Today we plant a rimu tree to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the New Zealand Institute of Forestry. You will know why rimu was chosen for planting. Its name Dacrydium means tears. There will be ‘tears of joy’ for this planting!

But why choose Orari – Wilton’s Bush as the place for such a broad-based organisation to celebrate its 75th year?

Apart from the convenience of being close to central government and some of its institutions it introduces us to connections with Leonard Cockayne and his almost unbelievable contribution to land and vegetation matters throughout the country. He markedly influenced and made a huge contribution to the development of the science of ecology and also the ecological examination of the total flora and vegetation of New Zealand.

Because of this widespread work Cockayne, who was living in Christchurch during the initial stages, moved to Wellington. He was then closer to the organisations, mainly government departments, seeking his help. Cockayne built up close relationships with the Department of Lands and Survey, an organisation originally set up and developed to guide and settle immigration. It was involved with proposed subdivisions of land, negotiations with Maori concerning these, surveys of townships and the clearance of areas of forest for proposed settlement areas. Much of these contained timber trees needed for milling. Areas of mountains and other attractions introduced thoughts about parks and reserves.

These relatively rapid developments led to great changes, two of which had especially far-reaching effects; the clearance of native forest and the widespread use, including export, of native woods. Both of these needed comprehensive study because of long-term effects on land-use and the organisation of settlement.

A Forest Division grew up in the Department of Lands and Survey. By the beginning of the 20th century questions involving forestry issues, mainly the disappearance of native timber trees, had become so important that thoughts were being given to holding a Royal Commission to examine and report on them.

Preceding such action it was considered that the forestry position in the country should be broadly analysed. Even though native timber trees were disappearing, afforestation with introduced forest trees was already well under way. The total timber supply situation needed special examination.

So the Department of Lands and Survey conducted this survey and produced a comprehensive report “Forestry in New Zealand 1909” which was presented by the Under Secretary of Lands, W.C. Kensington, to

Lindsay Poole and Tim Thorpe planting the 75th Anniversary rimu.

the Minister of Lands, the Right Honourable Sir J.G. Ward. In this document is a section contributed by L.Cockayne, even though he was not on the staff of Lands and Survey, entitled “The Necessity for Forest Cover”. It deals with Conservation, Character of Native Forest, Distribution, Economic Values, and Scenic.

This departmental report was soon followed by the setting up of the Royal Commission on Forestry 1913. Cockayne was one of its six members. The 1914-18 War interrupted any formal action on the recommendations made but action was taken immediately post-war. In 1919 a Department of Forestry was formed and L.M. Ellis, a Canadian, was appointed Director. He was a trained forester and was widely experienced in forestry practices including some wartime experience in Europe dealing with the wood supplies being produced by the lumberjacks, mostly Canadian, operating there.

Ellis spent his first year in New Zealand travelling and studying the forest and forestry position. Greatly assisted by the Lands 1909 digest plus the Royal Commission he produced a further comprehensive document setting out succinctly the guidelines by which he proposed to develop the new department. So here were three detailed reports dealing with forestry
background and proposals.

In 1928 Ellis suddenly left the New Zealand position and took up another in Australia. There has been a great deal of conjecture as to why Ellis abandoned New Zealand forestry but there can be little doubt that he was unable to make headway with a system of short-term changing politics in developing reasonable and necessary forestry measures.

The unexpected gap was immediately filled by E. Phillips-Turner who had been a senior officer of Lands and Survey, and as well as being a surveyor was widely experienced in the native forest cover. He was a great friend of Cockayne who was now, by invitation, the Honorary Botanist of the Forest Service.

Cockayne lived not far from Orari. As he grew older he became partially blind. Nevertheless, he worked almost to the day he died, 8 July 1934, coming down to the Forest Service office in Featherston Street, and dictating his last papers to Mary Sutherland, a Welsh-trained forester who had migrated to New Zealand to work in the newly established Forest Service.

I happened to have been posted to Wellington that year and was allocated a spare desk in Mary Sutherland’s room. I used to listen to Cockayne’s dictation and then I had the task of taking him to catch the train home.

One day he stopped suddenly, turned to me and said “I’m as good as you fellows!” I suddenly remembered he had just been given an Honorary Forestry B(For)Sc by a long-time ecological friend in Europe who had just been made Head of State! It was the only time I ever heard Cockayne being modest. It certainly raised my ego!

## Services to members

I have recently been coopted on to the Council of the New Zealand Institute of Forestry with a brief that includes looking at the services that the Institute provides to members. This has come about partly as a result of a review I made of the new Southern North Island section to see what sort of activities the new section could arrange for its members.

The new section covers a large geographical area, but with over 50% of members concentrated in or around Wellington. Apart from a dozen members at each of two provincial centres, all the other members are scattered in ones and twos all over the region. As I focused on what the Institute/local section could provide for such members, I also realised that provision of better services goes hand in hand with increased membership – but if we want to increase membership, we need to consider what we can offer to potential new members that they cannot get elsewhere.

The services that might interest one group of members might be of less interest to another group. For example, members working for larger companies or government departments benefit from the size of their employer in terms of in-house libraries, ability to subscribe to journals, news services, statistical reports and so on. While the internet has improved access to some journals, news services, statistical reports and so on, it can still be a limiting factor for a self-employed member or those in smaller organisations.

As part of my involvement with the Southern North Island section, I have been running an email distribution service for members. Through it I have had react to members about meetings and events in the region that might be of interest to forestry people, copies of speeches and media releases from organisations such as the Forest Industries Council or the Forest Owners Association, news about forestry people, advice of new material on web sites and so on. While a few members feel that there are too many messages, there has generally been a positive reaction. I find Institute members turning up at meetings of other societies, I get feed-back asking for more information and I get people sending me material to distribute in this way. Positive reactions come from a range of members including those in smaller centres, consultants, retired members and those in government departments. There is also interest from members in other local sections. This suggests that a service such as this is appreciated by members, is worth providing and that we should consider making it available to all NZIF members.

I have also contacted a couple of suppliers of information about the possibility of them providing their material at a group price, as long as we could get sufficient interest from members (in the same way that NZIF members can now purchase the South African Forestry Journal at a reduced price). There are some problems with this sort of service as the publishers are concerned about cannibalisation of their material and a reduction in profits. The trick is to find a way for purchases by Institute members to lead to an overall increase in demand, rather than simply a switch from individual to group purchases.

To assist me in the task assigned by Council, I invite members to contact me with suggestions for services that they would like to see the Institute trying to provide. I would be particularly interested in knowing what sort of member you are (consultant, full member, retired member, self employed, corporate employee, large city, rural town, overseas, etc.) and your views on how new services could be funded. Responses can be emailed to am.mcewen@xtra.co.nz, faxed to (04) 476 6264 or posted to 12 Tisdall Street, Karori, Wellington.

I look forward to receiving your ideas.

Andrew McEwen