Sir William Schlich Memorial Prize - what is the background to it?

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Introduction
Some 80 years ago, on October 1, 1925, a German forester died in England at the age of 85. Such was the stature of the man that world-wide public subscriptions were sought to honour him and his achievements. Foresters and forestry organisations in England, Scotland, India, Canada, and the U.S.A. contributed to a fund to provide a suitable memorial for Sir William Schlich. In New Zealand an annual Schlich Memorial Prize is given to the best all-round student at the New Zealand School of Forestry. Who was this man who evoked such world-wide acclaim, and why was he held in such high esteem?

Biography of Sir William Schlich
William Schlich was born in Darmstadt, Germany in 1840 and studied forestry at the University of Giessen, completing his Ph.D. in 1866. In 1867 he accepted a position with the Indian Forest Department assigned to Burma as Deputy Conservator of Forests, and in 1870 was transferred to the same position in the Province of Sind. His competence was such that in 1872 he was chosen to fill the position of Conservator in the Province of Bengal. In 1880 he became the Conservator of the Punjab, and in 1883 he was appointed Inspector-General of Forestry, following the retirement of eminent forester Dr. Dietrich Brandis.

During his 19 years in India, he developed financially sound forestry programmes in the Provinces. Also, he was directly or indirectly involved with a great many other important developments, among which were the passing of the Indian Forest Act in 1878, and the development of the Code of Forest Accounts and Procedures, as well as an improvement in the numbers and quality of the forest staff and the establishment of the Forest School at Dehra Dun1. He was the first editor of the Indian Forester, and was instrumental in the formation of the Imperial Working Plans Branch of the Indian Forest Department.

Schlich was asked to move to England in 1885 to organise the forestry branch at the Royal Indian Engineering College at Coopers Hill, Engefield Green, primarily to train recruits for the Indian Forest Service. Over a 20-year period the College produced a stream of well-prepared, distinguished foresters who fanned out over the world. In 1905, the forestry branch moved to the University of Oxford, and in 1911, Schlich gained the status of Professor of Forestry, a post he held until his retirement, at 80 years of age, in 1920.

William Schlich was awarded the distinction Commander of the Indian Empire (C.I.E.) in 1891, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1901, and in 1909 received further recognition in the form of the award Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (K.C.I.E.) in 1909. Still active in retirement, he was President of the Royal English Arboriculture Society 1913-1914, and became an Honorary Member of the Society of American Foresters in 1924. At the time of his death in 1925, he was on the Governing Council of the Empire Forestry Association.

Contribution to the Profession of Forestry
In his teaching and publications Schlich insisted that sound silviculture was the basis of rational forestry and this precept set the direction of forest management in many countries. He strove to gain recognition for forestry as a branch of British academic learning, and was formally successful in 1919 when forestry was included among the subjects of the Oxford Bachelor of Arts degree.

As well as his sterling work in the Indian Forest Service, Schlich was a leading force in bringing effective, rational forest management to the British Isles, as at that time forestry there had fallen to a very low ebb. The local wood was undervalued, timber imports were increasing, forestry texts and literature were out of date, and neither the public nor

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the politicians could see the value of British forests².

William Schlich is perhaps best known for his monumental “Manual of Forestry” in 5 volumes – “The Utility of Forests and Fundamental Principles of Silviculture”, published in 1889, “Formation and Tending of Woods” in 1891, “Forest Management” and “Forest Protection”, both in 1895, and “Forest Utilisation” in 1896, the latter two volumes being produced by W. R. Fisher, a colleague at Oxford. These publications, of which there were four editions, formed the basis of forestry education at colleges and universities throughout the Commonwealth, as well as the United States – “Our notes are thick with old Bill Schlich” proclaims the old Yale Forest School song³. Other publications included “Forestry in the United Kingdom”, “The Outlook of the World’s Timber Supply”, “Afforestation in Great Britain and Ireland”, and innumerable reports, memoranda and official papers.

**Schlich’s Influence on New Zealand Forestry**

Although Schlich never visited New Zealand, he nevertheless contributed indirectly through his writings as early foresters adapted his teachings to conditions in the new colony.

His more direct dealings with New Zealand forestry include his comments in Volume 1, “Forest Policy in the British Empire”, of the 3rd Edition of his Manual of Forestry (1906), in which Schlich criticised the rapid destruction of New Zealand’s kauri forests, and pointed out the loss of a sustained source of revenue and the lack of any definite forest policy.

Schlich also contributed to the New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology 1918⁴, providing a summary of New Zealand forests, and current and future wood demand, as well as some broad forestry financial calculations. He also took the opportunity there to comment on the report of the 1913 Royal Commission on Forestry:

- He criticised the Commissioners’ view that indigenous growth rates were too slow to meet demand.
- He questioned whether the quality of the proposed exotic timbers would be sufficient.
- He pointed out the risk of catastrophic disease following the suggested large scale exotic establishment.
- He argued that it was wrong to ignore the indigenous forest, and recommended that reserves of the better stands be established for the sustained production of superior timber. This would reduce the area of exotics needed to match the future timber demand.
- He criticised the Commissioners for doubting the value of thinning in the young exotic stands, emphasising the universal importance of tending during the rotation.


