



Centenary of the Dean School of Forestry

Early in January 1904, eight young men created the first course of forestry students in the Forest of Dean. Mr C O Hanson was the instructor who devised this unique method of forestry training long before the Forestry Commission came into being. In fact the first courses were viewed with suspicion by the then Deputy Surveyor and it was expected that there would be little call for trained foresters and that the school would quickly close.

Well closure came, but not quickly. The Dean School was the last to close with, for several years, four others in place too.

There are many old Dean students still alive and they are all called to a Centenary Reunion this year. The Commemorative Dinner will be in the Dean on Saturday 4 October 2003. The oldest surviving Dean student, Fred Beasley, who was in the school in 1929 and currently 95 years old, expects to attend. Cyril Lewis who was in the school in 1935 lives in Lydney, his father was on the first course in 1904. Already ex-students from across the world have shown keen interest in attending.

Bart Venner, the organiser, asks all those ex-students who receive a letter from him to contact other members of their respective years. Not everyone who left the School joined the Forestry Commission, therefore the whereabouts of many are unknown.

So this networking to friends and colleagues is important to spread the news of the event widely, and ensure its success.

You can contact Bart at **Fern Cottage, High Street, St Briavels GL15 6TB, tel: 01594 530504, e-mail: bart.venner@fdean.gov.uk**

Bob Hendrie, who went to the School in August 1934, kept his joining instructions. Part is reproduced below and will bring back memories....*"I am directed to inform you that you have been selected to attend the course at the Dean Forest School which commences on the 21st. August. Please report to the instructor. Mr. R. G. Broadwood, Woodman's School, Parkend on that date. There is an omnibus service from Lydney station G.W. Railway to Parkend.*

It will be necessary to provide yourself

with a pedal bicycle for your use during your apprenticeship, and to maintain it in proper running order. The use of a motor cycle will not be permitted. You will be required to carry out special duties in connection with fire patrol and outbreaks of forest fires for which no extra remuneration will be payable.

It must be clearly understood that you will be held responsible for the proper care of School equipment, furniture and utensils and for the cost of repair or replacement of articles lost or damaged by you. The sum of 5/- will be deducted from your first week's pay towards a fund to meet the breakages of crockery, etc.

Arrangement will be made on your arrival at the School for measurements to be taken for the uniform mentioned in the prospectus, a copy of which is attached for your information..."

Bob then had to acknowledge receipt and agree to these conditions. Just how did students get their motorbikes there, for they did. There must be some stories on this! Start writing.



...So that's what those folks in the Edinburgh and South Scotland Group get up to - quad biking at Ardentinnay. Bill Sutherland arranged a visit to his grandson's hill farm near Dunoon last summer, and after initial training we took to the hills. We had an enjoyable afternoon on the hill circuit overlooking Loch Long - greatly recommended as a way of keeping active.

Welcome to Retirement!

Patricia Ashley	Bordon
Capel Bevan	Knighton
Catherine Bond	Aberfoyle
Anne Patmore	Saffron Walden
Sheelagh Pegler	Tetbury
Terence Pembroke	Abercarn
Gerald Walker	Tarporley
Clive Brashier	Alton
Allan Naismith	Aberfoyle
Hugh Currie	Newton Stewart

Heaven's Angels

Last summer Ken Broad gave us the ballad of Jack William's Tractor. But he also sent in other material. Looking back over the almost 50 years of his career in forestry his most abiding memories are also the most whimsical. What about this one!

In 1976 I took charge of Quantock Forest in Somerset. Forester Mike Millman, the small workforce and I worked well together as a team and we took great pride in what was a truly scenic area.

The forest had a modest picnic/camping site where, due to the high risk, open fires were not permitted – a condition accepted by most visitors. However, every Easter dozens of Hell's Angels-type motor cyclists would arrive en masse. And they always brought a large van bearing generators and amplifiers. So-called music would blare away day and night, with the commotion audible in villages miles away. Trees and bushes would be hacked for firewood.

Their general demeanour with studded leather jackets, long greasy hair and 'Third Reich' helmets all contrived to rapidly clear the site of all the more orthodox voters. Such was the annual disturbance that by 1980 I asked the police for advice. They sent along a young bobby in a patrol car. He took one look at the multitude, proclaimed that he had no powers of eviction, said that was my job, his was to ensure no breach of the peace. However, since it was a Bank Holiday and they were short staffed he strongly advised against any such action. And he drove away.

