

FCRA News

The newsletter about retired Forestry Commission employees

Issue 5 – March 1999

Long may they exist.....

says Tony Butcher from Biggleswade

Although the names mentioned in Slasher no longer have any significance to me, I still find the articles interesting. It is a bright and cheerful newspaper and does much to boost morale in FC employees.

I was a forester in the lowlands of East Anglia for 22 years. Not 'real' forestry but important nonetheless and with its attendant complications being situated in an area of high population. After a period at Lynford Hall, Wigsley, The Depot, Santon Beat then Ampthill, I, for various reasons decided to resign and with some sadness, left the FC in 1976. I started a small forestry and tree surgery business which I have only just closed.

At the age of 60 I received a lump sum and welcome pension from the FC. I also started to get Slasher again as a retired FC employee, together with **FCRA News**. I have just volunteered to be a warden for a small bit of FC woodland in our parish here in Mid Beds and met the rangers in October. Glad to 'do my bit' again, you're so thin on the ground these days.

Millennium Forest Awards

The Millennium Forest for Scotland (MFS) has recently launched the Millennium Forest Awards. The awards are grants of between £2000 and £5000 for personal development, training and project costs to carry out a woodland project which will benefit the community. Any woodland project will be considered – historical, archaeological, environmental, woodcraft skills and community events. People who receive the awards will be expected to work as volunteers and the grant must be spent on the expenses of the project itself. The money might be used for –

- * training courses
- * travel and subsistence
- * organising events
- * childcare
- * specialist help
- * materials and equipment

The scheme is open to anyone living in Scotland. More details and application forms can be obtained from:

Millennium Forest for Scotland
91 Mitchell Street
Glasgow
G1 3LN

All award recipients will have a mentor who will assist them through the different stages of the award scheme and they will play a key role in the success of a project. Mentors do not require specialist forestry skills, but an understanding of the woodland environment will be an advantage. Their main functions will be information sharing, discussion, advising and giving feedback. Anyone who is keen to become an award mentor should contact the same address. A mentor need NOT be resident in Scotland, but an awareness of Scottish forestry will be helpful.

From our "MAN IN TOBA"

Readers will recall that Tony Joslin emigrated to Manitoba, Canada together with his wife and elder son.

He writes in early December – "We arrived here in March '98 where we had taken a farm for Oliver. We had failed over several years to find anything in the UK which was within our price bracket where he could hope to make a living. Here he has a 900 acre farm for a figure not much higher than we sold our smallholding in Herefordshire. There are about 600 acres of arable, 160 acres of Alfalfa and the remainder is rough grazing and Aspen woodland. The latter is pretty derelict due mainly to excessive stocking with cattle in the hot weather. I have already started thinning it preparatory to doing a small planting programme in the spring since with good wind shelter cattle – beef animals – outwinter even with a temperature of -40°C.

At the moment we haven't any livestock. We anticipate buying beef cows in the spring but farming is almost as depressed here as in the UK. Most of Canada's farm produce is exported so you can imagine how popular the EEC is out here with their massive subsidies.

The farm is only about 2 miles from Rossburn, a small town of under 1,000 inhabitants but a good centre with hospital, high school, library etc which serves a large rural area. It lies just north of the 51st parallel – much the same as Ross on Wye – elevation is just under 2000 ft. The major problem is the need to be tri-lingual as Canada went metric but everything is laid out in miles and acres, America of course has its own gallons, tons etc so one needs to be good at mental arithmetic when doing business.

The weather so far has been very kind to us – no blizzards, about 6" of snow, daytime shade temperatures varying from +3°C to -10°C and night time -3°C to -15°C with a couple of -25°C which fortunately were windless nights!"

From the Editor



Just a couple of issues this time – FCRA News contributions and new Groups. I now expect Slasher to appear regularly and **FCRA News** will follow. So I'll need plenty of contributions. I have some in hand as a result of personal contacts – how about some impulsive items. News, views, anecdotes, information, requests for contacts – anything of interest! Now new Groups. The North Wales Group is off to a flying start, there are more problems at Kielder and South Scotland. Can I encourage all retirees, especially in areas with small or embryonic Groups, to become more active in the FCRA. We are NOT a tedious bunch, and we all enjoy social contacts which have sprung from past contacts in working life. Why not make it a "Meet a past friend or colleague year" in 1999!

