



Winter 2015



FCAtoday

The newsletter about former Forestry Commission employees

Issue 56 - Winter 2015

From the Editor

I have managed to survive another issue but it's like walking on ice! I never quite know if I am going to receive enough copy. This issue is thanks to the old stalwarts. Much as the stories of past days in forestry are interesting, I am sure the present activities of our readership are just as fascinating. Why won't you write? I had to draw on an outside contribution. I hope that by putting this in, it will encourage you to do similarly. Is it a forlorn hope? It's not much to ask to keep our newsletter going. Perhaps you don't care. But I am certain that isn't the view of most. I never met an uninteresting forester in my days in forestry. Most were irrepressible! Get writing for your and my good.



Richard Toleman

Contents

FCA Today

	Page
From the Editor	1
Cashel Hydro Electric Scheme	2
Life After The Dean FTS	6
Exchange Course Betws-y-Coed 1951-2	14
Steam Wagons	16
The Band of Colleagues Remembered	18
Into The Forest	22
Life in Brief	26

Cashel Hydro Electric Scheme

This hydro electric scheme is a small scale run-of-the-river project of about 500Kw capacity on the Cashel burn on the east shore of Loch Lomond. It is now supplying enough electricity to meet the average demand of about 450 homes.

It was constructed by DHG Hydro in partnership with the two landowners, The Cashel RSFS Forest Trust (CFT) and Mr. Peter Meddings. The aim of the Trust is to demonstrate the restoration and regeneration of Scotland's native woods and this scheme reinforces the Trust's commitment to the wider environment. But most importantly, the income from the sale of electricity is providing a secure long term cash flow to ensure effective management of the woodland, and the development of related conservation and educational projects.

DHG Hydro grew out of Dulas Ltd which itself was born out of the Centre for Alternative Technology near Machynlleth about 30 years ago. Dulas Ltd has about 80 employees specialising in all aspects of renewable energy including wind, solar, biomass and hydro. DHG is the development company that has 5 hydro schemes fully operational in Scotland and Wales and is actively developing others.

Construction took place between April and November 2014 after a three year planning and development phase. Prior to construction, a number of ecological and technical surveys were carried out to assess the impact of the scheme. The ecological surveys included studies on birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and other aquatic species, bryophytes and vegetation.

During construction there was some disruption to the marked footpaths but this caused very little inconvenience as there is a wide choice of routes. Also great care was taken not to disrupt the environment for adders which can be frequently found on many parts of the hillside. There was a little minor disruption to the area allocated to sponsored and memorial tree

planting. A few trees had to be carefully transplanted to nearby locations, all of which proved successful.

- As part of the planning process, all local and national bodies were consulted and details of the responses can be found on the website of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs N.P. Planning Dept.
- The illustrations show the details of the scheme.
- Water is abstracted from 3 locations on the Cashel burn high on the hillside.
- It is conveyed to the power house close to Cashel farm in a 2 km buried pipeline.
- At the power house, water at high pressure (250m head) drives the turbine and generator.
- After generation, water is returned directly to Cashel burn.
- The electricity generated is fed to the National Grid.

After the hustle and bustle of construction, quiet is returning to the Cashel burn. Nature is rapidly covering the building scars. The burn and the turbine are getting on with the job of generating electricity for the Grid and income for the Trust. Very little of the works can be seen, but it is worth the long walk up the hill to visit the 3 intakes that have been carefully landscaped into the burn.

More general information about small scale hydro schemes can be found on the Dulas website www.dulas.org.uk and details about the developer DGH Hydro and its other schemes in Scotland and Wales can be found at www.dghydro.com

Design diagrams on next page 

Cashel Hydro Electric Scheme

The Project Design



Intake A

This is the largest intake, having a maximum design flow of approximately 250 l/s. Owing to the deep, steep sided nature of the river in this section, a full height Coanda screen is being proposed, making the weir structure approximately 2.0 m tall.

A pool will be created behind this structure but owing to the steep gradient of the burn, this will only extend back a short distance. A new short section of access track to this intake will be created over the line of the pipe.



Intake B

This is a very small intake on an unnamed watercourse that has partly been formed by the ditch along the side of the track. This will have a maximum design flow of 25 l/s. The intake structure is only 1.0m wide and approximately 0.7m high.



Intake C

This is a smaller intake than Intake A and as the banks are less steep and there is more width available, a half height coanda screen is proposed, making the total weir height approximately 1.2m. This will have a maximum design flow of 150 l/s.

A new short section of access track to this intake will be created over the line of the pipe.



Intakes A & B view - upper section

This is a view looking back at intakes A & B. This is the upper section of the pipeline route where the pipe would be buried alongside the existing forestry access track to the east of the track.



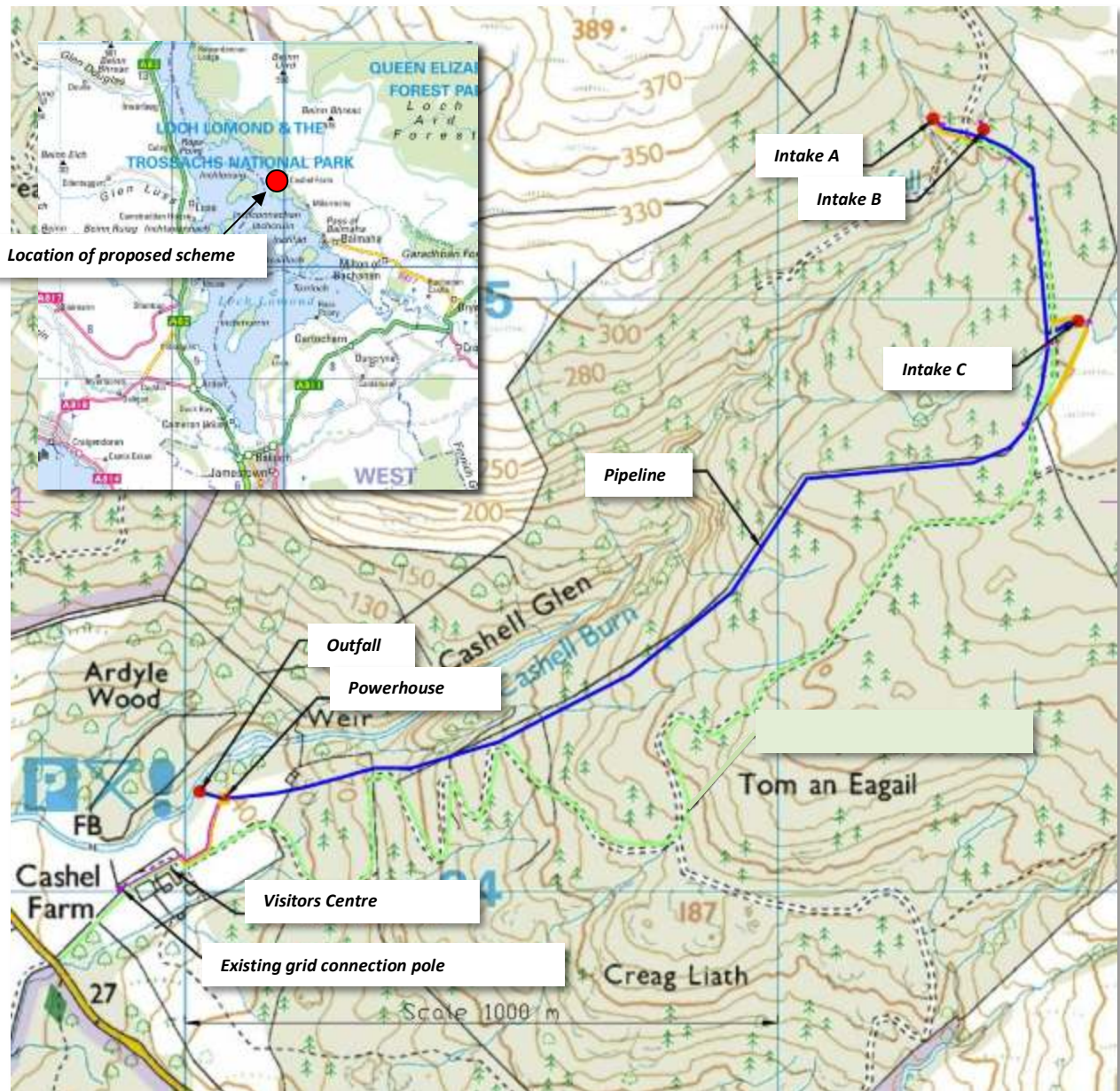
Intakes A & B view from Intake C location

