

FCRA News

The newsletter about retired Forestry Commission employees

Issue 4 - December 1998

Don't You Look Well!?

John Fletcher - previously Conservator (Regional Director) in Bristol

Retirement began in July 1989 and in common with most FCRA members I was concerned to inform enquirers (not always successfully) that "Yes - I have plenty to occupy my mind and waning muscles", and "No - I do not have the luxury of endless hours of spare time".

In 1988 I had approached the late Leslie Troup to ask him if he would give a most necessary and practical kick start for **TREE AID**. He became **TREE AID'S** first Honorary Director and with Brian Tipping and Jack Massey formed the team which produced the first Newsletter, appeals brochure and leaflets. All three agreed to give six months of their time - in fact Brian and Jack are still members of the Council of Management 10 years on!

The Charity, founded in 1987, received charitable status in 1989, appointed its first Fundraising Manager, Miranda Spitteler, (now our enthusiastic Director) four years ago and since its inception has raised over £700,000 to support projects designed to relieve poverty amongst the world's most deprived people in arid Africa. Amongst these projects were the introduction of sound silvicultural management in remnant indigenous forests, the establishment of tree cover for shelter against windblown sand, and the use of trees for the provision of fuelwood, fodder, fruit, medicines and - most importantly - shade. Before funding is agreed, each project is evaluated by a professional group which includes Roger Busby and Julian Evans. So the involvement of retired Forestry Commission personnel has been crucial from the very start in ensuring the success of the Charity.

TREE AID'S continuing reputation in the charity world as the Foresters' Charity depends on this involvement with the FC as well as with bodies such as ICF, The Royal Forestry Societies, TGA, APF and individual companies within the wood processing industry.

Most recently **TREE AID** has received a substantial grant from the National Lottery to establish a permanent presence in Africa. This will give us the opportunity to work closely with African NGO's and to monitor the projects we are funding more efficiently.

Finally let me quantify the contribution which FC staff past and present have given to **TREE AID**. A total of £33,000 has been raised through individual donations, Sponsored Walks, Marathon Runs, Visitor Centre Events, Barn Dances, Toy carvings, Sponsored tree plantings and Friends Group activities too numerous to detail.

Four major projects have been funded:

- Two Natural Forest Management projects: one at Takieta in Niger, the other in Kordofan, Sudan.
- Tree nurseries and plantings at Biharamulo in Tanzania.
- Agroforestry at Thies in Senegal

It would be tremendous if we were able to recruit you to join hands with some of the poorest people in the world whose hopes for the future depend so much on trees. We can then be sure that the Commission's involvement in **TREE AID** continues. Honestly not a great deal of mind bending, muscular exercise or spare time invasion! Please write to:

TREE AID, 28 Hobbs Lane, Bristol BS1 5ED
or phone 0117 934 9442

and we will send details of how you may be able to help.

Memory - or Lack of It

from Ron Brown at Alice Holt

Did you keep a personal diary during your days in the FC? If only I had done so, what a story could be written. **FCRA News** is one of the mediums we can use to share and record our interests, events and activities.

As a Forester I had to accept that a peripatetic lifestyle was part of the job from Ferndown and Wimbourne in 1940, then Lynford Hall, Dean, Alice Holt, Rockingham, Sherwood and finally Alice Holt again until retirement in 1985. My travels from Alice Holt took me all over Britain. If only I had kept that diary. I should have been able to write about:

- * The **PEOPLE** I met - thousands - land-ladies, local staff, DGs, wonderful people and scallywags, in forests and offices.
- * The **STORIES** I heard - not all repeatable.
- * The **BEDS** I slept in.
- * The **MILES** I drove - Scotland was a long way before motorways.
- * The **REMOTE LOCATIONS** I worked in. The northern lights of Borgie, the quaking bogs of Clocaenog. No mobiles or radio.
- * The **VARIETY OF BUGS** I investigated. Giant woodwasps through weevils and beetles to the smallest nematodes.

IF ONLY I HAD KEPT A DIARY!

If anyone can send me memories of my visits in earlier decades, I should be delighted to hear from you. Perhaps I can include them in a sort of retrospective account in lieu of any non-existent diary.

You'll find me at: Edgewood, Station Road, Bentley, Farnham GU10 5JZ
(01420 22224).

From the Editor

FCRA News is back on track, but because of past publication delays I still have much of your material which must be held over. Don't despair. It will appear. Winter days curtail outside activities but the HQ and South Scotland Branch has come up with a good idea for social contacts. A slide showing afternoon. Each year, a few members do something exotic or unusual, and record on film. Why not entertain your friends in a retirement branch. What better than a captive audience. Lock the door, turn on the projector, and check for sleepers halfway through!

