

FCRA *News*

The newsletter about retired Forestry Commission employees

Second issue - December 1997

Is It Worth It?

Asks Frazer Lindsay - formerly Head of Information

Whilst I was still at work the thorny problem of how to record and report the activities of the Commission's retiring and retired employees was a constant irritant to myself and a succession of *Slasher* editors. Just how many photographs of the big bosses handing out cheques and other goodies can you stand each couple of months; how interesting was it to read of 12 members visiting yet another stately home; how do you choose which obituary deserves space over another?

And I'll let you into a secret - nobody ever agreed and nobody was pleased with the result. Different editors of *Slasher* have taken different routes to finding solutions - in the sure knowledge that the Forestry Commission pensioners outnumber serving employees and will claim the right to most space in each issue.

There is, of course, a legitimate place both in *Slasher* and in this Newsletter for obituaries. It's important to us that we all have news of former colleagues. There is also a legitimate place for news about Branch activities, and national officers can use it to keep in close touch with members.

So **FCRA News** will only be a success if we, the retired, make our mark. We can't blame the editor if we don't like what we see. So what shall we make of future issues. Already there is evidence that amongst our membership there are those who make up jokes, or have funny reminiscences worth sharing. Is there anyone out there who draws cartoons, can write about the giants of former Forestry Commission people (this might make an excellent series), can suggest new and novel ways of recruiting new members; can - in short - entertain the rest of us.

The **FCRA News** has been gestating for some months and it is a measure of the commitment and perseverance of a few fellow members that it has finally appeared. This first issues will please some, disappoint others but that it exists is good.

RETIREMENTS

T G Breed, Thetford

C F Evans, Llanwylchlyn

J J Hamilton, Castle Douglas

D Linney, Rugeley, Staff

E R Parry, Aberystwyth

Mrs S Simpson, Edinburgh

D Yeats, Huntly

D Galbraith, Kames, Tighnabruaich

M R Plowman, Alice Holt

P C Clark, Lyndhurst

J Fraser, Inverness

G J Hamilton, Inverness

J J Phillipson, Roslin

C Roberts, Cynwyd Clwyd

E Woodgate, Farnham

J Dack, Horsham St Faith

A G James, Aberystwyth

A B Sawers, Edinburgh

D L Wilmot, Llangorse, Brecon

We do apologise to anyone who had been left out of this, or the previous list. There have been some difficulties in ensuring all names have been submitted to us - Sorry!

THE NEST IS HISTORY

Mike Long - of mole plough fame in Moffat - recalls an incident in 1969 at the Forestry Commission Golden Jubilee Exhibition at Bush. A cage labelled and containing a pine marten also had 2 hens' eggs on a pile of heather (the marten's lunch). A primary school teacher and class passed by. She announced "you have seen the arrival of sand martins and house martins, here's a pine marten's nest". With that the pine marten emerged and promptly ate the eggs! Response 'there's a rat eating the pine marten's eggs!' Moral - the world survives quite happily on misinformation, especially if delivered profoundly.

1998 FCRA AGM

The 1998 AGM of the FCRA will take place at the Crieff Hydro hotel, near Perth on Tuesday 2 June 1998. On 3 June there will be a forest excursion. Many will know the hotel, which has a wide range of facilities and entertain-ment. An inclusive full board rate has been negotiated at £50 per day. For more details contact John Wallace, 0131 539 0667.

FROM THE EDITOR

This is the second issue of the **FCRA News**. I hope you think it is an improvement on the first. Our objective was to produce something to meet the needs of retired employees; then make it better. Only comments from the readership will help this happen. I have already received many - thanks for your time. I am feeling my way also, as I have not edited and produced a publication before. I am receiving plenty of help from staff in HQ Edinburgh, and you the retirees. The contents will reflect your ideas and expectations - please keep them coming. Meanwhile, if you feel you have spotted errors, it shows you have read it carefully. Please let me or Bill Sutherland know.

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY

LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT

After retirement, life can take many new or fortuitous routes. From time to time contributors will let us know what they have been doing since leaving the Forestry Commission. David Chadwick in Aberdour, Fife is our first. Similar contributions are always welcome.

A year in Zimbabwe

I think we underestimate the inter-national impact of pioneering work in British forestry. Work study is a case in point. We took for granted its application in the Forestry Commission and have given little thought to the tremendous strides made in work organisation. Quantification of work content in standard timetables is still the basis of most rational piecework systems and objective assessment of contract rates.

