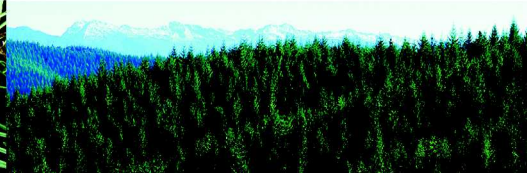


Douglas-fir

Research Cooperative

No. 9, December 2007 **Newsletter**



Loss of Co-op founder and Manager, Leith Knowles

All members will be aware of the fact that our Manager, Leith Knowles, died in Rotorua Hospital on November 19th, just a few days short of his 64th birthday. He had battled cancer, in the form of lymphoma, for a number of years. As with many cancer victims, he had his highs and lows, and we were all fortunate to see him on a real high at the last Co-op meeting in Gore. It was hard to believe that he was even ill, let alone that his chances of survival for more than a few months were very low. It was also fortunate that, after the meeting, he was able to tramp back into one of the favourite hunting and fishing spots of his youth, up the Grebe River in Fiordland. He got a lot of pleasure from that, as the photo on page 2 shows (taken on that tramp).

Leith's passion and enthusiasm for forestry (and life in general), meant that his contribution to our sector was huge. For many of us, the aspect of Leith's research which we admired most, was how he went out of his way to blend the academic with the practical. The D-fir and radiata calculators are excellent examples of that mix – he was

determined to make sure that the summation of all our knowledge was made as readily available as possible to the rank and file. That was probably what inspired him to create the NZ D-fir Research Co-operative back in 1993. Since that time, his managerial enthusiasm has ensured that sixty Co-op reports have been published, covering virtually every aspect of forestry imaginable.

Leith's management style may have been somewhat akin to that of a benevolent dictator, but we all appreciated it. We can say goodbye knowing that the future of D-fir in NZ is bright, thanks largely for having had Leith at the helm.



Photo: Leith Knowles (right) and Co-op Chairman, Phil De La Mare, address members in a production-thinned D-fir stand at Naseby in 2005.

Chairman's comment

Leith's enthusiastic, no-nonsense and hands-on approach meant that industry always had results delivered in abundance, while making sure that it was provided in user-friendly form. We came to expect this, and while his legacy remains, his drive and passion will be sorely missed.

Leith's professional style was inclusive. He always encouraged publication and sharing of results, provided users funded it. This encouraged scientists to contribute and also enabled other related disciplines to be linked in. While he was always up-front, in recent years his acute awareness of his own mortality brought about a keenness and sharpness of focus which meant no time was wasted going off on tangents.

Leith was always proud of his roots, and he was never questioned, when on his many visits to Southland, he would say "I planted those trees", or "I put a trial in that stand". Best of all, we loved hearing him pronounce "Gore" with at least three r's. Leith's prolific output and international connections meant he stocked our cupboards before he left. The Douglas-fir industry can be grateful to Leith for single-handedly re-shaping and re-defining the role of this timber species.

Phil De La Mare

THE JOINT FORCES OF CSIRO & SCION

ensis



CSIRO

SCION

THE JOINT FORCES OF CSIRO & SCION

Co-op life after Leith

Leith's funeral was on Thursday, Nov 22, and the following day we had a meeting (chaired by Phil De La Mare) to try to get a new grip on the managerial reins. Our first job was to sort out responsibilities for continuing administration, before running through all the current research projects (no less than twenty-eight) and making sure all those involved knew what was required and by when. The onus of work completion now rests more squarely on the shoulders of those actually doing the research, as gone are the days when Leith had his finger on every pulse, and frequently stopped by to check on, and assist with, progress.

Much of the managerial and financial responsibility will move to Dr Heidi Dungey, Unit leader of the FRST Alternative Species bid, in Ensis Genetics.



Heidi is a tree breeder with experience in Tasmania, Chile, and Queensland, and has been with Scion for seven years. She has worked primarily on pines and eucalypts, and is very keen to see the Co-op's good work continued – and to make sure it transfers smoothly into the Future Forests Research (FFR) (see box at right).

Left: Leith Knowles relaxing in Fiordland after the last D-fir Co-op meeting in Gore (Feb, 2007). It was his last 'back to my roots' trip; hence his holding both fish and rifle. Needless to say, the fish was caught on a line – Leith was not that good a shot.

Next Co-op meeting

At the last meeting in Gore on February 19-21, Blakely-Pacific offered to host the 2008 meeting in Timaru on Feb 25-27. However, since that time, other factors have had arisen, and changes have to be made. The hosts (Blakely-Pacific) and the location (Timaru) remain the same, but the dates and format have been altered as follows:

- **Dates:** Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday, March 11-13
- **Format:** To be held jointly with the Site Management Co-op. This is to enable members to share the same field-day (focusing on D-fir), and for those who belong to both Co-ops, to save time and 'kill two birds with one stone'.

So, the days will be organised as set out as follows:

Tuesday, March 11.

D-fir Co-op AGM plus Business and Technical sessions

Wednesday, March 12.

Joint D-fir and Site Management Co-op field-day

Thursday, March 13.

Site Management Co-op AGM plus Business and Technical sessions

The venue for the joint Co-op gathering will be the Grosvenor Hotel on Cains Terrace, Timaru. It has good conference facilities, plus 51 rooms for accommodation. We suggest you stay in the hotel, but as in previous years it will be up to individual members to book their own accommodation. Details of the field-day, together with a reminder to register for the meetings and book your accommodation, will be sent out early next year.

The D-fir Co-op and FFR

On 1 October 2007 the D-fir Co-op began to transition into Future Forests Ltd (FFR). This new venture is a partnership between the forestry sector and Scion to organise research in forest growing, harvesting and environmental activities - under four themes:

- Radiata Management.
- Harvesting Logistics.
- Environment and Social.
- Diverse Species.

D-fir will sit as a sub-theme under Diverse Species, and will keep the same technical committee structure and ongoing research programme while new funding bids are prepared.

Patrick Milne has been appointed as interim leader for the Diverse Species theme, and will work closely with the FRST programme manager (Heidi Dungey), to ensure the best science and science delivery.

The D-fir Co-operative grouping of members will remain within the Diverse Species theme, with its own Technical Committee and Phil De La Mare as Chairman. The success of this theme is very dependant on the successful re-bidding to FRST for investment beyond October 2008. The outcome will be known in April 2008. Please take some time to support this bid by participating in the review process (contact Patrick or Heidi), and by continuing your financial support for Douglas-fir research through FFR membership.

**Next Coop meeting in Timaru, 11-13 March 2008
A joint meeting with the Site Management Co-op (see details above) hosted by Blakely Pacific Ltd**

Require further information? Contact the Secretary, Nick.Ledgard@ensisjv.com or call him on (03) 364-2949