A small group stood warming their backsides at a fire so I drove over and asked who had lit it. Grubby hands shielded eyes as they scanned distant horizons. "Fire? Fire? Can anyone see a fire?" they asked of one another. The Land Rover was equipped with a small pump and water tank. I got out, extracted the hose, took the nozzle in my hand and doused their fire.

Perhaps it was the shock of witnessing this contemptuous show of bravado; perhaps they were on 'whacky baccy' or something even more potent (the local 'magic mushrooms' are second to none I hear tell). Anyway, whatever it was they just stood there looking vacant while the female element screeched with laughter – something hardly likely to help matters I deemed, so I beat a hasty retreat. But not before telling them that if they lit another fire I'd call the police. Such bluff!

Something more drastic was clearly called for, so for 1981 I devised a cunning plan. On the Thursday before Easter (the day they usually arrived) I had practically the whole workforce on duty – volunteers to a man. We assembled in a lay-by on the narrow lane leading to the campsite and there we parked our forwarder tractor. Behind the tractor the team parked their vehicles, while in front Mike and I sat in the Land Rover.

And through that long, warm afternoon we waited, and waited, and waited. The hours ticked by. The lads stretched their legs. The occasional visitor came by, some stopping to ask what was happening, all wishing us good luck. Early in the evening some boy scouts arrived with baskets and flasks. Their troupe leader had learnt of our plans and had sent along refreshments.

It was just before dusk when we heard a faint drone in the distance. Growing louder by the minute we knew they were on their way. Strains of 'High Noon' ran through my mind as I gave the signal for action stations. The tractor moved out, fully blocking the lane, and the lads behind started their preparations. Then the riders hove into sight riding two and three abreast, and soon the lane was jammed with dozens of machines. The noise was deafening.

The lead man asked what was happening and I told him that we were not allowing them through. He was incredulous and asked again. Getting the same response he stopped his engine, hauled the bike onto its stand and

swaggered back to spread the news. One by one engines died. Riders dismounted, milled about, held muted discussions. Things were looking decidedly hostile.

The leader returned with another storm-trooper who informed me that he was a lawyer, that what we were doing was illegal and discriminatory, and that we were in breach of several Acts of Parliament (for which he was able to quote the relative dates). This threw me I don't mind admitting. There I was expecting some moronic response, instead I was getting legal contention. And although this character seemed not to have washed for months he actually sounded like a lawyer. And come to think of it the leader of the pack wasn't exactly thick either. I had to agree with their argument – but said we were not shifting anyway.

Now it must have been at about this juncture that they caught sight of our lads behind the tractor further up the lane. Fully kitted out now with gloves, helmets, ear defenders and visors, they stood in a menacing line holding their chain saws in the trail position – roughly around tyre level. Further prolonged discussion ensued within the Panzer ranks. Then, to our astonishment, one by one they remounted, started their bikes, turned around and roared off into the night. We waited several more hours expecting a return visit (perhaps a judge we thought!) but nothing transpired.

Later that night we heard that they were ensconced in a field some miles away, so I decided to stand the men down. Some days later we had a letter from the Conservator, Leslie Troup, informing us that news of our exploits had reached Bristol and he wanted to congratulate us on controlling the influx of what he termed "the boisterous leather jacketed fraternity".

Boisterous? Hardly, they were more akin to heaven's angels than Hell's Angels. In act I felt a bit guilty for spoiling their weekend.

WARTIME STORIES

Reg Waters, a Chief Forester who retired to Welshpool in 1972, tells a fascinating wartime story of forestry in Mid Wales.

In September 1939 the late Mr A Jones and I were the first to be transferred to Timber Supply. I was living at Eglwys Fach near Machynlleth and carrying out a survey of availability and suitability of timber for pitwood.

Arriving home one night there was a message for me to report to the Birmingham Estate Office Rhayader by 9 o'clock the following morning to get a permit to go to Elan Valley and take over the timber operations which had started a few weeks before.

The person in charge knew nothing of Forestry Commission paperwork and left the next day. What a job I had! However we soon got going fairly well, and were despatching several railway trucks of pitwood each week.

After a couple of years we went to fell a large plantation the other side of the bottom lake. We hired a boat from the Birmingham Corporation which would carry about a ton of props. All was going well when one day the military came and said they wanted the boat for one evening and night. The next morning not a pitprop or stick of timber was out of place and the boat tied up as usual. But some of us noticed a crack in the small dam on the other side of the lake which had been built to provide water while the main dams were under construction. After a few weeks the same thing happened again, but this time the little dam was completely shattered.

