



## Forty Years of the Northern Research Station

On May 7<sup>th</sup> past and current staff met for a lunch time celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Northern Research Station in May 1970.

"My word, you do look well!" was the comment heard frequently as old friends and colleagues met. Bill Mason and Chris Quine had gone to great lengths to dig out retired research staff and their efforts were met with undoubted success. People were there from the whole span of 40 years. While to some, today's research may seem esoteric, all past staff recalled times of ground breaking research into the practical problems of forest establishment and maintenance. Researchers produced the results and the field staff were quick to implement their advice.

One good crowd puller was a photographic display of staff and projects over the 40 years. Oh for the days

of the 70s, with skimpy short skirts and long hair! For many retirees, the opposite is true now!

Below is a photo of Silviculture (N) staff in the early 70s sent in by John Keenleyside which was on display. All the names are there. Have a go at identifying them. From the left look for: -

Dave Willmot, Andy Mair, Roger Lines, John White, Alan Green, Ken Mills, Walter Patterson, Ted Baldwin, Tony Lewis, Neville Danby, Angus Macdonald, Geoff Bartlett, Gordon Forbes, George Pringle, Graham Semple, John McNeill, Tony Sharp, Alistair McInnes, Ken Gabriel, John Keenleyside, Ivor Blackmore, Mike Hollingsworth, Ron Robson, John Kirby, Calvin Booth, Martin Rogers, John Mackenzie, Alec Reid, Don Lindsay, Neill McKell, Jim Thompson, Pat Priestley, Sandy Watson.



## From the Editor

Goodbye paper copies, hello newsletter on our own website. Over the last few weeks, I and the committee have been looking at many ways of keeping in touch through our newsletter. Finally we settled on having our own website. In this we had the help of Tony Butcher, now in New Zealand, who had a contact, Diane Birkett, who agreed to set it up. There is also a link between the FC website and ours.

The first problem was to find a way of telling all 5500 retirees about our new system. Fortunately this proved straightforward and the FC agreed to one last mail shot, that's why you are reading this on line. We could think of no way of sending paper copies to those of you without computers so we hope the local groups can take on this task. Many of you also have computer access through friends or family, they will help you.

So it now remains for you to keep supplying copy for friends and colleagues to read. As we are not restricted to time of publication or size of newsletter, there need be no more complaints of delays to the appearance of an item or that the print size is too small!

However I'll keep to 3 issues per year for the present as that's about the rate of your contributions. The more you send the more I can put on.

So let's hope our new e-newsletter has a long and successful life. It's up to you to keep it going, I can't do it all!

*Richard Toleman*

*Merry  
Christmas*

## Locked into Oak

Those of you who have travelled on inland waterways cannot fail to have seen the massively constructed wooden lock gates. What is the story behind them? Firstly they are expensive, up to £50,000 each and secondly, each takes about 4 weeks to construct. Most are produced in the British Waterways (BW) workshop at Stanley Ferry near Wakefield.

The life of a lock gate begins at Pontrilas sawmill on the Welsh Marches near Abergavenny. This family-owned mill supplies BW with FSC certified oak. For a while in the 1990s, BW imported tropical hardwood from the Cameroon. It was very hard-wearing and at the time seemed a good idea. However the very hard timber was difficult to work, the dust gave serious health risks and there were ethical concerns about the timber harvesting. So today, lock gates are once again made from the traditional timber, oak. It is winter felled and the green oak is delivered to the yard at Stanley Ferry, where it is stacked awaiting construction. Locks were never a standard size and a uniform production line would be impossible, so every gate is made to order. Each craftsman is trained in all aspects of production from the stacked green oak to the finished gate.

Templates are wholly electronic using Computer-Aided Design. There is a computerised library of gate plans with reference designs for each waterway and individual variations for each lock. Every time a gate is needed, the stonework is measured to check the exact dimensions, the old gate may no longer be the correct size. By this method, and with the



careful use of heavy steelwork, the life of a gate can be extended from 25 to 30 years.

Although the heavy balance beams have been traditionally made of timber, steel beams are used in inner city locations as they are much harder to vandalise. The wooden beams have been cut off or set on fire! The completed gates are stored wet to ensure no shrinkage from the exact measurements of the green timber. Gates are made all year round with a final tally of between 200 to 220, the stack in October is an impressive sight. Most leave the yard in November for fitting over winter. On site each gate is given the final adjustment to ensure a watertight fit. So next time you pass through a lock, look at the gate and think of the long story from oak seedling to mature tree, to sawmill, to workshop and to final installation. Craftsmen have been involved in the entire trip.





## News from New Zealand *by Tony Butcher*



"I talk to the trees, but they don't listen to me". Hands-up, how many remember that song? Oh well, never mind. That's what it can be like as some of you will know and I have a book that is popular in New Zealand called "Bogor" where this cartoon forester in the forests 'down here' gets to talking to his chainsaw and planting trees upside-down simply for amusement, and to alleviate the boredom of living on his own for months on end. Today, most foresters travel daily to work, probably in a helicopter, but not so many years ago they had their section and camped out till the work was completed. On the Department of Conservation land where the native forest and bush is now preserved, they still do that and have short stints of only 10 days at a time. But even in my experiences in the Lowlands of Britain, we saw few humans.

