

FCRA *News*

The newsletter about retired Forestry Commission employees

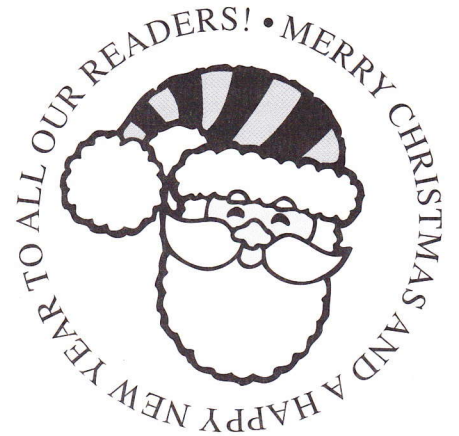
Issue 15 - December 2001

Alice Holt and Chilterns Lock Together



Warwick Payne and Deidre Waddell led their respective FCRA Groups on a narrowboat cruise along the Grand Union Canal at Tring in July. The photo was taken while

walking between locks where the canal descends the Chilterns. All agreed that the joint "get together" was very successful. More such meets are planned. The onboard



bar ensured convivial company and conversation! There must be opportunities for joint meetings between other Groups – how about it!

FCRA Annual General Meeting

For this year's AGM and forest visit we went to Grizedale. It will be remembered for wet weather, dry humour and warm conviviality. After the annual dinner we were given a preview of the forest district by David Lowe. He whetted our appetites for the next day's visit. Our arrival at Grizedale coincided with the arrival of the rain! We were greeted by David Kemp's "Ancient Forester", created in 1988. Was it modelled on any one of us? Penny Knock, Chief Recreation Ranger described the sculpture in the forest project started in 1977 which was entirely due to Bill Grant's vision and enthusiasm.

Unfortunately the planned walk along the Ridding Wood trail had to be cancelled because of the heavy rain, but John Cubby, the Chief Wildlife Ranger, filled the time sharing his wide knowledge of the wildlife in the forest with us. This ranged from the tiny wren, the only bird to persist right through from moorland to high forest, to the majestic Furness red deer which is the only native red deer in England. We were sorry to learn that

the red squirrel was unlikely to survive the ravages of parapox and competition from grey squirrels in the main forest block. However, John felt that it may remain in some smaller more isolated areas of woodland where grey squirrels may be excluded. On a positive note we were delighted to hear about the successful breeding of an osprey chick in the Thornthwaite section of the forest close to Bassenthwaite Lake. The viewpoint at the Dodd Wood, near Keswick, has been visited by over 17,000 enthusiasts from all parts of the country.

It was sad to learn from Education Ranger Emma Bartlett that for economic reasons the wide variety of live professional stage performances in the Theatre in the Forest had been discontinued. On the positive side Forest Enterprise and the Grizedale Society jointly employ her as a full-time Education Ranger. So not only do school children work with sculptors on projects, they have the benefit of performing on the stage of the Theatre in the Forest. Penny and Emma even gave a demonstration of one of the characters from a

Christmas performance to entertain us and illustrate their work with school children.

Whilst it was unfortunate that the weather prevented us from enjoying views of the forest during our coach tour with Dave Gregory, we were able to appreciate how the regeneration of the forest was proceeding. A forest already well known for its naturalness is becoming even more diverse. The rain did not prevent us from seeing some of the sculptors' work and even identifying or pretending to identify what the sculptures were. We also saw how Bill Grants 'bomb holes' had led the way in the creation of ponds to provide new and diverse habitats for plant and bird life.

My memory of the day was of a diverse multipurpose forest, the enthusiasm of the staff, the rain to fill the lakes and of course the food and drink. We reminded Clarke Anderson, our day's organiser, that past management of the forest primarily for timber production had resulted in the diverse forest of today. All participants agreed it was a great success. We are now looking forward to the Dean next year. **Brian Roebuck**

BENMORE AND THE YOUNGER FAMILY (Part 2)

Henry Younger (HGY) took a close interest in the woods. Not only did he plant trees to the south of Eckford and to the north of Duncan's plantings on the Cruach, but on the bank above the Golden Gates lodge he experimented with a mixture of Western red cedar and Japanese larch. The theory was that the cedar would prevent branches developing on the bottom of the larch, but unfortunately the rapid growth of the larch suppressed most of the cedar, so an interesting idea came to nothing. In the garden he planned and developed the Silver Wedding shrubbery to the south of the Wellingtonia avenue; elsewhere, he planted many rhododendrons and shrubs, many of which can still be seen.