This is a view looking back towards intakes A & B from the Intake C location. This is the upper section of the pipeline route where the pipe would be buried alongside the existing forestry access track.

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Cashel Hydro Electric Scheme

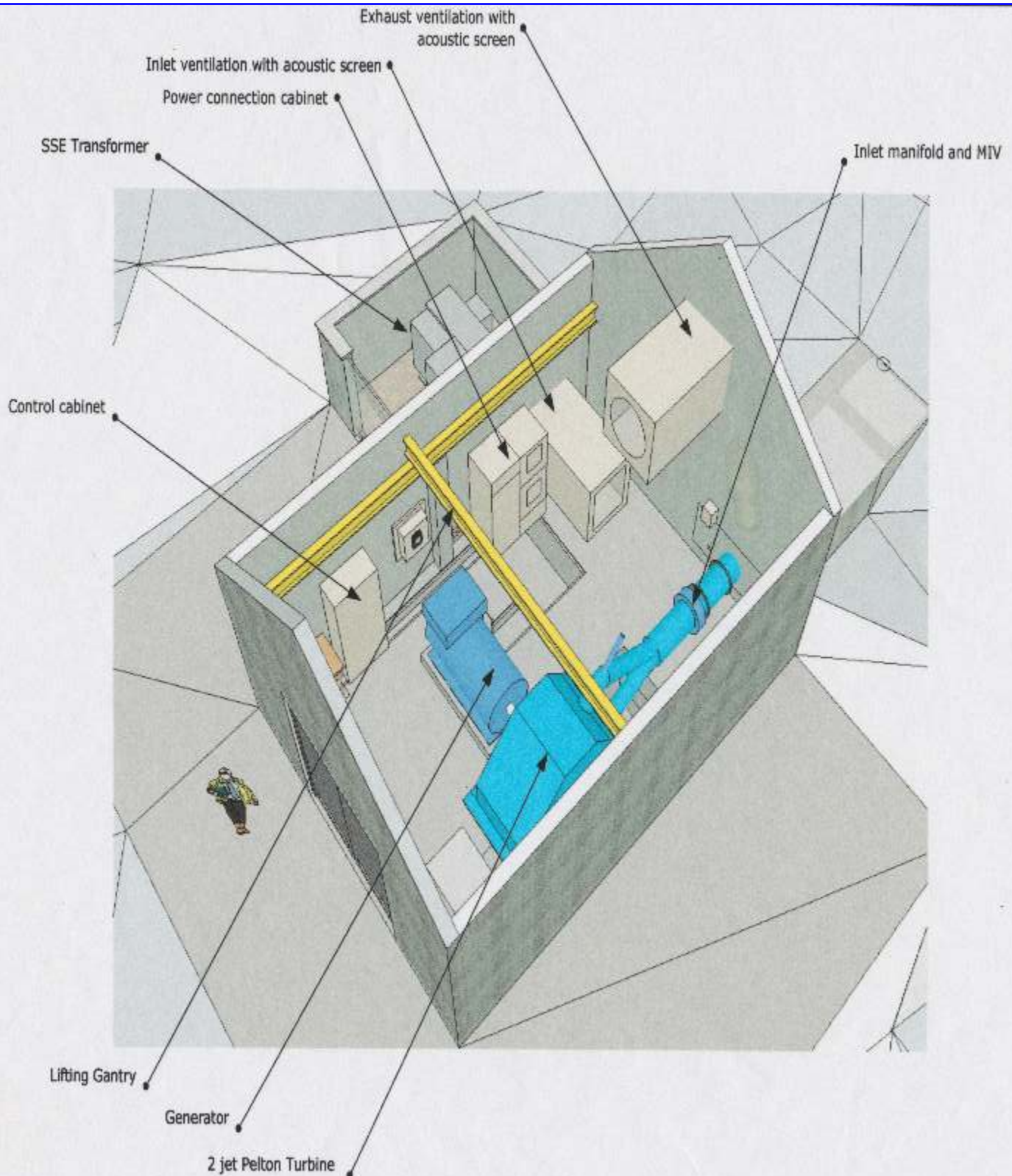
The Location



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

Cashel Hydro Electric Scheme

Powerhouse Internal Equipment View



Life After The Dean FTS

by Simon Malone

Simon Malone continues his reminiscences of time spent with the FC.

After a thoroughly enjoyable two years at the Dean FTS we were all well prepared for life outside – or so we were told!

While my time at the Dean was coming to an end my future wife, Chris, was making all the plans and arrangements for our wedding and in July 1967, a week after leaving Forestry School, we were married in the Parish Church, Farnham. Our honeymoon was in Guernsey and then we returned to start married life together.



My first posting was to Challock Forest in Kent. We arrived at Westwood Cottage, in the Lyminge beat, with virtually no possessions in

the world except for a fridge which Chris's Mum and Dad gave us for a wedding present. Other than that, our first furniture was a couple of old tea chests and some kitchen chairs given to us by one of the forest workers.

I hired a van and we took what little we had from Farnham to Kent and also went via London to collect an old sideboard stored for us by a cousin. We went into Canterbury where Courts, the furniture store, had a special offer of three items for twenty pounds! For this we got a simple kitchen table and chairs and an even simpler kitchen wall cabinet and base unit. From an advert in the local paper we bought a wooden wardrobe, which we later sold in 2002, so that lasted well! We also bought a bed in Courts. Cooking was by Rayburn which was never easy, especially as we tried to run it wholly on logs to cut down the fuel cost as much as possible. That first winter, there was plenty of snow and due to the remote location of the cottage down a long track, we were snowed in for several days. The forest workers dug us out but it soon blew back in off the fields. We learnt that a prerequisite to living in the sticks was to keep a snow box – an

emergency food ration box plus candles and a Tilley lamp for when the power went off.

At this time the forest was some 5000 acres, big by SE(E) standards and with a total workforce of over 40 men. I looked after a gang of about twenty men at that time and the names of many of them are still with me today. There was Ted Corke whose father had been blinded in the first war, poor old Ben Keeler who had a stroke one day while at work, Alf Johnson, Gil Clarke the leading ganger, and the crew from Sole Street, including Ernie Potter, Ron Graves, Danny White and Bill Bradley, who worked mainly in Denge Woods, to name but a few.

