



A New Environmental Body for Wales

A new body that will include the functions of Forestry Commission Wales, Countryside Council for Wales and Environment Agency Wales is likely to come into being on 1 April, 2013.

The aim of the new body will be to sustainably manage Wales's natural resources and a consultation document on the proposal is available at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations

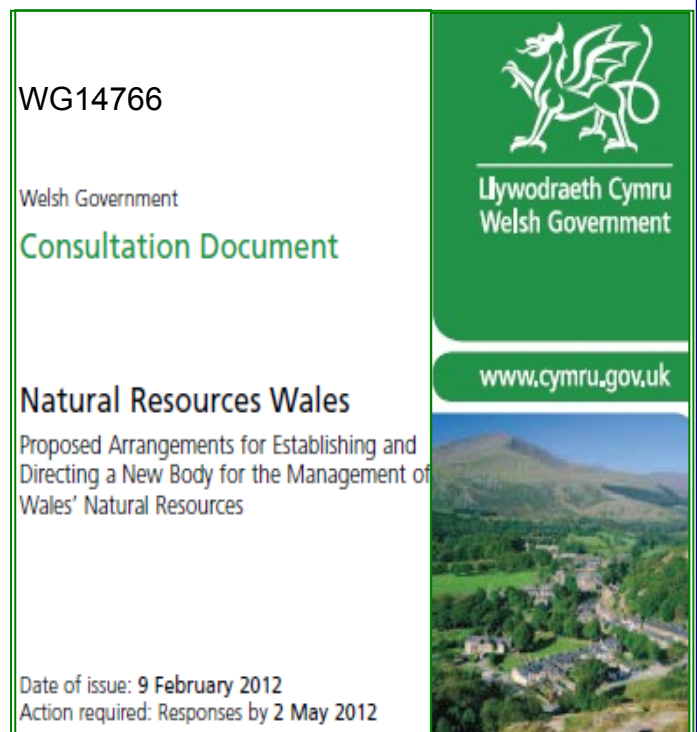
The Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, John Griffiths, announced his intention to create the new body after staff from each of the three organisations and the Welsh Government prepared a detailed business case that evaluated the benefits of working together.

Senior staff from FC Wales have maintained a close dialogue with the forestry and wood processing sectors and encouraged them to contribute to the Welsh Government's consultations on the move.

The Minister has offered reassurance that forest management was an important part of the new body in order to further develop the benefits that trees bring to Wales, and his commitment to the continued delivery of the Wales Woodland Strategy.

He also re-stated the Welsh Government's commitment to maintaining a large, publicly-owned woodland estate in Wales.

FC Wales continues to be closely involved in the creation of the new body, with 11 members of staff seconded to the Welsh Government to work on the transition phase.



New Forestry Commission England Hits Ground Running

The restructured Forestry Commission in England takes full effect from 2 April 2012. The Public Forest Estate is now divided into six Districts instead of 11 and our grants, licensing and wider woodland advice works across five Areas instead of nine Regions. The main national office remains in Bristol. Full details are available online.

Much of the new structure has been working in the background already and our new administrative hubs will be developed over the next 12 months. Some customers and partners will be dealing with new people and offices and

we are working hard to make contact with everyone we need to.

Simon Hodgson, Forestry Commission Chief Executive explained:

"We have dealt with a period of change like no other in the Forestry Commission's 90 year history. It has been a challenging year for us to create a smaller, more efficient organisation remaining focused on balancing the needs of people, business and the environment. We

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New Forestry Commission England Hits Ground Running *continued*

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keep our core responsibilities to protect, improve and expand England's woodlands and will do things that only Government should do.

Now that we're smaller, and often working across larger areas, it also means focusing our efforts where they're really going to count."



The Forest Services Areas and Our Forest Districts maps are on the Forestry Commission website.

From the Editor

There was very little response to my request for copy in the winter issue, apart from contributions by "The old Faithful".

Come on readers, if you enjoy a read why not contribute.



The next issue will be very slim unless copy turns up from someone, and is that someone you? Readers are always interested in retirement activities, the more unusual the better.

Go for it – now.

