

FCRA News

The newsletter *for* retired Forestry Commission employees

First issue - September 1997

This is your newsletter

The Forestry Commission Retirement Association, in conjunction with Slasher, is pleased to present FCRA News.

The move to a dedicated newsletter came after increasing pressure forced Slasher to devote less and less space to retirement matters.

FCRA News will come along with every copy of Slasher so that both retired, and those still working, can keep abreast of what goes on after retirement. In this way everyone will know that the Association is active and well supported.

The bonus in having a dedicated newsletter is that we are now free to report on whatever subject we wish and we aim to make it interesting, informative and enjoyable reading. If you have any ideas, write to the Editor or your newsletter correspondent. (see back page)

Because the newsletter is produced in-house, we are unable at present to reproduce photographs.

Our Organisation

The resurrection of a Branch of the Association in Inverness last year means that the FCRA now has complete coverage over the whole country with its branches located, north to south, at Inverness, Glasgow, Edinburgh, York, Cardiff, Bristol and Farnham.

In addition, local Groups have developed where there are concentrations of retired people. This is an ongoing process, so that Aberdeen, Dumfries, Northumberland and North Wales are four centres where it should certainly be possible to start up new Groups. [Readers in these locations please note and get together].

RETIREMENTS

Slasher no longer publishes names of those who have retired. So in future we shall do this. The following is a list of those who have retired since February 1997, roughly when Slasher stopped giving this information.

Roy Baldwin FE S&W(E) New Forest
David Bell FA (E) Midlands
Paul Biggin FE N(S) Lochaber
Bill Brown RD NRS
George Bruce FA (E) NW England
Tom Buchanan FE S&W(E) Forest of Dean
Jack Burton FE S(S)
Basil Carter FE N&E(E) Lakes
Frank Clough FE N&E(E) York
Eric Coles FE N(S)
Mike Compton FE Business Unit Wales West England
Gordon Cowie HQ Edinburgh
James Davidson RD NRS TSU(N) Newton
Merion Davies FA (Wales)
Merv Davies FE (Wales)
Charles Dickens HQ Edinburgh
Julian Evans RD Alice Holt
David Grundy HQ Edinburgh
Peter Humphries FE N&E (E) Lakes
Brian Jones FE S&W (E) Bristol
Anne Lewis FE N(S)
Tony Ludlow RD Alice Holt
Willie McGarva FE Santon Downham
John McNeill RD NRS TSU
William Mutch FE (Wales) Llanrwst
Steve Petty RD NRS
Tom Rainey HQ Edinburgh
Jan Robertson FE N(S)
Eleanor Smart FE N(S)
Richard Smith FA (E) Cambridge
Brian Spencer RD Alice Holt
Mike Turner FE Gravel Hill Workshop
Gordon Walker FE Inver Workshop
Roger Warn FE S&W(E) Forest of Dean
Thomas Wilkinson FE N&E(E)
Tim Winter RD Alice Holt

Obviously those, who live in the heart of the Flow Country or deep in the Southern Uplands will face problems, however they will now be kept aware of activities through the Newsletter, and they may even find it possible to attend a meeting somewhere. Our meetings are always enjoyable.

Joining the Association couldn't be easier - newly retired people are being given a free year's membership automatically - including spouses, after which the annual subscription is a mere £3 - again including spouses. Furthermore guests are always welcome at no charge so Aberdonians can save their £s!

So pick up the phone and speak to one of our newsletter correspondents for details.

Round the Branches

In each issue there will be a contribution from one Branch of the Association. This one comes from Tom Moules, Chairman North England Branch.

He writes, "Despite our rather grand title we comprise the York Group plus the 'Wavering-on-the-fringe' Chester Group. So, please jump off the fence Chester!

"We don't think the possible closure of the York Regional Office will affect us as our activities are organised from Pickering with the majority of members coming from the Old Allerston/Helmsley Districts.

"We held our first AGM in February '96 and visits etc. are arranged for the last Wednesday of alternate months.

"Considering that our total membership is only 51, we feel our average attendance of 24 members is a healthy sign.

"We had hoped to start a new group in The Borders

and an attempt was made in November '96 to hold a meeting in the Bellingham FE Office but this failed due to lack of support. We keep trying to find someone from Northumberland who is prepared to take a leading role so if you are interested in having a local FCRA group do please contact me, Tom Moules at 14 Fenwicks Lane, Fulford, York, YO1 4PL, Tel 01904 658239 or our newsletter correspondent Mrs Marianne Price.