I am still pleasantly surprised when the Slasher and FCA Today arrive in my mail box having travelled 12000 miles and they give me great pride to think that I am still considered part of the Forestry Family. Recently we had an ex-FC visitor here who was once associated with The Chilterns. It is amazing to me but no surprise that so many things have changed since I was assistant forester at Ampthill in Bedfordshire. The old office is now used by Natural England.

By 1976 there were changes being made that encouraged me look outside the square and I decided to leave and go it alone as a forestry contractor. A bold step at the time and I was surprised how much I was missed and how much I would miss the companionship of "the Old Firm". But with the help of contacts I made it as a forestry contractor, later to diversify as a landscape contractor and tree surgeon, or arboriculturist or even arborist as the name has become (Many could not get their tongue around arboriculturist).

Later because of a remarriage, I deserted my country to become a Kiwi after a visit in 1997 when I fell in love with the climate here, the people and the landscape. However, I still get The Slasher and keep track of the changes to the FC and of my old friends who have either written articles or passed on to that Great Forest in the sky. This makes me wonder who else may have moved to foreign parts more especially in the Southern Pacific or Indian Oceans.

It would be great to have a natter and compare notes. My e-mail is [tab@netspeed.net.nz](mailto:tab@netspeed.net.nz)

Get in touch!

## Now It's Lynford's Turn *by Henry Smith*

In 1951 I set off for Lynford Hall FTS for the 2 year training course. Margaret, my wife, came with me to Liverpool Street station to see me off. The train arrived at Brandon station and a lorry took us on.

There were about 15-20 young men from all parts of England and full of enthusiasm. We were allocated rooms and I was in the so called dungeons in the basement with five others. We had army style beds and one washbasin and a communal bathroom. From the group photo later you would see they are all respectable people. The Principal was a Scot, Mr Tulloch, with Mr Goff as Assistant Principal. There were two forester instructors called Mr Jenkins and Mr Sherrell and briefly, a younger instructor Caborn, a catering officer called Humphrey and a cook called Black Annie, a very large woman.



The routine in the first year was working in Thetford Forest with one day of lectures. On Saturday morning we travelled in the two lorries to study botany in the Technical College in Kings Lynn. The lorries were driven by two of our fellow students and it used to be a race to see who

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would get there first which was dangerous and exciting. There was little traffic at that time because Norfolk was a depressed area. During one of these visits I bought a set of kitchen tools with one week's allowance. These are still with us after over fifty years and in good condition! On another occasion I bought a large pineapple. Otherwise I was very careful with my small amount of money. Margaret was supporting herself.

We split up into gangs with a ganger in charge. Each student had a chance of being a ganger. We were doing normal work in the forest but were supervised by our instructors. We had outings including private estates. We had end of term exams and personal assessments. At Christmas the seniors departed for their exchange term at one of the other schools and after Christmas we had students from the other schools. At this point I was elected to be the school librarian and the books were supplied by Norfolk County Council. Unsurprising, we were a mixed bag of people, but we had little conflict and seemed to bond well together as a group. We studied silviculture, mensuration, pathology, botany, entomology, surveying, tree measurement, tree recognition and FC regulations. Some took the exam for the Royal Forestry Society for England and Wales for a Forestry Certificate.

There were many amusing incidents. We were in a field close to the school, having our photographs taken sitting on a donkey until someone noticed

that the donkey was crawling with fleas. Another was when our seniors were felling one of the sequoias in the avenue. There was a group of them at the base of the tree and a rope. Mr Jenkins warned them that the rope was attached to the tree. As the tree fell the rope caught the foot of one of the students and as he passed by Mr Jenkins said, "I told you so".

We all had a week with the local warrener to learn about vermin control and setting snares and traps. My warrener explained the layout of public roads. He said the mouse made a track which was followed by a rabbit. The fox followed the rabbit and enlarged the track. The deer followed the track made by the fox. Then the man and the horse followed. The cart followed the route and eventually man laid hardcore to be followed by tarmac. It explained why country roads sometimes follow a tortuous route. Modern road engineers straightened them.

One of our instructors was returning with the school car and passed the Principal's wife who was walking there. Within her sight he stopped to pick up his dog. The next day he was on the motorbike! He is dead now so wouldn't be offended. We were thinning Ash Carr and had a small tractor for extraction. This was an ex-airborne which used to be dropped on the battle area by the army and was difficult to start. The driver got very frustrated and lost his temper which made it worse.

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**Lynford Hall F T School. 1955**



The 1951-53 students were: -

Pat Marsh, Wilf Meek, Peter Gascoigne, John de Whalley, Paul Collings, Alan Flint, Eric Rogers, Henry Smith, Ray Monk, John Webster, Ted Baldwin, Rex Howell, Peter Kirby, Peter Davys, Dickie Bird, Peter Daborn, Peter Pritchard, Neil Cochrane, Mike Whitlock, Charlie Hinds, Norman Fugler, Bill Tyler and Paul Winkworth.



*Continued from previous page*

I was his mate and was completely unused to machinery but asked him if I could have a go. I carefully turned the handle and it started first time.

One of our seniors, Ron Nye, told me that when he had finished the forestry course he was going on a mosaic flooring course (he didn't). There were many such courses at that time for ex-servicemen. Ron also wrote to me and said when he went to the labour exchange each week he met the nicest people queuing up for their dole.

