WORKING TOGETHER FOR NATURE

A HISTORY OF FOREST & BIRD NORTH SHORE BRANCH 1969 - 2015





Tou rourou, toku rourou, ka ora te lwi.

With your contribution and my contribution, we will thrive.

In November 2009 ecowarrior Jim Lewis held a celebration for his 80th birthday at Northcote College. Guests were requested not to bring gifts; instead they were invited to make a donation to Forest and Bird (F&B). Jim requested that this money be used to benefit the branch. After consideration by the committee, the decision was made to embark upon this history; a decision that Jim endorsed.

Unfortunately Jim did not live to see the finished work; he passed away in 2012.

This history is dedicated to Jim's memory.



THE FORMATION OF THE BRANCH

The North Shore branch of Forest & Bird (the branch) was, like Auckland itself, volcanic in origin. There are tales of passion, intrigue, betrayal and triumph from the lips of an extremely alert and intelligent 95-year-old, Ralph Silvester, who related the story of the birth of the branch as though it was yesterday. From this tumultuous beginning, the branch has grown and matured to where, today, it is the fourth largest in New Zealand and boasts among its illustrious past and present members a national president, two distinguished life members, seven Old Blue Award winners and numerous executive members. This history will attempt to tell the story from inception to the present day, through the memories of the branch's most important asset – its members.

Auckland became a branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand in 1947. It had jurisdiction over the area from the Manukau Harbour to the Brynderwyns, a truly awesome responsibility. Naturally, the North Shore fell within that jurisdiction and many members of the fledgling Auckland branch resided on the Shore. Some even held office, notably a Mr WT Slater of Northcote, who was chairman for five years, and Mr CW (Bill) Sievwright, who served as acting chairman for a brief time. The first intimation of North Shore's nascent wish for independence is seen in a letter, written on 20th November 1964, from Muriel Fisher to the president of F&B in Wellington. In it she referred to the "goings on" in Auckland, and asked that the North Shore be included in the official list of 'sections' of the Society. A section was a precursor to full branch status – "a branch with trainer wheels". She noted in her letter that the section had been formed unofficially in October 1961, with Hugh Satchell as chairman. At the time of the letter (November 1964), the chairman was Ralph Silvester. Muriel Fisher was secretary, Hugh Satchell having passed away in July 1963. The February 1965 issue of the F&B magazine reported the formation of a new section and gave a brief history of progress. However, F&B's national office records 1964 as the official beginning of the section.

Muriel Fisher's letter went on to paint a picture of the workings of the early section. Meetings were held every two months (at Takapuna Primary school in Taharoto Rd, recalled by Ralph Silvester) and were well attended. Outings to local reserves were organised; the "junior group" (a precursor to KCC) was frequently included. Council was contacted to discuss tree planting. Muriel asserted that the section was serving a need in the community. Muriel's involvement with F&B, and conservation in general, continued until her death in July 2012.

A snapshot of this pre-branch status period is neatly captioned in an archive letter from the Minister of Mines (Mr TP Shand) dated 1st December 1965. Protection of Coppermine Island, the easternmost of the Hen & Chicken group, had long been a key conservation goal of the section and a letter (since lost) had been sent to the minister outlining the section's objections to proposed further exploration. His reply, in part, states:



New Zealand is one of the poorest countries of the world, in terms of natural wealth, and with our rapidly increasing population, the Government has a growing responsibility to endeavour to find some means of supporting this increasing number of people at acceptable living standards. In due course, the Government may have to decide whether, if the existence of valuable deposits should be proven, authority should be given for their development to provide adequate living standards for some of our children or grandchildren, or whether the preservation of some rare survivals from the days before European settlement is more important.



RALPH SILVESTER

ONE OF THE FOUNDING
MEMBERS OF NORTH SHORE
BRANCH AND LONG-TIME
COMMITTEE MEMBER



Does this sound familiar? Shand served in Keith Holyoake's National Government and, according to his online biography, "held a staunch right-wing philosophy". Fifty years on and the right wing rhetoric is virtually identical as National grants mining rights throughout the country in the name of jobs and living standards. Back then, prospecting went ahead but was unsuccessful and Coppermine became a Protected Natural Area.

The North Shore branch continued as a section but there were clouds gathering. The first sign was a letter from the chairman of the Auckland branch, Professor W R McGregor, to Ralph Silvester, in November 1967. Prof McGregor acknowledged receipt of a notification from the section to meet, in December, to discuss and advocate separation from the Auckland branch. He requested a meeting with Ralph Silvester, ahead of the planned meeting, for the purpose of a frank exchange of views. The meeting was fateful and recalled in detail by Ralph Silvester. Unfortunately there is no record of Prof McGregor's account, which may have differed from Ralph's! McGregor was bitterly opposed to the idea of separation, thinking that the Auckland region should speak with one

voice. Ralph was equally adamant that the time for North Shore's independence had arrived after six years of successful operation as a section. Views were exchanged but there was no agreement.

The next documented account is in the form of a short newsletter issued by the Auckland branch, in August 1968, to announce a celebration to mark the 21st anniversary of its formation. The event was to be held at the Intercontinental Hotel on 21st November 1968, and offered a seven-course dinner with table wines for the princely sum of \$5 per person. Attendees were assured that representatives of Cabinet, civic bodies and our own national executive would be invited. Continuing on from the invitation was a message from the acting chairman, CW (Bill) Sievwright – the same Bill Sievwright mentioned earlier: North Shore resident and soon-to-be first chairman of the new North Shore branch. Bill had been a member for 30 years before he and his wife joined the North Shore section. His "sudden and unsought emergence, first as North Shore chairman and, within a couple of weeks, as acting chairman of the Auckland branch as well" was put down, modestly, to his previous administrative experience. He accepted the dual role "because I believe our cause deserves the support of all people who recognize that the heritage we received from the past is a sacred trust for us to preserve and pass on to future generations". Noble sentiments, indeed.

At the AGM of the branch on 9th May 1968, the then chairman, Prof McGregor, took exception to the application by the North Shore section for branch status.



His extraordinary action in sending a provocative notice to about half of the members (North Shore members being among those excluded) not unnaturally aroused feelings which were not calmed by statements made at the meeting. Although the chairman moved to disestablish the section, he withdrew his motion on the suggestion of several members after the North Shore's action had been explained. The chairman, secretary and two or three committee members chose to resign or to not accept renomination for office."



As a result, of the three principal office holders, only a treasurer was elected. A week later, a meeting was called at which Bill agreed to act as chairman until a suitable nominee from Auckland could be found. The clear message here was that no-one from the North Shore would be available to serve on Auckland's committee as they would be serving in their own branch on the Shore. (As it turned out, however, Bill Sievwright, Ralph Silvester and Muriel Fisher continued to run the Auckland branch for another year while also conducting the business of the North Shore section.)

The drama continued. A stop was placed on the North Shore section's bank account. The former secretary refused to hand over the section papers, which were not received until June after National Office had been asked to intervene and legal advice taken. To cap it all off, four speakers withdrew from the published programme, creating unwanted difficulties for the new administration at a trying time. The administration itself had six members from the North Shore, all of whom wished to be released to assume duties in the proposed North Shore branch.



As for the anniversary dinner, there are no records, although branch member Louise Stevens recalls a "posh" dinner at which the grand finale was baked Alaska, dubbed baked Egmont, and decorated with lit sparklers.

The dramatic AGM in May 1968 had far-reaching consequences. It was such a significant event that The Auckland Star, on 10th May, lead with a front-page headline "Six Quit in Stormy Wildlife Meeting". Prof McGregor went on to resign as a life member and vice-president of the Society at national level in June of the same year, stating that he thought the Society had "failed lamentably to get to grips with the major conservational issues of the day". While cast as the villain in the turbulent break away of the North Shore branch, it must be remembered that Prof McGregor was a major player in the saving of Waipoua Forest for the nation. In 1948 he led an F&B campaign which collected 50,000 signatures and led to the creation of the Waipoua Forest Sanctuary four years later. The Auckland branch itself had only been formed in 1947. His name is also commemorated on the Honours Board at the Native Forest Restoration Trust's reserve at Rangitoto Station in the northern Pureora forest. A plaque at the Kauri Museum in Matakohe gives a lengthy tribute, calling him the man who fought to protect the kauri forest.

The proposal for North Shore to become a branch was submitted to the 1969 National AGM for ratification by the National Council of F&B, and in the F&B magazine in late 1969 it shows North Shore with Branch status.

One account (unattributed) reads: "On 30th May 1969 at a meeting of Council held in Wellington Public Library, Mr B Teague moved, Miss V Rucroft seconded, that the North Shore section be considered a branch". This was carried. The motion was accepted by the president, with extreme reluctance, and he insisted on various safeguards to ensure that Auckland secured an officer to effectively carry on. Auckland Branch membership of 1087 went down to 768 but was back to 1094 by November 1971. North Shore branch started with 333 members and reached 509 by the same date.

In a later undated "Open Letter to All Members and Friends of the Society" the two chairman of the Auckland and North Shore branches wrote, "The separation of the North Shore branch from the Auckland branch has at last been harmoniously and successfully accomplished... About two thirds of the total current membership of 1000 will remain with the Auckland branch and one third transfers to the North Shore branch".



