



Faskally Reunion

By Jim McIntyre

Sixteen ex-students and a lecturer from 1957-60, accompanied by their wives, met at Pitlochry last September for their first reunion. On the first day a small group of early arrivals visited the Scottish Plant Hunters' Garden led by Mike Cheesewright, himself an ex-Faskally student.

The next day began with a nostalgic visit to Faskally House courtesy of the Christian Trust, the present owner. This was followed by a conducted tour of the Policies, known as Faskally One. This was where students had worked in and studied 1950s management theory and techniques as planned by Prof. Mark Anderson.

The current management regime based on the Continuous Cover System, was explained by the District Manager, Charlie Taylor, which led to interesting discussions.

The afternoon was reserved for optional visits to local venues, another opportunity for a dose of nostalgics! As everyone was in the septuagenarian bracket, lunch was followed for some by an extended siesta. The day concluded with a formal dinner at the Fishers Hotel.

Reunion group names from left: Joe Meechan, Bill Thomson, Alex MacLeod, Brian "PEB" Priestley, Esmond Harris, Keith Fletcher, Mike Oxnard, Jim (Hamish) McIntyre, Barry Auld, Basil Dunlop, Donald McIntosh, John (Jack) Brunton, Peter White, Roger Cartwright, Roger Jackson, Pat Priestley and Peter Clark.

1959 Graduates from left: back row; John Bryson, Bill Stewart, J "Hunter" Chrystall, Mike Oxnard, David Lloyd, David Coutts; middle row: Alex Robson, Jim "Hamish" McIntyre, Gordon Waugh, John Thompson, Peter Duckworth; front row: D'Arcy Black, J "Jumbo" James, Norman Tulloch, Esmond Harris and Ian Garrioch.



The Holly in Folklore

By Karen Bell

Holly was considered a protective force against evil. Many prickly or thorny species were considered protective due to the fact that it was believed that evil thought forms or spirits would be caught up in their branches or unable to pass through the tree.

At the Winter Solstice, and later on in time at Hogmanay people would decorate their homes with Holly branches to protect them from fairy mischief. It was considered OK to ask permission to take some cuttings from the tree as long as an offering of some sort was made, for example, leaving a piece of silver at the roots of the tree, but it was considered desperately unlucky to

actually fell the tree.

People would also plant Holly around their homes where they would not only act as hedgerows but also protect the home and animals from ill luck or evil.

The Holly was also considered a powerful tree due to the fact that it was an evergreen and could withstand the onslaught of the cold winter months.

The word Holly means holy. The Holly tree was considered sacred to the waxing year, or winter. It ruled in duality with the Oak tree, which ruled over the waning half of the year, or summer.

The Holly is also sacred in the Christian religion where the jagged leaves symbolise the crown of thorns that Jesus wore at his crucifixion and the berries his blood.

AGM 2010

This year's AGM will be held in the Forest of Dean at 2.00pm on Tuesday May 11th. at The Loft Beechenhurst Lodge. The conference dinner will be in the Speech House Hotel at 7.00pm. The Wednesday tour will take in part of the Cannop valley looking at mature oak woods. The local organiser is Bart Venner who can be contacted on 01594 530 504 or e-mail barten.venner@btinternet.com

50,000 Ancient Trees Recorded

Have you recorded ancient trees for the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt? If so, you will be pleased to know that through all the efforts of the volunteer recorders, the half way mark has been passed. 50,000 really old trees have been logged on the data base. The target is 100,000 – keep going! Anybody can record, just go on to the website www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk It's not only native trees which can be recorded but any tree that qualifies as being old and interesting. I recorded a huge Monterey cypress in a churchyard in N. Wales and an enormous sycamore with 4 trunks and a footbridge through it near Comrie. I also verified an ancient twisted cordon apple tree in an abandoned Victorian garden. Oaks and sweet chestnuts in their declining years can become almost surreal. So go looking for any old tree with character. It's pure serendipity, but it's also great fun, and with retirees of our age, the grandchildren can be recruited, they love measuring!

Glentress Recalled

By John Keenleyside.

As a student at Glentress FTS from 1951-53, I was in the last class which completed training there before it moved to Faskally. The training was conducted in a military manner. The camp had been built pre World War 2, occupied by the army during the war and had become a FTS post war. There was adequate accommodation for around thirty students in first year. Usually huts were divided into cubicles with each student having his own corner, and a common area with wood burning stove. Those who survived first year moved on to huts which had individual rooms with central heating.

I arrived at Peebles station and was met by Tom Robbie, Head of School, who took me to Glentress in an old ex army ambulance. My new case with all my worldly goods was thrown in the back beside dirt and dust that had fallen from the boots of countless previous students.

On arrival I was handed over to the catering officer an ex-army Sergeant Major. He took me to a hut and said "Select a corner cubicle, they are best. Help yourself to your furniture from the pile on the floor. You can have a bed, a single wardrobe and a bedside cabinet complete with towel rail".