Fishermen, like gardeners, continue to grumble when the weather sets fair. HGY, a keen angler, wrote in 1915, 'Third year running of very dry weather. Absolute drought in April, May and June; drizzles and slight showers in July, but August and September very dry. Hardly any fish came through the river, and we only netted Loch Eck once. It was a glorious sunny summer, spoilt only by the horrors of the War'.

In these days of correct practice, only fly fishing is allowed on the Eachaig. But in earlier years, when the kitchen demanded a salmon for the dinner table, it was considered acceptable as a last resort to use the *Carlisle fly*. Once a suitable fish had been located, the large bare hook was cautiously manoeuvred beneath it. Then, provided the aim of the fisherman was accurate, whoops! up came the fly, the foul-hooked fish was hauled in to the bank and the conspirators beat a hasty retreat with their prize, hoping that they had not been spotted. A dreadful way to behave—but I'm told it was enormous fun.

What would it have been like to have been a member of a house party at Benmore? Except on Sunday, when church-going was virtually mandatory, men were free to lead an active life. They might have accompanied their host who, most mornings, rode around the estate on horseback for a couple of hours before breakfast. Before the introduction of motorcars, cycling was popular, and there are accounts of trips down to Ayr over 40 miles away. If the opportunity to fish or shoot was not available, guests could take advantage of the 240 ton steam yacht 'Queen of the May'. Though pleasantly comfortable in a sheltered anchorage, she had the reputation of being a terrible sea boat, rolling wildly in anything but a dead calm. Up the Massan valley, close to the road but outside the policies, there was a Swiss chalet which survived until it was burnt down around 1945. Early in the afternoon, the butler and his staff might be seen carrying the wherewithal to make an Edwardian tea. This consisted of methylated stove, silver teapot, endless plates of thin sandwiches, scones, pancakes, biscuits and cakes. By four o'clock, members of the house party would go through the garden and along the path to the chalet, there to remain until it was time to return home to start changing for dinner. The path they used has just been uncovered near the bottom of 'Chile'. My father could remember people from Benmore walking to and from the church at Kilmun every Sunday morning, then repeating the journey to attend a later afternoon service.

Other than travelling up to Glasgow on a shopping trip, going in the launch for lunchtime

picnics up the loch or driving out to drop cards on acquaintances living nearby, there was not much for wives and daughters to do at Benmore. It is probable that time weighed heavily on their hands, despite constant changes of clothing. Women in those days did not smoke, but men were known to puff surreptitiously up the chimney in their bedroom in order to avoid having to walk 200 yards in the rain to the Smoking Hut which was situated where today the big leaf rhododendrons have been planted. It was a light-hearted age – and the practical joke was seen as a jape. As guests crossed the yard, wet sponges could be lobbed down on them from bedrooms in the tower. Perhaps nowadays we are inclined to judge such antics as tedious and boring, but it must be remembered that many of these carefree guests were soon to die in the Great War.

Benmore was not connected to the electricity mains till 1940. In the Youngers' time, the house was lit by acetylene gas produced in the gas house which lay next to the drying green and outside laundry. The gas-lit evenings were undoubtedly convivial. The Youngers were a musical family and music-making was a common form of entertainment. One professional musician was heard to say to HGY, 'I may have heard the violin played with more flamboyance, but never have I seen the ash of a cigar maintained intact for the whole of the last movement of that Beethoven quartet'. The old order had passed away and smoking indoors was no longer forbidden. Harry Lauder, who lived ten miles away at Glenbranter, used to come and spend evenings at Benmore. After dinner, everyone would gather round the piano, and for the next hour he would sing his heart out. HGY's son, Jock Younger (JWY), couldn't help noting that given Sir H's normal rates, the household got about 500 guineas worth of free entertainment each time the Laird of Glenbranter came to dinner.