The first members of the North Shore branch committee were as follows:

Chairman: Mr CW (Bill) Sievwright

Vice Chairman: Mr Ralph Silvester

Hon Secretary: Mr Owen Raskin

Hon Treasurer: Miss J Burn

Committee: Mr Bill and Mrs Muriel Fisher; Mrs GD Rothschild, Mrs Hinton,

Mr Connor, Mrs Schiessell

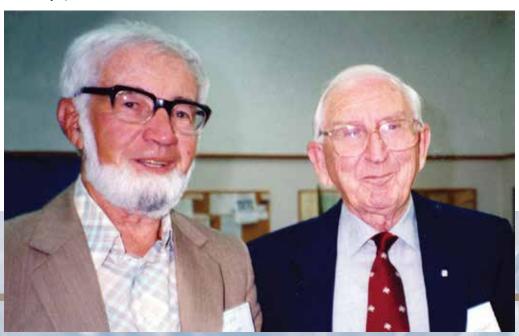
The new branch had jurisdiction over the area defined by North Shore City, Rodney County and those parts of Waitemata County, east of a line from Riverhead to Kaukapakapa. During the early 1980s the western part of the branch was taken over by the Waitakere branch and then, in 1988, the Hibiscus Coast branch was formed.

Le Roys Bush became the responsibility of the new branch. It had been purchased in 1949 after F&B initiated a public subscription, supported by the Prickett family. The 12 acres, which cost £804, were purchased with £500 from the Department of Internal Affairs, £50 from North Shore boroughs and the balance of £254 was raised through a F&B appeal. The children of Northcote Primary were made honorary wardens of the reserve. Weeding was required and identification tags were fitted to trees. The single largest private donation towards the purchase of Le Roys Bush was from Mr & Mrs James Prickett from Birkenhead. James Prickett was a foundation member of the Auckland Botanical Society (ABS), and his wife had served on the Auckland branch committee prior to the separation of the North Shore branch. Their home in Maritime Terrace (later the home of Neil Sutherland and Sheryl Corbett, more of whom later) had large gardens, and they had planted many native species, all of which were identified and labelled. James had also planted natives at Birkenhead Primary School to enable the children to become familiar with these species. He was recognised in the February 1960 edition of the F&B magazine in an article about his position for 30 years as "honorary ranger for Auckland" which also noted a visit to the Kaipara to carry out a census of godwits: 800 birds were counted. Control of Le Roys passed Bush to the North Shore Scenic Board in 1971, and then to the Crown in 1989. Today it is managed by Auckland Council with valuable input from the Le Roys Bush Management Committee.

A file from the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network (NZPCN) records a tribute to James Prickett following his death. It reports a gathering of local body members, schoolmasters, botanists and ornithologists on 6th March 1965 to officially open the new park entrance to Kauri Park reserve and to dedicate a park seat to James. Over one hundred people attended. The file acknowledges James' contributions to both ABS and F&B, and credits him with being pivotal in acquiring Kauri Park for the citizens of the Shore.

The North Shore Times Advertiser (NSTA) published a story on 10th June 1969 to mark the historic first meeting of the branch. Bill Sievwright is quoted as saying, "with over 240 members, and with interest in membership growing quite rapidly throughout the 80,000 residents of the Shore, the creation of a branch was warranted". He also advised that the objectives of the society had been expanded to cover the preservation of all native flora and fauna, natural features and the purity of our natural waters.

Bill Sievwright chaired the new branch for six years and was elected to the national executive in 1972. Interviewed by future branch chairman Neil Sutherland in 1997, he revealed that, when he came to the Shore, the section had only £2 in the bank and was considering folding. One of the reasons for this poverty, according to Ralph Silvester, was that the capitation grant for members (a monthly payment from national office to the regions) was sent to the branch and Auckland did not pass that portion owed for North Shore members on to the section. Bill recognised the "tremendous dedication" of people like the Fishers and Silvester (then chairman) and argued that "the strength of the organisation was in its members, rather than the size of its bank account". This drive saw Bill appointed deputy chairman, and in 1968 he became chair when the death of Ralph's wife forced Ralph to relinquish his post. Bill and his wife, Margaret, hosted committee meetings at their home, and organised branch outings both locally and around the region. Among the more adventurous were trips to Mt Auckland, the Coromandel Peninsula and Little Barrier Island (once, for four days).



RALPH SYLVESTER AND BILL SIEVWRIGHT

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE NORTH SHORE BRANCH;
BILL WAS THE FIRST CHAIRMAN

It was Bill Sievwright who suggested that Muriel and Bill Fisher host an annual garden fête at their Fernglen property, to raise funds for the branch. This became an annual event and continued for many years, contributing much-needed funds to the branch's coffers. Most of the older interviewees recalled these fêtes with affection. When Bill left the branch committee, he went on to set up the 60's Up group in Birkenhead.

Bill Sievwright's six-year term as chair of the branch has only been equalled once (by John Cuthbert, from 1988-1994). His vision, tenacity and skill guided the branch through its turbulent formation and set the scene for the years that followed. Bill will be remembered rightly as the founder of the branch.

Muriel Fisher was a remarkable woman, nationally acknowledged as an accomplished botanist and author. She was born on 25th July 1915, in Wellington, and early on showed an interest in plants. Her parents were conservationists, as were her grandparents and her great-grandparents. Her great-grandfather was a member of the Royal Society. Her own interest in native species was sparked through joining a tramping club in Wellington and exploring the Tararua Ranges and other bush areas close to Wellington. Muriel and her husband Bill lived in Birkenhead at Fernglen for over 50 years. In an interview with Anne Rimmer in 2012, she said of Fernglen, "We were building up a collection of native plants. The whole section, the whole 17 acres, consisted of natives... Bill was good at propagating, so we grew them on - totara, kauri, heaven knows what". As a teacher, Muriel introduced children to the scientific names of plants. With Bill, she joined the Auckland branch in the mid-1950s and together they fought for the preservation of a number of tracts of bush on the North Shore, especially in the Birkenhead/Northcote area. They took the family on car trips all around NZ. Having a real love of alpine plants, Muriel enhanced Fernglen with rare alpine species she had collected on these trips.



MURIEL FISHER

PART OF THE FOUNDING COMMITTEE OF THE BRANCH AND AUTHOR OF MANY BOOKS ON NATIVE PLANTS INCLUDING THE FIRST BOOK ON NATIVES TO PLANT IN YOUR GARDEN

Muriel's first book was titled *Gardening with New Zealand plants, shrubs and trees*. She wrote about lesser-known plants from all around NZ, including Stewart Island. The book was the first to encourage people to plant natives in their gardens. She wrote seven books in all.

The Fishers were recognised for their work when jointly awarded the Loder Cup, NZ's highest conservation award, in 1970. This trophy was donated by Gerald Loder in 1926 to "encourage and honour New Zealanders who work to investigate, promote, retain and cherish our indigenous flora". The Minister of Conservation awards the prize to a person or persons who best represent the objectives of the Cup. Gerald McSweeney, a former F&B president, was a winner in 2003.

Fernglen was purchased by the local Council in 1989, and is now a much-loved reserve adjacent to Kauri Park in Birkenhead. The Fishers retained the use of their family home on the property and Muriel continued to live there until shortly before her death. She died two days short of her 97th birthday, on 23rd July 2012, at a rest home where she had spent the last few months working with the owners to install a native garden in the grounds. Her son, Malcolm, has continued the legacy of Fernglen and is employed by Auckland Council as caretaker of the gardens. He served on the branch committee in the early 1970s and maintains interests in conservation outside of Fernglen, notably with weed control on Motutapu Island.

Ralph Silvester has already been mentioned a number of times, in relation to the formation of the branch. He was interviewed by Alan Emmerson in May 2011 and died, aged 95, only two months later. During the interview, which lasted more than two hours, Ralph demonstrated recall, humour and the vigour of a much younger man. He remembered Gordon Ell, the future national president, starting a branch newsletter in the early 1970s. This was the forerunner of *Habitat*, about which more will be said later.

The main focus of the new branch was the protection of local bush reserves, which were coming under pressure from developers following the opening up of the Shore by the construction of the harbour bridge in 1959. An (anonymous) account reads:



The rapid disappearance of green pastures, clumps of bush, etc. to be replaced by motorways, neat and tidy subdivisions, level and bereft of any sign of vegetation. Sulphur Bay (Northcote) was replaced by toll booths, mangroves covered with thousands of tonnes of rocks as base for the motorways... Smith's bush was bisected; Wairau Rd, a two-lane road between gorse and rush-covered swampy areas, the abode of a thinning population of fernbirds, was improved; drainage and buildings soon got rid of the birds.



Ralph was an interesting man. During these years he was also a member of ABS and the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. He was born in France to a British father and a French mother. He left France in 1940, "chased out by Hitler", as he put it, arriving in NZ in December 1949.

There were many challenges for the new branch. Ralph remembered one that caused a great debate: when is a native tree not a native tree? It was in 1973 that the Birkenhead Council felled eight pohutukawas on the front verge of properties in Wanganella St, Birkenhead Point, following complaints that they

obstructed views. Wanganella St residents (and F&B members), Mr and Mrs Davey, had been fighting to save the trees, but when they went overseas on a holiday, the Council removed them. Mrs Davey took the matter to Court and tried to prosecute the Council. The appeal was unsuccessful as the judge decided that as the trees had been planted they could not be dealt with under the Native Plants Protection Act.