• He argued against the Commissioners’ recommendation that the future New Zealand Department of Forestry should be under an administrative and financial expert who would turn for professional advice to an advisory board. Schlich believed that the new department should be directed by an expert forester, so opting for professional control. Clearly this viewpoint had become accepted when Leon McIntosh Ellis was appointed as Director of Forests in 1919.

The thinking of many early New Zealand forest managers was influenced by Schlich’s publications. Henry Matthews, first Chief Forester for the Forests Branch of the Lands Department, included Schlich’s “Manual of Forestry” in a list of references in his 1905 publication, “Tree Culture in New Zealand”. In “A Century of State-Honed Enterprise”, Kirkland and Berg⁵ state that Schlich’s Manual of Forestry, along with the ideas of Matthews, had formed the basis of H. A. Goudie’s early forestry education. Goudie, a protégé of Matthews, was Superintending Nurseryman, North Island in the Forests Branch of the Lands Department, and, in 1919, Conservator of Forests for the North Island, excluding Auckland, in the new State Forest Service. Also in 1919, D. E. Hutchins produced a report on the management of kauri forests which quoted Schlich’s writings on manpower requirements, and natural regeneration, as well as his concern over their destruction⁶.

Schlich’s observations were also included in an early book on afforestation, dealing with the planting of exotic trees in New Zealand, by E. Maxwell in 1931⁷.

Perhaps the most important example of Schlich’s influence can be seen in the recommendations of Leon McIntosh Ellis, the first Director of Forestry, to the Government in 1920. Ellis outlined three administrative options for the new State Forest Service, and recommended the one which, he acknowledged, was modelled on Schlich’s suggestions made early in the New Zealand Journal of Science and Technology for a professionally-led organisation.

Sir William Schlich’s contribution to forestry was perhaps best described in the British Forestry Commission Annual Report in the year following his death: “To him, rather than to any other one man, belongs the credit of the spread throughout the Empire of modern ideas on forest policy and silviculture⁸.”

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⁹Forestry Commission 5th Annual Report, 1926.
The Sir William Schlich Memorial Prize

Shortly after Schlich's death, a committee was set up in England under the chairmanship of Major General the Lord Lovat, first Chairman of the Forestry Commission, to obtain funds to provide a suitable memorial. The Committee included representatives of foresters and forestry organisations in England, Scotland, India, Canada, and the United States. The money raised was placed into a trust, with a grant from the trust being awarded to different parts of the British Empire and to the United States.

Schlich awards or medals are presented to meritorious students in Australia (School of Forestry, ANU), Canada (each professional forestry school in rotation), South Africa (Forestry Department, Fort Elizabeth Technikon Saasveld), the United Kingdom (Oxford Forestry Institute), and New Zealand (School of Forestry, University of Canterbury). In the United States the prize is administered by the Society of American Foresters.

The prizes have been various. In Canada and Australia, the Schlich Memorial Trust Prize is presented to the student completing the requirements for the forestry degree who shows the most promise in forestry. In England, the Schlich Memorial Medal is awarded annually to the best student on the MSc course at the Oxford Forestry Institute. In the U.S., the Sir William Schlich Memorial Award is presented biennially to recognise broad and outstanding contributions to the field of forestry with emphasis on international activities: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gifford Pinholt, William B. Gleeley, Kenneth Davis, and Robert Buckman are among the previous recipients.

In 1971, the then New Zealand Institute of Foresters presented the interest from the Sir William Schlich Memorial Fund to the University of Canterbury, for an award, called the N. Z. Institute of Foresters Schlich Award, to be offered each year to a student attending the School of Forestry. The award, presented to the student who is eligible to graduate and who displays the best all-round ability, consisted of a book or books to the value of $50. While the proposed recipient was chosen by the School of Forestry, the award was administered by the New Zealand Institute of Foresters.

In 1999, following changes to the NZIF Awards scheme, the Schlich Memorial Prize was replaced by a scholarship, and so the administration of the Schlich Prize was transferred to the Canterbury School of Forestry. The award, now known as the NZ School of Forestry Schlich Memorial Prize, consisted of a book and one year's Associate Membership to the Institute of Forestry. In 2001, in conjunction with a review of School prizes, the value of the Prize was increased to $500 plus one year's Institute membership, still to be presented to the student who is eligible to graduate and who displays the best all-round ability.

Past Winners of the New Zealand Schlich Award

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<td>1985</td>
<td>P. J. Sweetapple</td>
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