



From the Editor : Our 60th Edition

This is the 60th issue. I am sitting at the computer looking at a paper copy of the 1st dated September 1997. The first paragraphs are, "The Forestry Commission Retirement Association, in conjunction with Slasher, is pleased to present FCRA News. The move to a dedicated newsletter came after increasing pressure forced the Slasher to devote less and less space to retirement matters. FCRA News will come along with every copy of Slasher so that both retired and those still working, can keep abreast of what goes on after retirement. In this way everyone will know that the Association is active and well supported".

Interestingly it was headed "Newsletter FOR retired FC employees". This was changed in all subsequent issues to "ABOUT". I think the time has come to revert to "FOR" as I have so much difficulty in obtaining copy from members. In recent issues I have had to rely on outside contributors to provide enough copy to keep the newsletter interesting. This in itself is a plea for more contributions from you, the members.

Also at the time of the first issue we had eight active groups. How that has changed. We are having a great struggle to keep going at all.



A number of groups have disappeared, although those remaining are very active. We shall hear from Charles Dickens at the national AGM in May about the way ahead. But for certain our central funding that supports this will cease. If we wish to continue with a national AGM we shall have to re-think its organisation and funding. We shall discuss this at the AGM.

I don't want to be too pessimistic. We are a resilient bunch and enjoy keeping in touch. As long as there are a few around, we'll keep organising events. Just send me copy to let all know that we are alive and kicking!

Richard Toleman

FCA Today 60th Edition

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FCA Today

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FC Transport at The Dean FTS

by Martin Fletcher

All the forestry schools had a varied selection of transportation vehicles for the students. They ranged from the 'Practice Car' to 25 seater open backed lorries.

I was particularly reminded of the lorry transport after two recent photos in FCA Today.

These lorries were probably 7 tons, with petrol engine and bench seats each side and centre seats with swing backs, so they could face either way.



Before embarking on a couple of brief stories of the Dean lorry used by the 66 – 65 course, I should add a note about the lorry garage doors. The story may be apocryphal, but there is only one explanation I know for the astronomical height of these doors which still can be seen today by the level crossing in Parkend. The height of the former FC lorry was measured by some students, long ago, in links (7.92 inches) and this figure was naturally assumed to be feet, when the doors were constructed by the builder.



Back to some lorry yarns and there must be lots out there from former FTS students.

Firstly, we were on a trip to the famous Crumbland Open Grown Oak experiment in Tintern Forest, high up at Trelleck. Anyway, after passing over the River Wye at Bigsweir Bridge and starting to climb, the lorry slowed at a bend to change down a gear, and a brown Labrador started loping along behind. With our encouragement, it followed us the rest of the way to the top. Trelleck is about 1,000 feet a.s.l.

We duly made a fuss of this dog, gave it a drink, and it followed us round for the afternoon visit to the Crumbland Plantation.

Taking pity on the creature, we heaved him into the lorry and instructed Ted the driver to stop when we banged on the cab.



He was duly returned to his owner having had more than an afternoon's exercise!

Another practice that occurred after a good night at the New Inn was that the usual popular seats by the tailboard were left vacant. This was because it was not unknown for those who were the 'worst for wear' to sit there or hastily move to either seat and throw up into the road. Any following car promptly increased the distance between the lorry and themselves.

Of course the poor wretch, when arriving at the worksite, would be found a convenient dip or hollow and gently



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FC Transport at The Dean FTS *continued*

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covered with brash. When the instructor came mid-morning, after bait time, there would be a flurry of activity and movement by all the students present, so he could not determine if anyone was missing, let alone which student. Such were the halcyon days of FTS transport in the back of the FC lorry.

Another vehicle was the practice car that was used by those students who arrived at the school, but had not passed the driving test. Those who had passed would take them out for a spin on a Saturday, perhaps down to Monmouth, where the test was held. These practice cars were either a Morris Minor Pick Up in the Dean or a Ford Popular or Escort at Gwydyr.

A member of our course, when on exchange at Gwydyr, was in need of a working dynamo. This was 'solved' by changing his for the one on their practice car.

The two long wheelbase Landrovers and a Utilibus made up the transport complement. The latter had a penchant for the rear doors to fly open going up a hill, if they had not been secured effectively. One of our Seniors was just grabbed as he started to fall out.

The two long wheelbase Landrovers were the best of the transport to drive. They drank petrol, their tanks having been filled up at the FC pump at Castlemain Workshop and signed for, of course, on an oily page of the A158 log, kept by the pump in a little cupboard.

The Landrover with the registration letters BCG had a good powerful well 'run in' engine and would outpace the other more recently purchased one.

When Gwydyr FTS closed, its Landrover Safari was allocated to the Dean FTS. This was rather tame and sedate compared with the Dean ones.

Enough from me, let us hear some other stories of FC transport.

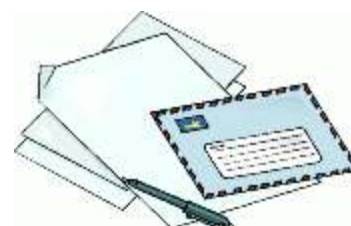


Send any articles for publication in this magazine to the editor



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Autumn in the Forest of Dean

*by Dick Gossling
Former Woodlands Officer Bullers Hill*

On November 3rd, Sheila and I took an elderly friend and neighbour Norman, up to the Wye valley to enjoy the superb autumn colours, before joining mutual friends and former FC colleagues from Coleford, Richard and Linda Davies (formerly Mason) for lunch. Afterwards, we all walked in the Nagshead reserve near Parkend, hoping to show Norman, who is a former army shooting instructor and life-long sporting enthusiast, some wild boar.

