



From the Editor

Come on all you potential contributors, I need copy for the Summer issue - urgently. A potential contributor is **You** as you are also a reader of this newsletter. You read what others contribute so why not have a go yourself.

I don't need sagas, short well illustrated articles will do. Just something you can knock off in a wet afternoon. I can't imagine that all you active and imaginative retirees out there are not able to come up with something. If you don't, the Summer issue is in doubt. I don't have enough for it at the moment.

You want the next issue, so do I, so do it now.

Richard Toleman



Contents

FCA Today

	Page
From the Editor	1
Moving Eight Times in a Lifetime?	2
Experiences of a Forester in Africa	3
Before Chainsaws	9
Cargo Bikes	12
Willie Cameron - Sutherland Man and Forester	13
Recruits Wanted in 1961	18
Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker	19
A Senior's Prayer	26
Life in Brief	27
Visit us on Facebook	30
Contact Details	30

Moving Eight Times in a Lifetime?

by Don Amer

According to some TV adverts every person moves house at least eight times during their lifetime. So in my case I have decided to put it to the test.

Having finished training at the Gwdyr Forester Training School in North Wales, I was posted up to Edinburgh to join The Northern Sample Plot Team under the great Alex McKenzie. Our office then was in Drumsheugh Gardens in the west end of Edinburgh, but later moved out to Government Buildings at Sighthill Business Park. Whilst there I met and subsequently married my wife, Nan who worked for HM Stationery Office whose office was also at Sighthill.

My first move as a married couple, was to Culbin under Willie Milne, That was in 1954. That was move number one.

In 1959 we were on our move number two, to Kielder Forest, working under Chief Forester Tom Fox, living in relatively modern three bedroom house in the Butteryhaugh half of the village, the other half being Castle Drive.



Don Amer at Glentool in 1964

Move number three saw us moving to Glentool Forest in 1963, staying in Glentool Village, working to Chief Forester Alex MacRae. Whilst there I applied for and got accepted to join the Radio and Electronics Branch under Charles Connel, Conservator for SW England. This move

required me to move up to Perthshire to be more central for the area I had to cover, which was North England, (Yorkshire and the Lake District) and all of Scotland. Pending buying a house, we moved into a Forestry Commission house in Bankfoot - move number four. After six weeks there we purchased a house in Stanley, just seven miles north of Perth, that was move number five.



Blairgowrie

Since then, anticipating early retirement, we moved into a bungalow on the outskirts of Blairgowrie in 1987 - move number six.

Having taken early retirement in 1989, we remained in that house for about twelve years, when we decided that with advancing old age, it would be more convenient to actually live in the town with all its amenities, we moved into Blairgowrie - move number seven.

However, fourteen years later, old age brought on some health problems and so we decided to "downsize" and were lucky enough to purchase a well maintained bungalow circa 1930, about one half mile from the town centre of Blairgowrie. That was move number eight and hopefully, our last house move, but who knows, there is still a nursing home or sheltered accommodation!

Experiences of a Forester in Africa

by Duncan Lee

In 1966 an advertisement appeared in the press for suitably qualified foresters for a teaching post at the Zambia Forest College. I applied for the post as the job looked interesting and I was summoned to the Ministry of Overseas Development in London for an interview. The British Government was sending out people as part of their overseas aid to Commonwealth Countries.

Zambia had obtained its independence in October 1964 and was formally called Northern Rhodesia. I was asked at the interview whether I wanted a posting to the British Colonial Service or secondment from the Forestry Commission. The original tour of duty was for three years only so I opted for secondment thus holding the "door open" to the Forestry Commission on my return.

I found myself within two months of the interview on a VC10 overnight flight from Gatwick to Ndola on the Zambian Copperbelt with my wife and two children aged four and two.

I was met at the airport by the Principal of the College, Ken Roberts, and taken to a grand colonial house for a chat!

Ken asked me, amongst other things, if I was interested in gardening, I replied that I liked to grow vegetables for the house. He next asked me if I knew anything about farming, I replied that my brother was a farmer. "Good", Ken said, "You are Station Superintendent". When I asked what that meant, his reply was "You'll find out".

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Aerial view of Zambia Forest College Mwekera showing plantation plots (bottom right), college buildings (centre top) with classrooms, kitchens and dormitories to the right.

(Google map ref: 12.855135 28.357209)

Experiences of a Forester in Africa *continued*

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We were put up at a Government hostel for seven days, the whole family living in one room. In April, the temperature is well above 35c and just coming from a cold Northumberland, this was a huge shock to me and the family.

My first task was to purchase a car for which I could obtain a Government loan. I travelled 250 miles from Ndola to the capital Lusaka to obtain the loan and returned the same day to pay the company for the purchase of the car.



Crossing the Luapula River Belgian Congo into Northern Zambia from the Copperbelt - Government lorry and my Land Rover

We moved to Mwekera, (the name of the village) at the end of the week and we were allotted a three bedroom bungalow at the college. There were two other expatriates at the college as well as Ken Roberts, Paddy O'Dare and Cliff Brookes. Both had trained at the Forestry Commission schools and had joined the British Colonial Service straight from there. Ken Roberts had gone to Bangor University.

The station superintendent was responsible for the smooth running of the village and college. The village population was approximately 1000 including wives and extended families of all the employees. The duties covered provision of water and food to the student kitchens and the supervision of specialist workers from cooks to general labourers of over 100.

Training at the college was at two levels, the forester students and the forest ranger students. Not only were there restrictions on food costs but a varied diet was required. The forester students preferred a more European diet of bread, butter, jams, cereals, potatoes, vegetables and meat. The forest ranger diet was more of cooked maize (called Nshima) with again cooked meat and vegetables.

I soon learnt why I had been made station superintendent. The station had a herd of African Brahman beef cattle and the bull that was running with the herd was serving his granddaughters! The herd was about 60 strong. I managed to do a swap with a neighbouring Agricultural College and built up the herd to over 120 head. The herd was under the daily supervision of the "herd boy". He took the cattle out of the yard "kraal" each morning and brought them back at night. The kraal was situated alongside the station garden where two gardeners were employed full time. Manure from the kraal was collected each day and used in the garden as fertilizer. The gardens were extensive and grew cabbage, lettuce, potatoes, cassava tomatoes, runner beans, beans, maize, carrots, parsnips, onions and swede. Any vegetable waste from the garden was put in the kraal for the cattle returning at night. A good set up all round.

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Me and my garden!