Having spent thirty years of my working life as District Officer, Assistant Conservator and, finally, Chief Work Study Officer my first visit to Zimbabwe as a consultant for ILO, an United Nations Agency, in 1990 was something of an eye opener. The forests are superb. The first *Pinus patula* seed was imported from Mexico in 1924 and from this beginning the local Forest Service (now the Zimbabwe Forestry Commission), the Wattle Company (part of Lonrho) and Border Timbers have established large areas of pine plantations in the Eastern Highlands. With yield classes in the twenties and rotations averaging only 25 years these pioneering plantations are now well established forests providing much of the employment in the area. As high pruning and regular thinning are part of the standard management regime these handsome crops also produce a very good quality clear timber. This is the basis on which the country is developing a flourishing processing industry. Zimbabwe is now a net exporter of forest products.

Benefit

Sadly, whilst the silviculture systems were clearly very successful, work organisation left much to be desired. Working systems were generally very third world, and frequently far from safe. If the country was to get full benefit from the tremendous wealth accumulating in the forests working methods had to be modernised. The Zimbabwe Forestry Commission had recognised this. It asked ILO for assistance, and ILO asked me to see what scope there was for the introduction of Work Study to forest operations.

From the report on this preliminary visit ILO drafted a project plan, secured from the Royal Netherlands Government the promise of funding, and asked me if I would go to Zimbabwe as Chief Technical Advisor for the project. It was not difficult deciding to ask the Forestry Commission if it would give me early retirement so that I could accept the offer. I made

a further visit of a month in 1992 to settle details of the project plan and select staff to be sent to the UK for basic training in Work Study. Through the good offices of Technical Development Branch, they also experienced at first hand the application of work study in the Forestry Commission.

In June 1993 Anne and I moved to Zimbabwe for a year. After a lifetime in line management and running Work Study Branch it was not easy to stand back and let local staff flex their muscles and establish the newly formed Work Study Branch, but my job was to assist not to direct what was done. They have had a big impact on forest operations and have already established their reputation internationally. Towards the end of the project we organised a very successful workshop on the use of work study in tropical plantation forestry. It attracted over forty participants from the forest services of sub-Saharan countries. Through the workshop the Zimbabwe Forestry Commission's Work Study Branch established strong links with forest work study staff in the Republic of South Africa. We were very fortunate in having David Mobbs enthusiastic participation in the workshop and in the statistics course he ran for the Branch and other Zimbabwean foresters after the workshop.

Greetings

We also had a visit from Richard and Judy Toleman and enjoyed showing them some of the sights of Zimbabwe. Richard joined us at a meeting of the Forestry Association of Zimbabwe. At the Forest Research Branch Office at Chimanimani which Michael Wall, recently Head of Technical Development Branch, had built during his time with the Zimbabwe Forestry Commission, Richard gave greetings from the Institute of Chartered Foresters and presented one of its ties to George Bruce, president of FAZ, receiving in exchange one of the distinctive FAZ ties.

Anne and I returned home in July 1994, with many firm friendships from our year in Mutare. Zimbabwe is a beautiful country with lovely people - both black and white. They say that African dust gets into the veins. I think this is true. Part of us will always belong there. Happily we made four further visits, two each in 1995 and 1996, but sadly the project has now come to an end and any further visits will be as holiday makers. We look forward to whenever that will be. The lovely forests, the game parks and their magnificent wildlife, the mighty Zambezi, the cool green Eastern Highlands, the hot dry Low Veldt are all things we look forward to seeing again, but above all we miss the people who made us feel so very much at home there.

RAGBAG OF SNIPPETS

The North Scotland Branch visited Affric forest during the summer where the guides were Gordon Donaldson and Sandra Folds. The forest is rich in pine wood wildlife and located in a dramatic setting. A final highlight was wandering through the huge Douglas firs at Plodda where regeneration abounds, and it has the feel of a natural forest. More members welcome, great visits are planned. Contact Donald Beaton on Tel: 01862 881 3012.

The Director of The Royal Forestry Society of England, Wales and Northern Ireland has approached **FCRA News** with the suggestion that retired people may wish to join at a concessionary rate of £12.00 per annum. The Society has a wide range of functions and visits and new members will be made welcome. A good way to remain in touch with forestry.

Further information from:

102 High Street,
TRING HP23 4AF.

And on the matter of Societies, we have been contacted by the David Douglas Society, which was founded this year. It aims to perpetuate the memory of David Douglas, the Scottish plant collector (remember the Douglas fir). It is open to all with a forestry, horticulture and landscape interest. Visits and meetings have been arranged, more are planned. It appears very active!

Further information from:

Jean Stewart,
11 Mansfield Road,
Scone PH2 6SA.

Tony Joslin, the Deputy Surveyor in the Dean until his retirement, will be emigrating in 1998 to take up farming in Manitoba, Canada. Forester turned farmer - is this a turncoat?

