

A Cabin in the Forest

Charlie Greenlees has sent me this most interesting story which is printed below. It was given to him by Charlie Mitchell, who later worked on Eredine but was only a young lad at the time the events took place. Charlie investigated its source, but leads proved difficult to follow. The writer, Anne Henderson, is on the left of the photo. So – just enjoy the story...

The part of my life in which I formed the greatest friendships and when I laughed and enjoyed myself most profoundly, was during the War, when I had joined the Forestry Commission.

I was informed that we were to meet at McBrayne's Depot, in Glasgow, on 25 April 1942. This date has become very important to the five girls who were assembled there that morning. We did not know one another and we could not guess at the adventures that we were going to experience.

Our bus delivered us to Lochgilphead, near Loch Fyne. There, we met our supervisor, who was a very attractive lady, very stylish and dressed in smart slacks and tweed jacket. From Lochgilphead we were taken by Forestry lorry to Ford, where we embarked on the Forestry boat which was called 'Coileach Coille' (Woodcock). This was the boat on which we were going to have many excursions, and which would take us to our destination at Cruachan, Loch Awe. During the voyage we had the opportunity to view the loch and to realise its unique beauty. About nine miles from Ford, on the left side of the loch, we disembarked on a quay made entirely of pine logs.

Note well! There we were! Dressed in clothing which was very unsuitable for the wild forests of Scotland. We were dressed in tweed coats, and we were wearing hats. We also carried cases. The other Anne even wore a Deanna Durbin hat! However, we were not dismayed and advanced through a forest of pines and across a path of mud until we reached a clearing in the forest, and there, before us, was our cabin of logs. This cabin, constructed of pine logs, was built by Canadians at the beginning of the

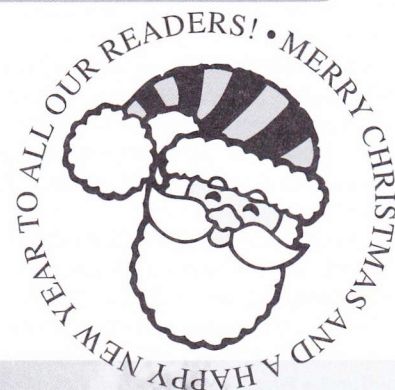


War. It was comprised of two cabins and we entered by the smaller one, which consisted of a kitchen with an iron Dover stove and a sink. A little bedroom led from the kitchen. This was for the supervisor. Also leading from the kitchen was the dining room in which there was a long table. From a door at the back of the dining room there was a gangway leading to the big cabin which was a dormitory. In the dormitory there were eight beds which resembled coffins as they were made of wood and had panels of wood on each side. There was a big iron stove in the middle of the room with a chimney which went out through the roof. A sink and chests of drawers were the entire furnishings of this room.

I cannot say that we were captivated by our new abode. It seemed too isolated; though we were thrilled by the beauty which surrounded us. Betty from Edinburgh suggested that we should ask for a transfer after a month. We were all in agreement with her.

Fortunately for us it was at this moment that Peggy (a local girl) entered our lives. She later became a friend for life. She invited us to Barmaddy Farm where she lived with her family. Barmaddy was...

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Welcome to Retirement!

Andrew Cameron	Oban
Derrick English	Hexham
Monica Farm	Penicuik
Raymond Harris	Trevalder
Christopher Houston	Ardross
John Neil	Lochmaben
William Powell	Talybont-on-Usk
John Speed	Ludlow
Robert Williams	Beddgelert
June Bell	Farnham
David Clarke	Gilwern
Gladys Cummings	Edinburgh
Peter Filewood	Bordon
Reginald Griffin	Brigham
Graham Haddock	York
Gwenda Hughes	Ganllwyd
David Jones	Stonehouse
James McDowall	Girvan
Norman Martin	Huntly
Richard Mihalop	Marchwood
David Nichol	Kielder
Ralf Nickerson	Farnham
B G Price	Ellesmere
Jean Pool	Newton Stewart
Margaret Ruskin	Tetbury
Bryce Reynard	Inverness
Horner Walker	Thirsk
Anne Stohlner	Edinburgh

A Cabin in the Forest...

situated at about two miles from our cabin at Cruachan. Soon we came to regard it as our place of refuge, and Mrs McEachan as our second mother. So, by the end of our first week, we were having the time of our lives and we had discovered that we could visit the local dances so we sent home for bicycles.

The clothing which was given to us by the Forestry Commission was insufficient – a pair of trowsers and a cotton jacket. However we managed to acquire wellington boots and later they gave us a battledress in bottle green.

