

The Story of the Lone Cyclist

by John Taylor

My appearance in last Slasher, as the lone cyclist at the end of the row of horses at the opening of the South of Scotland Countryside Trail at Ae, has prompted me to join the ranks of those who have recounted their retirement history.

As a rather late developer, my forestry career had been undistinguished, serving on the beat, mainly in Galloway. I did have times of great satisfaction - eg planting most of Penninghame during the years of immense expansion - most of all in my last years when FC really got to grips with respecting the environment. I particularly enjoyed the creative opportunities in planting and re-stocking. But, do you recall acts about which you are now embarrassed, and that you carried out in the name of the FC (in good faith at the time, of course)? I do - principally planting all those now precious raised bogs in Wigtownshire, especially the largest, the Tannylaggie flow!

So, although I would willingly have served those extra five years which I was unjustly denied after reaching the age of 60 in 1990, I had already laid down the shape of my retirement activities, so I slid into them seamlessly.

So, how did I arrive, on a bike, at the end of the line of horses? Well, in the 80s, I had already re-adopted cycling. I had helped to found the Scottish committee of the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) in 1987 of which I was secretary at my retirement. Since then, I have been Chair and Vice-chair. I might have been Chair again if it wasn't for creeping deafness, which isn't well enough compensated by hearing aids not to be a pest asking people to repeat themselves or speak up (which they do for one minute!). But I am still the sole surviving founder, "elder statesman" and continue to contribute ideas and work.

On the local scene, I set up the Galloway Cycling Group in 1986, which is now a CTC section and am again Chair/Secretary coordinating its programme and speaking up for cycling in Dumfries and Galloway

Help for Hazel Coppice

Alan Waters from Chichester is starting up a hazel coppice project and is particularly concerned about techniques. He is looking for a copy of the 1956 edition of Bulletin No 27 "Utilisation of Hazel Coppice", which is long out of print. Would any of you FC

(D&G). I have recently arrived at creating a programme of the kind of cycling nearest my heart. This I term Discovery Rides - fairly short distanced, packed with interest - we have taken 4 hours over 14 miles on a balmy summer's day! This is supported by D&G Council, mainly by way of boosting publicity, and has been successful enough to repeat next year. So I was naturally on the circulation list for the Ae opening; in fact, I was invited to bring my horse!

I am not competitive, nor a performance mountain biker, although, in respect of the latter category, I am enthusiastic about FC's establishment of the "7 Stanes" for its broad knock-on publicity value for cycling in general in D&G, and for the service facilities that it is generating. But, to celebrate the millennium and my 70th, I did achieve an "End to End" in 2000, of which I made 1,220 miles in 19 days, including visiting several Cornish gardens. I also climbed Ben Nevis that year in the company of my three offspring. I am scheduling a Scottish End to End of 1,000 miles for my 75th (on both of them raising money for charity).

We have, within 30 miles of us, the site of the invention of the first pedal bicycle by Kirkpatrick Macmillan. Its 150th anniversary came up in 1990, so we organised a successful festival of cycling at Drumlanrig Castle. I have had the honour of keeping it going on a social cycling get-together on the last weekend of May every year since.

My main other continuing interests are my large garden, which, after 26 years occupation, I am still developing, and choral singing. But I have a new major activity. Over the years, I had from time to time thought that I ought to do something in the welfare volunteer sector, but had never found time to do something else that I would have wanted to put my back into. Two years ago I and my wife were suddenly pitched into it by our second son, Colin, taking a stroke at age 42. It had nothing to do with the usual causes; it was caused by damage to his carotid artery. He was chief engineer aboard cargo ships in the SW

publication hoarders be able to help him obtain this information. He is also looking for a source of Elwell 3901 billhooks. Ideas? Please contact Alan directly at 53 Warehead Cottages, Stane Street, Halnecker, Chichester PO18 0NF, tel 01243 778106, e-mail Wildwoodcoppice@btinternet.com

Welcome to Retirement!

Cyril Wait
George Francey
Conwyl Phillips
Michael Ingoldby
Graham Roberts
Elma Wilson

Brimfield
Taynuilt
Llandogo
Preston
Abergavenny
Cairnbaan

Pacific and, since he was heading for Sydney, that's where he landed in hospital. So, we immediately went there for 6 weeks to support him and his devastated Filipino wife. At 71, I was suddenly father again - being referred to for decisions to be made and pushing Colin about Sydney in a wheel chair. For most of the time since, he has been residing with us. Despite still not having much speech, having difficulty in organising language, and having little use of his right-hand fingers, he has an amazing attitude and is making great progress with coping with life. He needs no close personal attention, has walked up many of the hills around here, cycles up to 40 miles and never gets lost.

This was a new world for us. First, we had to learn to understand Colin's condition, how to cope with it, and how to help him to cope with it. We were helped by something of which we had had only an inkling before - the diversity of the services available to the disabled and to their carers. But despite all the goodwill from that direction, it has still been my role often to coordinate and prompt them. It took Colin's wife a long time to address the future herself, having seen the security of his big income disappear overnight, but I am so pleased to say that, at time of writing, she and their two children are here on a visit, and that she herself has been so impressed by the professionals she has met and the support that there is here for developing Colin's future, that she has decided to migrate here with the children when Colin has a house for them to live in.

Well, I am convinced that continued physical and mental activity, supported by a sensible diet, has got me to a healthy 73, and I look forward to updating you for the next 30 years! All that forestry legwork contributed considerably to that!

Incidentally, has anyone else a curiosity birthday date in their lives? I shall be 77 on the 7th of the 7th of the 7th. I shall, of course, have to cycle 77 miles from 7.07 to 17.07 - or something like that!

Lastly, if you contemplate cycling in D&G, do get in touch with me and we can cover some miles together. John Taylor, Monksmill, Castle Douglas DG7 2NY, tel 01556 670395.

From the Editor

As there seems no likelihood of Slasher and FCA Today being published more than 3 times a year, I was becoming very concerned at the accumulation of obituaries, many lengthy but quite fascinating. In our last issue, I had to cut the published obituaries to fit on one page. Although an editor must do some cutting to fit the available space, I am reluctant to cut heavily as the writer has usually produced a rewarding account of the deceased's life. With "a little help from my friends", I was able to negotiate this thicker issue. I am reluctant to call it a "bumper obituary edition" for fear of offence. However, I have been told that most enjoy reading obituaries. Although there is sadness at losing a friend or relation, it is rewarding to have a written record of that person's contribution to forestry and life.

Does Anyone Remember?

