



Pictured, left to right, are: Back – Peter MacDonald, Andrew Mott, Mike Hannafin, Don Lindsay, Ralph Nickerson, Dave Maddison, Gordon Heddon, George Watt, Dave Elgy, Dick Ogilvie, Tom Rainey, Angus (Bob) Murray, Neil MacKell, Tom Gough, John Hill, Alan Sharpe, Charlie Fleming, Dave Cotton, Tim Taylor, Colin King and Mike Cheesewright; Front – Ian Robinson, Dave Douglas, Clark Anderson, Dave Chappell, Jim Williams, Abbey Gordon, Gordon Ray, Ted Radford, Roger Branford and John McNeil.

A Past Recollection

By John McNeil

At times there is an opportunity to look back at events in one's working life and, having recently unearthed the above photo, I was reminded of this one in particular.

While attending Faskally FTS in 1962 a "Scotsman" reporter arrived to take a group photo for a feature article titled "Britain's Future Pulp Producers".

At the time, the Commission was expanding on all fronts, and timber production was rapidly increasing. I had just started my second year and the juniors their first. I can remember most but a few are missing. Their names are below.

This photo also prompted me to recall my student days, particularly the first year under the supervision and instruction of Norman Tulloch (Principal), Sandy Cram, D'Arcy Black and Iain Garrioch. My lasting impression was that the regime had been very strict, almost severe at times.

A hint of what lay ahead became apparent when it was noticed that bearded students arriving on the first day were clean shaven by the following morning.

Our second day started with introductions to the various subjects, and included a welcome speech by the Principal, who stated that not all would complete the 2-year course. Having passed through so many hurdles to enter Faskally, such a statement seemed unlikely. However, these words were to ring true, because only 19 of the original 27 were successful. Our seniors suffered a similar fate, being reduced from 19 to 12.

Practical work carried targets which had to be attained in two days. Most of us had already experienced hard physical work and could attain them. Others were not so fortunate and had a struggle. High standards were also necessary for written exams and personal assessments. Behind all this was the constant threat of a warning letter, only two of which could be received: more brought dismissal. At the end of the first term, 12 students received written warnings, casting a gloom over what should have been the joy of going home for the Christmas break.

Time passed, and those of us who completed the first year had a chance to meet students from Benmore, Gwydyr and Dean. Comparisons were made from these occasions, and it became apparent that life for them was more relaxed. Even their food seemed better! The second year went in a similar way, but seemed a little easier. This was probably due in part to a strong student camaraderie as well as being familiar with the routine. Finally we reached the ultimate goal of a posting within the Commission, and felt we had truly earned our places.

AGM 2009

Next year's AGM and forest tour will be held in the Brecklands on May12th /13th. The Local Organiser is Simon Malone and he has booked the Woodlands Comfort Inn Northwold for accommodation, the AGM and the dinner. Northwold is about 10 miles north of Brandon. Later he will be able to provide details of other accommodation.

Dean is proposed for 2010 and North Wales for 2011

The Ramblings of an old Forester

By Peter Noot

A glade was created during a storm in the year of 1717, in the reign of King George I, when an old beech tree suffered catastrophic damage, leaving a ten-foot rotting stump. Within a yard of the stump, standing like a sentry, rose an old, long-dead oak spike. This heart of oak spike was being cut to be used as an axle support for a timber wagon. Bracken began to slowly encroach around the edges of the glade formed initially by the shade cast by the large beech tree.

The seed that fell from the beech tree during its declining years had fallen into the bare area beneath the old tree and had been consumed by red squirrels, mice and pigs, and any seed that germinated was consumed by deer and rabbits. The only seedlings to survive slowly worked their way up through the surrounding bracken area, where no other species could successfully compete with the bracken.

Within the now open glade, birch took advantage of the increased light levels and freely regenerated with an abundance of seedlings. As the birch grew, occasional acorns germinated, forming a scattering of young oak among the birch trees. The birch continued to occupy the area for about 30 years, but during that time several of the oak trees had been able to compete more strongly because of weaknesses in the canopy of the birch. Over the next 20 years a couple of these oak trees began to dominate the area. During this time some of the beech trees had struggled through the bracken surrounding the original glade and were producing seed, but much of that seed was taken by squirrels and mice.