We were presented with a small saw and on Monday morning our work was to commence, brashing plot 1917. The trees in this plot of land were planted by young women who came to work in the forest during the First World War. They were now ready to be felled, but first the branches on the lower part of the trees had to be removed. Thus we set out on our way, with a satchel of food and a raincoat.

At first our work was limited to the forests and this we found very pleasant as the woods were very beautiful with clearings where we could light fires and boil our billycans of tea. There were also very pretty streams in the forests. In the summer we even found a pool where we could bathe. Later on we planted young trees on the hillsides. Sometimes we peeled the bark from felled trees or worked in the nursery to eliminate the weeds and of course there was always the bracken which was a menace if it was not cut.

We became acquainted with the local people and several of them have kept up a life-long friendship. The dances were wonderful and we soon learned the intricate ones, but to reach them we often had to borrow boats, place the bikes in them and row across the loch and then cycle nine, or sometimes fourteen, miles. It was a wonderful and unbelievable time and we can never remember a time when we have experienced such happiness. As a group we were in harmony and I often think that we had the greatest of luck to be so compatible.

The dances took place at Portsonachan, nine miles distant on the other side of the loch and at Kilmartin which was situated fourteen miles to the south and near the Crinan Canal. I cannot describe the delight of these dances and the pleasure that we experienced in riding the bikes along beside the Crinan Canal and then along the lochside back to our cabin. Happily, the dances usually took place on Friday night and then we were able to sleep most of Saturday.

Each week one of us took a turn of remaining in the cabin and was responsible for the cooking and cleaning. The Commission delivered logs to our cabin and we had to saw them and chop them with an axe. Our post, which we always waited for avidly, was delivered by Katie the Post. Katie

collected the post at Dalavich School, which was five miles from Cruachan, and then delivered it on her bicycle for nine miles towards Ford.

There were many events which were both exciting and funny. Such as our supervisor put an advert in the Glasgow Herald asking if someone could send some records and a gramophone for six girls who were working in an isolated spot. The gramophone and 200 records arrived in the boat at the same time as the groceries. Betty could not wait to hear the music and she put the gramophone on and did a dance on the quay. The result was that Betty and the groceries disappeared with one of the logs, through the quay and into the loch. Our supervisor, who came to see what was happening, was not too pleased. However we were able to save most of the groceries, and Betty!

Another time we cycled to Oban which

was thirty miles away. We had to stay there for the night and found a hotel at the port. After going to the dancing we returned to the hotel to find it occupied by very strange looking people and the place suddenly seemed sleazy to us. So, for safety, five of us occupied one room instead of two.

Our supervisor, who was a woman of great courage, received a dare to stay on the island of Ardochonnel Castle for one night. The Castle, a former fortress of the Campbells was, according to the local people, haunted and one was supposed to hear bagpipes at three in the morning. So Anne set out in a boat, complete with blankets, hot drinks and food. She returned next morning safe and sound but would not discuss what had happened on the island.

The adventures and the camaraderie were fantastic but after one and a half years we went our different ways. It was a truly marvellous time but it could not last forever!

From the Editor

As I was assembling material for this issue it soon became apparent that most of it was reminiscences and recollections of past times in the FC. While this is very interesting, retirees are doing unusual and interesting things right now. The problem I have is that people seldom write to me about their present life, their activities and their pleasures. Current events are great to share with friends and colleagues through the medium of FCA Today. So please write in NOW about the enjoyment of retirement. I have very little material for the next issue, and by the time you read this the deadline will be on me. So do your bit to make FCA Today a friendly publication that keeps us in touch with each other. DO IT NOW.

A Shared Pleasure

I received this letter from Jim Walsham, now retired to Ayr. He wanted to share his experience with me, and I am passing it on to readers. It shows what great support there is for the FC.

My wife and I stopped for coffee last week by the Connell Bridge just a few miles short of Oban.

What a wonderful blessing we received. We were served by a RVS lady, Betty Bergant (nee Burnett) who worked at Inverinan 1955-62. She was 70 last week and so full of appreciation of the Forestry Commission. She worked with Bill Rattery, Jan McKenzie and Don McCaskill.

She was so full of reminiscences about her FC days. She was a pure tonic. She gave our hearts great pleasure. I just felt I had to share this incident with you.

Go to Budapest...

