

Customer Profile



Rick Osborne – A forestry journey

Our father Jim passed on to us from an early age his appreciation of bush and trees. As children holidaying in the Pelorus Sounds we used to play “sardines” in the manuka scrub that contained numerous wilding pines. Their growth was impressive and it is perhaps awareness of that that stayed with me until the early 1970s when the Forestry Encouragement Grants Scheme encouraged Jim and I to look for land for planting in the Marlborough Sounds. In 1972 we purchased “Skiddaw” a 500ha farm

at the entrance to Kenepuru Sound, for farming, forestry, and “holidaying”. We planted *Pinus radiata* as the commercial species and a considerable number of amenity species around the house and paddock areas. Encouraged by the start we had made, and the excellent planting team we had, we expanded by buying another block of land for planting at Long Valley, near Havelock. We have since planted some more pieces of land as they have become available and we are now up to approx 4000ha planted.

A forestry tour to North America in 1985 brought me into contact with the Anderson brothers who were sawmillers in Blenheim. Three years later in a rush of enthusiasm we purchased their mill with a view to the future for our trees and in the innocent belief that timber processing was a way to extract more value from them. Lochy Beckham, the mill manager, and I have spent the last 22 years modernising and rationalising the saw mill. The challenge is still ongoing. Mechanisation and computerisation is changing wood processing into a much more precise and detailed game in which the quality of wood is ever more measured and segregated to different end uses. The sawmilling journey is far from over.

In 2004, with my son Mark, we started harvesting at Skiddaw, a new challenge for us. In early 2005 there was a severe downturn in log exports. This left us with wood we could not sell and threatened to halt operations. It was at this time we met Jacob Mannothen who, with his forest partners, was in the same predicament. We teamed up to form Zindia Ltd., a company solely focused on export of logs to India. In June 2005, with the support from our forestry friends, we put together our first full shipload of logs (28,000t) bound for India from Picton. That was the first of about 50 shiploads we have now done. It is a volatile but vital trade featuring cut throat marketing by other Kiwi companies, hostile exchange rates, anti methyl bromide protesters, and seesawing shipping costs. We have survived and continue to lead in the Indian market for NZ *radiata pine*.

It has been a great journey from seedlings in the ground, to milling our own trees and exporting timber and logs. The great driver for me has been the people involved, suppliers, contractors, advisors, forestry friends and so on. The pleasure of working with open, sincere, knowledgeable, and thinking people has helped and encouraged me despite the tough challenges the forest industry seems to throw up. The pleasure of growing the trees ourselves makes it all worthwhile.

