



New Forest Campsite Wardens' Reunion



A reminder of summer. Details of the New Forest Campsite Wardens' reunion are on page 11.



From the Editor

I am getting the hang of producing the newsletter, I hope you are enjoying it. My last appeal for copy produced a few responses but I can't claim I was inundated.

However you will see from the website we also have a Gallery for your pictures and a place for well illustrated articles. To date I am the only one who has put articles on the website and I have kept to the theme of forests around



the world. I was hoping that others would contribute. At present I am working on an article on the forests of the Sudeten in SW. Poland. These articles do not have to be an exhaustive study of the subject, rather they can be any interesting observations from a personal visit.

I have received some contributions for the Gallery, but more would be appreciated. Winter days are ideal for working on such contributions, how about it?

Richard Toleman

Quarries - Good or Bad? Another View

Whenever new quarries or aggregate workings are proposed, there are usually howls of dismay from a whole range of conservationists, both practical and armchair. But is this fair?

A study by the University of Chester looked at breeding birds in hard and soft quarries. In the past, disused quarries have provided birds with important extensions to their natural breeding habitats in areas devoid of nesting cliffs and banks. The steep cliffs of hard quarries attract birds of prey such as the peregrine while soft rock quarries attract burrowing birds such as the sand martin. In this latter case, sand martins are becoming increasingly dependent on the aggregate industry.

Birds of prey are very tolerant of humans and noise in working quarries and the added security

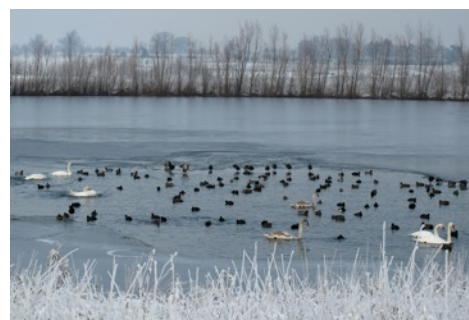
of human presence benefits them. With careful management and planning, quarry managers can create



relatively peaceful and undisturbed areas in working quarries that are attractive to birds and other wildlife. A guide to good practice has been published that aids these managers in wildlife conservation.

So before you become overheated when you next hear of a quarry planning application, take another view.

Former gravel quarries in Broom, Bedfordshire through the seasons.



Photographs © Alison Palmer

Do you have a view on the effects on the landscape of hard or soft quarries in your area? Post or e-mail your opinion to the editor. Contact details are on the back page.

If pictures are sent by post, please indicate if you require them returned.

How It Looks to Me

Ron Marnie sent in this poem by Head Forester R.J. Jennings of the Dean, who also used to be at St. Asaph nursery. He felt it was quite splendid and had appeared in an old Slasher of unknown vintage. He thought it needed a wider audience.

*I lived in a wood where oak trees stood
And a squirrel's hoard was made
Where a woodpecker drummed on a hollow limb
And the blue tit's eggs were laid
But a traffic roundabout has displaced
The holly, hazel and yew
And a petrol pump in yellow and black
Now stands where orchids grew.*

*I walked through a field where villagers
Played in a green and spacious park
Where children tumbled in new mown hay
And the corncrake called after dark
But the grass is gone and the earth is black
Where young men kicked to the goal
And a bulldozer churns up rock and stone
In a search for opencast coal.*

*I bathed in a lake where the mayfly danced
And the grebe and moorhen nested
Where the sunlight shone on a willow branch
'neath a bank where a kingfisher rested*

*But the water now is foul and black
Polluted with oil and tar
And the reed beds littered with rusty cans
Paper bags and a derelict car.*

*I tramped on a moor where the heather bloomed
And the curlew and lapwing flew
And the honey bee sought the harebell flower
Where the cotton grass held the dew
A rifle range and an army camp
Now stand where sheep once fed
And painted notices say, "KEEP OUT"
Where the ramblers' footpath led.*

*I knew a countryside green and fair
Where men would relax from toil
And appreciate the fresh clean air
And enjoy the touch of the soil
But the leafy lanes and the spreading hedge
That sheltered the primrose and fern
Have gone with traditional country life
Past the point of no return.*

Wales Tallest Tree Is No More

The tallest tree in Wales is no more. It was a 124 year old Douglas fir at Vyrnwy Forest and was last measured at 63.7m. At one time it was considered UK's tallest tree. It was battered by a storm in February, but the damage has only just been spotted. The forest is popular with walkers and cyclists and it posed a risk to visitors. The storm caused it to lean, but there were two substantial cracks extending up from the base. The tree was so tall that it had to be removed in sections. However the local FDM, Mike Whitley, had an idea to leave the lower 15m. of the trunk in place and has commissioned a wood sculpture to commemorate the champion tree.