Richard Toleman

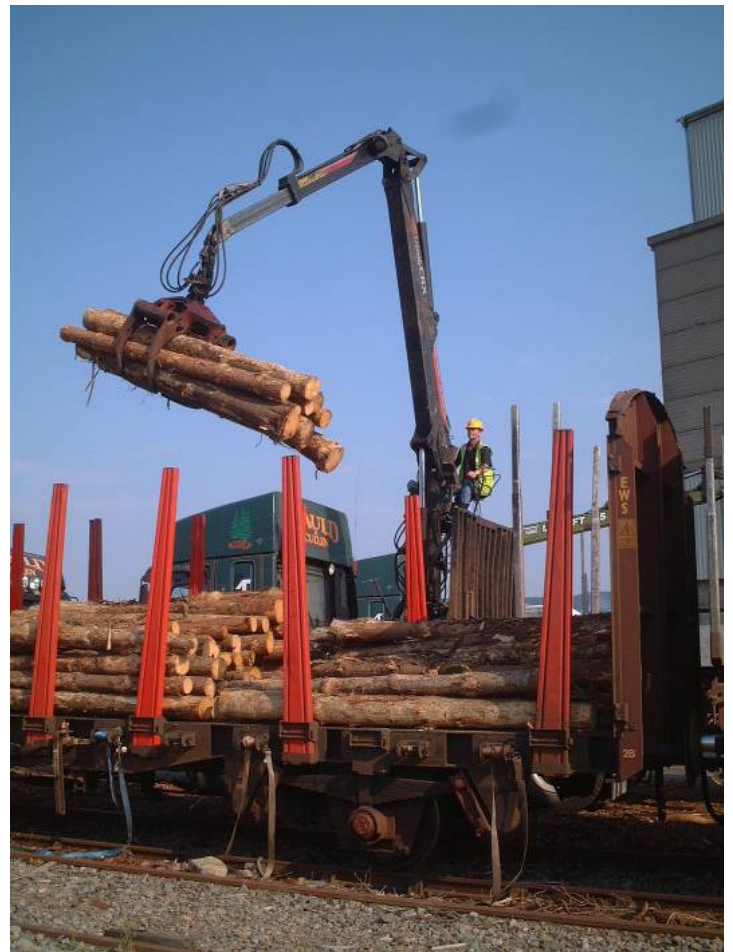
Far North Timber Traffic in Prospect



A new flow of timber by rail is likely to begin on the Far North of Scotland line in the next few months.

A loading centre is being built at Kinbrace between Helmsdale and Wick from where timber trains will run to an unloading terminal in Inverness. From here it will be shifted by lorry to the Norbord mill at Dalcross, 6 miles to the east.

Finance for this project has come from the Scottish Strategic Timber Transport Fund, a scheme supported by FCS with the objective of promoting environmentally friendly timber transport in rural areas. The money has been used to convert container wagons into timber carrying flat wagons.



Unloading timber from Kinbrace at Inverness

Bark! Internal news and views of the Forestry Commission

Check out the new FC blog at <http://news.forestry.gov.uk>

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

Anyone Want a Chair? – and Other Woody Delights

By Eric Rogers

So what about my life up to retirement? After Grammar School, I joined a private estate, then National Service in Hong Kong and Malaya, (here I was shot by a bandit), Lynford Hall, Eastern England, Kesteven, Huntingdon and the Chilterns, seven years in Work Study, finishing up on pine forests in Eastern England and retiring as District Forester, Forest Management at Thetford.

I had a very interesting life, but I have always considered the day I retired as one of the happiest, just before computers, other than the database. I had enough of budgeting, re-budgeting, revising and re-revising, and the future looked more like pop concerts than planting trees. I now had time for hobbies.

I had been on Mike Abbott's courses, and soon I made more chairs than the house could accommodate.



Anyone want a chair?

I made wooden spoons my "thing", published a "How to do it" book and went to Williamsburg in America and to Sweden to train with Willi Sundquist.

I was a founder member of the Association of Pole Lathe Turners and I have written articles



Shingle making at Williamsburgh USA

in their quarterly Gazette for many years. These included a report of a trip to Novgorod in Russia where the 900AD village was being



Pole lathe

excavated. Practically everything was made of wood and was in excellent preservation. More recently I have been to Stockholm to the 'Vasa', a 17th century warship, almost 98% intact, after being sunk shortly after being launched. Close by was an excellent reconstructed village of houses from all parts of Sweden, re-erected and furnished, all mostly in wood.

Before I retired, I had been organising the Royal Norfolk Show woodlands exhibit. I was later asked to organise the Woodland Crafts section of the Norfolk Show and only this

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Anyone Want a Chair? – and Other Woody Delights *continued*

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year, after about 20 years, I have passed the baton on. Some of the best greenwood workers in the country now come to the Show.

You cannot be making woody things all of the time, so I spent many happy hours recording for the “Flora of Norfolk” and, just for pleasure, bird watching mostly on the North Norfolk Coast



Eric retiring from The Royal Norfolk Show

with colleagues from F.C. days. There were also the local visits to grand houses and gardens in East Anglia and quite a large garden of my own to cultivate.

For holidays I have been to Crete, which I loved for its history, flora, mountains, coasts, food and

people. Oh, yes. I almost forgot the Black Poplars. I started on that before it became so popular, recording throughout Norfolk, and collected cuttings material for the County Council who have distributed trees through the County to ensure their future.

Nobody need worry about being bored when they retire. I have managed nearly 20 years in spite of the triple heart by-pass and a couple of mini-strokes, although perhaps I ought to slow down a bit now! But before I do that, I'm off to my yoga class.



No time to sit!