Experiences of a Forester in Africa *continued*

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I endeavoured to utilise the kitchen waste by having a pigsty built and with a bit of bartering with the Agricultural College, obtained a sow with the intent of breeding and supplying pork back to the kitchen. Unfortunately the sow got too fat and consumed its litter. It was slaughtered and we had a surfeit of pork for over a week! Every week "Bwana" Lee, me, had to go to the kraal to choose a bullock or a heifer for slaughter for the kitchen. This was an onerous task as the chosen animal was tied tightly by its neck and slaughtered using an "African axe" with a blade less than 2 inches long. The slaughterer had to hit the poor animal between the eyes. Invariable his aim wasn't good and he missed. The dead animal was then hoisted by its back legs to a tree branch and butchered. Not one scrap of the animal was wasted. The best cuts were for the cook house, but the offal was cooked and maize meal (mealy meal) was dipped into the gravy for a tasty "nshima" eaten with one's fingers.

Mwekera had its own lake of approx 100 acres. This was called a "dambo". Two powerful electric motors pumped water up to the station waterworks. Here there were two settling tanks or flocculation tanks and a chlorination plant.



The College water supply!

The settling tanks had to be emptied every second week and the sand filter renewed. From this treatment works, water was pumped up

into a large 10,000 gallon tank about 50 feet up. Water was then gravity fed to the expatriates' houses and to stand pipes in the African housing areas. The station had two swimming pools, one for the students and one for the expatriates. The latter was in a sad state of repair and one of my first jobs was to get this repaired. This pool was very popular, it was nice to go for a swim after work and have a few beers cooling at the bottom of the pool.



Children enjoying the pool. My youngest is on the right of the paddling pool. My house is in the background

At weekends the pool area was a meeting point for the whole of the Forest Department staff in the Copperbelt area.

The headquarters of the Department was based in Ndola and the Research Department was at Kitwe, some 16 miles in the opposite direction. There was an industrial forest some 20 miles beyond Kitwe at a place called "Chati" where further expatriates were stationed. The weekend saw hosts of European families descending to the station bringing beer and food for a grand barbecue or (braavlais). We worked hard and we played hard.

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Experiences of a Forester in Africa *continued*

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The college was involved in training Africans on two levels.

Forester Student. These were trained for two years and left the college to become forest officers at stations throughout Zambia. Students had to have Maths and English and one other subject at "O" level. Selection was done at the college and consisted of written exams and practical tests in the form of leaderless group tests. As examiners on the leaderless group tests we were looking for students who had some practical ability, common sense and leadership. Briefly we had two ramps and three short planks of wood. The exercise was for a group of six to get across a raging torrent with crocodiles in the water and being chased by robbers. The planks were not long enough to reach right across but with a bit of thought it could be done. There was no rope or string. Some attempts to cross made us laugh until our sides hurt! The forester training included such subjects as botany, silviculture of species, biology, forest practice, Government administrative procedures, mechanics, electricity, forest law, and man management.

Forest Ranger. These were students from a lower educational ability. They were selected from persons who could read, write and speak in English. These were a uniformed rank in the Forest Department and wore khaki shirt and shorts, grey socks and a "boy scout" style hat. In the main they were the police of the bush and patrolled giving licences for head loads of firewood and summoning illegal tree felling and honey hunters. Zambian bee honey was a much sought after for making a very strong sweet beer. To obtain the honey the tree was cut down and the honey extracted. Honey hunters caught were taken to the local court and fined, sometimes imprisoned.

A certain standard of smartness was required and at 7am every Monday morning the students were paraded and inspected military style together with college principal, the station superintendent and the station VSO. The VSO was usually an ex public schoolboy on a six months tour before going on to university. The rangers were taught to march and salute similar to UK military recruits. The VSO also taught English and Maths to the rangers. Their classroom training was based on forest law, writing out summons etc. On forest stations

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Forest Rangers 'on parade'

Experiences of a Forester in Africa *continued*

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they were also responsible to the forester in charge to see that the work was carried out satisfactorily similar to the old forest ganger. I found that the station superintendent at the college had to be a "Jack of all trades".

We had a labour force of 24 supervised by the station forest ranger. We also had a force of specialist workers on the station that included carpenters, plumbers, drivers, gardeners and a man responsible for all the water works. We had a tailor, named Gabriel, who's job it was to look after all the ranger uniforms, the bedding sheets and blankets and other soft furnishings. I had an office staff of 5 who carried out all the administrative duties such as ordering while I signed payments as a close eye had to be kept on all expenses.

The work force was paid monthly and a bank trip to Kitwe to collect the money under escort was done in military style. Not quite with an armed guard! Many labourers could not read or write so a thumb print was made opposite the man's name. The pay clerk then signed to say the man had received his money. The currency when I arrived in Zambia was the Northern Rhodesian pound. In 1968 Zambia changed its currency to Kwacha and Ngwee, one Kwacha was the equivalent of the old 50 pence.

The basic pay for the working staff was 17 Kwacha a month. There was no overtime payments as the Zambian valued his leisure time more than money. The labourers were given a daily task, set by the forest ranger, and on successful completion the man was allowed to go home. Failure to complete the task meant that the man was docked his day's pay.

On pay days the local traders would come to the station in their lorries mainly to sell mealie meal. Families would buy a 200lb sack of mealie which cost in the region of 10 Kwacha and was enough to feed a family of at least 4 for a month. Mealie meal, when cooked, looked

like a grey porridge and a relish of meat, gravy, mushrooms or other plants gathered from the bush was added. The mealie was rolled into a ball, dipped into the relish and eaten with the fingers. Maize beer was also delivered to the beer hall by a tanker lorry. This was a fermented maize and was pumped into the beer hall tank. Glasses were not known so the beer was measured by "gallons" in old large baby powder tins. I stopped one of my drivers one day, clearly intoxicated and when asked how much he had drunk the night before a smiling Dixon replied 8 gallons Bwana! needless to say he lost a day's pay and sent home to sleep it off.



Eucalyptus seeds in the nursery at Ndola Industrial Forest

Zambia was undergoing its first Four Year Development Plan financed by the British Ministry of Overseas Development. Under this plan major developments were proposed for the College. These plans consisted of extra buildings such as classrooms, dormitories, houses and kitchens. Having spent my allocated money and got everything I wanted, I was approached by the principal and asked if I could spend another 4,000 Kwacha which was spare and would not be spent by another Forest Department within the allotted time of four years. I had three months and had to spend all the money! I took up the challenge and armed with a number of Government order books I visited the local brickworks, timber yards, and Government stores with a fleet of

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Experiences of a Forester in Africa *continued*

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lorries and bought everything I could use for the station. Mwekera was well stocked with materials for the development projects for months to come.

Having got the station working smoothly, I turned my attention to what I was originally seconded for, namely teaching various aspects of forestry. The subjects I was teaching were Government procedure, having picked this up from being station superintendent, mechanics, machinery, bricklaying, electrics and the use of hand tools. Chain saws had not reached Zambia at that time. Under the 4 year National Development Plan I was able to build a large training workshop and stores. I acquired a crashed landrover which I stripped down to its chassis, engine and gearbox. Not only was this buggy a very useful training aide but it also served as the station superintendent's run about. Student understanding of the workings of an engine was nil so the course included the mechanics of the Otto cycle 2 stroke and 4 stroke machines.

