



From the Editor

Thanks for keeping the copy going even if it is from the "Old Stalwarts!"

It's now Summer time, so while you are relaxing, why not put finger to keyboard and e-mail me a contribution for the Winter issue. I have a little, but not enough. Do it - Now!

Richard Toleman



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FCA Today

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A Half Century of Work at Alice Holt

by Derek Patch

On Monday 10th August 1959 Brian Greig started his professional career in forestry when he joined the Pathology Branch of Research based at Alice Holt Lodge. 50 years later to the day, on 10th August 2009, Brian was joined by his wife, daughter and granddaughter to plant a tree to celebrate his continuing work at Alice Holt Lodge. After a career working particularly on Fomes root rot and Dutch elm disease, Brian retired from Forest Research in 1995.

He was able to continue, and expand his interest in tree pathology and wider damage to trees when he joined The Tree Advice Trust's Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service based at Alice Holt as tenants of Forest Research.

Forest Research and Trust colleagues helped Brian plant, very appropriately, a "Princeton" elm, an elm disease resistant cultivar, in the grounds of Alice Holt Lodge. We all hope that it will survive at Alice Holt for at least 50 years.

Postscript. The Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service was wound up by the Trustees of The Tree Advice Trust at the end of March 2013 and so Brian's connection with Alice Holt ended after a remarkable 54 years.



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www.fca-today.com*

Yorkshire Group Activities

by Dorothy Munn

The Yorkshire Group AGM was held in the Black Swan Pickering and attended by 22 members with 15 apologies.

Minutes of the last meeting and Balance Sheet were read and agreed.

The Chairman, Chris Griffin, read out his report for 2013 followed by Richard and Charles' discussion paper on The Future of the FCA.

Members proposed and seconded that the current Yorkshire Group Committee should remain in office for 2014.

During 2013, an excellent turnout of members, family and friends visited Lincoln Cathedral and the Hemswell Antique Centres, Foulbridge Farm near Snainton, Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, Kilnwick Percy Hall and Burnby Hall Gardens at Pocklington, Wentworth Castle Gardens, Barnsley and The Sage and Baltic at Gateshead. We had perfect weather on all six occasions.

The Christmas lunch was held at The Forest & Vale Hotel Pickering early December and attended by 53 members and friends.



Wentworth Castle Garden visit

Breckland Group News

by Simon Malone

Our group here in Breckland is still going strong with a membership of 47. However, including spouses takes the potential turnout to around 80, so we are still able to expect reasonable numbers to support our events. The events programme for most years is based on a spring and autumn day excursion to places of interest within a couple of hours travel. In addition, at Christmas and for the group AGM in April we hold a dinner.

The dinners are normally very well attended with 40 to 50 members and spouses coming along. In recent years a Barbecue in June has attracted 20 or so folk as well.

Our small committee of six members meets twice a year to plan and agree the outings we intend to arrange. The current chairman is Eric Rogers, supported by Val Marsh, (secretary), Linda Horne, (Treasurer), Jill Wood, John Broatch and yours truly acting as events organiser. Sadly, as with many of the other groups, the average age of the membership is increasing. With very little prospect of significant new recruitment in the future I suppose the group will slowly wither. However, while we can, we soldier on. Of late it has become necessary to invite friends or family members to join the coach parties as the cost per person is prohibitive unless we can turn out at least 40 to come along.



Our most recent excursion was in early May this year when we visited the village of Stoke Bruerne on the Grand Union Canal near Towcester, Northants.

The weather forecast for the day was not good and, sadly, turned out to be accurate. Leaden skies for much of the day were a disappointment though, thankfully, the rain was mainly a fine drizzle for much of the day and did not stop us getting about at the destination.



Stoke Bruerne

On arrival at Stoke Bruerne we had about an hour and a half of free time to explore this picturesque village, its museum and the canal side towpath walks.

Lunch was taken at the Boat Inn, a historic canal side watering hole. From there we literally stepped straight out onto the narrow boat, Indian Chief. We filled it to its capacity with 40 members and embarked on a one and a half hour trip to the village of Blisworth, the next village north along the canal. Here we turned around and returned to our starting point.

The highlight of this voyage was the run through the Blisworth Tunnel. The tunnel was opened in 1805 and is 2813 metres in length. At its deepest it is 143 feet

Continued on next page »

Breckland Group News *continued*

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Blisworth Tunnel

below ground. It took seven years to construct, partly because the initial digging was swamped by flooding and the tunnel had to be realigned and a new start made.