By 1916, the Great War was taking its toll at Benmore. Staff could not be found for the house, the forestry staff was cut to one and land girls were used in the woods. Things slowly got back into shape after the War, but the death of his wife in 1921 took away a lot of HGY's pleasure in living at Benmore. By 1924, the cost of keeping the estate in the style he felt was appropriate was proving a serious financial burden. In addition, he wanted to find a house in a sunnier and drier climate with a suitable garden in which he could develop a collection of really tender plants. This he did with success at Bishopsteignton in Devon, and later at Belhaven, near Dunbar, where mimosa flourished in the open and a banana plant grown on a south facing wall once produced a small but unripe fruit.

The handing over of Benmore to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBG) and the Forestry Commission, a process that took nearly four years, came about because both 'The Prof' (Sir William Wright Smith) and Sir John Sutherland, the head of the Forestry Commission in Scotland, were close friends of HGY. In 1929 Benmore House became a training school for young foresters, and the Commission took over the woods, the farms and the hill ground. The policies, then amounting to 85 acres, had already been placed in the safe hands of the RBG who controlled the gardening staff and stocked the garden with plants that would prosper in the damp

climate of the west coast. The Younger (Benmore) Trust was set up with funds contributed by HGY, supplemented by an income derived from the feu duties of properties on Loch Long and the Holy Loch. These resources were more than sufficient to cover the cost of running the Garden in the 1930s.

So ended forty years of Youngers at Benmore. HGY had retained Eckford, the house originally built for the estate Factor, and for the next few years he used to stay there for a month or two each summer. Though the Prof fulfilled his promise and a magnificent selection of rhododendrons were sent over from the RBG to Eckford, HGY never took much interest in this garden, preferring to spend his time working in his shrubbery at Benmore. There was a curious echo of this pattern of behaviour after the war when JWY, who had taken over Eckford, spent a great deal of his spare time at Benmore helping to restore the ravages of wartime neglect. After the death in 1943 of John White, who had been HGY's Head Gardener and who became the RBG's first Curator at Benmore, the Benmore gardening staff for a time consisted only of two women. Inevitably, rhododendron, bracken and brambles infiltrated the planted areas. The family connection was finally broken when the last Younger was ordered out of the garden for the crime of deadwooding a rhododendron at the Duck Pond.

Among the numerous vices identified by the politically correct is that of paternalism. Neither HGY nor HGY would have accepted that point of view. Indeed, JWY extolled the virtues of feudalism, maintaining that the privileges granted to the owners of Benmore had to be matched by their accepting responsibility for the people who worked on the estate. Perhaps it was a flawed perception based on an attitude that was happy to demand long hours of physical work in return for wages of less than £50/year. And yet, and yet ... When HGY died more than twenty years after leaving Benmore, three full busloads travelled to Edinburgh to attend his funeral. Similarly, JWY visited on Sunday afternoons those who had worked at Benmore whilst it was owned by the Youngers. He knew all about their children and followed their lives with interest. Long after he died, his simple kindness was still widely remembered and respected.

DO YOU REMEMBER THIS LANDROVER?

Readers will recall that the owner of an ex-FC tractor successfully obtained its FC history via these columns. Now it's the turn of a Landrover to feature. Martin Chattin owns a 1952 ex-FC LR (short wheelbase). He has nothing to go on as the original log book does not exist, other than it was supplied to the FC in April 1952. It is canvas top Reg No MLM 863. He is a member of the LR Series One Club and plans to restore it to exhibition condition. He is very keen to obtain information on its life in the FC. Please dig into your memory and if you come up with something please contact Martin Chattin, Highlands End Farm, Eype, Bridport DT6 6AR, telephone 01308 426914, e-mail MartinChattin@aol.com

Fare Well in Retirement!

Retirement can bring about many significant changes in people's lives and sometimes the unexpected can appear just when you least expect it. In those circumstances it is comforting to know that there are organisations and agencies which can help you deal with some of the problems that you may experience.

