

The FCA Visits the NYM

By Peter Green

After a hearty breakfast at the Palm Court Hotel, around 50 members boarded the coach in Scarborough for the day visit to the North York Moors Forest District hosted by the FDM Andrew Smith.

The first stop was in Wykeham Forest at Highwood Brow view point, offering a fine vantage to the north over the Derwent Valley and across to Langdale and Broxa Forests. This gave a good overview of the landscape and Andrew explained more of the geology and soil types and how they influenced species choice.

Here we were met by Nursery production manager Peter Everitt, and his dog Dillon. Peter put to shame those of us huddled into our coats against the cool north wind by sporting a sweatshirt and shorts! He told us that Wykeham was one of only three nurseries managed by the FC which together produced some 18 million plants. From the coach we were able to look over many of the nursery sections, seeing seedlings and transplants in varying stages of growth. In one section seedbeds were being prepared and in another the precision sower was being used. Conifers were the main species with 2-3 year larch, Douglas fir, pines and Sitka spruce being produced.

A break for coffee was next on the agenda and this was served at a local

hostelry, the Anvil.

We then drove to Dalby Forest which was the main area for visitors and was accessed by a 9-mile forest drive. It also had a visitor centre and many other attractions. The District had just got funding for major refurbishment of the existing visitor centre and the adjoining courtyard buildings and we saw first-hand the car park extension that was being built. A new visitor centre was planned on a green field site beyond the car park and we were able to look at visualisations of this contemporary building and the courtyard proposals.

The first stop in Dalby was at the Staindale Lake. The sun was shining and it was warmer here in the valley, and the more energetic of us were able to take a stroll around the manmade lake on a new all-ability path which had been jointly funded by the FC and the National Park. Recreation Manager Richard Pearce joined us and he and Andrew explained the importance of recreation in the District, borne out by the fact that the recreation income exceeded the income generated by timber sales.

The coach continued along the forest drive and we were shown the site that was used to host the annual concerts which could hold up to 4,500. This year the artists were Brian Ferry and Paul Weller who had just sold out his gig, which was a first for Dalby.

A buffet lunch was provided back in Low Dalby by the resident caterer. Members made the most of the sunshine and the courtyard picnic tables and enjoyed an al fresco meal. There was time to use the facilities and browse the information and the goods on offer in the visitor centre and shop.

After lunch the coach took us to Cropton Forest to see the newly refurbished Keldy Cabin site, managed by Forest Holidays. Here we were met by the site manager, David Cox. David explained that the site had been opened in the 1970s and the original cabins were dated. The injection of over £5 million of CMF funding was the largest single investment in one location by the FC. This had resulted in 60 new cabins that were bigger than the old ones and offered a very high standard of accommodation. The site had a shop for basic needs but no restaurant. This had endeared the scheme to the planning authority as it meant that local shops, pubs and restaurants all benefited from the investment. David opened up one of the cabins and we were free to inspect it and to wander round the site and facilities.

All agreed that our host and his staff were very helpful and had organised a great trip around the forest. We were sure some would return to explore more of the interesting part of North England.



Where Could That Be?

This is one of the photos in Betty Kirkland's collection. It is taken after the 1953 storm, probably somewhere in Scotland. Any ideas?

Welcome to Retirement!

David Bacon
Doreen Green
Ian Knox
Murdo MacLean
Edgar Moorhouse
Kathleen Phillips
Jim Anderson

Bury St Admunds
Brandon
Inverness
Strathcarron
Otterbourne
Horsemonden
Edinburgh

From the Editor

Avid readers of FCA Today will have spotted a terrible blunder in the last issue. There was a repeat of Jack Massey's article on his retirement. No! I am not that short of material, although more is always welcome. I have no idea how the repeat came about. It didn't appear on my drafts – but there it was for all to see in the final product. Normally the shareholders would have demanded my resignation, while a successor would have moved in to snap up the 6 figure salary which, unfortunately, does not go with the job. So you still have me, at least for a little longer.

