



Winter

FCA Today

The newsletter about former Forestry Commission employees

Issue 50 - Winter 2013

50th issue of FCA Today

From the Editor

A Happy Christmas and a Get Writing New Year!

I am cleaned out of copy.

I had to poach from another journal to find enough for this issue. I know the editor's life for a small newsletter is hard going, I could even say stressful.



However the easy way out is – no copy, no newsletter. Where is it all coming from?

Certainly it's a struggle to get it from the readers. I can't imagine your lives are so empty that you cannot find time for some contribution.

We battled to get our own newsletter in the old "Slasher" days, it would be sad to see it fail now through lack of interest, *especially as this is the 50th issue.*

Richard Toleman

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Days at Dean FTS

by Harry Pepper

I needed some old black and white photographs for an exercise set on a recent Photoshop course I attended. I came across four 1960s photographs, three of which relate to the September 1959 to July 1961 Dean FTS course.

The first picture is of Mike Stark on the tree bicycle without hard hat or any other safety equipment.



Mike Stark on a tree bicycle

I am in the second peeling bark, and again without the benefit of any protective clothing such as gloves and rubber boots with protective toe caps. I remember well the abundance of fine splinters embedded in the backs of my hands after peeling Larch.



Harry Pepper peeling bark

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Days at Dean FTS *continued*

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Field trip 1959-60

The third picture is a group photograph of the course taken on a field trip in 1959–60. Once a month on a Thursday there was a field trip and I think this one was to South Wales to see deep ploughing in operation. In the front row are from the left: Brian Hibbard, Gabriel “Gabby” Charles, Derek Willmott, Peter Stubbington, Mick Scutt, myself, John Hannam and Tony Graver. In the back row are from the left David Ford, Mike Stark, Shaun Purcell, Nail Buckley and Phil Drewett. On his own at the back is Ted Williams the FTS driver and what a character he was.

I think the photograph was taken by Paul Collis. The only other course member not in the picture is Peter Webb.

Another field trip involved a tour of Parkend saw mill. At the time, apart from converting Dean oak into planks, it was still producing keys and ferrules for the railways.

We were told that before nationalisation of the railways the mill was the principle supplier of these track components to the Great Western Railway.

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Do you have any articles for publication in this magazine?



Send your articles to the editor

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



by post to: Richard Toleman,
Manuel Stables,
Linlithgow,

Days at Dean FTS *continued*

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The fourth image shows the late Roland Thomas with his Foden timber wagon. It is outside Parkend Saw Mill waiting to unload oak destined for conversion into the two track components. Again I am not sure what H&S would make of this load now. Incidentally

Roland told me that this Foden was unusual in that it was powered by a two stroke diesel engine that was very noisy under load. This was an advantage to him because his wife would hear him coming home as he came up the Whitcroft road. By the time he had unloaded, his evening meal would be on the table.



Roland and Foden

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

www.fca-today.com

The Great Bear Rain Forest

by Charles Dickens

It is early autumn. We are sitting quietly in a hide on the bank of the Nekite River surrounded by majestic western red cedar, western hemlock and Sitka spruce. Above the far riverbank, high on a bare branch sits a bald eagle. It is raining and the only other sound comes from the river skipping over the shallows.

We see movement on the far bank, emerging from the undergrowth is a large grizzly bear followed a few moments later by her three

cubs. She is after the salmon swimming upriver to spawn. She breaks into a slow gallop, stops, splashes down a huge front paw and then emerges with a fat salmon between her jaws. Deftly she peels off and eats the highly nutritious skin and then allows her cubs to feed on the scraps. They need to fatten up before moving up into higher ground to seek out a den in which to sleep out the winter.

Then she and her cubs are gone and we sit quietly by the now empty river.



Gulls skit over the stones helping themselves to fishy morsels left by the bears. The eagle remains high in the tree, his turn to feed will come later.

Welcome to the Great Bear Rain Forest. Yesterday a small float plane brought us into Smith Inlet from Port Hardy at the north end of Vancouver Island.

We flew under the clouds over the temperate rain forest that clothes much of the Pacific coast of British Columbia. Looking down we could see old logging roads, delineated by sinuous lines of lighter leaved naturally regenerated alder threading their way through second growth forest. Then evidence of active logging marked by the cut of new roads, bare hillsides and a floating loggers' accommodation barge hitched to the shore. Rafts of logs float along the shore to be gathered and towed to the sawmills.



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The Great Bear Rain Forest *continued*

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Environmentalists despair at the loss of the old-growth trees that are a vital part of the rain forest ecosystem. They contend that logging is proceeding at a rate that is not sustainable and are lobbying for the protection of the remaining intact old-growth trees to ensure the survival of the ancient temperate rainforest, the coastal grizzly bear, stocks of wild salmon and the many other indigenous species.

Salmon come up the river to spawn. Bears, and other animals, eat salmon and scatter their digested remains into the forest. The forest is fertilized and grows providing the habitat for bears and other animals. During heavy rainstorms the tree canopy and roots hold back excessive run off into the rivers so the gravel spawning beds are protected, the salmon population is maintained and the cycle is perpetuated.