Though not the longest canal tunnel in the country, it is the longest built to allow double running of traffic, boats passing in the tunnel with 24" clearance in total, i.e. eight inches between the boats and eight inches to each side wall of the tunnel. A hairy experience in the darkness as we were able to experience on our trip!

The tunnel is dead straight allowing the further end to be in sight as a pin prick of light initially. It was built because the only alternative would have been to build a flight of locks over a hill. This would have been an expensive option as there is no natural water supply on the top of the hill to replenish the locks and it would have been necessary to install pumping gear to get water to the top. Each lock operation uses around 50,000 gallons of water.

In the 1980's the central 900 metres of the tunnel was refurbished and is now built of modern precast concrete linings. The 900 metre lengths at either end are still lined with the literally millions of bricks required during the original construction of this amazing tunnel.

Cargo carried include cocoa beans bound for Cadburys, motor parts for the Morris motor factory at Oxford as well as the more traditional cargos of agricultural products and locally manufactured goods etc.

At the end of the trip the members returned to the coach bound for Santon Downham village in the heart of Thetford Forest – an uneventful trip except for being held up for around thirty minutes in near stationery traffic at one point. Sadly, a familiar story on today's busy roads!

Now for the planning of the autumn trip.....!



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

An Early Risk Assessment

by Brian Greig

This is an instruction, handwritten on a J3 (large) from Research head forester John Low in Surrey to his assistant Bob Gladman in Wester Ross in June 1959. It provides instructions on the use of an arsenic compound to be applied by the assistant to ring-girdled larch for control of a root disease. It is relevant to note that many hundreds of trees were to be treated, on a slope exceeding 40%. It is also relevant that both involved are healthy and in their seventies.

'...it is a second-class poison, that is why it has had to go (by goods train) in a sealed compartment.....In case I am not with you, I want to re-iterate the point about arsenic. It **is** a dangerous poison though it is perfectly safe to handle with care. Remember it is cumulative in the body, so avoid repeated small doses.

Dilute one part of arsenic to one and one half parts of water. You will find it easiest to get an old 5 gallon tin and clean it out, and also an empty 1 gallon paint tin and fill this with 2 of arsenic and 3 of water. Remember to stir well and keep stirred. The diluting is especially the time to take care or you might get the concentrated solution splashing onto your face or into your eyes. Alternatively the fumes might have an effect on the skin when you are pouring. I therefore enclose a further polythene bag which is best to put over the head when pouring the concentrate to protect head, face and eyes.

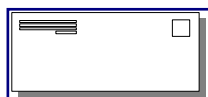
At all times, wear protective gloves.....you should really wear rubber boots etc. in case the splashes accumulate although I did not always do so....Sorry if I seem fussy ...'

In the 1950s chromated copper arsenate (CCA) was widely used as a wood treatment to prevent fungal decay (Tanalith). For decades it was the standard treatment. Recent appreciation of its toxicity lead to a ban in 2004 for domestic use in the EU and US. It is still widely used throughout the rest of the world. Ed.



"This was not the method of applying arsenic but it illustrates another method used at the time to apply similar chemicals".

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, EH49 6JF.

Bark Stripping in Student Days

Oak bark used to play a major role in the tanning industry. Brian Greig looks back to his student days to recall how it was harvested.

The students at the Parkend Forestry School in the Forest of Dean received instruction in various woodland skills during their practical training. Much of this was fairly routine; planting, fencing, 'prep' ground and nursery work at Viney Hill Nursery. However, recently when I was looking through a collection of old colour slides I came across a set of photographs that reminded me of the short spell stripping oak bark for tannin. By this time in 1959 the demand for oak bark in the tanning industry had fallen to virtually nothing and the work was largely an academic exercise for the students.

The task of bark stripping was only carried out in early spring, from mid-April to the end of May. The bark is most easily removed at this period when the sap is rising and it is richest in tannin at this time.

The bark was first removed from the lower section of the trunk. Using a small axe, a series of zig zag cuts were made around the circumference as far up as a man could reach. The bark was also cut around the base of the tree. Vertical cuts were then made at intervals around the trunk. The bark was then prised away using a tool known as a barking iron. These were often home-made and were simply a piece of iron flattened to form a rounded spoon shaped end, 3 to 5 cm in diameter and fitted into a wooden handle. The tree was then felled and the bark stripped from the upper trunk and branches.

Bark stripping is also known as rinding, sipping, flaving (from flaying) or peeling. The surname Barker is probably derived from this ancient woodland craft (Ward, 1952).