On the second day, we were divided into working squads of six and sent out to work in the forest with a second year student in charge. Our first task was the brashing of Scots Pine in Shiel Green and our target price was a half penny per tree. This was a tough target so we tended to brash whips and class many rough branched trees as wolves. The instructor soon rumbled to this one and sent us back to brash these rough trees. This sent unit costs through the roof and our practical marks spiralling downwards.

It was a five and half day working week then. Lectures were scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and Saturday morning. The working periods were carefully monitored. One student in each squad was appointed ganger for a week. He was responsible for motivating the squad, filling in the time book and calculating unit costs, all of which were carefully scrutinised for accuracy and legibility. No calculators then but a few had the luxury of a slide rule.

Thus things proceeded with exams at end of term, after which a Practical and Personal Assessment (PA) was allocated to each student. The exam marks depended on one's ability to memorise the facts and to write them down in orderly manner. There were no marks for waffle or original thinking. Practical marks depended on physical skill. The ability to wield a large axe or plant huge numbers of trees per day was all important. The P.A. system depended to a large extent on how your face fitted and how you obeyed the rules.

There were additional jobs which had to be performed. Duty squad, cleaning huts, providing firewood, kitchen garden duties, harvesting vegetables for the cookhouse, meteorological station readings, fire ratings, fire duty, fire tower and fire standby with vehicles and pumps ready to go at a moments notice.

When we moved into second year we became "The Seniors" and were treated accordingly but expected to show an example to the new first year students.

The work patterns changed and the type of jobs became more technical and included surveying and timber measurement. The marking of thinnings was reckoned to be the skill of a real forester and we were shown how to achieve uniform stands of valuable timber. Little bits of arboriculture were introduced wherever possible. Most trees planted by the F.C. trees were conifers and Prof. Anderson of Edinburgh University encouraged the F.C. to change this by introducing groups of broadleaved trees into the forest. His work started at Glentress.

After the Autumn Term in second year we were all dispatched to other FTSs for what was known as the exchange course, from January until Easter.

We returned after Easter for our last term and sat the final exam and the R.S.F.S. Foresters exam. We were then looked on as

competent to become foresters and posted to locations throughout the U.K. Some opted for private forestry while others went overseas to some of the developing countries.

How does all this training look when viewed over 50 years later in the 21st century. This training produced foresters with the practical skills which were needed at that time to enable the F.C. to meet the targets imposed on it by government, and to restore the woodlands after the massive war time fellings. Modern machines have taken over the whole harvesting operation and axes and cross cut saws have been consigned to the museums. The need for numerical skills has been taken over by calculator and computer. Surveying with compass and chain has long since gone. The mystery and art of thinning has been replaced by machines which gobble up everything on site and in sight in a short space of time.

In conclusion it shows that the whole picture has changed in the last 50 years.

The discipline and training given then were good for the F.C. in the early afforestation phase and created the timber industry as we know it today.

You will be pleased to hear that one of the Glentress huts still remains in use but is under threat of demolition. I consider it should be retained as part of forestry heritage. Does any ex Glentress student wish to take up the crusade? Meanwhile, Glentress has developed as a national all terrain cycling centre with a big cash investment. The Anderson Plots continue to be maintained and have become part of an attractive irregular forest. Much thinning has been neglected in the name of cycle safety, but last autumn I saw its reintroduction and it was being carried out very effectively by young men on big machines. Skills live on. Ed.

Innovative Resource Management

By John Martin

I enjoyed the recent series of articles in the FCA about the varied experiences of the student foresters whilst at FTS. Although all the schools were all closed by the time I joined the FC in 1975 I soon gained lots of experience dealing with their graduates.

What struck me as an engineer was how robustly HFs and CFs defended "their" forest to the extent that senior staff would almost have to ask permission to pay them a visit. The schools seem to have turned out very independently minded individuals.

This fierce independence may have allowed a foresters to develop skills in managing local facilities and natural resources to generate income to supplement what was, so I am told, quite low pay in the '50's and '60's. None of this income, I assume, ended in an FC account but it did keep squads busy when other work might have been scarce. I recall two examples of such skills.

In Lincolnshire a HF realised that forest rides were ideal for growing carrots and the squad was set to work sowing and tending the crops. Sadly this enterprise came to an end when the high level of drains maintenance was questioned given that the forest was in an area of low rainfall.

Foresters then often lived within the forest, sometimes in a croft type house with outbuildings. These outbuildings in one NS forest were used to rear pigs on a commercial scale. This gave the squad lorry driver regular work to haul in pig feed along with a few bits of fencing which justified a journey into town some 60 miles away. When a visitor called at the house to speak to the forester, his wife directed him to the outbuildings saying "He's with the pigs in that outbuilding, you'll recognise him as he is the only one with a bonnet on". Having met the forester some years later I could understand what his wife meant.

There must be many stories like the above which should be shared before they are lost forever. To be fair to the foresters, I have to admit that they were not alone in their enterprises and that engineers (mostly civil of course) and land agents all have, I'm sure, similar stories to tell.

