

Forbes Elworthy
Bledisloe Medal
2017

A global business and passionate farmer is this year's Bledisloe Medal recipient.

Forbes Elworthy is the Founder of Craigmore Sustainables one of New Zealand's leading investors in farmland.

Brought up on Craigmore Station, a sheep, beef and deer property farmed by the Elworthy family in South Canterbury, Forbes started work as a shepherd. He then studied agricultural economics at Lincoln University, where he was student president in 1984. He went to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in 1985 and completed a degree in politics, philosophy and economics there in 1988.

After working as an analyst at Goldman Sachs in London, he completed an MBA at Harvard Business School in 1992. Forbes worked in the financial markets from 1992 to 2000. He then founded financial information publisher Credit Market Analysis which was acquired by Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

Forbes returned full time to farming in 2005 to live on and manage Craigmore Station. He has since extended the farming assets of Craigmore Farming Company to approximately 4,000-ha by acquiring the Baber's Block and Grange Hill runs in the Hunters' Hills. During this period he became involved as one of the leaders of the Meat Industry Action Group. Forbes learned a few lessons from this organisation's failure to create a 'national champion' in the New Zealand meat industry.

From 2009 Forbes partnered with his brother-in-law, Mark Cox, to create Craigmore Sustainables to invest in dairy, horticulture and sheep/beef farming as well as carbon forestry. Craigmore Sustainables established 6.5 million trees during the past five years.

Forbes' father, Sir Peter Elworthy, used to say "you'll never beat the family farmer". This is something Forbes holds dear. He and Mark Cox see the capital and management they bring to farms as enabling the 'real hero's of the Craigmore farms who are the talented men and women who operate them – in many cases as our equity partners'.

In 2013 Mark Cox and Che Charteris took over from Forbes as the active leaders of Craigmore Sustainables. Forbes and his wife Bridgie and three children then returned to the UK where Forbes is leading a new 'digital' venture under the Craigmore umbrella. This farm information management business is called Map of Agriculture. Forbes sees it being 'built by farmers, for farmers'. Map of Ag has offices in UK, New Zealand and Argentina. It has 75 staff. Map of Ag is an active recruiter of experienced agricultural graduates with strong analytic skills.

Forbes believes the greatest future challenge facing the world and the farming industry is climate change. He separately believes that "platform economics" will be a massive disruptor of many industries, including agriculture.

Forbes is following in the footsteps of his late father, Peter Elworthy who was also a Bledisloe Medal recipient. Forbes' outstanding achievements, and contribution to his community make him a worthy recipient of the 2017 Bledisloe Medal.