Yes, you have guessed it. The Bouncing Bomb was being tested, so when I hear the Dam Busters March being played it brings back memories. Although I was not actually involved, I can say I was there when this unique bomb was being given trials.

AGM MAY 2003

This year's AGM will be held in Aviemore on Tuesday 13 May. On Wednesday John Keenleyside has planned a visit to Glenmore. There have been many interesting developments in recreation and conservation, which include the refurbishment of the visitor centre. Strathspey has a wide range of attractions, too many to list, but they will serve all your needs. The most recent is the Cairngorm funicular. Some of the others to whet your appetite are Jack Drake's Alpine Nursery, Landmark, Whisky Trail, RSPB reserves, cycle hire, steam railway, Highland Museum, off road vehicles, clay pigeon shooting and boating – you could make a week of it. Come and join us and have a great holiday. Group secretaries will be circulating details.

The Story of the Forest

In the last issue I mentioned the project by Forest Enterprise Wales, the National Library of Wales, and the Museum of Welsh Life, to record memories of those involved in the creation of the forests of Wales. I hope many of you replied to the project coordinator **Caroline Earwood** (01691 671808).

Two who did were Jock McRobert and Jock Low. Jock McRobert began ploughing in South Scotland in 1951, then went on to join Jock Low's ploughing team in North Wales. Together they prepared the Trawsfynydd "bomb alley site" with armoured tractors. Jock Low recalls his crawler shovel driver reporting a bomb in the bucket after extracting gravel from a bank. The Bomb Disposal people had to pay another visit. This is the stuff of forestry memories in Wales.

Jobs for the Boys – and Girls

Retirees have so many interesting projects, so how about green woodworking. If you have always wanted to build a hand hewn cruck barn or any other green wood construction, now is the time to take action. Grudrun Leitz runs 9 day green woodworking courses at Clissett Wood, Ledbury near Hereford. The woodland workshop is equipped with steam bending and cleaving equipment, and a pole lathe, and has an adjacent kitchen with cooking fire, clay oven and compost toilet. A shave horse and tool set is provided for each course member. Students can stay locally or camp in the wood. Much of the timber is sourced nearby, often extracted by horse. Grudrun recently organised courses for the construction of the Great Oak Hall at Westonbirt Arboretum. Free form furniture is a particular passion of Grudrun, made from curved sculptural pieces of roundwood. He produces a small range of free form orders to commission each year.

For more information contact **Grudrun at Hill Farm, Stanley Hill, Brosbury HR8 1HE, 01531 640 125 or www.greenwoodwork.co.uk**

Information on green woodworking in Scotland can also be obtained from the Argyll Green woodworkers, 01546 603346.

If any of you are doing green woodworking already, why not tell us about it.

More on Cycling

Cycling can be fun besides being good exercise. The Phoenix Trail, an old railway between Thame and Princes Risborough, is one of 4 Sustrans projects under the Arts and the Travelling Landscape programme. Artists and students have worked together to produce a series of sculptures, seats and shelters on the route. They worked mainly in greenwood from woodlands in the Chilterns. Other routes now being worked under the same scheme are:-

- **Spenn Valley Greenway between Dewsbury and Bradford**
- **Chalk and Channel Way in Kent**
- **Bath to Frome**

The artists take their inspiration from the local landscape. On the Phoenix Trail the theme is the old railway and red kites and in Kent it is fossils in the chalk cliffs.

Beside these new artwork trails, Sustrans has been opening more routes on the National Network. Why not try Bath to Salisbury, using the Kennet and Avon Canal, Leeds to Saltaire, using the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Jubilee Way at Cambridge along the banks of the River Cam and St Albans to Milton Keynes via the River Lea at Luton. Good cycling and cycling is good!

More information from **Sustrans**,
35 King Street, Bristol BS1 4DZ,
Tel 0117 926 8893, www.sustrans.org.uk

FROM THE EDITOR

Members will have noticed that there has been a change of FC pension provider from Paymaster to Capita Hartshead, as a result of a contract awarded by the Cabinet Office.