Cedric Quayle, an independent forester in Wyre Forest, is asking whether anyone knows of, or was involved in, World War II Victory Plantations. Over the decades he has seen two, but none since 1970. A "V" was planted in contrasting greens on a visible hillside. He has spoken to current FC staff but none can help. Can you?

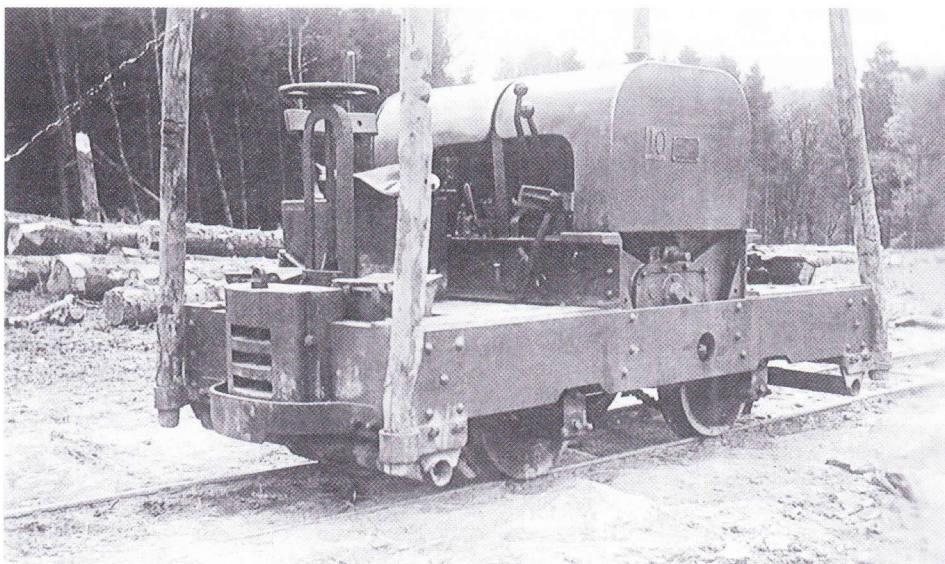
I recall seeing EIIR on a hillside somewhere near Knighton, but I have long since forgotten. Were any of you involved in commemorative and visible plantations? Were they really "approved" by senior staff or were they local idiosyncrasies, which would never emerge for many years? There must be interesting stories – get writing! On the "V" plantations, please contact Cedric Quayle directly at Bowcastle Farm, Bewdley DY12 2LN, tel: 01299 403 585, e-mail: Quayle@talk21.com

Castle Howard Arboretum

For those of you attending the AGM, or living in the vicinity, a visit to this arboretum in Yorkshire will be enjoyable. For its Millennium Project, the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers created a Furniture Makers' Walk in the arboretum. It included 29 species of trees used in English furniture making. These tell the beginning of the story of trees to furniture. Each tree is labelled and boards indicate the uses to which they are put – from structural timber to turnings and veneers.

In the arboretum itself work continues on lakes, bridges and walks. A Rootery has been designed to blend perfectly into the landscape surrounding the lake. The Bird Feeding Station and Observatory is constructed of lime covered straw bales and roofed with sweet chestnut shingles. Not to be missed is the completed Peter Garthwaite green wood "cruck" shelter designed and built by Gudrun Leitz and Doug Joiner.

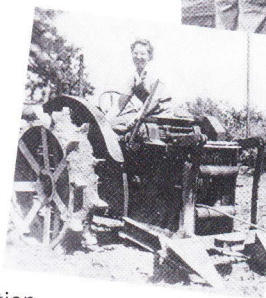
Rail Memories...



In the last issue of Slasher there was an article about a replica narrow gauge tram, a hutch in Scotland, which had been positioned on the line of the old Rhymney to Talybont tramway at Talybont Forest. This reminded two readers of their connection with temporary narrow gauge railways. The first, unsurprisingly, was Jock Low. He recalled a forestry light railway in the Dovey Valley. The diesel engine and bogies brought pit props down to a roadside loading bay. It was dismantled in the 50s and lay in Chirk Depot before being sold to the coal mines. It was just not mobile enough for the coming extraction methods.

This was probably the swan song of rail timber extraction in Britain, but Betty Kirkland née Saunders, also recalls earlier rail use. She worked in Alice Holt from 1947 to 1956, after which she married Cyril and left the FC. Prior to that and towards the end of the war, she was in the Woman's Timber Corps. She started in East Anglia where they had to clear hedgerows so that pill boxes had an unrestricted view for 200 yards. This was in the expectation of an imminent invasion. In 1947 they were posted to Wiveliscombe in Somerset and in one location a woodland was being felled at a distance from a road. A short narrow gauge railway was laid across the fields to extract the timber, and she became the diesel engine driver. Her friend drove the spade-lug tractor which dragged the timber to the rail head. The photos recall her exploits. Do any readers have other rail extraction stories? I know they were used in Strathspey.

My own memory of temporary narrow gauge railways was in connection with dredging and strengthening Fenland waterways. In the 50s Dragline excavators



Top: Somerset – extracting timber, 1944 - 1946. Above: The "gang" at Wiveliscombe. Inset: Women's Timber Corps, 1940, Somerset.

deepened the channels and the spoil was loaded on barges to be taken by tugs to the earth bank rebuilding site. There it was off-loaded into a train of tipper wagons. The temporary lines ran quite extensively along the top of the bank from which the spoil was side tipped. All this was too lengthy to set up in subsequent years and I have not seen it since.

Swedish Timber Houses

Russell Bruce has received a few replies to his article in the last issue of FCA Today in which he asked for interesting stories, and anything about the history of Swedish timber houses. I have asked him to send me some of the more entertaining responses for publication in the next issue. If you haven't replied and do have stories, please contact him at The Bannachra, Blairmore, Argyll PA23 8TL or e-mail bannachra@eidonet.co.uk

Life After Retirement

by Jack Massey of Bristol

Retirement started for me at aged 63 when the FC moved the retirement age goal posts and I was out of work having been stung at the other end as well by wartime service not qualifying for pensionable time by some quirk of Estacode.

However, there was plenty to do. I had, for some years, and wherever we lived, been involved in matters 'churchy', and as I retired, so did the local vicar; and as one of the churchwardens, I was much involved in trying to maintain the status quo.

There followed six years of ecclesiastical and episcopal politics with two rogues of parsons - well one I suppose perhaps better described as pathetic; interspersed with three interregna, when the congregation was presented with a wide assortment of visiting clerics; and the buildings and property maintained to exacting standards.

