



## *Where have 50 years gone ?*

My first job was Forestry work at Woodhill Forest and this led to a position with the Forest Research Institute establishing conifer provenance trials between Hanmer and Southland. I met a nurse, May Manera. We married and moved to H. Baigent and Sons Ltd in Nelson, running their nursery and investigating poor radiata pine growth on some of the Moutere clay soils. Low levels of nitrogen, phosphorus and the critical trace element boron all played a part.

With May's encouragement we leased 3 acres and started our own nursery in 1968. Pinus radiata seedlings were selling for \$12 per 1000. We started to produce an increasing range of other tree species to encourage diversity in the landscape. With hard work and support from tree planters and forest owners', production expanded and in 1974 we bought our own piece of land, the former Cawthron Institute farm at Wai-iti. Tragically May died in 1983 and Robert our eldest son came into the business to keep the enthusiasm going. Linda married Robert and they have worked hard establishing a larger forestry nursery at Mt Heslington and an arboretum on steep country around their home in Pig Valley.

The original Wai-iti site expanded to 16 hectares, now grows 400 different species of trees annually and employs 20 people year round, expanding to 40 in winter. Open ground grown trees are sent to all parts of NZ in the dormant winter months and container grown trees allow the planting season to be extended. Robert's enthusiasm for machinery led to the development of a sawdust spreader for covering seedbeds and applying composted pine bark to keep the soils in good condition. Next came the conversion of an agricultural crawler tractor into a high clear hydrostatic track laying tree lifter to gently lift the trees from the soil without damaging the fine roots.

With production increasing came the need for our own computer programme to manage the business and over the past 28 years this has been refined.

I made a great career choice and have spent 68 years since School Certificate in the same forest and nursery industry. Enjoying the fresh air and nurturing nature's seeds to useful and attractive products for man's use. I have been a part in producing over 150 million trees, over two rotations of Pinus radiata, and many millions of dollars for the NZ economy. Perhaps my lasting legacy will be the redwoods and oaks which could live on for centuries.

**Eric Appleton**



Robert Appleton, Eric Appleton



Jo Boyes (Office Manager)



Keith Roberts (Nursery Manager)

## *15,600 miles by motorcycle to sink roots in New Zealand, epic adventurer*

**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 197 cc 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.

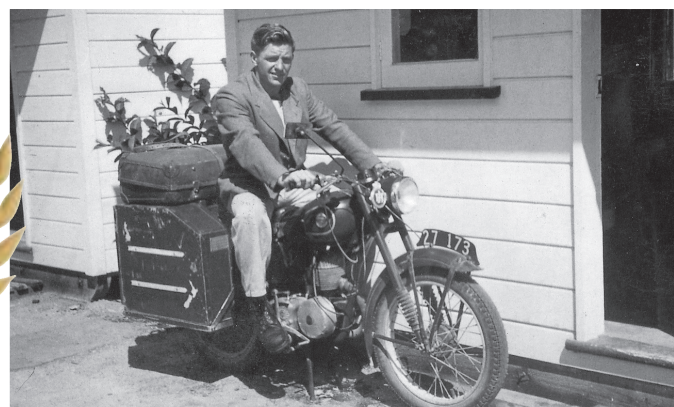
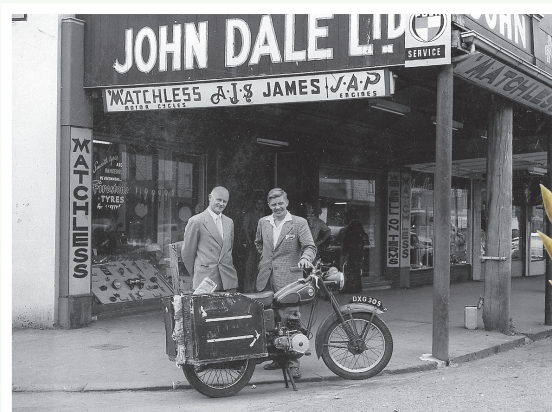
East of the Bosphorus the roads were not sealed and an Army escort was provided in Eastern Turkey. A detour over the Elburz Mountains to the broadleaf forests beside the Caspian Sea provided welcome relief from brown semi desert. Close to the Afghan border Eric joined up with a 1935 London taxi with 6 Aussies and Kiwis returning home and they traveled 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. Eric 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