On another subject – notification of deaths. There have been no notifications in FCA Today for many issues, but there may be action – soon!

Capita, the pensions provider, has proved incapable of identifying FC pensioners from those of other Government Departments. This seems unbelievable but true. Capita has now decided it can identify FC pensioners and will produce a list of those who have died since October 2002. Now the catch. It does not know when it will be able to provide this simple information. So watch this space!

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.

The Wind in My Face

Bridget MacCaskill, Don's wife, has published a photographic record of his work. He was a well known naturalist, forester and wildlife photographer who died in 2002 while walking in the forest. He had amassed a very large collection of photos and Bridget felt that many were outstanding examples of his work as a photographer and naturalist. As Bridget looked through the collection she realised that they formed his photographic autobiography. She has assembled a book of 250 stunning photographs with guiding text which gives the reader a delightful taste of nature through the seasons. The book can be obtained through Whittles Publishing, Roseleigh House, Latheronwheel KW5 6DW, tel 01593 741 240, www.whittlespublishing.com priced £19.95 (post free).



More on Stress Laminated Timber Bridges (SLT)

In the last issue Geoff Freedman described those innovative bridges. Now there is more news on their use which will interest all including retired civils. The spectacular walk through Puck's Glen in Cowal has 9 bridges all of which required replacement. Three SLTs were installed at a significantly lower cost and a shorter erection time than conventional steel girder bridges. These are proving very useful in difficult locations and can use low quality UK grown timber. More will be installed as the method is perfected. SLT sections have also been used to cross burns and bogs on the 7 Staines mountain bike route in the Scottish Borders. Because timber can be lapped eccentrically, horizontal and vertical bends can be formed. This allows interesting and exciting profiles to be built for mountain bikes such as inverted arches and high banked corners. Bikers and walkers watch for more examples.

But why not go biking or walking on these routes to see for yourself.

A Drop Head meets Pyjama Stripes...

Stan Forrester, now retired to Lochcarron, has happy memories of a tour with Silvia Crowe, the FC's first landscape consultant.

I first met Silvia Crowe when she was paying a visit to the forests of the west Highlands. She had not long been appointed as the Forestry Commission's landscape consultant. When I moved from the vast areas of planting on wild hills, to the softer, more intimate, and older forests of Devon, I saw the need for more guidance. I managed to arrange that she would spend almost a week with me in North Devon.

Silvia Crowe and I got off to a good start. At that time I was running a drop-head coupe, and with a week or more of brilliant summer weather, I had been driving for several days with the hood down. As we met, I commented on the open car and offered to close it up.

"Oh, no!" was the response, "I love an open car."

Our first visit was to Eggesford, to a spot with considerable interest for visitors. Backing the site was a group of Douglas firs, about forty five years old, underplanted with Lawson's cypress, presumably with an eye to 'amenity'. Miss Crowe was in one of her forceful moods.

"These cypress belong in a cemetery, not in a living forest. Have them out!"

On another day we had quite a discussion on improvements we could make to forestry houses, to the office and to

outbuildings. I thought it strange when Sylvia Crowe recommended that we paint the shed doors 'barn door red'. Later, when this had been done, we saw the point. It is a cheerful colour, contrasting pleasantly with the forest surroundings.

There was little demand for small timber from the many coppices we had in East Devon. Forest policy in the 1960s saw the only objective could be to replant with conifers, although small areas were retained for scenic reasons. Sylvia Crowe was again adamant. We were not doing enough to maintain the existing appearance of leafy valleys. She would press the top brass to change their policy.

There was one plantation over which we shook our heads. A valley side had been planted with alternate belts, four or five rows of each of larch and oak, not our native species, but the American red oak. At about twelve years of age it showed up across the valley like pyjama stripes. As it was not a place to which many visitors would have access, we shook our heads, and turned our backs.