In 1767 during the reign of King George III, a squirrel was extracting beech seed whilst sitting in a fork in the trunk of the larger of the oak trees, and some of the seed fell to earth at the base of the oak. Despite the dense canopy of the oak tree one of the beech seeds started to grow. Slowly at first, the young beech tree headed for the light that filtered through the branches of the oak. As the beech got taller it responded to the extra light and it began to

compete with the now 100-year-old oak tree. The beech tree grew in stature and found its way through the canopy of the oak, and because its tolerance to shade was greater than that of the oak, its leaf cover outgrew the leaves on the lower branches of the oak.

Once above the canopy of the oak, the beech tree was able to take full advantage of the light and expanded its own canopy, further shading out the now sub-dominant oak tree.

The oak tree was now 150 years old, the beech tree 100 years old, and Queen Victoria was on the throne. Both trees continued to grow closely together for a further 20 years, and their combined canopy suppressed competition from any tree attempting to grow close by. The only survivors growing in the shade were some holly trees which grew steadily up into the lower branches of the now struggling old oak.

At 180 years old the oak tree was in serious decline, caused by the shade of its competitors, and in 1917 at the age of 200 years it died. King George V was on the throne.

The beech tree continued to develop its crown, taking up the space previously occupied by the now fragmenting oak tree. The increased shade from the beech tree now killed off the holly beneath, and created an area clear of any vegetation out to the edge of its crown.

The oak tree had now lost all its bark and sapwood to insects, fungus and birds, and had become a skeleton of a tree, standing like a sentry by its dominant rival. Over the next 50 years the beech tree suffered some severe wind damage and its extended branches had broken under the weight of new spring growth. The oak tree was now a tall hard spike of heartwood.

In a storm in October 1987, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and at the age of 270 years, the beech tree suffered catastrophic damage and snapped off. It left a ten-foot dead stump, with the adjacent old oak spike still on guard at its side in an open glade surrounded by bracken.

The Yew in History and Folklore *By Karen Bell*



Yew is an other-worldly tree and was worshipped by the Druids. It is said that the Isle of Iona is named after the Gaelic for Yew – Iubhar. This was because Druids were said to worship yew trees on the Island before St Columba arrived. Yew is also sacred to the Goddess Hecate, and its branches and twigs were used in prophecy.

You will find yew planted in many graveyards as an evergreen symbol of immortality. It was believed that the roots of the yew grew down into the dead bodies to release the soul and purify the body – the trees were planted as a fertility gift to the Earth.

There is an old Celtic story that tells of two lovers – Naoise and Deirdre – who, after their deaths, had yew stakes driven through their hearts to keep them apart in the afterlife.

Fortunately for the lovers, this did not work. From the stakes two yew trees sprouted and entwined above the graves, keeping them together and giving them new life above the Earth.

Yew is a quality wood and its staves were used for making wine barrels in Ireland.

The wood was also used for making of bows, and a deadly mixture of yew berry, hellebore and devil's bit was used to tip the arrows of the Celts to ensure their enemies' death. It is thought that the word toxin comes from the Latin for yew – Taxus.

Yew wood is an extremely strong wood, and when seasoned and polished it has an uncanny ability to resist corruption. Yew is also an extremely long-lived tree – the oldest tree standing is around 3500-4000 years old – and it outlives even the stately oak.

A Forestry Dynasty

By David Aston

My father Thomas Aston, known as Tom, went to Friston Forest in Sussex after completing training at the Dean FTS. In 1943 he moved to Alice Holt Forest, and later to Challock, from where he retired. Uncle Orlando Aston was a Forester in the New. My grandfather, Charles Aston, was at Sutton Lodge in the Dean. He was Keeper for Abbotswood and Blaise Bailey from 1913 – 1929. Some of his sons also worked for the Forest Commission.

I was born in 1934, and my memories go back to the time when I was a lad at Alice Holt when my father was forester. We had a Canadian lorry driver, Ken Tabner, whose mate was Peter Woods.