For those who haven't visited the Dean in recent times, the evidence of the boars' presence is widely visible along the roadsides, where many grass verges have been ploughed up by the boar.



After a short walk from the car park, we entered a raised hide looking out over a small pond, with a glade beyond it. We were joined in the glade by a young fallow doe, unusually on its own, and busily licking what appeared to be a stump, but which turned out to be a salt lick. It stayed there for some time, during which we were also able to watch a Goldcrest washing in the pond, a first for all of us.

We heard a squeal or two from beyond the glade, which told us that there were some boar not far away. When the deer had



moved on, we left from the hide, and skirting the pond on our right, moved carefully up the slope towards the likely location of the boar, dropping down to look under the browse line from time to time. We were able to approach into the wind, using some old bracken to help with cover, and were thus able to approach within about 20 yards of three young boar, which were feasting on sweet chestnuts. When they did notice us, they first moved a little towards us out of curiosity, and then moved away as they gained a better view of us.

I gather that the latest population estimate for the Dean boar is around 1500, and that the FC are aiming to shoot 600 of them this year. This is still not enough to start reducing the population I suspect. Meanwhile, local opinion ranges from the "Friends of the Wild Boar", to the local cricketers, who have seen Yorkley cricket pitch made unplayable by the boar, and have had to give up their summer game. If you visit the Dean, it is now necessary to beware of sheep, fallow deer and wild boar on the local roads, to say nothing of the local lads, some of whom, judging by the accident record, appear not to worry about such things when they're driving around!

Breckland Group News - 2016/17

by Simon Malone

The year started with our AGM held in the village hall in Santon Downham and preceded by our traditional lunch.

Although numbers were slightly down on last year 36 members were present and the committee members were re-elected en-bloc.

What has become our usual pattern of events started in May with a visit to the Beth Chatto Gardens near Colchester, Essex. These attractive gardens are an informal collection of plants created by Beth Chatto OBE in 1960 and planted on the gravel soil and varied land of a former fruit farm owned by her husband.

The gardens were in beautiful condition despite the late, rather cold spring weather of 2016 but on the day, the party was blessed with warm sunshine. Lunch at the nearby Courthouse Inn was praised by all concerned, although I was not able to undertake this trip myself. I have it on good authority that everyone had a most enjoyable day.

The prelude to the visit had been to spend an hour or so at the coast before adjourning to the pub and the gardens. This had been planned by yours truly to be at Frinton, but on arrival, coach parking proved difficult and the driver, using his initiative, suggested heading to Walton on the Naze. This proved to be a good decision and everyone enjoyed an hour or so of sea air!

In September, we paid a return visit to Bletchley Park home of the wartime Enigma code breaking machine and other equipment. We last visited here in 2012 and since then, there have been many changes and improvements.



Mansion at Bletchley Park

We were again lucky with the weather and it was shirt sleeve order for much of the day. The history of Bletchley Park in the years just before the second world war starts with the arrival of "Captain Ridley's Shooting Party" in August 1938.

However, all was not as it seemed and this group were really members of MI6 and the Government Code and Cypher School. Their mission was to decide if Bletchley Park would make a suitable location away from London, for future intelligence work and in later years, to be a suitable place to crack the Nazi codes and cyphers, the most famous of which was the Enigma code. In September 1939, the codebreakers settled in at Bletchley to start their famous code breaking work.

With large numbers of people recruited to join the team, the various sections were deployed to prefabricated wooden huts set up in the grounds which were known only by hut numbers for security reasons. In January 1940 the first breakthrough came when Dilly Knox, John Jeffreys, Peter

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Breckland Group News - 2016/17 *continued*

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Enigma Code Breaking Machine

Twinn and Alan Turing managed to break the German Army administrative key which was to become known as "The Green Key". This was followed by the breaking of the "Red Key" used by the Luftwaffe to provide air support for German army units.

At its height, over 7000 people were employed at Bletchley, many billeted in nearby villages and small towns. It is thought their work may have shortened the war by as much as two years, and one of the most amazing aspects of it all was that security was maintained throughout by this large number of people.

One of our members, Simon Leatherdale, had a special interest in the site as his mother had worked there. Simon said that even years after the war, she was very private about what work she had done and what went on there, and this was the case

with most of the workforce who said little about their experiences even into old age.

The trip was somewhat disappointingly supported with only 32 taking part and of these almost half were non-members, being members of other local organisations. However, Lenny Marsh, Robin Tuck, John Marston and John Broatch, seen in the picture, clearly enjoyed the day!



The year ended with our annual Christmas lunch, historically held in early January! Well why not - we all need something to look forward to in the New Year! This year was a departure from the norm with a buffet style lunch held in the recently refurbished club house of Mundford Bowls Club. Some 40 members attended and in a relaxed atmosphere met up with fellow retirees for a drink, a snack and a good yarn.

So 2016 was a fairly busy year for the Group and the plans for 2017 include a boat trip on the River Deben in Suffolk preceded by a pub lunch and we hope for ongoing good support for this.

The People's History of Thetford Forest - An Update

by Simon Malone

The Summer 2016 edition of FCA Today carried an article I had written about a project to record the history of Thetford Forest. The People's History of Thetford Forest was one of a number of new and exciting landscape and heritage conservation projects under the Landscape Partnership initiative, Breaking New Ground, thanks to a £1.5M grant from the Heritage Lottery.