So we had four days of delight touring North Devon as if we were on a summer holiday. But the delight was more than that. We had achieved much in planning the forests. Not only did we have a host of recommendations for using in our current work, there was a wealth of thought and discussion leading to a better way ahead. That was not all. There was the satisfaction of seeing things clearer with the unassuming guidance of a great lady.

Foresters were delighted to hear a few years later, that we should now address Miss Crowe as Dame Sylvia!

My First Job

by Ian Goodlet

Friends will be sad to hear of the death of Ian Goodlet at the end of May. Previously he had written an article on his first job, which unfortunately had to be held over from a recent issue due to shortage of space. As a tribute to him it is printed below. He had retired to Edinburgh and during his FC career he had worked as DFO Cowal and Peebles, was in acquisitions in South Scotland, and had a number of overseas secondments and consultancies. Now to Ian's first job.

It was early in 1950 that I boarded the RFA tanker Dewdale at Rosyth, bound for the West Indies. I had just been appointed as a Colonial Forest Officer to Trinidad, my first job.

The journey took about 2 weeks, passing the Azores and the magnificent extinct volcano Morne Pico - a beautiful sight at sunrise. On arrival in Trinidad I was based at the Forest Department HQ in Port of Spain, the capital, for three weeks familiarisation. Including the Conservator of Forests there were 5 senior staff from UK, I became number 6 to be posted to the south west division as understudy to the Assistant Conservator there. I had to purchase a car and learn to drive it.

Port of Spain was a vibrant cosmopolitan city of some half million people. I enjoyed being shown around, mixing with my new colleagues and making trips with them into the forest.

The island is comfortably tropical, situated only 11 miles from the mouth of the Orinoco River in Venezuela. Geologically Trinidad is an extension of the Andes and many of the tree species are similar to those

on the continent. It has three separate hill ranges, the highest of which reaches over 3,000 feet, all forest covered.

The economy of Trinidad was based on sugar cane, cocoa, coconuts, bananas, mangoes, citrus and other tropical fruits, timber, and in recent times oil exploration and development.

In 1950 28% of the land surface was covered in forest, consisting of tropical rain forests and some climatic variations such as semi-evergreen, deciduous, montane and swamp forests.

It was interesting to note that as far back as 1891 Trinidad had a tentative forest policy. In 1901 a Forest Officer was appointed to select and demarcate Forest Reserves to protect them from encroachments, uncontrolled felling, fire and soil erosion.

In 1913 the Conservator of Forests embarked upon plantation forestry by introducing teak seed from Burma. This continued very successfully and ready markets were found for thinnings from 5 years old upwards. Plantations were established using the "taungya" system. This involved a one year agreement giving local labour permission to clear and cultivate up to one acre each of forest land for vegetable growing, for a fee of one shilling. In clearing the land he made charcoal for himself. The Forest Department then planted young trees and the gardener planted his vegetable crop (mainly hill rice, maize, tomatoes, root crops, etc). While he tended his vegetables he was required to keep the young trees free from weeds, as his part of the agreement. The following year the same procedure was repeated on the new planting area.

In 1948 *Pinus caribaea* was introduced and it soon became another successful plantation species. Mahogany was also introduced as a good exotic plantation

species. In the natural forest, timber was always in demand by local sawmills.

Where good natural regeneration of some species was encouraging, the Tropical Shelterwood System was adopted. This involved leaving a number of valuable timber trees, in the felled areas, for seedling regeneration to form the next crop.

Other forest produce such as palm leaves, small poles, vines for basket making, etc were also controlled under a permit system. Oil companies carrying out exploration work in the forest, such as cutting star lines for seismology surveys and other development work, had to pay full royalties for every tree cut.

Trinidad is notable for its amazing richness in biodiversity and environmental sites. I cannot think of anywhere in the world where one could find such an interesting variety of flora and fauna so readily accessible and all within only 2,000 square miles.