A Taste of Wine

From Stan Forrester's Winery in Strathcarron

Our wine making started some years before we retired with a wine making kit from Boots. After the first fermentation, we realised that we would need to take the job more seriously. The labels on the cans of concentrate suggest that the wine can be drunk immediately but usually recommend storing for 3 months, or even longer for a red wine. Our first gallon did not last 6 weeks! It took about 15 years before we built up our equipment sufficiently for our brewing needs and to allow storage in bulk for maturing. Since we retired it has become a particularly rewarding hobby. We brew about 20 gallons a year.

No! we are not dipsomaniacs. We usually have a bottle over the weekend, half with our dinner on Saturday, and half on Sunday. Add on an occasional bottle for a special occasion, a couple of bottles when we have guests, and perhaps half a dozen for a party, and 120 bottles does not seem a lot.

We retired to a large garden, planned partly with wine making in mind. We start the year with the rhubarb. Elderflower is usually next. Then one of our specialities, rose, brewed with rose petals. Later come the gooseberries, raspberries, blackcurrants and a real delight, red currants. The flavour of beetroot wine surprises many guests - the glorious colour is expected. Last of the season is the elderberry wine.

We are always on the lookout for 'windfalls'. A friend offered a bucketful of wild cherries. My brother had a bumper crop of apples, many of which fell and were too bruised to keep. They made an excellent white wine. We had a glut of plums one year. We have not had a single plum on the 3 trees since. My brother provided a supply last year.

There have been real successes. I had 2 first prizes in a local garden show. The judge afterwards was particularly complimentary - and he spends quite a bit of the year in France. Just this year, friends from Portugal had a taste of the 1994 elderberry. Their eyebrows went up. Their faces lit up with a smile. They ought to know something about wine. They had just given me a bottle of very special port!

The cost? I have not bothered to price things out precisely. I must average less than a pound a bottle. When I use only our own fruit, or somebody's surplus, it is well under 50p.

It is a hobby which does not cost the earth. It provides a great deal of fun in the brewing. When it comes to opening a bottle, 6 months or 3 years later, well.....

They could give a fig!

Betty and John Zehetmeyer, who are keen gardeners in Penarth, S Wales, are pleased to announce their fig tree produced 700 edible fruits last year. In true research style they were categorised and sorted into a wide range of specifications. Full details of inputs and results may be obtained from John. This year's harvest fell to 100! Should we be concerned or is it within the limits of a normal distribution?

Round up Round up

Congratulations to Keith Ball (late of Drawing Office HQ) who took part in his third London Marathon, and 11th marathon in total. He raised £1,175 in sponsorship towards the cost of a new mini-bus for the community project in East Edinburgh, and another £260 for Alzheimers Edinburgh. 15 more marathons and he'll be able to buy the mini-bus outright! Keep running!

59 ex Dean Foresters' school students and wives enjoyed a great reunion dinner in October at the Bells Club, Coleford, Forest of Dean. A successful night of good food, liberally sprinkled with yarns and reminiscences made them decide to meet again in October 2000. Cyril Lewis was longest retired, entering the Dean School in 1934. Next reunion will expound stories of DN Williams, Twiggy Leafe and Tony Joslin.

A last minute entry comes from the Association of Professional Foresters (APF). It was founded in 1960 to meet the needs of the practical side of the home-based forest industry. Many retirees may wish to continue in active forestry work, the APF offers assistance. Further information from: 7-9 West Street, Belford NE70 7QA.

ROUND THE BRANCHES

Chairman, David Fraser writes that the Edinburgh & S(Scotland) Branch members enjoy an extremely full programme of outings throughout the year, catering for many and varied tasks in away-day events. Can we claim the title of 'the most active Branch of the Association?' he asks.

Our ability to gather members for our monthly activities is, of course, eased by the large numbers of retired personnel living in the Edinburgh area although we also encouraged those from further afield by arranging outings to locations throughout the south of Scotland.

Unfortunately, our attempts to set up a Dumfries Group have so far failed through a lack of persons willing to run the Group; if any retired reader(s) in Dumfries or nearby would wish to accept this challenge I would be delighted to know. Please write to David Fraser, 6 Dean Park, Gowkhall, Dunfermline, KY12 9PA or contact **FCRA News** correspondent Nancy MacKenzie who is of course the widow of Alex MacKenzie. Alex retired as the Commission's Mensuration officer but also their mathematical guru and well known raconteur.

LISTINGS

1. Keep the 15 February 1998 free for a visit to the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh. More details of this and other Edinburgh venues from Keith Ball at 0131 664 7863
2. Finlay MacRae will be guest speaker at the North Scotland Christmas lunch. Should be some good yarns there about people past and present - come along it will be too good to miss. More details from Donald Beaton at 01862 881301.

OBITUARIES

Ted Baldwin of Dumfries writes to say that former forester **Austin Watson** died on April 24 1997 aged 66. He trained at Benmore in the early 50's. He retired in 1990 having spent time in Mensuration Branch (Edinburgh) and latterly in S(S) in Glenbranter and Mabie.