Our lodging here is a floating platform tied to the shore at the upper end of Smith Inlet. Consequently the tides give us an up and down sort of existence but we have comfortable beds, a convivial mess room and good food to keep body and soul in harmony.

The only way in or out is by floatplane or if the weather is bad, by sea. We are not allowed ashore unless accompanied by a staff member;

bears can sometimes be bad tempered and they are big. Travel to the riverbank hide is by an old school bus along a few miles of disused logging road or if we are exploring the inlet or the river estuary by boat.

When moving between bus and hide we call out the greeting “hey bear”, just to let them know we are around. The last thing you do is to creep up on a bear.



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The Great Bear Rain Forest *continued*

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It is a privilege to have a glimpse into the world of the Great Bear. Our stay will sadly be brief and soon we will be boarding the tiny floatplane

back into civilization.

It would be nice to see some sunshine tomorrow.



Glen Estate Aberdeenshire

Jim Christie, a volunteer warden with the Woodland Trust, has sent me the following request for help.

Glen estate, near Edzell in Aberdeenshire, was built in 1795 and many of its trees were introduced around that time. The estate is now held in Trust and the main building is used by a Scottish university for courses. It's a 200 acre estate with a walled area for the arboretum. The estate manager is keen to keep the estate as well loved and cared for as possible, be it the many buildings, parkland, riverside and arboretum.

A tree recording session has taken place this year and over 20 trees (sweet chestnut, yew, beech, sycamore, lime, turkey oak,

Wellingtonia, cypress, monkey puzzle, cedar) have all been recorded. The arboretum has a large area not readily accessible, rhododendron having taken over. The resources to care for the arboretum are very limited and the estate manager would dearly like some advice on how to look after it.

If anyone can help, please e-mail, telephone or write to the Scotland Director Carol Evans.