The bark was stacked in rows with the outer bark uppermost (see photo). The tannin is mostly in the inner bark and as the tannin is soluble, stacking in this tradition manner preserves the valuable tannin during the drying process.

As students we carried out the exercises in felling and de-barking mature oaks in the appropriately named Oakenhill Inclosure.

According to the forest records, the wood had been planted in 1840 and so when felled, the trees were approximately almost 120 years old. The felling was carried out in the traditional manner, using two-man cross-cut saws and axes. Although motorised chainsaws were just being introduced into the Forestry Commission in the late 1950s, as students we were not to be trusted to use these new-fangled machines. Also it was thought to be valuable training and good for the soul for the students to learn the hard way in felling large oak trees!



Stacked bark with the felled and stripped tree behind

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Bark Stripping in Student Days *continued*



Parkend forestry students demonstrating how not to fell an oak tree and the unfortunate consequences

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However not everything always went according to plan as can be seen above, which illustrates how not to fell high-value timber. The photograph captures the moment a tree split in two and the students have to take evasive action. Standing in the centre of the split tree with arms akimbo is the instructor of the course, Chief Forester John Webster. The students in the picture are Johnny Mitchell (with hat), Paul Cooper, Malcolm Ridges and Paul Hellard.

The photograph and memories also evoke a bygone era, before Health and Safety became paramount. No safety equipment was being used as I recollect, as is apparent from the bare-chested students in the photograph. It is probable that the class of 1957-59 were among the last students in the Forest of Dean to be instructed in the art of bark stripping for tannin. Certainly I have not heard of the practice for many years.

Also there is no mention of it in the recently published book, *Dean's Big Oak* by Chris Morris or featured in the compound book of photographs *A Portrait of Dean* by the same author.

If any students from the Parkend School class of 1957-1959 happen to read this article, the author would be delighted to meet up to renew acquaintances to reminisce about those halcyon days long ago in the Dean.

References and further reading

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Brian Greig* worked in the Pathology Branch of the Forestry Commission Alice Holt Research Station for 36 years. Since retirement from the FC in 1995 he has been a part-time consultant on pest and disease problems for the Tree Advice Trust.

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This article first appeared in the Royal Forestry Society's Quarterly Journal of Forestry (April 2010, Vol: 104 (2), p143-144).

Halcyoné: From Forth to Hebrides

by Roddie Burgess

This is an account of our sailing our yacht Halcyoné from her home berth at Port Edgar on the Firth of Forth to her new mooring in Camas an T' Salainn Bay, Loch nan Ceall. Her new port being Arisaig, a part of the country my wife Carole and I both love and which has been our second home for many years now.



Camas an T' Salainn Bay, Loch nan Ceall

This is, truth to be told, more Carole's account than mine as she kept a diary of our trip while my written record is of the type mariners must keep of their voyages showing such mundane things as barometric pressure and charted position, hour by hour – hardly an entertaining read!

I have always loved boats and can remember going out as a boy with my parents fishing from Fairlie and Largs on the Clyde, then later water skiing. However, when I joined the Forestry Commission in 1972 at the old Savile Row office in the heart of London, boats and boating had to be put on the back burner. After the move to Edinburgh in 1975 I was lucky enough to be invited out sailing from time to time, but it was not until 1996 that we managed to buy our first yacht, Seren, an O'Day 22 which gave us a lot of fun both cruising and racing as members of the Port Edgar Yacht Club.



An O'Day 22

I had always planned that we would look for something a bit bigger just before I had expected to retire in August 2012, with a view to keeping her at Arisaig from the following spring. The idea being that we could spend our summers sailing around what is arguably the most scenic area of Britain, with hundreds of islands to be explored, until we were no longer 'fit for purpose'. When Halcyoné came on the market, in Port Edgar, in the spring of 2010 I initially cursed that it was a year too early, but she was in such immaculate condition that we knew we simply would never get such a chance again. Launched new in 2002 she had done a mere 1300 nautical miles, had never left the Forth, hadn't been slept aboard and the oven shelf was still secured by sticky tape! She ticked all the boxes and we fell in love with her, a Hanse 301 6-berth, 30 footer, immediately. The only home comfort she lacks is a shower, but we manage!

When HMG decided that Departments had to cut staff, the opportunity of an early retirement came up and I took it, retiring at the end of March 2011, some 15 months earlier than originally expected. The Gods had smiled. Here we were, both now retired, with the right boat, and a season's experience getting to know her under our belt, and the addition of a few little extras, including a very useful chart plotter, extra batteries and some additional safety gear. We could now start planning our voyage north for real, with the first step being to join the Camas an T' Salainn Mooring Association, secure one of the vacant moorings, and pay the princely sum of £50 to the Crown Estate Commissioners for the right to lay some

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Halcyoné: From Forth to Hebrides *continued*

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fairly hefty ground anchors and chain to tie on to, when we eventually got there.

