



## PERSONAL PROFILE



# Geoff (Claud Geoffrey Rowden) Chavasse

Geoff Chavasse was born in Oxford, England, in March 1920, the second child of a family of seven. His father was the parson in Lynch, a tiny village in Sussex. When he was seven the family moved to Upton Nervet in Berkshire. He went to prep (boarding) then became a choir boy in Wells Cathedral at the age of 10. Four years later he attended All Saints' School, Bloxham, a "public" school on the verge of collapse during the Great Depression. His achievements, in the classroom and in the field, he describes as "undistinguished".

Geoff volunteered for the Army in 1939 and went to Oxford to read history until called up. He obtained a War Degree with distinction and then joined the Royal Artillery in 1940. He volunteered to serve in India, and there obtained his commission, serving with the Indian Army in Bengal, Karachi and the Maldives before sailing back to Britain in 1946. He returned to Oxford to read for a forestry degree, which he obtained in 1949.

He could not find employment commensurate with his qualifications and applied for work in Ireland, the USA and New Zealand, in the meantime taking a forest labourer's job in southern Britain and then working for "Charlie" Peace at Alice Holt, research establishment of the Forestry Commission.

He was eventually accepted by the New Zealand Forest Service and sailed for this country in October 1950. He was posted at once to Otatau to work on the much-vaunted Beech Scheme in western Southland. It was largely on the basis of his research that the silviculture of silver beech was structured. He was also responsible for exotic forest establishment, but his prescriptions to plant *macrocarpa* as the major species in Jubilee Hill Forest and for forest recreation and landscape planning were laughed out of court.

He moved to Invercargill as Conservancy Forester, where he wrote the original working plan for Berwick Forest, but was then called to spend some time in Head Office, working (rather desultorily) in Management Division under Alan McKinnon. He spent seven months there, after which he was posted to Westland to reinstate research into, and begin management of, *Podocarp* forests. He spent a couple of months on forest survey in the deep south, bought a property for 500



Geoff Chavasse

pounds (mortgage at 4 1/8!) and married Shirley Ray Fisher from Otatau.

### New Research

In Westland he drew together the work of the old Christchurch School of Forestry and carried out a good deal of new research, on the basis of which he prescribed selection management of *Podocarp* forests. This was in 1959.

His remarkable Conservator, Dave Kennedy, sold Geoff's ideas to the sawmilling fraternity but unfortunately, after they left, his silvicultural prescriptions were abandoned in favour of profitability, and the scheme was a failure; or so he thought. When he last visited South Westland with the Farm Forestry Association in the autumn of 1994, he witnessed these same 1959 prescriptions back in operation: another example of where he was ahead of his time. He does, however, lament the loss during the Forest Service "reorganisation" of the records from that era.

While in Westland he produced the first major report on possum damage in protection forests, and also compiled the first NZ regional working plan.

In 1962 Geoff was posted back to Invercargill, where he was involved in the major upsurge in planting during the ensuing years, and also in land planning and purchase. He transferred to the Forest Research Institute in 1968 as Project

Leader, Forest Establishment where, over the next 13 years, several important advances in nursery work and establishment were due to the work of himself and his research team. They took a "systems" approach to the entire process and, according to Dr Colin Bassett, ironed out most of the problems of the establishment stage from seedling quality through to planting and monitoring the results. Colin describes Geoff as "a tireless worker, full of ideas and energy and a prodigious writer".

### Numerous Papers

He retired in 1981 and for a short spell worked as a forestry consultant. In his career he produced numerous papers, he attended several overseas symposia and one IUFRO Congress in Japan, he kept up a world-wide correspondence with research workers in his field, and he mounted and reported upon five FRI symposia. In 1984 he was invited to run a forestry course in Harbin, North China. He wrote three books in collaboration with John Johns, ARPS, and was also editor of the first NZ Forestry Handbook. Since retiring he has written four novels, two published.

He joined the Institute of Foresters in 1951, was Journal Editor from 1970 to 1974, became Vice President in 1976 and President in 1978-1980. As President, he followed a more political course than the Institute had previously adopted. He was also responsible for drawing up that part of the Constitution dealing with Consultants.

In 1984 Geoff was awarded the OBE in recognition of his services to "forestry, conservation and the community". The Farm Forestry Association publicly honoured him for his services to farm forestry at their 1994 Conference, appropriately, in Westland. A week later, at the NZ Institute of Forestry Nelson Conference, he was awarded the Kirk Horn Flask for his services to forestry.