*View or download earlier issues of FCA Today
from the FCA website at: -*

www.fca-today.com

A Walk On The Wild Side

By Mike Whitlock

"From the Editor" in the Summer issue of "FCA Today" stated "Why am I not receiving copy.... but we are all doing interesting things in our retirement". However, I suspect that readers feel that what they do in what they consider their rather mundane lives will be of no interest to others. Many retirees are advanced in age and much of the travelling they do is to hospital or surgery. So I am responding to Richard's plea and relating what I did during 5 days in late July of 2011.

I have to state that I am very fortunate healthwise. Although I am 84 years old, I rarely think about this. Calendar age is meaningless. Biological age, although difficult to determine, is what matters. I am only conscious of my calendar age when descending steep slopes. Then I realise that my knees are not what they were. I also suspect that my balance may not be so good as it was and I feel more tired after a day's exertion.

On the Monday morning I drove to that marvellous viewpoint, Barrow Wake, near Birdlip in the Cotswolds. It was fine and sunny and I could see Gloucester, the Severn Valley, the Forest of Dean, Black Mountains, Malvern Hills and the distant Shropshire hills. I then did a 6 mile walk that started as an undulating path through beechwoods, The Cotswolds Way, and over fields to Brimpsfield. This was typical Cotswold scenery with limestone cottages and farms and a walk not much different from one I could do at home.



Barrow Wake

The next five nights were spent at a farm near Abergavenny. Tuesday dawned sunny and warm so now it was the real hills that beckoned. Those familiar with the Black Mountains will know that they consist of long moorland ridges divided by narrow valleys with a mixture of small fields and woodland. The main valley is called the Vale of Ewyas. It is usually known as the Llanthony valley after its principal settlement with its ruined priory, although the river is the Honddu. I drove along this valley to Capel y Ffin (Chapel at the End) and started walking. For a short distance, the route followed the east side of the valley in a southerly direction, then the first climb commenced. I went up through bracken and small trees to open moorland, eventually arriving on to the Hatterall ridge. From here I followed a broad track that was part of the Offa's Dyke long distance path and was well frequented by walkers and pony trekkers. I eventually reached Hay Bluff (677m/2221ft) at the end of the ridge with Hay and the Wye Valley below. This is a popular spot with paragliders and people who have climbed up from the car parks below.

My way lay to the south west descending to the road at the Gospel Pass and then a



Lord Hereford's Knob (Twmpa)

steady climb up to Lord Hereford's Knob (Twmpa). From there it was another pleasant ridge walk along the west side of the Llanthony Valley. I like ridge walks because, in addition to usually being fairly level, they afford good views on both sides. The ridge ended in a steep descent to Capel y Ffin.

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A Walk On The Wild Side *continued*

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Another walker equipped with poles came striding up behind me and plunged on through the scrubby vegetation straight down the hill. He was in long trousers, I was in shorts. I had to look for a gentler way down but did not succeed in finding it. At one point I followed what appeared to be a narrow path through gorse and bracken. One foot slipped on some loose earth and small stones and down I went. However with only an elbow graze, I descended the slope and reached my car at Capel y Ffin. The guide book said that the walk was 10 miles. I recorded 12 miles but one must remember that in ascending and descending and over rough ground I was taking shorter steps.

The walk on the Wednesday was slightly easier. It involved taking a path from Llanthony which climbed the flank of a hillside parallel with a deep gully. The weather was hot and close during the climb, so I was glad to reach the cooler air of the open moor even though there was virtually no wind.



Capel y Ffin Monastery

From then on it was a pleasant ridge walk to the west of the Llanthony valley and overlooking Mynydd Du forest. The highest point reached was 679 metres. I descended to Capel y Ffin passing the striking white buildings of the former monastery, now a riding centre and returned to Llanthony.

Thursday was the adventurous day. I have walked in the Black Mountains before, but I had never been to the Black Mountain at the extreme western end of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It is sometimes shown on maps as the "Carmarthen Van". This mountain area is not easily accessible. The approach is from the east along a mountain road from Senni Bridge, and through



Red Kite

Glasfynydd Forest to Cross Inn. This has been renamed "The Red Kite" and I read later that red kites were fed there. As proof I saw one.

I walked to Llandeusant after which the narrow, steep and undulating road deteriorated into a rough surface, but when I reached the open moorland, it becomes a broad straight track made by the water company for access to a small reservoir.



Llandeusant

Most walkers seemed to take a direct approach to the mountain by walking up this broad track, but I tackled it by walking up the western ridge following the guide book directions.

After a steady climb I reached the top of the sandstone cliffs with Llyn y Fan Fach nestled below. I followed the cliff edge and the peaks of Bannau Sir Gaer and the dramatic Picws



Bannau Sir Gaer

Du. There was then a steep descent to a cwm. Although I had a 1:50000 O.S. map, I thought that I had completed all the peaks but was puzzled by the steep slope in front of me. Another walker showed me on his GPS that the highest point lay ahead, so another climb to Fan Foel and finally, Fan Brycheiniog the

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A Walk On The Wild Side *continued*

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highest peak with its trig point (802m/2632ft).