Consultancy I discovered very early on, was not for me. Without my knowing it in advance, the regulations relating to licensing quotas was changed the day after I retired - so there followed an embarrassed telephone conversation and my UK forestry was henceforward confined to silvicultural meetings - and still is.

The other mainstay of retirement activity has been of course Tree Aid, which crept into my life quietly and insidiously courtesy of John Fletcher and Leslie Troup in 1985. It began gently, as many worthwhile things do, with four local (Bristol area) individuals with a tree bias in their lives considering the Ethiopian famine and the possible and potential effect that tree planting on a reasonable scale might have for the future in such situations. They took this forward until it got beyond them in both time and scope, involved John, who involved Leslie, who involved Brian Tipping and me. We three (John still being gainfully employed) thought in terms of one day a week for six months - that was in 1987 when the charity was registered. Brian and I are now down to one day per year or thereabouts, but John is still deeply involved as President.

John and I visited Sudan in 1994, to see for ourselves some of the early Tree Aid projects, and to assess their effectiveness. The trip began at Heathrow in January, arriving in Khartoum, via Paris and Air France at 1.30 am the following day in an airless temperature of 90 odd. Not only was the climatic atmosphere stifling, but the immigration, customs and passport controls all had the same feel about them, which made us feel not a little insecure. The inkpad in the visa office was so dry it was difficult to stamp the passport page with

the visa stamp, and equally difficult to keep a straight face - so essential if one was not to lose it. The customs lady, large and effusively inquisitive just added to the whole rather unreal but indescribably squalid arena which was Khartoum International Airport. Eventually by taxi to the Acropolis Hotel, to fill in yet another entry form, down an exquisite bottle of iced coke, to a bed with a straw mattress, sawdust pillow and a very clanky airconditioning unit outside the window. The next day was Friday - in a Muslim country - so a late breakfast didn't really matter, until a note from the Greek hotel management announced a formal visit from our hosts (SOS Sahel, Sudan office) and two formally dressed Sudanese gentlemen appeared, dressed of course, being Friday, in freshly laundered white jebellars. Fortunately we had met one previously in Cambridge, and the necessary future arrangements were duly made over a cup of black Nescafe.

We spent just short of three weeks in Sudan, taking three excursions to see projects in the west and north, and in the 'respites' in Khartoum inevitably became a little involved in formal discussions with Government ministers and like folk. Being also a Marxist country this was rather daunting until it transpired that almost all the relevant top brass we met were either Aberdeen or Edinburgh trained in the fifties!

The field excursions were, without exception, fascinating, challenging, instructive and tiring, but I found them, and I'm sure John did too, very worthwhile. I certainly went with some trepidation because of a total lack of experience in dryland tropical forestry, but this turned to be no serious barrier to constructive discussion.

A few particular incidents are worth recounting, like the isolated village we visited where Tree Aid had provided a donkey and water cart. These were brought out for display, the donkey being untethered while the cart was wheeled out from its specially built hut, and John looked on imperiously from the top of a camel.

During these excursions we were accommodated in the local SOS Sahel compounds or rest houses, where facilities varied considerably, a shortage of water being the most common. This meant dipping a can into the supply perhaps an oil barrel - for whatever purpose it was needed. Personally I was very thankful for a battery electric razor. And of course we ate whatever was provided, usually at a mess table, with all the other men, and using the best utensils the human has to offer - the digits of one's right hand.

Travelling north from Khartoum on the second of these visits we were driven for eight hours in the office based land rover across the desert. Tyre tracks proliferate here, but may literally be years old. School geography will remind you that the Nile

takes a U-shaped loop on its way to Egypt, so we felt we could hardly wander into Lybia, but John and I were sure we were clearly heading too far west for our destination, which was Ed Debba, only 200 or so miles north of Khartoum, and on the Nile. Arriving eventually at our proper destination, we spent three very interesting days, and then began our return journey with a local driver. How these chaps know their way in the desert is extraordinary. It is far from featureless, but changes all the time and all appeared very much the same to me. Our return journey took three and a half hours.

This three weeks had been exhausting, but at the same time, very rewarding personally. What is shattering is that the trip was nine years ago. Moral there somewhere about 'Life in Retirement'.

Tree Aid I'm glad to say progresses steadily, and I hope inexorably forward under Miranda's directorship and John's presidency, though I am, of necessity now much less involved.

Currently I should expect to take part in quiet village life - but not in this village, not a hope, merely a return to furniture restoration, gardening (well, mowing the lawn) and the social aspects of the village, avoiding drama and bridge.

Tools for Self Reliance

I was very pleased to have the following response from Martin Fletcher, recently retired to Brockenhurst. He said he just wanted to add encouragement to others to turn out sheds and workshops. Have you done something about it? If not, do it now!

I was delighted to see the piece in the December issue of FCA Today about Tools for Self Reliance (TFSR). This is my chosen charity to work for in retirement, with a bunch of engineers at their HQ in Netley Marsh, Southampton. This utilises skills learnt pre-FC from my time with the Atomic Energy Authority but also as important was the FC Tool Maintenance Course held by Ron Bignal in May 1965 at Bucklebury Forest.

Though we don't quite "turn scrap into useful tools", a container load of about 15 tonnes of refurbished tools, in crated kit form, leaves Netley Marsh for Africa every month.

Unwanted tools need to be in reasonable condition ie not worn out, but always in demand are carpenters vices and blacksmiths anvils. Garden tools other than stout spades and shovels are not required, neither are hard point saws or tools like surforms needing replacement blades. Forestry tools like axes or cross-cut saws are in occasional demand. John or Bob at TFSR (023 8086 9697) would be able to give advice. Please keep the tools flowing and us busy.

OBITUARIES

JAMIE GALBRAITH will be well known to many who have practised forestry in Scotland as the Head Factor of Buccleuch Estates. His early career was in the Royal Navy, but he was severely wounded in 1941 on HMS Zulu when it attacked the German battleship Bismark. This ended his naval career so he took up land agency, completing the Cirencester course in 1945. He was appointed Factor on the Buccleuch Estate at Bowhill, Selkirk in 1954 and succeeded to Head Factor in 1959, then becoming Director of Buccleuch Estates in 1964.

Subsequently he became a Forestry Commissioner and was instrumental in the formation of TGO in 1976 and the Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain in 1987. He sat on many committees of the SLF and RICS and was a great supporter of private forestry, the FC and the forestry business on Buccleuch Estates. Although a firm and forthright manager, he had a wry sense of humour and it was always a pleasure to be in his company and discuss forestry issues. He has left his mark on British forestry.