OBITUARIES

Jean Balfour remembers **Gunnar Godwin**, who was born in 1915 of Icelandic and Danish parentage. He died peacefully at his home in Glenalmond in August 1998. He read forestry in Edinburgh University graduating in 1935. He joined the FC as District Officer in Neath in 1939. After a tour in Land Acquisition in Aberystwyth, in 1954 he became Divisional Officer North Wales Conservancy. In 1963 he was promoted to Conservator at the then Scottish Directorate in Edinburgh. In 1965 he moved to York as Conservator North East England. In 1973 he became Conservator in Aberdeen and retired in 1975. Active in forestry affairs, he was President of the now ICF during 1974 and 1975. A committed and distinguished Forester who recognised the wider countryside interest in woodland. A man of high integrity who expected similar from those who worked with him.

Duncan Campbell belatedly remembers **Dame Sylvia Crowe** who died in June 1995. She was appointed as the FC's first Landscape Consultant in 1963 at the age of 62, when most of us are thinking of retiring. She had a great ability to provide practical solutions, and made a considerable impression on FC staff, many of whom became enthusiastic converts to her ideas of forest design. By the end of her consultancy in 1976 she had advised the FC on almost every facet of its operations – recreation facilities, forest cabins, bridges, forest buildings and their colours and the distinctive sign boards. She was appointed CBE in 1967 and DBE in 1973. She left behind a major legacy in improved forest design for both public and private forests. Her books have promoted landscape design in forests both in UK and abroad, while a cadre of landscape architects have continued her work in the FC.

George Holmes recounts the working life of **Maurice Nimmo** who died at Haverfordwest aged 89. He was much respected and loved for his warm and caring personality, and for his great professional qualities as a forester, scientist, naturalist, photographer and meteorologist. He shone in all these activities because he was one of those rarities, a brilliant all-round naturalist and observer. He worked for the Forestry Commission for forty years from 1928 until his retirement in 1968. He graduated from the Forest of Dean Forester Training School in the late 1920s and thereafter his whole service was with the Research Division. Prior to 1946, the Commission's research South of the Border was run from a couple of rooms in Museum Road, Oxford. Its tiny team included Maurice. He was posted to Alice Holt when it opened in 1947, at the same time as the late Robert Wood. Together, they formed the nucleus of the post-war silvicultural research team in England and Wales. Maurice played a key part in pioneering and developing

LIFE AFTER

Many retired staff have continued to work in forestry full time, or part time or in an advisory capacity. Reasons have been many and varied from needing the money to being unable to put forestry away! I hope you will write in about your continuing forestry activities. Meanwhile I have encouraged three colleagues to tell us more – Malcolm Macpherson, Alan Low and Mark Yorke.

Malcolm retired as FDM from Lorne in 1986

When the Commission decided to retire all non industrials at 60 years (it was interesting that the numbers of this staff category promptly dropped by 25%), my mortgage and insurances were geared up to retirement at 65. So I had to find gainful employment and I set myself up as an independent forestry consultant. After taking out professional indemnity insurance for £250,000 I arranged to be included on the Institute of Chartered Foresters' list of members in consultancy practice.

At first it was difficult to find much work locally because of the wide cover provided by the big forestry companies and I had to travel quite long distances for comparatively small jobs.

However, I was lucky to be offered employment as a Factor for 2 local estates with absentee landlords. Apart from forestry this involved management of red and roe deer stalking, pheasant, duck and woodcock shooting together with river and loch fishings. There was a 1000 ewe hill farm in hand, let farms and seasonal grazings as well as crofting land. Wayleaves and mineral leases had to be negotiated and there was frequent involvement with the public. Perhaps the heaviest workload involved the water supplies, drainage, maintenance and letting of buildings, including a mansion house, shooting lodge, service tenancies and furnished holiday cottages. A room in our house became my office and my wife managed my business accounts and the holiday lettings, with the addition of part time clerical assistance.

I gave up estate management after 6 years and was then employed for the next 6 years as Argyll Secretary for the Scottish Landowners' Federation. In addition to this specific employment I continued, and still do, with consultancy projects including felling licences, planting grant applications, woodland valuations for purchase and taxation plus odd sidelines such as mineral searches, dangerous tree reports and access negotiations. I enjoy being self employed so much that I sometimes wonder why I did not give it a go before the FC retired me at 60 years of age!

Alan retired as Chief Conservator Scotland in 1996

The Falklands Re-visited

When I retired in 1996, I planned to concentrate on what had been my previous spare-time activities, as well as visiting various far-flung parts of the world with my wife. My firm intention was to have no further involvement in paid employment of any sort, as this would impose an unwelcome constraint on time available for recreational pursuits. However, in autumn 1996, I received an unexpected letter inviting me to act as forestry adviser to the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) Department of Agriculture, particularly in relation to tree planting for agricultural shelter. I had previously visited the Islands in 1983 to assess prospects for successful tree planting, and the initial task would be to update the conclusions and recommendations contained in my 1983 report. It was not difficult to convince myself that this was something which I could do more easily than most, and that it would provide an opportunity to re-visit a remote and very interesting location.