He caused problems at the school once by blowing up a waste paper basket in the bedroom. He also showed me a crib for the botany exam about the size of his fingernail - it might have been on his fingernail. I heard later that he had been in charge of a survey party in India and became lost, and lost his job. I heard much later that he had gone to New Zealand and had done very well.

In the second year my friend Paul Winkworth from Gillingham in Kent bought a car. I had been going home by train but he invited me to go to Gillingham in his car and Margaret used to meet me at the bus station. We crossed the Thames on the ferry and on one trip there was a violent thunderstorm. It was black with heavy rain, thunder, and lightning and we couldn't see either bank. It was like being at sea. The ferry survived and the sun shone when we reached the Kent coast.

One Sunday, he was at the bus station and told us that the car had broken down so we couldn't return until Monday to resume work on Tuesday. I was in charge of a gang of juniors. In the evening we were called to the Principal's office and were suspended for the Wednesday and he deducted our pay for two days absence including the cost of board.

Hard times!

## An Afternoon of Story Telling

Over the winter, the Edinburgh & South Scotland group has a members' afternoon. In the past, members have come along with a DVD, CD or slides and talked about them. The length depended on the number of contributions, but was usually about 15 to 20 minutes each. This year it was a little different and we are passing this idea on so that other groups may take it up.

We started with the usual short visual presentations, then three members said they could tell stories, some about an object they had brought along. Nancy MacKenzie said her family never threw anything away and she had a vast amount of family documentation. She produced a bill of land sale for 1634. It was in Latin but she had the translation. She then read extracts of letters sent back to Scotland from an emigrant sheep farmer in Australia telling of life there in 1842.

Keith Ball gave us a story of his life as a child in south London during the war and of his evacuation to the country. He is still in touch with the family with whom he stayed. Finally, Chris Ball told us of the enjoyable, entertaining and rewarding times she has taking blind members of the RNIB on holiday.



The format was quite unplanned but the afternoon turned out to be a great success, we shall do it again. So why not try it. Ask members to bring along an artefact and tell a story. You'll be surprised what emerges.

# Letters to the Editor



## Benmore Forestry School

Through your magazine I would like to thank people for their responses to the article in the December 2009 issue, looking for some names in the Benmore Forestry School photograph circa 1935 and the same image as No 553 in the [www.forestry-memories.org](http://www.forestry-memories.org) website.

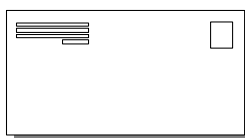
Archie Cameron MacNaughton from Fort William area positively identified his uncle Angus Macdonald (Research Forester at Fort Augustus) as No 1 in the formal line up. Currently we have other names as follows: No 17 George Small, No 19 Alex MacLeman, No 22 Harry Watson, No 25 Jackie Frater.

*Yours sincerely,  
Norman Davidson*

**Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today**



by e-mail to [editor@fca-today.com](mailto:editor@fca-today.com)



by post to Richard Toleman, Manuel Stables, Linlithgow, EH49 6JF.

## The Great Sell Off

So the Great Sell Off is about to happen, or should it be Rip Off? In the name of big Government is bad and local control is good, our state owned forests may disappear in England. We don't know what will happen in Wales and Scotland, they are devolved matters. Scotland and Wales have always been socially aware countries, so there is hope.

The FC, although a large organisation, has long since become associated with local initiatives and projects. It is managed at a local level to give both national and local benefits. But don't spoil a Bad Big Government story with facts. England is predominantly Tory, look at the extent of blue on election maps. They voted them in now they have to live with the consequences. Every Tory vote was a nail in the coffin of the FC.

So what next? It's hard to see how the New Forest or the Dean can be put on the open market, they may be transferred to large conservation bodies who are waiting in the wings. Smaller conservation bodies will be looking at the likes of Cannock, Delamere, Rockingham, Wyre, Alice Holt, Salcey and Sherwood. Small productive forests will be snapped up by timber business, but what about the forests of the Lakes, or Thetford or the N.Yorks Moors? These are big productive forests with a vast range of conservation and recreation benefits. Who will get them?

Finally, what about Kielder? Now that's a really big one. These are in the realm of international timber business or Russian oligarchs. Now just remember that the Russians trade football teams to suit their whim, and so it will be with Kielder or Thetford or the NYM. Next year's Russian press may have an ad.

*"Large forest area in England for sale. Big profits from the sale of mature timber possible. Very few conservation or recreation restrictions. Or would swap for a middle ranking Premier League team with potential"*

In New Zealand when the Government sold the productive forests they were bought by US and Japanese business. The recreation potential was recognised but nothing was done about it. Access was made difficult by indifference and neglect. They couldn't be forced to maintain it. Is that the way ahead in England?

There may be hope, but it will be a long hard battle. Will the FC make its 100 in 2019? The Tories don't see it that way. They just see cash in hand. It's up to you! Go to [www.38degrees.org.uk](http://www.38degrees.org.uk) to sign a petition. There is also a DEFRA website outlining the proposal. Before writing to MPs it would be prudent to await the Consultative Document so that a clear case for opposition can be stated.

## Surveying Trees for the National Trust *by Andy Gordon*

Having joined a golf club where the women have priority on the course every Wednesday I was looking for something to do on that day so volunteered with the local National Trust estate. By a lucky coincidence at that time they were looking for someone who knew something about trees and who was a keen photographer. Having just been given a Nikon D70s SLR camera, I thought I might fit the bill and so did they!

