

Obituaries

Ellaby James Martin FRIH

18 December 1931 – 9 June 2016



Ellaby Martin celebrating 50 years of IPPS membership in 2011. Photo: Shirley Ogilvy.

Ellaby Martin, a well-known Hamilton nurseryman and the first President of the International Plant Propagators' Society New Zealand Region (IPPS-NZ) passed away in Hamilton aged 84.

Born in Hellingly, a village in East Sussex in South East England, Ellaby left school at 16 to become a farmhand. After he was laid off, he went to work at a local nursery where he learnt propagation and developed his love of plants. He also worked on a local estate and in another nursery before deciding to emigrate to New Zealand in the early 1950s where he gained a position in the Hamilton Parks Department.

He completed a National Diploma in Horticulture (NDH) before he and his family moved down to Canterbury where he worked as Propagator in Charge at Lincoln College until 1961, when he moved back to Hamilton and once again took up a position with the Hamilton Parks Department.

Ellaby was a long-standing member of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, and joined on 1st April 1957. In 1998, he became a Fellow (FRIH) of the RNZIH.

He also joined the Eastern Region of the IPPS in 1961 and travelled to their conference in Rhode Island in 1966.

It was there he met Jim Wells, the founder of IPPS in 1951 and its founding President. Jim's vision was to Internationalise IPPS and he told Ellaby that if he could get a group together in

New Zealand, he would visit – which he did twice to help get IPPS New Zealand off the ground. The first meeting was held at Waikato University in 1972 and Ellaby was elected as the first President.

In the 1960s, Ellaby opened his nursery in Hamilton, first as Martin's Nursery in Insoll Ave, before relocating to Rototuna Road in 1970 to become Martin's Nurseries and Garden Centre. This new name reflected the new garden centre approach which was quite innovative at that time. The new site at Rototuna Road was a 4 ha (10 acre) bare block of land, with a couple of beautiful oak trees near the road front and a gully at the rear of the block from which to build a nursery and garden centre. The first year was a busy one building fences, retaining walls, display gardens, laying out pathways and beds for the garden centre, building propagation benches and beds, and cold frames.

Over the next three decades, Martin's became well established in Waikato gardening and horticulture circles and Ellaby was the go-to man for anything to do with gardening, propagation and horticulture. Ellaby attributed his skills as a nurseryman and propagator to his English background – where as a gardener you grew everything from bulbs, hanging baskets, roses, ferns, fuchsias, pot plants, vegetables, conifers, fruit trees, field grown trees and shrubs.

His nursery grew both open ground and container plants in conjunction with a garden centre, and landscape and garden maintenance work. They also wholesaled to other outlets. Ellaby always said that they "specialised in being non-specialist".

Ellaby selected several new plants, including four mānuka (*L. scoparium*) cultivars he raised and released during the 1960s: *L.* 'Cherry Brandy', *L.* 'Elizabeth Jane' (named after his daughter), *L.* 'Pink Champagne', and *L.* 'Pink Martini'.

Part of Ellaby's legacy is the large number of apprentices and nursery

workers that emerged as trained horticulturists during their time at his nursery. All were treated fairly and encouraged to learn. Ellaby was always 'up with the play' and ran classes (in paid time) for his staff including plant identification tests, talks on new sprays and other innovations. They were always running experiments such as potting mix trials, slow release fertilisers, pest control, capillary irrigation, drip irrigation, weed sprays, and budding strips. Luckily for Ellaby, his first wife Jocelyn (Jo) was very efficient at doing the accounts and wages, so he could be very much 'hands on' outside.

Among the 50 or so staff over the years were Rocky Abbott, Joanne and Peter Armstrong, George Austen, David Clayton-Green, Linda Clements, Jack Drewett, Ruth Henderson, Greg Leigh, Craig Newton, Caroline Nouwens, Malcolm Redpath, Eion Scarrow, Robert Scarrow, Peter Sergel, Hans Schurman, Hazel Thom, Stewart and Pat Kerr. Many went on to become notable horticulturists in their own right.

Ellaby was at times a hard boss, but a just one. He fought for apprenticeship rights – a year after Ruth Henderson had started work in 1969, the Arbitration Court had still not 'approved' her, a female as an apprentice in the then male-dominated world of commercial horticulture. Ellaby fought on her behalf answering their "But you'll have to pay her as much as a boy" with "She works twice as hard as a boy".

In retirement, Ellaby was actively involved with the Hamilton Gardens serving as Chairman of the Hamilton Gardens Management Board, then as President of the Friends of the Hamilton Gardens. He often acted as tour guide leading groups around the gardens.