Government procedure was the administration side of running a station. This included pay, accounting and record keeping. Machinery was the use of equipment for forest operations and included tractors, ploughs and bulldozers. Most forest stations including Mwekera had electricity from the national grid but some remote stations still relied on electric generators and batteries.

The weather in Zambia consisted of a 6 month dry season followed by a further 2 months of increasing humidity, then 4 months of violent thunderstorms and torrential rain. Very often lightening strikes would knock out the electricity supply which meant a visit to the substation to replace a 60 amp fuse.

My initial tour was for 3 years but at the end of this time I was asked to stay on for a further 2 years. I took my whole annual leave back in the UK. I bought a brand new car and returned to Zambia on the Union Castle liner Pendennis Castle to Cape Town. I then drove through South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, (soon to be called Zimbabwe) to Zambia, a total of 2,500 miles in only three days and nights.



Me waiting for President Kaunda prior to the opening of the new training workshop



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Before Chainsaws

Before chainsaws were invented, in case you have not seen before, the logging industry in the United States & Canada was a seriously challenging occupation and we are only talking about 125 years ago. In the Pacific Northwest there were forests full of monster trees and cutting them down was done by hand.

Look at the length of the two-man hand saw and heavy duty axes above that they used to drop these tremendous trees. It is almost inconceivable to think of cutting down a tree this size with a hand saw.



The work required very strong men (and horses) working long days for minimal pay. Could you imagine doing this to earn a living?

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Before Chainsaws *continued*



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After a tree was finally felled, it took a week or more to cut it up into sections that could be managed (somehow) and transported by train to a lumber yard.

Maneuvering the logs down the mountain to the train was a complex job. I didn't do any research on this, but I would be willing to bet that many men lost their lives doing this dangerous work. One slip and a hunk of wood as big as a hotel is rolling your way! The other question that begs an answer is how did they get those logs up onto the flatbeds of that train?



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Before Chainsaws *continued*

Continued from previous page

Hollowed out logs became the company's mobile office. Can you imagine stacking such logs to build a log home?

Two courses would produce a 30' ceiling. Maybe that's why it was easier to hollow out a tree.



A long time before anyone ever thought of a mobile home or RV, hollowed out logs were also used to house and feed the logging crews.



We are accustomed to our modern conveniences like electricity and gasoline powered chainsaws, and it is always such a mind-boggling experience to see how such monumental tasks were performed before these conveniences appeared on the scene. Remember that the picture above shows a hollowed-out log made into a travel trailer.

Cargo Bikes - the Only Way to Travel around Town

Put "Copenhagen Cargo Bikes" into Google and enjoy the YouTube bike adventures in Copenhagen.

Go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0SEpVo33AM>

Cargo bikes make ordinary biking look very staid. Who will be the first to write an account of adventures on a cargo bike? There have to be some aficionados out there. I know I am keen.



Cargo bikes are also popular in the university town of Leiden in Holland

Visit the FCA Today website at www.fca-today.com



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

Willie Cameron - A Sutherland Man and Forester

by Norman Davidson

Willie's sudden death aged 89 in November 2014 brings to mind his life and career in forestry in an era of head foresters in charge and the days of rapid forestry expansion under the plough in North Scotland. Born in Sutherland and the fact that he spent a large part of his forestry career in that same county was remarkable.

Willie, the son of a shepherd, was actually born in Glen Loth but when his father took over the large hirsle at Gruids Estate, Lairg, it was there, from the age of two, that Willie and his two siblings lived. As a young man he worked at several jobs including the brick works at Lairg, but after his mother had an accident, he was called upon to mind house for some time and help his father with the lambing.

From 1941 to 1943 he was working on the Estate. When his call up papers arrived he joined the Royal Engineers at Buxton, and from there was posted to the Glasgow docks which were at the time inundated with shiploads of timber imports from Canada. Willie later transferred to Billingham, as a member of the Pioneer Corps. There he was part of the team of 'Smokey Joes' manning the Hasler machines that created enormous volumes of smoke by burning a mixture of oil and water to hide the nearby ICI factory. His Pioneer duties took him to Aramanche in Normandy, Aaloe in Belgium, and the Rhine area. After several more shunts, VJ night found him near Hamburg when a Glaswegian appeared playing a set of bagpipes. They both then passed the evening

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Auchterawe Nursery Fort Augustus in 1948

From the left are: C. MacAulay, Davie Robertson, Bob Ross, Willie Cameron and John MacLeod.
(Forestry Memories Picture No 609)

Willie Cameron - A Sutherland Man and Forester *continued*

Continued from previous page

each playing their favourite tunes. His final grading was Quarter Master Sergeant in charge of stores, food and clothing before demob in Aug 1947 and a safe journey home to Lairg.

Applying to the Forestry Commission for a job, Willie thought his army career was continuing when he ended up a few weeks later in a two roomed WW1 hut used as a bothy at Auchterawe, Fort Augustus. Two of his bothy colleagues at that time were John MacLeod and David Robertson (latterly foresters i/c Sunart and Skye respectively). Willie passed the Forester Training School entrance exam but qualifying as a ganger at Auchterawe before that, he was posted to Farigaig Forest as a ganger under forester Murdo Macrae (ex Lewis) to complete his pre Forestry School training. One of his responsibilities was managing a gang felling the birch trees that covered part of Farigaig Forest at that time.

The trees were cut into logs and sold at the roadside to a firewood merchant called Montgomery who blocked the timber and sold it as firewood around the area. The area was afterwards planted of course with conifers!

On completing his two years of pre-school training, Willie enrolled into Benmore Forestry Training School near Dunoon in 1949 along with nineteen other students and thought the standard of accommodation was good but the quality of the food much less so. Archie Douglas from Aberfeldy was Willie's room mate and his student colleagues included John MacLeod (also at Auchterawe), Hamish Reid, Bob Thomson, Don Wood and John Doran to name but a few of those who went on to become foresters or emigrate overseas.

The Principal at Benmore was the redoubtable Harry Watson, who had been there since it opened in the early 1930s. He was aided and

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Benmore Forester Training School 1949-51 Class in 1950
Willie Cameron is 2nd from right. (Full details in Forestry Memories Picture No 596)

Willie Cameron - A Sutherland Man and Forester *continued*

Continued from previous page

assisted by two teaching foresters Alec McLaren and Walter Scott. Many trips to Dunoon, 6-7 miles distant, enabled Willie to indulge in old time dancing on a Saturday night in the Town Hall, a pastime he always loved.