Looking for a short impulsive holiday? Why not go to Budapest? Budget flights have greatly reduced costs, and food, accommodation and travel within the city are reasonable. We had a very good self-catering apartment one block from the Danube near Margaret Island. Buy a 1, 3 or 7 day ticket. This gives you unlimited travel over the integrated public transport system which is far easier to use and understand than systems in Britain! Cheap, clean accommodation can be booked on www.hostelworld.com. And what to do when you arrive? It's too easy to rush everywhere because there is so much to see. Relax, be selective, you can't see it all, so see only a little, at leisure. Museums are endless. Castle Hill on the Buda side is very historic, the Art Nouveau of Pest is romantic. Take swimming gear as there are baths everywhere. Gellert is the most opulent and expensive, Szechenyi, in the City Park, is impressively neo-Baroque. Even if you cannot go to the opera, at least have a tour of the Opera House which is along Andrássy Avenue, reminiscent of a French boulevard. There are boat trips on the Danube, and if you have a day, take one to Visegrad on the Danube Bend, returning by bus and train via Szentendre – this is a good trip to see the surrounding countryside. And about eating. There are places everywhere, but avoid the tourist spots. Go down side streets to eat with the locals. Good hearty food at sensible prices – not a place for vegetarians! If you must buy something, go to the Central Market, built in 1890 and restored 10 years ago – it's also excellent for tasty cheap food.

English is widely spoken by the younger people and most public notices are also in English. Avoid taxis, especially from the airport, the public transport (bus and metro) to the centre is cheap and reliable. Finally if you are tired of pounding the streets, take the No 2 tram along the east bank of the Danube, just look at the sights – at night they all sparkle.

Well, if that's not encouraged you to go, nothing will! Have a great time.

Where could that be?

In the last issue there was a photo of the 1953 windblow in east Scotland. Colin McLean was quick to reply. He was ex-NRS and has now retired to Roslin. He considered it was taken at either Ballindalloch near Cragganmore on Strathspey, or Ballogie near Banchory. He recalled that he had his wife were in the midst of the gale on 31 January 1953 and were unable to leave Banchory for three days. Subsequently he wrote an article for the Journal of the Forestry Commission No 23, which is given in full below.

During the summers of 1951 and 1952 surveys were made of the North and East Conservancies of Scotland to find the best stands of forest trees for seed collection and also the best individuals for more intensive breeding; these individuals are hereafter referred to as "plus" trees. As a result of this work 165 Scots pine were selected as "plus" trees for breeding, and about twenty Scots pine stands classified by measurement and a visual scoring for form, as being good enough for intensive seed collection. A number of other species were dealt with in a similar manner.

On January 31st, 1953 an area extending from Nairn to east Perthshire suffered from a gale of terrific force, and many of the "plus" trees and stands were blown down. Thus if the character inherent in these woods was to be saved, quick action was needed. It was decided to collect cones and scion material for grafting from every blown "plus" tree and from a proportion of the largest and best-formed dominants in every worthwhile stand, and in addition to assist the Conservancy staff in making a large general cone collection. The work began at once.

Normally the collection of seed and vegetative material from mature trees presents some difficulty and many tools, including ladders, tree-bicycles, and shotguns, have been used. In this case no such difficulty existed, but it was not easy to select the best stems from amongst the wreckage. On arriving at a windblown stand the first operation was to pinpoint the position of any marked "plus" trees. Sketch maps had been made previously and these indicated possible landmarks. Once found, the tree was stripped of cones. The cones were counted, bagged and labelled with the tree number, and as many suitable current-year's shoots as possible were cut off as grafting material, and also labelled with the tree number. Then from five to twenty of the next best dominants had to be found, the number depending on the assessment of the stand. The better stands, such as the

Scots pine woods at Altyre (Moray) and Crathes (Aberdeenshire) being allotted the full number of twenty trees.

In order to avoid indiscriminate selection it was necessary to fix a minimum girth and height limit, below which no tree would be considered. Usually the girth limit was not more than four inches (true measure) below the breast height girth of the biggest plus tree. Then having climbed to a vantage point in the timber one tried to pick out trees above this girth by eye. If on inspection these trees proved to be of the required girth and height, and were straight, healthy, had stems which were circular in cross-section, with a good branch habit, they were allotted a number of identification, measured, their form described, and then their cones were collected.

The vegetative material resulting from such a collection was sent off immediately by post to one of the propagation sites at Alice Holt, Bramshill or Grizedale, where they were grafted, or else stored in peat for later grafting at Newton Nursery, Elgin. In addition, the cream of the selected trees were propagated at Horsholm, Denmark, and the Northern Irish Tree Breeding Station. This wide dispersal of material will act as extra insurance against any clone becoming extinct.