My division, centred on San Fernando, was surrounded by sugar cane estates. Field staff were responsible for timber sales, forest protection, forest production and plantation development. All had good forest training either within the Forest Department or overseas on scholarships.

I recognise that my 5 years in Trinidad was a first class posting which included attending a post-graduate course in tropical forestry at Oxford University. All this gave me excellent grounding for my future career.

As a young man I learned a great deal from my West Indian colleagues and friends. I have great admiration for the Trinidadians who are resourceful, witty, fun-loving, happy people. Their annual Carnival is a display of their artistic and musical abilities, while their cricket prowess is well known to us all.

It was in Trinidad that I met my wife Lena. We married in 1953 and our daughter Wendy was born in Port of Spain.

Do You Know the Best Stand of Sycamore?

The British and Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme (BIHIP) objective is to improve the quality of planting stock, so improving the potential of these trees to produce the best quality timber. Groups have been set up to promote 7 species which are commercially important in Britain and Ireland – ash, oak, silver birch, sweet chestnut, sycamore, walnut and wild cherry. The Sycamore Group is appealing for help. One of its aims is to identify stands of top quality sycamore.

The search for outstanding trees is on! Do you know of any superior stands and individual trees? If so, please get in touch with the Sycamore Group secretary, Andrew Leslie at adleslie@uclan.ac.uk or go to www.bihp.com

2004 AGM, SCARBOROUGH

This was attended by 23 members, of whom 12 were delegates. It was reported that since the 2003 AGM we had received agreement on FC carpark and forest drive concessions, subject to the production of a membership card. There was also no formal policy with FC "memorials" for ex-staff. This would be subject to local agreement.

The Chairman noted that the committee had managed without a secretary for the year, due mainly to the convenience of e-mail, although John Wallace had helped greatly even though he had relinquished the post. Charles Dickens had taken over the roles of both secretary and treasurer as an interim arrangement, but could not commit himself to this for 2004/05. He also said that the editor of FCA Today, Richard Toleman, was appealing for more "newsy" copy because we needed more light entertainment (come on you retirees – you must have enjoyable tales to share through FCA Today – Ed).

Fiona Alexander updated us on the latest systems in Welfare. If you need any Welfare assistance, please get in touch with her at Silvan House, Edinburgh.

The existing Management Committee was re-elected, but Charles Dickens said that after 6 years as treasurer this year would be his last. We still required a secretary, and some fruitless approaches were made – but there was still hope.

It was agreed that the 2005 AGM would be in South Scotland and 2006 somewhere in Wales.

Rail Memories...

I had three responses to the article in the last issue. There may have been more memories. Bill Sutherland, now retired to Edinburgh, recalled driving a diesel loco on a narrow gauge temporary railway in 1940. They were working for the Home Grown Timber Production Department under John Macintyre and were extracting pit props from Hillhouse Wood at Newcastleton. He remembered that the load and gradient were critical to avoid wheelspin and stalling. He slept each night in a loft at Dykecrofts and each evening had a cooked meal at the Commercial Hotel, Newcastleton.

David Foot, now retired to Edinburgh, also had some interesting information which I give below.

From time to time I have seen brief mention of the narrow gauge railways being used on private estates in the First World War. They were quite common I believe and the timber carriages were pulled along by horse. I have seen an old picture – around 1920 – of a horse-drawn carriage of logs going along the line that ran between Glenmore and Aviemore (to link with the main railway system). There was massive exploitation of the forests in Upper Speyside in the First War and the Canadians were billeted in Glenmore Lodge. Of course this was all before the FC acquired the by then worked-over forest in 1920. I don't know if this particular line was used again in the second war, but it is often said that the old lines can still be found in the ground.

The two extracts are amusing. They were taken from a book of timberjill "reminiscences" published in 1945 called *Meet the Members* – in fact it is obvious that some of the women were still working in the woods at the time of writing, as of course they did for many years.