Jim Walsham, has enjoyable memories of **DAVID MURRAY**, former nursery forester. He worked at Ae in the late 30s, and after war service returned to Fleet around 1947 and was responsible for the Cullendoch, a fiery spot as the Stranraer railway ran through the centre. He ended his working life at Fleet. He had a massive vibrant personality and was an outright naturalised Forestry Commission man, with his heart in South Scotland.

He was extremely professional and thorough and achieved much for the Commission. Generosity was his attitude and I was blessed to have David extend his warm friendship to me. His vitality and pioneering spirit was evident for all to see who came near him. His enthusiasm and skills were obvious as he went on to work in nurseries until he was 65. No mean feat.

It was a tremendous privilege to know and work with David. He truly was a great part of the backbone of the Commission.

ROY CARLAW was well known to foresters, both within and outwith the FC, as a person with extensive forestry knowledge, who would never shirk from stating his opinion, would enliven any meeting with his comments and was a regular correspondent of forceful letters to the Glasgow Herald.

He entered the Forest Workers Training Scheme in 1946 at Tulliallan and Devilla, moving on to Benmore from where he graduated in 1950. He joined the FC and was appointed Foreman at Strathmashie, where he was involved in an extensive planting programme. After promotion to Forester, he had a short spell in North Wales, but returned to take charge of Glenhurich Forest in 1959. He was stationed at Polloch, a remote FC village which produced many hardy and individualistic men! He then moved to Work Study at Inchnacardoch, another location which produced memorable characters. He was involved in the timber supply project for Corpach Pulp Mill. His final FC years were in Ae, and after retirement in 1968 he became woodland manager for Castlemilk Estate. He was given all the freedom he had always

wished for and developed new and innovative ideas and working practices. He was committed to thinning plantations and many fine stands of timber have been his legacy. In inaccessible areas he developed 'no thin' mixtures of SS/SP on restocking, a benefit of which was to encourage red squirrels to expand over the estate. After retiring from Castlemilk he continued marking thinnings. On that basis he approached the Laggan Trust, no doubt to satisfy his curiosity about the fate of his earlier Strathmashie plantings, and deprecated the lack of contractor supervision on the thinning operations, which was depauperating the remaining crop. His other forestry involvement included the Carrifran Wildwood Group, of whom he was also critical and Newton Rigg College where he was an Assessor. He was an unforgettable man of great integrity who had a major influence on Scottish forestry (condensed from a fuller obituary in "Scottish Forestry").

Although not a member of the FC **DAVID KINLOCH** will be known to many ex-Bangor students. He graduated from Edinburgh in 1930 and after studying at Princes Risborough laboratories he joined the Gold Coast Forest Service, where he published books on its timbers.

He returned to the UK in 1954 and took up a lectureship in Wood Science, Forest Management and Economics at the Department of Forestry, Bangor, where he remained until retirement in 1970. His students greatly appreciated the attention he gave them. His interest in forestry continued and he was editor of "Scottish Forestry" until 1974 (condensed from a fuller obituary in "Scottish Forestry").

THOMAS KIPLING's wife Brenda told me that he died in August 2003, aged 86 years. Although appointed to the FC on graduating in 1939, he was called up immediately for army service. At the request of the Sudan Government he was sent in 1941 to assist the Sudan Forestry Service and remained there until Independence in 1955.

Once again he applied to the FC and after a term at Oxford brushing up on UK forestry, he was accepted and held posts based in Northampton, Chichester, Ashford and Petersfield until retirement in 1979. He then organised outings and house parties for the National Trust, trained as a Winchester Cathedral Guide and wrote historical articles for the Cathedral Record. He was active in mind and body till the end of his life and enjoyed visits to FC forests, noting with special interest the latest vehicles and machines and the presence of lady members of staff!

Gwyn Francis has brought together contributions about **BILL ELLIOTT** who died on 7 September 2003, aged 82 years. He was born and brought up near Carlisle. He was appointed a Clerical Officer in September 1938. Given the choice of working in the Ministry of Labour or the Forestry Commission, he elected to join the Commission in the South Scotland Conservancy Office at Dumfries. Bill always spoke of this as one of the best decisions of his life. During the war years he served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946, a service that took him to South

Africa. It was a country he loved and one he was able to return to later in life.

Bill returned to the FC in 1947 as an Executive Officer, working on acquisitions in the office of Director Scotland at Drumsheugh Gardens in Edinburgh. It was here that he met and married Maude, yet another of his best decisions. There followed postings as HEO to Headquarters in Saville Row in 1951, to Dumfries in 1954, as SEO to Chester in 1959, as Principal to Aberystwyth in 1968, to Headquarters first in Harvesting and Marketing Division in 1972, and then Senior Principal and Budget Officer in Finance Division in 1974.

One of the extra tasks he took on at Chester was to chair the regular selection boards for entry to the Forestry Schools. He had the patience and sense of fairness to encourage each candidate to relax and give his best performance. But Bill was no soft touch; his questioning was rigorous and his assessments keenly perceptive. He enjoyed these sessions and throughout his career he was always ready to encourage and help those who were starting off in the Commission.

Although his time at H&M Division was relatively short, it was action packed. One of Bill's tasks was to draw up contracts and negotiate prices for all the major pulpmills. It was a time of rapidly rising timber prices. Such was the pace that in one year prices were negotiated upwards four times, a challenge which Bill relished. He was held in very high regard by the timber trade whose members had great respect for his firmness, clarity of purpose and fair dealing.

As Budget Officer in Finance Division Bill was the main link between the Commission and Treasury. He was adept at reading the minds of Treasury people. He maintained good and constructive relations with them and he enjoyed their confidence. It was largely due to his efforts and negotiating skills that the FC's allocations held up so well. Bill was always ready to try new approaches. His determination and support led to radical changes in the Commission's credit control system. In budget management and control his experience and common sense were invaluable. When difficulties arose he had the ability to define the problem clearly and provide the practical answer. He was never one for the negative thought and no obstacle deterred him. His great gift to those around him was his ability to keep his sense of humour and to be positive, cheerful and constructive whatever the strains and stresses.

Bill was often to be seen visiting the forests meeting people; he was always keen to know what they did and to hear their views. He was never satisfied to confine himself to an office desk. He gave high priority to making sure he knew at first hand how things were done in the forests. He won the confidence of all those he met in this way and was greatly trusted by them. He had no patience with any barriers between office staff and field staff; to him they were all Commission people.