The branch planted lots of natives. Ralph remembered the back of Northcote College, Kauri Glen, and Alice Eaves Bush, Orewa. In 1971 there was great concern about the loss of a substantial amount of native forest, including some of the few *Nothofagus truncata* (hard beech) in Birkenhead as the Chatswood subdivision was being prepared. An article in the F&B November 1971 magazine observed, "A brief look at the devastation in the name of subdivision was enough to make us shudder". Ralph was a horticulturist and had studied farming and nursery management in France. He had been the groundsman at Northcote College and had a big garden at his home in Greenhithe where he grew many native species.

The branch also had a close association with the Tiritiri Matangi (Tiri) Island project, from the start. Ralph recalled when the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Darcy O'Brien, met the committee in c. 1968 and told them about the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park and the possibility of Tiri becoming a reserve.

On Ralph's death, Ray Walter, Tiri's long-serving lighthouse keeper, and then DoC ranger, published the following obituary in the *Tiri Bulletin* as a tribute:

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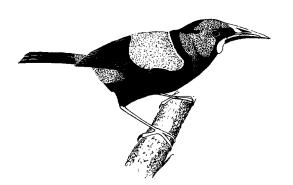
Ralph Silvester, a long-time member of the Supporters of Tiri, and one of our earliest volunteers, passed away recently. He was involved at the beginning of the project, helping with early propagation and plant management in the island nursery. Ralph had a very wide knowledge in the propagation of native plants and he freely passed this on to me. He was on one of the earliest planting trips with North Shore Forest & Bird and continued to volunteer his time with Eric Geddes, spending several days at a time on the island planting.

The Silvester Wetlands and dams at the northern end of the island were made possible by his and his wife Connie's generous donation. At the opening of the dams, two brown teal were released and named after Ralph and Connie.



The obituary also pays tribute to Eric Geddes, another branch stalwart who was a member during Bill Sievwright's chairmanship and who joined the committee in 1975. Rona Wark, a current member, remembered Eric with affection. "He was a real hands-on conservationist." Possibly his greatest achievement was the construction and installation of more than 300 nest boxes for tieke/saddlebacks on Tiri. It was this branch link to Tiri and to tieke/saddlebacks which led the branch to adopt the tieke as the branch emblem. Ralph and Eric would go out to Tiri in a small runabout, leaving from Army Bay. Rona decided to accompany them one day but the boat was so small Ralph had to make two trips. Eric was the first North Shore member to get an Old Blue, an award he earned in 1991 following 23 years of devoted service to conservation on the

Shore. (Rona Wark would receive one 17 years later). Eric's recognition was reported in the North Shore Times Advertiser (NSTA), with a photo of him holding his award. He had been an F&B member since 1949 but only became active after his arrival on the Shore in the early 1970s. After his retirement as headmaster at Hauraki Primary School, his commitment became all-absorbing. He weed-busted on many reserves, did projects in local schools, edited the newsletter for a time and used his wood-working skills in the construction of billboards at Heritage Park, Auckland Zoo and the Auckland Environmental Centre. One reserve he identified with was Centennial Park where he went every week to work under the direction of Prof John Morton. Centennial Park is still closely allied to our branch.



THE TIEKE BRANCH EMBLEM

Dates of specific activities are hard to pin down but Eric provided his school's Gestetner machine (for readers under 30, the Gestetner was a copier in the 60s and 70s) for the branch newsletter while he was still working at Hauraki Primary. After his retirement, he bought his own Gestetner so that he could continue printing for the branch, and was ultimately disappointed when modern photocopying became available in the early 1980s.

The first recorded use of the name *Habitat* was in 1981, as newsletters bearing that name have survived. Eric was the instigator of the "Adopt-a-Reserve" scheme which encouraged small groups to take responsibility for local reserves. Today we see the legacy of this idea with many reserves on the Shore having their own volunteer care teams.

Eric finally left the Shore to move close to family in Tauranga where he continued his work with the local F&B branch until his death in 2009. He was a true hero of North Shore conservation, and one of the giants of our history.





Another considerable figure associated with the branch in the 1970s was Emeritus Professor John Morton, a marine biologist and internationally recognised expert on shore ecology. He was author of *A Natural History of Auckland*, and many other publications, and presented the nature and science TV programme *Our World*. Prof Morton did much for conservation in NZ. He was a leader in the establishment in 1975 of NZ's first marine reserve, at Cape Rodney-Okakari Point, near Leigh, which includes Goat Island/Motu Hawere. The professor led the conservation movement to a series of victories in the 1970s and 80s which saved the last of NZ's mainland native forests - Pureora, Whirinaki, Waitutu and South Westland - from logging. He served on the Auckland Regional Authority from 1971 to 1974. In 1976 a group of people, led by Prof Morton and his wife Pat, formed the Centennial Park Bush Society. Today, 39 years on, the Bush Society is led by Richard Hursthouse, the current chair of the branch.



PROF. JOHN MORTON PIONEERING CONSERVATIONIST





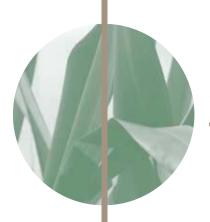
Gordon Ell said of John Morton that, "he changed the character of Forest & Bird forever, from a collection of bird lovers to a mature conservation organisation". John served on the committee while Gordon was chairman (1978-1981) and was on the executive from 1980 until 1986, during which time the F&B magazine frequently published his with thoughtful and stirring articles on conservation. In 1990, Prof Morton published a *Forum* article entitled *A Green Equity* in which he spoke about a sustainable future and the need for all our politics to be green. Such talk in 1990 was visionary; he was clearly a man ahead of his time. He wrote the valedictory for retiring President A A T Ellis, and delivered the Sanderson Memorial address in May 1985. He was made a Distinguished Life Member in 1990, the first North Shore member to be so honoured.

Gordon himself had joined the committee in 1974, under Bill Sievwright's chairmanship, capping the stellar cast of that first administration.

In 1973, Louis (Len) Stevens and his daughter Louise were elected to the committee. This was the beginning of an association between the Stevens family and the North Shore branch that has continued to this day, all of 40 years. Len Stevens had been a Birkenhead Borough councillor and had headed the Parks committee, so brought experience and knowledge to the branch. He was committed to the conservation of native forests and enlisted his entire family to gather signatures for the Manapouri Campaign. Len Stevens had been committed to conservation from the 1930s, and he passed this commitment and enthusiasm on to both his daughters Claire and Louise. Louise had been a member of the Junior Naturalists which was run by Muriel Fisher while she was teaching. The family had gone on F&B outings for many years, including collecting plants from Hunua, prior to the dam being established there, and planting on Waiheke. A favourite trip had been to Waiomo Reserve near Kaukapakapa. Louise moved away and stood down but was re-elected in 1981 and became *Habitat* editor in 1985.







GORDON ELL, TIRI AND THE YEARS 1975-1984

Bill Sievwright was succeeded by Johnny Johnstone as chairman of the branch in 1975, a position he held for three years. He had served on Bill Sievwright's committee and succeeded Owen Raskin as branch secretary when Owen took over as treasurer from Miss J Burn.

Gordon Ell had come from Christchurch to settle in Takapuna in 1967. He thinks he joined F&B in 1969, despite rules forbidding state-employed journalists from having private interests which might conflict with their impartiality. He joined the committee in 1974, under Bill Sievwright, and became branch chair in 1978. This was an important time for the branch, as momentum for replanting Tiri and relaunching it as an open reserve gathered pace. The Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park (HGMP) was established in 1967, to protect some of the islands of the Gulf, although Tiri was not one of those at first. The HGMP was administered by a government-appointed board, with the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Darcy O'Brien, as ex officio chairman. As mentioned earlier, Ralph Silvester had recalled a meeting between the branch committee and Darcy O'Brien in 1968, a meeting at which the future of Tiri had been discussed.



GORDON ELL

A FORMER CHAIR OF THE BRANCH AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY In 1970, Tiri was designated a Recreation Reserve, having been for years a lighthouse reserve, with most of the land leased for farming. Rather than selling the land off, the Department of Lands & Survey, in the person of Darcy O'Brien, gazetted it as a recreation island. Tiri was added to the HGMP and the farming lease was not renewed. From 1974, students from the University of Auckland, led by ornithologist John Craig and botanist Neil Mitchell, began scientific research on the island. Ray Walter arrived on Tiri in 1980 as lighthouse keeper, the same year that the island became a scientific reserve within the HGMP. The decision to replant the island was taken.

In 1982, Sir Peter Scott, son of the famous Antarctic explorer Captain Robert Falcon Scott, was in NZ to look at suitable projects for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to support. The Tiri project caught his imagination, and it was Scott who first coined the now popular term "open sanctuary" in reference to the island. Louise Stevens recalled the WWF presenting to the branch committee and requesting assistance with fundraising. Although the branch had little in the way of cash resources, they pledged to back the project with hands-on assistance, a pledge that was kept in the years ahead. At Scott's direction, WWF set up a fund-raising committee and over \$40,000 was quickly raised by public subscription. With a two-to-one government subsidy, this grew to near \$150,000, enough to get the project up and running.

