

# Pīpīpi

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Maurice White Native Forest Trust  
Newsletter from Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula  
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Kererū

## Maurice

Maurice White died on 24 July, barely three weeks short of his 96th birthday. He was born on his parents' farm at Wainui, across the harbour from Hinewai, on 13 August 1923. The 1930s Depression, and his dad's health, moved the family to Woodend, North Canterbury, when Maurice was 8. He attended Rangiora High School, biking the four and a half miles from Woodend, and back again, every day. When he left school he took correspondence courses in accountancy and business. Drafted in to the army at 18 he was sent to Egypt



2 in 1944, aged 21, then to Italy, and finally to Japan as part of the J Force after the war's end.

Back home in New Zealand he put his professional learnings to work, before long setting up his own businesses, selling automotive spare parts. He married Nita in 1951 and they had three daughters, Diane, Kate and Nicky.

In 1977 Maurice set up a charitable fund to be used, when the time was ripe, to purchase land for conservation. He had in mind some sort of sanctuary for native birds, preferably the ones he had loved in his Wainui childhood. So it happened that at a Forest and Bird meeting in 1986 the then Chairperson of the North Canterbury branch introduced businessman Maurice to botanist Hugh. He knew that Maurice wanted to put his fund to work and that Hugh was in the middle of a botanical survey of Banks Peninsula. Could Hugh keep an eye out for likely land? Would he perhaps be interested in direct involvement with the project? [Ha! - Ed.]

Maurice and Hugh were very different people in many ways. To Hugh, Maurice appeared at first an older conservative businessman. To Maurice, Hugh must have seemed a bit of a left-wing zealous greenie. That the collaboration worked at all was in no small measure due to Maurice's quiet and gentlemanly good nature.

In 1987 Maurice's Trust purchased the original 109 hectare Hinewai farmlet. Now, 32 years on, the Trust "owns" 1250 hectares, and looks after another 240 hectares of adjacent land "owned" by other individuals and



Joseph Maurice White  
Queen's Service Medal 1999



Trusts but effectively part of "Greater Hinewai", like a mini-National Park on the doorstep of Akaroa.

Maurice got his hands dirty at the work-faces and served as Chairman and Treasurer until in 2017 (at 94) he handed over financial management to Bruce Hansen.

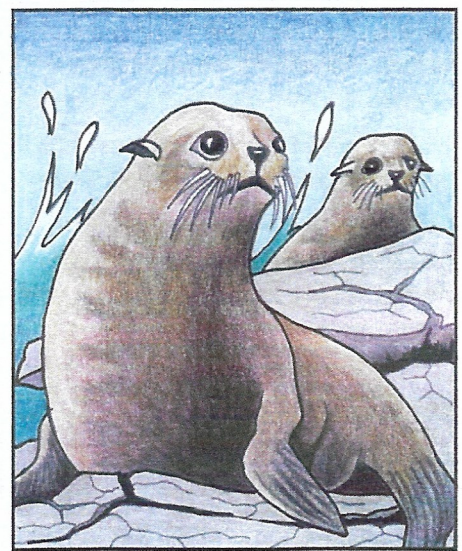
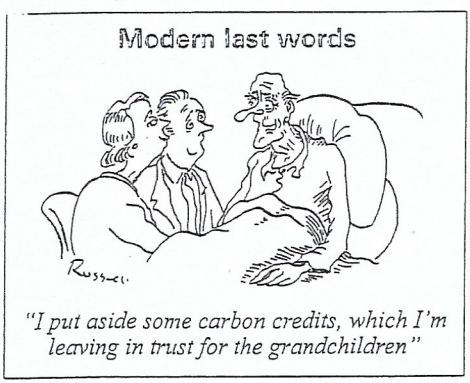
The early 2000s were difficult years, when Nita's health failed; she died in 2007, aged only 78. Maurice was still in his own home (in Ilam, Christchurch) until the last few days.

We have much to thank him for. It was such a game-changer when he directed to conservation his financial resources, his skills, and his visionary concerns. We have planted a tree for you, Maurice, a tiny 30 cm seedling now but growing already towards its future as a towering kahikatea, tallest of the forest giants.

Ki uta ki tai - sea to sky

Efforts to extend Hinewai to the sea at Otānerito Bay are currently stymied. We have simply failed to reach agreement on what would seem a fair price to both parties.