After retirement he maintained a keen interest in the Commission and those who worked there. His first question on meeting was usually "what news of the Commission?" It can be truly said of him that he was proud of

OBITUARIES

belonging to the Commission. A pride that was undiminished throughout all the years of his career and of his retirement. Latterly he acquired one of the new FC ties and he wore it with great pride,

One of Bill's great passions was bridge. He was a very good player. He exercised his skills at every opportunity from lunchtime games (with no lunch!) at Conservancy offices, at Saville Row and at 231 to the Melville Bridge club and League Bridge in Edinburgh. It was an interest that continued throughout his life and one where he made many friends.

Bill's other great interest was golf. He was a regular player at the annual FC golf competition, a practice he continued for many years after retiring. He regularly played in the annual match between the Timber Trade and the Commission for the Bowater Cup and had trophies to prove it. He was Captain of the FC (HQ) Golf Club up to his retirement in 1981. He was a very popular member of the Bruntsfield Golf Club and played there during his retirement.

For several years after retiring he did voluntary work as Treasurer for the Citizens Advice Bureau in one of the most deprived areas of Edinburgh.

He was proud of his family and they were a great source of happiness to him. In 2000 Maude and Bill had the joy of celebrating their Golden Wedding with their family and friends. His was a close-knit family. With Maude, his two sons and daughters-in-law, two grandsons and two granddaughters family gatherings for holidays were regular events, often in South Africa.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Maude and also to Chris and Brian, Colleen and Julia; Joanne and Kerry; Tom and Eddie in their great loss, but each of them will have some wonderful memories to cherish.

Bill inspired not only the respect but also the affection of those with whom he worked and many of them have had a hand in this tribute to him. His guiding principle was that there were no problems which could not be solved given application, a little patience and a lot of good humour. He drew out the best in those around him and he was loyal and constant in his friendship. In difficult times he was always steady, calm and decisive. Those whose lives he touched are the better for it. How fortunate the Commission was to have had someone of the competence and complete integrity of Bill Elliott. How fortunate were we to have known him as a friend and colleague.

Steve Quigley has many reminiscences of **COLIN TURQUAND** who joined the Forestry Commission in late 1974. In those days the Controller of Finance was a very influential and powerful position. Colin was replacing Bill Cormack who had been filling the role it seemed forever. Bill Elliott was the deputy and Colin and Bill formed a partnership that ensured the financial well being of the Commission for many years ahead.

Colin was a Huguenot whose ancestors had been forced to leave France when the Huguenots were being persecuted for their beliefs. He was a highly principled man.

Colin joined the Commission not long after

the Public Accounts Committee had roasted the then DG, John Dickson. The Commission, despite its relatively minor share of Government expenditure, seemed to get undue attention from the Comptroller & Auditor General's department. This led to a number of appearances before the PAC. Colin was a master in the preparation of briefing material for the DG. He was determined that the Commission would never again be roasted. His briefs were prepared meticulously, totally comprehensively and indexed so well that it was possible to turn instantly to any topic. He also had a knack of forecasting the questions which would come up so that the briefs included the material that covered most contingencies. The briefs explained so clearly the complex economic rationale of the Forestry Commission and its unique accounting system that they were used for many years as reference points. Colin's briefings led to first class PAC performances by George Hunter and Gwyn Francis. So much so that the National Audit Office appeared to be after the Commission for many years thereafter.

Colin was a keen cricketer but his long travel to Gifford precluded participation in the Commission team's regular fixtures. However he never missed an appearance at the annual Sport's Day when he played in our mini cricket matches with great enthusiasm and tough competitive spirit.

His first wife died after a period of illness, which he bore with courage. He was very fortunate to meet the lovely Pat and enjoyed many happy years together. The circumstances of their meeting over a chance drink one weekend were explained to me when he burst enthusiastically into my office one Monday morning to inform me that he was stealing one of my staff. It had been love at first sight and it was not long before they were married.

Colin was a great jazz fan with a formidable collection of music. He regularly attended jazz sessions in Edinburgh particularly during the jazz festival.

He had a passion for home brewing and creating bean stews. These were known by the number of different types of bean that they contained. I cannot remember just how many beans he had reached when shortly he invited me to his lovely home one Saturday. We had a couple of pints at his village local then returned to his home where I received several helpings of the famous stew. It was a glorious summer afternoon, which led to the swallowing of copious amounts of Colin's home brew. I do believe that had I run out of petrol on the way home the gas that I was producing would have powered me effortlessly.

Andy Little and Giles Davies recount **JOHN DAVIES'** eventful life. After leaving school, his study of medicine was cut short by four years wartime service as a pilot officer with the RAF, serving in Canada. He was then involved in setting up the Mountain Rescue Service in the Lake District.

On leaving the RAF John studied forestry at Edinburgh, graduating 1949. He joined the Forestry Commission in 1950 and was posted to Wales (with the name Davies, where else would the Civil Service send an Englishman?) and worked for six years on Land Acquisitions. On

promotion, he took charge of the Dovey District for two years. While in Wales he met his future wife, Beti.

In 1958, due to the fortunate intervention of the then Director General, who insisted that young "High Fliers" be considered for promotion, John was off to West Scotland as Divisional Officer with responsibility for the north of the West (S) Conservancy. He spent ten years in the west rising to Assistant Conservator (Forest Management) and serving under three Conservators until he himself became Conservator in 1969. It was a hectic period; planting was at 4000 ha per year and under John's influence the percentage of Sitka Spruce was increased, as was the proportion of Lodgepole pine. It was also a period of intense harvesting activity in the wake of the 1968 hurricane, clearing the aftermath of windblown timber and gearing up production for the new Fort William pulp mill. John also pushed through the first forest cabin development in Strathgryre, the forerunner of what has been a most successful national enterprise.

When, in 1971, he moved to Dumfries, as Conservator South Scotland, John was able to influence the culture and aspirations of his charge. He took up the banner as self proclaimed "Sitka Farmer", raising the proportion of Sitka spruce to 90% and all but eliminating the planting of Lodge pole pine. His enthusiastic applications of Research Branch recommendations for high input fertiliser regimes were, with hindsight, not sustainable in the long term, but led to the abundant harvest of timber we enjoy today. John's involvement in the desperate war years undoubtedly coloured his appreciation of the need to create a strategic timber reserve, which, with the ever-greater consumption of timber, the necessity of maintaining that reserve is still relevant today.