For a fuller account of the history of Tiri, see Anne Rimmer's excellent book *Tiritiri Matangi a Model of Conservation*. Auckland politician Mike Lee was chairman of the Waiheke section of F&B in 1984, and wrote of Tiri in the 1987 November issue of the magazine. Embedded in the article was a feature on the special relationship between North Shore branch and Tiri:



The North Shore branch of the Forest & Bird Society has taken a keen interest in the replanting scheme and as they have no reserves of their own have "adopted" Tiritiri Matangi. Members have made monthly trips through the winter months for several years and some have stayed for extended periods to help with large projects such as building a reservoir dam and working on the house conversions.

Until recently the only accommodation on Tiritiri Matangi was an old university hut and a small bach. With the winding down of the PEP¹ schemes, one of the two families left the island and their home has been converted into a bunk house. Some money for this was supplied by the University [of Auckland] and the HGMP Board but the project ground to a halt when partially completed because of lack of finance.

To celebrate 25 years of F&B on the North Shore, an appeal to members was launched to raise the necessary \$5,000 which, with subsidies, completed the house. Comfortable accommodation is now provided for 18 people.



^{1.} Project Employment Programme: a Department of Labour scheme giving subsidised work in the public sector to job seekers at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

Gordon remembered being given an envelope by an F&B member at the branch's 25th anniversary party that he subsequently discovered was a cheque for \$2,000 intended for Tiri. The donor was Eleanor Marwick who made at least one other donation of this size towards work on Tiri. Some of this money went towards the purchase of a 4WD vehicle for the island. In the 1980s, \$2,000 was a lot of money. Eleanor deserves recognition for her generosity which made a significant contribution to the restoration of the island.

Eric Geddes, Ralph Silvester and other men from the branch spent many weeks adding the toilet and shower room, moving the back door, covering the veranda, and upgrading the water supply. The bedrooms of the old house were converted into bunk rooms. All the materials were funded by the branch. The association with Tiri, and the contribution made by the branch and its members to the success of the project, remain among the proudest achievements of our branch.

Gordon Ell, a publisher, photographer and author of a wide range of books on NZ's natural and historic heritage, had instigated the branch newsletter that eventually became Habitat. As mentioned earlier, there is no record of what this first newsletter was called or when the name Habitat appeared. Suffice to say that Gordon was the founder and first editor of the branch newsletter, a publication that endures to the present. He went on to become editor of the national magazine as well. To reduce internal costs, F&B had contracted Gordon's nature publishing business, The Bush Press, to publish the national magazine from February 1998. He was editor, under this contract, until February 2005.

Louise Stevens had re-joined the committee in 1981 after a period out of Auckland. She was working on the newsletter, and found a printer in Highbury who would print it at a discounted price in return for including his company's details at the end of the document. This made a big difference to the quality of the publication, enabling photographs and other illustrations to be included.

Sometime before 1981, Auckland regional meetings began, following an initiative from Gordon. Louise recalled the motive being the realisation that many issues were common to the whole of Auckland and yet there was no communication between branches in the area. We can be certain that the date was pre-1981 as that was when West Auckland became a full branch, and Louise remembered that they were only a section when the first regional meetings were held. The first such meeting was held in the Girl Guide Hall in Takapuna. An early result was the redefinition of branch boundaries which had, through circumstance, become illogical. For example, the North Shore boundary included Helensville and part of the Waitakere Ranges! Regional meetings have continued until the present. They have done a lot to get people together and align objectives. Another important achievement was the opening of the first regional office outside Wellington, as a result of pressure from the combined Auckland branches.

Gordon stepped down as branch chairman in 1981, owing to the pressure of other commitments. He was on the F&B Executive from 1983, represented F&B nationally to advocate for a national park for kauri in Northland, and was involved with the protection of the gannet colony at Muriwai. He was succeeded by Owen Raskin, who had already served on the committee from the branch's inception as both secretary and treasurer. Gordon retained his seat on the branch committee after stepping down as chair. Owen served for two years until Gordon was re-elected in 1983. There was a spell during Owen's chairmanship, from May until December 1982, when Brian Hurst was chairman (Gordon Ell vice-chairman) but there is no record of why this took place.

Gordon's second term as chairman was from 1983 to 1984 but he was elected vice-president of the Society in 1984 and had to relinquish the chairmanship for a second time. One significant achievement for Gordon was the building of fences at Muriwai, to keep the public and dogs away from the gannets that had started nesting on the mainland in 1979. Gordon and Louise met the council's park representative on site to discuss the problem. In 1981, two fences were erected on the landward side of the northern and southern cliff platforms. By 1985, the original fenced area was insufficient to contain the burgeoning gannet population and a new area to the north was identified. North Shore branch contributed the first \$2000 towards the work, drawing on funds left for conservation by Mrs DM Fenwick. The Auckland Regional Authority provided the public amenities. The fences remained in place until 1996/1997 when the large size of the colonies made them less vulnerable to predation and disturbance. Upgraded tracks, signage and viewing platforms were installed. The Muriwai gannets are today one of Auckland's major wildlife attractions. It is a shame that F&B's contribution to this attraction is not acknowledged on the signs at the colony.

Gordon was elected president of the Society in June 1990, after serving six years as vice-president. In the 1970s, he had represented the Society as a statutory member of the Waipoua Forest Sanctuary Committee and also of the Northland Forest Park Committee (part of the old NZ Forest Service). He was also an appointed public member of the Northland National Parks Board advising the Department of Lands and Survey about the region from Auckland north. When the conservation interests of these government departments were merged into the new Department of Conservation (DoC), he became the Society's representative on the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA), the statutory body which has the job of investigating and recommending natural areas for protection to DoC. He assumed this role in 1990, when he became president.

Although he stood down as president at the June 1994 AGM in Wellington, Gordon continued to represent the Society on the NZCA, where he was lobbying for a kauri national park in Northland, until 2000. He was editor of the F&B magazine from 1998 - 2005.

In August 1996, he wrote a piece entitled *What happened to the Kauri National Park?* In it he described 100 years of advocacy for the remnant kauri forests of Northland. F&B had helped draft the proposal to create a new national park in the 1980s but the project was stalled over Treaty of Waitangi claims. At the time of Gordon's article, the NZCA had just issued a report recognising several of the Northland forests as being of national importance. It stopped short of recommending that government confer national park status immediately but it was an important step. As of June 2012, the discussion was ongoing but the areas under consideration have shrunk to include only Waipoua, Trounson and some smaller adjacent scenic reserves. However, it seems treaty settlements have been completed in this area and the national park may not be far away.

Gordon was made a Distinguished Life Member of the Society in 1998 and was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2000 for services to journalism and conservation.



1985-1988 AND THE BIRTH OF THE KIWI CONSERVATION CLUB

By 1985 we know that the branch newsletter was called *Habitat* and that the editor was Louise Stevens. We have no official record of who succeeded Gordon Ell as chairman in 1984, although the August issue of the national magazine records Margaret Collings as chair at that time. Margaret was interviewed by Alan Emmerson in September 2011. She assured him that she had never been branch chair. Her recollection was that Trevor Sampson had succeeded Gordon. Trevor Sampson was definitely chairman from May until December 1985 and it is indeed possible that he took over from Gordon in 1984 as he had served as secretary since 1983 and was listed as councillor in August 1984. The only anecdote that could be found concerning Trevor came from Louise. A fire at ICI in Auckland brought the potential dangers of chemical storage to attention when, in the course of fighting the fire, many were washed into waterways. Trevor had been a fire fighter and took part in discussions looking for ways to minimise this risk in future.

Margaret Collings became committee secretary under Bill Sievwright, a separate function to branch secretary at the time, and continued in this role until becoming branch secretary in 1986 when Dr Joan Suckling became the first woman to chair the branch. Margaret was able to shed more light on Bill Sievwright, who she described as a very public-spirited man. He was active in areas outside of F&B, notably assisting poor children in Northcote with reading difficulties. He recruited volunteer teachers to do this and one of these recruits was Muriel Fanselow. Muriel has been a stalwart of the branch since 1986. Margaret recalled Johnny Johnstone (chair 1975-78), a man she described as "a bit of a character".

She also remembered Steuart Russell, a long-serving member of the branch. Although Steuart seems not to have served on the committee at any time, he was a significant member and donor to conservation causes. Margaret recalled that Steuart was the first man to ride over the new Greenhithe Bridge. He did this on his bicycle before any cars had gone across and he was sporting an F&B sticker on his rucksack at the time. A photo of him appeared in the NSTA to mark the event. Wikipedia only says the original bridge was built in the 1970s, so an exact date for this is unavailable. Steuart also made a donation to the branch to allow them to set up an annual prize, known as the Steuart Russell Young Conservator Award, to encourage young people to take an active interest in conservation. Unfortunately, this award is no longer extant and there is no record of any of the winners, although Louise remembers two winners receiving their prize.