With Benmore successfully behind him, Willie's next home in 1951 was a caravan at Cannich where he was allocated a job as an ex-school ganger in Affric Forest. He had only been there about a year when the bothy in the Black Isle closed and all the inmates were transferred to Affric Forest to live in another bothy which had been an accommodation unit recently vacated by the men building the hydro dams. At this time also, Andrew MacKay came from Ratagan as the head forester and Willie was graded up to a forester. In 1954 Willie was given the keys to a forestry bungalow and as by this time his parents had retired, they came to live with him. Willie told a story of carrying out tractor ploughing and draining in an area behind the Affric hotel in Cannich which, unknown to Willie, was the location of the main water supply pipes to the hotel, Comar farm and several private houses. All went well until the inevitable happened, and everything was drained!

Following promotion to head forester, Willie, was sent in 1957 to take over the long established Gleyloy Forest near Fort William. This was at the start of thinning and felling operations which required many new roads to be constructed. At this time there were a number of contractors using heavy horses to drag timber on the flatter areas and lighter ponies on the steep slopes. It was there that he met up with Finlay MacRae who was the district officer for the area based in Torlundy, assisted by Jock Mackintosh. Finlay mentioned several country dancing venues to Willie and from that time onwards, the two remained lifelong friends with shared passions in forestry and piping. While at Glenloy, Willie carried out relief forester duties in the nearby areas of Clunes, Glen Nevis and Leanachan Forests

and made friends with Hugh Morrison of Glen Righ Forest, who likewise taught country dancing at classes.

In 1963 there was a change around of foresters with Wilfred Lawson taking charge of Glenloy for a short time until his untimely death, to be followed on by Ted Saunders. Willie returned north and set up base in Oykel Forest which had been vacated by Hugh Mackay. This forest was initially centred on the village of Rosehall, where the forester's house was located. The forest covered both sides of the Oykel River as far as Einig, but later acquisitions at Loubcroy, Craggie and then Cromalt heralded the era of rapid forest expansion. Willie was joined by Gordon Watson as his assistant forester and the situation remained so until the creation of a chief forester post at Shin Forest under Alex Lockhart. This entailed the amalgamation of the former forest units of Balblair, Craigs, Carbisdale and Oykel into the very much enlarged Shin Forest. Prior to this point, there were also separate individual forest units at Borgie, Strathy, Naver, Helmsdale, Rumster and Dunnet employing over 300 workers including the mobile ploughing and road squads.

Helmsdale Forest was next in Willie's career after he swapped locations with Willie Patience in 1971, and he thus then managed forests in the very area of his birth. Shortly after this time, Willie married Jean Robertson and the house was large enough to allow his now very elderly parents to live with them. It was a single forester post with four permanent workers and a series of widely scattered forest blocks which was easily managed until fire danger time and then it virtually entailed 24 hour duty seven days a week! Jean recalls that when initially discussing their marriage date, she hoped for a Spring wedding, but that was judged to be too risky and they ended up getting married in the frost and snow of the fire safe month of January!

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Willie Cameron - A Sutherland Man and Forester *continued*

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In 1981 Willie was asked to take charge of Naver Forest, which at the time had a large planting programme and its office and house located in Bettyhill. Here Willie had two assistant foresters, Colin Morgan and Keith Mills, while in the office Jenny Johnston carried out the clerical duties covering the former forest units of Borgie, Naver and Strathy. Jean, who was a teacher in Dornoch Academy, remembered Jenny Johnston (nee Mackay) well as she was one of her former pupils at the Academy. Jean and the two boys also moved, but went to their house Broomfield in Rogart as in 1981 Jean was again teaching full time at Dornoch.

At weekends depending on fire danger and other responsibilities, Willie would either commute down or Jean and family travel up to Bettyhill. And so in 1985 after 38 years in the Forestry Commission plus four army years, Willie retired. Having saved as many holidays as possible, he was able to miss out much of that season's fire duty by finishing work in March.

Looking back on Willie's life people remember his passion and great interest in all things forestry and piping, his great loyalty to the FC, his humour and his recall of past people and stories. One typical recount concerned Wilfred Lawson prior to his move to Glenloy. Around the late 1950s Wilfred, a forester at Balblair Forest, was one of quite a large number of foresters to attend a meeting in the Conservancy Office. The subject came around to houses and the condition of housing for foresters. Wilfred at that time was staying in Dairy Cottage near Carbisdale. He got to his feet at the meeting and robustly claimed that he was living in a byre. Nicholson the senior estate or administrative officer countered by saying 'Oh come now - we have done a lot to that building'. Wilfred's reply 'Yes indeed - you put the cattle out!'



Willie Cameron and son Donald in 1994

Willie had a long productive retirement, a life with little illness, and with his wife Jean and sons Donald and Ruairidh, a happy family life which was further enhanced with the arrival of three grandchildren. Indeed he was a Sutherland man and forester!

Details of the Forestry Memories website and a picture of Willie Cameron in 2009 are on the next page 

See forestry photographs and articles on the website www.forestry-memories.org.uk

Willie Cameron - A Sutherland Man and Forester *continued*



Willie Cameron beside Memorial to William Ross MBE Director of Bagpipe Music Edinburgh Castle etc.
Cairn erected 2009 in Strathfarrar under a scheme organised by Finlay MacRae (District officer) who was tutored by William Ross.

The website www.forestry-memories.org.uk has full details of the photographs on Pages 13 & 14. Just enter the picture numbers 596 and 609 in the search box on the www.forestry-memories.org.uk website.

The www.forestry-memories.org.uk website now has close to 3000 records referring to many facets of Scottish forestry and contains well over 6000 images of people, machines, work situations, horses, maps, documents, tools and events such as the 1953 gale. The entries can all be commented on and is welcomed. Should anyone have any Scottish forestry photographs or images that they believe would be of value to the website, please visit the website.

Recruits Wanted

*The following appeared in the January 1961 issue of the Quarterly Journal of Forestry and was contributed by **Brian Greig**.*

The Forestry Commission announce that recruitment of young men to their Forestry Training Schools is being reopened forthwith.

This has been suspended for some time to enable an accumulation of successful applicants to be absorbed.

Forestry is a "man's job" for those who are physically fit and like an open air life and offers a healthy, interesting and creative occupation.

There is a need for a steady stream of young men to train for supervisory posts. The woodlands managed by the FC have been expanded to about 1¼ million acres and there are now only two counties – London and Middlesex – in the whole country without a national forest. At the same time, woodland owners have been steadily increasing the area of private forest under systematic management.

By successfully completing a two-years' course at one of the Commission's schools, a man becomes qualified to take up supervisory employment with the Commission or a private estate; his forester's certificate is also recognised as qualification for employment by some of the Colonial and Commonwealth forest services.

The Commission maintains four Forester Training Schools – in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire; in Gwydyr, near Capel Curig, North Wales; at Faskally, Pitlochry, Perthshire; and Benmore, Argyllshire. The schools are residential, training and board are free, and the students receive certain allowances. Instruction covers a wide range of subjects, including tree nursery work, planting, thinning, felling, marketing of timber and sawmilling and the essential job of overall forest management.