Ellaby had a fine voice and often sang while he worked. Away from horticulture he performed in productions at his beloved Hamilton Operatic and Repertory Society, was an avid reader of historical and biographical books, and was also an enthusiastic tennis player.

In 2008, IPPS New Zealand presented Ellaby with the Award of Merit, its highest award for services to horticulture in New Zealand and to IPPS. He was also presented with a Hamilton City Civic Award in 2009 for services to the community.

Ellaby is survived by his first wife Jocelyn, two children, his second wife Pamela, three step children, and six step grandchildren.

**Obituary prepared by
Hayden Foulds and
Ruth Henderson**

Other obituaries for Ellaby have been published in the *Waikato Times* (25 June 2016), the *IPPS New Zealand Newsletter* (Vol. 47, Issue 3, July 2016), and *Commercial Horticulture* (August/September 2016).

Roland ('Roly') Woodroffe Earp AHRIH 18 September 1923 – 18 December 2016



Roly Earp, standing in front of his likeness as part of a mural 'The History of Kiwifruit' by Marc Spijkerbosch. Photo: Steve Graveson, courtesy of Katikati Open-Air Art Inc. (www.muraltown.co.nz/the-history-of-kiwifruit/)

Considered by many to be one of the founding pillars of New Zealand's kiwifruit industry, Roly passed away peacefully at Bethlehem Views in Tauranga on Sunday, December 18. He was 93.

Born and raised in Te Puke, Roly originally trained as an accountant before pursuing a career as a kiwifruit grower in 1959, purchasing a 50 acre (20 ha) dairy farm in Te Puna with childhood friend Grahame Bayliss.

The two broke with tradition by becoming the first growers to establish a large scale orchard totally devoted to growing 'Hayward' kiwifruit – the variety on which the industry is now based – and exported their first fruit in 1964.

In the years following, Roly would eventually revolutionise the kiwifruit industry. He led the battle for grower control of their product through to the market for more than a decade, from 1966 to 1978, facing opposition from the exporters, successive Governments and some growers who were determined to remain independent. Roly would eventually become the first Chairman

of the Kiwifruit Association in 1978, a position he held up until he retired in 1984.

By the time he retired, the New Zealand industry was a major horticultural exporter worth more than \$100 million in that year.

Friend and kiwifruit grower Mike Muller first met Roly 44 years ago when he and his wife purchased a kiwifruit orchard in Te Puna.

"I needed to find out what a kiwifruit orchard was about because I was a farmer. So I found Roly, who lived just down the road, and from that time on I've known him on a professional and personal basis."

"He is one of the most unselfish people I have ever met. All the time I knew him his focus was entirely around what was best for kiwifruit growers, he believed what was best for the growers was the best for the country's industry."

Mike says even now for "old growers like me" and those new to kiwifruit growing, they are all huge beneficiaries of Roly's passion and determination for the industry.

"Absolutely no doubt, Roly is a founding pillar of the kiwifruit industry that we know today. He elevated those around him, he singlehandedly did this and he just wouldn't have a bar of it, not a bloody bar of it."

"It's amazing the people in your life that have this clear view of what is best for the whole and I think this sums Roly up for me. Everything he did was for the betterment of everyone."

"He was the most unassuming, modest and humble man. He was a man of high principal and great integrity, and absolutely steely and resolute in what he wanted to achieve," says friend and

former journalist Rosalie Smith.

"I greatly admire Roly and so do a lot of people. He has a lot of good friends in the kiwifruit industry."

Rosalie collaborated with Roly on his book *The Kiwifruit Adventure* published in 1988, which examined the early history of New Zealand's kiwifruit industry, as well as partly serving as his autobiography.

In his professional and personal life Roly was absolutely determined with what he wanted to achieve and worked hard until he accomplished it. It was the same when writing the book, recalls Rosalie.

"He would hand me a draft chapter and I would edit it and make three sentences into one, and one paragraph into three," she says with a chuckle.

"But he was determined that if my alterations meant that it wasn't saying exactly what he wanted, there was no changing him. His determination to get his message across as he wanted it really impressed me."

"Almost all of my alterations made it into the final version, 95 per cent. But there was that five per cent that he wanted exactly his way."

Roly Earp was made an Associate of Honour (AHRIH) of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture in 1992¹.

**Obituary prepared by
David Tauranga**

Adapted from a version published by Sunlive, 21 December 2016 (www.sunlive.co.nz/news/143278-tributes-flow-kiwifruit-pioneer.html)

¹ *Horticulture in New Zealand (Journal of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture)*, 1992, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 19.

