

RENOVATED TOOKE MEMORIAL UNVEILED

An unusual but important granite monument has stood steadfast under a grove of magnificent plane trees near the entrance to Cedara Agricultural College for almost 20 years. This monument honours groundbreaking research on a major forestry pest that was undertaken in the early 1900s. This research was the visionary and pioneering work of the South African entomologist Dr. Frank Tooke, who discovered and released a biological control agent for an insect pest that was devastating *Eucalyptus* trees in South Africa. Over the years, this monument had become degraded and a ceremony was held on 19 January to unveil the refurbished monument.



The renovated Tooke monument was unveiled at a ceremony attended by three generations of the Tooke family, FABI researchers and guests from Government, the South African forestry industry and associations. FABI sponsored the replacement of the plaque on the monument. This monument serves to retain this important South African historical record and also to continue to honour the pioneering work of Dr. Frank Tooke.



Addressing the guests, Dr. John Tooke, the son of Dr Frank Tooke, spoke of the challenges his father – a Government-appointed forest entomologist – faced in travelling to Australia to find a biological control agent for the devastating *Eucalyptus* pest *Gonipterus scutellatus*. His journey to Australia by ship lasted two months and he had to have his food supplies dropped by aircraft while in the field. He even developed scurvy while in the field and

once was so thirsty for lack of water that he, in desperation, drank a tin of syrup. But his perseverance paid off and his groundbreaking work and discovery of the egg parasitoid *Anaphes nitens* Girault has formed the basis for the continued research into the use of biocontrol agents to counter the devastating impact of pests on the forestry and agricultural industries.

FABI Director Prof. Mike Wingfield noted that “insect pests are devastating forest plantations in South Africa, damaging the local economy and opportunities to promote job creation. Biological control is one of the most effective means to negate the negative impact of these pests and the pioneering work of Frank Tooke should not be forgotten”.

Prof. Wingfield recalled the first unveiling of the monument in 1975. He told the group how Dr. Graeme Hepburn had told the group attending that ceremony how he had released the biological control agent in 1926. Rather than blowing these little insects out of a glass tube, he replayed that action using a glass tube containing white confetti. Prof. Wingfield attempted the same action but with a sudden gust of wind blowing in his direction, found himself covered in white confetti!



Dr Brett Hurley, a forest entomologist and leader of the forest insect biological control programme at FABI, shared stories taken from the doctoral thesis of Dr. Frank Tooke. He also brought with him living specimens of *Gonipterus 'scutellatus"* and its tiny biological control agent *Anaphes nitens* for the group to see. He also told the audience of the new and important insect biological control work being undertaken at FABI on behalf of the South African forestry industry.