Out of the blue a different chance arises. Hinewai's congenial neighbours at Stony Bay, Mark and Sonia Armstrong, came up with an unexpected suggestion. "Would you" they asked "like to add to Hinewai some of our adjacent hectares and achieve your dream of reaching the coast?"

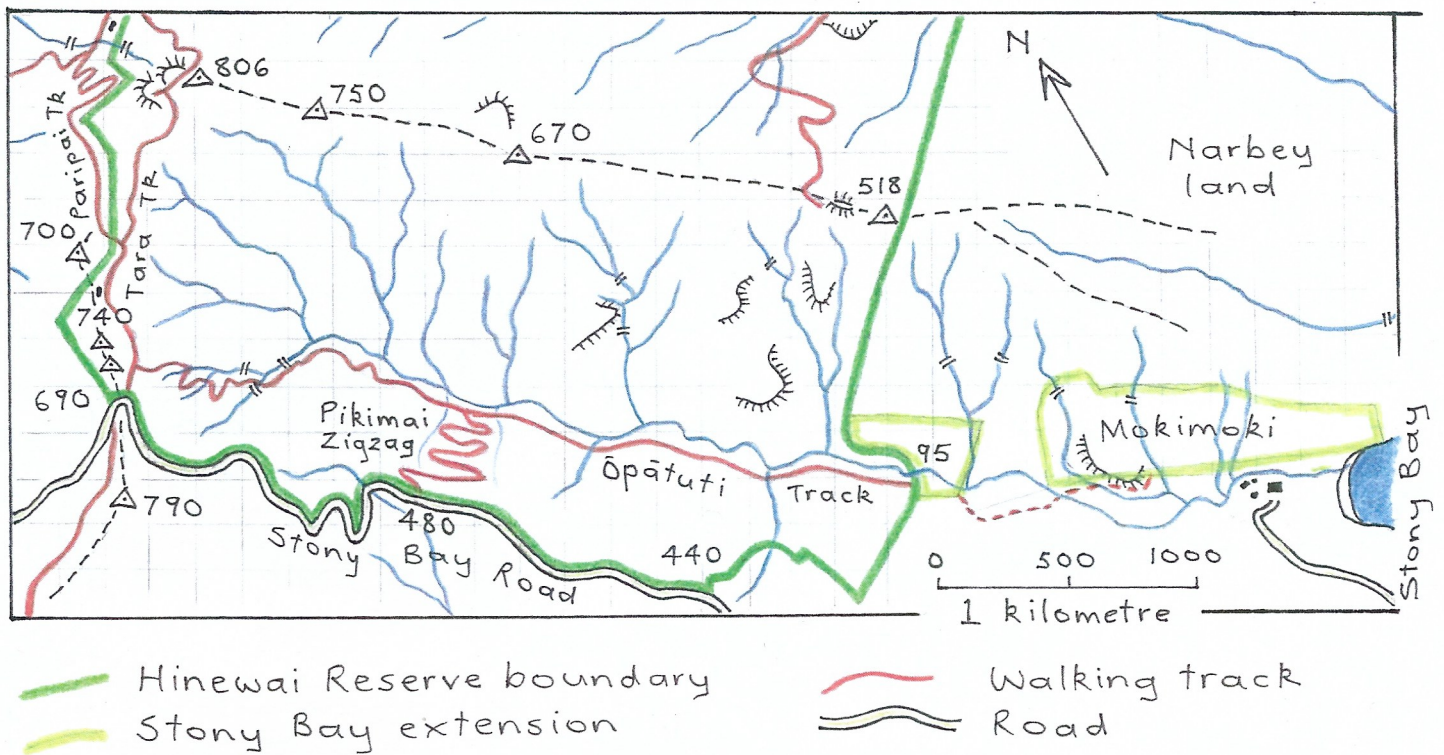


We chatted about this over tea and scones in their warm and friendly farmhouse. One



4 damp day in early autumn our whole Trust visited and walked the talk, so to speak. On a brighter day in July, after more tea and scones, Hugh accompanied independent land valuer Ryan, walking upvalley to the Hinewai boundary then back down through Mokimoki. Brown creepers chirruped in the forest. Seals lay about snoozing at the corner of their beach. Wild waves washed up against the bouldery shore.