Men who successfully complete the course and are accepted for employment with the Commission are normally appointed as Assistant Foresters, promotion to Forester and Head Forester grades being dependent on merit and the number of vacancies that arise. All the posts usually lead to establishment and pension rights; they carry a rent-free house or cash allowance in lieu.

Application for training can be made from the age of 17. Conditions of entry to the school include certain educational qualifications or alternatively the passing of an elementary examination; the passing in due course of a competitive examination; and a specified term of practical experience of forestry work which, if necessary, The Commission will help the candidate to obtain.

Applications for entry to a school should be made to: Chief Education Officer, Forestry Commission, 25 Savile Row, London. W.1.

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.

Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker

by Simon Malone

Prior to taking up a place at the Dean Forester Training School, I was a pre-school forest worker at Alice Holt Forest in Hampshire. The FC policy at the time was that students had to do a minimum of two years practical work before taking up a placement at a Forestry School. In the event I worked in the forest between September 1961 and August 1965.



I lived in nearby Farnham and for much of this period, the sole means of transport to work was by pedal cycle. Depending on whereabouts in the forest I was required to work, the journey was between 3 and 7 miles

each way. The return 7 miles was pretty tiring after a long day in the nursery! In those days the working week was 44 hours, 9 hours a day Monday to Thursday and 8 hours on Friday.

Although I am sure many of your readers will have similar recollections about this period in their lives, I thought they may find it brings back some memories if I set out some of my own recollections. Also, of course, Foresters are not the only retired employees and those who worked in other spheres of the FC may find such memories of interest.

Nursery Work

The majority of the work was lining out the rows of one or two year old seedling trees to grow on for another year or two. To do this, we used a long board about seven feet in length with notches in it which was placed in a large frame with a hessian screen round it. This was tall enough to protect man and plants from wind and rain while the board was filled. A forest nursery is a windswept place in the middle of winter. A thin strip of wood cushioned with two strips of foam rubber was then placed down the length of the board and clipped down to hold the plants in place. The board and its fifty odd trees was then taken to the nursery line and placed against a vertical face in the soil

produced from making an earlier line. We back-filled the roots with soil, unclipped the wooden strip supporting the plants and they were then safely planted as part of what could well be a line of trees one or two hundred yards in length. A plank about eight inches wide with handles on it was placed along the length of backfilled section of row just planted and stamped down carefully to firm the ground and level it. We then used a spade to cut another vertical face, which in due course would be where the next row of trees would be planted.

Usually two lads worked with two of the men and we shared out the number of boards in such a way that we all finished a row together so that we could all start the next row without delay. Theoretically once a straight line was established the succeeding lines would remain straight as well, but inevitably they would wobble a bit and after creating six rows of trees, we left a wider gap for future access on foot or by tractor and used a string to set out a new straight line again. Every now and then, we would have to drag our screens back a bit as the new rows we planted gradually crept too close to them. The rows of trees could be up to a hundred and fifty yards in length, depending on which part of the nursery we were working in. This was one job where it was easy to see who was ahead and who was holding the team back and we took pride in doing as many boards as we could to keep up with the men, running back and forth to the screens if necessary!

It was very satisfying to look back at the work as it progressed slowly across the nursery. I think we were paid about six shillings a thousand for lining out seedlings and the work went on from autumn to late winter. (Incidentally, the father of one of my friends had a contact who owned a small private nursery locally which grew forest trees. Occasionally a group of us would get weekend work in the winter lining out trees for him. His rate was a bit better than the Forestry Commission paid and with my experience at

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Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker *continued*

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this work, I earned good money, far outstripping my friends' efforts!) We also lifted two or three year old plants from previous seasons to be bagged and sent out to the forests for planting out. To do this we used a fork to break the plants loose and then wrench them out by hand. They were usually counted into hundreds and put into polythene bags, which were tied with string and carried to the nursery shed when we went back at break times. For this we were paid about two or three shillings a thousand.



I clearly remember Head Forester George Cross and Forester Ron Hoblyn coming round with the pay on Thursdays. You did not know what time they would come, as they had to go to all the gangs after the pay was fetched from the bank and made up. George Cross, or "Uncle", as he was known affectionately (and behind his back), invariably wore a dirty off-white trench coat and with a voice like a fog horn bellowed for us to come out of the forest for our pay.

In the summer, we weeded the young transplant beds, usually by hand, pushing antiquated "Planet" hoes between the rows to loosen the weeds before gathering them by hand into canvas buckets. However, sometimes weeds in parts of the nursery where there were no planted trees were killed by



spraying tractor gas oil on them from a pressurised brass "4 Oaks" knapsack style sprayer. A dirty, smelly job with limited protective clothing and leaky old sprayers. Once a year stocktaking took place and on hands and knees we crawled along the rows of young trees to count them!

Spent hops from the Courage brewery at Alton were used to improve the sandy soil in the nurseries. The hops were loaded by hand onto an open bed seven ton lorry at the brewery. I helped with this from time to time. Reg Disney was the driver and as mad as a hatter, but it was good fun and we usually got a pint of beer for our efforts before setting off back to unload at the nursery. The lorry would go flat out down Worldham Hill with hops blowing everywhere in the slipstream!

The nurseries were the furthest distance away from my home and it meant a cycle ride of about seven miles to Headley which, after a hard day's work in the nursery, meant a tiring journey home each night. Fortunately, in those days the A325 was very much quieter and several of us boys used to make a race of it back home in the evening. If we were lucky Pete Woods would be driving the Fergy tractor and trailer back to base and we lads and a heap of bikes would bounce the 3 or 4 miles back to the main forest yard saving some pedal power!

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Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker *continued*

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Planting

In some ways this job hasn't changed such a lot except for areas like Thetford where mechanical planting is possible. The trees were planted in straight lines, using straight sticks to site a line across the area to be planted. The planter carried perhaps a hundred or so young plants in a hessian bag carried over his shoulders. The only difference today is that the bags are at least made of waterproof material keeping the planter dry around the waist and thighs. We were paid by the hundred trees planted, with a small addition on sites where it was necessary to "screef" the planting spot to remove grass and other vegetation.

I remember my first planting operation as a new recruit wearing my brand new wellies. I was issued with an ancient Schlich spade which had the foot treads missing. The tangs which had formerly held the treads in place soon pierced holes in the bottom of my boots and before the end of the first morning I was working in wet feet! No use complaining as nobody could or would do anything about it. The best that was achieved was that one of the planting gang attacked the spade with a hammer and managed to burr over the offending tangs to some degree.

