



From the Editor

Guess what. Same old appeal, same old problem. I know readers will say that yet again an issue has appeared and there was enough copy on the publication date. But it was a close thing!

I suppose all editors of minor publications have worries about lack of copy. But this is not a minor publication for the FCA. It is a key part of keeping us together.

There will be big changes in what we have known as the FC. What we knew will disappear, so it is important that the FCA continues to function as the group of friends that we are.

FCA Today is part of our continuity. But it must be supported by the readership. Copy does come in, but the greater part is from the "Old Stalwarts".

FCA Today needs the support of the wider readership. So now is the time to contribute. I can't imagine that our retirees are anything other than inventive, adventurous and imaginative. Let us all know what you are up to.

Get writing. And a Happy (writing) Christmas.

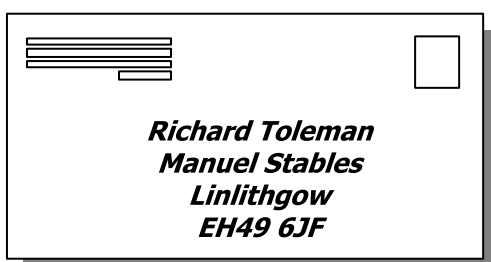


Richard Toleman

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FCA Today



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Forestry Commission - Its Future in Scotland & England

by Charles Dickens

During November, I have been in correspondence with Jean Lindsay, the Forestry Commission's Director Central Services at Silvan House. She has briefed me on the latest developments on the future of the Commission in England and Scotland.

There is quite a lot of information on this matter on the Internet and perhaps many of us are aware that matters are progressing quite quickly. Below is a synopsis of where we are now.

Today, the FC exists only in England and Scotland. The FC in Wales was devolved to the Welsh Government in 2013 and is now wholly subsumed into Natural Resources Wales.

SCOTLAND

The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill was debated in the Scottish Parliament this 7th November. It will transfer the powers and duties of the Forestry Commissioners, insofar as they relate to Scotland, to the Scottish Ministers. The application of the Forestry Act 1967 to Scotland will be repealed with the effect that the Forestry Commissioners will no longer be responsible for forestry in Scotland.

Scottish Ministers have decided to establish a new Executive Agency – Forestry and Land Scotland - and also a dedicated Forestry Division within the Scottish

Government. Forest Enterprise will come under this Agency and the old Forestry Authority will come under the Forestry Division. No new body akin to Natural Resources Wales is being set up.

These changes are scheduled to happen on 1st April 2019. Already there have been many changes with Silvan House, in that many of the services provided by the Shared Services there are being devolved this next year to new corporate service teams in Scotland, England and Forest Research.

ENGLAND

The Bill referred to above will leave the Forestry Commission as an England only body under the direction of newly appointed Forestry Commissioners.

The Commissioners will be accountable to the Defra Ministers. The executive leadership of Forest Enterprise, Forest Services and Forest Research will continue largely unchanged. Forest Research will, with the agreement of the Scottish and Welsh ministers, provide research and data (i.e. plant health and biosecurity) services to all three administrations.

This was confirmed in a statement made by Therese Coffey, Under-Secretary Defra, this 7th November. She also said that that the Government will not allow any net reduction of the Public Forest Estate which it will protect, improve and expand.

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

30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm of 1987

by Simon Malone

On the night of 15th - 16th October 1987 I must be one of the few people who slept throughout, blissfully unaware of the severity of the storm that had raged during the night and initially unaware of the havoc caused. It was only on waking and listening to the radio news that I became aware of the situation.

An early riser, it was still pretty gloomy and very windy when I ventured into my garden to check for damage. Thankfully our house was unscathed save for two roof tiles which had parted company on the south west corner of the roof and which lay smashed on the ground. At the time I was serving with Research Branch - Silviculture (S) outstationed at Santon Downham.

My journey to work, some six miles, was mainly on quiet lanes through the forest.

I quickly became aware of the amount of branchwood and general debris lying everywhere and it wasn't long before my route was blocked by three large, fallen poplars. Fortunately, the road at this point had wide flat grass verges and I was able to negotiate around them.