The land on offer totals about 37 hectares, in two blocks, some already protected by covenants and good fencing. There are nīkau palms, waterfalls and rare ferns. A gap of neighbouring land separates the two tracts, but the Armstrongs have had a walking easement surveyed across some 300 metres of valley floor terrain that they will retain. Both parties agreed on price, based on Ryan's valuation. It may be several months before the land is legally transferred to Hinewai, but all this seems so positive we thought that Pīpipi should sing a little about these bold advances.



### Transforming the Trustees

As well as handing over the financial reins to Bruce, Maurice discussed not long before he died a few changes to his Trust. He asked that Bruce, Hugh,



David and Nick continue as Trustees. Nick Head had represented the Department of Conservation (DoC) on our Trust Board, but now works for Christchurch City Council (CCC) as an ecologist. Tom McTavish will now represent DoC for us. Tom is the young, energetic, not-all-that-long-ago-appointed DoC ranger on the Peninsula. Andrew Youngson will retire in just over a year and Paul Broady will be the new Forest and Bird rep. He is a recently retired lecturer in algae at Canterbury University but, more to the point, he is "owner" of 16 hectare Kāpuka Bush which he manages as part of wider Hinewai.

### Wondering about weather

Hinewai's winter of 2019 was the least-snowy of all our 32 recorded years, similar only to 2018, 2017, and the El Niño of 1998. Forecasts kept promising snow to low levels but none came, or at most we awoke to the thinnest of meagre sprinklings that struggled to drift a few centimetres deep and were gone by lunchtime. Perversely it was Spring that really brought out the winter woollies and even a wee bit more snow as overdue as late October. All this came with a lot of rain. As Pīpipi goes to print the vegetation almost glows with lush and lovely verdure, streams run full and clear, and waterfalls fill the air with their softly soothing roar.



'...and the good news is there's more rain on the way'

### A pernicious push for pines

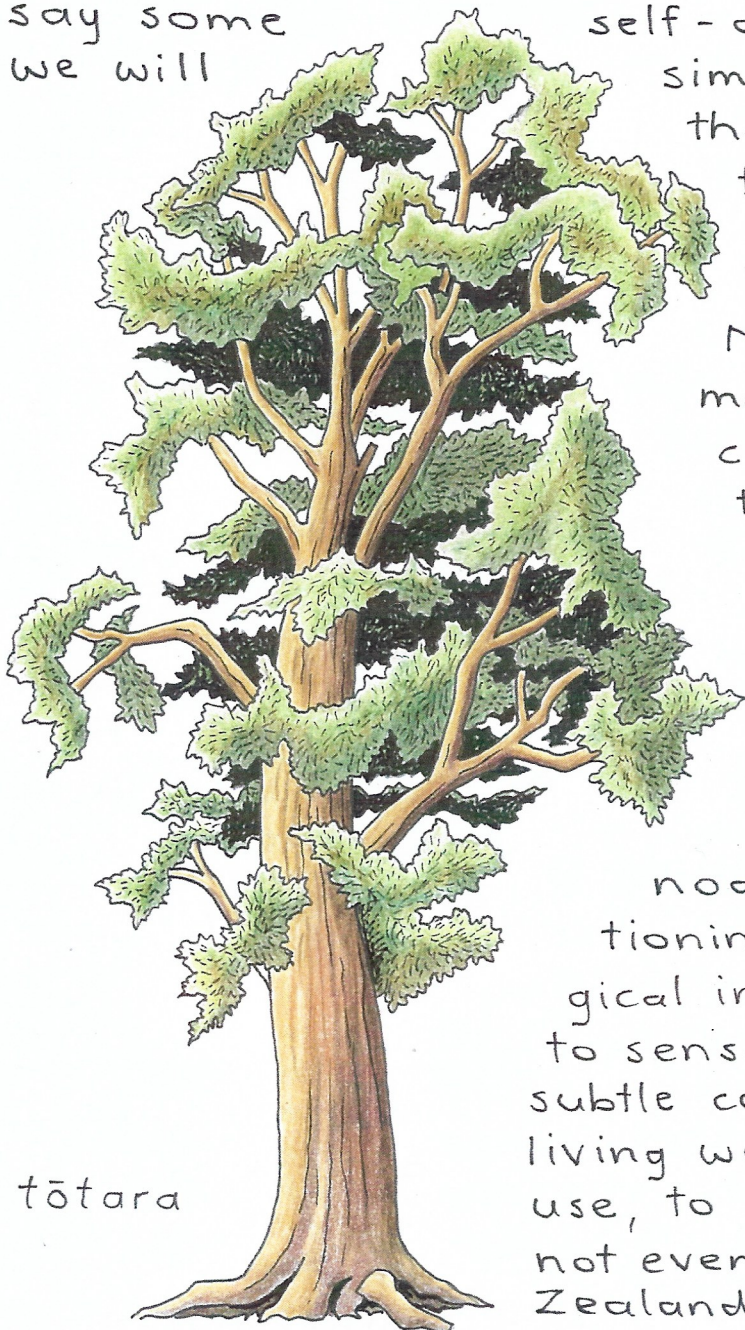
Climate scientists warned us more than 40 years ago about the disastrous consequences of continuing to burn fossil fuel, raising the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the membranous film of air wrapped around Mother Earth.