We then started to plan the voyage, determining our ports of call each night with alternatives, just in case. We loaded the provisions and clothing needed to sustain us over the 10 days or so I anticipated it might take us to get there. I also picked up what looked like a delightful book entitled "Sea Change", in which the author Mairi Hedderwick describes her 6-week long voyage from the east to the west of Scotland in an antique 26 foot cruising yacht – following very much the route we would be taking. This put the fear of God into me. The number of incidents of grounding, losing the way, and other mishaps that befell her and her host 'The Captain' seemed impossible to believe! But we were made of sterner stuff.

I set our start date as 24th May to coincide with the turn of the tide to carry us east down the Forth, turning left at the end, and aiming for Arbroath, our first intended port of call. However, the weather forecast for that day and the following 2 were not good, with winds of force 7 and 8 expected. We had to be patient a while longer, but if we didn't get away by the 27th, we would, I feared, have lost the tide and would have to rethink the journey.

The 27th dawned fairer, with a force 6 expected later, so we decided we would go. The brisk breeze from the west helping us make up some of the time lost by leaving a little later in the day. The car was parked at Port Edgar, we untied and stowed our mooring warps from the pontoon we hoped we would be leaving for the last time, and headed out to sea at 09.30 hours on the turn of the tide.

Carole now picks up the story from her diary.

"27 May : HIP-HOORAY – we get away after 3 days of waiting. Farewell to the Forth and west coast here we come! Eventually. Think we were both a bit edgy this morning. Although it has been long in the planning, the reality and the delay hit home and we were a bit snippy with each other, but we got away without incident and relaxed into a run down the river on an outgoing tide. We took 1 hour shifts on the helm which seemed to go by quickly at first, but as the Firth widened, and the sea got choppy, we both started to feel the cold and added extra layers.



Farewell to the Forth Bridges

What struck me as we passed Inchkeith, the furthest I had ever sailed previously, was that we had hardly scratched the surface of the Forth. So many pretty towns along the north shore – St Monans, Elie, Anstruther. After Inchkeith we saw lots of guillemots and puffins as well as a few black throated divers. The puffins were the most shy and took flight as soon as we approached, with their red feet and legs splayed out at the rear like oars. The most amazing were the gannets; perfectly evolved for sea and sky. We saw some just relaxing on the surface of the

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Halcyoné: From Forth to Hebrides *continued*

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sea, folding their necks over and resting their heads on their backs just like a swan. In flight they are magnificent, skimming the surface, gliding, then rising and diving with amazing precision after their fishy feast."

We sailed for 9 hours, covering 51 nautical miles and berthed in Arbroath, having slowed down for the last hour or so to allow the tide to rise enough for us to enter the outer harbour. We tied up alongside just inside and against a sheltered pier, just touching the bottom as we did so, which meant we would need to check our lines overnight and while we waited for the lock gates to open in the morning. After dinner we were both rather tired but spent a restless first night on board listening to the wind getting up as forecast, and checking our lines every so often.

On Saturday morning, it was clear we were not sailing anywhere and were probably stuck there for the weekend. We entered the inner harbour as soon as the lock gates opened at 07.39 to be greeted by Ron, the very helpful and friendly harbour-master. He pointed us in the direction of the loos, showers and the best places to get the famous Arbroath Smokies, all were good! We spent a pleasant day ashore, visiting the local sights and generally relaxing. In hindsight, it was probably a 'good thing' that we were forced to rest up after the tensions of the preceding few days and the long first day's sail.



The diary continues. Sunday 29th : It's true. The smokies were in a class of their own. Lovely, subtle, smokey flavour and succulent flesh –



Halcyoné with Jagged Edge (red boom cover) in Arbroath

accompanied by a perfectly cooked poached egg. A lovely start to the day.

We walked up to Victoria Park, just beyond Danger Point, where there is a large open grassy area between town and shore which rises up to give great views across the North Sea and over the town.



Victoria Park, Arbroath

Roddie got a phone call at the top of the hill and had to crouch down under a bush to get out of the gale force wind so he could hear. The call was from a previous colleague in Italy asking him if he would help put together a book on an International Standard on wood packaging material which he had a hand in crafting. No escape!