The following is a sample of the numerous agencies and organisations that can offer free and practical advice.

Citizens' Advice Bureaux – these are great 'one stop shops' for getting help and advice on a range of subjects. Offices are listed in local telephone directories and there is also a website (www.nacab.org.uk)

Care and Repair – many local councils help fund care and repair schemes whereby grants are available to repair and improve homes. Contact your local council for information on the schemes available in your area.

Financial Problems – sometimes retirement can bring additional money worries and pressures and it is all too easy to slip into debt. The National Debtline offers free debt counselling; contact them on 0808 808 4000.

Bereavement – for many people the loss of a loved one can be a distressing event and they may need some professional help in coming to terms with their loss. CRUSE is a national charity devoted to helping bereaved people. CRUSE has many offices throughout GB and you can find the nearest one listed in your local telephone directory.

Paymaster General – HM Paymaster General processes and pays pensions for FC pensioners. They will also deal with any queries you might have on pensions, preserved awards etc.

Note: Paymaster must be notified timeously in the event of the death of an FC pensioner. This is important to prevent an overpayment of pension.

What's in a Name?

At our last AGM we talked about FCRA NEWS. Generally it was thought that it was a good means of keeping in touch, but a few thought there was a "Scottish Tendency". This is entirely due to contributions. I'll try to give a fair geographic distribution, but I can only do this if you send in material! It's up to you!

Another issue raised was its name. FCRA NEWS was considered BORING. So – over to you. What shall we call ourselves – a few ideas.

- The Veteran Forester (but we have others)
- Evergreen
- The Forwarder

Send suggestions in and I'll devise a method of selecting the most popular.

Meanwhile I plan to sell the name FCRA NEWS to the Forestry Commission Research Agency for an undisclosed fee to subsidise the Editor's professional activities!

MEMORIES OF FORESTRY TRAVEL

Fred Hummel has just published this book which recalls 5 decades of his forestry life which took him across the world. I asked him to tell readers of FCRA NEWS the story behind his story.

My main reason for writing the book is that in my old age I enjoy reminiscing and find that putting pen to paper helps to focus the mind. Additional incentives have been the opportunity to place on record the support I have enjoyed throughout from family, colleagues and others who have wished me well, the desire to leave something for my grandchildren to remember me by, and the urge to use my experience to illustrate some strongly held views. In particular I want to show general readers that forestry is not just about trees and timber but also about people, rural development, nature conservation and international cooperation including development aid. I also try to show that forestry can be fun!

As pegs on which to hang these observations I trace my career; managing tropical forests in Uganda, experiencing the early years of Alice Holt as the FC's first Mensuration Officer, exploring Mexico's forest wealth as FAO Co-ordinator of the Mexican National Forest Inventory, serving as a Forestry Commissioner back in Britain, heading the European Commission's Forestry Division in Brussels, and finally active retirement as a freelance consultant across the world. I have enjoyed every stage of my fifty years in forestry but, being off the leash, I have felt free to put forward some views which may be controversial but will, I hope, cause no offence.

The book is published by Radcliffe Press price £24.50, ISBN: 1 86064 726X

FORESTER TRAINING SCHOOLS – IT'S DONE!

Readers will recall that Henry Smith has been coordinating the publication of a history of the FTS.

The recollections of the students have been assembled. Publication is imminent.

There have been contributions from all the schools, coming from all parts of the three countries but regrettably the Forestry Commission was not able to offer any assistance.

It is historical, serious and hilarious. It consists of 150 A4 pages bound together of text and photographs and will cost £7 plus postage (not yet calculated). 100 copies will be produced.

It has been a hard job but worth doing. Geoff Waygood at the Dean has cooperated with the editing.

If anyone wishes to reserve a copy please write to H J Smith, 35 The Pastures, Kings Worthy, Winchester SO23 7LX.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I would like to wave a flag and ask a question in recognition of our "fair sex" insofar as our Association is concerned, even at the risk of being accused of making "sexist" comments!