6 The atmosphere, among other enterprises, functions as a finely-tuned thermostat, with just enough greenhouse gases (chiefly CO<sub>2</sub> and water vapour) to maintain the global temperatures that let life thrive. The thermostat and the temperatures have changed a lot over time, challenging our own and other species with both ice ages and hothouse interglacials. Now to our astonishment we find that our own wasteful ways are altering the thermostat at an unimaginable and unprecedented pace and scale. Have we changed our behaviour? Not yet, partly perhaps because the whole scenario is barely thinkable, partly because we pretend that if all else fails our own remarkable technology will save the day. Aha, say some self-assured experts, fear not, we will

simply invent a machine that will suck CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere and hide it away in safe places. Hello, say the biologists, Nature invented such machines long ago. We call them trees. Aha, say the foresters, we will plant billions of the fastest-growing trees that Nature has (apparently) already invented for us.

Thus, with not even a nod to complex, fully functioning ecosystems, to ecological integrity, to aesthetics, to sense of place, to history, to subtle comprehension of how the living world works, to wise land-use, to rural human communities, not even to commonsense, New Zealand seems hellbent on



tōtara



planting *Pinus radiata*, an exotic conifer native to California, solely for carbon sequestration. Is this the best *Homo sapiens* can do, attempt to solve one monstrous blunder with another?

Increasing tree cover is a sensible contribution to tackling climate change. It could also mean an economic incentive to let native forest regenerate



naturally across millions of hectares of marginal, often weed-infested, currently unproductive hill country. Slower to get going, native forest regeneration eventually sequesters more carbon and for much longer than monocultures of pines. It also brings a thousand other benefits which pine-plantings don't even touch.

Pine proponents claim that planting natives is costly. They miss that point too. There is no need to *plant* natives when Nature provides this service free. "Fools and dreamers" cry the doubters, "it will never happen." Well, it can and it does. 32 years of natural regeneration on Hinewai, and on many other places less favoured, show that it happens alright, and beats exotic plantings hands down, by every meaningful measure. [Have a nice cup of tea, Hugh, and a lie down - Ed.]. [Thankyou Ed. - Hugh].

### Fools, Dreamers, and an avalanche of Emails

The half-hour documentary about Hinewai made by Antoinette and Jordan of Happen Films was premièred in the c\*r-infested Swamp in June. Two days later it began numerous screenings



8 in Akaroa. Jord and Ant followed this with a weeks-long tour of both islands. They then let it go [released it - Ed. - free to view on YouTube] [whatever that means - Hugh].

Everyone seems to agree that the film is nicely put together and tells the Hinewai story well. This did not prepare Hugh [who rabbits on a bit in the movie - Ed.] for what happened next. And here he must make a confession and an apology. Messages and requests have flooded in from all over the world, mostly as emails dutifully printed out at Ōtānerito by Tricia and Paul and wafted upvalley. Hugh would love to respond to all of them. Alas, if he succeeds in this, it means he has left no time at all for anything else, including outside work on the reserve [and sleeping - Ed.]. He believes this is an outcome no-one would want. So if no response has reached you from your lovely feedback, now, yet or ever, thanks, and sorry.

Happen Films' publicity machine was in top gear for a while. Hugh found himself being interviewed for print media, radio, and even television. At one stage, still dazzled and astonished by the attention, he was being interrogated for a farming magazine. He asked "How often does your journal appear?" The journalist didn't answer this directly but simply repeated the question: "How often does the New Zealand Farmer's Weekly come out?" he said. [So Hugh still doesn't know - Ed.].