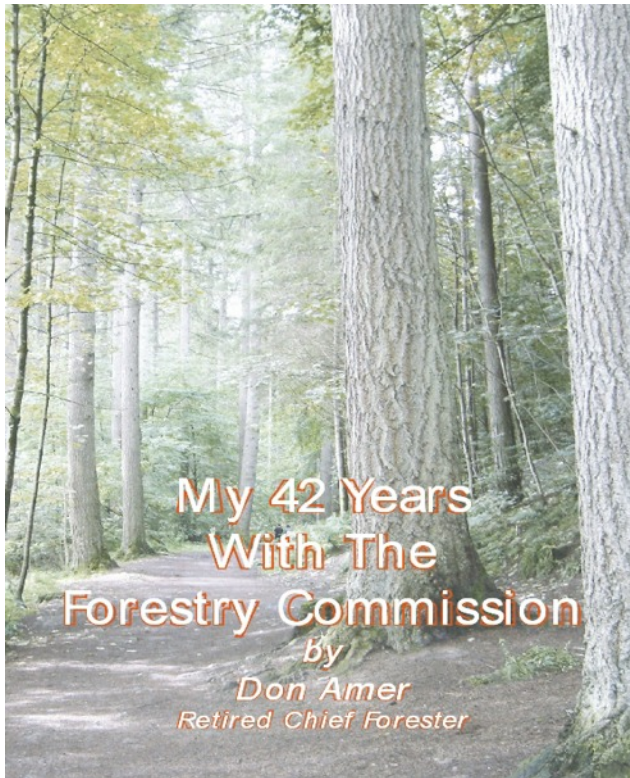


Lake Vyrnwy

*For the latest FCA news, check the Message Board on the FCA website at
www.fca-today.com*

My Career in Forestry – Summary of My 42 Years

by Don Amer



I left school aged sixteen and gained practical forestry experience at Delamere and Thornthwaite Forests before enrolling at the Gwydyr Forester Training School in North Wales in 1950. My first posting was to join the Northern Sample Plot Party under Alex McKenzie in Edinburgh. Our main work here was the setting up of one-tenth acre plots in young plantations of fifteen to twenty year old trees, and recording their growth over three years in order to establish a quality class. We were also involved in measuring the amount of damage caused by the 1953 windblow in East Scotland and the ten year tree census.

On getting married in 1954, I was posted up to Culbin Forest under the watchful eye of Chief Forester Willie Milne. This was the first forest in Scotland to have a radio communication installed and I took a great interest in its development and maintenance.

In 1959 I was on the move again, this time to the great Kielder Forest to serve under Chief Forester Tom Fox at the Mounces Beat. Plant-

ing was still going on here, together with thinning operations.

1963 saw me on the move again, this time to Glentworth under Chief Forester Alex McCrae. Here there were large planting and hand draining programmes ongoing, and my job was to allocate work to different squads and measure their work, because they were all on piecework rates.

It was whilst at Glentworth that a job with the newly formed Radio and Electronic Branch was advertised, and I applied for it along with other candidates. We were invited down to SW(E) Conservancy in Bristol to be interviewed by the Conservator, Charles Connell and Bob Linder, who had been a Head Forester at Clashindarroch Forest in East Scotland, and was an amateur radio enthusiast, who Mr Connell had already appointed to establish the unit. I was offered the job and that was the end of my sojourn at Glentworth.