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Halcyoné: From Forth to Hebrides *continued*

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Arbroath Harbour

Back in the harbour we got to talking to Mike, the skipper of Jagged Edge, another yacht heading up the coast and likewise stormbound in port. That led to post-dinner drinks and a convivial evening around the table down below. Mike's wife was joining him to sail through the Caledonian Canal, so we hoped we would meet up again there. Tomorrow's forecast was for winds of force 3-4 so we hoped to set off towards Peterhead as soon as the lock gates opened at 09.38.

Monday 30th : We woke to a fine day with light winds, setting off as the lock gates opened with Jagged Edge just behind us. Once out of the harbour approach, we set course for Stonehaven and were delighted when we were joined by a pod of 5 or 6 dolphins after just a few minutes. However they did not stay and were gone before I had time to reach for the camera.

We had a gentle run up the coast, just keeping ahead of a large lump of cumulonimbus and attendant rain. It finally caught up with us just off Montrose and the heavens opened, but we were well suited and booted so did not mind.

But, at the height of the storm out of the mist came a huge battleship-grey vessel steaming straight at us. 'He must know we're here' said Roddie, 'we have a bloody great radar reflector and visibility isn't that bad'."

About half a mile off, the ship stopped and a RIB was lowered into the water and headed towards us at speed. As it neared we read 'UK Border Control' on the side and counted 5 persons in black dry suits, helmets, and armed! As it slowed alongside, one shouted over asking for permission to come aboard. And what if we refused, I thought to myself?. 'Of course', I replied and was advised to maintain course and speed while two of them boarded. We couldn't out-run them, even if we wanted to!

We had successfully up until then kept the down below shut off and dry. Not



any longer. One asked to go below with Carole while he checked our lockers for drugs, contraband, firearms or illegal immigrants. The other stayed in the cockpit with me and asked questions about our trip, where we had been and where we were heading. All chatty and he volunteered that they knew as soon as they got close to us that they weren't going to find anything. Presumably this

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Halcyoné: From Forth to Hebrides *continued*

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was because we hadn't moved, thrown things overboard, or otherwise acted suspiciously. Their boss had spotted us on the radar and decided that we were to be rummaged, just as they had all sat down to lunch, so out they had come.

His colleague then asked if we could identify ourselves, so I pointed to where our passports were, to then be asked why we were carrying our passports? Naughty, I know, but I just couldn't resist it - "in case we have to identify ourselves" I replied. Actually, it was so we could get Club 55 train tickets back to Edinburgh to get the car, but it was too good an opportunity to miss.

As they left, the rain stopped and the sun



The coastline around Dunnottar Castle

came back out. The rest of our day was uneventful, but pleasant as we settled back into our hour on, hour off routine. I trawled for dinner, without success, while lots of sea birds around showed us how it was done. It's an interesting coastline – grass covered, well weathered, red sandstone with jagged fingers of land jutting out and caves dusted with sea birds and their signature guano.



Dunnottar Castle

Dunnottar Castle is pretty spectacular, just south of Stonehaven where another outburst of rain awaited us, but not until we had tied up and were cooking dinner down below. We had curry and tortillas, great things to have on board, but found we had forgotten to pack the rice – oh no! We visited a local hostelry before returning to the boat for the inshore forecast, only to find a bigger Dutch-registered Hanse, Chica Rica, tied up alongside us! They, too, it turned out were making for the Caledonian Canal, but had arrived on a falling tide and could not get further inside the harbour, hence they rafted alongside us. There was a fair forecast and we planned a similar distance to today of around 35 miles to Peterhead.



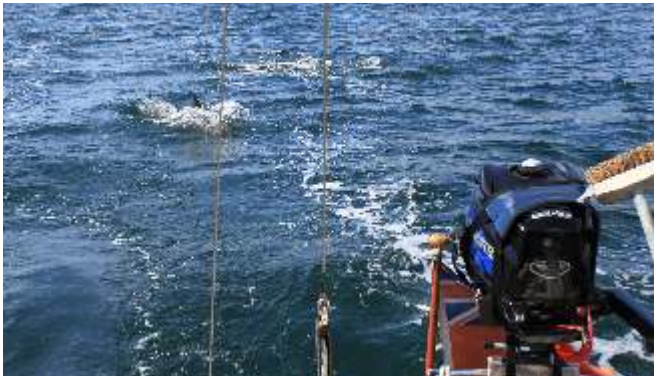
Stonehaven Harbour

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Halcyoné: From Forth to Hebrides *continued*

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31st May : Woke about 07.30 and had a leisurely breakfast of eggs and smokies. There is no shore power at Stonehaven, but we were given access to a new and decent shower block and were able to top up the water tank before leaving at 09.45, some time after Chico Rica and Jagged Edge.