It is a small pocket-size book with stories, photos and poems contributed by timberjills in England, Scotland and Wales who were members of the Women's Timber Corps. My own copy is a facsimile limited edition published by the Imperial War Museum in 1997. It's probably still available.

Equally readable is a similar book of stories by members of the WTC in Scotland only. This is "Timber" by Affleck Gray published in 1998 by the Tuckwell Press at East Linton as No 7 in a series called *Flashbacks*. I don't know if it's currently in print but you can sometimes get copies at the National Museum shop in Chamber Street, Edinburgh. Probably the rose-tinted spectacles come in a bit here as these stories, unlike *Meet the Members*, were not written contemporary to the war.

Of the many different jobs in which I have been engaged in connection with timber production, the one I have found

most interesting is loco driving.

The loco is a Ruston Hornsby product, weighing just under three tons, and possessing a two-cylinder diesel engine of twenty-one horse power. In addition to three gears, used both for forward and reverse, it has a reversing lever, and a handbrake. However, owing to the exceptionally steep sections, there is an emergency brake fitted, which operates on the rails.

At my Unit, the narrow gauge track extends for a distance of about two and a half miles uphill, with an average gradient of one in twelve, and at the steepest parts, one in six. This, I understand, is exceptionally steep for a railway and therefore special care must be taken, particularly on the downward journey.

The railway is the only means of communication between the sawmill and the wood, which means that the production of the Unit depends entirely on the amount of timber extracted by the loco, thus it follows that should there be a hold-up on the line, most of the Unit is affected by it.

During wet or frosty weather, extra care is necessary to avoid skidding, and only by the liberal use of coarse sand on the rails is it possible to get sufficient grip to enable the loco to pull its load to the top of the incline. On a normal working day we can manage four loads, and on the return journey uphill we usually transport horse feed, or any equipment required in the wood.

The loco must have regular cleaning and attention if it is to be kept in good running condition, and my last job at night is to clean and refuel in preparation for the next day's work.

Other amusing incidents come crowding to my mind. We once laid our railway down the side of a steepish hill. It is winter time and very wet and muddy, so that I gladly accepted the offer of a quarter mile ride on one of our miniature bogies, scarcely noticing that the only brake was operated by thrusting a stick against one of the four wheels of the bogey. Quarter of the way down over the steep bit, the man in charge of the brake remarked, "Oi don't think I c'n 'old 'er, the rails be so slippery" – and I (with what I considered to be superb understanding of the bucolic humour) grinned cheerfully. It wasn't until we were halfway down the slope that I realised the remark was not meant to be humorous. By that time I was too petrified to move. We were saved by the prompt action of a young lad, who has ever bewailed the fact that he lost the lid of his teapot, a lovely red one, in the ensuing skirmish.

Finally Dennis Harrison, who was one of the early Site Survey Section stalwarts, has an interest in temporary narrow gauge railways. He would be pleased to have more information, pictures, and personal stories. Get in touch with him at Brynawel, Llanfadwrn, Llanwrda SA19 8HW, harrisonnden@ntlworld.com

WARTIME STORIES

I still have a few more stories tucked away in my archives. This is Roger Lines as a young lad! He has now retired to High Ham in Somerset, but spent most of his years in the Northern Research Station.

In autumn 1943 I had left school and knew that I would be called up in May. I was interested in forestry, but had insufficient qualifications to go to university. My only forestry contact was an uncle in the Treasury, who was responsible for Forestry Commission firearms. He knew Sir William Taylor well. The latter advised me to "do some practical work to see if I liked it", and arranged with Geoff Rouse, then District Officer in charge of Thetford, to take me on as a boy worker. The

Forester at Santon Downham gave me my first job. As the nursery was not producing large numbers of plants, part had been used for growing potatoes.