I had to establish a base which was central to the area which I had been given, which was in effect, all points north from North Yorkshire across to the Lake District, and the whole of Scotland. I finally established my first workshop at Inver, just outside Dunkeld in 1969/70. From then on it was a huge workload to buy test equipment, tools, a vehicle, organise surveys, advise Conservancies on suitable radio installations, purchase radio equipment, and maintain equipment after it was installed. I also enrolled at Dundee Technical College for radio technology classes for two evenings a week for two years. As the radio schemes expanded, so did the need for extra staff to install and maintain the systems, so two additional radio workshops were established, one at Smithton, Inverness and one at Mabie Forest in South Scotland. Each workshop was manned by two radio technicians, not from the forester grades, but fully trained electronic technicians who had been working previously with the emergency services, i.e. police and fire and rescue services.

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es. Each technician had a vehicle, normally a Sherpa van at that time, fitted out as a mobile workshop with power tools, an electricity generator and all necessary test equipment and spare parts for the many different types of radio equipment in use.

Eventually Charles Connell relinquished his control of the REB, whether or not it was due to his retirement, I don't know, but the Branch became the responsibility of the Chief Mechanical Engineer, Mr Roger Hay, stationed at FC Headquarters in Edinburgh. A further appointment was made by recruiting an electronics engineer to oversee the day-to-day organisation of the Branch, and to advise Roger Hay on its future development. His name was Dave Blandford, who opted not to have his office in Edinburgh, but to set up next to mine at Inver. This was advantageous to me because I then became involved in policy decisions and meetings with major equipment suppliers to identify which equipment best suited the FC requirements, and to broker deals for the best prices.

As all the major forest areas were now provided with radio communications, work became more routine for the out-stationed technicians, dealing with breakdowns and attending forest fires to deal with any communication problems that might arise. If a fire broke out in an area which was a communications blackspot, they had to set up some sort of local radio coverage to relay messages back to the control centre, and very often the Fire and Rescue Service had to rely on FC communications to get messages back to their control centre.

The REB were pioneers in the use of using photovoltaic cells (solar panels) to provide power for radio stations on remote hill tops, instead of diesel generators. We also devised a system for pinpointing items of interest on a landscape relief model of part of Thornthwaite Forest in the Lake District for the visitor centre at Whinlatter Pass. We did this by using fibre optics connected to a push button control panel, so that when a particular button was pressed, a pinpoint of light would appear at the point of interest selected on the relief model. A similar system was supplied to a diorama exhibit at the visitor centre at Dalby Forest in Yorkshire.

We were also involved with agricultural shows, including the Royal Highland Agricultural Shows at Ingleston, both with setting up exhibits and providing local communication systems. Such was the variety of work that came the way of the REB, such as using vehicle traffic counters to control gates in deer fences, to concealing end-fed dipole aerials inside plastic flagpoles for environmental purposes outside forest offices, work was never dull. But retirement was fast approaching, and I was winding down from what had been at times a very hectic workload, but I consider myself very lucky to have had so many lucky breaks and to have been able to take advantage of them. I was able to take early retirement by retiring one year early in 1989.

*This booklet can be purchased from Don at:-
12 Harriet Row Blairgowrie PH10 6BW
Price: £5.50 plus £1.00 p&p*

Visit the FCA Today website at: -

www.fca-today.com

My Early Life in the Forestry Commission

by Eric Crofts

In the last issue, we published Eric Crofts' memories of Glenbranter.

Part Two : Ardgarten Forest

The Swedish houses of Ardgarten were in Glen Loin on the Argyll side of the River Loin. The FC campsite lay between the main road and the houses. The houses and buildings of the Torpedo Testing Range lay across the loch from Arrochar. Spaced out at intervals for a long way down the loch, there were platforms laid on pontoons. When we saw launches set off to put men on these, we knew that torpedoes would soon be fired. A hooter would sound to signal the start of the tests. If we could, we would watch the wakes of the torpedoes. As each one went under a platform, the watcher would record its passing. Later, the hooter would signal the end of the tests. The launches would gather the floating torpedoes and tow them home.

The Head Forester was Angus MacKay and his assistants were Donny McCaskill, George Francey and Sandy Graham. I have many memories of my time there. On warm summer evenings, I swam in the loch at Arrochar Pier with local lads. On Saturday afternoons, I joined them at the pier to enjoy the entertainment provided by visitors. Tour coaches from Glasgow stopped at Arrochar to let the travellers see the scenery and get some fresh air. The piper at the pier often included a popular song of the time, *How much is that Doggy in the Window*, in his programme of pipe tunes. Occasionally, when he did, a load of lassies would link arms and kick up their legs left and right. The village hall was beside the Tarbet road above Arrochar. In it, I enjoyed the occasional dance, concert and film. On good evenings, a companion and I would go to Helensburgh on my BSA Twin motorbike to see a film.