I had to decide on the return route. I could follow the ridge and, perhaps, a gentle descent to Llyn y Fan Fawr. It would be quite a long way round. The alternative way was the one described in the guide book - *"plunges steeply downhill initially on a narrow path to the foot of the mountains; slippery and difficult in wet, icy or snowy conditions (crampons needed); wriggles around the foot of Bannau Sir Gaer whose N.W. face towers above; one section squeezes past a rock outcrop beneath which the path is narrow and has crumbled away in places - cross with care."* It was not a description to engender great confidence but I decided to risk it. It meant taking a short cut back to the dip where the descent started. I negotiated it with trepidation and extreme caution in view of my experience of two days ago. A slip was unthinkable because the slope was steep with low cliffs farther down. One should be able to follow the path without much use of hands but I used my hands to steady myself against rocks. Incidentally, this is why I find poles an encumbrance. I need my hands to be free. The rock overhang meant bending down quite low. When I reached safer ground

I watched other walkers descend and it seemed as if they were just walking along Oxford Street or Princes Street. There was a time when I would have had such confidence but I do not do so much of this type of walking nowadays and as my knees are not so good, my balance may be suspect. I recorded a 9 mile walk.

The last day of my holiday was rather an anticlimax. It was damp and drizzly with low cloud.

I walked about 8 miles along the Brecon Canal from Abergavenny towards Pontypool, returning by bus. Quite a change from steep mountain slopes.



Brecon canal

It will probably be said 'why has he written so much about very little out of the ordinary?' I accept this criticism, but I hope that it stimulates others to write about more fascinating places they have visited or interesting activities they have engaged in. Perhaps it will be something more adventurous than climbing high hills because they happen to be there. If this happens the editor's plea will be answered.

Brecon Beacons

My Life in the Forestry Commission

By Eric Crofts

Part 3 : First year at Forester Training School 1954 - 55

When I arrived at Faskally FTS in 1954, the staff members were Tom Robbie, the Principal, whose flat was on the top floor at the north end of the house, D.O. Robertson, whose house was at the road end of the central drive, HF "Daddy" Stoddart, who lived on the other side of the railway, and Forester Ian Garrioch, whose house was beside the A9. Robertson taught Botany, Stoddart Prep Ground and Garrioch Forms. There was a Secretary, a Matron, a Cook and three girls. The ground floor of the house held the Games Room, the Common Room, two classrooms, the Dining Room, the Kitchen and the offices. Upstairs the Seniors' bedrooms were at the front and the Juniors' and Domestics' rooms at the rear. The motor bikes were parked in an alley at the back.

We numbered 18 and were divided into three squads. We spent one or two days a week in class and on the other days, worked in neighbouring forests, brashing trees in Craigvinean, and planting in Fonab and Glenarrochty Forest. Afterwards, we visited Drummond Hill Forest and saw the cruck house at the Clachan of Dull. In addition, on wet days, we passed the time in discussion.

Generally the food was plentiful, but the sandwich fillings were sparse. In my bag, I had a jar of peanut butter, one of jam and a knife. The bread was more palatable with a thick layer of butter and jam. One morning, a dish of kippers was put on the table. I like kippers, many of the lads didn't. I wrapped my sandwiches in paper and filled my tin with kippers. At lunchtime, after I had my fill, I called, "Anyone want a kipper?" There was a rush. I had to ration them to half a fish.

Our first term, October to Christmas 1954, was an interesting one. I hitchhiked to Glasgow, stayed overnight with my brother, went home and drove my motorbike back to Faskally. I was now able to enjoy the open

road. Pete Fligg and I shared a room. We got jobs as scene-shifters from 8pm to 10pm at five shillings per hour in Pitlochry Festival Theatre. The afternoon shift had prepared the stage for the first evening performance. During the interval, we put up the scenery for the second one and, at the end, set the stage for the next day's play. But, the actors kept us waiting while they argued, changed the layout and messed about, so we were kept until midnight. We didn't mind, £1 was better than 10/- . After a few weeks we were told that our wage would be 10/- for all hours worked, so we resigned.

One evening, Roy Arrowsmith came to say that he had retuned his bike and asked if I would listen to it. We went out to the ally. "You'll hear it better if we go for a run, sit on the pillion". He kick started and moved off so quickly that I had to grab him to avoid being thrown off. The bike had no silencer! We roared up the south drive to the A9, then went north and down the north drive. Robbie was standing outside the house with his arms spread wide. I turned my head away from the light and pressed close to Roy. We shot past Robbie and went up the south drive for the second time. We stopped some way along the A9 and pushed the bike to the central drive and along it to the hill leading down to the house. Roy got on and free-wheeled down, I walked. At breakfast, the talk was of the hideous noise made by those damned Pitlochry motorbikers.