Establishment and Maintenance

Much of the summer was taken up with weeding young plantations. The trees, planted in rows about six feet apart and the same distance down the rows, needed to have the vegetation cut back at least once each summer to prevent it swamping or crushing them as it died back in the autumn. Bracken, grass and brambles were cut from the trees working down the rows using sickles or reap-hooks. Back breaking work in the hot weather and plagued by flies and mosquitoes. We were paid by the acre and again we boys strived to keep up with the men as we worked, more or less line abreast down the rows. In wet weather the sickle handles became slippery and it was not uncommon for someone to lose their grip and

their hook would go flying off towards someone else! Further excitement would be caused if one of us came across a snake or a wasp's nest – frequent occurrences!

By late summer, we switched our attention to hedging which meant trimming miles and miles of boundary hedges along all the roadsides and field edges adjoining the forest. Most of the hedges were hawthorn and it was while trimming these hedges I encountered a long thorn in my wrist which required a visit to Farnham Hospital to have it extracted. Payment for trimming both sides and the top of the hedges using our trusty sickles was by the chain (22 yards).

A fill-in job in the winter, when we weren't working in the nurseries, was draining or ditching. Mainly the task was to clean out existing old and sometimes ancient drains. Usually working in pairs, with one man using a spade to re-cut and shape the profile of the sides of the ditch and remove vegetation, while the second man followed along working in the ditch with a shovel, scooping up the cut side material and "bottoming up" before shovelling the soil along the side of the ditch far enough back that it did not fall back in. As with hedging we were paid by the chain for this work.

Another regular job was high pruning. This entailed removing the branches from the stem of pines and other conifer trees using either a saw or a chisel. The saw was a short curved blade about 18" in length fixed to the end of a long wooden or aluminium pole either 15 or 20 feet in length. The branches were sawn off to a height of around 20 to 25 feet or to where the stem was about 3" in diameter. The chisel was similarly mounted on a pole and was simply a flat blade with a sharp cutting edge on the top and another on one side at the bottom, so that branches could be severed by driving upwards against them and then pulling down again, thus cutting through the branches from above and below them. Either tool needed care in its use in order that branches were removed cleanly

Continued on next page ➡

Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker *continued*

Continued from previous page

with no damage to the bark on the stem. As the trees continued to grow, the wood occluded over the cut branch leaving small knots in the centre of the tree and clean knot free timber would form outside this knotty core. The pruned stem would start off being pruned or brashed to a height of six feet, as much for access into the crop as anything and while the trees were fairly young. As the trees grew older, the pruning would be done in a series of lifts over a period of years to 15 feet and then 20 and 25 feet. Rarely would we go above this due to the physical difficulty of using the tools at any greater height. Today, safety helmets and goggles would be essential wear, but in those far off days you dodged the falling branches and blinked the saw dust out of your eyes! Like most of the jobs in the forest, we were paid on a piece work basis by the tree, with the rate varying according to the height of pruning and the species involved. The object of pruning was to produce clean knot free

stems with a greater value at maturity in a sawmill.

Harvesting

At the time that I was working at Alice Holt, most timber harvesting was done by manual work. Trees were cut down using a bow-saw or a two man cross-cut saw. Although a single Danarm DD110 chain saw was available this was generally unreliable and used only to fell larger trees. We also had a huge two man Danarm chain saw which took forever to start, was forever losing its chain and I sometimes wondered if it was really worth the effort! Once the trees were felled, they were trimmed of their branches (sned), using 5 and 7lb axes and cut to length where they lay, again using bow-saws.

Products included pulp for Bowaters at Sittingbourne in Kent. This was three feet in length and had a maximum diameter of about

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Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker *continued*

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15 inches. Pieces larger than this were split using steel wedges driven in by sledge hammer. This task fell to the boys who usually spent the time after the three o'clock break going back over the day's work dealing with such pieces. Hard work when you were at your most tired! Other products were PIM, a random length piece of poor quality wood, sent to a hardboard factory in Sunbury, fence stakes and posts and sometimes hop poles up to 18 to 24 feet in length. We also cut rustic poles for garden use and these were straightish poles 5 to 8 feet long down to a 1 inch top. Some of the fencing material was split larch with the heavier pieces of wood cut lengthwise at the roadside, using a McConnell mobile saw bench, which also cut the points on each stake. George Strugnell was reckoned one of the best at this work, having a good eye to line the timber up and saw it evenly down the middle. We also produced a lot of pit-props, there was still an important coal mining industry in this country at that time. Pit-props covered a huge range of lengths and diameters and were normally peeled of their bark once out of the plantation. To get the products out of the plantation, they first had to be carried or

manhandled to "racks", sections of plantation two chains (44 yards) apart where a row of trees was totally removed to allow a tractor and trailer access. This meant the furthest anything had to be carried, in theory, was about twenty two yards, the length of a cricket pitch. Lighter pieces were carried by individuals on their shoulders and heavier products, such as hop poles carried out by two men. Everything was manhandled onto the trailer and taken to a forest road where it was stacked by product type.

We were paid so much a piece for the final product stacked at rideside. Often this was as little as 3 or 4 pence per piece and as these were old pennies, we had to produce a lot of products each day for our day's earnings. We were paid more for the more valuable products, such as pit-props to encourage us to get the best out of each tree relative to the quality of stem to be dealt with. We allowed time at the end of each work day to go along the piles of produce and tally up the number of pieces making a single chalk mark across the facing end of each piece to record our count.

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Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker *continued*

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Subsequent despatch from the forest by lorry meant more hard work, for in those early days everything was hand loaded. During the time I am writing of, the early HIAB cranes began to be fitted to the lorries. They were simple affairs, requiring logs to be stacked across a wire hawser, which was then looped around the bundle and attached to a hook before the crane lifted it onto the lorry, where it was roughly unloaded to then be manually stacked neatly on the lorry bed. Lorries were typically 10 to 15 tonners in those days.

Fordson Major



Bob White was an early chain saw operator with Sid Sawkins driving the old Fordson Major tractor, Pete Woods the Massey Ferguson 135 tractor and Reg Disney the Bedford lorry. All of this work was carried out without any protective clothing or helmets. If we wanted gloves to protect our hands we bought our own; the alternative was hands covered in thick tree resin by the end of the day, which we washed off with petrol from the chain saw if we were lucky. Our clothes were thick with resin so they were fairly waterproof! At the end of a hard nine hour day, it was on our bikes to cycle home anything up to six or seven miles. Those were the good old days! During my career in forestry I have seen the advent of sophisticated harvesting machines which fell the tree, cross-cut the stem into length using computer

controlled systems and stack it in the forest, for equally sophisticated forwarders to take it to the roadside and load onto 44 tonne lorries. Operators of these machines wear clean clothes and listen to CD's and the radio in comfort in their air conditioned cabs, while the computer controls the outturn of their work. At the end of their work shift, they jump into smart modern cars and vans for their journey home!

Fire Patrol

I looked forward to doing fire duty in hot weather. On a Saturday afternoon we were paid time and a third for four hours and on a Sunday double time. We either patrolled on foot in the woods at The Bourne or Crooksbury outliers or up the fire tower in the main Alice Holt block. We were paid an additional 6d (2½p) each shift for climbing the tower!