"The People's History of Thetford Forest" is centred on capturing oral recollections of staff who have served at Thetford over the years. Some of those interviewed, like myself, are relative newcomers to the forest, (I was only there for 20 years), while others served all their working lives there. In addition, a large collection of photographs has been collected, examined by a panel of volunteers in an effort to identify names and locations, and catalogued for safe archival storage.

In mid March the organisers, volunteers and interviewees gathered at the Breckland Club in Santon Downham for an event to mark the official conclusion of the project.

The organisers spoke of their gratitude to all those who participated in and contributed to the project.

CD copies of the transcripts of the oral interviews were presented to interviewees, together with a souvenir booklet containing synopses of the interviews as well as historical information and photographs of the forest. A large selection of photographs was also on display. A tasty buffet lunch was also provided, and there was much reminiscing among people who had not met up for many years.

The project is nearing completion and so far, some 20 people have been interviewed and their interviews recorded. Since the event described above, more people have come forward and although the funding has now ceased, the recording equipment and the volunteer interviewers are still available, and it is hoped that some more retired staff may yet be interviewed.



You can listen to the interviews by following this link: -

<https://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/bee9-9vnemt>

Details of the recorded oral histories are on the next page



The People's History of Thetford Forest - An Update

continued

The recorded oral histories have been accepted for storage by the Norfolk Record Office, and from the end of April 2017, will be available for research by interested members of the public, and it is hoped that in such safe hands the history of Thetford Forest will be saved for future generations.

The photographs are being stored in archival storage materials at the Forestry Commission offices at Santon Downham.

To obtain the free booklet contact Vicky Tustian at the East of England Forestry Commission Offices, Santon Downham, Suffolk, IP27 0TJ.

Email: victoria.tustian@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone: 0300 0674551



Website Message Board

If you have any news, announcements or forthcoming events, post or e-mail the details to the editor. Contact details are on the back page of this magazine.

www.fca-today.com

The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve

Part 2: Paths, Play, Photos and Places

by Sue Morris



The previous FCA newsletter presented an introduction to The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve (TGTF NNR). In this edition, we focus in on the facilities available within the NNR and some highlights to visit over the summer.

First of all, a bit of a recap about what The Great Trossachs Forest is. It is the restoration and conservation of a 16,500 ha landscape in the heart of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. It stretches across three landowning partners, RSPB Scotland's Inversnaid reserve on the eastern shores of Loch Lomond, the Forestry Commission Scotland's estate at Loch Katrine and the ancient hunting forests at Glen Finglas,

owned and managed by Woodland Trust Scotland.

The first 10 years of our 200 year project has seen significant progress. Work undertaken involved expanding the existing native woodlands by planting more than 2 million native broadleaf species and encouraging regeneration in the wider landscape. There is now more than 4,000 hectares of connected, establishing woodland. Cattle are used to create the low-pressure grazing that is needed for the return to wood pasture habitat. They also help to control bracken levels, encourage wildflower glades and habitat regeneration.

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The Great Trossachs Forest NNR *continued*

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The Great Trossachs Forest
NNR in the National Park



*The Great Trossachs Forest NNR in the
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park*

A programme of harvesting has started to transform non-native conifer woodlands into a more natural forest. Efforts to remove and control *Rhododendron ponticum* have also been extensive.

However this huge restoration effort is about much more than simply planting trees. It is helping to improve Glasgow's main water supply, Loch Katrine, and thanks to funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, is providing a superb area for recreation, and this is the focus for this article.

In 2015, our new long distance path was launched, The Great Trossachs Path. This 30 mile long distance route is part of Scotland's Great Trails network and provides a key strategic link between the West Highland Way, Rob Roy Way, NCN 7 and the Three Lochs Way.

Long distance explorers now have a wide range of options to explore the entirety of

the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. However, The Great Trossachs Path is more than just a long distance route. It is a key central spine within The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve.

Between Inversnaid and Callander there are more than 160 km of connected routes of different lengths and characteristics. These walks highlight the various features of the area and provide opportunities for hill walking, loch side trails and woodland wanders.

The various cycling opportunities are also promoted in a separate leaflet as are walks which are on the gentler spectrum. All of this aims to show that there is something for everyone in The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve.

Along The Great Trossachs Path are two new Visitor Gateways which provide local information, toilet facilities and shelter in poor weather.

The Visitor Gateway at Inversnaid is modest, reflecting the remoteness of the site but provides a fantastic location for a picnic.



The Inversnaid Visitor Gateway

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The Great Trossachs Forest NNR *continued*

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Opening of the Glen Finglas Visitor Gateway

The Glen Finglas Visitor Gateway is a more substantial building, and is a great meeting point for larger groups. It also is the start of our new family friendly Natural Play and Sculpture trail.

Set along a loop in Little Druim Wood, just outside of Brig o' Turk, the natural play and sculpture trail is designed to encourage young children to explore and enjoy the woodlands. Along the loop are a series of features for children to discover and play on including a woodpecker drum, a spy chamber and a beetle optical illusion. The play trail has been a huge success with many return visits.

If the play trail does not appeal to you, then maybe our Art and Literature trail will. Largely situated at Loch Katrine and in Brig o' Turk, a series of book panels and sound stores along the paths illustrate the rich history of the Trossachs. From Sir Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, *Rob Roy* and the Glasgow Boys painters, the artists and writers who have been inspired by the natural beauty of the area are celebrated.

In recent months we have also launched two new digital products aimed at promoting the area and providing information about our work.

The Great Trossachs App is free to download on android and iOS and gives details of all the walks and themed points of interest. The latter includes history, Gaelic, wildlife and great viewpoints and are GPS enabled to automatically trigger when a user passes by.