Barbara Shiels, who joined the Forestry Commission HQ in Secretariat in 1978, died in September. Her early career took her to the ATS, then the Ministry of Transport. Latterly she was active in the local FCRA branch as Slasher correspondent.

Roger Larsen remembers **Hazel Pottinger** who died this year. She came to the Forestry Commission as Information Officer in the 70s and 80s. She brought with her an air of cheerfulness and enthusiasm especially at Recreation Planning officer's conferences. On retirement she went to Argyll with her old boat and married Peter Clowes, to whom we send condolences.

Tom McGeorge recalls **Raymond Fossey**, who died recently, aged 92. He came to South Scotland in 1947 from south of the Border, and quickly adapted to his new surroundings and colleagues in Scotland, where he remained until he retired. His time in Dumfries spanned a period of great expansion of the Forestry Commission estate with extensive planting programmes. His memorial grows on for all to see. He had many interests outside the Forestry Commission and played his part in the local dramatic group's stage productions. In his retirement, he made several visits to his family in New Zealand. Although very active in his retirement years, unfortunately he became blind and was admitted to a home for the blind, where he died. He will be most remembered at Dumfries for notices on his door "Not to be disturbed under any circumstances". This was put down to work on plant supply - we believe!

John Zehetmeyer writes about **Jimmy Farquhar** who died this year aged 89. He served over 40 years in Research, starting in Sample Plots in 1929 and leaving as Chief Research Forester Scotland in 1970. During his time in Scotland he travelled extensively around the experiments demonstrating them to staff and visitors. Many Silviculturists in NRS will pay tribute to his care in setting out and recording experiments.

John recalls the completion of the 1952 Teindland ploughing experiment and considers it one of their finest. In 1953 they set out the Shetland trials, which Jimmy tended for 15 years. After retiring he worked for the EFG and enjoyed "being his own boss". He was also proud to have participated in a Bonspiel on the Lake of Menteith. He was a model family man and an ideal forester for his time.

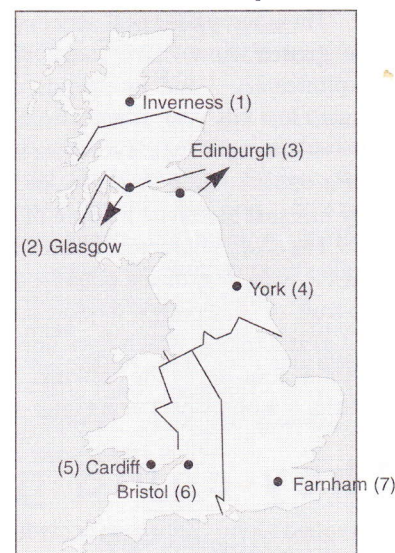
Geoffrey Forrest who died on 22 October became the Forestry Commission's first Senior Officer for Scotland in 1964. The Scotsman obituary of 29 October details his interesting and varied career.

David Williams is trying to form a group in N Wales but where are all the retired people? Should be many opportunities for visits and social occasions there. Details from David at: Y Wenallt, Cwm cynfal, Ffestiniog LL41 4PU

It is with regret that we have heard of the deaths of:

		Retired	Age
William Anderson	Fortrose	1996	51
James Bodle	Locharbriggs, Dumfries	1994	68
Edwin Booth	Stratford on Avon	1962	70
Ernest Burton	Somerton, Somerset	1969	93
Jack Chamberlain	Itton, Gwent	1981	79
Francis Cowie	Forres	1979	85
Arthur Chapman	Bridgewater	1975	85
John Cambell	Skye	1981	81
Gordon Drew	West Malling, Kent	1984	72
Alexander Downie	Carradale	1980	76
William Fawkes	Newcastleton	1997	61
Charles Ferguson	Aviemore	1996	57
Griffith Griffiths	Pwllheli	1979	78
Thomas Green	Bonnyrigg, Edinburgh	1982	79
Charles James	Maentwrog, Gwynedd	1990	65
Thomas Jones	Knighton, Powys	1972	89
Frederick Jones	Woodbridge, Suffolk	1976	82
Henry McConnachie	Elgin	1966	95
George Marshall	Lydney	1978	84
John Munro	Lumsden, Huntly	1970	86
C Otto	Aberdare	1977	80
Gurnos Roberts	Christchurch Coleford	1980	82
Raymond Roberts	Dolwyddelan, Conwy	1996	62
John Rogers	Berriew, Welshpool	1986	75
Arthur Rudling	Chichester	1976	83

Branch Boundaries and FCRA News Correspondents



- (1) Donald Beaton - Tel: 01852 881303
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