Attingham Park is an 8000 acre estate only 5 miles from my home and has over a quarter million visitors each year. Following recent deaths due to falling trees in other Trust properties, Health and Safety has a very high priority. The Head Warden wanted pictures in both winter and summer of all the trees in the 600 acres of Deer Park and Home Farm, to which the public have access in order to be able to assess year by year, any decline. The same area is an SSSI for invertebrates associated with rotting wood, so any fallen limb, no matter the size, is left in situ. Later I also began recording the exact location with a very expensive GPS machine.

Two years ago I first became aware of the Ancient Tree Hunt of the Woodland Trust and noticed that Attingham

had no trees noted on the ATH website [www.ancienttreehunt.com](http://www.ancienttreehunt.com) I made contact and it was agreed that when I had finished my survey of the 600 acres, I would let them have my records of Attingham's Ancient and Notable trees.

A year later when I again made contact, I found that an agreement had been reached between the Woodland Trust and the National Trust, that within a three year period, the National Trust would undertake to survey all its properties using the Woodland Trust criteria.

Being now regarded as a bit of an expert, I was asked if I would survey other near-by NT properties, to which I agreed. I have now completed Dudmaston, half done Brockhampton and Croft Castle, Morville, Wenlock Edge and Long Mynd are on my list for the spring and summer. I verify the status of the trees that I survey into Notable, Ancient and Veteran Trees.

*(Andy Gordon, was formerly Principal Seeds Officer, Alice Holt Lodge. I know quite a number of you record and verify trees, if you want to know more, go on the ATH website. Ed)*

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## A Glance in the Rear View Mirror *by Kenny MacKenzie*

Born and brought up in Poolewe in Wester Ross, I discarded my schoolbag at 14 years to pursue more interesting and profitable activities. I eventually joined the FC at Milbuie Forest on the Black Isle in 1949 aged 24.

Ever an enthusiastic fan of all types of motoring, there I had my first opportunity of combining ordinary forestry work with lorry driving. Over a period of 36 years, and based in three different forests, I was able to sample and enjoy the various diverse and unique aspects of life in the old FC.

I was forced to accept early retirement from lorry driving on medical grounds in 1985. It was about 15 years after, that I gradually developed the notion of recording my experiences, both for my own enjoyment in reliving the past and as a source of interest to those who look back fondly to those early days. I started writing and produced the booklet named above. It does not make a profit, indeed it consistently falls short of breaking even, but it has sold over 600 copies in the Inverness area. If anyone would like a copy, please send £5 to me at:- Airigh 'n Eilean, Forest Drive, Inverness. IV2 7HT

### Note

*I can fully recommend this booklet as a great read. It is written in an entertaining and informative style and keeps the interest right up to the last page.*

*There are detailed descriptions of forest life and work on the Black Isle and Glen Affric. It is well illustrated with photos taken throughout Kenny's career. Some of the early ones in the 1950s show classic vehicles which will make the enthusiast's heart jump for joy!*

*More than anything, it is the personal story of a lorry driver in those great pioneering days of the FC when nothing was going to prevent the onward march of successful forestry.*

*Today's FC staff would do well to read this as they are reaping the success of all who went before. We hear much of the great staff who guided the FC in the early days, now you can read about the driver who steered his way through it.*

*Have a good read! Ed.*



## Editor's Report to the 2010 AGM

by Richard Toleman

I have settled down to a standard system which requires little funding, £3.87 last year. Most contributions are by e-mail, I edit to the appropriate length and e-mail to the designer who also produced the Slasher. The final layout is modified to fit the available space and you all know the result.

Members are not good at providing copy. FCA Today is all about retirees' activities and it is too easy for them to write up reminiscences of the "Good old days". Just a few of these articles stimulate more of the same. However, if that's what they want, that's what they'll get.

We have had issues dominated by obituaries and I have often had to cut extensively to fit the space. I know relatives have felt aggrieved that full details have not been included but I do try to avoid more than one page with three of news and stories. David Chadwick and I plan to visit the DG again to talk about provision of information on notification of deaths. We hope for more success since the previous head of HR left.

When you return to your groups try to encourage your membership to contribute something about their activities, particularly those who are up to the unusual, extreme or even bizarre! Let us know about it.

FCA Today has been going since September 1997, 40 issues to date. At 3 issues per year, the 50<sup>th</sup> or "Golden Issue" will come up in Spring 2013. I hope to make it! We must have a special issue and we'll need copy for that.

### Footnote

*This was written before the demise of Slasher and FCA Today was announced. The 40<sup>th</sup> issue was the last sent by mail to all recipients.*

*You are now reading this on line and that will be the way ahead. We shall still have a 50<sup>th</sup> issue. I also still need contributions but this can be done by correspondence to my postal address or to my e-mail address [editor@fca-today.com](mailto:editor@fca-today.com)*

## Third Touchwood History Booklet

"No rivalry, but different". The story of Glenmore and Rothiemurchus in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This booklet was published in August and is the third in the Touchwood series which tells the story of those who worked in and around the great expanse of forests in Badenoch and Strathspey. It records the stories of foresters and forest workers on the FC forests of Glenmore and Inchriach, and of folk who lived and worked on Rothiemurchus.