One Sunday they were on fire duty and resting on a canvas sheet. A fox came by, ran through the roadside hedge, was hit by a car and killed. I took the fox, dressed it in overalls and a trilby hat, put sun glasses on its nose, stuffed its back legs in a pair of wellies, and put it in the cab as if it were driving! I hid in the bushes to await results. Later Ken awoke, went to the cab and let out a yell, then went to tell my father what I had done. We all had a good laugh!

On another occasion I was stung by wasps. I found the nest, taped six large bangers together, put them down the hole and lit the fuse. BANG! The result was a crater you could put a chair in! My father heard the bang and came to investigate, because he kept gunpowder, charges and fuses under lock and key in the house. Such are the memories of my early days at Alice Holt.

When my father moved to Challock, I used to have some good fun amusing visiting tourists with a trick I had learned. I used to pick bluebells and put them in an ants' nest. The ants would spit formic acid on them and change their colour to pink. I'd sell them for half a crown a bunch!

During hot summers quite a few people used to go into the forest and light picnic fires, so to prevent serious fires, I used to find dead adders and drape them over the tops of gates leading into the forest. When people saw them they thought twice about entering. However, if my father caught them they were sent packing!

Later I worked for the Commission at Alice Holt Research Station under Bob Hendry and foreman Charlie Thorn. We were interested in the Howard rotary hoe, and went to a demonstration at Andover, where it was used to plough up a flint road. I was asked if I could handle this 8hp machine. I could, so we bought one each for the nursery and the research station.

I have many recollections of my days working at Alice Holt and I enjoyed my time working with my colleagues.

Want to be a Recorder?

Thousands of people across the UK are registered to record for Nature's Calendar. This work provides valuable information on how climate is affecting the timing of natural events. It is also used by the UK Government as one of its climate change indicators.

The Woodland Trust, which organises the recording, is looking for more volunteers in localities not covered by the scheme. Can you fill a gap?

Recorders are few in the uplands and areas of low population. The Trust needs more recorders everywhere, but in particular, those listed below:

- **Scotland** – all parts outside Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen;
- **England** – Northumberland, Pennines, North York Moors, Dartmoor and Exmoor;
- **Wales** – all upland areas.

You can take part by visiting www.naturescalendar.org.uk or by contacting the Woodland Trust directly at Autumn Park, Grantham, NG31 6LL.

Now, that's a good job to do in retirement, and if you cannot do it, do you have a friend who can?

Beating the Sheep Badgers

Wilf Meek, ex PW. Weald and now retired to Tenterden, spotted an article in The Telegraph earlier in the year which brought back memories.

It referred to a farmer at Bream in the Forest of Dean who had been served with an ASBO because neighbours claimed he was not controlling his sheep. He had been excluded from taking the flock into the village. For 500 years Dean commoners, known as "sheep badgers", have been able to let their livestock graze freely, but there have been many complaints of sheep mess, damage to property and hazards on roads. This is his memory:

"I spent part of my youth as a forest worker in the Dean before going the Lynford FTS, so I had good training in trying to outwit the sheep badgers! To mitigate the costs of replacing missing gates and repairing fences, we used to take a flock of sheep to the pound at Watson's Lodge when the forester thought it worthwhile. Instructions were issued early in the morning to prevent the intention from being leaked! Although there were no mobile phones, the bush telegraph was very efficient, and the loyalty of many forest workers was divided.

"The charge was 5/- to reclaim the sheep, and after August it was 2/6 for a lamb. The weekly wage then was £3. Sheep are very much a part of life in the Dean. I should hate to see them excluded, and I think it would take an Act of Parliament to do so!"

Lloyds, Zehetmayrs & Campbells

By John Zehetmayr

When I was Conservator W(S) in 1964-66, a certain Miss Marion Campbell of Kilberry, provided with a forest key by my predecessor, was visiting every known archaeological site.

This culminated in her publishing 'Mid Argyll: an Archaeological Survey' of 1964. She sent me a copy, hoping we could meet. In early 1966, in Kintyre for a weekend, it poured on Sunday and on the spur of the moment Betty and I called on Miss Campbell and her co-author/companion Miss Sandeman. We were greeted with open arms and an alfresco lunch. Six months later I was posted to Wales at very short notice, never to meet them again.