The work was mainly forest management, planting, weeding and cleaning, but for a short time we carried out some in-house harvesting on a trial basis and in a somewhat basic way.

Wilf Howell was the beat forester I worked to, a forester of the old school who believed that because his hair grew in Commission time then it should be cut in Commission time! He was a colourful character and had regular lively debates (arguments) with the Head Forester Peter Awbery, who was in overall charge. Wilf also had a Weimaraner dog called Bingo, which was as unpredictable as its owner and it gave me a savage bite on the hand one day when I tried to get in the Land Rover with it.

I worked out of a wooden office next to Forest House on the edge of the forest where Wilf lived. The main office was at Challock, about thirteen miles away, and we would go there to work several times a week. These offices were of the standard wooden shed variety, heated by wood burning and fume producing Jotul stoves. Challock was an "allowance" post. It was considered big enough and with a large enough work programme to permit payment to the head forester i/c an additional £100 per annum on his salary!

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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This was also the era of 2-4-5T and this was sprayed around on a regular basis to deal with the prodigious re-growth of broadleaf coppice across the area. Indeed my early life as a trainee forester seemed to be nothing but ferrying 40 gallon drums of the stuff wedged in the back of a Bedford Utilabus to the gangs working in the forest.

In those days, foresters were provided with a uniform, the familiar grey-green jacket with red collar complete with gold crowns. Every two years, off I went to Hepworths in Canterbury to be measured and fitted for a new suit. I declined the generous offer of plus-four trousers!

The weekly routine would start on Monday with collection of the tally books, preparing the A6 time sheets, before moving on to the time sheet summary and going through the entire pay and tax calculation process, culminating with hand writing the carbonised payslips using the dreaded Kalamazoo board!

Monthly, the progress report was completed, a complex and apparently useless document! On Thursdays after carefully analysing the required coinage, ten shilling and pound notes needed to fill each man's pay packet, it was off to the bank to collect the cash. After this, there was a trip to the post office, using some of the cash to buy National Insurance stamps which were then stuck on each man's card on returning to the office.

On Thursday afternoons it was the pay run, tearing around the Kent countryside with all the pay packets in the canvas satchel provided, to get to everyone before the end of the working day.

One way or the other, two days of each week were largely taken up with pay in some form.



Annual tool stock takes were carried out by the district officer, John Harrison. After accounting for axes-felling, hooks-bill and shovels-draining etc, there were inevitably shortages and write-offs. Write-offs were conveyed to an old and very deep, unused well at the rear of Westwood Cottage and their disposal was overseen by the DO. Peter Awbery was quite adept at calling out "3 bill hooks" while only throwing 2 down the well if we had a shortage of that particular item! I feel sure John must have known what was going on but chose to be looking the other way! *(I can confirm this from my time on tool checks. This was the easy way out! Ed)*

Another feature of forest life was visits by senior staff from Conservancy. These were preceded by frenetic activity to prepare to the highest standards, the office and the visit route, complete with copious notes, and any part of the forest likely to be on view!

I remember a visit by Charles Barrington, Conservator SE(E). He was a tall, gently spoken man, a real gentleman in fact. He was accompanied by the assistant conservator, Bernard Stocks, a much shorter man clad in tweed suit and plus fours and with a much more abrupt and demanding manner of speech. Such visits were duly written up, approved by the conservator and returned to the forest with umpteen action points set out. The report duly filed away under "Visit Reports", joining the myriad other similar reports and I suppose the more important points were duly actioned. There was a sigh of relief from everyone at forest level as these most important visitors took their leave!

A major event was a visit by the Commissioners in the early 70s. They convened in a hotel in Folkestone the night prior to the forest excursion and during the night it lashed with rain and there were gale force winds. I was deputed to meet the party in the morning and lead the coach out to the

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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forest area they were to inspect. I arrived in the town to find trees blown down in the streets and the sound of chain saws as the roads were cleared. A fitting start for a forestry party!

One day Peter Awbery announced that we were to move to the Challock beat as he needed me to take on the work of Bob Hammond who was retiring. At the time this seemed devastating as we had only lived at Westwood Cottage for about a year and our daughter was only a couple of months old. Much as my wife disliked the cottage and its location we were quite settled in our own little way.



We duly went to look at No. 1 Forest Cottages, Challock which was in a close of ten similar houses most of which were occupied by forest workers. The house itself was quite nice, much larger and we were promised some work to the kitchen and a new cooker. The house was on the edge of Challock village, so there were some attractions to it and we duly moved taking up residence in early 1969.

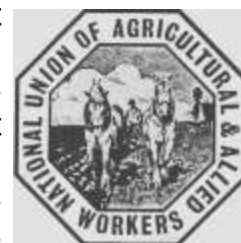
As a tenant of the Commission, we were entitled to get decorating materials for free. This meant filling in a form which stipulated the limited types of paint you could have and also how much a roll the Commission would pay for wallpaper. I remember spending hours scraping off the old white ceiling distemper material back to the plasterboard, so that I could use emulsion paint

which was coming widely into use at the time. This was always a very messy task!

I was the only supervisor in the close of ten houses, with forest workers in all the other houses. They were all friendly towards us, but sometimes we felt a bit outside the rest of the gathering. Our immediate next door neighbour had a young family and they were excellent neighbours. Their youngest child was of similar age to our daughter, which probably helped a bit.

I completed my period as a trainee forester in July 1969, after successfully passing an interview at the Commission's HQ, which at that time had moved from Savile Row to Priestley Road, Basingstoke.

Every six months or so, meetings were held in the Ashford District Office between the Forestry Commission management (Official Side), and the Trade Union organisations representing the forest worker staff (Staff Side). This meeting was known as the LJCC (Local Joint Consultative Committee), and for my sins, I was required to take the minutes and write them up afterwards. These meetings usually lasted about 3 hours and were sometimes a bit fiery as the men raised various topics which were contentious at the time. Their unions were the Agricultural Workers and the Transport and General Workers and they each fielded their own local beat stewards. These meetings were shared with staff from Orlestone Forest to the south and Shipbourne Forest, our nearest forest charge neighbour in west Kent.



As management numbers reduced, I was left as the single beat forester for the Challock beat, which meant looking after Kings Wood, Sharsted, Longbeech and Clowes Wood. Sometime during this period, further staff left and I remained looking after the then

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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A presentation party in Denge Woods Petham for Gilbert Clarke, retiring from the FC after 43 years

dwindling labour force of both Challock and Lyminge beats. This meant a further move, this time back towards Stelling Minnis, to live in Forest House when Wilf Howell moved away on promotion. The woods I looked after here were West Wood, Elham Park, Denge Wood and Cove. At about this time, Challock Forest amalgamated with Orlestone Forest and its forester, Charlie Batt joined us. With further forester reductions, Kings's Wood, Challock together with Sharsted, Longbeech and Clowes woods were added back to my area of responsibility.

The photograph was taken at the retirement of leading ganger Gil Clarke, probably in about 1972. Gil had served just over 50 years. Conservator Charles Begley is standing centre, next to him, D.O John Harrison extreme right and a very young author kneeling in front of him!

Wilf Howell had developed a lucrative Christmas tree sales point alongside Forest House and we inherited this when we moved there. I say we because my wife worked as hard as I did for the FC, dealing with sales at all hours of the day.

One year we were both really poorly with flu and took it in turns to rise from our sick beds every time the door bell rang! In those days A35 receipts in quadruplicate were issued for every single tree and had to be tallied up at the end of the day! Most customers were bemused that we insisted on giving them receipts prepared in such a ponderous way!