The final stretch of my journey was blocked by minor debris which I was able to drag aside and make my way to Santon Downham, creeping under partially fallen telephone lines on the way.

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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On arrival at my office, I found two of the Research workers had managed to get to work more or less on time. We collected a couple of chain saws and initially retraced my route as a starting point for general clearance as at this stage no one had a full picture of the problems ahead. As the day wore on, word filtered through of the extent of the damage in Thetford Forest and the total devastation of the Sandlings forests on the east coast. As I was with Research branch at this time, we were not directly involved in the initial clear up, but everyone turned out to help clear forest roads and enable access for a full damage survey. Over the following weekend, I visited the Sandlings forest and was horrified by the sights I found. Major roads through the forest had been totally blocked by fallen trees lying on top of each other some 2 to 3 metres high. In places, access had been created by clearing a car width or so through, giving the feeling of driving between walls of trees. Access into the forest itself was impossible at this early time.

The storm, or hurricane as it was described by the press, and which took place during the early hours of Friday 16th October 1987, did enormous damage to woodlands across the south of England and East Anglia.

Thetford Forest was severely damaged only in the extreme south of the area but the Suffolk FD forests at Rendlesham, Tunstall and Dunwich, known as the Sandlings, near the east coast of Suffolk were virtually flattened. Because of the enormous quantity of timber blown down, it was

decided that Thetford Forest would stop all normal harvesting and the men and machines would be deployed to the east coast areas to help the local Rendlesham gangs to clear up the damage.

To enable this to happen, the Commission purchased three elderly coaches and everybody, (the best part of a hundred men and supervisors), travelled back and forth daily in these. (A "P" registration coach is 1975 meaning these coaches were some 12 years old when purchased!) This was a fairly grim period which lasted for over two years for most of the men and meant long days travelling in coaches which were unreliable and forever breaking down.

My background

At the time of the storm, I was working for Research branch outstationed at Thetford acting as Head Forester for the Silviculture (S) team. I had been in this role for nearly five years and had already put out feelers with a view to a transfer over to Thetford forest when my tour came to an end. The "ill wind" brought me this opportunity and I was transferred to H&M Thetford, south beat, at Easter 1988 as Head Forester harvesting working to Chief Forester George Marshall. Before this, I had had very little harvesting experience so this became a baptism of fire for me.

Windblow Harvesting organisation

All routine harvesting at Thetford and Suffolk Forest Districts was suspended during clearance, due to the enormous volumes of blown timber to be cleared while timber already in the pipeline was

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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despatched to our customers in the normal way. The volume blown equated to approximately around one year's programmed cut at Thetford and 14 years cut at Suffolk. The Thetford harvesting labour force was approximately 100 strong at the time of the storm and all harvesting at the time was motor manual, supported by Volvo 861 and A20 forwarders and MF tractors with hydratongs. Suffolk FD harvesting was similarly organised though on a smaller scale. In addition, some clearance was carried out by contractors, particularly in some of the more fragmented outlying areas.



In order to carry out this immense task it was decided that Thetford labour would travel to Suffolk FD, hence the Forestry Commission's purchase of the 3 old coaches to transport labour and some supervisors between Thetford and Suffolk on a daily basis. This was a return trip of a little over 90 miles each day. The coaches were allocated one to each of the three Thetford beat teams. The coaches initially lacked even heating though this was subsequently installed. Due to their age, reliability was

not good and for much of the time only 2 of the 3 coaches were operational at a time and constant reorganisation was needed in order to redeploy roadworthy vehicles to suit the needs of the scattered labour both at the workplace and for their return home in the evenings. Fortunately a number of the harvesting team members already held appropriate PSV licences and were able to act as drivers. A 10 hour day was in operation throughout in order to get a minimum 7 hour working day and allow for travel.

Machine operators involved in timber loading duties travelled independently by van as there was a need to be on-site early each morning for loading customers lorries. At this time all timber at Thetford was sold Free On Lorry.