Happy Christmas to all our friends!

OBITUARIES

Bill Elliott reports the death of two colleagues. **Tom Farmer**, one of the few remaining officers who joined the Forestry Commission before the war, died in Adelaide, South Australia, in March 1998, aged 80. He started as a clerk in the Glasgow office in 1934. On returning to the FC after the war he became Chief Clerk in Glasgow. From 1951 to 1955 he served in Secretariat, HQ: during this period he was the Secretary of an inter-department committee on Hedgerows, for which he was awarded the MBE. In 1955 he was promoted to SEO and took up the post of AFO in Dumfries. He returned to HQ Secretariat in 1966 on promotion but after two years he left the FC to take up a Principal post with the Countryside Commission, where he remained until he retired in 1977. In 1983, Tom and his wife, Winifred, emigrated to Australia.

Arthur Searle died at his home in Colwyn Bay in April 1998, aged 81. Arthur joined the Forestry Commission in the Forest of Dean. In 1948 he moved to O&M Branch at HQ. In 1956 he was transferred, on promotion to HEO, to the Chester office. In 1964 he was further promoted to SEO and took up the post of AFO in Cambridge, where he served until his retirement in 1977. He and his wife, Olwen, moved to Colwyn Bay in 1988. They continued to enjoy their golf, while Arthur with his fine voice was a regular member of the church choir.

John Zehetmayr writes to say that **Jeff Hampson** died at Brecon in June 1998 aged 80. In his early years as a DFO in Snowdonia he began the afforestation of Newborough Sands. Later as Assistant Conservator Forest Management in South Wales he saw the recreational opportunities in the Welsh Valleys. He developed the Cwmcarn Forest Drive and Garwnant Forest Centre. Today both are widely popular as Jeff forecast. At the end of his career he worked for Welsh Water as Assistant Director Recreation & Amenity. The results of his work can be seen in the extensive visitor facilities - a far cry from the prohibiting notices of the old Water Authorities.

Graham Pyatt recalls **John Stoakley** who died after a short illness in July 1997. He had periods as a Forest Manager in the south of England and north of Scotland, but after taking a Masters degree, became a career entomologist. Beside giving advice to Forest Managers, he will be best remembered for his work with Pine Beauty Moth in the late '70s, and his novel pesticide application to control it. It is still in use today, and a technological triumph of

LIFE AFTER

In this issue, we look at authorship. Many of us write a great deal in our FC careers, but retirement offers the opportunity to tackle something a little different. These two books could be good Christmas or birthday presents.

"Talking Taproots" by Ann M. Moules

What makes anyone want to write a book? Since first tackling the subject in 1996, I have often wondered! My reasons were simple. Life as a Forester's wife had been enjoyable. Tom had been a Forester in Cropton Forest, North Yorkshire; 1969 he was posted to Northumberland to Slaley Forest; then Falstone, as Head Forester; finally Private Woodlands' Officer - York.

Later, having retired we joined the FCRA and here I heard many anecdotes that were worthy of recording. Finally, by chance, I won a book. "The First 75 Years of the FC". A very well researched book, packed with the achievements of the Forestry Commission, but nothing about the men who did the job! It was then I advertised for anecdotes and stories.

At first the response was slow, then anecdotes and some longer scripts arrived. One narrator commented that he was glad the stories were being collected "straight from the horses mouth" before it was too late! All the narrators gave frank accounts. The variety made it difficult to categorise; some of hardship, others of people, animals, and mishaps. The material was perceptive and gave a good insight into life in the FC and on Private Estates. In all cases the scripts were well peppered with humour. Only a few wives were willing to contribute.

Those who have read "Talking Taproots" have said, "a thoroughly enjoyable read, which brought back many happy memories, of earlier days in the Forestry Commission". One reader recommends that, "every young Forester should read it". I'm not sure if the latter was to be a pleasure or a punishment!

The book is published with a bonded cover, A5 size, 160 pages. Illustrated with photographs and sketches.

If you would like a copy of the book please write to "T. T. Books, 14 Fenwicks Lane, Fulford, York YO1 4PL. Cheques payable to A. M. Moules, price £6.50 plus £1 postage and packing.

The following gives an idea of what to expect.

Keep Scotland Green

A Forester was transferred from South Wales to Clydesdale in Lanarkshire. Many would describe this as an escape because of the arson problem in South Wales where some people hated the Commission sufficiently to set fire to its growing trees.