I went home every second weekend. On one occasion, it had rained heavily but it was dry after lunch and I set off. Going over a rise before Crianlarich, I saw below me a flat stretch of road, a very squat car and a very

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My Life in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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tall man standing at its offside. Getting nearer, I saw that the flat road was water, the car was immersed in it and the man was standing on its running-board. If I tried to stop, the bike and I would end up lying in the water. I opened the throttle and plunged in. Water rose high on both sides, the man and car disappeared. My speed carried me through, but one cylinder had died and the other one stuttered. Then both roared into life. That man must have been soaked. I didn't go back.

In early 1955, Robbie and Robertson were replaced by Hector Cruickshank and Esmond Harris. On a cold dismal day, my class was sent with a German hypsometer to practice measuring tall trees at the bay. On the way home, someone said to Roy that it was too cold for a swim. Four of them each bet half-a-crown that he wouldn't go in. He took them on. We went down to the landing. I held the money and Roy's hat, coat, jacket and wellies. He dived in, swam a few strokes, turned back, climbed out, donned his wellies and ran to the house. When we got there, he was wearing dry clothes and a big grin.

We planted trees on Fonab Moor where there was a lochan with an island in the centre on which scores of black-headed gulls laid their eggs. Joe Pearce stripped off and, holding his shirt above his head waded out to it. He bundled a few dozen eggs in his shirt and returned. No one accepted his offers, so he had several fried eggs with every meal. I feel sure he must have become constipated. Pat Alexander had a Rudge motorbike and a sidecar which could be hitched on when required.



On a run to Rannoch Station in the west, I saw a footpath sign reading "The Road to the Isles". On the following Saturday, he and I took our rucksacks, tent,

sleeping bags and food and rode along that path. We left the bikes at a steep-sided burn and walked on to Corrou Station and the Youth Hostel where we camped. On the Sunday, we walked around the loch.



Corrou Station

Seated on a pile of logs to eat our lunch, we observed one of Nature's wonders. A sawfly landed beside us. It raised its tail vertically and its ovipositor, which had lain along its belly, was pointed down. The insect's rear end moved up and down and the saw-tooth lance bore into the wood. The sawfly knew that the grub of another insect was down there. It would lay an egg on top of it. Its grub would feed on the larger one. We returned to our bikes and to Faskally. On Midsummer Eve, Pat, Roy and I, with two of the girls climbed Ben Vrackie to see the sunrise next morning. On the summit, we had supper and settled down for the night. We woke to find ourselves in a cloud. We couldn't wait, we had to descend to go to work.

The Summer of 1955 was the very best in my lifetime. When the mornings got lighter, on my visits home, I stayed overnight on Sunday and left at 6am the next morning. The roads were quiet and I was back at Faskally in time for breakfast. Lecturers from East of Scotland Agricultural College came to give advice on living in the country.

One spoke of growing vegetables, another on bee keeping. He heard of a hive in the old garden and took us there to demonstrate how to remove the combs. We stood in a half circle around him and the hive.



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My Life in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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He didn't use nets or gloves, but simply lulled the bees with smoke from his puffer. Without meaning to, I was standing near the gate. Joe Pearce, standing on the far side started to wave his hands, then ran towards me and the gate. The old man just had time to say, "Ye should never run in front of a hive, laddie", before the bees came out. I was one of the first through that gate and was unscathed, but many other lads were badly stung.

By June, Loch Faskally became warm enough to tempt me into the water. On a warm, sunny morning we went by coach to Tentsmuir Forest. After we had lunch in the dunes behind the beach, some of the lads decided to go into the water. Stripped naked, they



Loch Faskally

headed seawards. Immediately after the whooping mob had passed on, a young girl and her boyfriend rose from a hollow and hurried away. On the way home, I accompanied the singer on the coach with my comb and paper.

On my way to Mass in Pitlochry on a Sunday morning, I saw a rare sight. A movement, half-right, made me stop. Then I saw it again. It was a weasel, moving left. I looked half-left. A rabbit was grazing. When it ate, the weasel moved. When it looked up, the weasel stopped. Soon, the predator pounced. A brief squeak and it was over.

At the end of July, we went on holiday. In mid August, the seniors went to their postings. The Juniors went on for six more weeks to another FTS. With Roy Arrowsmith and John Bartle, I went to Lynford Hall. The others went either to Benmore or Gwydyr or Parkend. That's for part 4.

The photograph on the following page shows the Class of 1954 - 1956 at the Faskally Forester Training School.





Faskally Forester Training School 1954 - 56 Class

This photograph is on the www.forestry-memories.org.uk website and is listed as part of Bill Stoddart's collection of images taken when he was a lecturer at several Forester Training Schools. Donald Beaton provided the information on this photograph which was taken in 1956 at the end of the course.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ron Troughton | 12. David Main |
| 2. John Bartle | 13. Pat Alexander |
| 3. Alistair Brown | 14. Ken Fryer |
| 4. Fred Burgen | 15. Pete Fligg |
| 5. Harry Thirwell | 16. Esmond Harris (Instructor) |
| 6. Dave Williams | 17. Mr Cruickshanks (Head) |
| 7. Donald Beaton | 18. Bill Stoddart (Instructor) |
| 8. Joe Pearce | 19. Ian Garrioch (Instructor) |
| 9. Brian Maughn | 20. Eric Crofts |
| 10. Jim Johnstone | 21. Roddy Ross |
| 11. Jim McLean | 22. Gordon Thirde |

There are more photographs on the www.forestry-memories.org.uk website.