Previously Paymaster provided Silvan House with a monthly list of retired colleagues who had deceased and from this I drew up the list for "Farewell". Since the new contract was awarded Capita Hartshead has been unable to provide this information. Personnel is making every effort through the Cabinet Office to reinstate the previous arrangement as a matter of urgency. I regret that "Farewell" will not appear until the old system is restarted. When it does there is likely to be a lengthy backlog of names. I am reluctant to list deceased as a result of personal contacts in case of errors, which may cause distress. However I shall continue to accept obituaries.

Plant a Tree – End Isolation

In the November issue of the Big Issue I saw an article showing how local volunteering projects can help asylum seekers to feel welcome in their communities. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and The Scottish Refugee Council arranged for people living in temporary accommodation in the centre of Glasgow to work on Cashes Forest on Lochlomondside. The RSFS already has a very small working group headed by David Gross, and the work carried out by the asylum seekers will aid its aims.

Until now most had only been in urban areas since their arrival in Scotland. They all enjoyed working on the open hillside planting trees, and they said it gave them an opportunity to meet many more people both from other countries and Scotland. They all said they had experienced isolation and boredom as legislation prevents them from seeking jobs until after 6 months from arrival.

They felt that by working on such projects it both gave them a sense of achievement and sent a message that they wanted to give something back to the community. They all returned to their accommodation tired but enthusiastic. So if there is any way in which you can help asylum seekers to feel more welcome and accepted, you will be making a major contribution to helping people that are often disorientated and traumatised.

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Check with contacts for exact area covered.



OBITUARIES

ALAN FREETH's son tells of his father who attended Dean FTS in 1943 and joined the FC after the war at Emery Down. He was promoted to Forester at Bishopstoke, and later moved to Southwater. There he became secretary of the Southwater Horticultural Society and later president. He also spent many Sunday afternoons playing cricket on the local ground. In 1968 he became Private Woodlands Officer in West Sussex and also moved house. He spent many hours creating a garden, chicken run and looking after his many hives. But he also found time to become involved in local clubs and organisations, including the council. Prior to retirement in 1984 he bought a bungalow which required extensive reconstruction. This kept him, his wife and son well occupied. After retirement he continued as a consultant in SE England until his health deteriorated.

George Taylor has many memories of GRAHAM SEMPLE. He graduated from Edinburgh and served first in SW England where he met June, whom he married in 1957. He was posted to NE England and they had a very happy time at Kielder. Graham became very ill and was feared likely to go blind, while recuperating he was given the job of librarian at Alice Holt. This was right up his street as his family were in the publishing business and he had a deep love of books. He did a great job of sorting out the untidy collection which had accumulated at Alice Holt and set up a system making a great deal of valuable information available to his colleagues. Recovering his health he got back into fieldwork as Silv S and then came to us at Bush. An easy boss to work for, always encouraging, always asked searching and helpful questions and exerted just enough discipline to keep our worst excesses of enthusiasm in check. Back to the field again as A/Con FM in York and finally back to his much-loved Kielder where he retired. Graham was a kind and hospitable man and he and June always made one feel welcome and provided me with much needed support on several occasions when my health was down. They had a love of village life and always preferred to be on the fringe of the countryside rather than near town. Very much a family man, he was ruled by June and his girls Fiona and Charlotte, despite his protests – he loved every minute of their company. He was a keen and competent gardener, loving nothing better than an oversized and overgrown garden to lick into shape.

BILL McGIVERN's son remembers his father who retired as Chief Forester at the Bannan in 1983. He joined the Forestry Commission after the war and started his training at the Forestry School at Glentress in 1947. His first posting was to Ae Forest where he was the first forester to move into the new village. He took an active part in village life and helped set up and run the village football team. The man in charge of Ae Forest was Jimmy Reid MBE. He respected Jimmy for his knowledge and experience and learnt a great deal about forestry from Jimmy, but his admiration was for Jimmy's ability to keep his hat in place regardless of the weather and even on one occasion when Jimmy's Land Rover overturned.

From Ae he moved to Edgarhope Forest at

Lauder to be in charge of his first forest. Its proximity to Edinburgh afforded him the opportunity and the enjoyment of showing friends and relatives around the forest. He was a great storyteller and many left believing that the woods were still full of bears and wolves.

Opening up the forests for people to enjoy was important to him. During his four years as Head Forester at Glentress from 1965 to 1969 he promoted forest walks, and encouraged school trips to the forest. As Chief Forester at the Bannan he oversaw the setting up of the Raiders road. He spent many evenings in the forest observing the wildlife or watching the sunsets. This allowed him to make sure members of the public left before the gates closed. He always shared his knowledge of the forest and spent time working with the Covenanters Society to provide access to monuments.