Much of the forest dated from the early days of the FC with plantings from the early 1920s and consequently had a fair area of mature timber standing, mainly Douglas fir and surprisingly, Sitka spruce! We were involved in the felling plans for this and it even warranted a visit from Dame Sylvia Crowe, the FC's landscape expert at the time.

I also managed over a thousand acres of working chestnut coppice. This was felled on a 16 year cycle and sold by auction in two local hostleries each November. This I loved and learnt to deal in acres, roods and perches quite proficiently. The history of this

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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form of measurement was lost somewhat when we went metric in 1968/69 but I managed to teach the old timers in this trade what a hectare looked like in due course (see also my article on this subject in the Spring 2014 FCA Magazine).

After these various house moves within the forest area, I applied for a specialist posting with Mensuration Branch at Alice Holt in 1977. Actually, I applied to join Wildlife Branch but the FC confused the branches and I ended up with Mensuration, then part of Field Surveys! By then we had three children and with my wife's family still in Farnham, it was a good opportunity to live closer to them. This also opened up the opportunity to buy our own first house and be free of FC housing for good! Mensuration Branch, which was part of Field Surveys, was responsible for the management of the FC's sample plots.

I was involved with the computerisation of all the data, a mammoth job which took up a fair bit of my five year tour of duty. This was my first introduction to computers. I also measured most of the sample plots in southern England. Life with Mensuration Branch was very different and initially I found it strange to be working in such a large building with so many people after living quietly in the forest. However the mensuration team was quite small and Don Case, a fellow Dean student, was already there so I soon settled in.

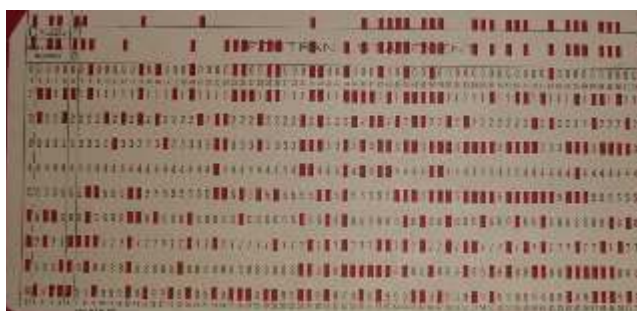
Soon after I arrived, it was decided that the whole mensuration team, including clerical support, had to go to work on the Isle of Wight to measure sample plots there. This was to last for about two weeks, coming home in the middle weekend. We had great fun there, as well as working very hard. Sample plots are small plots of trees which are measured at regular intervals



to obtain data about rates of growth. This, combined with data from plots of similar species all over the country, was used to give foresters management information about their crops. It also allowed the data to be used to predict future growth of trees under defined conditions, a process known as modelling.

The core job which occupied most of the time I was at Alice Holt, was to assist with transferring all the hand written data from over a thousand sample plots onto the computer.

Cyril Fletcher was the most senior forester in the team and he sorted the multitude of different paper documents out and sent them away to a bureau for the data to be punched onto computer cards. When the cards came back, the data for each plot was read into the computer and a program was used to analyse the data and check for punching errors. These we corrected and sent to our own staff to re-punch. When we were satisfied that subsequent check runs had fully validated the data, the final cards were stored pending completion of all data checking. We reckoned we had over a million cards at the end. Then came the process of loading all the data on the cards onto a computer with storage space sufficient for the size of this project.



A computer punch card*

The card reader fed the cards through at an impressive rate, but because it was an electro-mechanical part of the computing process, it regularly broke down, chewing up some of the cards as it did so. These had to be retrieved and re-punched by local staff.

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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IBM 1130 computer**

The IBM 1130 computer at Alice Holt was not up to the job of analysing the very large amounts of data electronically and was really only used to read and verify the data from individual plots. Once checked and corrected, the cards were read into the IBM and the data then sent by phone line, a plot at a time, from the Alice Holt computer to a computer at Rutherford High Energy Laboratory in Oxfordshire. There, it could be stored and transferred onto large magnetic discs that were compatible with our own in-house computer. The theory was that once the data was on computer, all subsequent new data would be continuously added and much more complex analysis would be possible.

What had been estimated as a two year project took up nearly all my five year tour at Alice Holt. Desktop computers were beginning to arrive at that time and Peter Edwards, who was the Mensuration Officer, was keen to learn about them. He started their introduction at Alice Holt as well as portable electronic data collecting machines for use in the forest.

I gained promotion to head forester during this period and after five years at Alice Holt, a chance came to take on another tour, this time with Silv(S) outstationed at Thetford. We moved from the urban stresses of southern England to rural Norfolk, virtually exchanging our three bed terraced house in Farnham for a detached four

bed bungalow, in what was then a much cheaper and quieter part of England.

I had an assisting forester and a small squad of men running forest and motorway experiments across eastern England and into the Midlands.

As the time passed by, I was concerned not to spend too long with Research as I felt I was getting increasingly out of touch with day to day forestry. Being at a place like Thetford wasn't too bad as I was in daily contact with many other foresters. Nonetheless, I discussed with the then district manager Len Simpson, my wish to move across onto the beat if a vacancy arose. It's an ill wind as they say, but after the great storm of 1987, a vacancy did arise. I was put in charge of harvesting in the south beat of Thetford Forest in the spring of 1988 and found myself caught up in the big clear up that was just starting.



This storm, or hurricane as it was described by the press, did enormous damage to woodlands across the south of England and parts of East Anglia. Thetford Forest was only damaged in the extreme south, but the forests at Rendlesham, Tunstall and Dunwich over near the east coast were virtually flattened.

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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Because of the enormous quantity of timber blown down, it was decided that Thetford Forest would stop all harvesting, except its own windblow clearance, and the men and machines were deployed to the east coast areas to help the local Rendlesham gangs clear the damage.

To enable this to happen, the Commission bought three elderly coaches and everybody, the best part of a hundred men and supervisors, travelled back and forth each day in the coaches, a round trip of just over 100 miles. This was a fairly grim period which lasted for about two years for some of the men and meant long days travelling in the elderly, unheated coaches which were forever breaking down. We were lucky to have two out of the three coaches operating at any one time.



I remember as we were returning home one evening, there was a shout from the rear and the card school at the back reported the loss of a rear window together with the cards! On another occasion, while proceeding around Ipswich early one morning, a van ran into the rear of the coach causing some structural damage and also giving the slumbering occupants of the rear seat a very rude awakening! I may go down in history as being the only forester to complete a traffic accident report for a coach!

My south beat team was divided into two groups. About a quarter of the men stayed at Thetford to clear up windblow in the south of our beat, while the rest travelled to Rendlesham and Tunstall. Because my gangs were in two places, I spent some days at Thetford and some at Tunstall which meant I did not have to endure quite so many coach trips as others. Luckily my assisting forester, Paul Bond, was very experienced and well able to look after things.



Some of the salvaged timber was sent to a wet-log store back at Thetford, set up to buffer the glut of timber. In due course around 85,000 tonnes of top quality sawlogs were under a sprinkler system. This ensured that as long as the timber was fresh when it was placed in store, then the constant soaking prevented the ingress and development of blue stain and other fungi.

Chain saw work was still very much the norm, but towards the end of this period, the machines were arriving, initially crewed by mobile workers brought in mainly to clear the blow in Kent and Sussex. After the blow, the machines stayed and steadily the labour force reduced.