Chased by a dolphin

We saw 3 pods of dolphins today and enjoyed the company of one which surfaced right behind the rudder, to be joined by others which swam and dived alongside us for a while before shooting off.

I guess it's special because they are beautiful and curious about us, rather than running off as the seals and sea birds do. I can understand why it's such a positive experience swimming with them as we were both happy and exhilarated every time we saw them.

Otherwise it was a fairly uneventful journey. There were quite a lot of oil support vessels and helicopters as we passed Aberdeen, but we were too far inshore for us to spot any rigs.

As we approached Peterhead we radioed in for clearance to enter, which was given. Another vessel waiting to leave was told in best radio-speak to "jist wait a wee minute – there's a yattie comin' in". It's a very busy working port but has an excellent marina tucked in the south-east corner. Every pontoon has water and shore power. Both Chico Rica and Jagged Edge had arrived before us and were settled in. A trip to the local Spar was followed by haggis, tatties, butternut squash and carrots – a veritable feast. We settled down to watch TV, with the forecast strongly suggesting we would be in Peterhead for a second night. And so we were.

On to the Caledonian canal will follow in the next issue. Ed



Peterhead Harbour



A Hanse 301



BOOK REVIEW

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"The inside story of the Forestry Commission from the environmental crisis of the 1980s to the forest sales U turn in 2011"

FOREST VISION
Transforming the Forestry Commission
Roderick Leslie

FOREST VISION
Transforming the Forestry Commission
By Roderick Leslie



BOOK REVIEW



Forest Vision Transforming the Forestry Commission

by Roderick Leslie

Forest Vision is a personal story of the Forestry Commission, guardians of the national forests and Britain's largest land manager. Roderick Leslie joined the Forestry Commission in 1976 just as it was changing from the massive tree planting programmes of the first 50 years to managing the forests it had created. Because of his interest in birds and conservation, he found himself centre stage in the violent conflicts that eventually stopped new conifer planting in the uplands dead in its tracks. As Environment manager in England, he describes the long climb back from the near fatal unpopularity of the late 1980s to the overwhelming public support that halted the Government's plans to sell all the Forestry Commission forests in 2011.

This book is about much more than trees and timber: it is about how best to use the precious space of our countryside in an increasingly crowded country. It

explains how the Forestry Commission's ground breaking concept of restructuring, completely re-designing forests to answer the critics of even aged conifer monoculture underpinned increasingly exciting programmes for recreation, nature conservation, landscape and community engagement. From repairing the scars of heavy industry around our towns and cities to the re-invention of wood as a modern fuel, Roderick Leslie goes on to explain how the Forestry Commission experience can help Government create the new, resilient landscapes essential in the face of climate change and to find space for development without destroying our environment. Aimed at professionals and anyone who appreciates and enjoys our Forestry Commission forests, this book passes on the experience that turned the Forestry Commission into the successful, forward looking organisation it is today.

The cost of this book is usually £10 plus P&P, but the price to ex-FC members is £10 including P&P.