At Ardgarten, I came in contact with the massed hordes of Scottish midges. I liberally applied the Dimp supplied by the FC, but the little horrors found unprotected spots like the corners of the eye and mouth. For most of 1953, I felled trees. The other fellers were untrained and were content to let the tree fall downhill and rest on

those below. Holding branches of neighbouring trees, they would walk up the tree and jump up and down until it fell. We were felling in Coileasan Glen. A forest-road ran up to the mouth from near Ardgarten. Horses dragged the logs down the hillside, then down the glen to the road, where, in time, they formed a huge pile. Of course, they scraped off the turf. One day, rain started to fall about 9 o'clock and we took shelter. It poured all day. At going-home time, we found that the scrapings had become a wide, deep trench. At the road, the resultant river had swept away hundreds of logs and the road. Down on the loch, there was a wide half-circle of brown. We had to cross the crater and walk down to where the truck could turn. It was here that I first heard of logs sliding down the hill and knocking a horse to the ground and of seeing a horse standing in pools of blood from its log gashed legs. Horses can play a part in log-extraction on flat ground, but I think it's cruel to use them on hillsides.

Far down the loch, near the mouth of Loch Goil, a worker lived in Mark Cottage. We knew him as Johnny Mark. There was no road to his house, so a forester had to go down in the launch with his wages on pay day. Johnny would then row across the loch to Finnart, walk over the pass to Garelochhead, buy his supplies and have a drink, then return to Finnart and row home. That summer, some of us were taken down in the launch to join Johnny in ring barking the native oak trees. The area would be planted with spruce. This was commonly done in Scotland. The fine broadleaved trees died and the planted crop was eaten by deer.

I had been told that I would have to do two years as a forest worker before going to FTS. But, in September, I was informed that I could join the 1953 entry. I turned down the invitation, I was having second thoughts. I liked that part of Scotland and it wasn't far from our family in Glasgow. I knew that after graduation, I could be sent anywhere in Scotland or Wales. I needed more time to think about it.

The east side of Loch Goil was owned by Glasgow and had been planted with conifers.

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My Early Life in the Forestry Commission

by Eric Crofts

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This forest continued up Glen Goil to near Pole Farm. The FC acquired the land between it and The Rest.

During the winter, drains were cut diagonally down the hillside. With rutter spades, two men cut a foot wide ribbon.

A man cut it into foot long turfs with a rutter and another one pulled them out with a draindrag. A fifth man cleaned the drain with a spade.

Later, the upturned turfs were positioned 6ft. apart. In spring, a tree was planted in each one.

In late September 1954, I boarded a train in Glasgow's Buchanan St. Station and went to Pitlochry, Perthshire, to be a pupil at Faskally Forester Training School. But that's another story.

Eric Crofts was a former Research Forester and Cartographer. Ed.

National Tree Collections of Scotland

Scotland has some of the world's finest tree collections. Their diversity reflects the role many individual landowners have played over the centuries, collecting and planting specimen trees from around the globe.

Scotland's mild, damp, oceanic climate is conducive to tree growth. It has few native trees and for many years others have been introduced from across the world that can thrive in Scottish conditions.

The finest of Scotland's specimen trees are being brought together as the National Tree Collections of Scotland (NTCS). The objective is to increase public awareness and help protect this national heritage.

Amongst the great planters were the "Planting" Dukes of Atholl, the Adams of Blair Adam and John Stirling Maxwell of Corrour, the latter also founded the NTS. The names of the intrepid plant collectors are known to all foresters, among them, Menzies, Douglas, Jeffrey and Drummond.

The NTCS has been established by FC Scotland and the RBG Edinburgh. Initially the collection will comprise Benmore, Kilmun, Puck's Glen, Glenbranter, Glasgow BG, RBG Edinburgh, Dawyck and Scone. The network will be expanded to include other important collections.