When the Forester met the Scottish version of arson-youngsters setting fire to whin bushes (gorse) for fun, he knew what to do. He visited schools and with talks and colour slides attempted to educate the young. He erected notices on vulnerable areas with snappy slogans "Keep Scotland Green".

Poor Sassanack, he did not realise that "green" did not mean environmentally friendly in this part of the world. Only after his notices were uprooted and vandalised and a helpful spray-gun message told him what to do with the Pope, did light dawn. "To see ousels as ithers see us..." Robert Burns.

"All for a Handful of Seed - The Life and Adventures of David Douglas" by Archie Smith

It started in Strathgry, it accelerated in Abertay, and at last has been concluded in Callander after three rewrites. Obviously a book and one long laboured on. The subject was special, he became a fellow in forestry over decades, David Douglas of the Fir and so much more. Retirement can be redeployment into that interest which we always wanted to develop but failed to find the time. Deflection from the cherished goal can come so easily, endless time seems to lie ahead. David Douglas did not allow of such indolence. Dynamic in his life, he haunted me and denied deflection, however hard I tried. Twice he took me on a trip to the Pacific Coast of North America.

I reached the mouth of the mighty Columbia River, one hundred and sixty five years after his first visit. From the only fur trade fort around, he travelled on foot with native Americans. No national flag flew over that land then. Today the Stars and Stripes fly everywhere, and I had a native of the United States to chauffeur me. David and I were bachelors both when we first found the forest of the West. By my second trip I had lost my bachelorhood (to quote Robert Burns.) to my native chauffeur!

On the 25 June 1999, two centuries will have passed since he was born at Scone in the old county of Perthshire. He started his career in the policies of Scone Palace. Today visitors can view a Douglas fir sent

RETIREMENT

as seed from the Columbia River during 1826. By the old church is a monument to this son of Scone, erected a few years after his tragic death in 1834. Last year a David Douglas Society was founded at Scone.

Back to that book, it has already brought delight in Devon. There is angst in Arran! Mirth will be in Moray and a deep sigh can be expected in Skye. Should anyone wish to find out more on this man who packed so much of life into his 35 short years and brought to Britain so much to grace our gardens and fill our forests, please write to me at 16 Katrine Crescent, Callander FK17 8JS, and I'll be delighted to send you his story. A cheque for £8 would be much appreciated also.

Finally, I could not resist Ron Marnie's account of a lifelong love of old cars. It will appeal to past and present FC staff, and may encourage them to dump their Mondeos!

Old Bangers - and their Hobbies!

Way back in the sixties I was working as a DO in the Great Glen alongside such worthies as Fin Macrae, Sandy Morrison, John Ogilvie, Alan Rae, Johnny Drummond and Ernie Michie and life under the two Assistant Conservators, Bob Innes (now sadly deceased) and Jock Crystall, made me think of retiral! It seemed a long way off then, but it seemed the right time to *think* about it at least. I decided then that what I would do to prepare for it was to build up a wee collection of interesting cars to work on and play with when duty no longer called. So, whenever the chance came along of one at the right price (and the right price in those days on a DO II salary was not so much) I would buy it and put it in the garage or wherever. I started off with a lovely old Morris 8, of 1937 vintage. It was languishing behind some hoardings in Harrowden Road in Inverness and it became mine for £25. The car was sound enough but the hood was tatty and the interior pretty rough. Just the car for Jenny, I thought. It came down the Great Glen to Fort Augustus in the back of a Johnstone's tipper from Glen Garry and delivery cost me another £5. I did not *restore* the car in the modern meaning of the word, so much as get it running well and looking better and doing what I could to delay the rust. I put on a new hood and renewed the upholstery and hand painted it dark green. It looked very well and Jenny used it for many years as her shopping and golf car. Nothing else