After about 18 months, the end was in sight and the south beat team were the first to be brought back and start the process of normal

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Life After The Dean FTS *continued*

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production again. On their return we settled down to standard harvesting work, but at that time all felling was still carried out by men with chainsaws.

However, we had trialled the use of harvesting machines as part of the windblow clearance work in the Kings Forest area, and it was decided to introduce them throughout Thetford.

The first such machine was to be an Akerman clear felling harvester, and this was soon followed by two other harvesters to carry out thinning work.

The numbers of chain saw operators had been falling steadily over the years, partly due to retirements, and the policy had been not to replace them. In any case, finding men willing to carry out such arduous and potentially dangerous work was becoming more and more difficult.

The harvesters were introduced over a period of about two years, and we were able to mechanise the entire programme. We retained four or five of the younger chainsaw operators who would fell the biggest trees or where, for environmental considerations, manual felling still had a place.

Happily there were no redundancies while this transition to machines occurred. The older men came off of chainsaw work to carry out other lighter management work in the forest.

I enjoyed the work of looking after the team for about two years with the help of a number of excellent support foresters, and was then lucky enough to get another promotion.

By then, the old terms of head and chief forester had gone and my promotion this time was to forest officer 2.

I was put in charge of all forest management operations at Thetford. This meant looking after planting and establishment of young plantations, fire protection and wildlife control.

After a short spell with FM I returned to H&M still at Thetford until I retired in spring 2003, having progressed to forest officer 1.

("We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralization." - attributed to Gaius Petronius Arbiter c 62AD).

Thetford was a great place to be, with a significant timber programme and a wonderful forest where visitor numbers were rapidly increasing and the diversity of the forest was changing rapidly with landscaping and restructuring plans. Today, the earliest second rotation crops from the late 1960's plantings are nearing maturity and the naturalisation of this great forest in the landscape continues.



I have heard many retirees talk in a cynical way about their time with the FC. But I count myself lucky to have been part of an organisation with such camaraderie throughout my entire working life. I would not have changed it at all, despite the many frustrations of the bureaucracy of a publicly owned organisation. I worked with wonderful groups of people over the years and look back with genuinely fond memories over my working life.

** Punch card reproduced from picture by Arnold Reinhold*

*** IBM 1130 console reproduced from picture by Martin Skøtt*

Exchange Course Betws-y-Coed 1951-2

Photo sent by Eric Rogers



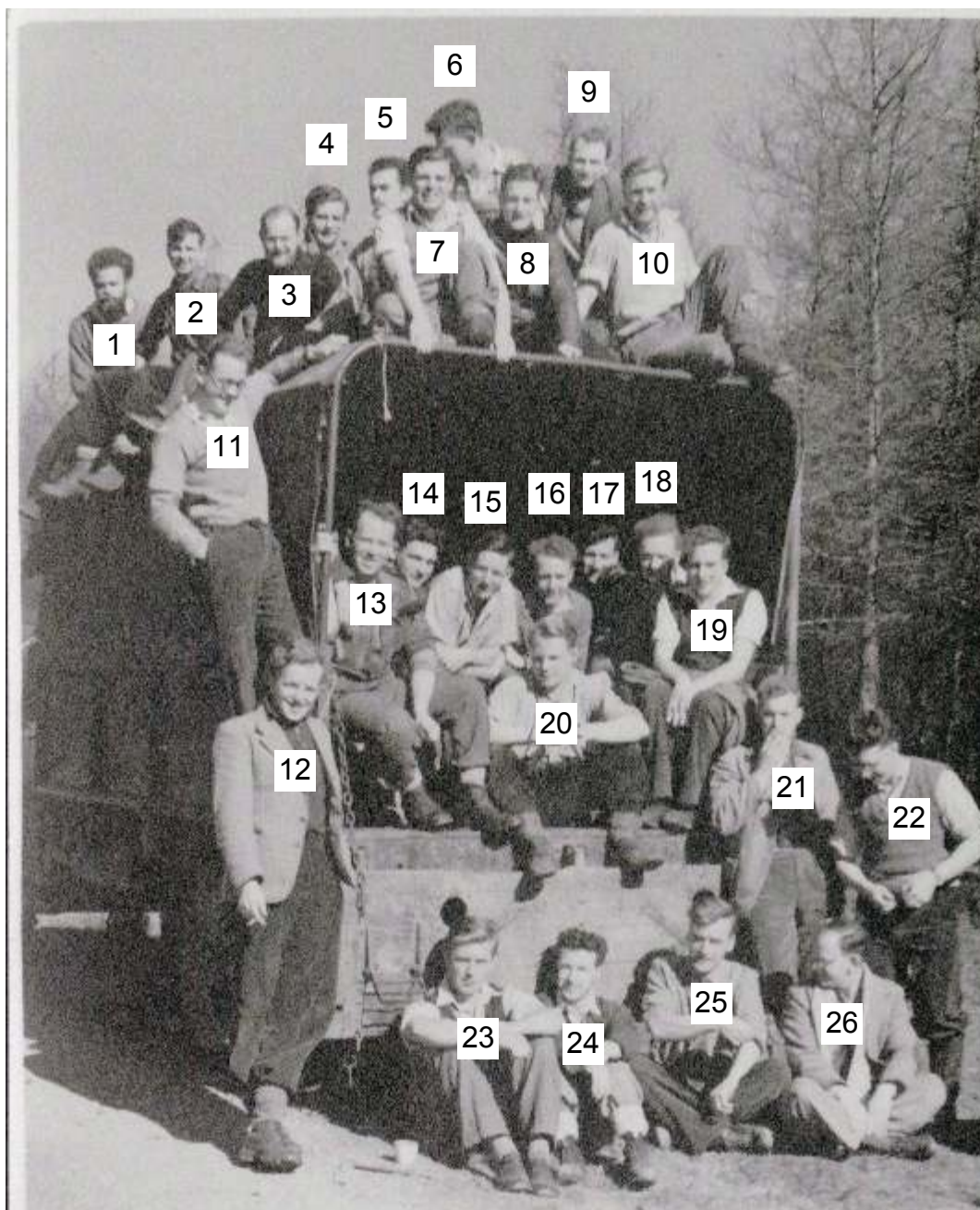
My - Don't they look young!

Students from Lynford FTS on exchange at Gwydir 1951-2.

Only a few can be identified. Can you fill in the gaps on the next page?



Exchange Course Betws-y-Coed 1951-2



Can you fill in the gaps?

1 : Rex Howell

2 : ?

3 : ?

4 : Eric Rogers

5 : ?

6 : ?

7 : ?

8 : ?

9 : ?

10 : ?

11 : ?

12 : ?

13 : ?

14 : Tyler

15 : ?

16 : Bird

17 : Winkworth

18 : Meek (Wilf)

19 : Charlie Hinds

20 : ?

21 : ?

22 : ?

23 : ?

24 : ?

25 : Waddilove (Instructor)

26 : ?

Steam Wagons

by John Palmer

The annual Beds Steam Rally was held at Old Warden in Bedfordshire during the weekend of 19th/20th September 2015. Over the past few years, some of the engine owners and crew have made a pilgrimage to the Cock Pub in Broom. This year, five engines came to the village.



The Yorkshire Undertype Steam Wagon

This steam wagon No. 117, was manufactured in September 1905 by The Yorkshire Patent Steam Wagon Co. Ltd. at their Pepper Road works in Hunslet, Leeds.