Dr Ronald (Ron) Meric Davison FRIH 18 November 1927 – 20 April 2017



Dr Ron Davison, a former Chairman of the Auckland Branch and former editor of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (RNZIH) journal, died in April 2017. Ron was a pioneering specialist on kiwifruit and a former Assistant-Director of the Division of Horticulture and Processing of the New Zealand Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR).

Ron was born in Whangarei in 1927. His parents had a dairy farm at the Whangarei Heads, and part of their farm is now included in the Bream Head Conservation Trust. Ron and his brother John were guests at the first release of kiwi on the site. Ron came to Auckland as a boarder at Mt Albert Grammar, just across the fence from the Mt Albert Research Centre of the DSIR, where he was to spend almost his entire professional career. He joined Fruit Research Station in February 1949 after completing an MSc in Botany at Auckland University College with a thesis on mangroves. He spent the next 40 years with DSIR, eventually retiring in 1989 as Assistant-Director, Division of Horticulture and Processing. After various name changes, this is now part of Plant and Food Research.

Ron's first task was to study the potential use of synthetic hormones and plant growth regulators on tree crops – for fruit thinning, control of fruit set, preventing fruit drop and for the control of fruit ripening. It was then the responsibility of Fruit Research Station to obtain information for the certification of plant hormones.

In his early years at DSIR, he and the late Peter Brook went climbing in the Southern Alps during their summer holidays. They were competent climbers, attempting Mt Cook and succeeding in climbing Mt Elie de Beaumont. Ron also

skied. He was a keen sportsman, played tennis (including in the Pascoe Cup competition) and badminton. He enjoyed walking in the bush locally and while on holiday away.

In 1958 Ron travelled to the United Kingdom to undertake a PhD at King's College, University of London. On his return he continued his work on plant hormones including studies on the use of chemical thinning sprays. This developed into a major research interest – the regulation of cropping on fruit trees, particularly apples. Ron also found other interests at Mt Albert. In 1961 he married Sue McBeth, then working in mycology with the late Joan Dingley. Ron and Sue had one daughter, Anna, who now lives in California.

In 1968 he and Sue spent about 15 months at Michigan State University, East Lansing, where he continued to work on the regulation of yield in fruit trees, with Dr John Bukovac. When Ron returned to Mt Albert he concentrated his efforts more and more on kiwifruit. At that time kiwifruit plantings were beginning to expand rapidly and Ron was one of the very first scientists to appreciate the potential of this new crop. He studied various aspects of crop management such as the use of girdling to enhance cropping and he built up a collection of different male kiwifruit vines at the Te Puke Research Orchard. He also encouraged work on the chemical control of vegetative growth in kiwifruit.

Ron's greatest contribution to the kiwifruit industry was his insistence on the need to breed new cultivars to complement the existing 'Hayward' cultivar. Ron argued long and hard for the appointment of kiwifruit breeders. Many in the industry and probably some within DSIR were rather sceptical but the last twenty years have shown just how right and how far-sighted he was. The products of the kiwifruit breeding programme that he fostered have earned New Zealand billions of dollars in export earnings. In 1981 he and a colleague went on a lengthy trip to China to collect kiwifruit germplasm, the first essential for a breeding programme. Today trips to China are simply routine but in 1981 their trip was pioneering, demanding and arduous, and also very rewarding. Ron fostered links with

China: he had a genuine regard for his many Chinese friends and he did much to assist Chinese scientists and students going to New Zealand.

As horticultural production expanded, Ron took on more and more administrative responsibilities. For many years he was in charge of DSIR's pomological research and he was responsible for the Division's network of research orchards. Ron always insisted that the work of the Division should meet the requirements of the fruit-growing industries. He was well respected by orchardists and he had particularly good links with the early leaders of the kiwifruit industry. He had the ability to set long-term goals with the quiet persistence to ensure that those goals were achieved.

In retirement, Ron became more involved in the activities of the RNZIH, an institute that he joined in 1961. For some years he was Chairman of the Auckland Branch and a long-time committee member. He also served as editor of the Institute's journal for ten years. Perhaps his greatest contributions were the two very successful courses that he organised on flower judging for shows, so important for local horticultural societies. He also arranged for the planting of kauri species in the Auckland Domain, just west of the duck pond, to mark the new millennium. Ron's efforts for the Institute were recognised when he was elected a Fellow (FRIH) in 1986.

Ron and Sue were Foundation Members of the Friends of the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens. While Ron did not participate actively with the Friends, he was always interested, supported Sue in her involvement with the Gardens, and attended annual meetings, Friends events and talks until poor health prevented this; he also took an interest in planning matters and worked with some of the Institute members to produce submissions on planning matters at the Gardens.

Ron was a quiet but loyal supporter of the Institute and he will be greatly missed.

**Obituary prepared by
Ross Ferguson**