At our recent, well attended, AGM we re-elected unanimously for another year in office, our lady Chairperson, Mrs Deirdre Waddell, one of our more recently retired members from the Research Branch at Alice Holt. She has chaired for 2 years a very active and worthwhile range of events and already her committee has produced a well-packed programme for our current year. We look forward to her report from the national AGM.

Having seen the report in the March issue of 'Slasher' concerning the appointment of another lady Conservator in the Forestry Commission, I wonder if we, at Alice Holt, have the first or only lady Chairperson of any of our FCRA Groups?

Ronald M Brown

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OBITUARIES

Although DAVID BRIERTON, who died in March, was not a member of the FC, he was known throughout the forestry profession in Britain.

He graduated from Edinburgh in 1955, and joined the forest service in Cyprus. After 2 years he returned to Scotland, part of the time working for SWOA. He responded to a request by Archie Aitkins to lead the expansion of the modestly sized Tilhill Forestry. Under his leadership it grew from the lone Scottish base in Jedburgh, to 7 bases in N Britain, with its HQ in Old Sauchie, Stirling. In 1976 he became MD of Tilhill with overall responsibility for the company.

Private forestry was expanding in the '70s and he was one of those with vision who set up the Cowie particleboard factory which successive owners have made very successful. He was a member of the Scottish Forest Products Development Group whose promotional activities influenced the location of the Irvine pulpmill and the Inverness OSB plant.

He was a member of council of Timber Growers and on the FC's Mid Scotland RAC. He was also a keen member of the ICF and encouraged Tilhill staff membership. His enthusiasm and commitment made an important contribution to the forestry profession and industry. He retired in 1987 but spent much of his time in Cyprus which he and his wife had loved since their first sojourn there. (Condensed from an obituary in the Scotsman.)

I saw LORD TAYLOR OF GRYFE's obituary in the Independent written by Tam Dalyell, and have taken extracts. He was appointed as Commissioner, and subsequently as Chairman of the FC in 1963 and served over 13 years under 3 Governments. George Holmes recalls he was an extraordinary combination of hard headed businessman and left-wing, socially aware, politician. He worked well with all DGs because he was a chairman who did not fuss – he was great to have at the helm. He was instrumental in obtaining funding for the Wiggins Teape Corpach mill, but was also keen on recreation and public access to the forests. During his latter years he managed the transfer of HQ from Basingstoke to Corstorphine and was praised for the way it was handled with care and good sense. He inspired loyalty. He always retained an interest in forestry, particularly its political aspects, and after leaving the FC served as Chairman of EFG for 5 years. Forestry owes much to his skills.

MIKE LONG died recently, and John Davies recalls his eventful forestry career.

I had known and admired him for many years and between 1970 and 1979 we were colleagues in the old South Scotland Conservancy. Our friendship continued after retirement and I looked forward eagerly to his annual visit.

Mike graduated from Aberdeen in 1936 and until the war served as a worker and surveyor, chiefly in Argyll. On the outbreak of war he joined up, served in the Commandos and was awarded an MC.

On demobilisation he was appointed Private Woodlands Officer in the West (Scotland) Conservancy and then moved to the Black Isle District in 1951. In 1957 he is alleged to have played a prank on a senior officer who was not

amused and was immediately sent to the Moffat District in South (Scotland) where he spent the next 22 years of his life, until retirement. And a remarkably productive period it was, for his district saw an enormous expansion of both State and Private forests.

His sheer enthusiasm was worth a great deal and his loyalty outstanding. I recall taking a young intellectual trainee graduate to meet Mike. We went for a walk in the plantations above the Daer reservoir. When we got to the top Mike said to the trainee "Patrick, if you want to get on in the service you must remember three things – say please, say thank you and most important of all, say sorry".

His office was a joy to behold. Stuffed birds and animals, forestry tools, old estate records, a fretsaw and bee-keeping equipment.

Mike was an innovator. A day on the hill could be exhausting for he held forth on a score of new ideas with great enthusiasm. Some of his ideas were preposterous but among these were usually some really valuable thoughts and observations.