came along for a while and we moved to Nairn where I heard of a 1938 MG TA lying in bits in Barnhill, nearby Dundee. Jen and I hired a 3-tonner and collected all the bits. I spent 6 months renewing the ash framing and aluminium panels and when it looked a bit more like a car I put it to the back of the garage to make way for another find – not in a barn, but in a small lock-up in Cawdor. It was a big Healey of 3000 ccs and '65 vintage. It belonged to John Poland, the famous helicopter pilot and owner of the firm of PLM – much used by the old firm for fire fighting and the like. He took me on a short and terrifying drive over a disused airfield road and all the fillings in my teeth fell out! I could only buy it after that but it was a hairy monster indeed. The next thing that arrived was a Jeep of 1942 vintage and that came via an advert from the south of England. I got a few motor cycles during my stay in Nairn but nothing significant. My next move to Buckie saw a '70 MGB GT in very rough state being bought for a song and after much work with sills, inner and outer wings, engine changes and rebuilds, given to Jen to take the place of the Morris 8, which sold very well indeed by then. Mike Green, still with the old firm, came as my assistant and immediately bought an MGB Roadster and totally rebuilt it in my garden at Arradoul House. We did a bit of forestry and a lot of welding, spraying and the rest and I really missed him when he went. There was a lot less oil on the drive too! Next came a 1929 Austin 7 special (that means it had a home-made body – no roof nor doors nor windscreen) but it went quite well. Several Morris 1000s went through my hands then, bought from £10 upwards and passed on for a bitty more. A couple of Triumph 13/60 Drop Head Coupes came and went with quite a bit of work in-between with changing hoods, spraying, engine rebuilds etc. Then in 1995 I got the daddy of them all – a 1923 Fiat Doctor's Coupe with 3 seats under the leather hood, and 2 outside in the dickey or rumble seat. The car has a **huge** copper radiator, an electric choke, no brakes on the front wheels and very little on the rears. The accelerator (so called) is between the clutch and brake pedal. There is no windscreen wiper so when it rains one tilts the top half of the windscreen so that one can peer through it with the rain hitting the face. It does not have a great top speed but it pulls like a train and goes up all the Lincolnshire Wolds with ease. There is nothing fancy like brake lights, reflectors,

OBITUARIES

Continued

our era of forest research. At home he will be remembered for high-tech solutions to low-tech problems, and his hobby-cum-business as a bee keeper. An enthusiast and perfectionist at work and at home.

Lena Birchall tells of the great sense of loss felt by the Alice Holt Group on the death of **Robin Sym** in August, aged 54. In his FC career he was at the Dean, Wark, York and Wykeham. He will be missed particularly at the Group committee meetings for his humour and helpfulness.

John Gwynn remembers **David Moir** who died early this year. He was a Land Agent in the FC for most of his working life and retired in 1983. Part of his duties involved the supervision of major contracts, including the Alice Holt Research Station extension and "231". He will be remembered for his cheerful disposition and his ready laugh. He never married and was able to indulge his passion for fast cars, women, good food and wine - a bon viveur. In retirement he followed his other passions, cricket and travelling.

Some obituaries have been held over, and Gunnar Godwin's, due to lack of space.

dipping heads nor Car Tax. We take it out to the pub, for shopping and fun runs in the Wolds and we do the odd rally and local show, where it is quite popular! Most folk have never seen an old Fiat so it is quite an interest for them. But the real reason for taking it to shows is that it saves the entry fee! I may be living in England but "auld habits die hard" and I need all I can get to finish the completely new body now on my Austin 7!

So here I am, comfortably rusting in Hameringham, not far from Horncastle with 4 oldies crammed into a double garage and a few more outside, and life is very sweet. One never lacks something to do when one has an old car and time passes very quickly.

But why do we do it? Why on earth does man have such a great love affair with the motor car when there cannot be one of us who has not lost at least one good friend sacrificed on the altar of motoring? It beats me, but I do enjoy the tinkering – and the driving in the Wolds is magical. Roads are so very quiet and the countryside is so lovely and so well seen from an open car – and they are all rag tops after all!

I would be more than glad to hear from or meet any FC folk, tel: 01507 588224. All are welcome. Rust in peace.

Even Engineers Eulogize

Attention all retired Civil Engineers! In April 1998 Forestry Civil Engineering (FCE) opened for business. Its first priority is to provide Forest Enterprise with a Civil Engineering support service, but it will also serve the forestry industry. It produces a bi-monthly newsletter which will be of interest to all retired Civil Engineers. A good way to keep in touch with friends and past colleagues. Anyone interested in receiving a copy of the newsletter should contact: Forestry Civil Engineering, Greenside, Peebles EH49 8JA (01721 720448). FCE will also welcome stories, opinions, letters, photographs, or even plausible anecdotes. Get writing!

Here to Help

Counsel & Care is a membership organisation which gives advice and help to older people, both members and non-members alike. It published a wide range of free factsheets on issues of concern to older people.