The Woodland Trust Scotland
South Inch Business Centre
Shore Road
Perth PH2 8BW

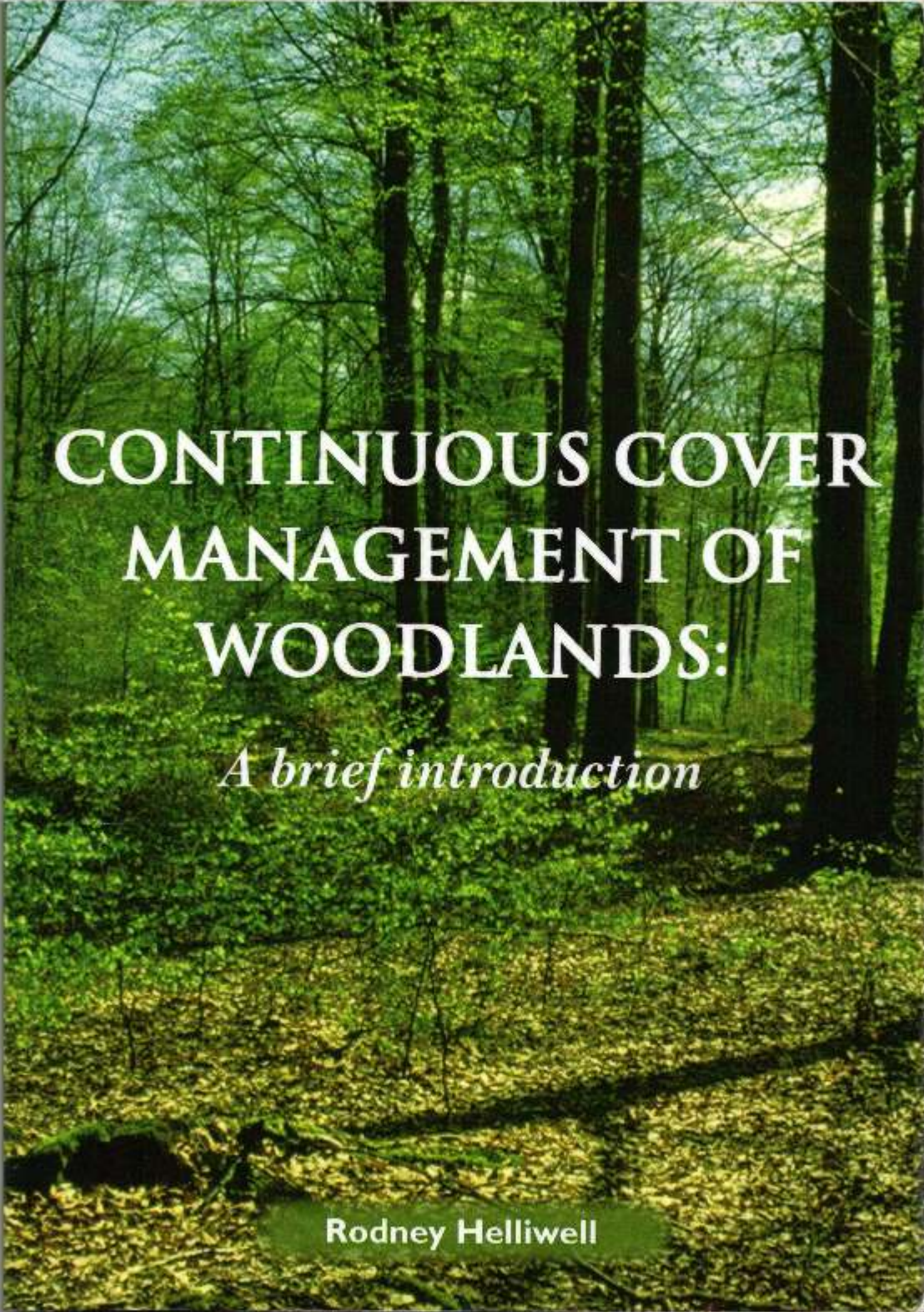
Tel: 01738 635829

Mobile: 07767 211977

E-mail: carolevans@woodlandtrust.org.uk



BOOK REVIEW

The book cover features a photograph of a sunlit woodland with tall, thin trees and a forest floor covered in fallen yellow leaves. The title is centered in white text.

CONTINUOUS COVER MANAGEMENT OF WOODLANDS: *A brief introduction*

Rodney Helliwell



BOOK REVIEW

by Richard Toleman

Continuous Cover Management of Woodlands A brief introduction by Rodney Helliwell

ISBN 978-0-9576326-0-8 £9.50 2013 66 pages.

Copies are available from Treesource , Church Hill, Stillingfleet, York. YO19 6SA

In his introduction, Rodney says that his intention is to provide a brief introduction and explanation of the basis of continuous cover forestry. It will be primarily for owners and managers of woodlands, but will also be helpful to others who have an interest in how forests and woodlands are, or could be, managed.

He starts with the concept of natural woodland saying that it can regenerate in different ways. He gives as examples regeneration after catastrophic events or after death of small groups or individuals. In the management of woodlands he notes the different systems of coppice, clear felling and the alternatives based on small group or individual tree removal. The latter, termed continuous cover forestry (CCF), has become widely used in European countries in the last two or three decades.

He states that the objective of CCF is to maximise the benefits from an area of woodland while letting natural processes do most of the work. He then looks at timber production, nature conservation, landscape, conservation of soil and water and recreation.

Before commencing CCF management he says that a detailed site appraisal is necessary. He notes amongst other things the importance of accessibility for timber production, exposure to wind, soil type, species and condition of trees and constraints in particular browsing.

Then he introduces the key part of the booklet, commencing management. He says that the objectives of management must be carefully considered and that a vision statement of the features that the owner seeks to develop, will be helpful.

He outlines the principles of tree removal and retention, this section is well illustrated with examples.

He recognises that an land owner may wish to create a new woodland with the potential of CCF management and he provides much helpful advice on species selection as related to site type.

In the management of the growing stock he explains the significance of diameter harvesting and "reverse J-curve" enumeration.

As natural regeneration and its relation to daylight within woods is so important in CCF management, he describes comprehensively the main factors affecting it.

In his final chapter he gives a simple review of costs and returns.

At the end of the booklet he gives further sources of advice, a bibliography, and two appendices with growing stock sample plot data. The final appendix is a clear diagram showing the transformation of a woodland from being even-aged to one of continuous forest cover with many ages and sizes.

The booklet is clearly and succinctly written and illustrated, and fully achieves its purpose of introducing CCF to the reader. Foresters with wide experience in CCF may consider the booklet as one that simply reiterates known facts. However, it will be valuable to all who have an interest in, and wish to have an explanation of the basis of CCF. I can recommend it, and it is likely that the reader will become enthusiastic to explore the subject further.



Women at war *on the land*

The women of the Land Army and Timber Corps played a vital part in feeding wartime Britain, yet their contribution is only now starting to be recognised, writes James Hendrie.

Scottish Memories



During World War Two, women not only fought alongside men on the Home Front in the armed services but also helped Britain to overcome the Nazi threat by working on the land.

In Scotland, 8,500 young women served in the Women's Land Army (WLA) toiling for up to fifty hours a week to ensure that vital food production was maintained. Some also served with the Women's Timber Corps (WTC) felling timber in forests and helped to transform the timber that they felled into products such as pit props needed for the coal industry.

The WLA was formed in 1917 during the Great War, disbanded at that war's end and reformed in 1939. The Women's Timber Service operated during the Great War also and it too disbanded then reformed in 1942 as the WTC and was part of the WLA.

These women, some as young as seventeen (it is suggested some might have been younger) were attracted to serve out of a desire to support the country when most of the male labour force was away fighting on foreign shores.

Wartime recruitment poster campaigns showed smiling girls in sunny countryside surroundings, yet masked the fact that often when women enrolled and were allocated to their areas of work, it was anything but pleasant!