FAREWELL

		Retired	Aged
Joyce Anderson	Alice Holt	1985	81
Alexander Anderson	Alford	1998	63
Edward Bennett	Thetford	1981	81
James Bradshaw	Ashford	1973	83
Geoff Bowers	Beaumaris	1980	80
Robert Burns	Hexham	1996	70
John Chisholm	Needham Market	1980	76
Albert Cox	Hook	1988	75
Anthony Benson	Coleford	1979	85
Charles Holmes	Elgin	1977	88
George Jones	Aberystwyth	1989	76
Fazal Khawaja	Reddich	1980	74
John Lloyd	Bucknell	1988	70
Robert Mackay	Corwen	1981	67
Stanley Mayhew	Woodbridge	1977	86
David Smith	Northallerton	1987	76
Gladys Stevens	Midhurst	1982	75
Marjorie Vessey	Coleford	1988	74
Fredrick Wilson	Kinlochard	1979	79
Isabella Wilson	Edinburgh	1971	89
John Paton	Narborough	1982	?

Yes, he was a pioneer and a couple of years ago he sent me a 20 page account of his silvicultural experience embracing ground preparation, ploughing, ball and chain drainage, drain maintenance, windthrow, snap, spacing, detopping, mixtures etc.

But I remember him too as a very kind man. One evening while returning to Moffat he asked if we could call at a certain farm so he could pick up some bee-keeping equipment. He had lent the farmer's son, a schoolboy, some stuff. While he was collecting the material the farmer came over to the car. "A great man, your Mr Long."

Mike was a great, good and most loveable man. A rare person indeed.

Stanley Robertson also remembered Mike as a bender of rules and not averse to commandeering a bulldozer to create a wildlife pond! He had a flair for hands-on communication and was an enthusiastic organiser at agricultural shows. Two years ago he guided members of the RSFS around his de-topping trials in larch and spruce, designed to avoid uneconomic first thinnings and encourage growth in selected stems. Another of his activities

was work with the Moffat Hill Rescue Service.

Bill Elliott remembers ERIC TINSON, who died after a long debilitating illness on 12th August. Eric joined the Forestry Commission in 1938 and, after Army service on a radar site on the South coast and then in Germany after the surrender, returned to HQ and was employed in Audit Branch. In 1954, on the introduction of commercial accounting, he took up the HEO post in Bristol. During his time there he obtained an extra-mural degree in Economics. This stood him in good stead when he was chosen for the post of Marketing Officer. This was a job for which he had a natural aptitude, and I am sure the one he enjoyed most of all. However, in 1972, with HQ moving to Edinburgh, Eric opted to stay in his native London. He was transferred to Customs and Excise and remained there until his retirement in 1980.

Eric was a lively and stimulating colleague and companion. He was a keen, indeed a fanatical cricketer, playing for Raynes Park and always the leading light in the HQ matches between the Finance Branch and The Rest and in matches against Alice Holt and the New Forest. As a life member of Essex County Cricket Club, his connection with cricket was maintained well into retirement, during which time he also acted, briefly, as VAT adviser for the Surrey County Cricket Club.

He is survived by his wife, Kathy, who served with the Forestry Commission at Alice Holt and in the office of Director England from 1945 to 1952.

Paul Goodson of Arundel remembers 'BUNNY' WINGATE who was well over 6 feet tall and had a powerful physique to match. With a benign temperament and wry sense of humour this gentle giant of a man was very popular with all his FC colleagues.

Demobilised from the army in 1945 he worked on a farm until 1949 when he joined the FC at Arundel Forest and became involved in the creation of what are today very fine beech plantations in Angmering Woods.

During the 1970s much of his time was spent working with a trunk road planting team. His size and strength serving his particularly well when it came to drilling and "topsoiling" planting holes in chalk and intractable clay, often on steeply sloping ground.

Spells of duty at Rogate Nursery added to his width of forestry experience and knowledge. No matter what the task, it would be undertaken with his customary conscientiousness and good humour.

Ill health forced him into early retirement in 1987 at the age of 61, but he was able to spend the early part of his retirement working on his allotment.

APOLOGY

In the last issue there was an obituary for Reg Williams. This was an error; it should have been Reg Waters.

I regret any concern or distress this caused.

Richard Toleman

Editor