Listings

This will be an Editor's selection from information provided by newsletter correspondents of forthcoming events planned to occur during the 'life' of each newsletter.

He will be looking for events which will attract non-members, and events likely to be of interest members from adjoining Groups and Branches.

1. Nancy Mackenzie recommends Wednesday, 17 September for a visit to Wm Adam designed NT property at House of Dun, near Montrose where in addition to the interesting house there is a spectacular avenue of Wellingtonias dating from 1853. Cars leave HQ at 10 am. Lunch at House of Dun, tour begins at 2 pm. Also make note of the Cheese & Wine Party at HQ at 7 pm on Thursday, 2 October. A good social occasion.

2. Audrey Childs sends the following

"The Wessex Group plan to visit the Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagan's Castle, Cardiff on Thursday, 4 September, where rural buildings of bygone days from all over Wales have been erected. Entry £3.75 including a 'land'

train for oldies. Meet at the castle car park at 11 am. We shall welcome any Welsh members and non members." Contact John Thomas on 0117 986 3869 for further details.

3. Donald Beaton N(S) writes, "our Branch is at present closed, but will open in September with Arthur Bramwell as Chairman. If you can do something or organise something then volunteer and do."

4. Barry Griggs, Breckland Group writes that at a well attended AGM, it was resolved that a letter be sent to all members, including recently retired staff, sounding them out about their interest in the activities of the Group. The 80% response produced a welcome number of new members. This approach could be used elsewhere to encourage others.

Forthcoming excursions include Ickworth House and Knebworth House - the latter for a SE(E) Branch Rally. Further details from Lena Birchall or from Barry Griggs, 62 The Lammas, Mundford, Thetford, Norfolk, IP26 5DT Tel 01842 878 257.

Letters to the Editor

These should be sent to Richard Toleman. (see back page)

Dear Sir

I have always been suspicious of a reader's letter in the first issue of a publication. Readers may rightly assume some editorial machinations - a 'plant'.

But nevertheless the latest (June 97) Slasher did include the good news that the Old Firm is to be de-industrialised. This hideous jargon is being rapidly replaced by very slightly better jargon terms such as

'unification' and 'harmonisation'. What's wrong with fair play?

Basically the declared aim to (belatedly) get rid of class differences in conditions of service (pensions, sickness, holidays, etc.) will be widely welcomed. Progress indeed!

Oldies will remember the protocols of address; 'Sir', 'Smith', 'Mr Smith', and 'Jock'. And the subtle difference between English and Scottish custom.

What a proud graduation it was to move to white blotting paper from the plebeian green of the lower orders; the smug satisfaction of a fitted carpet that was recognisable by all visiting public servants; the proud ownership of a cap for the officially issued early ball-point pens. Mere chair-borne staff received no cap, thus hopefully ensuring that these prized objects (which spewed black gunge) would not walk out of the office.

I now look forward to meeting a Commissioner in standard class on the Intercity, and the first worthy harvester operator displaying his C B at the Palace gates.

As Rabbie Burns said,

*"The gowd is but a guinea stamp,
a man's (or a woman's) a man (or
a woman, of course)
for a' that."*

Yours etc., Andy Neustein,
Innisfallen, Church Hill,
Easingwold, York - 11.7.97

A Ragbag of Snippets

These are short - even one sentence - contributions on any subject and preferably including some humorous items. Please send them to the Editor.

1. Mike Reaney, writing from South Wales, reports that

Gerry Cutcliffe who retired on 31 July as a Leading Ranger, was recently awarded the MBE. We congratulate him and look forward to receiving the benefit of his enthusiasm and enormous knowledge of local wildlife.

Mike, also offers this word of advice,

*"Put your hand in a bucket of water
Plunge it in right down to the wrist
Take it out and the size of the hole
Will show you how much you'll be
missed"*

2. Did you know that Ann Moules, wife of Tom (N(E)) has now completed the manuscript of her 'Tales from the Forest' and is now at the illustrations stage. She renews her thanks to all contributors.

3. We are looking for someone who can provide an analysis of why some people don't join the FCRA while for others it provides so much satisfaction and enjoyment. Are you the one we seek?

4. All a matter of 6's and 7's

Willie George, back from Ireland for a holiday at Ardentinnny Caravan Park in July was recalling old times with Alistair Maclean - his 1964 team mate on the Glenfinart Forest Isachsen Winch.

Under Works Study guidance and encouragement from John Drummond and Bill Norris the pair were modestly pleased with their achievement of 600 cft of timber extracted per day on a regular basis - rain, hail or shine - until one day John allegedly mentioned in passing that around 700 cft was the amount the Glenbranter team was extracting.