Play features along the Natural Play and Sculpture Trail



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The Great Trossachs Forest NNR *continued*

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Our virtual tour of the Trossachs (<http://www.thegreattrossachsforest.co.uk/trossachs/virtual-trossachs-tour/>) provides 360° panoramas from 11 viewpoints. Within the panoramas it is possible to virtually hop between them and also change the view to see the scene through the seasons.

The app and our virtual tour were recently shortlisted in the innovation category in this year's Nature of Scotland Awards.

So there is a lot to see and do in The Great Trossachs Forest NNR. It is well worth a visit.

As well as the facilities mentioned above, the following are also particularly recommended. The Primrose Hill trail is a great place to see butterflies and offers spectacular views across Loch Katrine. The Meall is a strenuous day walk around the Glen Finglas estate but passes by some excellent wood pasture habitats. Pollochro woods at Inversnaid are alive with woodland birds during spring and early summer, a bird watchers paradise.

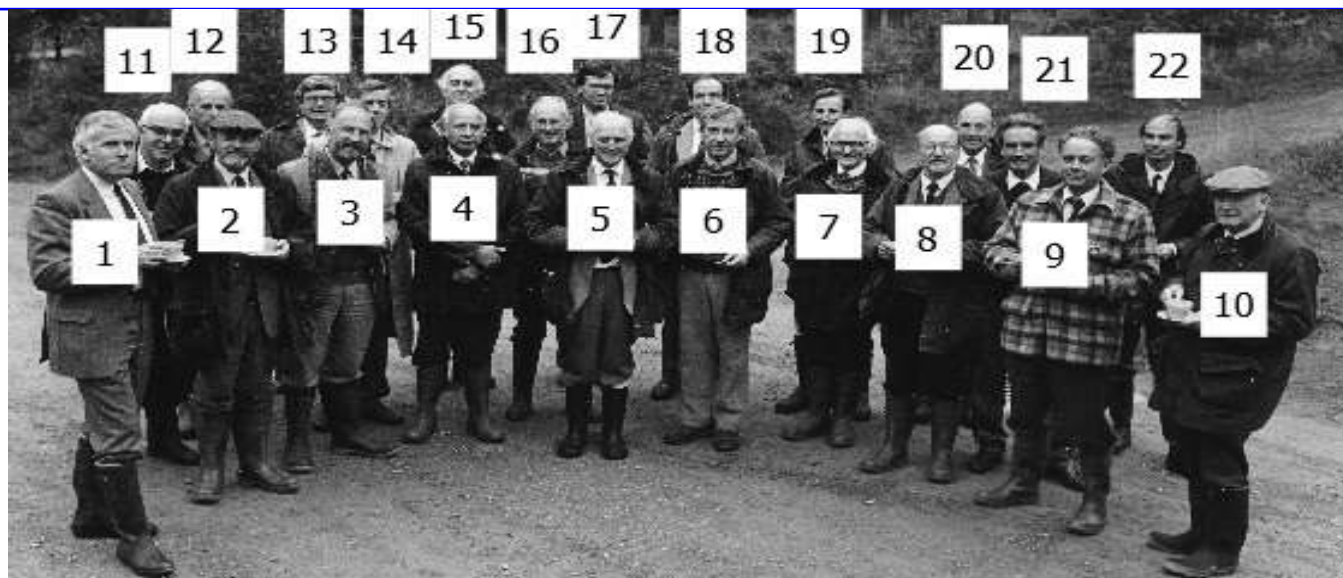
All pictures are from the Woodland Trust Media Library.

Group Photograph at The Hydro

Another of David Foot's Photographs

David thinks this was taken at either Peebles or Dunblane Hydro. Can you recall them? If you can, please let Norman Davidson know at Forest Memories.





David Foot's Photo in the Last Issue

Norman Davidson has been able to identify all except two in David's previous photo.

1. Arthur Barlow (FDM Marches Forest District)
2. Richard Illingworth (Director Estate Management - Chief Land Agent)
3. Roger Busby (Conservator SW England)
4. ? Part time Commissioner nominated by the trade union
5. Tim Sawyer (FDM based in Ludlow)
6. Alistair Scott (Director Private Forestry and Environment)
7. Bruce Robertson (Secretariat - Secretary for Commissioners' Meetings)
8. David Grundy (Commissioner for Administration and Finance)
9. Robin Cutler (Director General Forestry Commission)
10. Ian Coutts (Part time Commissioner)
11. Peter Clarke (Secretary of the Forestry Commission)
12. Charles Woosnam (Part time Commissioner)
13. Eddie Arthurs (one time head of IT at HQ)
14. Roger Bradley (Commissioner for Forest and Estate Management)
15. David Burdekin (Director for Research and Development)
16. Charles Simmonds (Director Personnel)
17. Rod Leslie (Private Forestry & Environment Officer, SW England, Bristol)
18. ?
19. Sir Michael Strang Steel (Part time Commissioner)
20. Tony Spencer (Former Conservator N England, York)
21. Terence Mallinson? (Part time Commissioner)
22. David Foot (Commissioner for Harvesting and Marketing)

Nick Fielding of Mortimer Office comments: 'The photograph was taken between autumn 1992 and late spring 1993 during a meeting of conservators, FDM's, chief and head foresters from Wales and the border counties, to look at and discuss the recent finding of the spruce bark beetle, –*Dendroctonus micans*. The meeting was held at the Mortimer Forest Office in Ludlow. The reason all the participants are outside with their tea or coffee was that the office had recently burnt down as a result of the pyromaniac tendencies of one of the foresters.

