

Bills, David (mainly from obituary in *The Forester* April 2014)

BSc Forestry ANU 1969. David Bills CBE was Director General at what is now the CSIRO Division of Forest Research. He was General Manager of APPM Forest Products. *David was an IFA voting member from 1976 to 2004* Throughout his career David clearly exhibited those characteristics which mark a well-rounded individual who had the ability to lead in his profession.

David was a student at Taroona High School and Hobart Matriculation College and studied Forestry at the ANU. He played Rugby Union for Tasmania for the under 19's, and in the Tasmanian University Team.

His first assignment after graduation from ANU was to work on policy in the then Federal Forestry and Timber Bureau where he assisted the Director-General Dr Neil Cromer to organise the National Forwood peak conference dealing with, among other things, community concerns about Forestry. He also worked on catchment management at the Norwegian Forest Research Centre.

David then returned to Tasmania in 1978 and joined Associated Pulp and Paper Mills as an executive Forester. By the time he was in his early forties David, still working in the same business, became a Board Member of North Broken Hill Ltd, who had bought APPM, and represented that Company's interests as General Manager from 1986 to 1995 in the largest Forestry operation in Australia with over 125,000 hectares of forest. The company exported very large quantities of a variety of wood products whilst serving the domestic market.

David oversaw North Forest Products' 5000ha per annum plantation forestry expansion and three large scale chip export mills with associated port structures. He was also subsequently responsible for the divestment of some of the assets of North Forest Products to Gunns Ltd in 1990 when Rio Tinto had bought North Forest Products from NBH Ltd.

At the same time he participated in both a Diploma course on Pulp and Paper Technology at the British Columbia Institute of Technology and the Senior Executive programme at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

While in Australia David was Vice President to Mike Hall AM, who was the President of the Australian Forest Development Institute,

a role he held for some years. He facilitated the wood products industry to fund the Australian Forest Development Institute to conduct the International Bicentennial Forestry conference in Albury. Other local roles included Vice President of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chairman of Australian Veneers Ltd, member of the Tasmanian Marine Board, which included the Port of Hobart and West Coast Ports, and member of the Australian Prime Minister's Panel on sustainable development.

He served on the Board of the National Association of Forest Industries and was President in 1994 and 1995.

In 1995, at the age of 46 he took up the position of Director-General of Great Britain's Forestry Commission, the largest estate manager in England, Scotland and Wales, and remained in that position for 8 years. He played an important part at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992 that resulted in the Rio de Janeiro Declaration, which in turn resulted in establishing the UK Forest Plan.

Under his leadership the UK Forestry Commission received recognition from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International for their efforts in promoting independent certification of forests by facilitating the UK Woodland Assurance Standard to Forest Stewardship Council standards. David himself was presented with a *Gift to the Earth Award*, WWF's highest accolade.

David managed the devolution of Forestry management from the UK Forestry Commission from a single Authority to English, Scottish and Welsh control. He represented the UK position on Forestry in Europe at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development; and the Inter-governmental Forum on Forestry.

David was Chair of the Commonwealth Forestry Conference Standing Committee through meetings in Zimbabwe in 1996 and Perth WA in 2001.

On retiring from the Commission he became Vice Chairman of the Forestry Commission of Great Britain and worked as an independent consultant to a number of clients, including SAFCOL, the plantation owner and paper manufacturer in South Africa, as the first part-time Chief of Confederation of Forest Industries and established its governance, management systems and business

planning arrangements.

He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to Forestry in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2001.

David was only the second Australian-born Forester to hold the UK Forestry Commission leadership position.

In 2006 David became the first Australian to be President of The Commonwealth of Nations Forestry Association, the oldest Forestry Association in the Commonwealth.

He was, during 2004-2011, also the technical advisor and spokesperson for the *Wood for Good Campaign* funded by the Nordic Timber Council and UK Domestic Producer. He also led a review of the Scottish National Heritage programme of that Conservation body which was answerable to the devolved Scottish Parliament.

David's success was hard earned. He was strong, intelligent, enthusiastic and energetic and effectively applied himself to the many and varied tasks which he undertook. A remarkable record of a fine man.

Bob Newman