In 1977 he was ordained a non-stipendiary deacon in the Church of the Province of New Zealand and a year later was priested. From that time he has taken an active part in the worship at St Luke's church, Rotorua. He still sings in the choir,

(Continued on page 46)

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# In Our Contemporaries

Judy Griffith

## WHAT'S NEW IN FOREST RESEARCH

- No. 228 Aerial spraying by computer  
No. 229 Managing stands of radiata pine using PC-STANDPAK  
No. 230 Stability of radiata pine for remanufacturing uses

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## NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF FORESTRY SCIENCE Volume 21 No 2/3 (1991)

Climate change – Implications for *Pinus radiata* improvement  
Grace, J.C.; Carson, M.J.; Carson S.D.: 123-134

A change in New Zealand's climate, caused by "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere, may affect the productivity of *Pinus radiata* through increased wind damage, more severe infection by fungal pathogens, and areas becoming too dry or too wet for satisfactory growth. The current breeding strategy is well suited to maintain genetic improvement in a changing environment. Future research should consider planting identical field trials at particular sites several years apart, and planting trials at and beyond the current extremes of climate.

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## Geoff Chavasse

(Continued)

64 years since he became a chorister in Wells Cathedral.

His wife Shirley has now retired from school teaching, and they regularly visit their eldest daughter and her family who live in Augsburg, Germany. They have two other daughters: one lives in the Hohepa Community, Hawkes Bay; the other is a general practitioner and lives in Auckland with her husband and three-months-old daughter.

Geoff and Shirley are keen gardeners, although Geoff claims that their large garden gets bigger every year. They have taken on a new challenge – a 7.3 hectare agroforestry, multi-species forest in the Bay of Plenty.

Propagation system for the production of rooted cuttings from physiologically mature *Pinus radiata* within two years of field collection  
Van Dorsser, J.C.; Faulds, T.: 135-143  
Scions from selected *Pinus radiata* trees were grafted on to open-bed-grown seedlings. The resultant first-year grafts produced the material to be used as cuttings. The technique for rooting such material is based on a system developed since the 1960s at the NZFRI nursery. All but one of the 24 clones tested produced rooted cuttings. The method offers opportunities for establishing and updating archives and seed orchards with rooted cuttings within two years of field ortet selection.

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Increased nutrient availability in topsoils under conifers in the South Island high country

Davis, M.R.; Lang, M.H.: 165-179

Phosphorus levels were higher under conifers than under adjacent grasslands at most sites, with the largest absolute increases occurring under older stands on dry soils of the Mackenzie Basin. Increases were smaller under stands on hygroscopic, high-country, yellow-brown earths of the Canterbury region, but these soils were characterised by large increases in mineralisable nitrogen and sulphate-sulphur. Mineralisation of organic matter by the pines appears to be the major mechanism for nutrient enrichment of topsoils under pines in the hygroscopic soils of Canterbury, but transfer of nutrients from deeper horizons to the soil surface via nutrient uptake and litterfall may be more important in the dry-hygroscopic soils of the Mackenzie Basin.

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Estimating stand weight – The importance of sample selection

Madgwick, H.A.I.: 180-184

Simulated sampling showed that, in determining estimated stand component weights, sampling method and estimating techniques were less important than the sample of trees selected. There is a need for more work on the variables used to predict tree weight. Some problems arise with sequential sampling but it has the advantage that aberrant estimates based on small sample sizes are revealed.

Spiral grain patterns in plantation-grown *Pinus radiata*

Cown, D.J.; Young, G.D.; Kimberley, M.O.: 206-216

Strong radial and vertical patterns were established on wood disc samples from 50 25-year-old trees grown in Kaingaroa Forest, but there was also a major individual tree effect. The most pronounced deviations from vertical grain were in the inner 10 growth rings, where the left-hand angles averaged 4.7°. This amount of deviation is sufficient to cause significant problems through drying degrade, strength loss, and movement in service. Outside this zone, angles were generally less and showed a higher proportion of right-hand spirals.

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Utilisation of 25-year-old *Pinus radiata*. Part 1: Wood properties  
Young, G.D.; McConchie, D.L.; McKinley, R.B.: 217-227

The stand was selected as "typical" of current silvicultural regimes and as being at the lower end of the age range for expected rotations of this species. Average whole-tree wood property values were determined from discs cut at the butt and at the top of each log. Assessments were also made of compression wood, and within-tree variation in tracheid length and spiral grain. Generally, wood property values were similar to previous studies and to predictions for trees this age grown in the region.

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Utilisation of 25-year-old *Pinus radiata*. Part 2: Warp of structural timber in drying

Haslett, A.N.; Simpson, I.G.; Kimberley, M.O.: 228-234

From the same stand, 183 4.8 m-long logs were sawn to 100 x 50 mm framing timber. After high-temperature drying, warp measurements were related to the individual log characteristics. Twist was the major form of degrade; before planing, 36% of the lengths had excessive twist, and rejection from Framing 1 grade was 28%. Twist was most strongly related to log diameter, with corewood portion and spiral grain being the contributory factors. Twist also increased with log height class. Gauging halved the incidence of twist rejection.