More information can be found on the website www.ntcs.org.uk



Dawyck Botanic Garden



Puck's Glen



Benmore Botanic Garden

Benmore 1940

by George Pringle

April 1940 and just over 20 young men arrive at Benmore in Argyll to train as foresters. They come from all quarters, from as far apart as London to the Isle of Skye and the N.E. of Scotland. Only one or two have any previous knowledge of the industry, quite a few are straight from school.

The course they were about to undertake would last six months. Normally it lasted two years but the FC decided to condense it to a shorter period. The experiment failed and after just two short courses the full two years was reinstated.

I am sure that everyone who trained at Benmore could fill a volume with tales and recollections of their time there. I do not intend to attempt anything like that, but with fairly brief references to events.

I hope to paint a word picture of what life was like at Benmore in 1940.

We lived in the tower at the west end of the mansion. At the bottom were the lecture rooms, the dining room and kitchen, the instructor's office and the common / recreation room. There we could play table tennis, cards etc and listen to the radio. We often cast envious glances at the billiard room at the other end of the building but that was out of bounds and no one ever used it.

The dormitories were on three levels and access was via a spiral stone staircase. On each level were two rooms, one for five or six beds, and the other for two. The rooms were spartan. Each apprentice - that was our official title, had an iron framed bed, a small bedside rug, a chair and pine chest of drawers and wardrobe. There was no heating. The only fire was in the common room. Wash basins, showers, toilets and drying room where we kept our boots and waterproof clothing, were in the basement.

The senior instructor believed that to be a proper supervisor you had to be able to "pick up the tool and show the man how the job should be done", and so we worked hard at many operations. We lifted seedlings covered in frost, made seed beds, and collected conifer branches which were draped over the seedbeds to protect the seedlings

from frostlift. We brashed plantations did felling and thinning. Having felled the trees we then extracted them. We did this in three ways. The first was what we called dragging; a loop of fencing wire was passed around the log; the other end of the wire was wrapped around a piece of wood which was the handle and allowed us to pull the log to the road. The second way was down a sectional metal chute. This was erected up the hill and the logs were lowered into it one at a time. They thundered their way down emerging at the bottom as if they were rocket propelled. Until we mastered the technique the first logs smashed through a dry stone wall and nearly finished in Loch Eck.

The final method would drive today's Health & Safety officials grey. A length of fencing wire was run up the ride next to the plantation. At the top it was wound around a rock or secure anchorage. At the bottom the wire was wound around a piece of timber about six feet long. The thinnings were taken to the wire and hooked on to it, again using fencing wire. Four men standing at the bottom then pulled on the handle, lifting the wire clear of the ground and so allowing the log to slide down.

The trick was to release the handle at the right time so that the log dropped to the ground and slid to a halt near the stacking area. Having released the handle the four men had to get out of the way in double quick time! It was a miracle no one was ever hurt.

When it was too wet to work outside time was generally spent cutting logs and firewood. Saturday mornings were spent in the lecture room. Our board and lodging was free and after some deductions we were paid five shillings a week.

Food - perhaps the least said the better! However I cannot let it pass without some comment. The war was on so food was rationed. We eased our hunger by mixing bread, at that time not on ration, with our

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Benmore 1940

by George Pringle

Continued from previous page

pudding. We augmented our jam ration by buying jars of malt from the local chemist. There were plenty of rabbits on the estate so rabbit stew was frequently on the menu. That was fine but instead of neatly dissecting the carcasses a member of the kitchen staff assaulted them with a meat cleaver! As a result the stew was an intimate mixture of meat and sharp shattered bones. A dish to be eaten with great care! On Sunday we had a treat, a cake for tea.

Football was our only outdoor sport. Sometimes we played against the local team but often our opponents were teams from the war ships and submarines moored on the Clyde. The submarine depot ship HMS Forth was anchored in the Holy Loch and there were always subs coming and going.

On most Friday nights there was a dance in one of the local village halls. These lasted from 7pm until nearly 2am. On Saturday nights we went to Dunoon to the cinema or to a dance and we usually had a fish and chip supper.

In the summer of 1940 Churchill, Prime Minister, called for the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers – nicknamed “look, duck and vanish”. It later became the Home Guard and most of us joined. At first we had armbands with the letters LDV stitched on and we drilled with pieces of wood cut to the length of a rifle. A few weapons did eventually arrive so that the two man patrols which were out every night from 10pm – 6am, each had a rifle and five rounds of ammunition. Later more equipment and weapons were delivered so everyone had a uniform and either

a rifle or sten gun with a plentiful supply of ammunition.