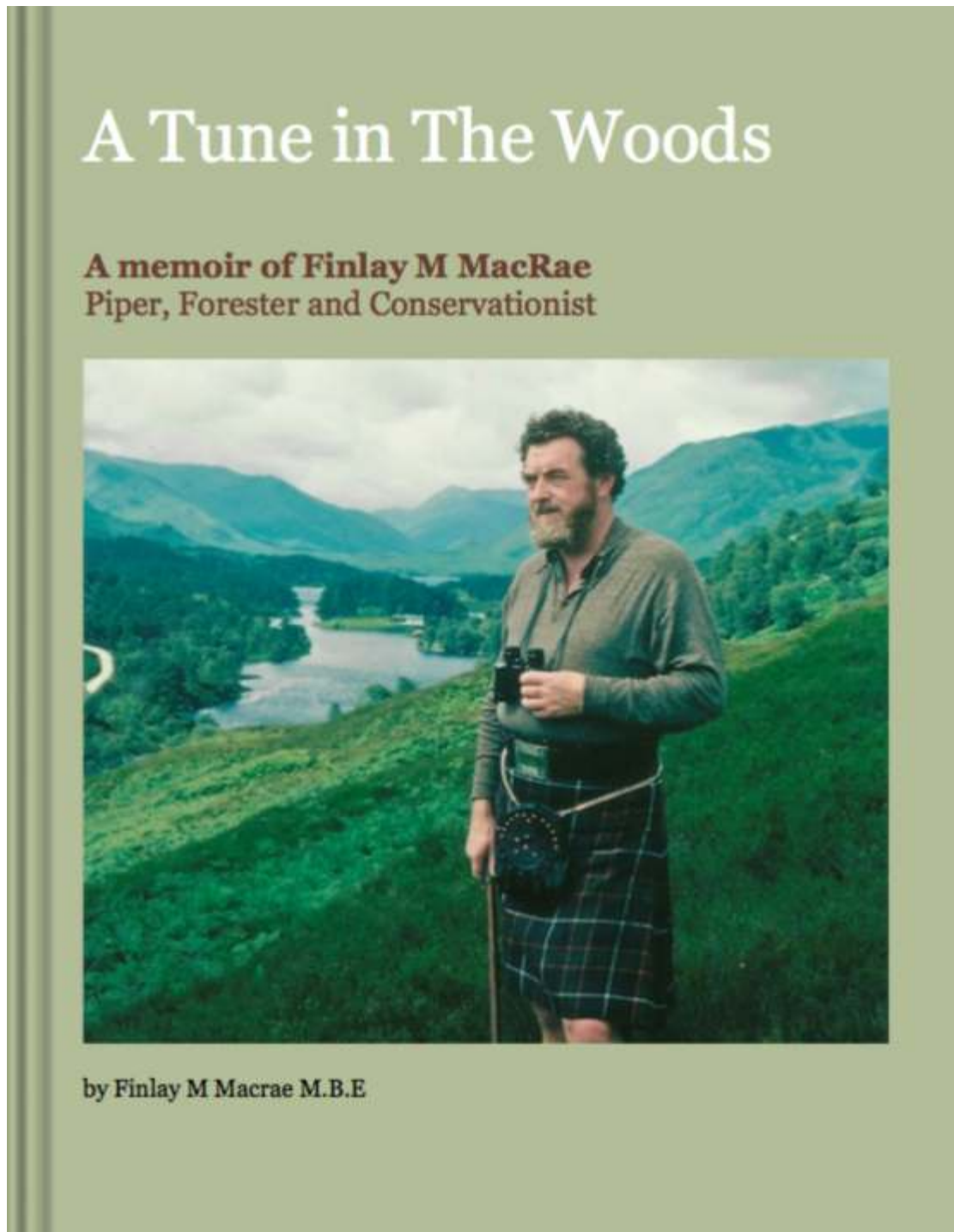
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BOOK REVIEW



Finlay had a remarkable career in forestry, piping and conservation. All who knew him will enjoy his tales. Obtain a copy from this website address: -

www.blurb.co.uk/b/5126253-a-tune-in-the-woods

Letters to the Editor

Re: The Sweet Chestnut Coppice Article by Simon Malone

As a postscript, the Forestry Commission has an interesting sub-compartment or cant of Sweet Chestnut coppice in Surrey. This cant is on a four year walking stick rotation, with a yield of approximately 40,000 stick lengths per net ha.

In the mid nineties the income was 8p per stick – perhaps it is worth running a NDR exercise to see how this compares with a mixed conifer yield class 14 Douglas Fir plantation crop!

Extra revenue could also be squeezed out of the normal rotation SC coppice by cutting out a few walking stick lengths from each stool in years 3 and 4. This usually meant only 2 – 4 per stool were suitable and of course left plenty to grow on, with slightly less competition.

The consumer of these SC walking sticks was the NHS, using about 300,000 per annum, on a total non-recovery basis. Inspection of the curved bent handle of one of these NHS walking sticks will show whether it is 3 or 4 year old coppice.

In an unguarded moment as Operation Manager I let slip to the local paper that the NHS were increasing their demand for walking sticks because slips and falls by the aging population in Britain were leading to more hip replacements. We then realised that the national dailies wanted to run a story on the relationship between SC coppice management and NHS capital expenditure. To protect the market for the FC we just managed to put the lid on it in time, and I learnt a salutary lesson on PR management.

Martin Fletcher
27th April, 2014.

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

by post to: Richard Toleman,
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Rob Guest Writes

The Winter 2012 Edition of FCA Today included information about a booklet written by Rob Guest describing the history of Laughton Forest in Lincolnshire. This text is now freely available on the web, see

<http://laughtonforest.blogspot.co.uk/>

Rob has also written an account of some of the special trees around May Hill - a prominent feature just north of the Forest of Dean. This is also available on the web, see

<http://notabletrees.blogspot.co.uk/>



Yew house

LIFE IN BRIEF

Graham Hamilton writes that the world of forestry lost one of its most colourful characters when **FINLAY MacRAE** died on 5th June.