In 1983 he retired to West Calder. He enjoyed observing the kingfishers in the Almond Valley and walking in the surrounding countryside. He remained active till the end of his life, taking in all that the countryside could offer. He enjoyed visiting the forests he had worked in and in which he took a pride in helping to develop.

Michael Osborne wrote an appreciation of DONALD KENNEDY which appeared in full in 'Scottish Forestry' Winter 2002. The following is an extract.

Here was a man who was rarely in front of the camera, being more often behind the shutter. Given the frequency with which he was to be seen bobbing about in front of the platform party at conferences and seminars, one can only wonder at the uniqueness of the archive of portraits of forestry luminaries that he will have left behind.

The other tool of his trade was his tape recorder, which he deployed quite openly. He was always in the front row, in order to pick up the badinage, and speakers were rarely shy of indulging him.

His uncle, Hugh Pennet, was a forester at Inchnacardoch and encouraged him to apply for the FC. He was appointed Clerical Officer at Inverness in 1947. Reports describe him as "quick on the uptake, reliable, with a lively intelligence and interest in his work". He was noted as being "capable of concentrated application, whilst maintaining a keen sense of humour". Tasks included the usual record-keeping, but also responsibilities for mechanical equipment and the vocational training scheme. Some years later these attributes were again noted, when he was described as a "very good training officer, preferring to lead rather than drive his staff".

He was recommended for promotion to Executive Officer in April 1954 and transferred south to the New Forest. During his years there his organising ability was recognised and he was noted as "always willing to assume new responsibilities". He achieved HEO grade in 1965 and was transferred to the Board of Trade, subsequently working in a number of other Government Departments.

On leaving the Civil Service he embarked on a freelance career as a journalist, contributing frequently to Forestry and British Timber and more recently writing for Andrew Kesson, who launched Forest Machine Journal.

He described his interests as writing and photography, and he may not have been referring to his own work there. I am sure that all writers carefully research the works of others. Politics was also an interest; Classic FM and Country and Western were listed too. These eclectic tastes might appear a curious mixture, although it probably reflects the reflective and playful sides of his character. Yin and Yang – a man who masked his seriousness of purpose with a measure of joviality designed to disarm his 'quarry'.

For he was on a mission, which was to "tilt at the establishment". As one of his officers remarked in the 50s, "Kennedy has an unusual capacity for entering into the spirit of his part, and his contribution has always been valuable".

Peter Graves recounts the eventful career of ISAAC "Ike" GARNER who died in December aged 96. He was born and lived all his life at Embleton near Cockermouth and was the last of a family of 11. For his early life he was a quarryman, but when it closed in 1950 he joined the FC in Whinlatter and Thornthwaite. After retirement in 1971 he helped his brother on the farm, and then his nephew, and was working right up to his death. He had a clear memory and looked after himself in his farmhouse at Beck Bank until the end. He was always amused that his wage just before retirement was less than £20 per week. After retirement his pension was £20 per week – for nothing!

Richard Williamson remembers CALDER MILLER as one of those larger than life characters – always good natured and as often as not with a story to tell.

Calder joined the Forestry Commission in 1982, having spent 8 years in the Passport Office and 14 in the Procurator Fiscal's Office in the West of Scotland. He spent 5 years in Personnel, then 8 years in Private Woodlands and Grants & Licences, and finally returned to Personnel in 1996, where he trained as a Job Evaluation analyst and completed a significant number of the job evaluations during the Pay & Grading Review and Staff Unification. He met many of the FC's characters during this latter part of his career and would regale colleagues with fascinating stories on his return from his visits around the country.

He was a dedicated family man, father of Innes and Linzi and a doting grandfather. Calder was always active, whether walking the hills, gardening or crafting model boats. He also collected old cameras and was a connoisseur of whisky, and would look out for possible additions to his collections on his travels. His other great interest was scouting. He started as a Scout leader in his native Lanarkshire before taking up several appointments at the Scottish Scout Headquarters, where he rose to be a Scout Commissioner, a post he held for 9 years. Tragically, he drowned in September while diving on holiday in Japan, where he was attending the wedding of a friend whom he had met through scouting.

Obituaries for BILL GRANT, VILNIS GRANT, MIKE LOCKE and WARREN HENMAN will appear in the next issue.