We left Benmore in October. Some returned the following year to start the full two year course but most were eventually conscripted. Some who survived the war, returned to do a three month refresher course, but that is another story!

Footnote : On second thoughts the extraction by chute and downhill wire happened in 1941 / 42 when I'd returned to do the two year course. *(I kept this in because it was a good yarn! Ed.)*



Dunoon overlooking the Clyde

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It Must Be True - It Was In The Newspaper

The mayor of Vilnius in Lithuania struck a blow for cyclists this week when he used a tank to crush a car that was parked in a cycle lane. "That's what happens if you park your car illegally", he said before sweeping up the remains of broken glass and riding away on his bike. Although the incident was staged, the mayor insists that he is serious about tackling inconsiderate car owners or those who think they are above the law.



*I know many of you are cyclists,
I am a volunteer for Sustrans.
I thought this would appeal to
you. Ed.*

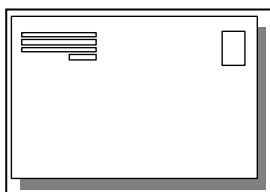


Drastic action!

Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today



by e-mail to editor@fca-today.com



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

Website Message Board

If you have any announcements, news or forthcoming events, post or e-mail the details to the editor. Contact details are on the back page of this magazine.

www.fca-today.com

NEW FOREST CAMPSITE WARDENS' REUNION

by Martin Fletcher

Nine former campsite wardens met at the Rose & Crown in Brockenhurst on 1st July for a lunchtime reunion. It had been 30 years since I and AO Linda Cox joined the recreation team in the New Forest. As a forester it was quite a challenge not to be concerned about felling and selling timber, but the camping pitch income was considerable. Linda is now the Office Manager at The Queen's House in Lyndhurst.

It was great fun with many reminiscences and stories being told of the highlights, crises and dramas of running the 10 New Forest campsites with 4,000 pitches, often with 10 – 15 thousand

people camping on bank holidays and busy weekends.

With those numbers, we reminded ourselves that in running the 304 lavatories, we shifted 3 million gallons of effluent, used 7 million sheets of loo paper and had loo seats broken every week during the season. There were numerous stories of ponies in tents and even one of a cow in a caravan at Denny Wood. We all agreed there was never a dull moment, though with very hard work and long hours, it was made all the more worthwhile with amusing incidents and happy campers.

This photograph taken outside the Rose & Crown shows who came to enjoy a very convivial lunch. Peggy Copson who ran Hollands Wood with her late husband Bob from 1976 – 1984.

Beryl Welton who ran Roundhill with her late husband Fred then Holmsley, Longbeech, Ocknell, PipersWait and Setthorns from 1978 – 1993.

David and Mary Meaden who ran Ashurst and Denny Wood from 1982 – 2004.

Gary and Lyn Withers-Lancashire who ran Longbeech, Ocknell from 1981 – 1986.

Eileen Leech who ran Hollands Wood with her late husband David from 1986 – 1992.

Molly Robertson who with her late husband Tony were Relief Wardens from 1980 – 1988.

Shelia Pople who with her late husband Eddy were Relief Wardens from 1989 – 1993.

Not forgetting the redoubtable, now retired, Bob Murray, who was the stores supremo and kept all the campsites supplied with their many items of weekly stores from the Burley Yard.



A Venerable Tree

During the summer, over the Festival, I visited the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. An artist, Carry Akroyd, had an exhibition of prints from linocuts and lithographs in the John Hope Gateway. Her work was both fascinating and evocative, you can see it on her website. It illustrated poetry from an earlier age. A particular one was about a venerable tree, I can share it with you.

Her next exhibitions are in the Nuneaton and Bedworth Art Gallery from 14th January to 11th March 2012 and Jerram Gallery in Sherbourne, Dorset from 18th February to 3rd March. If you are staying nearby, have a visit. You will enjoy her work. Go to her website www.carryakroyd.co.uk and you will see the full extent of her artistry and the future locations of exhibitions.