Forest Worker Training Scheme

By Ted Baldwin



For some of an ever dwindling band of octogenarian FC retirees, the Government's post war Forest Worker Training Scheme (FWTS) was the start of a forestry career.

Designed to encourage ex-servicemen into forestry, it provided a year's basic training at locations throughout the UK.

Accommodation was usually provided, with a weekly allowance of about £2.

A brief trot down my own memory lane of the FWTC may rekindle some experiences of others of the life as a trainee worker in those post war years.

After serving 4 years in the Fleet Air Arm after leaving school, on demob, I was clueless as to what I wanted to do. The FWTC recruitment leaflet offered the opportunity of a healthy outdoor life, in an expanding industry with good prospects. I vividly recall this leaflet which had an iconic photo of a forester contemplating a vista of young conifers and bore the caption, "In the woods is perpetual youth" (Emerson). Irrisistable!

After completing the application form, and having my suitability assessed by a selection board at the old Conservancy Office at Briar House, York, I was accepted. I was notified when my training would start and that I should report to Scarborough station at 5pm. for an FC lorry to take me to Birch Hall. I was advised to purchase a pair of heavy working boots for which I would be refunded a maximum of 30 shillings after successfully completing 3 months' training, and on the production of a receipt.

Birch Hall was nothing more than an encampment of wooden dormitory huts that had been built to accommodate forest workers in the depression years of the 1930s. Subsequently, it had been used by the Army when the North Yorks Moors was a training ground. For ex-servicemen this was an abrupt return to camp life but thankfully free of service

discipline and "bull". The huts accommodated a dozen or more trainees, each of whom had a bed and small clothes cupboard. Life was Spartan with little privacy. As food was still rationed, meals were meagre and basic, but we were all in the same boat and had to make the most of it.

I was not aware of any structured training programme or individual progress assessments during the year, but there must have been. Our daily work was determined by the camp's resident foreman/ganger. He organised us into working parties which were supervised by a local forest worker. Much of the work was within walking distance at Langdale, Broxa and Bickley. Anything further involved a bumpy ride in the back of an old FC lorry. We drew our tools daily from the camp store. Health & Safety considerations did not figure prominently and protective clothing was unheard of, except for the heavy working boots. Work experience varied according to the seasons and the willingness of local foresters to provide jobs for itinerant bands of trainees.

During my time at Birch Hall, new heathland nurseries were being opened on Broxa moor. Many a day was spent on this bleak plateau in a biting east wind, endlessly making roughly rotavated ground into seedbeds for spring sowing. As an encouragement to produce the fine tilth required, we were told that there was a chance of finding prehistoric flint arrow heads or other ancient artefacts. Slim chance! I only ever found an irregular shaped piece of flint which may have been a prehistoric huntsman's scraper.

It was at Langdale that I first saw forest ploughs in action. I was impressed by their power and the way the RLR produced a massive ridge and furrow.



RLR forest plough

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Forest Worker Training Scheme *continued*

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On one occasion all available tractors were mobilised to prepare a fire trace to prevent a large moorland fire from spreading into forestry ground. Trainees and forest workers were all supplied with shovels in an effort to contain the fire. As the open moor had been used by the

Army for training, the abandoned ammunition started exploding rather alarmingly as the fire spread. For the local forest workers, the days spent at the fire were profitable with lots of overtime and the opportunity to claim for damaged clothing and footwear. It was quite surprising how many jackets, trousers and boots were damaged beyond repair. As far as I can recall, trainees were not eligible for this compensation.

Scarborough was the place to go during our free time. On Saturday afternoons an FC lorry was provided to take us to the "Big city".

It was a chance to have a decent meal at Birkdale café with generous helpings of eggs and chips.

At other times a local farmer, who had an old RAF Crewbus, would make it available if somebody was willing to drive.



RAF Crewbus

During my year on the FWTS there was a fairly high wastage with some trainees lasting only a few days, not long enough to be reimbursed the cost of the boots.

However I managed to survive the year and received my Certificate of Training indicating that, in the opinion of Mr. C.A.Connell, Conservator of Forests NE(E), I was competent to carry out the duties of a forest worker. Oh joy! I could now look forward to being employed by the FC at £4 pw. and to be eligible for fire damaged personal equipment.

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

Letters to the Editor

In the winter edition of FCA Today Bart Vener remarked that he couldn't find anyone to write up aspects of Jack Leefe's career out-with the FTS in the Dean. In this connection the following will be of interest to readers.