These land girls took on board hard manual work and after a short period for training, found themselves at the heart of helping to feed the nation and ensure that it had vital timber supplies.

The regime under which the women had to operate in was, by necessity, strict and while a uniform and pay were provided, the accommodation provided usually had to be paid for.



Lunch time in the forest normally consisted of bread and cheese washed down with tea

Some women suffered bouts of homesickness, for many this was the first time they would have stayed away from their families. For others, who came from the larger Scottish towns and cities, this was the first time that they had been in the countryside.

Lasting friendships

Many members of the WLA and the WTC, speaking after the war, talked of the spirit of camaraderie and of lasting friendships made during this time. The women worked hard but despite this, still found time to walk to the nearest town at weekends to take part in the local village dances and social events as they attempted to maintain some air of normality in their lives.

The WTC was disbanded in 1946 and the women received a letter of thanks from their patron the Queen Mother. The WLA operated for five years after the war's end and its members received little or no recognition for their efforts.

In the years that followed, the women who had so proudly served increasingly felt part of a 'forgotten army'.

Now at last, things are beginning to change and this much-deserved recognition has started to arrive. A memorial to the members of the WTC was unveiled at Aberfoyle recently and a special commemorative badge was created for surviving members. Finally, last year a memorial was erected at Fochabars to the WLA. It may have taken over sixty years since the end of the war but at last some recognition has come to these women who helped to feed a nation in its hour of need.

Article first published in *Scottish Memories* magazine



The Memorial to the WTC at Aberfoyle appropriately is a member of that organisation with axe to hand

Fred Hummel: Memorial Tree Planting at Alice Holt

by Arnold Grayson

Older readers and those who have a fondness for mensuration will recognise the name of Fred Hummel. He will be remembered in particular for inventing the FC tariff tables, developing the first comprehensive British yield tables, for leading the sections devoted to planning and economics and for persuading Commissioners to go metric. He followed on from John Dickson as Commissioner Harvesting and Marketing for 5 years and then took over the European Commission's Forestry Division. He found the bureaucracy tedious but managed to initiate some Europe-wide studies, including forestry taxation, forest recreation, harvesting technology and small forest ownerships. His contribution to forest policy development in his FC days, to a smaller extent in Europe and, after retirement, through many consultancies was a notable one. Clear thinking and clear expression were the hallmarks of all his work.

Sadly Fred died in October 2012 at the age of ninety seven, and there was a good gathering of former colleagues at his funeral at Guildford. Subsequently his widow, Floriana, and his son Antony by his first wife, thought that a planting should be undertaken in his memory.

Unfortunately plantings in Guildford castle grounds were vandalised. Earlier this year Antony suggested to me that Alice Holt would be a more appropriate place for a memorial tree. Fred was at Alice Holt from its start in 1946 up to 1961. Peter Freer-Smith, the Chief Research Officer, said he would be happy to arrange a site and tree. We agreed that a Metasequoia from Westonbirt should be provided for a planting on August 16, 2013. On that day the Hummel family came to Alice Holt together with Philip and Janet Wardle. Peter Freer-Smith and a number of other staff who knew Fred's work also attended.

The occasion was, for all its poignancy, a happy one. The whole family consisting of Antony and his wife, together with Floriana, her three daughters Anna, Silvia and Julia, and their husbands and children, were present. Floriana flourished a smart ceremonial spade and expressed her thanks to Peter Freer-Smith and other Research staff concerned. In my view as one who started work as a student at Alice Holt in 1949, the occasion was conducted in the best traditions of Alice Holt. Fred would have approved.



The characters in the scene are from left to right: Antony Hummel, Robert Matthews, Gary Kerr, Arnold Grayson (to right with silver hair), Floriana Hummel, extreme right Philip Wardle.

A Great Day Out

by Ian Blake

Nineteen members of the South Wales Group enjoyed a day out at the Penderyn Distillery and Garwnant Visitor Centre in late May. The day started at Penderyn, nestled in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons, with a tour around the distillery. It was founded in 2000 by local businessmen and is currently the only one in Wales. It has a visitor centre and shop, and includes an exhibition about key elements of 'wysgi' making and Welsh culture that were important factors in the successful return of distilling to Wales. Members were escorted around the distillery by a well-informed guide. They had an opportunity to see its workings, learn about the process and the unique product range, and more importantly sample the new spirit of Wales. The photograph shows the FCA group at the start of the visit where everyone was coherent and quite straight!

Later in the day they made their way to the Garwnant Visitor Centre, part of Llanymddyfri Forest District. It is a founder member of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) along with the Environment Agency and Countryside Council for Wales. A relaxed lunch was taken at the 'Just Perfect' cafeteria, within the Garwnant complex, following which members received a short talk from Andrew Nock, an education ranger based at the centre.

Before leaving the group was updated on the recent AGM held at York and asked for venue suggestions for the 2014 AGM that will be held in South Wales.