Steuart was honoured for his contribution to conservation by the naming of a QE II bush reserve after him. The Steuart Russell Awakino Beech Reserve was opened and named in February 1990, not long after he died, aged 87, in November 1989. The knowledge that the Trust's new reserve was to be named after him, as a tribute to his fight to save the beauty and character of NZ, gave him tremendous pleasure. This was particularly so as he had no children to continue his name. He had been a generous supporter of Greenpeace, Men of

Trees (England) and the NZ Native Forest Restoration Trust, as well as F&B. At the opening ceremony, a plaque was unveiled and his ashes scattered around a totara planted in his honour near the entrance to the reserve.

In 1986, with Joan Suckling as chair, Louise Stevens organised a picnic at the newly opened Pumphouse in Takapuna to celebrate the branch's 25th anniversary. This celebration marked 25 years from the original setting up of the North Shore section under Hugh Satchell in 1961. The occasion doubled as a fundraiser for Tiri and was a success. Other celebrations included a week-long conservation display at the Glenfield Mall, where a number of groups set up exhibits and the Council provided a large glass-topped table display featuring poisonous and noxious weeds. Daily lectures on conservation topics, such as composting and weed control, were given. Life-sized bird costumes were borrowed and members wandered the mall dressed as native birds. The symbol of the branch at this time was the tieke/saddleback and there was a display dedicated to this endangered species.

About this time Eric Geddes built display panels to be used for promoting the Society. In time these were superseded by the purchased panels that are still in use today. An environment grant for \$600 was secured to cover the cost of these items.

Joan Suckling served as Chair from February 1986 until Ron Clark took over in November 1987. Several older members who were interviewed remembered the same dramatic event that occurred on a branch outing to Tiri, sometime before Joan became branch chair. Joan Drummond had suffered a fall. Dr Suckling attended her and discovered she had broken her ankle. The injured party was airlifted to Auckland Hospital by helicopter. Ron Clark served for less than a year and was succeeded by John Cuthbert in August 1988. Ron and his wife Muriel were the first coordinators of *Habitat* distribution, a job that passed to the Nancekevilles in the days when *Habitat* was distributed by hand.

One of Gordon Ell's most significant contributions to F&B was the plan he submitted to Council in 1988 for the formation of a junior chapter, the Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC). This occurred when Gordon was vice-president of the Society and Ron Clark was chairman of the branch. The plan was taken up and a young Australian woman, Andrea Lomdahl, was hired to bring the idea to fruition. Andrea toured the country speaking to branches and explaining the idea while encouraging members to step forward and start their own KCC groups. On the Shore, three recently retired primary school teachers accepted the challenge. Muriel Fanselow, Dorothy Wernham and Rona Wark set about establishing the North Shore KCC and stayed with it for more than ten years. Rona remembered a meeting at her house with Louise Stevens, Christine Ball and the others to discuss what could be done on the Shore for KCC. As teachers, the women had excellent rapport with both young children and parents, they knew the types of activities that appealed to young children, had good organisational skills and, most importantly, were committed to conservation. A report to the national council meeting in 1988 states that these three women visited all 68 schools on the North Shore to introduce the club to the children of the Shore. What an awesome achievement!



MURIEL FANSELOW AND CHRIS BALL

AT THE FIRST PLANTING OF THE MILLENNIUM FOREST



MURIEL FANSELOW, CHRISTINE BALL AND DOROTHY WERNHAM

KCC CO-ORDINATORS

In 1998 the May issue of F&B's magazine celebrated the tenth anniversary of KCC with a selection of reports from around the country. Christine Ball wrote of the North Shore Branch:



Our KCC presently has seven co-ordinators, including the original three, and all have teaching backgrounds. One of the secrets of our success has been sharing the load. Besides the roles of treasurer, newsletter editor and organising the telephone tree, each co-ordinator takes responsibility for one of the monthly trips.

Every year, in late summer, about 100 adults and children come to our family camp. Sometimes at the beach, sometimes in the bush, these are always a great success and let us get to know our member families. Co-ordinators take turns to be camp organiser. We explore the local area, learn about the ecology, swim, kayak, slide down flying foxes and have a wonderful time.

Summer day trips explore the natural world around Auckland and the islands of the Hauraki Gulf. We have adopted a local reserve where we have planted trees and now we return to weed and mulch them. In winter we have indoor activities with lively speakers, keen to share their conservation passion with the children



Christine continued the story in an article (abridged) written in 2011:



Our branch has always been very supportive, by funding our newsletter, and having it hand delivered along with Habitat, by a small army of volunteers. The branch has also always paid for the coordinators to attend the annual national training which is held in different parts of the country each year. Their reward is our large membership, which averages 250 to 300. Through the children we educate the parents about F&B, and get some of them involved.



Over the years summer camps were held at Piha, Motutapu Island, Snell's Beach, Mangawhai Heads, Henderson Valley, MERC (Marine Education and Resource Centre) at Long Bay and Hunua West Regional Park. Day trips attracted 30 to 50 people and included a wide variety of activities from sailing to Motutapu on the Te Aroha to visiting bird rescue "hospitals, local reserves and bird sanctuaries. Co-ordinators came and went as their children moved into and out of the club. Brian Gannon, Chris Curtis, Janet Hird, Rhonda Woodriffe, Ute Friedrich, Jocelyn Sanders and Margi Keys all gave their time as coordinators. Brian was also the editor of the newsletter and his business printed the KCC newsletter for at least ten years.

In June 2008 Muriel, Rona and Dorothy were awarded Old Blues in recognition of their years of service to KCC. This is the highest accolade awarded for service at branch level. The awards were presented to Muriel and Dorothy at the AGM in Wellington. Unfortunately Rona took ill and was unable to attend, much to her disappointment. All three attended F&B's 90th birthday celebrations in 2013.

Christine retired from active service in February 2014, after 25 years. An article about her involvement was published in Habitat in August the same year in which Muriel Fisher (now 88) said Christine was ideally suited to be a KCC coordinator, with her good organisational skills and her infectious enthusiasm for the outdoors. Christine's husband, Chris, supported her on trips and camps, so KCC was a truly family affair.

Thanks to Christine's initiative, enthusiasm and passion our KCC team was given a Civic Award by the North Shore City Council in 2010.

Today, KCC is as strong as ever. Competition for children's time means trips with a few families, rather than dozens. After Margi Keys departed for Whanganui in 2015, Marilyn Gulliver and Ann Brabant worked with Mandy Herrick, Jonathan Wood and Christine Thomson, so local children and their parents could continue to learn about conservation and NZ's natural heritage.

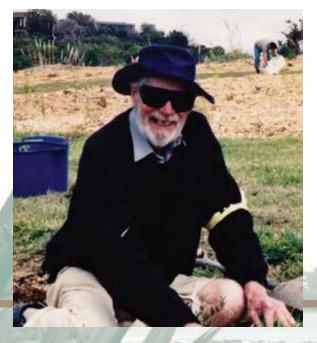


KCC CHILDREN THROWING SEED BALLS AT TUFF CRATER 2013



JOHN CUTHBERT TAKES THE BRANCH INTO THE 90S

John and Betty Cuthbert were already members of F&B when they moved from Whakatane to the Shore in in 1983. John had served in the NZ Navy during the war and was an officer. Both he and Betty were keen sailors; their move to the Shore after John's retirement was, in part, motivated by the desire to do more sailing. Betty recalled the many F&B trips they did with Mike and Dee Pigneguy on their boat Te Aroha. These included a weed-busting trip to Brown's Island (Motukorea) and a planting trip to Mahurangi when members were ferried across the harbour from west to east. Another trip to Little Barrier/Hauturu from Sandspit resulted in lots of members being seasick. John rowed members ashore in a dinghy and they spent the night in the bunkhouse. A newsletter from 1988 records John leading a working bee in Centennial Park (two men, 13 women!) in March of that year. It noted that the branch had worked in the park for some years; in fact Centennial Park had been the location of the first ever working bee held by the branch.



JOHN CUTHBERT A FORMER CHAIR OF THE BRANCH AT THE FIRST MILLENNIUM FOREST PLANTING IN 1999

John was one of the longest-serving chairmen of the branch. He is first recorded as chairman in the August 1988 issue of the F&B magazine and last appears in the November 1993 issue, although the next available issue in our archive is not until August 1994, when Jim Lewis was chair. John certainly led the branch into a sixth year and as such he ranks alongside Bill Sievwright for tenure. In a way, John ushered the branch from the early years into the current period, with many of his committee still active members today. Muriel Fanselow, Dorothy Wernham and Rona Wark all served on his committee, as did Claire and Louise Stevens. John retired as chair, due to illness, and is no longer with us. His legacy is best summed up by the achievements of the branch during his term in charge. First

and foremost is the establishment of KCC from 1988 onwards. Muriel Fanselow remembered John as very involved, and a hard taskmaster, spurring his committee to greater efforts at every stage. It was also 1988 (June) that a section was set up on the Hibiscus Coast under the stewardship of North Shore branch. This allowed a keen membership to the north, who had felt isolated and a bit far away, to start their own activities. Hibiscus Coast became a full branch in 1991. In 1992 the North Shore branch had 3000 members and was represented at council with two votes. This equalled 1981 as the highest level of membership the branch has ever had. John was awarded an Old Blue, for his enthusiastic and hard-working chairmanship of the branch, at the June 1995 AGM, held in Porirua.