I, along with my colleague the late Colin King, were talking to the group and showing them the symptoms and effect of the beetle and what we hoped to do to control this problem. We were, as was customary then, asked to move out of the way for the photograph!'



Letters to the Editor



Dear Richard,

This is a plea to 'FCA Today' readers for a copy of Forest Record No: 44, entitled **'A Creosoting Plant in Thetford Chase'** by **Donn Small**, printed in 1962. There is a bound copy of this FR in Alice Holt Library, but it has not been possible to locate a copy elsewhere in a Forestry Commission office.

This was one of the last black and white Forest Records, before they were printed in colour.

The request comes from Victoria Tustian, who has been doing oral history interview recordings of former staff, who worked in Thetford Forest. Victoria is currently compiling a history of the work the FC did in establishing Thetford Chase Forest, in the Brecklands, from the 1920's onwards.

I worked on this creosoting plant, for a short time, 50 years ago, when I was a pre FTS student working in Thetford. I have some photographs, description and diagrams of the plant. But F.R. 44 gives

a comprehensive illustrated history from initial construction to later enlargement of the site with a layout of the 2' gauge Deckaville rail track.

For those unfamiliar with this plant, it had seven hot and cold tanks, with cradles and gantry cranes, and used 400 gallons of creosote to process 1,000 to 1,200 stakes daily.

Stakes were conveyed manually, in cradles on bogies, on over 700 yards of track.

If anyone has a copy, this would greatly help the project, and could they please send it to: Ms Victoria Tustian, Forestry Commission, Santon Downham, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 0TJ.

E-mail victoria.tustian@forestry.gsi.gov

She would probably be interested in any (apocryphal?) stories about working at the plant. Ed.

Martin Fletcher





Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

I have a mystery for which I would like to engage the collective wisdom of the Forestry Commission Association. Can anyone identify the piece of machinery shown in the attached photographs? It is lying within an area of FES-managed P58 woodland near the Lake of Menteith in Central Scotland. Current suggestions include an early skidder, part of a mobile sawmill, an ex-agricultural reaper and part of a windmill/water pump.

Best wishes,
Hugh Clayden

hugh.clayden@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

If anybody can help please contact Hugh directly. Ed

Footnote from the Editor: I sent the photos to Jim Christie, ex Plant Engineer, who has considerable mechanical knowledge. His reply is on the next page.





Letters to the Editor

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Jim Christie's identification suggestions.

I would go for the 'sawmill' guess but to be more sure, I'd need to clear the surrounding vegetation.



There is no doubt that this is a winch driven by some power source via a chain-drive. Judging by the scale of the components it would probably be capable of a 5 ton pull.



I am equally certain that this is an old engine. Looks like a 6 cylinder but the wee branch is hiding where I would expect to see the sixth port. If it is a five cylinder engine then it is very rare. Judging by its size, I would put it at about 30 to 40 horse power.



This is one where I am guessing in that it appears to be a ground engaging wheel(s). Hence the protruding lugs. Although lugs normally are fitted to enable a wheel to either drive or be driven, it could in this instance, be neither.

When a wheel on a pulled implement sinks in beyond a certain depth it ceases to turn and acts like a skid. This considerably increases the drag, so lugs are used to ensure that the wheel rotates, thus reducing the required pull.



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Letters to the Editor

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The wheel in the fore-ground looks to me like something associated with a railway system, hence the flange on the rim. If there is only one of these wheels, it may have nothing to do with the other components and has been put beside the other stuff awaiting the arrival of the scrap-man.



This photograph reinforces my opinion that this is essentially an engine driven winch, and since the ground engaging wheels are lying apart from the winch, it may be that these wheels have nothing to do with the actual winch system *per se*, but could have been part of a 'Sulky,' to carry that which was being winched. The width of the wheel rim indicates its suitability for being used in soft conditions.

Now, and again I'm guessing, could it be that it was used to drag timber from the Lake to a hard standing? Does his help or hinder?

Cheers,
Jim Christie.

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



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

The Impact of the First World War on the Woods and Forests of Scotland

by Euan House

The Situation at the Outbreak of War

With the outbreak of war in August 1914, the United Kingdom faced a potential crisis in timber supplies. It was dependent on foreign imports for approximately 95% of its timber.

When the U-boat campaign on commerce began in early 1915, it strangled this supply from Russia, the Baltic and North America. With no more than 10% of the timber used in Britain sourced domestically in peace time, a wartime strategy was vital to ensure that supplies reached those reliant industries. Most significant were the pit props used in the coal mines, which in turn powered heavy industry.

The first year and a half of the war represented a continuation of policy and practice from the previous decade. Import stocks were still high, and a lack of forestry experience and skills amongst the general population, combined with the *ad hoc* nature of the war and its planning, led to a general complacency on the issue of sourcing timber.

With the war's entrenchment and the German Navy targeting commercial shipping, the government gradually came to realise a plan of action at home would be necessary to stave off an escalating crisis.

As David Lloyd George himself remarked, Britain came closer to losing the war through lack of timber than want of food.

Redress was begun in December 1915, when the Home Timber Committee was created under the Directorship of John D. Sutherland, who had previously headed the Forestry Department of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland.

To some observers, it was a belated response to a problem they had been speaking of for years. Two Scots landowners who would independently chair the Forestry Commission in its early years – Simon Fraser, 14th Lord

Lovat, and Sir John Stirling Maxwell – had been pressing the need for a national forestry body for years before the war. In 1914 Lovat commented,

"We have seen, since the foundation of the Society (Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society) sixty years of private endeavour and sixty years of organised inactivity on the part of the state".