John's enthusiasm during his tenure in south Scotland was not confined to "Sitka Farming". His responsibilities covered all aspects of forestry in both the public and the private sectors. This breadth admirably matched his wide personal interests in trees, natural history, people, and what is now termed 'the great outdoors'. Overall his stewardship was exemplary, but because he was in post for 11 years, he is occasionally blamed for policies that he inherited and with which he had to struggle. As was the case of the Galloway red deer. A Policy Group resolved that the policy of not fencing for deer exclusion should continue, that the deer population should be reduced to 500 where, it was thought, damage to trees could be held at an acceptable level. Also every effort would be made to prevent the spread of red deer away from the area in which they were then found, and, for good measure, it was suggested that the quality of the remaining herd should be improved! It says much for the man that he took this self-contradicting policy and persuaded all concerned with red deer management in Galloway to do their best to make it work. Under his tactful persuasion the Galloway Red Deer Control Group was established, John's wise insistence on scientific advice justified the Group's development of new policies. It was inevitable that the heavy deer culls should provoke adverse public reaction, and John proved expert in calming this. He was

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always willing to meet interested parties to discuss and justify the policies, and he developed the ideas of a Galloway Red Deer Range and the Clatteringshaws Deer Museum (better called a Natural History Museum) to assure the public that the deer were not being exterminated, and that wildlife management within the forest was in safe hands.

In projects such as wildlife introductions, fish restocking, and enlightened wildlife management, John promoted biodiversity long before this term had become a catch phrase. He was always aware that large-scale afforestation would change the environment, and where there were suggestions of damage, as from increased drainage run-off, or water acidification, he encouraged local research to seek solutions.

The creation of the Galloway Forest Drive, the so called "The Raiders Road" a name inspired by a novel of local author, S R Crockett, allowed deep access and enjoyment of the forest environment by an increasingly mobile "motoring" public. He believed passionately that the forests should be open to the public and that the public should understand the Commission's work.

Through his work in the South Conservancy, John became one of the most widely known Conservators, his enthusiasm and energy earning great respect and the award of an OBE.

John is remembered by his colleagues as a somewhat eccentric character, with his pipe, his use of "mature" cars with little corresponding mechanical knowledge, relying on colleagues to fix things under the bonnet! His individualistic management style, aided by a succession of dogs (whom to junior staff, seemed to make the decisions, particularly in the realms of staff transfers!) John's management style did not always endear him to his staff, but to those many "comrades" who shared his vision and strived to achieve it, he was always loyal and ever supportive.

His retirement in 1983 was the occasion of a great celebration at his home at Cairnmill that was attended by his many friends and supporters. For those who enthusiastically imbibed John's home-made wine, it was a "morning after" to remember! Fortunately the recipes for his wine died with him!

At his retirement John expressed worries about the attitude of politicians toward the Commission. He campaigned very hard to prevent its break up but he was bitterly disappointed that successive governments betrayed the Commission's commitment to continuing rural employment. The support the Commission and he received from the public at this time vindicated his belief that the public should understand the Commission and its work.

John had a very active "retirement, continuing to work as forestry consultant for G M Thomson in Dumfries. While always putting pen to paper, with some twenty-one articles attributed to him in Scottish Forestry over the years, he now had time to write; on his hero, the explorer and botanist, David Douglas; a slim volume, "The Scottish Forester", and a book on a contemporary of Robert Burns – Apostle to Burns. He also wrote his own poetry, producing a slim volume of 32 poems that had

been selected by his friends.

Among his other activities he chaired the John Muir Trust, was a member of the Sierra Club and the Howard Reform League. He was tireless in fundraising for his Church's Third World projects. He spent a lifetime working with young people; Outward Bound in Wales, youth clubs in Glasgow and Dumfries and coaching local children with their homework. He also worked for the Manpower Services Commission.

His adventures found him following the David Douglas Trail through the Rockies along the Athabasca River in North America, in Africa climbing the high Atlas and Mount Kilimanjaro and with his grandchildren and climbing Australia's highest peak. He enjoyed hill walking, fishing and shooting until just before he died and had planned a sailing trip for the end of March.

John was a man of great energy, zest and enthusiasm and obvious integrity and in cultured English tones, a gifted communicator. His home, at Cairn Mill by the River Scar, there was always a welcome amid the grandchildren and dogs. He liked his food and drink, ever provided by Betty, his wife of 50 years. He was excellent company, well read, full of wit and fun. John was special; he has been variously described as "A Man of Parts", a Poet, "A Man Ahead of His Time, and a Forester who has enhanced the standing of his profession. More than anything though, John was interested in and cared for people.

Many people have contributed to **JOHN MCGARVA'S** obituary who died in September. He studied forestry at Edinburgh University from 1948-1951 and then joined the Forestry Commission in 1951. He was the District Officer for North Cowal with an office at Benmore House. Bill Sutherland, his opposite number in south Cowal, remembers the lunchtime walks in the gardens where John was a fount of botanical knowledge on every shrub in the garden, particularly rhododendrons. Bill remembers John's successive gardens as collections of unusual plants growing in profusion cheek by jowl. He was able to name them all, even up until a few months before he died. Bill remembers John as an efficient forest manager, ruthlessly sticking to budget; he efficiently controlled his wildlife with handpicked gamekeepers.

Bill remembers the explosive home wine production; the memorable Cowal Forestry Dances and John's distinctly dry version of West Coast humour; he recalls the pride that John took in his forests and had great satisfaction in preserving the native oakwoods on Loch Eckside; one of the first genuine "conservationists"!

John left the FC to join the Seafeld Estates in 1962 where he assisted Inglis Johnstone, and took over as Woods Manager when Inglis retired in 1963.

John was a very knowledgeable and astute forest manager. By stimulating keen competition amongst the large timber merchants in the North and North East and by requiring bids for standing sales, he ensured top prices for all the Seafeld ownerships in Strathspey and at Cullen. John was a keen tree geneticist, and at Cullen he turned the Estate

Nursery into a large commercial company. He also ensured the Sawmill was profitable. In Strathspey he boosted production in the nurseries at Nethybridge and Castle Grant, collecting and sowing local origin Scots pine seed, but also raising exotics to supply the plants required to replant the wartime fellings and establish new plantations.

John was very enthusiastic and active in the RSFS and, the then, Society of Foresters, attending many excursions in Scotland and abroad, hosting some within the Seafeld Estates; and also organised displays at the Bush Estate for the Forestry Commission's 50th anniversary in 1969.

During his period of office, the Estate woods in Strathspey, owned by various members of the Seafeld family, amounted to 40,000 acres, and included all of Abernethy Forest and the Forest Lodge area.