Seed was extracted from cones at Alice Holt and the resulting plants will be planted out tree by tree in progeny trials. These plots will themselves become useful sources of seed, as well as good sources of material for back-crossing.

In all about 180 clones – or series of vegetative plants, all emanating from plus trees – were started as a result of the gale; representing 15 woods severely damaged or flattened.

Thus the qualities of these woods have been preserved by general seed collection, by a collection of clones from the best dominants and by separate seed collection from these dominants. It is hoped to establish seed-orchards from the clones propagated, and thus to ensure that the best strains existing in East Scottish woods do not become extinct.

Just as we were going to press, Chris Quine from NRS contacted me with yet more information which I had to include. It shows we have a wide readership outside the FCA!

I can confirm that the photo of the steam train and windthrow relates to the 1953 storm which affected north-east Scotland. I have inherited from previous researchers a number of black and white photos of the aftermath of that event, including a set taken on the ground by Roger Lines. The aerial photos that include your example appear to have been taken throughout the north-east by the RAF, as there is a wing tip and roundel in one of the photos. The particular photo shown is labelled Seafeld Estate, Grantown on Spey

– grid ref 033290 – placing it to the north of the town. No doubt a railway enthusiast could say more about the train and the line, but from the shape of the forest boundary (and the direction of fall of the trees) the train appears to be heading north (towards Cottartown).

The 1953 storm blew over approximately 1.8 million cubic metres of timber, representing 10-25% of the growing stock of the region. The winds resulted from a deep depression that passed to the north of Scotland and then drifted southwards in the North Sea. This had two effects – the strong winds in north-east Scotland were particularly prolonged compared to other notable catastrophic storms (eg 1968 and 1987 – further details of the comparison can be found in Chapter 2 of Bulletin 87 which covered the 1987 storm) and the winds were from the north or north-west. The storm is perhaps best remembered for effects further south, with a major storm surge resulting in flooding and considerable loss of life in east England and the low countries. It was these effects that seemed to attract media interest on the 50th anniversary of the event last year!

Chris also said that he would be pleased to provide storage for any other photos of this and any other major storms.

Does anyone remember?

In the March issue Cedric Quayle asked for more information about World War II victory plantations. Unfortunately he received no replies. There must be somebody who was involved in these. Please contact him at **Bowcastle Farm, Bewdley DY12 2LN, Tel 01299 403 585, e-mail ccquayle@tiscali.co.uk**

British Horse Loggers (BHL)

This is a grouping of professional folk and part-time contractors and enthusiasts who work horses by choice in contemporary forestry. There may be a few readers who are directly involved, while there may be others who could be interested if they knew more. The group is very active running a series of events all over the country, and with membership throughout Britain. Local events explore specific issues such as working alongside conventional extraction systems and use of a range of traditional and modern equipment. The annual championship is an exciting event with up to 20 teams competing. More information is available on www.heavyhorses.net and www.fcauk.com/bhl. If you are involved, or do become involved, please write in about it.

OBITUARIES

John Keenleyside has told me of the death of **HUGH MACKAY**, who retired from Dornoch in 1985.

Born in Reay, Caithness, he was educated at the Miller Academy in Thurso, and in his early teens he served his apprenticeship in horticulture. Aged 17, he was positioned with the Royal Navy destroyer service in the Far East, on the Russian convoy routes and at the D-Day Landings.

After the War he returned briefly to Reay before joining the FC at Ardrross in February 1947. Following a period as ganger he attended the Benmore Forestry School in Argyll from 1948-1950 (including 3 months at Glentress). On completion of the course he was posted to Glengarry and promoted to Foreman in 1952.

Hugh transferred to Dunnet in 1954 and on taking up the post of Assistant Forester he was responsible for the first planting on what has now become an important community forest area. He then had spells at Craigs and Oykel Forests and while lodging in Bonar Bridge in the late 1950s he met Moira whom he married in 1961. The couple made their first home in Rosehall where Hugh was employed as the local Forester.

Following promotion to Head Forester in Inverfarigaig in 1963, he was responsible for the establishment of the Inverfarigaig Forest Centre, one of the earliest FC recreation facilities which remains ever popular today.

Promotion to Chief Forester found Hugh and family transferred to Ratagan in 1971, before returning to Shin and a position at Lairg in 1978, prior to his final move to Dornoch to take up the post of District Forester.

Tales from his Forestry days are too plentiful to recall here, but many remember Hugh with great affection and his name was well known and respected throughout the FC. He was without doubt a 'character'.