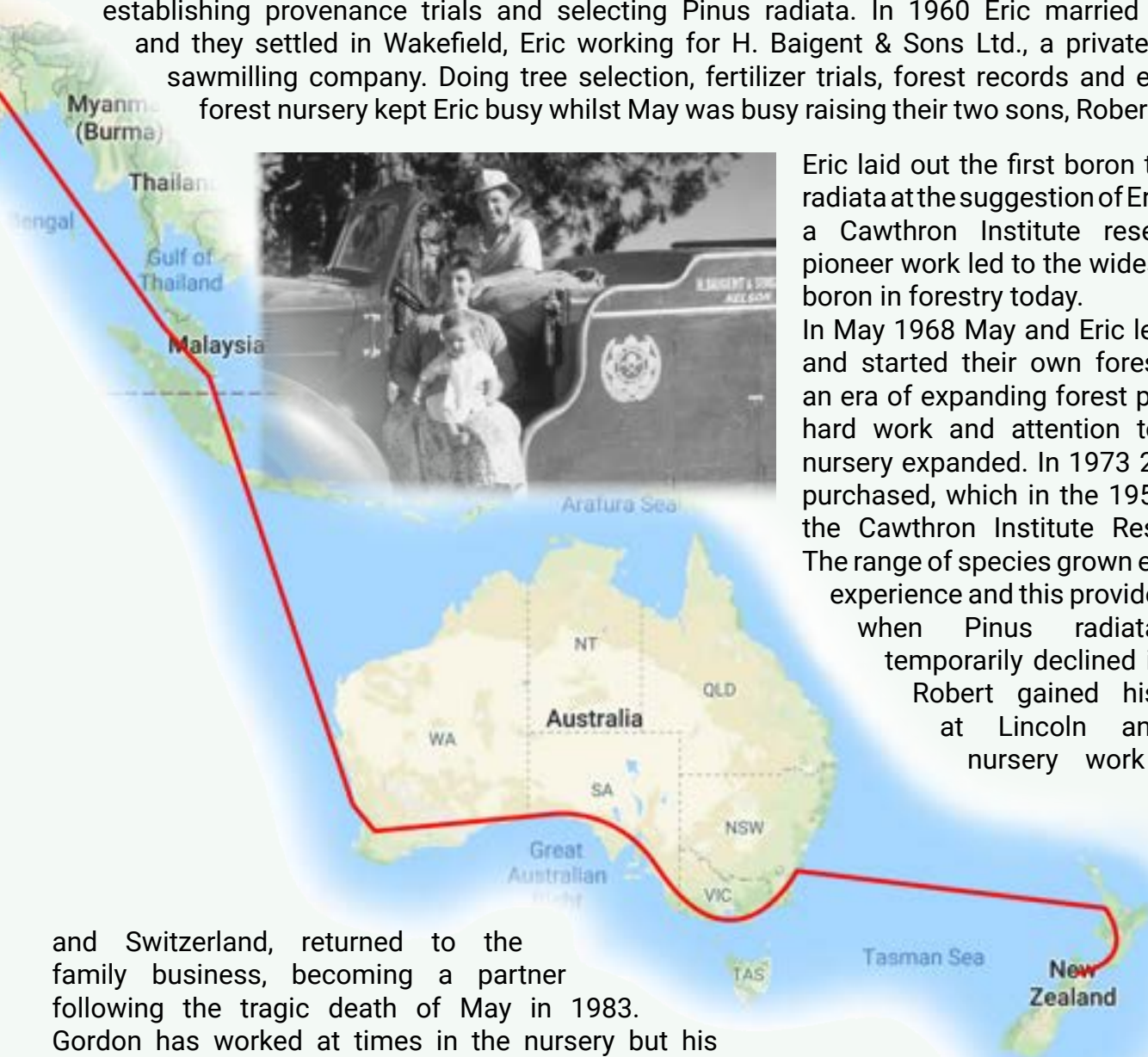


## *Eric Appleton celebrates 50 years of* APPLETONS TREE NURSERY



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 was a professional actor specialising in monologues by Alan Bennett, touring New Zealand extensively.