Unfortunately, although the crop had grown well, local skills in building a frost-free clamp were only partly effective. Thus I spent my first day in the Forestry Commission sorting through the clamp. If a potato was frosted it would squish in my hand, if not then it was okay. By the end of the day I had begun to wonder whether I was in the right profession. However, after six months of brashing, tree planting and nursery work, I was much fitter and forestry had a foreseeable future.

My first Research job there was helping Phil Gough plant Tom Peace's collection of poplar varieties. I remember helping Geoff Rouse to survey a burnt area which may have been started by German incendiaries. I did not meet him again for 43 years, until I retired to Somerset and met him on visits of the Wessex Silvicultural Group.

OBITUARIES

Frank Henderson remembers **ANDY GALLACHER**, who had been in a nursing home for several years suffering from Parkinson's and a number of strokes but had weakened recently. He had been a keen footballer in his youth but lost a leg due to infection in pre-antibiotic days.

He began his Civil Service career in wartime with the Ministry of Food then to the Admiralty and finally to the FC as a CO in the early 50s. He was in the West Scotland Conservancy from then on, including a spell as an auditor, in various Glasgow offices until he retired at 65. He remained active as an administrative advisor for SWOAC and as a founder member, secretary and treasurer of the FCRA until illness forced him to give it up.

Meantime his value as Secretary of the Younger Trust was such that its Chairman (and Chairman of the FC) Sir Peter Hutchison visited him in hospital. He leaves a wife Anna and son Andrew.

Bart Venner recalls **BERT DOVER**. They first met at a National Civil Service Union conference in 1965 when Bert was representing East England and Jack Morrish had called all the foresters representatives together.

The next year Bert was transferred to the Dean where he took over the Field Surveys Teams in South England and Wales. He was a workaholic and after retiring he enjoyed guiding groups through the Forest of Dean.

Bart also knew **IAN FALCONER** who spent almost all his career in the Dean, being moved there during the War to help with timber production. He was the son of the Scottish Highlands and often recalled heavy snowfalls at his home there, the like of which the Dean has never seen except in 1947 and 1962/63. He was a well-liked forester, looking after Highmeadow Beat while at the Dean. After retiring he helped with Horse Riding for the Handicapped Child and did private woodland consultancy. It was an accident on a quad bike which made him give up this work. He continued looking after himself until he died aged 92 in March 2004.

Mike Whitlock writes of a close friend, **GEOFFREY BLAND FLAGG**, who died in April.

On completing his training at the Dean Forester Training School he was posted to Bradon Forest near Swindon. He then followed me to the Cotswolds where he took charge of some new acquisitions in the Ledbury area. Later followed a complete career change when he joined Work Study Branch at Olney, working with Bill Wittering. Subsequently he transferred to the New Forest, still with Work Study. Following the completion of his tour of duty with this branch he moved to the Isle of Wight to carry out forest management duties. His tenure there was suddenly cut short when Geoff suffered a heart attack which was followed by surgery. His resultant ill-health confined his activities to office duties at Alice Holt, returning to Work Study Branch.

As soon as he retired Geoff and his wife

Betty joined the Association and regularly attended events. Increasing ill-health of both Geoff and Betty curtailed their activities and their attendance at the group's events was confined to the Christmas lunch. Eventually this had to cease. When I visited them some time ago Geoff said that although they could not go very far from home they had their memories. These must have been rich ones in view of the many places where they lived as well as the people they met.

Geoff died following a long and painful illness which included many spells in hospital. I am told that during this time he remained cheerful and retained his sense of humour.

Richard Illingworth contacted many friends to write of **KEN DACKER** who died in June aged 65. He was a pupil at Edinburgh Academy, where he played rugby for the school and later with the Academicals. After a period working as a valuer, and with a private estate, he joined MAFF and went to Alnwick in Northumberland to deal with grant and advisory work and qualified as a Chartered Surveyor. He then spent three years with the Crown Estate Commissioners at Fochabers dealing with the day-to-day management of their extensive rural estates. He joined the Commission in 1974 as Area Land Agent at Kendal.