Finlay was born in 1923 and brought up in Skye. Gaelic speaking and steeped in the traditions of the West Highlands, he was also a very well known figure in piping circles.

In 1942 he joined the RAF and trained as a pilot in England and Florida. He took part in Operation Varsity, part of the Rhine Crossing campaign in 1945, as a glider pilot. He was captured and spent the last few months of the war in a German prisoner-of-war camp. He was demobbed in 1947.

In 1948 he went to Aberdeen University to start the forestry degree course. He graduated in 1951 and joined the Forestry Commission. His first posting was to the Inverness based forest district as assistant to the District Officer who at that time was A.M. Fraser. In 1953 he moved to Lochaber to take over one of the two districts based at Torlundy. His charges then included Mull, Fiunary, and Sunart.

In 1963 he moved to the Mid-Ross district based in Dingwall. The district included Glen Affric with which the name of Finlay MacRae was to become synonymous. It was here that he was instrumental in breathing new life into the native pinewoods following years of stagnation. Some early planting of native stock

eventually was overtaken by natural regeneration which happily continues to flourish to this day. His success here was down to his acute observations of the various factors involved, of which deer numbers were one of the most important, devising the right strategy, and seeing it through with perseverance and patience.

Finlay was an instinctive forester of great common sense and foresight. He was frequently ahead of the game when it came to identifying problem areas for forestry. For example, he foresaw the difficulties that forestry could expect as a result of poor design long before design plans and the like were in vogue. He was given a special role in the North Scotland Conservancy in matters of wildlife and particularly deer management where his expertise proved particularly valuable.

His work, particularly in Glen Affric, resulted in the Society of American Travel Writer's Phoenix Award for Conservation in 1978. He was also awarded the Balfour-Browne Trophy for deer management. He was awarded the MBE in 1985. Finlay retired from the Forestry Commission in 1985 but continued to be involved in forestry with Fountain Forestry and some private estates.

A day in the forest with Finlay was more than a tonic. Somehow the world could be

seen in a better perspective. And of course it would be hugely amusing. Finlay had a rare gift for spotting the humour in seemingly unremarkable situations. Some of his anecdotes are priceless and well known throughout the Forestry Commission and beyond and have been retold by others many times and no doubt will be repeated years from now. A favourite target for a good few of Finlay's tales was bureaucracy, with which he had little patience, though some of his anecdotes could be at his own expense.

A personal Memoir entitled 'A Tune in the Woods' was recently published.

Finlay started playing the pipes at a young age. A frequent prize-winner, he twice won the Piobaireachd at the Strathpeffer Highland Gathering. For many years he judged the piping competitions at various Highland games. He was also Chairman of the Inverness Piping Society for several years. He was a composer of pipe music and he recorded one of his best known compositions, 'Leaving Glen Affric', some years ago. Finlay continued to teach piping right up until his death.

There was a very large attendance at his funeral in Inverness which reflected the esteem and affection in which he was held. A very warm and sensitive person, he left his mark on everyone he met.

Continued on next page ➤

LIFE IN BRIEF

Continued from previous page

Most important to Finlay was his family and our sympathies are extended to his wife Joey, daughters Donna and Fiona, and to his grand-daughter Rowan. Sadly he died a matter of a few weeks before the birth of his great-grand-daughter Charlotte.

The stories about Finlay and the stories he used to tell are the stuff of forestry myth and legend. I recall taking a piece with him on the Black Isle. I had recently arrived in Scotland and had a lot to learn. I quickly appreciated that there were two sorts of kilt, slick and sharp as

worn along Princes Street and work-a-day with stains and jags as worn in the forest. Finlay's was the latter. Later I was to enjoy his outdoor piping at an ICF meeting to Glen Affric. That was piping at its best, overlooking Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin. Amongst Finlay's many musical appearances, he worked with the musician Phil Cunningham who was married to his daughter Donna. On the Internet you can follow many links from Google to hear Finlay's music. I am sure readers will have their own tales of Finlay that will improve with the telling. Spread a wry smile by sending some for the newsletter. Ed



FCA Today Magazine

The next issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available on the www.fca-today.com website on **5th December 2014**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st November 2014.

The publication dates of the FCA Today magazine are: - **Spring edition: 5th April, Summer edition: 5th August and Winter edition: 5th December**

Visit the FCA Today website on these dates to download the latest edition of the magazine

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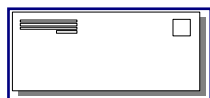
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