You can also see her work in the "Woodlanders" which was book reviewed in the last issue of FCA Today. In addition, she worked with the Aig an Oir (At the Edge) project when the Society of Wildlife Artists visited Scotland's Atlantic oak woods in 2004. She has some prints of Argyll in the book (Langford Press 2005).

Nothingness of Life

*I never pass a venerable tree
Pining away to nothingness & dust
Ruins vain shades of power I never see
Once dedicated to times cheating trust
But warm reflection wakes her saddest thought
& views life's vanity in cheerless light
& sees earth's bubbles youth so eager sought
Burst into emptiness of lost delight
& all the pictures of life's early day
Like evenings striding shadows haste away
Yet there's a glimmering of pleasure springs
From such reflections of earth's vanity
That pines & sickens o'er life's mortal things
& leaves a relish for eternity*

John Clare



Book Review

Using Alternative Conifer Species for Productive Forestry in Scotland

by Scott McG. Wilson

**FCS Conifer Diversification
Seminars – May 2011**

**Using alternative conifer
species for productive
forestry in Scotland**

Dr. Scott McG. Wilson MICFor

*Consultant Forester and Forest Ecologist
Aberdeen, Scotland, UK*

This publication, sponsored by FCS and the International Year of the Forests 2011, provides valuable and comprehensive information on alternative conifer species suitable for productive forestry in Scotland. The diversification of forest composition is an important element in the current development of forests, either newly planted or at restocking. Forest diversity will guard against future biological or abiotic threats.

The booklet is clearly laid out and amply illustrated with photographs and supporting tables. It has a reader friendly method of presenting the contents. There is a page colour code for each species and for each there are details of potential, existing resources, site suitability, provenance, silviculture,

establishment, marketing, processing, demonstration stands and uses. In the introduction there is general information on diversification, establishment and silviculture. Scott has assembled a vast amount of information in a well presented booklet that turns basic facts into an enjoyable read.

This booklet can be obtained free of charge from: -

Mike Strachan
Forestry Commission
Algo Business Centre
Glenearn Road
Perth. PH2 0NJ Tel: 01738 442 830

Guidance on the same subject has been prepared for Wales by FCW. Go to the website in the Woodlands and Environment section. Ed.

Footnote

Scott's current project will examine how ecological restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites can be reconciled with retaining timber potential. Current restoration often gives woodland conservation priority. However this may compete with productive forestry where valuable conifers could be grown and where continuous forestry cover is being implemented. We saw this conflict at Gwydyr Forest during the AGM tour. We await Scott's next publication with interest.

Do you have any pictures for the website gallery?

Post or e-mail them to the editor. Contact details are on the back page.

If pictures are sent by post, please indicate if you require them returned.

www.fca-today.com

Look Out for Commas in Scotland

Want a project next year? Then look out for Commas in Scotland. This distinctive orange and brown butterfly, well known in England, is making a come back in Scotland. It can be found in gardens and woods from April to September and hibernates as the adult over winter. Commas have been spreading up the east coast to Aberdeen and in the west to Motherwell. In the Central Belt they have arrived at Bridge of Allan. The Butterfly Conservation charity is asking for help in tracking their expansion north. Can you help? For details, go to: -

www.butterfly-conservation.org/scottishcommasurvey

Get spotting next year!



How Are Capers Doing?

The capercaille is the world's largest grouse and is widely distributed in northern Europe and Asia. The "Horse of the Forest" lives in mature conifer forests and prefers pinewoods. In Britain it only occurs in Scotland, while three quarters of the population is found in Strathspey and Badenoch.

Within living memory the caper was considered a forest pest, many retired foresters will recall taking action against them. In the 1970s there were thought to be over 20,000. Recent surveys show that the population has fallen to 2000 in 2003 and to 1200 in 2009. Why? The caper faces many environmental threats and pressures. While their survival is favoured by harsh winters followed by a rapid flush in spring, these conditions are exceptional. A cold and wet June is a great threat to the chick survival.

Recent research by wildlife organisations, including FCS, showed that, beside weather conditions, chick production had declined. Pine marten and fox droppings had greatly increased in caper localities. Nothing can be done about

the weather, but much can be done about habitat improvement. There are many partnership projects supporting capers including the FC Challenge Fund which has already dealt with the removal of 220km. of fences thought to be a risk. If you do visit woods where capers are known to thrive, go with care, they are sensitive to disturbance.