The Falkland Islands lie in the South Atlantic Ocean, about 300 miles east of the southern tip of South America, and still remain a UK Dependent Territory. They have a permanent population of about 2200 (with 75% living in the capital Stanley) and in practice seem to enjoy greater self-governing powers than are envisaged for the Scottish Parliament! There are 2 main islands – East and West Falkland – and over 200 smaller islands of varying sizes, with a total area equivalent to that of Wales or Northern Ireland. Much of the land is hilly, with the highest summits reaching 700m or 2300ft, and in appearance is reminiscent of parts of the Western and Northern Isles of Scotland. The cool, oceanic, windy climate resembles that of Shetland except for rainfall, which is considerably lower than that in most parts of Britain. Typically, the soil consists of a shallow peat layer overlying a compacted clay subsoil. The natural vegetation is a form of grassy heathland and there are no native tree species.

Since the unsuccessful 1982 Argentinian invasion, considerable effort has gone into developing and diversifying the economy, which had for many years been based entirely on low-input sheep farming for wool production. The Islands are now self-supporting in economic terms (apart from defence costs), with off-shore fisheries licence fees providing the main source of government revenue. However, extensive sheep farming

RETIREMENT

remains the primary land use and involves some 90 owner-occupied units with an average area of 14 000 ha. The FIG Department of Agriculture is examining ways of increasing and diversifying farm output, hence their renewed interest in shelter planting – particularly to protect paddocks used for lambing or for holding sheep after shearing.

Late January 1997 saw me heading south courtesy of the regular RAF Tristar service via Ascension Island and I spent most of February in the Falklands, visiting farm settlements, revising my previous prescriptions for tree planting and developing provisional plans for large scale shelterbelt trials. The recommendations in my subsequent report were accepted and I then spent most of October back in the Islands finalising trial details and overseeing ground preparation work on site, as well as advising on how best to ensure the availability of suitable planting stock for the trials. The high wind exposure, low rainfall and “difficult” soil type severely restrict species choice. The main species used are the highly wind-resistant Alaskan Lodgepole pine and Monterey cypress, but Skeena Lodgepole, Austrian and Radiata pines, and two very hardy *Nothofagus* species are also included. British forest nurseries are the traditional source of supply but growing seasons are 6 months out of phase, causing biological as well as transport complications. I travelled via southern Chile to find out if any of the necessary young trees could be obtained from there, but prospects were not good except for small quantities of *Nothofagus*.

My next visit was in May 1998 when I participated in planting the first two major trial shelterbelts. Hopefully, further shelterbelts will be planted in the near future and I expect to continue my involvement for a further 3-4 years. By then I should have the satisfaction of knowing that a sound basis exists for assessing the economic benefits of shelterbelts in Falklands agriculture. In the meantime, I shall continue to enjoy my trips down south because of the general interest, professional challenge and wildlife viewing opportunities which they provide. My long-suffering wife hopes to accompany me on one of these visits to see for herself the attractions of these distant islands.

Mark retired as FDM from Dolgellau in 1992 having also served in the New Forest, South Lakes and Cowal.

Life since retirement has been full of diverse activity which has included keeping in contact with woods and forests, and ‘old’ colleagues – both within GB and on the Continent.

My “biodiversity” has included – managing a number of private woodlands (and grumbling about the user-unfriendly and computer-driven woodland grant scheme!); establishing a small-scale but commercial *Eucalyptus* foliage enterprise; organising an annual multi-terrain Challenge event and two annual “fungus forays” in Coed-y-Brenin; guiding overseas and British clients engaged in woodcock shooting in Mid Wales (much of which is carried out in coniferous woodland) keeping up with FE ‘gossip’ via my athletic daughter and enjoying a busy role within the Continuous Cover Forestry Group.

This Group was established 7 years ago, and it continues to play a leading role in encouraging the implementation of a variety of alternative silvicultural systems in place of clear felling and replanting – where practical, sensible and economic. The Group has an annual overseas tour having visited Switzerland, Holland, Germany (Lower Saxony), Slovenia and Finland. On these we learn much about alternative approaches to silviculture and we have great social occasions. For the past 6 years I have organised 4 practical workshops annually in an effort to advise and encourage ‘practitioners’ in both the State, Private, Academic and Environmental Sectors to consider the benefits and opportunities for an alternative to clear felling.