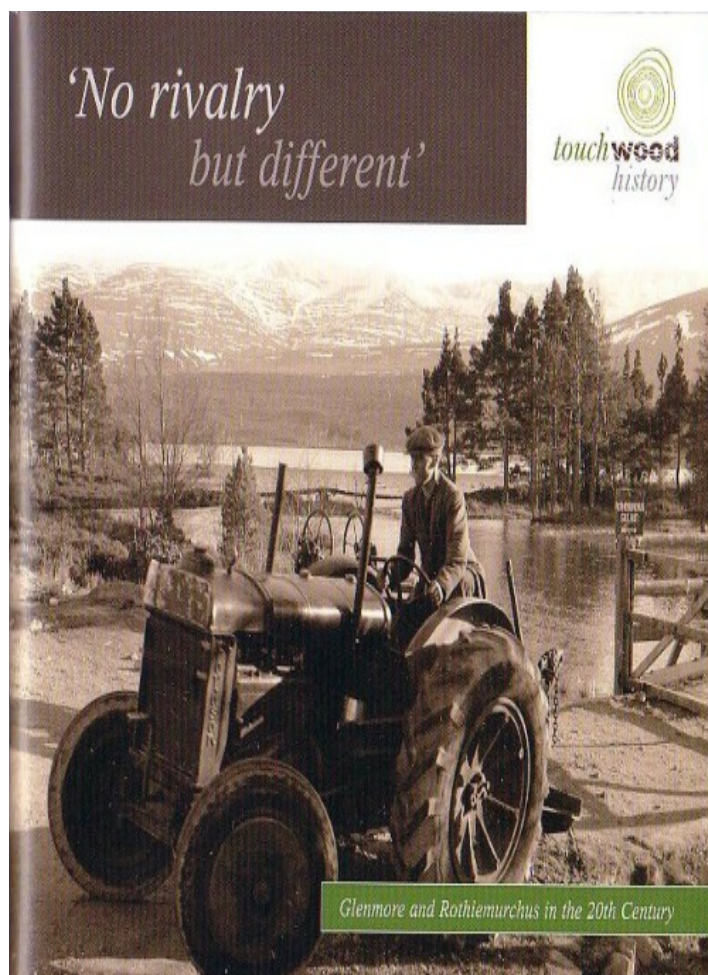
As a result of twenty one interviews, the rich and diverse life in forestry was uncovered.

This is the latest phase in the continuing project involving the UHI Centre for History and the FC in recording the social history of Scottish forestry. It follows two similar projects in Argyll and the Great Glen.

The three booklets are available from: -

FC publications,  
PO Box 501, Leicester. LE94 0AA.  
Tel. 0844 991 6500.  
e-mail [forestry@mrm.co.uk](mailto:forestry@mrm.co.uk)

*I can recommend all three, they are a great read.*  
Ed





## AGM 2010

The Forest of Dean was this year's venue and we met in Beechenhurst, the very attractive visitor centre near Parkend. It was hard to imagine that not so long ago, this was a coal mine. But that was true of so much of the Forest. It was an extensive industrial area and in parts, a blighted landscape. Nature, with the help of man, healed all.

At the AGM, amongst other things, we passed a motion increasing membership fees, which have remained unchanged for over 15 years, to £5 and £30 respectively. We also agreed to review them every 3 years. Bart announced that he would be standing down at next year's AGM. He had been holding the office for a very long time, so it was only fair that somebody else should take over. He was looking for a volunteer. It was not an arduous task as a local organiser looked after the detail of the AGM venue, tour and accommodation. Contact him if you are keen.

On the second day, Bart had arranged for Jim Sauter of the local staff, to lead a tour through the forest near Parkend. Steve Cooper, retired C/F Dean, began by explaining that the Dean had a long and complex forestry history with traditions of sheep grazing and mineral extraction. There were many and varied visitor attractions which had to be managed within a nationally important woodland landscape with its unique assemblage of birds. It had a rich cultural heritage with archaeological features back to the Iron Age along with the remains of over 2000 years of industrial and mining activity.

Jim then took over and we started our walk in Nagshead Enclosure by the RSPB visitor centre. Jim told us that the bird recording project, which began over 50 years ago, was the second longest

in Europe. It began as a bird box scheme to encourage pied flycatchers so they could control the defoliating caterpillars which were attacking nursery plants. We weren't told whether or not it worked! However, there was a great increase in the number of birds! We then walked through oak woods both open and grazed, and enclosed. There was prolific oak seedling regeneration but this came to naught as each year it was grazed by sheep. Where there were larger gaps in the canopy, only birch and holly had regenerated. We were still a long way off in understanding the regeneration dynamics of oak. It had been originally planted in 1840 and to date the only sure way was to clear fell and replant.

Next we stopped to discuss the position of conifers in the Dean. Douglas fir was successful and produced valuable timber. The policy was to reduce the present conifer constituent of the forest from 30% to 20%, although in practice it would end up somewhere between. Nearby we saw one of the last free mines (and a free miner). This mining could only be carried out by those born in the Hundred of St. Briavels, the legal boundary of the forest. As the local hospital no longer had a maternity ward and as so few were born at home, in time this tradition would be doomed to fail. Just opposite, there was a working sandstone quarry and we returned to the bus along the old tramway, which had been used to convey stone to the railway. We drove to Beechenhurst for lunch and said our farewells.