We met again in October and visited Westonbirt Arboretum where we enjoyed the glorious Autumn colours. More on this in the Spring issue.



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am doing research on the history of natural history collecting, biological research, forestry and conservation in the Seychelles islands.

I am trying to find information on "F. Strawbridge" (Fred Strawbridge?) who was a forester here in the Seychelles from 1958 to May 1961. The Annual Report of the (Seychelles) Department of Agriculture for 1961 says that "he left the Colony in May 1961, on the completion of his 3-year tour of secondment, and has since then reverted to the United Kingdom Forestry Commission, to which he belongs".

I would very much appreciate biographical information on Mr Strawbridge, any anecdotes he may have told anyone about his time in the Seychelles, etc. Many thanks in advance for your kind assistance.

Regards,
Pat Matyot
Island Conservation Society (ICS)
C/o P.O. Box 321
Victoria, Mahé
SEYCHELLES
E-mail: pat.matyot@sbc.sc

If you have any information on Fred Strawbridge please contact Pat Matyot directly.

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 news, announcements 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



The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre – A New Beginning

Back in the 1950s, Carnegie Trust chairman, David Marshall, was keen that the Trust should do something that would allow the ordinary person to enjoy National Parks. His idea was to develop a building that would serve as a rest stop and focal point for visitors and he convinced the Trust to commit as much as £20,000 to the project.

Emboldened by the Trust's endorsement of his idea, he started the ball rolling by approaching the Peak District National Park. Thinking that it wouldn't be in keeping with the landscape, the park authority turned the offer down. So David Marshall turned his sights to the Forestry Commission and Queen Elizabeth Forest Park (QEFP).

Thanks to his determination and persistence and Forestry Commission foresight, the project came to fruition and the David Marshall Forest Lodge opened in 1960 at a total cost of £50,000. It quickly became a much loved facility and in August 2010 it celebrated its 50th birthday. However, although it had become a popular focal point to welcome, refresh, orientate and entertain visitors before they venture into the forest and surrounding areas, those 50

years had not been kind to the building, or the site.

Largely left untouched, the building had suffered from a long series of ad hoc repairs and additions. The building needed comprehensive repairs to its leaky roof and windows, overheating electrics and eccentric wiring. Sometimes there were light switches in different rooms from the actual light fittings! The kitchen was too small for commercial catering and there was not enough office space, storage space or toilet facilities.

Susan Nash, for Forestry Commission Scotland's Aberfoyle team, said:

"It had become untidy and outdated, failed to meet accessibility standards as set down in the Disability Discrimination Act. In a very competitive tourism market, it no longer met visitor expectations. Together with the upgrades and redevelopment work required on the path network, the car park and interpretation materials, it was in a pretty sorry state. It was a site and building that was meant to be the flagship visitor centre in the QEFP, with over 1,000,000 visitors a year."

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The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre – A New Beginning *continued*

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Major investment was needed, and it was clear to Forestry Commission Scotland that the benefits would be much more widely felt than simply on site. It would be a long term investment in Trossachs tourism that would be of real benefit to the local economy, supporting and stimulating local economic growth and tourism.



New view to main entrance

As well as providing a new resource for local community access and recreation, a refurbished building would be able to cater better for the anticipated increase in visitor numbers from 165,000 to 250,000. This would additionally benefit local hospitality, leisure and retail businesses. For these reasons, Forestry Commission Scotland took the decision to invest in a major upgrade and refit and it engaging Robertson Construction to manage the £2m project.

Susan, who managed the project for the Commission's Aberfoyle based team, said:

"Phase one, carried out in 2011/12, dealt with the ground works. As well as providing a service road with new coach and car parking, a new DDA compliant footpath was constructed. Also the existing playpark, that had come to the end of its useful life, was removed.

We installed new natural play features, a willow maze, a water park and a tree trunk climbing frame. They were more widely dispersed around the site so that they would encourage further exploration of the forest. Because of the major impact this phase of work had on the site, we did get some negative feedback. However one year on the site was already looking more established and it's as though it had always been that way."

Phase two involved the building renovation and refurbishment. Work started in Autumn 2012 and was



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The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre – A New Beginning *continued*

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completed in August 2013. This phase included improving and upgrading the decking area, adding an additional toilet building adjacent to the Go Ape facility and improving the interpretation display.

The building underwent a complete transformation. The interior walls and dark colouring that closed the spaces off and made them feel small and enclosed were replaced with an open plan design that was light and airy, and gave straight through views in almost every direction. The café and interpretation areas were



New café view

moved around to make better use of the space and to capitalise on the dramatic views.

Susan added:

"The transformation was amazing and the reaction we've had from visitors was fantastic! I think all were impressed when they came through the door and saw how open, airy, bright and welcoming the Lodge was.

The job had been carried out so successfully that you would think the entire building was only a year or two old. It had given this much loved building a new lease of life, and transformed the centre into a



New shop

modern facility. It has lifted The Lodge into the ranks of top-flight visitor attractions in the area."