Come on! Let's have a few more stories suitably enhanced by the passage of time! Ed.

Book Reviews



The Foresters

By James Miller, ISBN 978-1-841158-8339

Previously this Inverness writer had success with *The Dam Builders*, an account of the work done on constructing the Hydro Electric schemes. He has now looked at the Scottish forestry industry.

He has researched the history of forestry in Scotland extensively and brought together much information from numerous sources. He has valuable information on the formation of the Forestry Commission and how it struggled in the early years to survive. The book has many photographs illustrating the development of machinery and techniques over the years. He has interviewed people from many different grades and connections with forestry and has brought it all together in a very readable form. Ordinary people can be well informed about an industry where there has been controversy in the past and where people interested in the outdoors spend leisure time, whether for walking, cycling, botanical studies, observing wildlife or just watching the majesty of growing trees.

This was a book that needed to be written. The real pity is that most of the early pioneers have passed on to higher things. James Miller had to glean his information from the archives and speaking to second and third generation foresters. He has achieved something that is already a success as the books are flying off the shelves very quickly. An enjoyable read for anyone connected with forestry.

John Keelyside

From Peat Bog to Conifer Forest

Ruth Tittensor's book on the recent history of Whitelee Forest was short listed for the Saltire Society's "Scottish History Book of the Year 2009" award. Although it did not win in its category, Ruth was delighted that such an unusual book was short listed. If you were involved in the afforestation of Whitelee and would like a copy of this book, please contact Ruth at:
6 Donington Street, Darval, KA17 0JR
Tel: 01560 320 543.
Price: £27.50 plus p&p.



90TH ANNIVERSARY

By Peter Webb

September's meeting of the Peninsula Branch marked the 90th anniversary of the founding of the FC. We had lunch at Eggesford followed by a visit to Flashdown Wood, where the first trees were planted by the FC in December 1919. We are seen gathered around the commemorative plaque.

Ikea and the Cross Cut Saw

Martyn Wateridge from the New Forest said that the Forestry Commission was called into action when the new Ikea store in Southampton opened. By Swedish tradition all Ikea stores throughout the world are opened by using a crosscut saw to cut a billet of wood.

The FC was asked if a crosscut saw was available – sadly all had been written off, "Worn Out", on a B10. However it was known that retired New Forest timber cutter, Den Griggs, kept one in his workshop sharp and ready for action. Den willingly lent his saw for the opening ceremony, when the Mayor of Southampton cut through the billet of wood, the saw doing its job perfectly. The Forestry Commission through one of its retirees, came to the rescue again. No job is too big or too small for an active retiree.

You can see the saw in action on the clip of the store opening on the Ikea website.

OBITUARIES

Andy Neustein recalls **GEORGE TAYLOR** who died at Inverness in November.

He was born in Aldershot in 1927, coming from a military family; both his father and grandfather having served in the Gordon Highlanders. He was educated at Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen, and joined the same regiment in the last week of the War. Most of his army service was in India and after demobilisation he studied forestry at Aberdeen University, graduating in 1952.

He joined the FC and after a short period as a surveyor in Monaghty and Glenlivet, he went to N(S) Conservancy, initially to the Culloden District, then to Fort William in 1954, where he met Anne, his wife-to-be, and subsequently to Dingwall as DO. In 1965 he was transferred to the Northern Research Station where cultivation was his main project. This was a period when the dominant aim was the achievement of successful establishment, growth and long term stability of Sitka spruce.

Promotion took him to Aberdeen, first as Assistant Conservator FM and then H&M.

In 1978 he was moved to the H&M Division HQ as Operations Manager, there influentially steering the widespread innovative changes in felling and thinning, as the use of manual labour diminished and mechanisation expanded. He returned to Aberdeen in 1982 and was promoted to Conservator there in 1983. After the closure of that office, he took over as

Conservator in Dumfries in 1985, retiring in 1987 after a typically diverse and engaging career.

Twenty years of retirement in Inverness gave him time to enjoy his lifelong hobbies of fishing and bridge, while also taking up curling, bowling and the academic pursuit of archaeology. Two married sons and five grandchildren fulfilled his life.

David Seal has brought together the memories of the many friends and colleagues of **ROGER LINES** who died in October last year. During his long career in the FC Research Division Roger brought important improvements to upland forestry. He was well known for his experiments and trials of species and provenances. He was keenly aware of the crucial importance of choice of seed origin as well as species, especially for infertile and exposed sites common in the uplands. His research was characterised by thoroughness, accuracy and excellent records.

He was born in London 1926 and after national service in the Royal Signals, spent mainly in India, he read Forestry and Botany at Bangor University. He obtained a First Class Honours Degree in 1952 and joined the Research Division in the same year.

An early assignment was to take part in assessing the extent and severity of the windthrow of January 1953 in NE Scotland. After transfer to Silviculture North Branch in

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