Next year's AGM will be held on May 17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> in Betws-y-Coed, North Wales. It's a popular venue so, see you there. Put it in your diary now.

## AGM 2011

This will be held at Betws y Coed on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> May. The North Wales Group will be organising it and the contacts are Chris Griffiths (Chairman) and Eifion Jones (Secretary). North Wales is a popular venue and the local group always puts on a special show. *See you there!*

**[www.fca-today.com](http://www.fca-today.com) Put it in your list of favourite websites**

# Woods & People

## Putting Forests on the Map

### David Foot

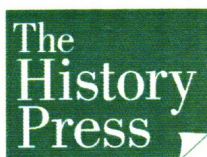
To be published October 2010 at £18.99, hardback,  
ISBN 978-0-7524-5278-4

Planted woods and forests, broadleaved and coniferous, make up the great bulk of Britain's tree landscape, their distribution reflecting much of the agricultural and social history of the past several hundred years. After centuries of tree decline, the combined efforts of landowners, planners, foresters and conservationists in the twentieth century saw the extent of tree cover in Britain more than double. No other book covers the history of woods and forests over the whole of Britain with a focus on forestry in the modern age.

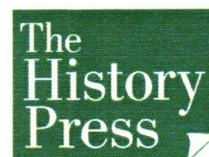
Drawing together political and social aspects of twentieth century woods and forests, the book is as much about people as it about trees; the people who planted them and shaped the landscape, why they were planted and where, the 'behind the scenes' influences that shaped forest policy, and the people who valued them for timber, amenity or recreation.

David Foot is a retired professional forester, and was a Forestry Commissioner from 1986 to 1999. He has also been a Trustee of the Woodland Trust and contributed to *People and Woods In Scotland: a History* (ed T. C. Smout). He lives in Surrey.

Available from all good bookshops,  
[Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)



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## OBITUARIES

Although **CHARLES TAYLOR** was not a member of the FC, he will be known to many Edinburgh forestry graduates and others in the forestry profession. He died in January aged 97 after a long and distinguished career.

He was born in 1912 in Shanghai into a family of mariners and marine engineers. The family returned to Britain and Charles graduated from Edinburgh in forestry in 1934. He joined the Colonial Forest Service in 1936 and went to Gold Coast, now Ghana. When war broke out he enlisted in the Gold Coast Regt. serving in Africa and Burma. Returning to Gold Coast he took charge of research, publishing two major works on vegetation and silviculture. He left in 1954 to take up a lectureship in the Dept. of Forestry in Edinburgh under Prof. Mark Anderson. After Anderson's sudden death, he undertook the heavy task of editing his "History of Scottish Forestry". In 1976 he was appointed chair of forestry in the university and in the following year, was awarded the CBE. For 20 years, he was director of studies, which he greatly enjoyed as it allowed him to become involved in the work of many young undergraduates.

In 1962 he had produced a textbook for the training of local foresters and forest rangers "Tropical Forestry" and when he returned to Britain he became involved in organisations responsible for education and technical training below university level. He was also a driving force in the change of professionalism within the Society of Foresters of GB, resulting in the emergence of the ICF of which he was president from 1977-79.

Charles was a man of great character and decisiveness, and had clarity of purpose. He will be remembered fondly by his colleagues, friends and his extensive family as a fine man.

(This is an edited version of a much longer and more detailed obituary which appeared in the Scotsman in February and was written by Bill Mutch).

Mike Whitlock remembers **ALAN CATCHPOLE** who was born in 1925 in rural Essex. His consequent love of the countryside stayed with him for the rest of his life. After wartime service in the Scots Guards he was attracted to forestry and trained at the Dean FTS (1949-51). He then joined the FC serving the rest of his career in SE England at Micheldever Forest and Orlestone before taking charge of Buriton Forest which was later renamed Queen Elizabeth Country Park and which he developed.

He retired to Petersfield where he became involved with the restoration of a former golf course back into heathland. His leisure activities included caravanning and walking. Wherever he lived he was involved with the local community serving as a parish councillor on at least one occasion. He joined the FCA at its inception and was for a period treasurer of the Alice Holt Group. Alan always had time for people, was meticulous in his work and dealt with all circumstances calmly.

Julian Evans recalls **DAVID FOURT** who was born in Redditch in 1923. His father was a headmaster and his mother's side were farming stock. This surely explains David's gift of verbal communication and love of the land. Indeed, he always said 'I should have been a farmer'.

David fancied driving a tank so this led him during the war to join the 5<sup>th</sup> Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards. On D day + 10 David drove his Cromwell tank ashore from the Mulberry Harbour and began the long and arduous struggle fighting through Normandy's 'bocage'. It is not surprising that on being demobbed in 1946, going to university was just not right for David and the outdoor and more practical challenges of forestry beckoned.

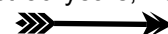
David was at Dean FTS in 1947 and 1948 and was posted directly to research at Alice Holt in 1949. And he stayed there for 36 years retiring in April 1985. David's first research branch, Ecology, meant his working with J M B Brown, a highly competent but crusty scientist. It was a productive time resulting in publication in 1953 of 'Studies in British Beechwoods' FC Bulletin 20, although regrettably he was not accorded co-authorship or

adequate acknowledgement, having done much of the work. In 1958 David joined what eventually became Site Studies Branch working for two Bills, Hinson and Binns. But there was someone to divert his attention, Roberta in the soils lab. It wasn't long before their shared passion for opera, wildlife, and the RA led to their deciding to share their whole life together. In 1970 David was promoted to HF and later to CF. It was this time of research into soils and sites, which was David's most productive period. Subjects such as foliar analysis, radiata pine, forest hydrology at Thetford, and opencast coal site restoration revealed his diverse interests and research agendas. However his work on developing soil compaction busting gear and the related development of rig and furr mounds was his greatest legacy.