Today it would be unusual to consider two individual extensive property owners pushing for public intervention in land management, but they were certainly not unique in their thinking amongst the gentry.

Sir Francis Acland, whose committee in 1916 formally established the grounds for the Forestry Commission, was likewise a substantial landowner in Devon and Somerset.

Across Britain, and especially in Scotland, there was growing opinion amongst interested parties that land which could have been used for forestry was going to less worthy uses for want of concerted organisation.

Many academics were also concerned, such as the Head of Edinburgh University's Forestry Department, Professor E. P. Stebbing. Likewise more radical thinkers, such as future President of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society, John McEwen, and future Scottish Secretary, and

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Impact of WW1 on Woods and Forests of Scotland

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later Chairman of the National Committee of the Forestry Commission in Scotland, Tom Johnston, similarly harboured plans for a state role in planning and directing forestry in the UK. But to their minds it would be a programme of nationalisation regardless of the interests of the landowners. Though collectively they made for strange bedfellows, the circumstances of the war did much to advance the case for a state body to oversee forestry, regardless of political viewpoint.

As the Earl of Selborne commented in the House of Lords in August 1918, "The whole problem of re-forestation depends on the decision of the Cabinet."



Ironically, it was to Germany, as well as France, that many looked for guidance on how and why the state should take a greater role in forest management.

Many Scots forest managers in the Victorian and Edwardian eras had received training in Germany, where formal higher education and the notion of "scientific forestry" had a longer pedigree than in Britain. Indeed, the man credited as the "father of Indian forestry" during British colonial rule in the subcontinent was a German, Dietrich Brandis.

A visit by the Royal English Arboricultural Society (today the Royal Forestry Society) to Saxony in 1913 left them highly impressed at the state forest management, though the author suggested that transplanting these state practices to *laissez-faire* Britain would not be straightforward, "Such things as, for example, a 300 year crop rotation is out of the question."

This points to a difference between the English and Scottish societies, with the latter body more widely sympathetic to the idea of the state playing a role in land improvement where reasonably possible. But there was little evidence in 1914 of any concern within the Cabinet to radically change the *laissez-faire* policy on timber imports that had seen Britain become a net importer to such an extent, to the exclusion of significantly expanding Britain's own forest resources.

Crisis & Response: Help from Canada

The finer points of such policy debates were of secondary concern for most of the war's duration. With imports increasingly at risk and unable to meet demand, timber stocks were running low.

With the relative lack of experience and equipment at home, Britain faced a potential crisis if action was not taken.

It was in such circumstances that the Colonial Secretary, Andrew Bonar Law, telegraphed the Governor-General of Canada in February 1916 explaining that, "Owing to the very serious shortage of freight for munitions, food, forage and other essentials, which is a matter of the gravest concern to H.M. Government, it is impossible to continue to import Canadian timber on a sufficiently large scale to meet War requirements. We request that a Battalion of Lumbermen might be formed of specially enlisted men to undertake exploitation of forests of this country."

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The response was swift. Approximately 10,000 lumbermen of the Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC) arrived to work in Britain during the course of the war, about one-third of them based permanently in Scotland. The first Canadians were logging by June 1916 in Dalbeattie and Kirkcubbin in Dumfriesshire, and advanced quickly throughout the country.



They would serve throughout the country, establishing headquarters at Stirling, and intermittently at Edinburgh, Inverness and Nairn. Overcoming adverse terrain and relatively rudimentary infrastructure, especially in remoter parts of Speyside and the Highlands, they often had to erect their own sawmills and light railways.

The Newfoundland Forestry Corps built a 3,200ft log chute at Craigvinean Forest on the Atholl Estate near Dunkeld that impressed the locals.



Newfoundland Forestry Corps Sawmill and Log Chute near Inchmagrannachan, Craigvinean Forest, Perthshire 1917

The Canadians brought the ingenuity of their homeland work to Scotland. So called "steam donkeys", engines that combined with winches to drag felled timber onto waiting train carts, were used where possible in place of the traditional method of horses. There is even an unverified account of one unit clearing an entire plot in Ayrshire to build their cabins, only to be told that they had felled the entire crop intended to help the war effort!

Operations were ultimately directed by Major-General Alexander McDougall, a civil engineer by background who had worked on the great Transcontinental Railway's construction in Canada.



Major-General Alexander McDougall, C.B. Director-General Timber Operations, GB & France. A Civil Engineer by education and vocation, he was chiefly responsible for organising the CFC's operations in GB in WWI. His previous projects had included railroad construction in his native Canada and dam-building in Mexico.

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The Canadians appear to have had a warm reception during their stay, many of them finding wives amongst the locals.

The farewell dinner hosted in their honour by John Stirling Maxwell at the Royal Hotel in Inverness on 15th May 1919 is reported as being held in good spirits and humour.

Their stay wasn't entirely without incident, though. Joseph Edward Boyce, a lumberman soldier in the 107th Company of the Corps was accused of "Theft by housebreaking with intent, malicious mischief, breaking open lockfast places and assault with intent to murder at Drumdelnies House, near Nairn," in 1918.

What this amounted to, in effect, was a drunken breaking-and-entering incident at the local manor, whereupon Boyce shot wildly at the arresting policeman. Fortunately for both parties he missed, but was jailed nonetheless for his misdemeanours.

