

OBITUARY

T. T. C. BIRCH

Tom Birch died suddenly at his home on 17 January, 1960, just a few days before he was due to go overseas to the Fifth Session of the FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission. Most of his co-workers had thought of Tom as a physically resilient individual who would have enjoyed many years of retirement after his short remaining service. At the time of his death he was in charge of the Development Division of the Forest Service concerned with the vital roles of research and training in the broad sense. During the critical period when the Forest Service was building up its professional and semiprofessional staff after the Second World War, from what might be termed the "irreducible minimum" to something approaching an effective group, Tom was the man on whom much of the burden fell. Most intermediate and younger members of the Institute would have come to regard him as the arbiter of their fates to a greater or lesser degree; some, doubtless, had felt aggrieved, but none would deny his strict sense of fairness, his sincerity, and his ready appreciation of work well done. Many discovered that a ready twinkle and warm smile were never very far away, behind a facade of apparent austerity. Other members of the Institute will recall Tom as one who applied in his daily life those virtues and moral principles that he believed in - truth, loyalty, temperateness in word and action. He was a valued friend to many of us and a solid worker for the Institute, in which he held office as a Committee Member and as Vice-President from the late 1930s to the mid 1940s.

Tom Birch obtained his forestry degree at Oxford and must have had a feeling of quiet satisfaction in that a succession of trainees from the N.Z. scheme developed under his care should subsequently have gained many of the higher placings in their respective years of completion at the Oxford School. His earlier years with the Forest Service were filled with varied experiences in the field, including silvicultural work in *Nothofagus* and exotic forests, before he transferred to forest mycology, working with Dr G. H. Cunningham's section of DSIR at Palmerston North. In this specialised field, Tom earned the approbation of Dr Cunningham, which is sufficient evidence of the quality of his work.

Back in Wellington in 1938, he was for a few years concerned with preservation, then being developed as a commercial enterprise by the Forest Service, and also established a small mycological laboratory set-up. His last fifteen years were almost wholly concerned with estab-

lishing firmly the training and research developments. During this time the overseas professional-training scheme was developed and F.R.I., the Training Centres at Rotorua and Reefton, and the Junior Woodsman Schools came into being. He was Forest Service delegate to the World Forestry Congress in Finland in 1949, and on that trip was able to develop useful research and training contacts in Scandinavia and Britain.

During his years in the field and in forest mycology, Tom was the author of several published papers and Forest Service leaflets; the later years, with the daily round of committees, complaints, interviews, supervision, reports, and correspondence provided little time for writing other than what was concerned with the intricacies of training. One of his last substantial papers was for the 1957 British Commonwealth Forestry Conference.

Tom was devoted to his family and home, at which he was a warm host to many of us, and was active in suburban activities and especially in matters pertaining to the schools attended by his four children. Through the rough patches and the smooth he had the best of all possible allies — his wife.

—J.S.R.

ARTHUR CAMPBELL FORBES, 1896-1959

A. C. Forbes died on 1st November 1959. He was a native of Eire, son of the late A. C. Forbes, O.B.E., long-time Director of Forestry in the Republic of Ireland and a prolific writer on forestry subjects. Forbes the younger served throughout the First World War in the Royal Field Artillery, graduated in forestry from the Royal College of Science, Ireland, and came to New Zealand in 1923. Except for a short period in the employ of a private forestry company, the whole of his working life in this country was spent with the Forest Service.

"Mick" Forbes, as he was known to every forester in New Zealand and to countless others throughout the Commonwealth, was one of that very small group who formed the N.Z. Institute of Foresters in 1928. He was then elected to Associate Membership, later becoming a Member and finally in 1958 receiving Honorary Membership in recognition of the yeoman service he had given the Institute throughout its existence. He had the distinction of being the second Forbes to become an Honorary Member, his father having been similarly elected in 1936.

The Institute of Foresters was to Mick Forbes a precious possession to be jealously guarded, and he will long be remembered for his unstinting efforts as Honorary Treasurer over a period approaching twenty years. The generality of members will recall his perennial solicitude that they should remain in good financial standing; those who worked more closely with him in Council will remember his forthright but invariably correct attitude towards all matters of professional principle. Though he might (privately) inveigh and threaten