

Banks Peninsula Walnut Odyssey

Sunday the 28th November 2004

The Convoy assembled at Teddington, at the property of Graeme and Jude Hamilton. The Hamiltons have around 120 eight year old trees which are beginning to produce significant quantities of nuts – 100 kgs last year and hopefully an exponential rise in the coming season.

They have both Rex and Meyrick cultivars in two blocks separated by a superbly planned and planted low maintenance native garden; with miniature toitoi and native grasses setting off the varied greens of the other plantings.

Sheep do most of the orchard floor maintenance, with some spot spraying and a bit of irrigation to keep things going.



Walnut lined drive at Port Levy

The long and winding road around the coast and over a hill or two to Port Levy was next. The magnificent avenue of walnuts planted in 1882 left us all wishing for eternal or at least prolonged life so we could see our trees look like that!

The Coop family had also planted around 160 seedling trees as an orchard behind the homestead and this forms a stately forest where if you saw fairies, deer roaming or blue bells in drifts you wouldn't be too surprised; a very English feel to the valley floor. The trees still produce 5-600 kgs of nuts each season but with the passage of time quantity and quality are slowly declining.

Lunch and a walk through Hays Reserve at Pigeon Bay was next on the itinerary. The remnants of matai, kahikatea and totara with the chorus of bellbirds is a splendid reminder of how Banks Peninsula used to be.

Another spectacular drive along narrow winding roads, with superb views and down a stock route to the Craw family in Piper Valley left some of us wanting a hill for our plains properties; those vistas! Another collection of wonderful old trees, still cropping and producing.



Mr and Mrs Craw of Piper Valley

Here we completed our collection of green walnuts for the Department of Conservation Kakapo recovery programme.

It is hoped that breeding may be induced every year by feeding the nuts as a substitute for native berries and fruits. We await with interest the results of these trials. Wouldn't it be nice to be able, albeit in a small way, to help in restoring the population of an endangered species using an exotic tree planted after the clearing of native habitat; a kind of poetic justice.

Our long but glorious odyssey officially finished at Rod Naish's property at Takamatua. Another visual feast with valley walls covered in trees, a meandering stream and some magnificent old walnuts surrounded by more recent plantings.

It was a great day and thanks are due to John Matthews who organised the day, producing a map and instructions so that no one got lost. Thanks to the people who hosted us at their properties.

Diane Leighton

HEA Update

From field day 27 November 2004

Janet Skilton, the executive director of the Horticultural Export Authority, gave an informative overview of how the authority operates and answered questions from members concerning how NZWIG could benefit from being an HEA partner.

The main areas of concern were about the process and cost of registration. In general there was a



positive response from the members present to the primary function of HEA which is 'to promote the effective export marketing of Horticultural products'. This includes having enforceable grade standards to ensure minimum quality entering the market and improved prices.

The possibility of NZWIG working with other nut groups

through Nut Industries of New Zealand [NUTNZ] was raised. This would keep the cost of registering down to all nut groups willing to participate and administration costs could also be shared. Janet Skilton commented that a similar model was already operating with Summerfruit New Zealand, where peaches, apricots, cherries and nectarines have formed their own export marketing strategy [EMS] under the NZ Summerfruit Export Council Ltd.

At the next field day another opportunity for NZWIG members to discuss the possibility of becoming an HEA partner will be given.

Jenny Lawrence



Events

Research Progress

Sunday 6th March.

Venue: Horticultural Teaching lab at Lincoln University - opposite the Cricket training nets on Farm Road. University Entry #2 (Calder Ave) off the Ellesmere Junction Road.

1pm HEA presentation by Standards sub-committee

1:30pm Benchmarking project update

2:15pm Blight research presentation: Tim Jenkins and Tasmanian blight researchers give update on this season's progress

3pm Afternoon tea

3:30pm Visit to Des Fowler's orchard.

3:45pm Tim to give guided tour of blight experiment

4:15pm Benchmarking training opportunity

How to select sample of trees

Procedure for taking trunk diameter and yield measurements

How to describe/define orchard management inputs

Data recording and submission process

Orchard identification numbers to be issued to trained individuals.

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