This was also a sentiment echoed by the local community and other stakeholders, who have been supportive throughout the two year development period. Their patience has been rewarded with an outstanding new visitor centre that enhances the visitors' enjoyment of the QEFP and Aberfoyle.

Many of them joined the celebration in September when there was a fantastic turnout for the official opening. Stephen Leckie, Chairman of the Scottish Tourism Alliance and Chief Executive of Crieff Hydro, presided over the ceremony. Guest of honour, Janet Marshall, daughter-in-law of founder, David Marshall, unveiled a plaque commemorating the important role David

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The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre – A New Beginning *continued*

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Marshall played in establishing the Lodge. Over the intervening 50 years it has helped millions of people to enjoy the benefits of the QEFP.

As a last little bit of icing on the cake, Mrs Marshall wrote in a letter to staff,

"Congratulations to you all. The refurbished Lodge is wonderful and

I know that David Marshall would have thoroughly approved of the amazing 'open-plan-ness' of the interior giving spectacular views in all directions."

Post Script: The last piece of work to be done will be to renovate the wardens cottage, to make it into a staff area and to integrate it with the approach to The Lodge. Watch this space.....



New Interpretation area



New Cafe area



New - view through to Interpretation area



New Reception area

Scene at Lynford Hall

by Simon Malone

Lynford Hall was a Forester Training School until the late 50's. While out walking there recently I took a few pictures that I know would be of interest to past students now scattered across the country. They may bring back a few memories.

South frontage of Lynford Hall. The modern extension on the left was built some 20 years ago as a conference hall. The Hall now functions as a country hotel with accommodation, restaurant and bar facilities.



The redwood avenue leading up to the western side of Lynford Hall. This was known locally as the Bull Ride because of the statue of fighting bulls that stands at the far end of the avenue.

This is the base of the old water tank that once held supplies of water for Lynford Hall. It is incorporated into the arboretum that adjoins the Hall which was planted by students in the 1940's and 50's. This is now the finest collection of mature trees in the east of England and very popular with bird watchers at all seasons.



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Scene at Lynford Hall *continued*

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A view of the arboretum looking suitably attractive in the snow.



When I retired in 2003 I was privileged to be able to plant a tree in the arboretum, as have many other retired Thetford foresters before me.

*The tree, a Japanese lime, (*Tilia japonica*), is pictured in 2006, having established satisfactorily.*

Lynford Hall captured in this view across the frozen lake.



Arctic Star Award

Ninety one year old ex-chief forester Cliff Featherstone, who retired from Thetford in 1987, has been awarded the Arctic Star. He is one of hundreds of Arctic convoy veterans of the Second World War who have been honoured by the British Government for their part in delivering supplies to the Soviet Union.

Cliff was a 19-year-old radio officer on the *Lowther Castle* when it was torpedoed as it sailed between Iceland and Murmansk in May 1942. He was picked up from a lifeboat by a small destroyer that accompanied the convoy. He still has his record book recording service on 9 different ships between 1941 and 1945.

The words "Sunk in enemy action" are stamped over the *Lowther Castle* entry. When he finally arrived in Murmansk he watched as the captain, spotting a German Stuka dive bomber, manoeuvred his ship between the bombs.

He had to wait in a survivors' camp for about a month before returning to Britain. He spent much of this time walking in the surrounding hills that reminded him of his home in the North Yorkshire Moors. He was only about 25 miles from the front line fighting and the ground was strewn with the debris of war.

Although the "Russian Run" was fraught with the problems of attacking U-boats and aircraft, the Atlantic run was far more stressful. Weeks could pass in peace, then a neighbouring ship would be blown up and sunk with no warning. He had a close call on the St. Lawrence River near Quebec when the two ships either side of his were hit.

Cliff left the Merchant Navy at the end of the war and joined the FC where he started work at Dalby Forest in 1946. After his wife Joyce died in 2000 he returned to Ryedale and later to Pickering. His Arctic Star will join his Ushakov Medal awarded by the Russian Government in 2010 in thanks for serving on the convoys.

This was an extract from the Gazette & Herald newspaper, so I asked Cliff to fill in some details of his career. This is what he sent. Ed.



I joined the Dean FTS in 1946 on the first full two year course after the war, and on completion returned to Dalby, becoming a Grade II Forester in 1950.

After some years, I was put on Private Woodlands in Yorkshire and after further beat work on Osmotherley and Wykeham, I was promoted to Chief Forester in 1972 and went to Kielder. My final post was Thetford from where I retired in 1987.

My wife and I moved to Minchinhampton, an area she knew well from her earlier life. After her death I returned to Yorkshire and now live in Pickering where I had attended grammar school.

I should like to pay tribute to three gifted instructors during my time at the Dean FTS. Bob Streets reopened the school in 1946 and was later transferred to Lynford Hall. Dr. Neil Chrystal had tutored Bob and was invited to run the lectures on entomology. One day we visited an abandoned coal mine being used as a timber store. Dr. Chrystal identified two Ips species in oak logs and was able to say they had originated in Germany as part of reparations payments. Being a cynic I asked the person in charge of the timber depot and he confirmed their origin as Germany. The third was Harold Jones, biology teacher at Lydney Grammar School who did so much for our course.