I have just published a booklet on the subject entitled “Continuous Cover Silviculture. An alternative to clear felling. A practical guide to transformation of even-aged plantations to uneven-aged continuous cover”. I am sure all you enthusiasts would like a copy at £7 incl postage. Please get in touch at:

Tyddyn Bach Llanegryn, Tywyn,
Gwynedd LL36 9UF

And more importantly, come and join our Group – for discussion, information and entertainment. You will not regret it!

OBITUARIES (Continued)

silvicultural methods at a critical period of forestry expansion. His influence was profound in many fields, including nursery work at Kennington, Wykeham and Wareham and afforestation methods on Lowland Healths (Dorset), Breckland (Thetford) and Chalk Downland (Buriton). He always had a keen interest in meteorology and kept detailed weather records for the Met Office for over sixty years. For this he was awarded the BEM. He was also a highly gifted photographer and he built up a large library of high quality pictures of trees and their disorders. Large numbers of his pictures were used to illustrate many books on trees over the years, over his own name and the pseudonym of “M Hubbard”. He was a fine man who made his mark in many ways and who can forget his quick wit and that infectious laugh!

Graham Jeffrey sends in an appreciation of **Sandy Walker** who died at Peebles aged 75. He began his District Officer career at Princes Risborough under the late Jim Davidson, then Halstead in Essex and on to Kielder. There he joined the late Keith Wilson and David Chadwick where they oversaw its continuing early 60s development. He then crossed the Border to Peebles where, uniquely in the FC, he remained for 22 years doing three different jobs – DO Peebles, Acquisition Officer South Scotland and at Estate Management Div in HQ. In this latter job he played a key role in plantation valuation in the FCs recent disposals programme. At Peebles, both during his working life and in his 10 years retirement, he was able to indulge his passion for golf and fishing. Latterly he and his wife Daphne spent many happy hours in the Elgin area, researching the genealogy of the NE Scotland “Walkers”.

Dick Richards recalls **Rod Hewitt** who died in January 1998. He joined the FC as a DO in the Dean and was involved in utilisation studies prior to the opening of Sudbrooke Pulp Mill. This led him to HQ in the Utilisation Development Section in 1963. He moved in to the New as harvesting and Marketing Officer, then to a similar job in York. His final move was to Cambridge as Conservator from where he retired in 1986. He always retained an interest in broadleaves and was a member of the FC’s Broadleaved Policy Group, subsequently promoting broadleaved grant aid schemes. After retirement he remained active in forestry and was made a New Forest Verderer. In 1995 he was awarded an OBE for services to forestry, a tribute to his devotion to the profession.

Obituaries of **John Dishington**, **Ian MacIver** and “Gene” Gize will appear in the next issue.

RETIREMENTS

Sheila Nelson, York
Howard Embleton, Lochgilhead
Jim Williams, Market Rasen
Jeremy Charles, York
Robin Khan, Bristol
John Paul, Inverness
Ashley Morris, New Forest

John McLaren, Inverness
Christine Chamberlain, York
Mary Binney, Ae
Jack Reynolds, Edinburgh
Eileen Tilling, New Forest
Ken Dacker, York
David Foot, Edinburgh

Tales of Yesteryear

Charlie Greenlees sent me this sketch of forest life by Daisy Bell of Lochgilphead. She was a forest worker in Knapdale Forest until retirement. She now attends Charlie's Adult Education Classes in English Literature and Communication.

On a lonely hillside in the Highlands a group of forest workers were taking their afternoon break. The sun was losing its warm rays and a chill wind was blowing but to warm the atmosphere an old fellow told tales of yesteryear when he was employed by the rich and famous in farm service. "Rats" was his favourite subject and everyone knew this, so with suppressed smiles they encouraged him to talk about rats.

He began by telling the tale about an island he visited when out fishing. In the summer it was infested with rats, yet in winter there was not a rat to be seen. His theory was that they made a bed in the cow's manure on the shore, pushed this out to sea with their tails for rudders and headed for the mainland. Yet he also heard that two rats sat face to face and used their tails for oars. One bright lad commented that the rats would have their tails screwed off by the time they reached the other shore, but the teller was not amused by that remark.

Then everyone would head off to their warm homes – rat tales all forgotten – the hill deserted save the birds coming home to rest and rat TAILS disappearing into their burrows for the night.

Berry Good

Readers will recall two issues ago that John and Betty Zehetmayr announced success with growing figs. In order to keep in the **FCRA News** they now announce success with josterberries – 7 lbs so far last year! Easier and larger to pick than blackcurrants, and no gooseberry spikes. Anybody want to match this with other gardening tales? (which must be plausible!) How about some from the Edinburgh Allotment Antiquarians, our local native earth diggers.