He left Seafeld in 1972 to take up a post with the Economic Forestry Group (EFG) based initially at Crieff, after which he moved to Berkhamstead HQ and thereafter to Thame in Oxfordshire, taking charge of the Nursery Division.

John retired from EFG in 1977, moved to Edinburgh and became a Partner in International Forest Science Consultancy. While based at IPSC's Penicuik offices, he built up a portfolio of forest management properties and worked on a number of overseas assignments in places as diverse as Iran, India and the Caribbean.

John and Rosemary moved in 1984 to St Johns Town of Dalry, Dumfries and Galloway, to the same house he had occupied 20 years previously. He regularly attended the SW Region meetings and excursions, adding a sharp spice of critical debate to the proceedings.

The final words are those of Dr Jean Balfour, Past President of the RSFS who worked with John on Council and the Committees; "John was one of those people who in his time contributed his own special flavour to Scottish Forestry. Direct and pawky in humour, he was a caring person with a deep sense of involvement in forestry and the Scottish countryside. He looked forward, applying incisive comment and wry thoughtfulness, in an often-changing world."

Dick Jackson recalls **FRED DONALD**. I first met him in the 1950's during my time on Acquisitions in East Scotland Conservancy but it was not until 1970 when, on moving to Perth and we ran the adjoining districts of Dunkeld and Perth, that I really came to know this well built and very pleasant man. He came from Kirkcudbright where his father had been the Chief Constable and also, rather incongruously, Inspector of Weights and Measures, a combination which always caused Fred to smile.

Eventually, after the Dunkeld office moved into town and shared the accommodation in Perth, we were able to work closely together, not least over lunches where the Commission hierarchy would be taken apart, chewed over and its future discussed – sometimes we were right, more often it was just wishful thinking. The discussion usually ended with Fred pushing back his chair, leaning back with his hands held together and uttering a loud "Ah!" All good

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innocent fun.

And then there was the "Case of the District Boundary". Fred did not really enjoy walking in hilly country - no doubt a legacy of a war wound in a rather uncomfortable part of his anatomy - and Dunkeld district included what became Braes of Angus forest in the foothills of the Grampians. As for me, I enjoyed the hills and had long cast envious eyes northwards. We therefore concocted a scheme under which we would swap parts of our territory and then proceeded to convince the Conservator that this really was the logical thing to do, as indeed it proved to be in the long run. Two satisfied DOs.

Away from work he was a keen gardener, so much so that he applied for an allotment on the island in the middle of the Tay. Rumour had it that he was carefully and surreptitiously vetted before being accepted for one. Whatever the truth or otherwise, he got his wish and tending it gave him a lot of pleasure. Maybe, too, that was where he disappeared at times to sit in the shed and enjoy the miniature TV set he had been given on his retirement.

He was a good friend. Cheers Fred - happy memories.

Howard Embleton remembers **GORDON**

STRAUGHAN, a true Northumbrian. He was born at Netherwitton, went to school there and worked in the gardens of the adjacent hall. His early interest in forestry was interrupted by the Second World War and Gordon entered the Royal Signals and served in Basra in Iraq. The mixed Morse messages he sent out confused the enemy and brought the hostilities to a swifter end than by tank and gun. In later life his mixed messages also used to confuse Conservancy Office, much to Gordon's benefit and amusement.

Gordon attended Lynford Hall Forester Training School and worked for a spell at Delamere Nursery in Cheshire, but after the war he returned to his beloved North Tyne to serve under the renowned Jimmy Heslop at the Mounces beat of Kielder. It was here that he met and married Betty, who worked for the Estates Branch in Kielder Castle. In the early fifties Gordon was given his own beat at Chirdon and they went to live at 'The Bower' a remote house standing on the banks of the Chirdon Burn some miles off the Kielder to Bellingham road. This was where they stayed for the better part of 20 years and where Maureen and Pauline, their daughters, were born. The house was powered by a generator, and a very noisy one at that, no electricity and computers in those days. However, the very warm welcome one always received made up for that. This was also the time of the huge post-war planting programmes at Kielder and Gordon was responsible for changing the barren landscape from Padderburn and Spadeadam down to Wark. Many of the environmental aspects had Gordon's ideas behind them.

Gordon somehow managed to avoid the switch from Northumberland to Yorkshire which was in vogue at the time with a certain Conservator in York, and from Chirdon he moved to manage Kidlandlee Forest in Upper Coquetdale. Living first at the fox infested 'Walby Hill' in Rothbury and then at 'Restalrig' in Thropton. This house had magnificent views

west to the Border ridge and thus had the added bonus of enabling Gordon to carry out much of his fire duty from his livingroom window. With his health deteriorating Gordon retired early and then with the Commission interested in having a hands on presence in the workings of the Northumberland National Park he took on a role in the Information Centre in Rothbury.

Gordon had a rare sense of humour and an infectious laugh and this was often at its best when he related tales about the eccentricities of senior staff.

His main passion outside work was in shooting. He liked nothing better than a day's wildfowling on the Northumbrian coast in the Druridge Bay area. In tandem with this he always enjoyed the company of golden labradors

Gordon and Betty were an unassuming couple, they did not tell others of the good they did and of how they helped many people. They saw a need and got on with it.

JOHN TAYLOR died peacefully at Oakfield Nursing Home, Bath on 25 September 2003, aged 81.

It was a far cry from his first Civil Service job at the India Office in Queen Anne's Mansions (where he prepared citations for Indian Army Officers to be collected by a Palace Messenger with horse and cab for signing by the King!), to the one he took with the Forestry Commission in 1968 as Administration and Finance Officer for the old South West (England) Conservancy.

In between he had served with the Royal Corps of Signals from the outbreak of the Second World War, meeting in those war years his wife to be, May, who was also serving with the Signals. They married in February 1945 before leaving the Army.

On return to the Civil Service, and still in London, John worked in policy departments of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning and the Ministry of Housing, gaining promotions.

So the Forestry Commission was a big change in mid-career but a welcome one, and he brought with him a wealth of experience and ideas of a sort that may have raised a few eyebrows in the administrative ranks of the Commission which then rather tended to 'grow its own'. He was outstanding in his field and the South West did well to have such mature and positive counsel. Posts in Headquarters held no appeal for him and he considered 400 miles from Edinburgh a proper working distance!

Natural history was one of his abiding interests - especially ornithology - and in retirement he developed his talents as a watercolourist. Friends were pleased to own his paintings. John's artistic leanings broadened when he took up silversmithing and to the delight of others he designed and made some beautiful pieces.