The phone in the tower was connected to the Frensham telephone exchange and to get the operator to connect you to a duty forester, you jiggled the receiver rest up and down until eventually she put down her knitting and deigned to talk to you. In the tower was a map marked to show what you were looking at in each direction and a pair of binoculars. Sitting in the tiny cabin 70 feet up on top of the tower was quite boring as fires and other events were quite rare.



Other Work

In the winter of 1962, we moved on to collecting cones from 100 feet tall Corsican pine trees at Rowledge in Alice Holt Forest. From the cone, the seeds would be extracted to go to the nurseries where young forest plants were raised.

Continued on next page ➡

Recollections of a Pre-Forestry School Worker *continued*

Continued from previous page



We all really enjoyed the work which meant climbing to the tops of the trees to collect the cones.

The cones were picked from the tree tops and dropped to the ground to land on tarpaulins laid out on the ground for the purpose.

Even on a cold frosty morning, once up in the tops of the trees, we were in sparkling sunshine on many occasions.

I also learned to use the "Tree Bicycle" to ascend the first 40 odd feet of stem which did not have branches and to get into the green crown where we climbed to the top. It was really very dangerous because these were tall trees and the ropes and other climbing harness equipment were not very sophisticated by today's standards.



In fact the harness was no more than a canvas waist belt about 8 inches in width with hooks and eyes to fasten climbing ropes to. However, thankfully we all survived and really enjoyed the exhilaration of the climbing and the superb views from the tops of these trees.

To avoid the laborious climb down and up another tree, we cheated and climbed from tree to tree across the branches, sometimes up to 3 trees away, still attached to our life lines, I hasten to add!

We were paid by the bushel for the cones collected, but I can't recall the rate.

Measuring standing timber for sale by the Tariff method was something else I learnt. At first mysterious, I later found this interesting work. This was in the days before metrication and I learnt to select and mark trees and to use the quarter girth tape and calculate volumes in Hoppus feet. The downside was that a couple of us were later brought into the forest office to carry out the complex calculations! This was a tedious job in the days before calculators and each tariff had a lot of multiplication and addition to be carried out mentally, and we were only paid flat rate as well! Samples of the results were checked by the Forester and sent back to be reworked if not accurate. Later, at Forestry School I was to learn that few of my fellow students had been given this work to do during their own practical training so this was one subject I had a head start in!

There were many other tasks including fencing, beating up, road making and so on and although the work was hard there was much laughter and merriment along the way.

I hope these reminiscences will be of interest to others and perhaps stir memories of their own dim and distant days as they started the long road to becoming qualified foresters. I would also like to dedicate this to all the Forest Workers and Foresters, the majority now no longer with us, who helped me in so many ways at the start of my career.

A Senior's Prayer



Today, Dear Lord, I'm 80 and there's so much I've left undone,
So I hope that, in your mercy, you'll let me live till I'm 81.

But, then, if I haven't quite finished everything I want to do,
Would you let me stay a little while-until I'm 82?

There are so many places I want to go, so much yet to see,
Do you think that you could manage to make it 83?

The world is changing very fast and so much yet in store,
It would be interesting to be still around and live to 84.

And then, if by your grace, I am allowed to stay alive,
Couldn't you stretch a little point and make it 85?

All the wonderful changes in your world make me want to stick
And see what might happen if I live to be 86.

I know, Lord, I'm pushing it and it'll be fun to come to heaven,
But, if you need the room up there, I'll wait until I'm 87.

I know by then I might be frail and my memory in a state,
But I'd try not to be a nuisance and still useful at 88.

By then I will have seen so many things and had a super time
And be quite ready to leave if called home at 89.

But maybe by then you could find it in your grace and power
To let me go until 90, then just take it hour by hour.

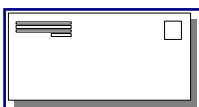
(Sent in by David Paterson)

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Send your articles to the editor



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



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

LIFE IN BRIEF

Brian Greig remembers **JOHN LOW** who died in 2013, aged 92. He was one of the remarkable band of men who after serving in World War II, joined the Forestry Commission and made a huge contribution to the early days of Forest Research.

John commanded a Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) in the Royal Navy and then attended the Dean Forester Training School in the Forest of Dean.

In 1954 he was posted to Alice Holt as an Assistant Forester in the Pathology Branch as a Field Assistant to the Forest Pathologist, who at the time was the legendary T.R. (Tom) Peace later to become the Chief Research Officer. Peace had the foresight in the early 1950's to recognise that *Fomes annosus* (*Heterobasidion annosum*) was potentially a major problem in British forestry and he instigated research into the disease. However, most of the work in designing and setting-up the field trials was carried out by John Low.

John soon became the driving force behind the research programme and it was largely due to his enthusiasm and hard work that the importance of Fomes Root Rot became recognised throughout the Forestry Commission.

John worked very closely with John Rishbeth of the Botany School at Cambridge University. It was the pioneering work of Rishbeth in the early 1950's that unravelled the biology of *Fomes annosus*, who then developed the concept of stump protection as a control measure and

subsequently promoted the use of *Peniophora gigantea* (*Phlebia gigantea*) as a biological treatment against the disease. It is still widely used today.

John built on the early work of Rishbeth in pines, extending it to the wider field of butt-rot in the conifer plantations throughout Britain.

Some eminent Pathologists held very entrenched views on *Fomes annosus* and were reluctant to accept Rishbeth's findings and John had many battles to convince the sceptics. Matters came to a head at the 1960 International Union of Forest Research Organisations Conference and Study Tour on *Fomes annosus*, which was held in Scotland. The site visits were arranged by John Low and extensive demonstrations in several forests clearly and unequivocally showed that airborne spore infection of stumps and root contacts were the key elements in the biology of the disease. These field trips proved to be a triumph for John as never before had these aspects of Fomes been shown so clearly and on such an extensive scale.

John Low designed and set-up numerous short and long-term experiments throughout Britain to test control methods and to evaluate the impact of the disease. The long-term experiments were on a vast scale, in some cases comprising entire forest blocks of hundreds of acres, as for example in Scotland in Drummond Hill and Lael forests. John was very

determined that the experiments would be of sufficient size to give meaningful results and could be used to demonstrate practical control methods. In one instance in Thetford Forest, John's plan for a thinning experiment over two compartments was turned down as being too large. A site meeting was arranged with Director (Research), the Conservator E(E) and the Chief Research Officer and after a heated discussion John's plan was approved with only a token reduction in the area of the experiment. Surveys were carried out throughout the country by John and his assistants, Bob Gladman and Irvine Walker to gather information on the extent and severity of Fomes in second rotation crops and to assess the susceptibility to butt-rot in different species.