On his retirement from the FC, he was snapped up by gravel and oil companies. The latter conducted inland prospecting and exploration, and employed David as a consultant to re-instate land and carry out conservation works. He became what he had been all along, a 'restoration expert'. He continued to champion soils. Barely a Wessex Silvicultural Group meeting would pass without David digging a pit and explaining the soil profile. Even last year at 85 he was giving students practical studies on forest soils. David had another great passion. For more than 70 years he was active in bee keeping. Last year he was awarded honorary life membership by the British Bee Keeping Association. In his local Farnham branch, he variously filled the roles of secretary, treasurer, chairman, spray liaison officer and swarm collector.

David leaves his wife Roberta and two children, Roger and Helen, all of whom know where his old experimental sites are from years of diversions while on family holidays! Helen, as a head teacher, is enthusiastic about the forest schools initiative. We in forestry have lost a giant in our profession and they an outstanding husband and father.

David Rice says of David "He was one of my forest heroes. On many occasions over the last 50 years, he enthralled me,



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expounding on the pedology of a soil pit. He would stand, acid bottle at the ready, and inform the listener of the nutrient and moisture status and the cultivation required. His unbounded enthusiasm will be greatly missed".

Eric Urquhart tells of the death of **JOCK CHRYSTALL** in Inverness in January aged 97. He had a long and distinguished career in forestry, joining the FC as a forest worker in 1928 and retiring as Assistant Conservator in 1963. He started with the FC in a remote bothy in Clashindarroch Forest. He successfully graduated from Benmore Forester School in 1936 and was posted to Newton Nursery, transferring to Tentsmuir Forest in Fife a year later to gain experience in harvesting. This coincided with his being offered a professional football contract with Elgin City FC which he regretfully turned down. He was a keen footballer and joined Dundee Violet in the junior ranks while at Tentsmuir.

With the outbreak of war, he was transferred to the Timber Control Department, his interest in mensuration leading to his involvement in the purchase of standing timber. Eventually he was based at Blair Atholl in charge of POWs and Displaced Persons, harvesting timber for the war effort. After the war he was sent to Burgdorf Forest near Hannover in Germany to oversee the harvesting and transport of timber to Britain as part of War Reparations. G.B. Ryle in his book 'Forest Service' writes about his time in charge of the North German Timber Control, when he was responsible for the supply of timber for a new bridge over the River Elbe. He recalls "piles with 10inch tops came through at high speed from Jock Chrystall's Burgdorf Forest". The words "at high speed" suggest confidence in his supplier!

On his return to GB he gained promotion to District Officer, being posted to West Scotland Conservancy in Lochgilphead. In 1955 he was promoted to Divisional Officer, later Assistant Conservator H & M, and posted to Inverness where he remained until retirement in 1963.

In retirement he continued to be very active, developing his loves of hill walking and gardening. He had a particular love of the Cairngorms which he knew intimately, taking part in the Mountain Rescue Team's sponsored walks over many years. Noteworthy were his walks across the Lairig Ghru on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and the Corrieyairick Pass on his 87<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Gwyn Francis and Andy Neustein have many memories of **JOHN FLETCHER** who died in September at his home in Farmborough aged 81. After graduation and National Service with the Royal Engineers he joined the Forestry Commission in 1953. His appointments as District Officer were first to the Lake District and later to Thetford. John became, with Bill Grant at Grizedale, an enthusiastic and hands-on supporter of the "Theatre in the Forest". Thetford offered scope for John's talent for inspiring leadership and he gained the trust and confidence of the wide range of interests involved. There followed a period in Harvesting and Marketing Division in Edinburgh. This coincided with major difficulties in the timber market following the closure of three major pulp and paper mills and several sawmills. Nothing daunted John, he made major contributions to the recovery and earned the great respect of the timber trade for his plain speaking and frankness. Appointment to Bristol as Conservator, (later Director) SW (E) followed in 1983. Here, as ever, the warmth of his personality, his genius for developing good relationships and his effective leadership were held in high regard.

He retired in 1989 and embarked on a breathtaking range of activities. These included President of the Institute of Chartered Foresters 1990-1992; Deputy Director of Tree Aid 1989, Honorary Director in 1990, President 1993; Church Warden and many Village Organisations. Passionate in his support of Tree Aid, he exerted a strong influence over its development. He visited West Africa twice to see results for himself. A report of his last visit in 2004 said this of him - "his unflagging energy throughout the trip"; "he was dancing

enthusiastically in a village welcome"; "he made people young and old warm to him"; "he never missed an opportunity to get to know people". John was appointed CBE in 1992, it was well deserved. He will be remembered as a man who was caring, always ready to help others and support causes he believed in. A man with an adventurous spirit and an inspiring leader. John is survived by his wife Maureen, his three children and their families.