Hugh was a man of many parts. In his younger days he played football and took up golf in his native Reay. In recent years, since returning to Bonar Bridge, he was a member of Bonar Bridge Ardgay Golf Club where he served for a time on the management committee.

He was an excellent gardener, able to transform wilderness into areas of beauty. His gardens at Inverfarigaig, Ratagan and Bonar Bridge were much admired by residents and visitors alike, and while residing at Lairg he and his garden featured on the BBC Beechgrove Garden programme.

He had a long interesting career on stage as a member of a number of amateur dramatic clubs throughout the Highlands

and, in his own right, he was a poet of no mean ability.

In addition to his varied talents and hobbies, Hugh was renowned for his remarkable sense of humour and dry wit. Whatever the occasion, be it at work, on stage, in his home, or on the golf course, he inspired fun and laughter. In the Bonar Golf Club centenary booklet a playing companion writes "Hugh was a good golfer but, to him, the most important function was to play and have fun. Anyone who shared Hugh's company on the golf course, or in the clubhouse, would experience the real pleasures of the game of golf."

As a storyteller he had few equals and he loved a 'crack' with his friends over a dram. He liked water in his whisky, though "only if there was room"!

Many friends and former colleagues joined the family at Fern House in Bonar Bridge and afterwards at Inverness Crematorium, to mourn Hugh's passing and celebrate his life.

The ceremonies, conducted by the Humanist Society of Scotland, which included poems by the family, truly epitomised Hugh's love of life and the great pleasure and happiness he gave to so many people.

RON WATKINSON's wife told me that he died last December, aged 81. He joined the FC in 1946, serving in Arundel and Bedgebury Forests. He was at the Dean FTS 1949-51, then worked in several forests in Berks and Hants. Finally he retired in 1983 as Chief Forester in the New Forest.

Elizabeth, **DONN SMALL's** wife, describes his life. He was born in Belfast in 1922 and took an early interest in botany, encouraged by his father who was Professor of Botany at Queen's University. He attained a BSc Degree, though it was interrupted by his army service which took him to the Dodecanese Islands and the Sinai Desert in Egypt. Having then completed his botany degree, he went on to gain a forestry degree at Edinburgh University.

In 1949 he joined the Colonial Forest Service in Sierra Leone where he and his wife undertook long arduous treks, cutting survey lines through the virgin forest. About 200 specimens of tree material were collected and sent to Kew for their West African collection. With the help of his wife he studied for his MSc in Ecology.

Following his return in 1954, he joined the Forestry Commission, working in Thetford Chase, the Chilterns and finally the New Forest as Deputy Surveyor, where he was made responsible for a major change in the methods of managing both the woodlands and the public use of the ancient

and beautiful forest. He was awarded the OBE and also edited and part wrote the guide book "Explore the New Forest", now in its 4th edition.

He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and was invited to address the Rockefeller Institute in USA following his paper to the Society. In 1979 he was responsible for organising the official visit of the Queen to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the New Forest and had the pleasure of accompanying Her Majesty on the tour.

AGM 2005

The 2005 AGM is being organised by David Chadwick. Details are still being sorted, but accommodation is booked at the Crieff Hydro. Convenient train stations are Gleneagles and Perth. This is close to Tay and Tummel, and Charlie Taylor, the FDM, is planning a forestry trip in the Pitlochry area, while we also hope to visit NTS properties in Dunkeld and the Hermitage. Dates for your diary are 3 & 4 May. Another great place to turn into a longer holiday.

FCA Today Correspondents

1. John Keenleyside: 01309 673599
2. Charlie Greenlees: 01546 602929
3. Muriel Williams: 0131 443 7740
4. Elizabeth Capstick: 01439 771249
5. Mike Reaney: 01792 202449
6. John Thomas: 01179 863869
7. Lena Birchall: 01420 23213
8. David Williams: 01766 762280

GROUP CONTACTS

N & NE Scotland

Eric Urquhart: 01463 221989

Mid Argyll

Charlie Greenlees: 01546 602929

HQ & South Scotland

David Chadwick: 01383 821216

Yorkshire

Geoff Barry: 01751 472575

Brecklands

Margaret Mayes: 01842 811920

Chilterns Warwick Payne: 01442 865595

New Forest Henry Smith: 01962 882017

Alice Holt Sylvia Nicholls: 01252 516016

Forest of Dean Hilda Jones: 01594 836006

West Country Peter Webb: 01837 52926

North Wales Tec Roberts: 01490 412314

South Wales Peter Walker: 01291 424291

Check with contacts for exact area covered.