OBITUARIES

Finlay MacRae has many memories of **WILLIAM (WILLIE) BEATTIE** who passed away in September at 97 years of age.

I first met Willie Beattie when he was head forester at Strathconon.

Taken prisoner by the Japanese in the Far East in WWII, he spent some years in a prisoner camp. A forthright and endearing part of his strong character was his acceptance with unusually good grace of his term there.

He had no great dislike of his captors and studied their culture, including their poetry.

My involvement with Willie during his time at Strathconon involved us very closely in the part that red deer played in the forest environment in this beautiful glen. We were on the same wavelength for the acceptance of a measure of red deer in the woodlands.

A small woodland of about 50 acres was set aside, and the fence around it allowed deer being fed close by to seek woodland and shelter. The idea worked well and damage to Scots pine, birch, larch and other native species was acceptable, and the deer gained much needed winter shelter. Willie may well have been at the forefront of accepting that red deer need shelter and that they are woodland animals.

Best of all I remember Willie and his good lady Cathie for their hospitality on my many visits to the glen. They were a couple apart in many respects and greatly admired and loved by colleagues and friends. Cathie pre-deceased Willie many years ago – he will be sadly missed by a wide range of friends and professional associates.

Ron Birkitt and his wife Ann have fond memories of Ron's sister **JOYCE JENKINS** who died recently. Joyce came from a Forestry Commission family and in true tradition joined as a forest clerk

when she left school. Joyce attended Thetford Grammar School and her first job was at Croxton Forest with Forester Bertie Woodrow.

After a few years her father was transferred to Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk and so Joyce moved with her family. In those days rules were very strict about working for your father and so Joyce had to leave and went to work in the Officers Club on RAF Bentwaters.

Joyce then moved to Holt and was employed again by the FC and worked with Bob Alpe and Barry Martin, while the DO was Brian Roebuck.

During the many amalgamations of Districts, Wensum forest office was closed in the 1980's and Joyce then worked at Santon Downham office. It was during that time that the payroll was going computerised and she became responsible for the running of the manual payroll while the computerised version was being tested.

In 1988 Joyce was made redundant and she then transferred to the Treasury Office in Norwich. Joyce stayed in Norwich until her retirement and completed over 40 years with the Civil Service.

Bart Venner remembers with affection, **JOHN "TWIGGY" LEEFE**. He was transferred into the Dean Forestry School in 1951 to become the Deputy Education Officer, a post he held until 1956.

Nick named "Twiggy" for obvious reasons, he knew and respected it once he was away from Parkend. He would expect to be called that by ex-students of his era.

He had a good sense of humour outside the classroom. He was renowned for his end of term exams, and famous for his "spotter" question paper which involved looking at a series of pictures, or real life objects, that the students had to recognise and identify to the best of their ability.

There was an occasion after the end of the Easter exam in 1956, when we as a group were unhappy with the question paper. Twiggy came out of the School and got into his car at lunchtime to go home. A trusty gang of students waited till he was in his car and then proceeded to lift it and the owner on to the pavement outside the school, and park it on it's side so that he couldn't get out. Then we walked away. After some minutes as the driver was getting quite hot we relented and put the car back on its wheels.

John was a great attendee at the Dean FTS student reunion dinners where we would chat about the "good old days".

This was only a small part of John's career. He was also Head of the Forester School in Cyprus and a neighbouring DO when I was in the Northampton District. However I couldn't find anyone to write up other parts of his full and eventful career. Ed

Past Bangor students will remember with affection **ERIC HUGGARD**, lecturer in Forest Engineering. He was born in Co. Mayo in 1919 and graduated in Civil Engineering from Trinity College Dublin in 1942. He joined the RAF and saw war service in Europe. He returned to the UK after the war and joined the FC, working in Brechfa amongst other places.

He joined the Forestry Dept. of UCNW as lecturer in 1954 remaining there until his retirement in 1982. While at UCNW he authored one book and co-authored two others on forestry. After the death of his first wife he moved to Co. Antrim. He led a full and active life right up to the end, dying at the grand age of 91. Past students will recall his great sense of humour, his encouragement of students and his love of life. It was a pleasure to have been taught by him, a memorable man.

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