To Wales I took not only my third name Lloyd, but also my passport in the form of a silver cup inscribed 'The gift of T Mostyn Edwards esq. to his tenant Edward Lloyd of Hendre Vygylt (sic) for the best crop of turnips in the year 1814'. That Ed Lloyd (1750-1840) was believed to be my great-great-great grandfather, farming near Mold.

In 1986 my sister Jean compiled family trees for Zehetmayrs and Lloyds, including the 'Italian Lloyds' residing and trading around Florence and Leghorn for some 200 years. They periodically recruited from Wales, including our great-grandfather, another Edward (1821-79). Among this branch was an 'Italian' artist, Llewelyn Lloyd (1879-1949), whose retrospective exhibition Jean had visited in Florence in 1951. The exact relationships between the two Edwards and Llewelyn were not clear in her

Lloyd tree.

About 1997 I spotted in the TV programmes for S4C Digital 'O Henrefigillt i Livorno'. This was a channel I couldn't receive in a language I can't speak (but all those Lloyds did). After some phone calls and letters I was in touch with Professor T. Gwynfor Griffith, author of the programme and of the book of the same name, which he kindly gave me. It is in Welsh, but with some translation and correspondence those doubtful relationships were resolved. Edward of the turnip cup is not my ancestor, but his brother and his father are. However, that's another story.

Among those Italian Lloyds a young lady, Maggie, wrote from Villa Lloyd, Leghorn, to 'My Dear Cousin Edward' in 1863 (Ed No2 above). We have her letter, but the book reveals that she and her brother Tommy grew up to marry brother and sister Campbells in Argyll. There is a photo of Minard Castle, their family home in Argyll. West Scotland had a Minard Forest, started around 1940. The light dawned: Marion Campbell, with whom we had lunched all those years ago, was a distant cousin. Prof Griffith had contacted her while writing his book, but I was too late, because she had died before I wrote. However, a Campbell nephew replied.

Two small points: forest research in post-war Scotland was dominated by Macdonalds; how would I have got on if they had known I had Campbell cousins?



Visit Top Lodge

No, this is not another Travel Lodge, but Top Lodge at Fineshade Woods in Northamptonshire.

Sid Ainsworth from the old NW(E) Conservancy Office at Chester, and now retired to Ellesmere Port since 1984, had reason to stop off at Top Lodge Caravan Club site. He was pleased to find that alongside the site the Commission, in collaboration with the RSPB, had constructed a visitor centre. Red kites had

been successfully released in the area, and the centre was dedicated to explaining the project. There were forest walks, hides and picnic spots in the woods, while at the centre there was a café, shop and craft and artists' activities. Why not call in if you are passing by? – it's worth it.

He also mentioned that they have a very successful "unofficial" local retirement group based around Chester – a very independent lot who meet periodically at venues arranged by Brian Hughes. He said they are a lively bunch with many memories of a (mostly!) happy working office.

Letters to the Editor



I found Les Howe's account of the Wareham Nursery's composting operation in the August edition very interesting. It reminded me of a similar operation at Broxa on the NYM in the late 1940s.

In those post-war years, when I was on a Forest Worker Training Scheme at Birch Hall camp, a number of heathland nurseries were being established on Broxa Moor. Weed-free compost was prepared by making heaps of chopped bracken and straw in mixture with hop waste, in large open-sided sheds. I cannot recall whether we used a mechanical chopper, but I do remember that when the mixture reached a critical temperature or state of decomposition, it had to be forked into fresh heaps.

On cold, wet, winter days this work, being under cover and warm, was not arduous, but the smell was all-pervading! Anyone who had spent the day forking compost was banished to the back of the lorry on the return journey to the camp at night.

Ted Baldwin

Yorkshire Branch 2008

By Libby Capstick

We held our AGM in February in the new, award-winning, eco-friendly Dalby Forest Visitor Centre. Our first coach outing, in April, was to Saltaire, near Bradford, the splendid village built by Sir Titus Salt to house his mill workers and which is now a European Heritage Site.