Tony Butcher said that he learned with much sadness of the passing of **BOB GLADMAN**. We had been great friends at Lynford Hall Forester Training College and for many years since. Bob ended up Head Student in 1956 after much serious study. He often led the way in method study with his little drawings to illustrate the subject in question. Together, but with his initiative, we constructed the "Weed Garden" for species identification discovering that the specially selected acid chips for tree seedling beds were in fact alkaline, something that Yanto tried to ignore. He and I, together with some other students, cleaned out the swimming pool of old Diddington House. We hired a fire pump from The Depot to empty the sludge and constructed a filter bed of shingle so the feeder stream provided clear water. I remember that it was a hot summer and proved very welcome. Bob went to Research while I was sent out into the field. We collided occasionally throughout our respective working lives, but his adventures with The Boat are some of the most memorable. His love of strange music while attending evening classes got him some raised eyebrows. He left an impression and his mark everywhere he went and will be sorely missed.

Bob Gladman was born in Ashurstwood, Sussex in 1929. He was educated at the village school, later winning a scholarship to the Grammar School in East Grinstead. He started his working life as a trainee mechanic at a laundry until 'call up' for Nation Service. Bob served in the RAF from 1948 to 1950 as an Airframes Fitter on aircraft including the Lancaster which, on one memorable occasion he



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hitched a ride during a weekend pass! He was mainly stationed in Norfolk & Lincolnshire and soon became a Leading Aircraftsman. An assortment of jobs followed before Bob began his forestry career. Between 1954 & '56 he was at Lynford Hall FTS which pointed the way forward for him. This time was an enjoyable experience for him.

In 1956 Bob joined the Pathology team at Alice Holt, spearheaded by the Chief Pathologist, T R Peace. He spent many months of the year travelling Scotland, Wales & Norfolk collecting samples & data on the various root diseases of conifers including *Fomes annosus* and contributed to much published information in F.C. bulletins. At Alice Holt, Bob met Jo (Joyce) whom he married in 1961.

Within two years he was transferred out of research into the field dealing with various aspects of woodland management in the counties of Dorset, Suffolk, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire & finally Lincolnshire where Bob, Jo & their family settled.

His knowledge of the woodland scene, trees, shrubs and habitats, was extensive and he often gave talk to local clubs.

His true enjoyment was travelling waterways, rivers and canals, with his family & friends, on his converted lifeboat, 'River Puffin'. This was central to his and Jo's lives in exploring reaches of narrow cuts of the land which were not always meant to be explored! For the past decade, Bob's health slowly deteriorated, having been diagnosed with Multiple System Atrophy. His quiet strength helped to sustain him, Jo and their two sons, Gavin & Robin, but on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2010, he lost his fight. He was, and is, a much loved man. A true gentleman.



Mike Whitlock knew **LES HOWE** well. After service in the RAF, Les started his forestry career at Charmouth in Dorset, transferring to Bramshill forest in Hampshire. Following training at the Lynford Hall

Forester Training School from 1950-1952 he served in Mensuration Branch before transferring to Silviculture Branch based at the Wareham nursery in Dorset. Leaving Forest Research in 1976, he took charge of Shipbourne Forest in Kent. Retiring in 1983, he and his family stayed on in that area before finally moving to Christchurch in 1991. He suffered but recovered from intestinal cancer 34 years ago, but cancer finally claimed his life in May at the age of 89.

Les joined the F.C. Association and played a part in running the New Forest group. When this group ceased to exist, he transferred to the Alice Holt group. Because of distance he was unable to attend events but was always interested in what was happening and especially liked to hear news of people that he knew. One of his accomplishments was playing the piano in a dance band which he continued to do until fairly recently. His wife Eileen tells me that he played the piano a week before he died.

*Les Howe sent me a poem a little before he died. I have added it below his obituary because it sums up his career which was one of dedication to, but most of all enjoyment of, forestry.*

### A Forester's Thoughts by Les Howe

*During my career in forestry,  
Friends of mine, and others too  
Had not the slightest notion  
What a forester had to do*

*They haven't seen the countrymen,  
Who work with skill and care  
With tools for every job they do  
And keep in good repair.*

*We always brew our tea out there  
And at mid-day, have a bake  
We are protecting our forest charge  
For all the people's sake.*

*It was assumed we cut down trees,  
This was our daily bread,  
The arts and crafts of forest skills  
Was hardly ever said.*

*We have to set the piecework rates,  
They're workable and fair,  
Each phase of work is safe and sound  
For each man to be aware.*

*There's bugs & nasties, small and large,  
And a careless match can halt the yield  
Before the final felling comes  
And the forest's fate is sealed.*

*We were the trusty lumberjacks,  
With axe and rope and saw,  
A helmet on the hardened head  
And very little more.*

*They haven't seen our office  
Way out there in the woods  
It's where we keep the records straight,  
Future foresters will see the goods.*

*I haven't dug too deeply  
Into a life that is unique  
It's never like an office block  
But it's one that many seek.*

*They didn't see us in the woods,  
When planting oak and pine,  
Recording growth and progress  
From Spring to Autumn time.*

*There is no noise, a bird or two,  
A squirrel and some deer  
Let's have a real good tidy up,  
Now there's room to store our gear.*

*We like to think, in a modest way,  
That our nation's sylvan beauty  
Is altogether safe and sound  
In the hands of the forester's daily duty.*

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Articles for inclusion in the Spring issue should be sent to the editor before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

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