The result of all this work was published in 1960 in one of the most important Forest Records produced by the FC, namely Forest Record 41 "Fomes annosus in Great Britain. An assessment of the situation in 1960". It presented the evidence gained from extensive surveys and site visits of the extent and importance of Fomes Root Rot.

In 1967, John was posted to Scotland, as one of the first Research staff to set-up the Northern Research Station at the Bush Estate, Roslin. Initially he worked out of an office in the Poultry Research Institute, together with a Forester as an assistant: not

Continued on next page ➡

LIFE IN BRIEF

Continued from previous page

for him a room in a Tax Office, which is where other staff were based before the move in 1970 to the newly-built NRS! Here he set up a Disease Diagnostic and Advisory Service for Scotland and the North of England, similar to the one that had operated for the whole of Britain for many years from Alice Holt.

He also continued working on *H. annosum*, but now with an emphasis on field experiments to investigate the biology of the fungus on Sitka spruce.

Through his energy, experience and enthusiasm, he made an extremely valuable contribution to the success of this research programme.

Sometimes the contrast between his wartime experience and the bureaucracy of the Civil Service proved too much for him. On one occasion, he had a huge row with the "powers that be" after building a bench in his office made from a single 2-inch thick plank of Scots pine. The bench remained until his retirement.

Apart from the field of Forest Pathology, John Low had a strong interest in silviculture. A hobby horse of his was wide spacing in Corsican pine and although it was never published, he produced a *Magnum Opus* on the subject.

The establishment of Corsican pine on second-rotation sites was another interest, as John was early to recognise that spring frosts were a severe

limiting factor on replanting after clear-felling in Thetford Chase. In 1976, John was awarded (jointly with BG) the Silvicultural Prize by the Society of Foresters for the two papers published in the journal, *Forestry* in 1973 and 1975.

John Low was a man of immense energy and persistence. On his posting to Alice Holt he found a plot of land at Bentley and set about badgering the reluctant owner to sell and persuading the Local Authority Officers to grant planning permission.

This was the first of four houses that John built in his lifetime. On the second occasion he again managed to persuade a local landowner to sell him a plot of land out on the moors near Penicuik, together with a derelict cottage. While living in a Gipsy caravan on site John virtually rebuilt the cottage which was transformed into a fine house with panoramic views across the Pentland Hills.

John's most remarkable building project was when he moved to the Isle of Muck for his retirement. Muck, with a population of under fifty and owned by the same family for hundreds of years was not a place that welcomes all-comers and John worked hard to persuade the owner that he would bring a skill to the island. This necessitated planting large areas of exotic trees on land that had not seen a conifer for a millennium: trees that, with his typical imagination and enthusiasm, John badgered out of his friends and

acquaintances in the nursery trade. The house itself, sited on the north shore with spectacular views to Rhum, was constructed using hundreds of tonnes of materials scavenged from throughout Scotland and held on the quay at Arisaig for eventual portage to the island on the 30ft Muck boat, in an open hold used for the carriage of sheep and cattle in a crossing of such ferociousness that few would attempt it. But to John it was a challenge, and seeing him standing with a glint in his eye and steady as a rock by the cabin in his old navy duffle coat as the boat, usually grossly overloaded, pitched and tossed on 10ft waves reminded us of his wartime service.

Finding men to build his house was another challenge. Tempted onto the island with promises of unrivalled views and copious beers, the various trades found themselves marooned until the job was done. Eventually John moved to north-west Skye, where he built his last house near his wife's parents. This was less of an epic undertaking than the house on Muck but still involved a large garden, much tree planting and sea views.

At all these places, John enthusiastically planted trees and gained great satisfaction in thinning some of his earlier plantings of larch at Penicuik and on Muck.

John Low was indeed a remarkable man and deservedly enjoyed over 30

Continued on next page ➡

LIFE IN BRIEF

Continued from previous page

years of retirement with his wife Seonaid and daughter Helen.

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Contributed by Brian Greig, Jim Pratt and Derek Redfern

Martin Fletcher has sent me a press cutting about **DAVID PERRY OBE** who died at 82 in January. David studied forestry at Edinburgh and graduated in 1955. He completed National Service with the Royal Engineers and became a 2nd lieutenant in charge of a transport unit.

He joined the FC in 1957 as an assistant DO based at Reading and two years later became DO at Guildford.

His next move was to take charge of Gwydyr FTS before he became DO at Kielder in 1966.

In 1969 he moved to Thetford and three years later he established the Forest Management Training Centre at Ae.

In the years that followed, he served as Assistant

Conservator at York and Dumfries, finally becoming Deputy Surveyor for The New Forest in 1985.

This was a job that he greatly enjoyed and he made a major impact on the management of the New.

He took over the chairmanship of the New Forest Review Group that was charged with developing a new plan for the wider area. This led to the creation of the New Forest Heritage Area to safeguard the surrounding land, much of which was in private ownership. His chairmanship was pivotal in bringing together a wide range of issues, objectives and activities of the many self interest groups that included local councils, the NCC, the CC and the Verderers. He appreciated the efforts of the Verderers and understood the role of grazing in maintaining the forest ecosystem. In this role he was widely applauded for his chairmanship, his resources of tact and diplomacy, his management skills and his attention to detail, all hallmarks of his whole life.

He was a Fellow of the ICF and on retirement in 1992, he received an OBE for his achievements.

He had an enduring love of the Scottish Borders where his favourite home was in Lochmaben and he had many Scottish friends from his university days and from the FC. His favourite holiday destination was Coll where he returned to the same cottage for many years, enjoying the

solitude and beauty of its beaches and hills.

David was a skilled artist who specialised in architectural pen and ink drawings, watercolours and photography.

He was also an avid collector of many things old; antique firearms and ceramics, historic trade tokens, Scottish church communion tokens, commemorative medallions and antique sporting and forestry books.

He researched his predecessors at Queen's House and helped reconcile gaps in the roll that hangs in the Verderers' Court which dates from the 1730s.

His research at the national archive revealed a reference to the earliest known Deputy Surveyor of the Royal Forest in 1542, Robert Dorne, during the reign of Henry VIII.

The Official Verderer said of David that he was a proper gentleman who knew his trees but also the importance of the New as a tourist destination.

He was a gentle man with a ready smile and led his FC team at Queen's House in a fruitful and productive way.

Norman Davidson has written about the life of **WILLIE CAMERON** who died in November 2014.

The article "Willie Cameron - A Sutherland Man and Forester" is on Page 13.

FCA Today on Facebook

by Ian Blake



I have set up a FCA Today Facebook page. Those with an account can search for FCA Today to become a member. If you don't have an account, I recommend you access the site shown below to set one up.

Simply follow the steps shown - they are quite straightforward. Once you're signed up, search for the FCA Today group to become a member, then you can disseminate information as and when you like.

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FCA Today Magazine

The next issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available on the www.fca-today.com website on **5th August 2015**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st July 2015.

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

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