There are only 10 complete examples of the Yorkshire Wagon surviving in the world: five in England; four in Australia and one in New Zealand, and this is the oldest example of them all.

The Yorkshire Company continued to produce wagons until 1931 and made some very interesting machines, including shaft driven six-wheelers as opposed to the chain driven example shown in the photograph.

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Steam Wagons *continued*

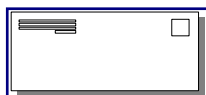


The Garrett Overtyp Steam Wagon

The Garrett Overtyp Steam Wagon No. 30826 came to Broom in August 2013. It was made by Richard Garrett and Sons at their Leiston works in Suffolk and is one of their three-ton models. It left the factory on 4th June 1912, going new to Charles Marston, as described on the side of the wagon. It is owned by the Worbey family from Henlow and only survived because of their dedication for restoring it.

Garrett produced a total of 689 similar wagons, mostly three and five-tonners, but also a handful of six-tonners. The last steam wagon left the works on 29th January 1927. Only three Garrett overtype wagons are known to have survived; the other two are in New Zealand and Canada.

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.

The Band of Colleagues Remembered

by Arthur Miller

Members of the North Wales FCA were invited to a meeting of the North Wales Division of The Royal Forestry Society on Thursday 8th October.

The R.F.S. (N.W.) installed a plaque to commemorate all members of staff of the

Forestry Commission from 1919 to 2013. It was then absorbed into the new agency of Natural Resources Wales.

The plaque is situated in a grove of tall Douglas Fir, close to the river and near the village of Tyn y Groes.



The stone is engraved in both Welsh and English and reads:

Gosodwyd gan
GYMDEITHAS COEDWIGAETH FRENHINOL
ADRAN GOGLEDD CYMRU
I gofio am rhai a fu'n gwasanaethu neu gweithio
i'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth yng Nghymru
1919 - 2013
Erected by
THE ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY
NORTH WALES DIVISION
To remember those who worked for or served
the Forestry Commission in Wales

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The Band of Colleagues Remembered *continued*

Continued from previous page

Dr Christine Cahalan, the Chair of the RFS Group helped to unveil the stone and introduced the main speakers from the Forestry Commission staff.

The first was Harry Hindle, who had just celebrated his 90th birthday. He told us that his father-in-law had been a forest worker at Radnor Forest during the 1920s and recounted some of the difficulties of those times, such as no wet weather payments, long walking distances to the work sites, poor accommodation and low pay. He reminded us that the work completed in those days laid the foundation of the forests to come.

David Williams explained the process of deciding the design of the plaque, the wording used, and the choice of location. He commented that it was not a gravestone, but a commemoration of thanks to all those who had been involved in the Forestry Commission during the period of its 94 years and a recognition of their achievements.

The final speaker was John Roe, who recalled that he first met Harry on a trip to Radnor from Gwydyr FTS in 1963.

He reminded us of the difficult conditions that all members of staff encountered at some stage because of the remoteness of the forest sites, the limited facilities and the constraints of budgets. But he then noted the success of the forest estate in Wales and the benefits that it brought.

The RFS members present, both in private forestry and ex-FC staff, contributed their own memories and comments afterwards.

It was good to see the next generation of foresters and land managers from Bangor University and Llysfas College attending the meeting and taking in some of the experience of the older generation.



Left to right: Phil Lloyd, Arthur Miller, Ken Searson, Andy Phillips, John Roe, David Williams, Terry Davies, Sue Starling, Gordon Griffiths, Les Starling, Graham Mayhead, Harry Hindle.

The Path to Forester Training School

by Eric Rogers

Tales of working with the FC to qualify for FTS have made me think about my path to Lynford. It started with family. My grandfather was a head gardener and his daughter, my mother, was a keen gardener, mainly growing food during the war.

After school, I worked on a private estate in Hertfordshire under a Scottish trained forester. I cycled to work along the hilly edge of the Chilterns. The staff included Old Hugh, a true countryman, who could do everything from laying a hedge to building a stack. There was also a horseman and three German ex-POWs awaiting repatriation.

Forestry work was mainly felling spruce with axe and crosscut, horse extraction and lorry transport to the wood yard. This had a saw bench that turned out timber for estate use, all push and pull. We also cut firewood and kindling for the manor, usually on wet days. I can only remember felling one hardwood, a superb beech that was sold to a merchant. Two or three of us laid into it with axes at the same time, safely as it was so far round the butt. It was growing at the head of a small valley that had chalk springs, lovely clear water to fill our bottles.

Apart from forestry the gang had other estate work.

- We painted the stables.
- Cut grass in the pleasure grounds with a scythe and autoscythe.
- Made compost with the grass.
- Trimmed box hedges.
- Carted chalk and pig manure for compost.
- Serviced the RAMs that pumped water to the village reservoir.
- Removed dead rabbits from the same reservoir.
- Planted a field crop of cabbages.
- Clay puddled the bed of a stream from the spring to the village.
- Emptied the village cesspit by bucket onto a bed of straw that was burnt when dry.
- Laid and trimmed thorn hedges.

Towards the end of my service I spent time with the gamekeeper, mainly rabbit catching. But I was also involved in pheasant, partridge and hare shoots that added 10 shillings to my wage of £2 per week. I recall climbing a redwood in the pleasure grounds and measuring it at 99ft with a piece of string!

After about 18 months, I was called up for National Service in the Royal Artillery. I trained at Oswestry and completed a course as a technical assistant directing 25lb guns by surveying and using a slide rule for calculations.

Then I sailed from Southampton to Hong Kong through Suez and by Singapore. There, we were stationed at outposts along the Chinese border in the New Territories where the Communists had recently taken over. Then we looked over paddy fields on the frontier, now it's a great industrial city.

The Korean war had started but conscripts were not sent.

We were transferred to Malaya, and after a little further training, we were sent on jungle patrols. Some of the

squad were terrified, especially at night, but I enjoyed it. Unfortunately, my time was cut short as a result of being used as a target by a terrorist. I was flown home, 5 days from Singapore to the UK! Then I had 6 months convalescence at the end of which I went directly to Lynford Hall. But that's another story.



1950: Eric in civies in Kowloon under banana tree



1950 in Malaya Tampin Camp

The Hazel in Folklore

by Karen Bell

Hazel nuts are renowned for being the fruits of knowledge and were eaten by Druids seeking prophetic wisdom. Hazel was more sacred to the ancient Druids than oak, and it was hazel nuts that were said to give the bards their ability to write their poems and songs of the ancient legends.

There is an ancient legend that tells of how the salmon, a sacred fish to the Celts, acquired its red spots by swallowing the nuts of the nine hazels of knowledge, which were said to produce flower and fruit, symbolic of beauty and wisdom, simultaneously. Whatever number of spots the salmon has, is supposed to be the same as the amount of nuts that the salmon has eaten. The knowledge was then supposedly passed on to the person who ate the salmon.

It gave its name to the God Mac Coll, Mac Cuill or Mac Cool (son of the Hazel), who was said to be one of the three earliest rulers of Ireland, according to Keating's History of Ireland. It was also sacred to the Celtic sea god Manaman.

Witches used it in their brooms because it was symbolic of female wisdom, and ancient Irish heralds carried white hazel wands. The penalty for cutting down a sacred hazel was death! Hazelnuts were used in divination rites at Samhain (Halloween) where the nut was thrown in the fire to discern the feelings of ones betrothed

– questions would be asked when throwing the nut into the flames and the answer would be given by the way the nut jumped or burned in the flame – i.e. if the nut burned strong and steady, then so did your partner's love for you.