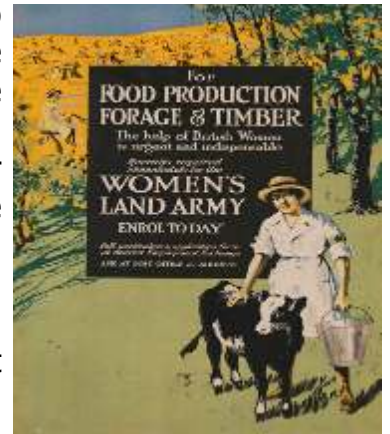
Whilst there is no mention of this particular case in the Corps' official history, it is admitted there were some minor offences committed by the men, as initially "there was very little in the way of amusement". Besides the Canadians, Finns, Portuguese, and even some German prisoners of war also found themselves working in Scotland's woods.

The Finns in particular, most of them rescued sailors from torpedoed shipping vessels, were noted for their aptitude for the work.



Opportunities for Women

In addition to foreign labour, the second half of the war also provided opportunities for women to become practically involved in forestry in an unprecedented manner. This wasn't without reaction.



The Treasurer's Remembrancer replied curtly to a Board of Agriculture request for an additional £2,000 to employ women in forestry work by stating he thought there was "... no likelihood of the Board spending the £10,000 on putting women into knickerbockers to work on farms." But employ them they did.



The Women's Forestry Service was set up under the Board of Trade, and worked closely with the Women's Land Army.

Across Britain, though based mainly in the south of England, there were nearly 2,000 women working in forestry at the war's end, around 350 as measurers and forewomen, and 1,500 as loggers.

Whilst the funding for this enterprise came from central government, it was the private estates that hired women to fill the labour shortage and help supply timber.

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Eleven such "ladyworkers" arrived at the Blair Atholl estate in March 1917, and a further eleven "ladystudents" a month later. The former did felling, clearing and planting duties alongside men and boys, while the latter worked in the newly founded garden nursery at Inver. Lord Tullibardine, heir to the Duke of Atholl, noted in a letter to his brother that "when they are not squabbling, they work well."

Interestingly, estate records show that the gap in average pay between the men and women working in forestry was not as great as might be expected for the time and, on the whole, it closed as the war progressed.

Without specific details of individual pay and tasks, it's difficult to draw too many conclusions from this, but forestry did provide novel employment opportunities for women.

Foresters at the Front

Men working in forestry in 1914, heeded the call to arms. Lord Lovat, who had raised the Lovat Scouts during the Second Boer War, joined active service. He served first in the Dardanelles with the Highland Mounted Brigade before being invalided back to Britain in 1915. He resumed both an active role and his passion for forestry in 1917 with his appointment as

Director of Forestry on the Western Front. He directed loggers from various Allied nations in the Jura in Eastern France for timber supply to the frontline. For this he received the *Ordre du Mérite Agricole* and the *Légion d'honneur*. He also remained in contact with Lord Acland and his Committee's progress during the later stage of the war.

John Campbell, employed as a woodsman on the Blair Atholl estate prior to the war, volunteered and served as a sapper in the Royal Engineers of the Black Watch and was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal in 1916. He returned to Blair on furlough in February to a hero's welcome. Shortly after, his brother Duncan, likewise employed on the estate woods, signed up for duty. But whilst John survived the war, his brother was not to be so lucky. It is likely he volunteered before conscription was enforced in May 1916, as those working in forestry were exempted from the front line, being in a reserved occupation.

The Impact on Scotland's Forests

The timber from Atholl Estate was sold to a number of firms. The greatest buyer was Robert Frazer & Sons of Newcastle, an iron and steel merchant.

From the moment imports were struck by the German naval blockade in 1915, Frazer & Sons, as well as a number of heavy industries in Glasgow and elsewhere, began demanding unprecedented quantities of timber. This persisted into 1919.

The first eighteen months saw little development, but by the second half of 1916, felling, timber prices, revenue and employment had all increased.

In October of that year, a £26,000 contract (approximately £2.3m today) was awarded to the Edinburgh timber merchants Calder Dixon

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& Co. for stands of Scots pine, larch and spruce from around the Cally Loch near Dunkeld. James Calder, chairman of the company, was himself Controller at the Timber Supply Department of the Board of Trade from 1917 to 1919, so one can probably assume he was wise to the nature of the deal.

In early 1918, £34,000 (approx. £2m today) worth of timber was felled in Craigvinean and sold to the government. It was one of the oldest and largest managed forests in Scotland and was established by the Dukes of Atholl between 1738 and 1830 with the intention of providing timber for the Royal Navy.

The felling was followed by the sale of the land in 1937 and it is now managed by FC Scotland.



Piling logs in Scotland

It was not the first occasion that the estate and government had sought to work together in forestry. In 1913 Lord Tullibardine had proposed an arrangement whereby the Board of Agriculture's Forestry Department would plant a variety of species at Ballogie, near Loch Ordie, as their educational plot. In return for having got the land for nothing, ownership of the trees would revert to the estate after

thirty-five years or so. This shrewd proposal, that would have furnished the estate with a valuable range of timber at little to no personal cost, was weighed up by the Board. Many influential figures, including Lovat and Stirling Maxwell, were supportive of the idea, though concerns were raised that its commercial appeal would be detrimental to its educational purpose.



Felling in Scotland

Ultimately the onset of war put a brake on the plan's development but as the sale of Craigvinean's timber demonstrated, it certainly did not bring an end to cooperation between government and landowners.



Railing logs to station in Scotland

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Speyside was a particularly concentrated area of felling, as it was one of the most widely and densely afforested areas of the country.