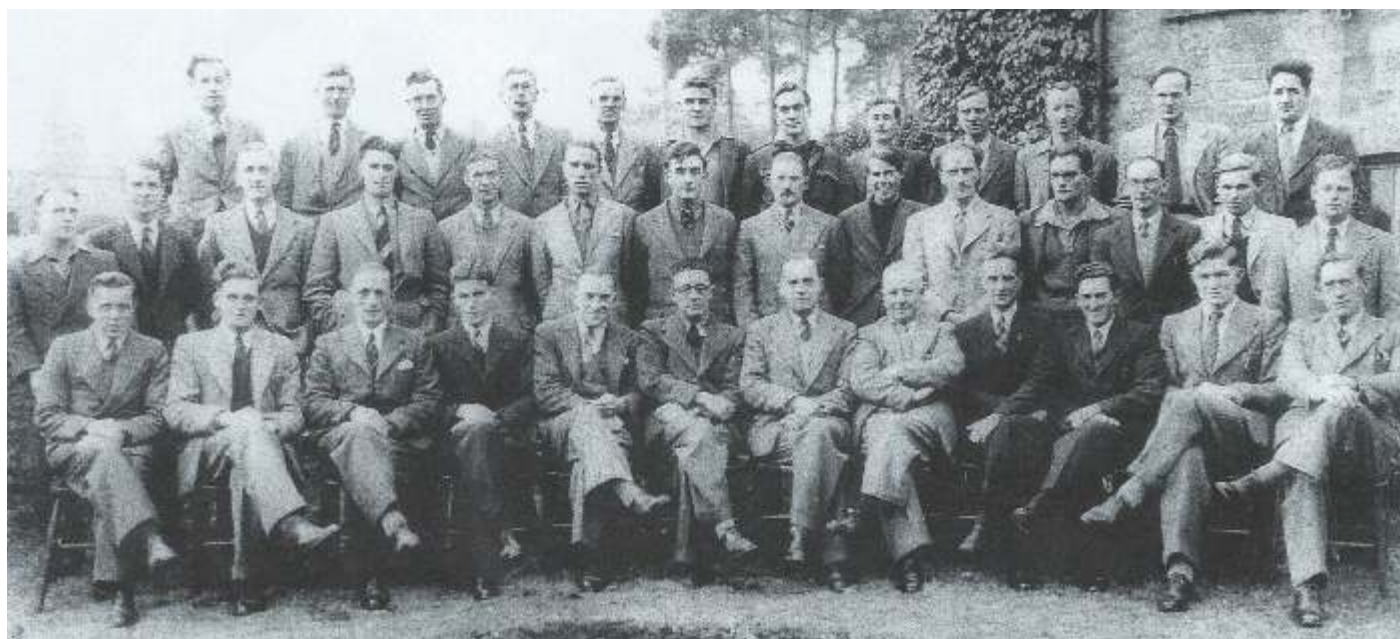
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Arctic Star Award *continued*

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The photo shows the 1946 – 48 Dean course. Almost all were ex-service. I and two others were 24 but most were well over that. Are there any of us left? I'd be very keen to know.

If anybody wants to contact Cliff, Dorothy Munn will forward your e-mail. You should send it to her at richard.munn@uwclub.net



Back row L-R: Frank Skinner, Norman McIntyre, Bonny Austin, Jack Permain, Charlie Russell, Stan Betterton, John Derbyshire, Ken Mills, Peter Woods, Bert Howland, Roland Baltitude, Cliff Featherstone

Middle row L-R: Mike Salmond, Wilf Ridge, Jim Field, Norman Fowler, Dick Crawford, Ken Lewis, Peter Gerrard, Howard Ingram, David Bromley, Raymond Young, John Offord, Ken Wills, Derek Rayner, Fred Hann

Front row L-R: Pincher Martin, Robert Baird, Fred Hinton, Fred Barling, Jim Bruce*, Harold Jones*, Tom Edwardson**, Pop Hale*, Arthur Eckton, Taffy Maddocks, Ben Olney, Arthur Tackney

*** Staff ** Head of School**

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The Red Deer in Folklore

Chris McCooley explores the folklore associated with the Red Deer, and its usefulness to Highlanders from prehistoric times to the Victorian era.

The Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*) is Britain's largest wild land mammal but it is only in the Highlands that they have remained truly wild. Originally a woodland animal, Red Deer would have roamed all over the Caledonian forests. When the climate changed during the Ice Age and the natural trees disappeared, followed centuries later by the Clearances and the introduction of sheep, Red Deer adapted to life on the open mountains and moors. They survived by eating heather, grass and the leaves of shrubs.