All was revealed some months later when Alistair was accosted by his Glenbranter opposite number who allegedly invited Alistair to explain just how Willie and he were managing to extract 700 a day.

5. Jinxed

Forestry folk have an affinity with wood and forests, of course. Does that mean though a subconscious antipathy to their opposites, say steel and water? I only ask because our last two trips have implied it. Take the annual meet at Northwich and that canal cruise (well, it was the River Weaver really). The boatman just could not bring his steel barge alongside the jetty. He manoeuvred and turned and of course Weaved but the boat would not come alongside. Eventually our waiting party had to get him to throw a line and we pulled him in. "Funny" he said, "It's never happened before".

The following month there was the Branch outing on Loch Awe. All went well until the return leg. Half way back the steel boat struck a rock, bang, bang, bang, three rocks! "Funny" said the boatman, "They weren't there yesterday". For the rest of the journey we forgot about the scenery and watched the deck for signs of a trickle. We disembarked before it appeared.

Last month I spent some days on a wooden boat in Finland. Not a hitch, not a murmur, not a protest. It's that affinity with wood, you know.

Charles V Greenlees

DEATHS

In future, Slasher will continue to give obituaries for people who die while in service. The newsletter will give information of deaths of those who have retired.

		<u>Died</u>	<u>Aged</u>
James Farquharson	Tulliallan	05.05.97	72 years
Malcolm Finlayson	Isle of Skye	31.05.97	86 years
Frederick Johnson	Selby	03.04.97	87 years
Mary Manicom	Woking	22.05.97	86 years
Alice Smith - Widow of Donald Smith	Edinburgh	26.12.96	82 years
Robert Vance	Ballachulish	04.05.97	82 years
Alexander Veitch	Glasgow	09.05.97	93 years
David Williams	Flookburgh, Cumbria	25.01.97	85 years

OBITUARIES

If you are in a position to write an obituary or just a brief note recording something memorable - an incident or a quotation or anything by which the person will be remembered - please contact the Editor or your newsletter correspondent.

Susan Stephan writes that her husband Erwin Erich Stephen (Steph) died on 7 February. He worked with Pat Garrow (Kinloch Rannoch) and H F Scott (Bristol).

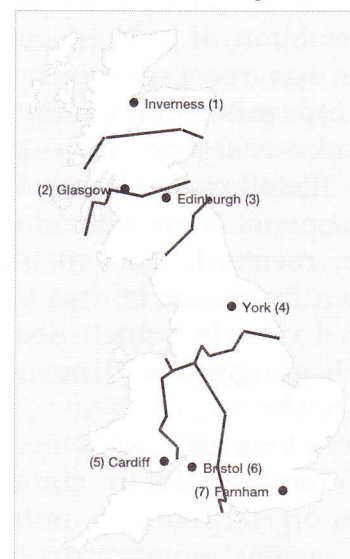
Mike Reaney writes that on 18 February, conservancy engineer Geoff Sinkinson died aged 73 years. "Geoff was especially respected by the men on the machines moving the muck." "His aim was to produce roads - not paper and when the first computer data sheets arrived in Cardiff he laid them along the corridor for people to walk on."

While on the subject of road engineers, Stanley Robertson suggests that any visitor to Arran should go down towards the shore and admire the dressed brick bridge across the River Sannox or when in Largs find the exquisite 18" tall model of the local kirk made entirely of matches. Both are memorials to Dave Bennett and both were built single handed. He died aged 82 a great character. He is survived by his wife and daughter.

Barbara Shiels writes of the sadness felt by his many friends at the death of Fred McLauchlan on 12 December at only 55 years old. He was treasurer and a staunch supporter of the Edinburgh Branch.

With sadness Donald Beaton records the death of John Campbell, a native of Raasay and a fluent Gaelic speaker who made his mark by establishing the FC plantations on Lewis. John was a life member of N(S) Branch which extends its condolences to his family on Isle of Skye.

Branch Boundaries and Newsletter Correspondents



- (1) Donald Beaton - Tel: 01862 881301
- (2) Charlie Greenlees - Tel: 01546 602929
- (3) Nancy MacKenzie - Tel: 0131 339 2367
- (4) Marianne Price - Tel: 01904 625993
- (5) Mike Reaney - Tel: 01792 202449
- (6) Audrey Childs - Tel: 01225 832526
- (7) Lena Birchall - Tel: 01420 23213

FCRA News is a joint Retirement Association and Slasher production.

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