The forked hazel rod is the famous tool used in divining for water and other minerals, such as gold, lead and coal - it was also used to find buried treasure! This is done by holding the rod loosely by the forked end. When passing over water or minerals, the other end of the rod will jump or quiver. In times past, this method was also used to judge whether or not a person was guilty of murder or theft!

When cutting hazel, as well as willow and pine, one should do so at the waxing (growing) moon. This is because at the waning (shrinking) moon, the sap of the wood goes down into the root, leaving the wood brittle and crumbly and without pith.



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

Into The Forest

by Mike Whitlock

Just after Christmas 1948, I boarded a train in Surrey bound for Cornwall. My destination was Doublebois, a rather unlikely name for a village in that county. I say "village" but it was little more than a hamlet. Then, it had a station on the main London - Penzance line and the A38 between Plymouth and Bodmin passed through it. How did it come about that I found myself there?



Doublebois Station in 1957*

I had always been keen on the outdoor life and had spent quite a lot of time in the countryside, sometimes doing cycle tours and staying in youth hostels. I also did some walking, but in those days, cycling was my main recreational activity. When I was serving in the army in

Germany, I did some walking in the conifer forests, which I found attractive.

Shortly afterwards, and thinking of what I would be doing in the future, I came across a small booklet "Forestry as a Career" and so my mind was made up. The booklet referred to the "Forest Workers Training Scheme" which was a vocational training scheme set up for ex-service people. There were such schemes for various skills, forestry being just one of them.

Hostels had been established to accommodate the trainees and the one I chose was at Doublebois.

Earlier, I wrote that Doublebois was an unusual name for a Cornish location. One of the better educated trainees, who obviously knew some French, told me that when he enquired at a station booking office about his journey, he pronounced the name as "Doobla bwah". I am sure that he used a correct French accent to fit what I have written phonetically. I did learn that the origin of the name came from the time when the railway line was built, cutting through a wood, making one into two. Why a French name rather than the English Two Woods was used, I do not know.



Doublebois, Cornwall

Continued on next page ➡

Into The Forest *continued*

Continued from previous page

The hostel was a largish house set in extensive grounds. It had been palatial with extensive gardens and a "farm house". At least that was what the latter was called, but I am not sure whether there was ever a farm there. I must admit that in those days I was not very interested in the history of an area. The accommodation for us trainees was hardly palatial.

I shared a room with four or five others and a 'mad' black labrador, who would sometimes charge around the room in the middle of the night.



The floors were bare wood which we were supposed to sweep clean, although this did not happen very often!

The warden could be described as laid back. I had the impression that his wife did most of the work. The food was not memorable, so I cannot say much about it. It was certainly not five star standard. I remember one trainee who did not get up very early, attempting to eat fried egg and bacon in the form of a sandwich whilst sitting on the floor of a lorry taking us to work. The lorry did not have seats. I was told that one previous trainee had spread a large white, clean handkerchief on the floor before sitting on it. I gather that he was one of those who did not stay very long.

There had been a large turnover of trainees during the time that the hostel had been open. It would appear that the information given to prospective trainees at their initial interview was inadequate. They were apparently not told what they were expected to do. One public school educated ex-army officer told me that he thought they would only be shown what went on in a forest. It was no surprise that he did not stay the course, but probably went to follow a more congenial career. In my interview I had been told that I would be expected to do manual work.

The local inhabitants were very amused at the comings and goings. I was told that a potential trainee would be seen arriving at the station carrying a suitcase, walk up the drive to the house and the next day, walk in the opposite direction. Some may have lasted a week, others a bit longer. Some of us diehards, whose aim was to go to a Forester Training School and become foresters, stuck it out.



My first job was cleaning European larch. This consisted of cutting back brambles using a long handled staff hook. Larger broadleaved growth was felled by the ganger using an axe.

Training was a misnomer - there was none. We did what we saw others doing, especially the local, older workers.

I realised afterwards that what I was doing was a waste of time and money. Apart from cutting the honeysuckle from the stems of the trees and removing competing naturally regerated broadleaves, little was achieved. The larch itself was moribund. They were almost certainly derived from seed collected from alpine areas.

Quite a lot of European larch, planted in the early days of the FC, originated from alpine areas. This was before seed origin was known to be important. Soon after I left Cornwall, the whole crop was felled and the area replanted.

One character called Wally said that all he had ever done was burning, i.e. burning vegetation which had been cut and cleared from an area to be planted with trees. The operation was called "Clearing" locally, but later I learnt that the correct description was "Prep Ground".

However, I did experience the full range of forest operations apart from nursery work. One more unusual task was the collecting of sweet chestnuts.

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Into The Forest *continued*

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I remember when manhandling Douglas fir poles down to a ride, one of my fellow workers set a large boulder rolling down the hillside. Not long afterwards, the forester appeared and asked if we knew about a boulder that had just missed his van as he was driving along the forest road in the valley. No one admitted to knowing anything about it!

The hostel closed a few months after my arrival and the residents, which included some now fully fledged forest workers, dispersed. We were offered accommodation at one of two agricultural hostels occupied by Polish workers. They were former members of the Polish army who did not want to go back to their native country, now that it was under the heel of the Soviet Union. Some of the residents of the hostel went to the hostel near Halwill forest in Devon. Wally and his friend Stan went to Plym forest.

Three married men had already moved into the new forest houses at Bellever (Dartmoor) and a number lodged in the farm house with the owner of the estate. These were men who were destined for the Dean Forester Training School. I did think about going into the local Polish hostel, but found some private digs, together with another ex-resident of the hostel.

We worked in Bodmin forest with R. Pritchard, the forester in charge. We never saw him, presumably because he had a large area under his charge, with work going on everywhere and also a large work force to manage. Eventually, he moved to Swaffham forest, so some old hands who worked in the Thetford area may remember him.

Soon after the closure of Doublebois House as a hostel, the forest was split into three units. The woods west of Bodmin retained the name of Bodmin forest.

The central area was named Glynn forest and the smaller eastern wood was named

Herodsfoot. I, together with other ex-Doublebois men, worked in Glynn forest. The forester then was F.W. Everitt. His son Eric, was also a forester and later on, I worked under him in the Cotswolds. He was quite a character and I understand that he is still alive and living in the West Country. I mention names because some older readers of "FCA Today" may have known these people.



Herodsfoot

Another useless job I was given, was cutting back heather from struggling Scots pine. I later learned that they would be described as being in check. It was hard work in hot July weather with horse flies prevalent.

I worked with an older man who had the reputation of being a tough nut. He was very critical of the trainees he had worked with, describing them as useless. However, I seemed to fit in. When F.W. Everitt arrived on the scene and saw what we were doing, he quite rightly stopped the operation.

Continued on next page ➡

Into The Forest *continued*

Continued from previous page

Not long afterwards, the whole area was burnt and we had the dirty job of clearing away the blackened trees. The area was then ploughed using an RLR plough drawn by a Fowler tractor. I acted as plough boy following the plough and helping to clear debris from the plough blade.

Occasionally the point of the plough became embedded in a tree stump. This caused some problems, but we managed to extricate it. I remember catching a vole disturbed by the plough. The creature bit me!



An early RLR plough

Eventually, I completed the year long course and became a fully fledged forest worker. I was given a certificate stating that I had successfully completed the training course. I repeat "what training?".