Plantations on the Darnaway and Moray Estates were worked on extensively by the CFC for approximately two years. Large areas of remnant native Caledonian pine in the Abernethy, Glenmore and Rothiemurchus Forests between Nethy Bridge and Aviemore were cleared from October 1917 until the end of the war, producing over 56,000 m³ timber.

The CFC also logged extensively around the country, notably at Drummond Hill, Logiealmond, and Taymount in Perthshire, Braemore in Ross, Dornoch in Sutherland, Drumtochty and Kemnay in Aberdeenshire, Tulliallan in Fife, Mauchline and Kilkerran in Ayrshire, Kirkconnel and Castle Douglas in Dumfriesshire, and Birkenhead in the Borders. Ultimately 47% of the CFC total timber production in Britain was sourced in Scotland. As it had around 5% of land area under woodland, this felling had a dramatic impact upon the forest landscape and resources.



A camp in the Scottish Highlands

The Forestry Commission census of woodlands in 1924 showed Scotland to have around one million acres (405,000 hectares) of woodland at the end of the war, of which 21% was classed as felled or devastated.

As the likely area of productive woodland accounted for only a further 40%, it is probable that around one-third of the potential source of timber was felled over the course of the war.

The War's Legacy

It was in such an environment that greater action on the part of the state was deemed essential. The largely fruitless campaigns for government to acquire and manage forestry holdings before 1914 had been given fresh impetus and a clear motive by the war. In Acland's words, never again could "the United Kingdom run the risk of future wars without safeguarding its supplies of timber as every other Power that counts has already done."



With the Acland Committee of 1916, the various supporters of an independent state body to oversee forestry found a vehicle for their cause and a government at executive level that was willing to listen.

Following the 1917 revolution, Russia as supplier of at least 35% of Britain's timber in 1914, fell into disorder. Allied to growing concerns over the depletion of forests across the Empire, the need for domestic afforestation was as clear.

The Committee was not afraid to think long-term, suggesting as a target the near-doubling of the UK's woodland area over the course of

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the twentieth century, from approximately 2m acres to 3.77m. This target would later be revised upward, but nonetheless displays the early ambition and seriousness with which the project was handled.

The independent state body created was to be the Forestry Commission (FC), which officially came into being on 1st September 1919, supplanting the Interim Forest Authority that had been provisionally created ten months earlier at the end of the war. Of the eight Commissioners, all but one were private landowners. Three came from Scotland, with Lord Lovat as Chairman. The FC's northern office, the only outside London, was in Edinburgh.

The objective was a programme of rapid land acquisition and afforestation. With the war having devastated timber stocks on many private estates, some landowners recognised the financial and practical difficulties of taking on such a long-term project as the planting and maintenance of woodlands. So they decided to sell, or in some cases donate, land to the FC.



With the end of price controls for agriculture in 1921, the FC began to expand its planting programme and became a significant employer in rural areas.

Amongst the areas of land that came under control of the FC in Scotland were Monaghly Forest and the Culbin Sands in Moray, Inchnacardoch and South Laggan Forests in the Great Glen, and Benmore, Glenbranter and Kilmun Estate in Argyll.

The first two were properties of Harry Younger, of the Edinburgh brewing dynasty, and Harry Lauder, the music-hall entertainer, respectively.

By 1924, the government owned 29 forests across Scotland, comprising 141,900 acres.

The First World War acted as a catalyst for considerable and radical change to forestry in Scotland. Events of diplomacy and warfare abroad, that seemingly had little to do with woodland management, subtly shaped a profound change in government policy toward forestry in Britain, changing Scotland's rural economy and landscape in a manner that continues to be seen to this day.

Thanks to Jane Anderson at Blair Atholl Estate Archives and Nicola Cowmeadow at A. K. Bell Library, Perth for their help in sourcing material.

Made possible by support from The Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission Scotland.

(Euan House is Syd House's son, an ex conservator in Scotland).

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.



LIFE IN BRIEF

Mike Whitock has told of the death of **KEN TRODD** in December aged 90.

I cannot give a full account of his career in the F.C. but I first met him in the 1970s when he was forester in charge of Bramshill forest and his final posting was to the Chilterns forest.

On retirement, he and his wife joined the now defunct Chilterns group of the FCA where he held the post of treasurer. On moving back to his "home" territory of Hampshire to be near their daughter and family, he and his wife enjoyed a short time together before she had to move into a nursing home, owing to increasing health problems. Ken's wife died some years ago, but he

continued to live on his own with help from his daughter and carers. Ill health and lack of mobility prevented him from attending group meetings at Alice Holt. He was latterly the owner of a mobility scooter, which enabled him to move around the area where he lived.

My contact with him was by telephone.

He remained mentally alert and was interested in news of former colleagues and acquaintances. I found him to be always friendly and kind, despite his physical limitations.

My knowledge of his F.C. career is sketchy, but I have discovered that he appears in the 1942 list of students at the Dean Forestry

Training School. However, he does not appear in the 1943 photo, which does include most of those people listed in the 1942.

He once told me that, at one time, he was stationed at Kielder forest. Perhaps other readers can fill in the gaps, although there cannot be many of his vintage still alive.

*I have been told of the recent death of **Arnold Grayson**, who had a major influence on FC policy and practice. It will take some time to prepare an appreciation and it will appear in the next issue. Ed.*

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://www.wikihow.com/Set-up-a-Facebook-Account>

Forestry Commission Association Organisers

FCA Liaison Officer: *Charles Dickens*

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FCA Today editor: *Richard Toleman*

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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 2017**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st July 2017.

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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