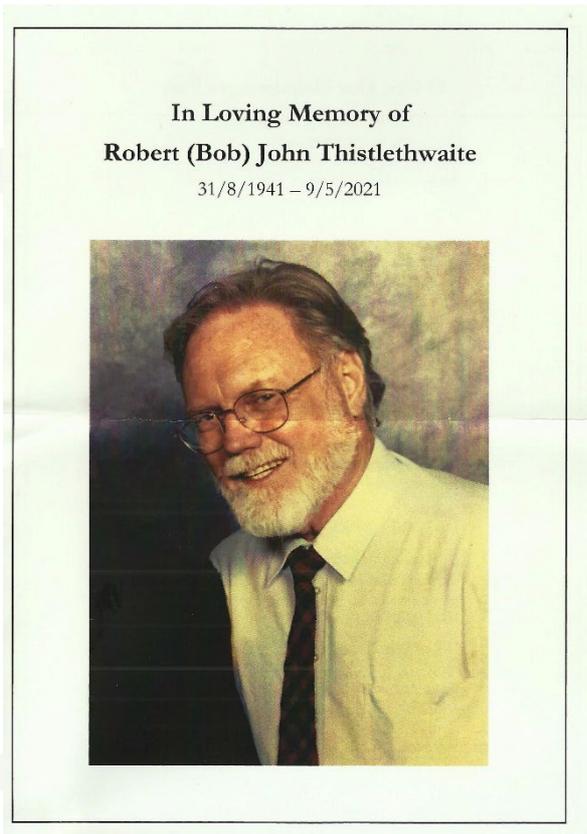




VALE: Dr Robert 'Bob' Thistlethwaite

PhD, Dedication to research
31 August 1941 – 9 May 2021



Dr Robert 'Bob' Thistlethwaite was a member of the IFA for 56 years after joining as a student member in 1963. He gave valued service to the Institute through various executive positions and remained an active and enthusiastic member up until very recently.

Bob attended the Australian Forestry School in Canberra in the early 1960's and was always a passionate researcher. He completed his PhD in 1970 from ANU on the topic "Forests and water supply in the Cotter catchment, with reference to *P. radiata* (D Don) plantations". Bob commenced his professional career in 1971 when he was appointed Principal Research Officer with the Papua New Guinea Department of Forests and oversaw forest plantation research, with a wide range of tropical and exotic species. In early 1978 he became Principal Research Officer with the Department of the Interior in Darwin and OIC of the Berrimah Research Laboratory. Then followed an 8-year stint working in primary industries with a focus on agriculture, animal industry development and agro-forestry ventures.

In 1986 Bob was invited to join AIDAB's (now AusAID) Pacific Regional Team as its Natural Resources Advisor to undertake identification, establishment, and appraisal of aid-funded projects for nine Pacific island countries across forestry, agriculture, and artisanal fishery sector. In 1989 Bob established his own natural resources and environmental consulting company which focused mainly on the 22 island nations of the Pacific basin.

In the mid 1990's and into the 2000s Bob continued to work in Australia as a consultant for companies he established to focus on genomic research for tree improvement.

Bob was a highly active member of the IFA and regularly participated in field trips, functions, and meetings. Bob was the Queensland Divisional Chair for 6 years (2001-2007), and IFA Director for 6 years, a Member of 2009 Conference Committee, Chair of the Tropical Forestry special interest group, and was an Executive Member of the Association of Consulting Foresters of Australia. Bob was the first member of the Queensland Division to obtain



accreditation in July 2007 under the Registered Professional Forester scheme in General Practising Forester, and he was made a Fellow of the IFA in 2009.

Bob Thistlethwaite's contribution to Forestry in Papua New Guinea 1971 -1975

Much of the plantation development work of PNG Forests at that time is summarized in Bob's detailed paper on "Further domestication of PNG's indigenous forest species". This work summarized early plantation development in PNG together with detailed trial work of PNG species.

Bob was involved with Dr Kisaku Mori D. Agr., supported by a small team of Japanese scientists and officials, to investigate the presence of Shiitake in PNG. Jack Simpson, Department of Forests pathologist based at Bulolo in Morobe Province, guided the Mori team to Castanopsis forests where Shiitake was identified on the first morning of the field visit. After Dr Mori's field visit, Shiitake was found widely distributed on Fagaceae, especially on Castanopsis in the highlands of PNG. At the Tari market in Hela Province, different varieties of edible mushrooms were being sold. Shiitake was known locally "abus long abus" or meat with meat and was highly prized.



*Kevin White Assistant Director PNG Forests greets Dr Kisaku Mori and the OIC Mori Research with Bob Thistlethwaite at the Davara on Ela Beach Port Moresby.
Photo credit Bob Thistlethwaite.*



Shiitake party L to R: Bob Thistlethwaite, Jack Simpson, Dave Lamb (partly obscured at rear), OIC Mori Research, Egon Horak, Kisaku Mori in Castanopsis forest at Bulolo. Photo credit Bob Thistlethwaite



A hard Saturday afternoon at Elome Creek a short walk north of Efogi. From left: Alan White, Kev White, Bob Thistlethwaite, Chris Done. Photo credit Bob Thistlethwaite.



A sample of Bob's PNG Travel Snippets

Travel went with the job in PNG and, except for road travel around Port Moresby or inland to Brown River, was by air.

- But in all the travel I did during my time there and subsequently as a consultant, only once when I was really concerned on a flight from Moresby to Madang on a Fokker, when in the Okapa area the pilot realised he was flying up the wrong valley for his approach to Goroka. A cliff appeared ahead and disturbingly close. He stood the plane almost on its tail, hung on the props and side-slipped out of danger. We exited the aircraft at Goroka a bit white around the gills, decided we would stay in Goroka for the night and forget flying on to Madang. I did not know that the Fokker was so versatile but subsequently learned that it was originally designed for military operations. The pilot was of course feted by all but fit enough to fly on to Madang in the morning.
- And, yes, there was a pilot strike, and we were stranded on Daru Island and lucky to get a small room at the Daru Hotel which was adequate, with good plain food and a congenial host. The influx was such that the stock in the private bar was rapidly depleted, and when all the beer was gone, we gradually worked our way through all other offerings on the bar shelves. The Daru Pub was locally called the Cerberus Arms, because all the crockery and cutlery were branded with "HMAS Cerberus". How, we did not ask. I decided to do a little exploration of the hotel and in a shed tucked away under a couple of trees at the back I found a hotel employee beavering away filling bottle. He had two huge casks from which to choose, both branded with Portuguese markings, one containing red wine and the other white – perhaps emulating Mateusz Rose and Casals Inhos – but unfortunately not the same calibre. The bottles were already labelled with what they had originally contained, and it was interesting to see a white wine in a bottle labelled Beaujolais. To feed the thirsty throng in the public bar, waiters moved through selling fried fish heads, some with backbones attached. A roaring trade and the kina were rolling in. Tuesday came, the strike was off, and we gratefully boarded the flight to Moresby.

Authors:

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