### To and Fro

Pikimai Zigzag is an old overgrown farm track that we are transforming into a new walking route. By linking Ōpātuti Track with Stony Bay Road, Pikimai Zigzag creates a circular walk of 2 to 3 hours, starting from and returning to Stony Bay Saddle (see the map on page 4). It should be fully walkable by Christ-



mas. Day walkers (as well as Banks Track 9 trampers) can then experience the majestic red beech forest of the upper Stony Bay Valley,



along with many other wonders. There is, one must admit, some height to lose and gain. You descend from 690m to 320m and then climb back up again. "Pikimai" may be translated just so. Speakers of Te Reo will be familiar with the exhortation "Pikimai! Kakemai!" [Up and at 'em - Ed.]. Monolingual English speakers will be re-

assured by the fine word "Zigzag" with all it implies of easing ups and downs.

### On edge

The Regional Council asked us to deal with gorse and broom sneaking on to our lengthy frontier with Narbeyland. They had a point. [Gorse has many points - Ed.]. Work had slipped behind a bit while we laboured away on new tracks in the Stony Bay Valley. Paul Newport put in a prodigious effort here, while Brian Narbey kindly lent him his quad bike and farm tracks to access the retreating workfront.

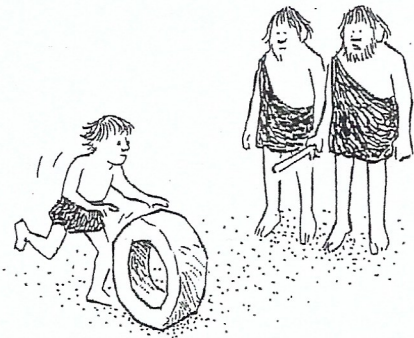
### A little electronic easing

The Stony Bay Valley is the wildest part of Hinewai Reserve, and also the furthest away from home-bases in the Ōtānerito Valley. For Hugh and Andrew to reach workfaces on upper Ōpātuti Track and Pikimai Zigzag, for example, they must commute by bike and foot for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours each way. These are glorious commutes, of course; and the only jams are in the lunch-box. For Paul to reach lower Ōpātuti Track and the Narbey back boundary takes at least as long.

Paul ventured a tentative suggestion: "Would



10 the Trust consider getting our own quad bike to help achieve work goals at Stony Bay?" He half-expected the Manager to throw up his hands in horror. But the idea made sense. What did not make sense, in these perilous times, was to buy a vehicle powered by fossil fuel. "Alas then," said Paul, the idea won't fly. I'm almost certain that electric technology could not handle the steepness of our terrain." The long and the short of it is that Paul arranged for a demonstration on site of an electric quad bike that held some promise of sufficient oomph. It was put through its paces on the steepest farm track of all - the Narbeys' zigzag to Sleepy Bay Spur. To Paul's delight and Hugh's relief the little vehicle passed its test with flying colours.

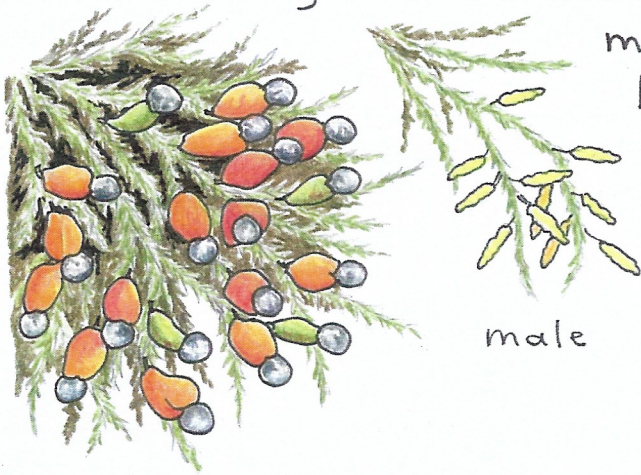


'It's like they're born knowing how the new technology works'

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## Martha and Arthur

Of the two big podocarps on Curry Track below the Worsley House site, we confirmed that the matai is male and the kahikatea female. Purple Peak Curry Reserve has a number of adult trees of both species plus some handsome tōtara. All podocarps have separate male and female trees and are wind-pollinated.