In 1978 Ken was promoted to the post of Conservancy Land Agent for NE(E) where his arrival coincided with the large-scale disposal of both surplus property and plantations. Among the many problems he had to deal with were a row of system built houses which were on a statutory hit list drawn up after the collapse of the Ronan Point flats, a comparatively small area of shelter belt woodlands where the Commission had an obligation to repair many miles of fences and a small wood in which there was a disused chapel, where there were endless problems with an emotional gentleman who had traced his ancestors there. Faced with a very large sales programme, Ken's instincts were to get on with things and he would not be offended if it was said that the labyrinthian disposal procedures were not his favourite bedtime reading. There is a story that he advised a newly appointed member of estates to "read the Sporting Life rather than the Estate Code – you'll get more useful information from it". He would be quite familiar with the former from his co-ownership of a racehorse with Richard Smith, and Ken's incredulous delight when it won at long odds is remembered to this day.

Ken was a loyal supporter of Scotland at many rugby internationals and at the Hong Kong Sevens. He was a keen golfer, could drive the ball prodigious distances and was a stalwart of the FC Golf Society, winning the Veteran's Scroll four years ago. His remembered reaction to that golfer's dream, a hole in one, was characteristic: he walked on to the next tee with barely a word. His somewhat gruff manner hid warmth and a pawky sense of humour which made him an excellent companion. It is sad that he has not

been spared to enjoy many more years of retirement with his wife Moira and he will be remembered with affection by his many friends.

PETER AINSWORTH's daughter has told me that he died in June at Newcastleton. He entered the FC in 1948 at Kershope where he met his future wife. His last posting as Head Forester was at Ardgartan, but he had been at many forests throughout England and Scotland before he retired in 1982.

Gwyn Francis and Peter Clarke tell of **GEORGE MURRAY**, a former Forestry Commissioner, who died in March aged 79. As a man of Buckie with its seafaring traditions, he saw service in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

From 1946 to 1981 he was in the Scottish Office, mainly in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. He was responsible for conducting a major enquiry into crofting and preparing the legislation that arose from it. During this time his portfolio included the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh; he played a key role in the acquisition of the gardens at Dawyck for the RBGE.

In 1981 George joined the Forestry Commission and became Forestry Commissioner responsible for Administration and Finance. His time with the Commission coincided with a number of important changes in the management structure and the adoption of IT, which he oversaw. He was much involved carrying through the amalgamation of Forests and Districts and in the associated negotiations with union representatives. In these he displayed those qualities that were his hallmark. He was a sympathetic listener who never failed to respect the views of others and was invariably decisive and fair-minded.

George took great delight in Commissioners' tours where his relaxed friendliness was always an asset in putting the visited at their ease. On these occasions he often used his fund of anecdotes to good effect, indeed he had the distinction of being one of the most notable raconteurs to attend these tours.

In retirement he was an active member and elder at Currie Kirk, where he used his talents to great effect in overseeing a major construction project. He became an enthusiastic member of a local choir "The Pentland Singers" and the local drama group, and was also a persistent golfer.

Although George came to the Forestry Commission late in his career he took the Commission to his heart. He had a very high opinion of its people and its style; they in turn had a highest regard for him. He was widely respected for his wise advice and counsel, the warmth of his personality, and his ability to tackle and solve the seemingly intractable with courtesy, humour and good grace.

Advice to Newly Retired

By Bill Sutherland

Bill has led a very successful life in retirement. He is over 80, enjoys wine and gardening, and an outdoor life on his grandson's hill farm in Cowal, where he drives his own quad bike. So we should listen to him as he seems to have found the formula for a great retirement.

For the first week just relax and have a long lie.

Then sell the car and scrap the TV and settle down for a week of thinking how best to spend your second life.