Claire had been involved in conservation almost all her life and came to the branch following a period serving on the Native Forest Action Council. She joined the branch in 1988, at the time John Cuthbert became chair. In 1993, she was elected to the Executive, where she served until 1998. She also served on the Auckland Conservation Board when it started in November 1990.



CLAIRE STEVENS AND JOCELYN SANDERS

AT FOREST AND BIRD'S 75TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Claire went on to chair the North Shore branch from 2001 until 2004. She recalls an unsuccessful 1991 campaign to save the caves at the southern end of Takapuna Beach. These caves were made famous in the play *End of the Golden Weather* by Bruce Mason. A developer won the battle and North Shore City Council approved the filling of the caves with cement to halt possible ground subsidence.

Jocelyn Sanders, the current branch secretary, took over from Ross Ridings as secretary in 1993. She remembers responding to a request for help in the KCC newsletter, but had to be interviewed by the chairman before being offered the job. Jocelyn holds the record for the longest-serving office holder, a record she deserves to be proud of and for which the branch owes her a huge debt of gratitude. There have been breaks in her service as a result of the demands of work, family and, most recently, a year-long working holiday abroad with her husband, Ivan, in 2012. During her absences, others have filled the post: Lynn Rain in 1997 and again in 1998; Pamela Roberts in 2001/2002; Anne Denny in 2012.



JOCELYN SANDERS OUR LONGEST SERVING AND CURRENT SECRETARY

In April 1993, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) imposed a twoyear ban on shellfish gathering at Cheltenham Beach. The August issue of the F&B magazine told the story of how the branch had contributed to this. In 1985, the cockle (tuanga) beds at Cheltenham were shown to support 100-180 adult tuanga/m². Six years later, MAF reported the density at just 0.3 per square metre. In May 1992 a young science graduate, Mary Gardner, decided to study how the beach would respond to the ban. She sought funding; MAF would not support the work so Mary approached John Cuthbert and was granted \$300 towards expenses. In addition, a dozen volunteers from the branch offered to help with the work. The volunteers were organised by Mary Moscrip, another member who is still active in the branch today. Field equipment was borrowed from the university, and DOC arranged permits to enable the use of Gardner's Gap beach on Motutapu as a comparison study. Sampling began in July 1992. There were early signs of regeneration, with juvenile shellfish found. A local group was formed to police the ban and they were known as the Cheltenham Beach Caretakers. Sampling ceased in 2011, as it became difficult to recruit volunteers, due to continued low numbers of shellfish. It is believed that the failure of the beds to recover, following the cessation of gathering, was the result of other factors – a disappointing outcome.

For many years, the branch had a library which held a large number of books of interest to members, most of which had been donated. Topics included botany, ornithology, entomology and herpetology as well as many natural landscape books. The books were kept in boxes in the cupboards at the hall and brought out and displayed each month. Rona Wark became librarian during John Cuthbert's time as chair, and continued until about 2004. Rona remembered that the library had been in existence for some time before she took over, but could not recall who had preceded her or when it had started. When the service was discontinued, the committee decided to donate the books to Awataha Marae, and for a few years afterwards there were further book donations to the marae to augment the collection.



JIM LEWIS AND THE YEARS 1994-1998

Jim Lewis joined the branch in the mid-1980s and immediately put his geography and social science knowledge to good use within the committee, to enhance the structure and assist in building the branch into a well-known entity on the Shore. The minutes of the committee meeting held in April 1994 record Jim agreeing to assume the position of chairman and also that, as he was about to depart for an extended trip overseas, Claire Stevens would stand in for him during his absence. This was Claire's first stint as chair, a position she was to hold again for a more extended period a few years later. On Jim's return from overseas, one of his first projects was the military-style organisation of *Habitat* distribution. He obtained topographic maps, divided the North Shore into distribution areas and, in conjunction with Dorothy Wernham, assigned people to each area. There was an army of distributors. Many of our older members remember with affection the mornings spent sorting and labelling the many hundreds of copies at the home of Eric and Rona Nancekeville.

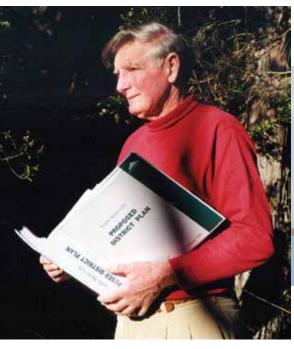
At this time Jim also began his commitment to Resource Management Act (RMA) work and, for the rest of his life, ensured that every application for a Resource Consent that affected the natural order of the North Shore was vigorously debated. Through this work, Jim became highly respected by North Shore City Council planning staff and local politicians. He was often invited to pre-consent application discussions with developers, to ensure the Society was aware of the issues. Some of these meetings resulted in developers changing their stance, and the branch did not then need to make in-depth submissions; some did not. Jim would mount an opposition worthy of any legal firm and present it to the Council in person. Some hearings took weeks. Jim had considerable success in most of the cases he tackled, reducing the number of homes built on a given site, saving a particular area of natural vegetation or seeing that stormwater was dealt with in a way that would not cause further damage to the local streams. His volunteer work for the branch in the Resource Consent area, often took 40 hours a week. The work he did opposing the Long Bay development dragged on for almost a decade. In addition, Jim attended Parks and Reserves meetings to discuss management plans and took the time to assist groups of neighbours in different suburbs to make their own Resource Consent applications in relation to proposed subdivisions in their own neighbourhoods.

Jim was influential in other areas during his chairmanship. He liaised with the Keep Okura Green group who were particularly active in opposing the developments at Long Bay. Under his leadership, the branch grew in stature and influence on the Shore.

Mel Galbraith was a teacher and North Shore member in 1997, when he became a recipient of a J.S. Watson Trust conservation grant (along with three others) to study kereru in urban Auckland. The grants were allocated by F&B head office and the project lasted five years. In 1998, Mel was one of only 14 New Zealanders to be granted a Science and Technology Fellowship by the Royal

Society. This grant was for a project looking at management strategies for local reserves, with a view to increasing the natural life in urban settings. The University of Auckland's School of Environmental Sciences hosted the research which was supported by the branch. These projects brought recognition for our branch in the Auckland area.

JIM LEWIS
FORMER CHAIR OF
THE BRANCH
AND RMA CHAMPION



It wasn't until 2001 that Jim was recognised for his efforts when he was honoured in the biennial environment awards of the ARC. The judges acknowledged the many hours he had spent over the preceding seven years providing an environmental voice on subdivision developments on the Shore.

During Jim's term, Forest & Bird celebrated its 75th anniversary. Our branch acknowledged this event in style at a function in Takapuna. He stepped down in 1998 ahead of an extended trip overseas and was succeeded by Dee Pigneguy, whose honour it was to lead the branch into the 21st century.



F&B 75 YEAR CELEBRATION 1995

MARY MOSCRIP, UNKNOWN, GORDON ELL, RALPH SILVESTER, MURIEL CLARK, BETTY DAVIDSON, LOUISE STEVENS, MARGARET COLLINGS, BARBARA LEIGH, ERIC AND RONA NANCEKIVELL, GARTH GREIG



INTO THE 21ST CENTURY, THE MILLENNIUM FOREST AND THE RESTORATION OF TUFF CRATER

Dee Pigneguy had been a member of the Auckland branch prior to joining the North Shore one. When the position of chair became vacant in 1998, following Jim Lewis' departure abroad, Dee stepped into the job and served until 2001. Dee and her husband Mike owned the charter boat Te Aroha and, under the name of the Adventure Cruising Company Ltd, arranged nature-based trips to different destinations in the Hauraki Gulf. Many Auckland region branches had trips out on the Te Aroha during the time that Mike and Dee owned the vessel, and those trips have been the highlight of many people's memories from those years.





During her chairmanship, Dee became the first to tackle the issue of feral cats and wrote several articles on the subject for the NSTA. This caused outrage from fanatical cat lovers who were feeding the animals on a regular basis. The debate went on but no resolution was found. The problems continue to this day.

In 1999, the branch decided to mark the coming new millennium with a flagship project. As the branch did not own land on the Shore, a site was required. Tuff Crater Reserve in Northcote became that site and the project would be called the Millennium Forest.



TE AROHA

OWNED BY MIKE AND DEE PIGNEGUY AND THE CONVEYOR OF MANY CONSERVATION BASED TRIPS IN THE WAITEMATA HARBOUR AND PLACES NORTH

Anne Rimmer, long-time member, former committee member and author, continues the story:

66

The planting of the Millennium Forest, at a site alongside the motorway just north of the Auckland Harbour Bridge, was a very successful public event. The on-going maintenance of this project, along with the restoration of the adjacent Tuff Crater/Te Kopua o Matakamokamo, remains a major focus for the North Shore branch of F&B.

It naturally seemed appropriate for F&B to mark the arrival of the new millennium by creating something that would still be there at the end of the coming century and beyond.

The idea of planting a forest stemmed from my long-held wish for increased plantings of native trees alongside motorways, in an attempt to bring native birds into the city. At that time, motorways generally had grass verges; the native trees planted alongside the Albany to Puhoi motorway and beside spaghetti junction in central Auckland came later. This idea of creating green corridors is now widely endorsed; it is known as the North-West Wild Link.