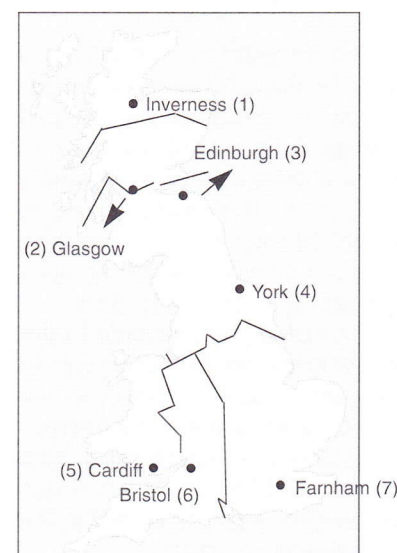
It also has advice workers who have considerable experience in problem solving. The contact address and phone number is: Twyman House, 16 Bonny Street, London NW1 9PG (0845 300 7585).

Fred Remembers

Fred Hummel recently contacted me with loads of anecdotes of the early days in Research. We could almost make "Fred Remembers" a regular spot! How about this:

"I recall an occasion when the then DG, Sir Arthur Gosling, asked me to accompany him to a Forestry Advisory Committee meeting in London. At the meeting a distinguished gentleman said of a proposal that it was interesting, but could the FC be confident that its data were sufficiently reliable to warrant such an important decision. Sir Arthur turned to me and I said that there was much detail, and if the gentleman would come to Alice Holt for a day, we could run through it. There was an embarrassed silence. Sir Arthur scowled. The gentleman said he would take my word for it. The tension was broken. The gentleman concerned was the late Duke of Buccleugh. I felt such a fool!"

Branch Boundaries and FCRA News Correspondents



- (1) Donald Beaton - Tel: 01852 881303
- (2) Charlie Greenlees - Tel: 01546 602929
- (3) Nancy MacKenzie - Tel: 0131 339 2367
- (4) Ann Moules - Tel: 01904 658239
- (5) Mike Reaney - Tel: 01792 202449
- (6) John Thomas - Tel: 01225 873232
- (7) Lena Birchall - Tel: 01420 23213

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

		Retired	Aged			Retired	Aged
Edward Brachtvogel	Bellingham	1990	61	Sydney Lewis	Lydney	1967	94
Joseph Caley	Chesterfield	1976	86	Clive Leeder	Fakenham	1970	84
William Clarkson	Huntly	1979	82	Riley Linn	New Milton	1977	80
Frederick Cater	Munford	1988	68	Mary Macauley	Dumfries	1973	90
Alex Campbell	Skerray, by Bettyhill	1993	61	Christine Mackenzie	Dingwall	1989	68
Charles Collins	Exeter	1987	72	James Mckinven	Carradale	1980	81
William Coombes	Wimbourne	1972	71	James McMillan	Lockerbie		79
William Cordy	Munford	1982	80	Donald Maclean	Muir of Ord	1971	65
Noel Cudlipp	Southampton	1979	82	Jane McLean	Edinburgh	1990	67
Leonard Eareth	Brandon	1979	82	Michael Maggs	Newton Abbot	1987	75
John Eckton	Arundel	1973	84	Edward Matthews	Turriff	1967	91
Frederick Farley	Cranbrook	1975	82	Charles Mitchell	Buckie	1990	67
George Garwood	Fareham	1972	85	David Murray	Elgin	1994	68
Caroline Grant	Elgin	1973	74	Robert Oliver	Billingham	1983	79
Albert Green	Manchester	1976	81	James O'Mara	Dalbeattie	1984	78
Griffin Griffiths	Dolgellau	1979	81	Trevor Owen	Llanfechan	1977	85
Peter Grieve	Troqueer	1968	89	John Page	Lochgailhead	1971	91
Andrew Hart	Thornhill	1977	83	Hamish Park	Tummel	1984	75
Rod Hewitt	Fordingbridge	1986	71	Albert Parry	Rhuddlan	1981	82
Charles Hillidge	Welshpool	1986	74	Maurice Pengelly	Tavistock	1968	93
Donald Hoskins	Llandrindod Wells	1985	73	Sydney Perkins	Hereford	1975	87
Isaac Hughes	Betws y Coed	1984	71	Idris Pierce	Dolgellau	1991	68
Cyril Jones	Chepstow	1994	63	William Rae	Peebles	1985	73
Robert Jones	Betws y Coed	1979	68	Andrew Roberts	Aberfoyle	1988	74
Wilfred Jones	Cowbridge	1981	81	Eric Rosher	Norwich	1979	68
Eric Larcombe	Weymouth	1963	84	Dugald Sinclair	Callander	1983	71

FCRA News is a joint Retirement Association and Slasher production.

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