But sadly his later years brought illness and incapacity. In the year before retirement he underwent heart surgery and although recovering well (becoming the first chairman of the Wessex Group of the Retirement Association), he had further heart problems by 1990. A major stroke in 1993 took both his speech and mobility leading to residence at

Oakfield for the past five years. There he was visited daily by May and by his devoted family often.

John Taylor's contemporaries in the Commission gathered at his funeral. Inevitably the day was overshadowed but not altogether, for how could it be without light for the passing of a man whose example had been of such courage, dedication and great good humour.

Dave Tracy, of Forest Research Cairnbaan, has told me about the death of his father **CECIL TRACY** in Elgin in November 2002. On leaving school Dad trained as a baker with Jimmy Hay in Auchenblae until his call up to the services shortly after war broke out in 1939. He joined the Royal Navy, serving until his demob in 1946, as a radio operator in the Mediterranean. He was at the Salerno landings, something he never tired of telling us right up to middle of 2002 and just before he went into hospital!

On demob he went to work with the Forestry Commission at Drumtochty Forest and remained in the squad for a number of years until he was persuaded to try for entry to the forestry school. He succeeded in passing the entrance exams and along with George Caird set off for forestry school in 1952. He went to Glentress for his first year, Faskally for his second and Benmore on student exchange. Amongst his contemporaries at forestry school were John Keenleyside and Alex Reid.

On graduating from forestry school he started his new career back at Drumtochty under Willie MacDonald. In those days there were no FC vehicles other than the lorry which took the squad about so he and others from the 'blae had to cycle to work. He remained there until early 1959 when he was transferred, along with his wife and family of four, to Craigvinean Forest under Ed 'Lofty' Fraser. It was under Lofty that he learned to drive - in a left-hand drive US army jeep! He also recruited a number of youngsters to help weed the nursery during the school holidays with yours truly being one of them. No bother I thought but if I remember rightly I spent most of the 8 weeks school summer holiday in that nursery! Oh happy days!

Dad remained at Craigvinean until 1972, during which time Lofty had been replaced by another wonderful character, Struan Stewart. In 1972 Dad moved to Coupar Angus where he remained until around 1975 when he transferred to Fochabers to Speymouth Forest under first Struan Stewart and then Jim Webster. Here he remained until his retirement in 1982 when he vacated the FC house and moved to a small house in Institution Road Fochabers where he remained until he went in to hospital in late August 2002 and his death in the November.

After retiring he kept himself busy with a number of small jobs for the likes of Christies of Fochabers as well as working at his garden and his firewood. He also joined the Fochabers Angling Club and until he had to give it up in 1997 as a result of Mum's deteriorating health (she died in 1998) and a shoulder injury, he enjoyed huge success. Photographs of some of his salmon catches are still with the family.

There was a very good turnout of friends as well as family for his funeral service at Bellie Church in Fochabers.

Stress Laminated Timber Arch Bridges



by Geoff Freedman

Innovative Engineering in the Countryside (InTeC) began three years ago as an initiative to increase the sale of timber to the lucrative and available structural markets in the UK. Timber has many advantages over its construction industry rivals, concrete and steel, with its social, environmental and sustainable tickets. However it was perceived that further value could be achieved by adding Engineering which would multiply timber's advantages, so InTeC was set up to explore these possibilities. To launch the initiative a conference was held at BRE in Garston with an invited delegation and international speakers of extraordinary standard. The focus was timber bridges to show what could be done with timber in the most demanding conditions of design and environment. The launch coincided with the completion of a report by InTeC for the Forestry Commission on timber engineering throughout the world.

The main conclusion from the conference was that critical mass has been achieved and international contacts cemented so momentum must be maintained. Partnerships and funding will be needed immediately to take advantage of the position. BRE, TRADA, Napier and the Forestry Commission are fully committed. We now need some industry backing for development of timber structural ideas like bridges.

Stress Laminated Timber Structures

This is becoming the first main focus for the work of InTeC as it is a way of utilising smaller timbers to build large structures. The method developed from a repair system started in Canada in the mid 70's which became a new design method in the USA through the 80's. The idea took hold in Australia and Scandinavia during the 90's

Above: 1/3 Scale model

largely due to the visits from Michael Ritter who had taken the research forward some significant stages in the USA.

The arch bridge is a further significant step forward in this branch of engineering. Until now stress lamination has been used for flat decks and mostly in the repair or replacement of existing timber decks. The arches are intended for recreational sites, which are in demand at the moment in the UK.

Basically, timbers of variable quality, are dried, drilled, cut and treated before simply being compressed using very high tensile steel. There is no glue and little to go wrong. We are however into new territory using home grown timber and arches so until the research is complete we cannot be sure that the structures have the reserve strength they seem to display and that they will be constructable by anyone anywhere. One of the benefits of such a structural system is that the materials are easily transported so the bridges can be built anywhere even if there is no vehicle access. The slenderness of the arch deck is quite remarkable for a material regarded as only suitable for secondary structural elements.

There is clearly a future for this type of bridge. It is low cost, basic technology and the ultimate sustainable structure.

The bridges built so far, 2 vehicle, 3 pedestrian arches, 1 flat pedestrian, have included elements of research and have cost about £1,000 per metre of span. With experience the costs should be between £500 and £750 per metre of span. These costs will be highly sensitive to the site conditions and thus the cost of foundations.

These bridges can be seen at Thames Chase and Red Rose Forests and at Keldy Cabins in the North York Moors, while one is planned for the Falls of Leny near Callendar.

Forestry Training Schools

Harry Smith has sold all 125 copies of the FTS book, the last going at the Dean School Centenary dinner. If there is a further demand, he could print more. You can contact him at 35 The Pastures, Kingsworthy, Winchester SO23 7LX.

2004 AGM and Forest Tour

This will be based at Scarborough on 11th and 12th May and promises to be a good get-together and tour of the forests of the North York Moors. Information will be circulated through local group secretaries. Besides looking forward to meeting the well kent faces, I hope to see new ones. Why not come along and catch up with friends and colleagues. Don't miss yersels!

Freebie...

You will be pleased to hear that we have arranged for FCA members to qualify for concessionary free FC car parking and free use of Forest Drives. You will need a pass and they are being sent to all members by Group secretaries. Why not become an active member and enjoy this freebie! If you are not on a membership roll, get in touch with your local Group contact – addresses below.

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Check with contacts for exact area covered.