Highlanders appreciated the deer, not only for their meat but also their skins, which were made into footwear and protective clothing. The antlers of the stags were crafted to make knife and fork handles, and buttons and clasps for fastening clothing. The hooves could even be fashioned into drinking vessels.

As well as these practical benefits, Red Deer made an important contribution to the economy of Scotland. Prior to the nineteenth century the deer were hunted by the laird's men who formed a huge circle over the moor and gradually closed the circle by walking inwards. They pushed the deer into a cul-de-sac where they were killed with guns, swords and knives, mature deer and calves alike. They were butchered and the meat distributed among the hunters.

But in the early 1800s a new method of hunting was introduced, namely stalking. The land owners ran their 'deer forest' for the benefit of wealthy visitors who were guided by the ghillies to use basic skills of covert approach and stealthy movement to get to within 100 yards of a deer and drop it dead, hopefully, with one shot from a rifle.

Once the sport caught on, the same wealthy visitors, mostly from south of the border, began to buy land, built grandiose lodges and drove roads deep into the hills so that they could stalk the deer and enjoy the great outdoors. The craze for spending some of the year in the Highlands grew rapidly, inspired by the young Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert taking a long lease on the Balmoral estate in 1848 and holidaying at the castle during long summers spent with their young family.

Barbara Fairweather MBE, who co-founded the Glencoe and North Lorn Folk Museum in 1966, wrote that red deer were called 'fairy cattle' and that the fairies milked them out on the mountains, as did witches. One witch Cailleach mhor Chilibric is said to have put a spell on the deer that lived in the Forest of Reay which made them impervious to bullets, which was good for the deer, especially when stalking with high-powered rifles became a popular sport among the wealthy bankers, brewers and industrialists of Victorian times.

Sinteag feidh (a stag's leap) was used as a measurement i.e. 30 feet. Caberfeidh (a stag's rutting roar) is the war cry of the MacKenzies. The animals being wild are very lean, so the by-product of fat was much prized by Highlanders for folk remedies as a cure-all. There was a Gaelic saying: Geir feidh a muigh's a stigh, mar leighis sun thu cha h'èil do leighis an (the fat of the stag, applied, externally or internally, if that cures you not, your cure is not to be). The antlers of the stag were also cut into short lengths, boiled down, sweetened with sugar with a little rum added and made into a jelly to treat consumption.

Article first published in *Scottish Memories* magazine



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OBITUARIES

Tributes as SAS Hero 'The Fox' Dies, Aged 88

by Robert Fairburn

Tributes have been paid to one of the first ever SAS recruits who has died at the age of 88.

Norman Watson - dubbed The Fox due to his cunning ability to escape capture - was just 17 years old when he signed up for the elite Special Air Service at the height of the Second World War.

Mr Watson, originally from Walkerburn, Peeblesshire, joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in 1942. But his athletic prowess playing rugby in the Borders quickly led to him being transferred to the 5th Battalion Parachute Regiment.

After training at RAF Ringway near Manchester, he was selected to become part of the covert SAS unit set up the previous year by Scots Guards commando David Stirling.

The following three years the war hero completed daring missions across north Africa and Europe against the Nazis - including raids in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Crete, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Norway, France and Germany.

His friend Charles Miller said: "As a Second World War Special Air Services volunteer he had numerous escapes, but none more extraordinary than when passing through enemy lines in Germany after D-Day. He was seen by an Allied patrol who held fire believing he was a tramp.

"By extraordinary coincidence and good luck he had come upon his home Battalion, the 8th Royal Scots, and an officer from Walkerburn recognised him exclaiming 'It's Norman Watson, The Fox'."

His daughter Amanda Forte said: "Another time he was among a group of four dropped by parachute behind German lines with a Jeep.

There was a padre and two other SAS members, and dad was the only one to come back alive out of the four of them."

Even in the final weeks of the war, Mr Watson and his patrol took the surrender of the German garrison in Bremen.

Being a bomb-disposal expert he was also deployed to Norway after the German surrender to check for booby traps among the U-boat fleet.

His courage and endeavour during the conflict with Germany led to him being selected as the SAS representative for the Victory Parade in London shortly afterwards. He was also honoured by the people of Norway in December of same year for his part in their liberation.

Undeterred by the war experience, he volunteered to remain in the Parachute Regiment and fought for a further three years in Palestine.

Mr Watson married sweetheart Peggy on July 14, 1945.

Following his extended stay in the Army, Mr and Mrs Watson moved to Walkerburn where they raised their son, Keith, and three daughters, Lynn, Gail and Amanda.

For 36 years he worked as a Forestry Ranger with the Forestry Commission.

Just before his 89th birthday, he was admitted to Chesterfield Royal Hospital, where he died in his sleep on November 5.

His funeral service will take place on Monday at Chesterfield Crematorium in Derbyshire.

Re-printed from an article in the The Herald Scotland.

I have heard of **Mike Mitchell**'s death from his family. He worked at Silvan House. I cannot find anybody to write a few memories, any volunteers?

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FCA Today Magazine

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