

# Excerpt from “The Notable Trees of New Plymouth”, 2002

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Based on a review of S.W. (Bob) Burstall's Mensuration Report # 19, 1973.

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## 1.1 Background Information

Mr S. W. (Bob) Burstall commenced employment with the Forest Research Institute (FRI) in 1948. His main responsibility was to work in the forest mensuration field, help to obtain the basic data and design methods of estimating tree volume and taper. His work entailed travelling widely throughout New Zealand obtaining measurements of unusually big trees and he acquired a good knowledge of exotic forests. As more experience was gained Mr Burstall developed a compelling interest, which broadened to include non-forest trees of both exotic and indigenous species. At first a large portion of his study was a personal hobby in his own time. This was until official interest was expressed in his work and he was encouraged to continue when it did not interfere with other commitments. By 1970 Mr Burstall was one of the more senior officers at the Forest Research Institute and had written many internal reports, published five papers on volume and taper and compiled a list of notable trees for "New Zealand Plants and Gardens". He had become an acknowledged expert on notable and historic trees and by the time he retired he and other FRI staff members, (A. D. McEwen and W. J Wendelken) had written a series of regional internal FRI reports as follows:

- Mensuration Report: # 16 - Northland, Auckland.
- # 17 - Waikato, Thames Valley - Coromandel, Bay Of Plenty.
- # 18 - Poverty Bay, Hawkes Bay.
- # 19 - Taranaki, Wanganui, Rangitikei, Central North Island.
- # 20 - Wairarapa, Manawatu, Wellington.
- # 21 - Marlborough, Nelson, Westland.
- # 22 - North Canterbury, South Canterbury, Chatham Islands.
- # 23 - Otago, Southland.
- # 24 - Historic and Notable Trees of National Interest.

The above regional listings have an initial distinction between 'indigenous' and 'exotic'. These were further arranged in categories of 'Historic' and 'Notable', each further subdivided according to 'national' and 'local' importance. Although these categories are very comprehensive and useful for comparative reference, interpretation can become cumbersome.

Burstall's definition of Historic and Notable was as follows:

*Historic trees are defined as those commemorating important events in Maori history and legends or in European settlement. For planted trees, nationally historic specimens are limited to those 50 years and older in 1970, but for locally historic trees there is no such restriction.*

*Notable trees are defined as those of species rare in New Zealand; of the earliest known plantings; and of large diameter, height or canopy spread. Individual trees of national interest must be larger in any one of the three dimensions than any other of their species known in the country.*

The reports had limited distribution and were largely kept in the archives of FRI, Rotorua. However Burstall did use a substantial amount of this information in publishing a book with E. V. Sale in 1984: *Great Trees Of New Zealand*.