In 1974 my wife Jess and I rented a cottage in Karni a short distance from the north coast of Cyprus. We already knew Jack Leefe from his time in the Dean and elsewhere.

About 1972 Jack had become Principal at Cyprus Forestry College, an establishment for training Cypriots and other Commonwealth people as foresters.



Cyprus Forestry College

We had a few days on the coast and then I rang Jack and said that we were on the island. His immediate response was "Why not come up to the college for a few days. It's cooler here in the Troodos Mountains and the mosquitoes are less voracious". Monday morning arrived with a hubbub in the villages around and all the church bells ringing. On enquiring it transpired that part of the Greek population of the island had armed themselves and were demanding Enosis (union with Greece). The Turkish population was resisting this and there was some fighting.

However, Jack was expecting us in the Troodos so we piled our luggage and family into the car and set off southwards.

One of the more amusing incidents of this journey was watching the police force of the village of Morphou locking themselves in their



Driving in the Troodos Mountains

own jail in the expectation of a rebellious onslaught. We were welcomed at the forest school and went out to visit the native cedar forests (*Cedrus brevifolia*) where I had my boys climbing for cones with only minor interference from revolutionaries.

The BBC was reporting events in a fair and factual manner, but this did not go down well with the Greek Cypriots. Attitudes to the British, Arab and African students at the school hardened. There were threats to them and to other assorted western Europeans who had drifted into the school. Jack organised a minor refugee camp and we fed and housed a number of them.

On the top of Mount Olympus was an RAF Listening and Radar station with which Jack was in touch.



The RAF Commanding Officer decided that all "refugees" should come up to the station where the RAF would house them under canvas. Jack and I took turns to drive everyone up Mt. Olympus by car, especially the Arabs who were most at risk. By this time there were also Germans, Israelis, Americans and French people involved. A shot or two was fired at us on our way up.

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Letters to the Editor *continued*

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The following week the Turkish Government decided to enter the fray and carried out a very inefficient bombing raid, presumably on the RAF station. However, what they did manage to do was to set fire to a large area of pine forest. Jack organised parties of locals to put the fires out and we went up to damp it down and inspect the damage. The fact that "Made in England" was stamped on many bomb fragments did nothing to enhance our popularity!

The RAF looked after this motley crew very well, helped by Jack who sent up Halal meals cooked at the forest school for the Arabs. Eventually all the "refugees" were evacuated by helicopters and Hercules aircraft to Lydd in Kent.



Jack left the Cyprus Forest School at Christmas 1975 and returned to Britain. Some short while afterwards he was seconded to Somalia in which arid and savage country he survived, I think, two years.

Colin McLean

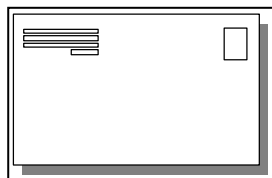


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Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today



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



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

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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.

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And finally"Every time I see an adult on a bicycle I no longer despair for the future of the human race". H.G.Wells.



OBITUARIES

George Bruce has told me of the death in October of **IKE ATKINSON** at the grand old age of 91.

Ike was born in Cartmel in the Furness District of the former Lancashire. He always visited his birthplace at least once a year but most of his life was spent in the western Lakes.

He began work as an apprentice joiner, wheelwright, cabinetmaker and undertaker in Lindale near Grange-over-Sands. He excelled as a cabinetmaker and was due to work for a prestigious cabinetmaker in Lancaster when World War 2 broke out and he joined the Royal Navy as a shipwright.

Rising to Chief Petty Officer, Ike served on HMS Newcastle and HMS Dido, travelling widely including America, Italy, Eritrea and Alexandria. He always related how, being trained as an undertaker, he was given the job of sewing dead bodies into canvas shrouds prior to burial at sea. Finally he was on destroyers guarding merchant shipping against the Wolf Pack U-boats in the North Sea. This was in his words "A terrifying experience" and his ship was torpedoed. Ike was one of only two survivors and as result was invalided out of the navy.

As part of his recovery process, he was required to be outdoors and joined the Timber Corps in the Dunnerdale Valley. It was here he met and married his first wife.

Ike then attended Gwydr FTS in the early fifties and on completion was posted to the

Lake District serving at Ennerdale, Blengdale, Dunnerdale and Mitredale. Other than a short spell at Kershope, he spent his whole career in the Lakes until retirement in 1983. However he continued as a contractor marking and measuring standing sales and measuring loads.

There was a low time in his life when his first wife died leaving him to bring up a teenage daughter. He did a grand job and his daughter has turned out to be credit to him. While at Blengdale, Ike found Elsie (literally found her lost in Blengdale forest!) and subsequently married her.

I first met him in July 1957 when I began work with the FC. On my first day I was brashing under the shadow of Pillar Rock in Ennerdale under the tuition of Adam, the Head Forester's father-in-law. Later in the day Ike arrived and asked how I was liking it and then, commenting how hot it was, removed his jacket and hung it up. He then wandered off and returned an hour or so later. When he saw that his jacket was still hanging up he quickly told me that I was supposed to be brashing, not creating coat hooks! That was Ike. He could have a sharp tongue but was always fair and even. When I took over from him after his retirement, I still learnt from his knowledge and we remained friends until he died.

