



OVERLAND TO NEW ZEALAND

Eric Appleton was born 3 June 1934 – he grew up and was educated in Middlesbrough, in England. Two years of practical forestry work, two years National Service in Germany were followed by two years at Lynford Hall Forester Training School in Thetford, Norfolk where he gained first place, a gold medal and decided to emigrate to New Zealand.



A 197cc James Motorcycle was his chosen form of transport, fitted with aluminium panniers supporting an expandable suitcase. All the necessary documents were obtained and he set off on his epic journey on 10 September 1956, travelling across France, Belgium, Germany and Austria. Arrested and fined in Southern Yugoslavia for camping near a railway line, Eric hurried on to Greece.

East of the Bosphorus the roads were not sealed and an Army escort was provided in Eastern Turkey. A detour over the Elburz Mountains to the broadleaf forests beside the Caspian Sea provided welcome relief from brown semi desert. Close to the Afghan border Eric joined up with a 1935 London taxi with six Aussies and Kiwis returning home and



they travelled together across an arid Afghanistan, through the Khyber Pass to Peshawar in Pakistan. Another detour to the Chamba – Simla area where the scent of Cedrus deodara logs being hand sawn into railway sleepers is memorable.

Photos of the Taj Mahal with not a single tourist, then to Calcutta. Cargo ship to Penang, by road through Malaysia to Singapore, so green, and the first rain for 3 months. A Passenger ship to Fremantle, West Australia, then around the South West Corner to see the Jarrah and Karri forests. The 1,100 miles across the badly corrugated Nullabor Plains almost destroyed the trusty James motorcycle, which sustained two cracked forks and a broken frame, resulting in a nine-day journey to Adelaide where major repairs were carried out. He followed the coast route to Melbourne, around Tasmania and eventually arrived in Sydney where he cooked his



supper and slept beside the Sydney Harbour Bridge built with Middlesbrough steel! A final boat trip across the Tasman Sea to Auckland where Eric arrived 18 February 1957 having covered 15,600 miles by road, and looking forward to a new life in his chosen country, New Zealand.



Work for the Forest Service at Woodhill was followed by 3 years with F.R.I. mostly in the South Island establishing provenance trials and selecting *Pinus radiata*. In 1960 Eric married May Manera and they settled in Wakefield, Eric working for H. Baigent & Sons Ltd., a private Forestry and Sawmilling Company. Doing tree selection, fertilizer trials, forest



records and expanding the forest nursery kept Eric busy whilst May was busy raising their two sons, Robert and Gordon. Eric laid out the first boron trials in *Pinus radiata* at the suggestion of Eric Chittenden, a Cawthron Institute researcher. This pioneer work led to the widespread use of boron in forestry today.

In May 1968 May and Eric leased 3 acres and started their own forest nursery. In an era of expanding forest plantings, with hard work and attention to quality, the nursery expanded. In 1973 20 acres were purchased, which in the 1950's had been the Cawthron Institute Research Farm. The range of species grown expanded with experience and this provided a backstop when *Pinus radiata* plantings temporarily declined in the 1980's.



Robert gained his Dip.Hort. at Lincoln and following nursery work in Canada and Switzerland, returned to the family business, becoming a partner following the tragic death of May in 1983. Gordon has worked at times in the nursery but his main love is farming deer.

Eric married Eileen in 1987 and they have visited forests in South America, Japan and Britain. Eileen, a professional actor has specialised in monologues by Alan Bennett, touring New Zealand extensively.