female kahikatea

male

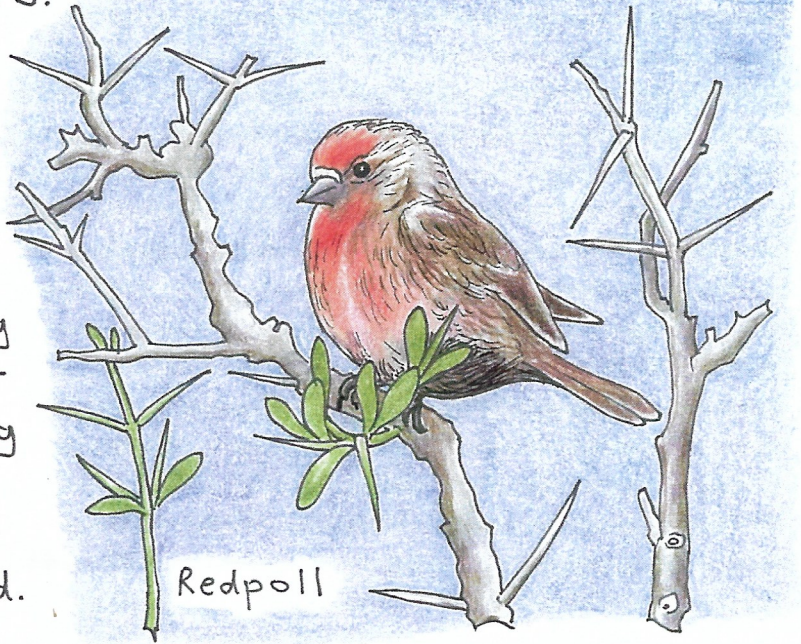
Along with the podocarps and many more unrelated plants, and unlike *Clematis* in other parts of the world, New Zealand's native species of *Clematis* also have separate male and female vines. Botanists don't seem to know exactly why heterosexuality should be so rampant in Aotearoa. As Pīpipi goes to print puawānanga (*Clematis paniculata*) is splashing the dark bush canopies with its



flawless white flowers.

## Good and bad

Spring is in the air. Sightings of single falcons are now almost commonplace, but during September and October we have been watching two flying together, calling out and sky-dancing high overhead.



Swallows are nesting again inside Tara Track Shelter, not too put out by passing people. Abundant redpolls are radiant in full breeding plumage.

At Brocheries Pond a male paradise duck has been on his own, mostly snoozing in the grass at the edge of the water, barely perturbed by our constant passing. "Mrs Pūtakitaki must be nesting" opined Hugh, and looked up his bird books to check on their shared responsibilities. "The male aggressively defends the territory" he read "and maintains an alert lookout for predators while the female incubates." "Not a good look" he told Mr Placid next morning. "Dereliction of duty." Nonetheless on 23 October seven tiny ducklings were paddling about on the pond, attended by both mum and dad. It was not a happy ending though. A week later only one youngster survived. Dad was looking increasingly unwell, perhaps not to blame for his





12 apparent inertia and poor parental conduct.

We hesitate to record one shocking incident in May. A young kāhu/harrier hawk was found dead in a Timms trap, set for possums at Skyline Beech. In 32 years of catching possums we have never before accidentally caught a hawk. Andrew pieced together the likely sorry chain of events. A few days earlier the harrier had found a dead hedgehog trapped there, feasted on it, and left it as an empty skin. Andrew pulled out the remains when he reset the trap. The hawk returned to see if the magic yellow box held further treats, poked his head in for a closer look, and lost his own life in an instant. E aue! as we say in Te Reo. We love these birds. Fortunately they are many.

### An Open Day

Hinewai is always open, but the Trust is planning a special gathering on Sunday 23 February 2020, about the time Hugh and his twin sister Hilary reach a combined age of one and a half centuries [about a quarter the age of Big Tōtara - Ed.]. You will find an insert about it with this newsletter, if the mailout workers have been their usual diligent selves, with contact details for Bruce and Tricia.

### T-shirts

Requests for Hinewai T-shirts have been numerous enough for Bruce to look at a fresh run. Contact him (see insert) if you are interested. It's not a fundraiser but prices will cover costs.

Pīpipi appears twice a year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations are hugely helpful and appreciated. Contributions of \$5 or more are tax-deductible. We will post a receipt.



NAME

ADDRESS

**CHEQUES** Make out to **Maurice White Native Forest Trust**

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CC 111 07 [Pīpipi 50]