Members of the 1999 F&B committee approved my idea and we began our search for a suitable site. Initially I focused on the high ridge that is bisected by the motorway just north of Greville Rd. This was a barren, treeless feature which is visible for many kilometres. I reasoned that if birds could be tempted to fly to this ridge, they would then see the expanse of the lakes at the Rosedale waste water treatment plant, and

continue south into the North Shore suburbs. The site had steep sides sloping down to the new motorway but otherwise seemed ideal, and it was extremely visible.

NZ Transport Authority (NZTA) seemed to be in favour of our plans, and offered all sorts of help, sending me to meet with the environmentalists at Beca Carter (a company that specialises in major construction projects, e.g. Sky Tower). But as the weeks passed, one man in the chain of command continually blocked me. I finally decided to look elsewhere, even though time was now tight. In mid-2000 I had a phone call from a top executive in NZTA who asked for clarification of what had happened. When I explained the train of events, he expressed deep regret that we had been prevented from planting at our preferred northern site. I would still like to see trees planted on this ridge.

Fortunately, North Shore City Council (NSCC) came to our aid. The Council had been planning to plant trees on a slope above Tuff Crater which looked south over the motorway to the city. It is below The Warehouse building. Finance was in place, the plants had been ordered, and a planting plan, designed by Heather Ann McConnachie, had been drawn up. Now, instead of the Council employing professional planters, F&B undertook to organise a public planting day in the winter of 1999. Funding and assistance came from F&B, North Shore City Council and The Warehouse.

Billing it as 'The Millennium Forest: 2000 trees for the year 2000', we got brilliant publicity from the media. We painted a huge (very amateur-looking) banner saying something like 'TREE PLANTING HERE, SATURDAY' and put it on the bare slope above the motorway. We were at pains to describe the location in terms of natural features so our press releases said 'beside Tuff Crater' rather than 'below The Warehouse' or 'beside the motorway'.

The F&B committee, along with the other sponsors, organised for marquees to be erected on The Warehouse's parking lot, borrowed heaps of spades, and got donations of spot prizes. Tea and refreshments, including a sausage sizzle, were provided by NSCC, as were a van load of huge activity toys usually used for the annual Summer in the Park events. The Warehouse, backing the project enthusiastically, allowed us to access the site through their land and gave us the use of their parking lot. The Warehouse's Kiwi and Pencil costumes were lent to us and we got kakapo, takahe and tui costumes from F&B Head Office. I roped my theatrical friends in to don the costumes. They had a ball.

Heather Ann laid the plants out on the site the day before, according to her artistic plan, which swirls across the slope. A pair of NZ dotterel had territory somewhere nearby and monitored our activities anxiously. It was to protect these birds that later artificial shell mounds were made at Shoal Bay, before land for the North Shore busway was reclaimed on the mudflats.

On planting day the weather gods smiled on us, and soon people were flocking in. It's a good thing we were well organised, with plenty of labourers present, because the response from the public, especially families, was phenomenal. Apparently the radio stations were urging people to go, and people driving past, attracted by the crowds on that very visible site, simply turned off the motorway on impulse and joined us.

Everything went so well that by the end of the day we had planted not 2000 trees for the year 2000, but 3000!

I was so busy that I didn't manage to plant a tree! One funny memory from late in the day is of The Warehouse Kiwi coming up and hugging me. I pulled back, affronted, having completely forgotten that inside the suit was my teenage daughter, Alix.

Very little went wrong, though the huge turn-out meant we had to modify some of our plans on the fly. We should have shown everyone how to plant a tree, and our spot prizes didn't work. We'd hidden numbered tokens in some of the planter bags but some people didn't know what they were. I think there may have been some language problems as I remember being struck by the large number of immigrant families in the crowd.

As I drive past on my way home from the city, I monitor the growth of the trees, and send them warm thoughts. I am very proud that F&B organised such a successful event and created a forest which will continue to enrich people's lives forever.



ANNE RIMMER

A FORMER DEPUTY CHAIR
OF THE BRANCH AND
THE ORGANISER OF
THE MILLENNIUM
FOREST PLANTING



One member with a long association with Tuff Crater is Anne Denny. Anne has been a member of F&B for longer than she can remember. Her parents were members before her. She remembers the first planting day and has worked at the reserve ever since. She recalled when Neil Sutherland would hold working bees on summer evenings after work and she joined the committee in 2004 when Neil was chairman. When she retired from teaching in 2010, she started her own working party and they would meet one morning a week for weed busting and other less glamorous duties.



ANNE DENNY AND SHERYL CORBETT AT TUFF CRATER

In 2001, Dee Pigneguy was succeeded as chair by Claire Stevens. Claire had been a member of the branch since 1988 and had served on the Executive from 1993 until 1998. Thus she brought a wealth of experience and institutional knowledge to the role of chair. Indeed, just prior to assuming chair duties, at the annual council dinner in Wellington in 2000, she had been awarded an Old Blue "for her sustained work for conservation, including involvement in the great forest conservation battles in both North and South Islands, serving on the national executive of the Society, and locally with projects such as the restoration of Tiritiri Matangi". Thus she had been awarded the highest honour the Society bestows for local service before she became chair of our branch.

Claire was succeeded by Neil Sutherland in 2004, although she continued to serve on the committee. Neil had joined the committee in 2000 after returning from a trip overseas. Hi partner, Sheryl Corbett, had been on the committee since 1992, and had been an active contributor since that time. From the outset, she had taken responsibility for organising speakers and trips. She organised themes that linked trips to the topic of the meetings. For instance, a talk by Dene Andre (South Auckland) and his associate, both fresh-water fish specialists, was followed by an evening trip to Little Shoal Bay/Le Roys Bush in Northcote where, with red cellophane on their torches, members lay on a bridge and observed inanga and banded kokupu. Excursions such as these brought out both adults and children. Sheryl also began to seek out professional speakers for the monthly meetings, following a period during which speakers had chatted informally on topics such as holidays abroad. She would invite speakers who

were experts in their field, usually from an academic background. This raised awareness in the membership and increased their knowledge of ecological issues. Sheryl also promoted a greater focus on local reserves, increasing members' knowledge.

Sheryl was the first to advertise branch activities, after discovering the What's On column in the NZ Herald. Her submission of branch meeting and trip dates to the paper increased numbers attending to such an extent that on occasion the hall would be packed, not only with North Shore branch members, but also members of the public and visitors from other branches. She stepped down from the committee ahead of her trip abroad with Neil and, while she did not rejoin the committee, she continued her duties as organiser of speakers upon her return until Karen Wealleans took over in May 2005. The North Shore branch compares favourably with branches throughout the country, with regard to attendances, normally attracting 50 but often up to 100. This has been in no small part due to the quality of speakers lined up year after year by Karen, who finally stepped down at the end of 2013 after nine years' service in this role. This important role is currently filled by Liz Anstey, another long-serving committee member.

Neil took over from Sheryl on the committee. He had been working with the Little Shoal Bay/Le Roys Bush management committee for some time and, while researching F&B's involvement in the purchase of the bush, had discovered an inventory of all the plants growing there in the early 1900s. The inventory had been compiled by Mr Le Roy, after whom the bush was named, and had lain undetected in council archives until Neil happened upon it. This was unique information, invaluable to those restoring the bush. Neil and Sheryl were responsible for a weeding and planting programme which enhanced the Little Shoal Bay area. They did a neighbourhood letterbox drop to muster support; Sheryl provided morning tea with home baking for all the volunteers.

In 2004, as chairman, Neil tackled the issue of feral cats, this time specifically the cats at Highbury shops and the adjacent reserve. He had been approached by a shop owner who was concerned about the health and safety implications of approximately 70 cats living in such a small area. Local cat enthusiasts were feeding them in a car park at the rear of the shops close to Le Roys Bush. Neil explained that the branch would campaign for removal of the cats, on the grounds of their impact on native birds and lizards, rather than on the health and safety aspect. Together, he thought they had a compelling case. Armed with research from the University of Auckland he presented to the local community board, accompanied by a university representative. The Board indicated that they were sympathetic to the issues raised and thanked him for his presentation, but subsequently backed down, following strong counter protests from the group feeding the cats. Despite a report that the cats did constitute a health hazard from the Council's health spokesperson, the branch was asked to negotiate with the cat lobby under the supervision of a paid arbiter. This proved fruitless. Neil was even a guest on Radio NZ National, along with a cat lover to debate the issue, but no progress was made. For a second time, the branch was unable to do anything about feral cats on the Shore.

Neil believed in valuing all members, not only those who contributed positively through service on the committee or stepped forward for working bees. He assured passive members that their membership alone went a long way to achieving the goals of the Society. He also worked hard to recruit younger members and successfully brought two onto the committee. Of these, Victor Meyer became Habitat editor for more than five years, continuing in the role

even after he left the Shore to live on the Hibiscus Coast. When interviewed, Neil also paid tribute to Jim Lewis, and the contribution Jim had made to the branch during Neil's term as chairman. He commented on the meticulous preparation Jim made for each campaign he was involved in, his measured presentation style and unflappability. He also was impressed with Jim's awareness of fresh-water issues and, as a geographer, his defence of general landscape values. In particular, he recalled how Jim always acknowledged the contributions of others, no matter how small.