In May we travelled north to Craggsdale, near Rothbury in Northumberland, "the revolutionary home of Lord Armstrong, Victorian inventor and landscape genius". July saw us venturing west to Hawes in Wensleydale to visit the real Wensleydale cheese factory and, on our return, calling in at Bolton Castle. Our final trip, in September, was to Brodsworth Hall and Gardens near Doncaster.

Despite the record-breaking rainfall this summer we were surprisingly fortunate with the weather on all our outings, the Sun making an appearance at every one. We are now looking forward to our annual Christmas lunch at the Forest & Vale Hotel in Pickering.

Although most of our active members are based around Pickering, we look forward to seeing those from a little further away, and always welcome new members. Come and join us!

OBITUARIES

David Mcleod has written to tell us of the death in May of **COLVIN HOPE**, aged 82. Colvin trained as a forester at Benmore in 1952-53, and thereafter spent his career in South Scotland. He started work at Fleet Nursery, and after several moves within the Conservancy he returned to Fleet, from where he retired.

Well known for his ability as a nurseryman, Colvin put his skills to great use in retirement in Castle Douglas, where he won first prize twice in succession for best garden during the town's Civic Week. It was a fitting testament to his talents and hard work. He is survived by his wife Lily, whom he met whilst she worked at Fleet Nursery.

Charlie Greenlees writes of two of his colleagues.

JIMMY MITCHEL was born in 1925 on Inverinan Estate, Lochaweside, where his father was the estate gamekeeper. Later, his father went to work for the Commission, as did Jimmy when he left school. He started at Eredine Forest and was based there for 49 years. During this time, mostly as a ganger, he helped to establish much of Eredine as well as many of the surrounding forests. Later, he was instrumental in their harvesting when those trees reached felling age. Jimmy was a bachelor for most of his life but, in his seventies, he met up again with Nan, a sweetheart from his younger days. They married and had nine happy years together before Jimmy unfortunately took ill and died in May.

ALEXANDER MACVEAN, or "Vean" as he was known by all, was born in Kilmartin in 1932. When he was a young boy, the family moved to Eredine Forest, where his father worked. It was there that Vean grew up and started work in the forest himself. Although he worked at times in Dalmally, Glen Orchy, Inverliver and Kilmichael, Eredine remained his home forest throughout his long working life as forest worker and later, ganger. Illness forced him to retire a little prematurely.

Vean was unmarried and liked socialising. His favourite hobby was having a few drams and a blether in a local pub, especially at Ford, until ill health robbed him of that pleasure.

STANLEY ROBERTSON'S son has told us his father's death in June.

Stanley was the fifth of seven sons born in 1921 to missionary parents who worked in India. In 1928 they settled in Hamilton. His lifelong passion for forestry began at Hamilton Academy when, early in World War II, senior pupils did their bit for the war effort at Loch Creran. They lived under canvas, felling and making pit props. After three years at Edinburgh University he continued in the reserved occupation of forestry and

joined the Gold Coast (Ghana) Forest Service.

In 1946 Stanley entered the Commission and was posted to Dumfries, where his fate was sealed. Marjory, the library assistant who regularly fined him for overdue books, was also a member of his choral society, and they were married in 1950. Their first home was a 10-roomed Commission house in north Lorne. It had no electricity, and its own water supply, which ran dry in spring. However, the view over the loch was stupendous!

In 1957 he moved to Gatehouse of Fleet, then to Moffat in 1962, where he entered into the life of the town. He became an elder of the Church of Scotland, a member of the hill rescue team, an enthusiastic tennis and cricket player and a singer in the local operatic group and the Dumfries Choral Society. In 1976 he moved to Girvan, from where he retired in 1981.

In his retirement he did consultancy work and extramural classes for Glasgow University, sharing his enthusiasm and love of trees with others, including championing eucalypts on Killochan Estate. For many years he was forest advisor to Carcant Estates, laying out the Tree Trail at Blairquhan Castle for James Hunter Blair.

In his latter years he spent time in his greenhouse relaxing under his magnificent grapevine, invariably with forestry publications at his side. He loved trees and planted more than 60 in the large garden of his last house, a fitting memory to a long career in forestry.

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