He never lost his skill as a joiner and wheelwright. Many gardens in the area proudly

display one of Ike's detailed miniature wheel barrows, including my own.

At his funeral in the church at Gosforth, many of his old colleagues were present including ex FC staff, contractors and hauliers.

Peter Brett said that colleagues from the old South East England Conservancy will be saddened to hear of the death of **WILLIAM "JACK" DAVIES** who died in Tenby, Dyfed on 16th March 2012 at the age of 88.

Jack was born and raised in Tenby where he became a plumber's apprentice until he was called up as part of the War effort. The call up resulted in Jack being posted to the New Forest as a sapper in the Royal Engineers where he built and maintained the accommodation for troops preparing for the 'D' Day landings. He subsequently served in France and Belgium before being posted to Gibraltar where he met the lady who was to become his wife.

On being de-mobbed Jack decided that he no longer wanted to go back to the unpleasant aspects of plumbing. Perhaps as a result of his experiences working in the New Forest, he joined the FC as a forest worker at Bucklebury Forest in the early 1950s. It was not long before Jack's true potential was spotted and he was off to FTS in the Dean.

After graduating Jack had a spell in Kent, first as an ex-
Continued on next page ➡

OBITUARIES

Continued from previous page

school ganger and later as a Forester. On being promoted to Head Forester Jack moved to Abinger Forest and in 1972 he took charge of Ringwood Forest. Jack finally retired as Chief Forester in 1983 and moved back to Tenby with his wife Doris with plans to indulge his interests in botany and photography. Unfortunately Doris did not enjoy the best of health and died in 1985. Jack subsequently found his second wind and joined many organizations and societies in Tenby. They were too many to mention here, but he seemed to have the uncanny knack of being elected to the post of chairman and/or secretary of all of them at some point.

As a man manager Jack was a man ahead of his time, employing the principle of team empowerment before any of the modern day management gurus had committed the principles to print. I for one will forever be grateful to Jack for the support he gave me and the confidence he provided to test out new theories without fear of retribution if things went wrong!

Jack's name will be forever remembered at Ringwood Forest, not least because an area of woodland was unofficially named after him! For the ten years or so that Jack lived in Forest Lodge, Ashley Heath he took a very close interest in the small block of forest that abutted the property, reporting every

blocked drain, broken fence post and fallen branch to the forester responsible for managing the area. When this area was mapped by the local orienteering club they named the subsequent map 'Jack's Garden', and this name is now embedded in the local Parish Plan!

Jack leaves a son, David, and a daughter, Joy, and two grandchildren.

David Paterson told me of the death in December 2011 at Laurencekirk of **GEORGE A DEY** aged 87. George served as District Officer at Cairnbaan from 1955-63 and briefly in S(W) Cardiff before reaching his true home in the Nor' East. He was an individualist with many interests pursued with painstaking enthusiasm and absorption - photography, hill climbing, classical music and jazz. He wrote Scottish songs and humorous verse to celebrate family occasions and in retirement appropriately acted as a helper at the Lewis Grassie Gibbon Centre, fostering the culture of the Mearns. He built up a collection of superb photographs of Scottish landscape and was in high demand for slide shows, which were delivered in his natural Doric. In this he served the Commission well, making the forest voice heard to wider audiences. We will miss his generous hospitality when passing Laurencekirk. He rests close by Drumtochty forest where he first worked.

George Stewart remembers **PETER INNES** who died recently. He was born in Yoker where his father was the manager of the distillery. He was educated at Ballindalloch and Aberlour and on leaving school he began training as a land surveyor at Dunecht Estates.

In 1930 he joined the Royal Engineers in the TA. At the beginning of the War his unit became part of the 51st (Highland) Division and he went to France in January 1940. Six months later he was taken prisoner when the Division was forced to surrender at St. Valery.

Peter was sent to Poland for the rest of the war and took part in the infamous 500 mile "Long March" back towards the West, during which so many died in the extreme weather.

After demobilisation, he joined the FC as an Estates Officer where he remained until retirement 30 years later.

He served in Argyll and Dumfries before going to HQ in Edinburgh where he dealt with land acquisition. In this role he was responsible for acquiring land to meet the extensive planting programmes of the 1960s and 1970s. It was an important job and Peter carried it out with great success and with the admiration of all those with whom he worked.

After retirement he moved to Bonnington. He is survived by his wife, Janet, and their children Patricia and John.

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David Parnall (*Treasurer*)

Charles Dickens (*Group & FC Liaison Officer*)

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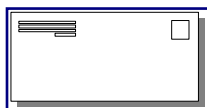
The next issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available on the www.fca-today.com website during the Summer/Autumn of 2012.

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Send your articles to the editor for publication in FCA Today



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