NEIL SUTHERLAND A FORMER CHAIR OF THE BRANCH AT TUFF CRATER

In 2007, Neil and Sheryl sold their home in Maritime Tce, the home that once belonged to James Prickett and in whose grounds so many native species had been planted. Neil stepped down as chair, and he and Sheryl moved north to Leigh. There was no one ready to assume the vacant chair's position and so Jim Lewis, then aged in his eighties, agreed to become acting chair with Claire Stevens as acting deputy. This arrangement continued for a full year with Jim showing no letup in his commitment or enthusiasm for the job. At the 2008 AGM, Alan Emmerson was elected. Jim stood down, although he continued to serve on the committee. He was ready to retire but felt compelled to find a replacement to take over the RMA role before he could do so. Peter Hassell had spent 20 years working as a lawyer, had experience in local government and had also spent time in Wellington in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet where he served as an adviser. Jim was impressed with these credentials and Peter assumed the RMA role with Jim mentoring him in the early stages. Peter is still serving the branch in this capacity. In 2009, Jim retired from the committee to look after his wife, Ruth, who was ill. He had given 25 years to the branch he loved, and was admired by all who knew him.

Alan Emmerson moved to the Shore in 2002, after spending 32 years overseas, mainly working in the oil exploration business. Originally from Hamilton, he had been a member of the Society since 1985. After two years attending branch



JIM AND RUTH LEWIS
WHO PROVIDED THE FUNDING TO ALLOW
THIS HISTORY TO BE WRITTEN

meetings, he was invited onto the committee by Sheryl Corbett, who persuaded him to do this while they were planting trees on Motuora. Alan brought a love of natural history with him, particularly his knowledge of birds and an interest in moths. In 2004, Oliver Saint, who had been selling calendars and diaries to raise funds for the branch since 1997, announced he was retiring and a replacement was required. Jim Lewis agreed to take on the job with Alan as deputy, and in 2005 Alan assumed full responsibility for the job. He developed his own strategies for the task and built a customer base of over 800 from a starting number of 186. In 2012, over 700 calendars and 160 diaries were sold. There were nearly 300 separate transactions, a turnover of \$15,000 and a profit of \$4,000 for the branch. From 2009, Margaret Breakspear had become a regular assistant with calendar sales and took increasing responsibility until 2013 when Elaine Conway took over the job. Elaine assumed full control in her first year and Alan's nine-year association with this task ended.

Alan had always enjoyed long-time member Linda Underhill's short presentation at branch meetings where she discussed a native plant that she had brought. Linda had ceased doing this so Alan, when chair, recruited Margi Keys to resume the practice and expanded it to include a weed and, his own speciality, a moth. The Good, The Bad & The Beautiful (the native plant, the weed and the moth) has been a regular feature of branch meetings ever since, with no shortage of natives, weeds or moths in sight. While the weed is on its own, where possible the moth and the native plant are linked by the former relying on the latter as its host.

Alan recruited two new committee members who were to play important roles going forward. Sarah Noble, a lively young Englishwoman became the branch's first ever dedicated fundraiser. The growing demand for funds to sustain the Tuff Crater restoration meant someone was required to make applications to the various providers of environmental support. Within a year of accepting this challenge, Sarah had brought in over \$35,000. Margi Keys came on to the committee as Habitat Editor in 2011, taking over from Victor Meyer and bringing

a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the role. Habitat was transformed under her guidance, in part as a result of Philip Moll's outstanding photography. In 2004 she had launched the *Bush Walk & Talk* program and over 11 years led 523 guided walks, introducing hundreds of residents to North Shore bush reserves and to Forest & Bird. In 2006 she became involved with KCC leading several successful camps including three in Tongariro National Park. In 2007, during Neil Sutherland's chairmanship, Margi began leading trips for the branch utilising her skills as a teacher, amateur botanist and general entertainer in bush walks around Auckland and beyond. Of the 12 she organised, the overnight trip in February 2014 to the Kaipara Harbour in search of Australian pelicans, was her personal highlight.

Another feature of Alan's term as chairman was the promotion of awareness of the threats posed by climate change as a result of global warming. He had been trained to deliver a slide show based on United States author and former vice-president Al Gore's award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, one of only two New Zealanders and over 200 Australians to convey this message to the general public. Alan delivered this presentation to over 40 audiences in the North Island; he was interviewed on television by Bomber Bradbury and debated the issue with Brian Leyland, the noted sceptic, on Radio Live. The branch also organised a private showing of *An Inconvenient Truth* at a Takapuna cinema with two theatres sold out.



ALAN EMMERSON WITH MOTH OF THE MONTH

At the suggestion of National Office, Alan organised meet-the-candidates evenings ahead of general elections in 2008 and 2011. These were delivered to a packed hall on both occasions. Expertly chaired by Claire Stevens, the branch has heard robust debate from leading politicians of all the main parties. Also during Alan's term, at the suggestion of Richard Hursthouse, branch outings were re-instated and have been very successful with trips or events every month. Richard also proposed that the branch draft its own strategic plan as a complement to the general strategic plan developed for the Society as a whole.

North Shore was the first branch to do this; it has generated interest in other branches that are planning to follow suit.

Alan, wisely, had a succession plan in place so that when he stood down Richard Hursthouse was ready to take over. Richard, a general practitioner, had for years led restoration projects on the North Shore, firstly at Campbells Bay School and then in Centennial Park. In 2009, not long after joining the committee, Richard proposed restoring the entire Tuff Crater Reserve, an escalation of the original plan that had never previously been considered. The original Millennium Forest/Tuff Crater project had concentrated only on the land bordering the motorway below The Warehouse offices.





Richard brought a new level of vision, commitment and leadership to the role and he galvanised the membership to support the wider goals for Tuff Crater. In 2011 Richard succeeded Alan as Chairman bringing the same energy and vision to the Chairman's role. He drove the design of a web page for the branch, and raised the profile of F&B on the Shore through passionate advocacy, making regular submissions on council plans and presentations to local boards. Richard's belief in the critical importance of retaining the small amount of remaining public green space on the North Shore has seen him lead branch campaigns to save areas of North Shore bush from developers and to protect endangered wildlife from unleashed dogs and poorly planned cycle paths. He has re-established regular meetings of the greater Auckland F&B Chairs to strengthen communication between branches which will in turn increase the lobbying power of F&B in the greater Auckland area.

Richard's contribution has been recognised officially on a number of occasions:

- He received a North Shore City Council Civic Award in 2008 for voluntary service to the community. The award cited his contributions to Campbells Bay Primary School (the community forest project), and the restoration of Centennial Park and Tuff Crater.
- In 2012 he was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship by North Harbour Rotary for "extraordinary endeavour towards preserving planet Earth", the award citing his membership of Auckland Botanical Society, his chairmanship of F&B (North Shore), his leadership of the Centennial Park Bush Society since 2003 and his leadership in the creation of the Campbells Bay Community Forest.
- In June 2011 the Tuff Crater project was awarded the F&B Golden Spade Award. The award is made annually to the restoration project that has made the greatest progress towards achieving its initial goals. When accepting the award in Wellington with Anne Denny and Claire Stevens, Richard paid special tribute to Anne, a long-serving branch member who has been involved in the Tuff Crater project from the start. When Anne retired in 2010 she began leading a regular Thursday morning Tuff Crater work group carrying out weeding, planting and releasing small plants from grass and weeds. This group has contributed significantly to the restoration project over the last five years.

At the time of writing, the North Shore branch is in good health. It is the third largest branch in the country, with approximately 1500 members and 400 KCC members. It is 45 years since the branch was officially recognised, 54 years since the unofficial recognition of the section and 50 years since the official recognition of the section. In that time, the branch can boast seven Old Blues, two Distinguished Life Memberships and it has provided one National President. Looking ahead, members can be confident that the next 50 years will continue to see our branch doing its bit to give nature a voice.



VOLUNTEER PLANTING DAY

TUFF CRATER, MAY 2015





BRANCH CHAIRS

CW (BILL) SIEVWRIGHT 1969 – 1975

(Executive Member 1972)

JOHNNY JOHNSTONE 1975 – 1978

GORDON ELL 1978 – 1981

OWEN RASKIN 1981 – 1983

BRIAN HURST MAY – DEC 1982

GORDON ELL FEB 1983 – 1984

(President of the Society 1990 –1993)

MARGARET COLLINGS 1984 – 1985

TREVOR SAMPSON MAY – DEC 1985

JOAN SUCKLING 1986 – 1987

NONE 1987 – 1988

JOHN CUTHBERT 1988 – 1994

JIM LEWIS 1994 – 1998

DEE PIGNEGUY 1998 – 2001

CLAIRE STEVENS 2001 – 2004

(Executive Member 1993 -1998)

NEIL SUTHERLAND 2004 – 2007

JIM LEWIS 2007 – 2008

ALAN EMMERSON 2008 – 2011

RICHARD HURSTHOUSE 2011 –



RECIPIENTS OF OLD BLUE AWARDS

ERIC GEDDES 1991

JOHN CUTHBERT 1995

CLAIRE STEVENS 2000

JIM LEWIS 2006

MURIEL FANSELOW 2008

RONA WARK 2008

DOROTHY WERNHAM 2008



DISTINGUISHED LIFE MEMBERS

GORDON ELL

PROFESSOR JOHN MORTON



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