

Founding Forest & Bird

The founders of Forest and Bird, 80 years ago, were men of affairs, often actively involved in the politics of their times. A former Prime Minister, Sir Thomas Mackenzie, was the first president; another founding member was a senior public servant Edward Phillips Turner, a former inspector of scenic reserves and just recently appointed secretary of the new Forest Service.

At the inaugural meeting of what was to become Forest and Bird, on March 28, 1923, Phillips Turner and the Forest Service director, MacIntosh Ellis, both spoke on 'birds and forests'.

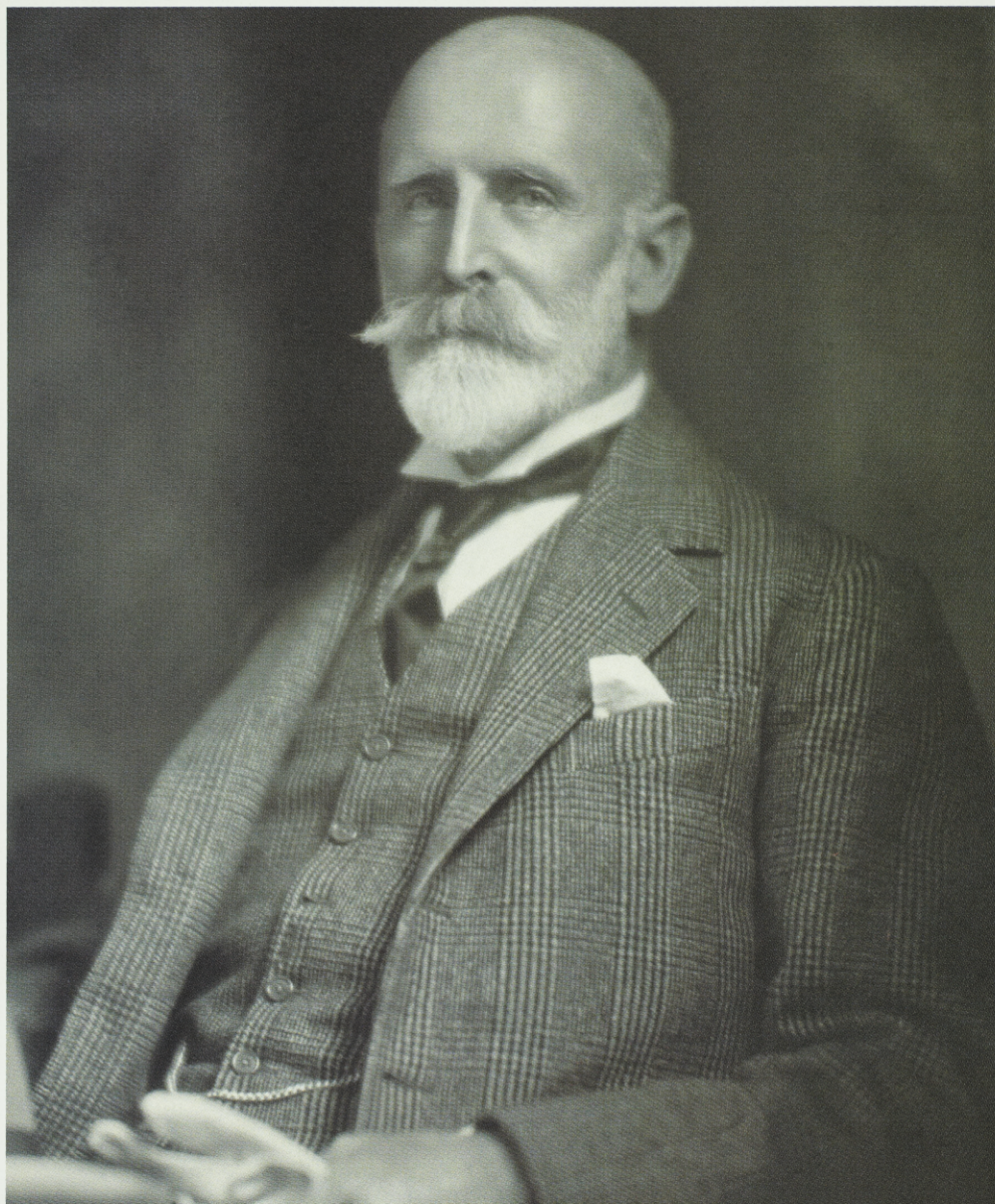
There were few more qualified to speak on this subject and arguably none more committed to New Zealand forests than Phillips Turner. For nearly 30 years he had worked in and studied the New Zealand bush, initially as a surveyor and, after 1907, as the first Inspector of Scenic Reserves. The impact of his reports was to have a major effect on the development of conservation in New Zealand. His eminence as a botanist was recognised too, when he and Leonard Cockayne wrote *The Trees of New Zealand*.

Phillips Turner's association with New Zealand began in 1870 when his parents came to settle. The five-year-old saw the country only briefly. The unrest at the time convinced his parents to go to Australia where his father set up as a country doctor in Woodbridge, Tasmania.

After a stint at sea, and a time of study in England, Phillips Turner returned to New Zealand, training as a surveyor. His employer was the Lands Department which was responsible for basic survey and subdivision for settlement of undeveloped parts of New Zealand. This work introduced Phillips Turner to the magnificence of our forests. In 1890 he wrote to the *New Zealand Herald* from a survey camp in Mercury Bay, Coromandel, drawing attention to the serious destruction of forests.

'I will not take the artist's point of view and show how these vandals are despoiling our country of one of its brightest adornments; nor yet the scientists, and point out the dangers that may arise through the alteration of the climate caused by the denudation of vegetation. In twenty years time our timber will be ten times as valuable as now.'

For the 80th birthday of Forest and Bird, SALLY GREENAWAY writes about one of its founders, her grandfather, E. Phillips Turner.



SALLY GREENAWAY

E. Phillips Turner was among those who set up the Native Bird Protection Society, the original name for Forest and Bird, on March 28, 1923. Like several of the founders, Phillips Turner was permitted to be active in conservation advocacy while holding a senior position in public life.

Was this letter a clever attempt to state his own views on conservation finishing with an appeal to the cupidity of the developers, or should it be taken on its face value — as an appeal to get better value for the resource? The question highlights a dilemma which faced the Lands Department itself.

For a century or more, the Lands Department was responsible for both

surveying land for future exploitation and also for conserving areas of scenic value. To try to resolve this dilemma, a Scenic Reserves Division was developed within the department and in 1907 Phillips Turner was appointed as the first Inspector of Scenic Reserves.

The general principles of his work were to reserve attractive regions near to main