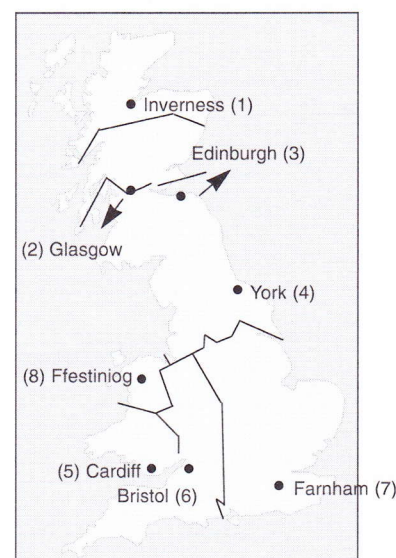
Fred Remembers

Here is another of Fred Hummel's anecdotes. It concerns one of our Edinburgh members, Mike Locke when he was in Mensuration Branch in Alice Holt. "The Minister for Agriculture, Heathcote Amery visited Alice Holt and we were showing him the woodland census. We decided on a little party game. We invited him to select any forest stand in any part of the country and would tell him precisely what it was. He pinpointed a stand in his estate. Mike Locke took out the field sheets, opened them, and I could see he looked a little horrified. He read out – devastated woodland! We all felt a little embarrassed. However Heathcote Amery put us at our ease by saying that we were absolutely right! He said the stand was sacrificed during the war and he hadn't yet the opportunity to restore it".

JOG YOUR MEMORY

In the August 1998 issue, Paul Shillito asked whether anybody could recall Phillip, his grandfather, who died in 1989. Readers will be interested to know that Bart Venner contacted Paul and put him in touch with John Perkins, head of the SW England Civil Engineering Division in the 60's, and Ray Howells, a dozer driver in the Dean. Bart also remembered working with Phillip on road alignments in the Dean. He plans to show Paul some of his grandfather's work in the spring so that it can be immortalised in the family photo album. A fascinating end to a detective story. Is anybody else wanting a contact? You'll never know what interesting events will be unearthed! As a policy matter, we cannot allow direct contact with retirees but we can publish requests for information.

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
- (8) David Williams - Tel 01766 762280

AGM

Our 1999 AGM will be held at Thetford on 25/26 May. This will be a good social event and interesting forest visits are planned. Many of you will have memories of the Thetford area. Details will follow, more information can be obtained from Group Secretaries.

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

		Retired	Aged			Retired	Aged
Nora Sims	Bournemouth	1977	83	Gerard Fell	Barry, S Wales	1983	75
John Stones	Scarborough	1978	84	Paul Kelly	Bridge of Allan	1993	39
Leonard Spencer	Llanrwst	1982	77	Duncan Kennedy	Invergarry	1972	91
Mabel Tudor	Shrewsbury	1962	97	Kenneth Kerr	Dumfries	1986	73
Lionel Vickery	Farnham		68	James Perratt	Arrochar	1992	68
Thomas Devine	Oulton Broad	1971	72	Alexa Telezynski	Glencoe	1975	88
David Dymond	Pontrhydyfen	1992	66	Norman Thomson	Dalbeattie	1983	74
James Gould	Ecton, Northants	1984	77	"Sandy" Walker	Peebles	1985	74
James Hendry	Ballachulish	1978	66	Colin Campbell	Beaulieu	1976	87
Mr James	Lydney	1974	84	Kenneth Clark	Moffat	1988	74
Hughie Jones	Llanwrtyd	1985	77	Donald Grayer	New Milton (Hants)	1982	75
Stanley Jones	Oswestry	1988	74	Raymond Foulsham	Swaffham	1976	87
Dorothy McIver	Pickering	1984	78	Paul John	Aberystwyth	1997	55
Raymond Nicholson	Ripon	1984	70	John Mackenzie	Ludlow	1985	73
John Nicholson	Tomnavaulin	1975	84	Thomas McJannette	Castle Douglas	1973	73
George Rogerson	Haverthwaite		67	Linda Marshall	Edinburgh	1996	42
Robert Welsh	Kilwinning	1984	73	Richard Parker	Dolgellau	1988	74
Charles Allan	Chester	1977	86	David Prichard	Rhayader	1989	68
William Dixon	Faversham		78	James Vincent	Saxmundham	1995	67
Henry Earsman	Bellingham	1975	89				

FCRA News is a joint Retirement Association and Slasher production.

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