Health comes first. Keep fit classes are readily available. Joggers always look so miserable! Walking is one of the best forms of exercise but on a bike you see more. The tops is a 20 minute swim each morning before breakfast. The breakfast tastes so much better.

The world should be divided into gardeners and non-gardeners. If you have a garden then you are a gardener, willing or unwilling. The truth is that gardening is the most enjoyable, the most rewarding, the most challenging of all pursuits, but one has to learn how to do it properly.

Hedges, if trimmed with a good electric trimmer at least weekly during the growing season, require no clearing up and disposal of cuttings, and the work involved is minimal and quite good for the shoulders and upper arms. Similarly, the lawnmower box was invented for townies. Forget it! You will find it is much easier handled in its absence. So long as you cut the grass weekly, or whenever there is visible growth, the cuttings will disappear.

After the first year, weeding is an unnecessary chore. All you have to do is plant something where weeds appear, and you will reach the next stage when weeds can't survive because there is total ground cover and even weeds can't survive without light.

During the first year, however, you have to make sure of ridding the garden of noxious weeds. These are deep rooting perennials or rapid spreaders which don't respond to hoeing. They are easily eradicated if you begin at once, using the appropriate weedkillers.

For the rest use modern aids such as black permeable sheeting for weed suppression, fleece for wind and frost protection, gel and slow acting fertiliser for hanging baskets and nematodes to control slugs.

In later years one can refine pruning, staking, etc all with a view to making the work easier when one becomes less capable of work and spends most of the time just relaxing in the, by then, beloved garden.

You now have oodles of time on your hands so re-think your present hobbies with a view to doing them better – perhaps going to classes.

Start a new hobby – pottery, drawing, painting, carving, lapidry, welding – the list is endless and some of the instructors are fabulous.

Start a regular routine visiting a new eating place with a friend. It can be outrageously expensive!

Susy Madron's cycling for softies in France I found most enjoyable. Nowadays seeking out bargains on the network seems

a good waste of time.

Red wine or whisky are best for health, happiness and long life and to correct any miscalculations use Fertier Branca. It is really infallible.

But why take the advice of others – do as you please.

Want to be a Bodger?

Every year the Association of Pole Lathe Turners (APT) gathers for demonstrations of hurdle making, bowl turning, steam bending, bushcraft and wheel wrighting. Members cover the whole spectrum of green wood trades, not just pole lathe work. A highlight of the annual event is a "Log to leg" race. Competitors race to turn 2 matching chain legs from a log. The winner manages this in 11 minutes! In 2003 they were at Westonbirt, 2004 at Kentwell Hall, Suffolk. Do you want to become part of the greenwood network? Membership costs £15 pa. Contact Richard Charles, Hillock Cottage, Buckland Common, Tring HP23 6NQ www.bodgers.org.uk

More on Swedish Timber Houses

In the last 2 issues Russell Bruce asked for information on these houses. He has received a number of replies, but would welcome more. One very interesting one came from Richard Illingworth, now retired to Edinburgh, who was District Estate Officer in Cowal in his early days. The following is an extract.

"The houses were prefabricated and shipped to Scotland in kit form. Legend has it that the parts lay on Grangemouth Docks for two years. The erection was carried out under the control of the Scottish Special Housing Association, much to the chagrin of FC staff, and there were long delays on site. Building took place at the end of the 1940s and early 1950s. The timber framing was clad externally with timber insulation and

boarding and internally with a type of timber-based fibreboard. The roofs were mostly of Canadian cedar shingles although my ex-colleague told me some of the ones at Arrochar had tile roofs because a lot of shingles had been used for kindling over the time that the kits lay waiting to be erected. Heating was by an open fire in the livingroom and a Rayburn in the kitchen. In some places mains electricity was not available and the houses were piped for calor gas lighting."

Still much remains to be uncovered about these homes including the stories of those who have lived in them. If you have any please contact Russell at The Bannachra, Blairmore, Argyll PA23 8TL.

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