It is worth mentioning some of those I was with at this time because they will have been known to many readers. I have referred to a few already. The ones who went on to Forester Training School were Colin McLean, owner of the mad dog, who eventually joined Genetics research at NRS, Ian (Pip) Dawson who also joined Genetics Branch and was latterly based at Westonbirt, Ken Baker who served in Silviculture Research and was latterly based at Exeter and Gordon Hamblin who joined SE(E) Conservancy but left to form a timber business, buying broadleaves, converting thinnings to pulpwood and transporting logs to a mill.

Finally there was Ian (Curly) Cooper who married Cathy the daughter of the owner of Doublebois estate. He was one of those who lodged in the farm house. He was posted to the

Forest of Dean after training school, but emigrated to New Zealand and joined the N.Z. forest service.

Colin McLean and Ian Dawson died recently, while Ken Baker unfortunately died soon after retirement. I liked Ken very much, he was very friendly and accommodating.

Some years ago, I met Gordon Hamblin when he was extracting thinnings in a wood which a colleague and I were visiting. Unfortunately, Gordon damaged my colleague's car with his tractor whilst we were looking around the wood. My colleague, Roger Twallin was not pleased, but Gordon did admit that he was the culprit and so had to pay for the repairs.

Whilst I was working at Alice Holt Lodge, a forester from New Zealand who was interested in forest mensuration and inventory, spent some time with us. He told me that he knew Ian and Cathy Cooper very well.

Eventually, I left the West Country for the east, Lynford Hall F.T.S. I shall not say anything about life there because it has been described by Henry Smith in *The Forester Training Schools 1904-1971. Recollections from Ex-Students. Edited by Henry Smith and Geoff Waygood 2001*. Whilst not disagreeing with what Henry wrote, I must say the surroundings at Lynford were more palatial than Doublebois House, and there was some training!

* Doublebois Station picture © National Railway Museum and SSPL from the website www.nrm.org.uk

**RLR plough picture reprinted from the Forestry Memories website www.forestry-memories.org.uk

LIFE IN BRIEF

Family and friends met at St. Michael's Church, Wark on 12th August to say goodbye to **LOU SIMPSON**, widow of Charlie, who died aged 95.

After the war, Lou left Gateshead and settled in the North Tyne Valley when Charlie returned to work with the Forestry Commission.

They lived at Shilburnhaugh, now under Kielder reservoir, where Lou quickly adapted to country life and began a love of nature and the countryside, which would last a life time. This avid interest in the wildlife of the forest, the red squirrels and osprey in particular, started when she visited Charlie in the bothy in the shadow of Kielder viaduct before the war.

On Charlie's promotion to head forester in 1963, now with two daughters, they moved to Stannersburn where Lou and Charlie immersed themselves in village life.

In 1967 Lou and Charlie moved to Kielder where Charlie continued his career as chief forester.

Charlie died in 1972 at the age of 52 and Lou continued to live in Kielder for a further twenty four years.

A combination of age, lack of public transport, and the demands of her beloved garden became too great, and after much sole searching she moved to Wark, further down the Tyne valley.

Her eighteen years in Wark proved happy ones where she enjoyed visits from her numerous friends throughout the valley and beyond. She

kept in touch with lots of FC employees, many of whom moved on, and maybe this will be read by a few of them.

George Holmes recalls **DAVID SEAL** who died in October 2015 at the age of 90. He was a distinguished forester who served nearly 35 years with the Forestry Commission.

He was a proud Yorkshireman, which may or may not explain why he possessed so many star qualities!

Born and raised in York, he joined the Navy in 1943 aged 17. This led to an action-packed wartime service in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Far East. He was demobbed in late 1946.

After a brief spell studying architecture in Leeds, he decided he wanted an outdoor life, so he switched to forestry at the University of Aberdeen. There, he graduated in 1950 as part of what I can only describe as a "vintage crop" of graduates, including the late Professor John Matthews and the late John Fletcher, a co-founder of the charity Tree Aid.

David joined the Forestry Commission in 1951 as a forest officer, and his first posting was to Fort Augustus under the late Robin Drummond, who became a life-long friend and fishing companion. This was the start of a most distinguished career in forestry throughout Scotland over the next 34 years. This included running the large forest district of

Perthshire and Angus, based on Dalguise and several years as assistant conservator for North Scotland in Inverness. It culminated with his appointment in 1974 to the FC's Research Station on the Bush Estate, Edinburgh as the chief research officer in charge of a major research programme throughout Scotland and the North of England.

David's time with the FC was a period of immense activity and rapid changes in the forestry scene, with large planting programmes, expanding wood production and major developments in research and in management of the landscape. At that time from the 1950s into the 80s, there was a very clear sense of purpose, practical achievement and good fellowship. David made a major contribution to these, due to his phenomenal energy, the high quality of his work and his charismatic personality.

With his unfailing quick wit and sense of humour, he was hugely respected and liked by everyone who knew him.

There are many tales that can be told about his great career, but one of the most important is that concerning his meeting and romance in 1951 with an attractive young South African music graduate. Beryl and David were married in Edinburgh in September 1953.

He was a very bright professional and an achiever with a personality that inspired everyone who worked with him.

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LIFE IN BRIEF

Continued from previous page

David's enthusiasm was contagious and there was usually a buzz of excitement around whatever he did. His jokes and quick asides are legendary, and laughter was never far away.

He was an innovator and a perfectionist who insisted on everything being done well. He also had the great gift of warmth and kindness with a strong tendency to give the credit to others for any successes. Near perfect qualifications for anyone managing an enterprise!

He had so many talents, not least as a sailor, starting with happy family holidays dinghy sailing at Inverness when his three children were in their early 'teens.

A long time later came several years of holiday sailing in the Mediterranean and Aegean. However, the ultimate sailing enterprise came nine years after he retired, when they sold their lovely home at Waulkmill near West Linton. They moved to Devon on the south coast,

where they bought a large boat and a small house. This was a bold adventure to start at age 70! For six years, they sailed the high seas together, David as skipper and Beryl as engineer and navigator, before moving back to Peebles.

He was a master fly fisher all his life and this led to many trips and great companionship with his many friends. Often in recent years, this comprised an age group with just a touch of the "Last of the Summer Wine" about them. They were very happy times for all.

David's love of precision and attention to detail came out in his skill as a wood carver in projects, such as the beautifully equipped workshop that he built a few years ago in his Peebles garden. This was even more impressive than the most magnificent woodshed I have ever seen that he built to dry his logs at Waulkmill.

He was also no mean poet and could burst into entertaining verse at unexpected times. As an

artist, he was a dab hand with a paintbrush in watercolours in a style which is precise and pleasing.

After they returned to Scotland in 2000, David and Beryl found lasting happiness with their many friends, she with her music and he with his fishing and golf.

David was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2007 and both had to contend with his gradual decline. A very special tribute is due to Beryl for the enormous part she has played in his life. No words can do justice to her heroism and support for him, especially during the last year.

On a most beautiful autumn day a short time before he died, he celebrated his 90th birthday with his family.

He adored his family and his seven grandchildren. They and their progress through life were his inspiration and delight.

David's story has been of a most fabulous and fulfilling life, lived by one of the finest men it has been my privilege to know.

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.

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.

Alternatively, there are a myriad of sites to assist in setting up Facebook, if you don't like this one, just type 'How to set up a Facebook account' into your browser.

<http://m.wikihow.com/Set-up-a-Facebook-Account>

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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 April 2016**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st March 2016.

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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