The North and Central beats began clearance late 1987. The South beat labour force was divided between Suffolk clearance and the serious windblow in The Kings Forest area and extreme south of the Thetford main block. Six chain sawyers and one forwarder remained at Thetford to cover timber clearance, extraction and loading duties, supervised by one forester.

The Suffolk harvesting team was similarly organised and each work group allocated an initial area of forest to clear.

Office facilities for the Thetford foresters were set up in an empty house at Tangham, some half a mile from the main forest office while the local staff continued to operate from their own Rendlesham office. Invoicing of timber harvested and contract

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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management was the responsibility of either Thetford or Suffolk, dependant on who actually harvested the logs.

Radio communications were already available and where necessary new call signs were allocated to allow communication forest wide. A single radio control was operated from the Tangham office.

Vehicles and machines were stored overnight, either at the Rendlesham office compound or in a secure compound close to the Tunstall block.

A chain saw maintenance/repair facility was set up in a mobile workshop adjacent to the Rendlesham repair bay. Upwards of 80 chain saws were in use at the time. Provision of fuel, water and repair facilities was set up with contracts to supply diesel and urea for stump treatment direct to bowsers/tanks at each compound and on-site to mobile bowsers. Local blacksmiths were contracted to carry out repairs to broken metalwork etc.

Although the area was already well roaded, some additional landings needed to be constructed in places accessible for timber haulage, due to the impact the fallen timber made on general access to some parts of the estate. Also it was important that access for the coaches was appropriate and new turning areas were occasionally needed.

Training

Additional training to work safely in windblow conditions was arranged for all chain sawyers and forwarder operators.

Locally based E&T and Work Study teams provided advice and training. Thankfully during the 2 + years clearance period there were no serious injuries.

Log Despatch and Storage

Once residual stocks from normal harvesting which were already in the pipeline had been despatched, all the timber harvested during the next two year period or so was from windblow. Almost 100% of the timber blown was pine. There was therefore a serious risk from blue stain. However during the first year, degrade was not too serious where timber was still held on the root plate, but at Suffolk a significant volume of timber was snapped which gave rise to early stain problems.



The decision was taken to curtail the volume of timber entering the market, and a wet log store was set up at Thetford on a 4 ha site adjacent to a working gravel pit with good access and unlimited water supply from flooded pits nearby. A weighbridge was also available on site so

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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that all timber could be weighed in and out. Road materials were also readily available from the gravel pit. Logs from Thetford windblow started entering the store in early 1988, with logs from Suffolk coming on stream from 1989. Some 70,000 m³ of timber, mainly pine, was eventually stored. Initially water was sprayed over the stock pile using tractor powered pumps and eight old tractors were worn out, before a fixed Sykes pump was eventually installed. The spray lines were extended on a weekly basis to keep up with the growth of the log pile and a company contracted to build,

service and maintain the overall spray system. Problems with fish blocking spray nozzles and frozen nozzles in the winter were frequently encountered. Water had to be sprayed continually over the logs and across the ends throughout the life of the store, or the timber was at risk of blue stain.

Only top quality logs believed to be fresh and free of stain were sent to the store from both Suffolk and Thetford sources. Initially, the majority of the logs were derived from Thetford windblow but as time went on more and more material came

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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from Suffolk with consequent implications for haulage costs. Split logs were not acceptable. Contract haulage and the FC's own timber wagons were used for transport. Logs were 7.5 and 4.9 metre length, being the most common sizes then taken by our customers at the time. Each length was built into its own discrete bays of the growing log pile, to make subsequent extraction possible to meet orders. Towards the end, random length logs were added but their management in discrete bays was problematic. Dispatch was based on a system where a face running the length of the log pile was opened up. This allowed access to different length logs to suit customer demands, and meant that the whole dispatch process worked back against the irrigation pipe construction, allowing it to be steadily dismantled as dispatch continued. It also meant working steadily back to the area where the pump was located as dispatch came to an end.

During the build of the log pile, the opportunity was taken to store several other species of conifer and broadleaf as a trial to learn something of the properties of such timber similarly stored.

Marketing

The normal sale events continued to offer pine sawlogs to the market. They were sold as free of blue stain in the early period with the onus on the seller to ensure this was so. To all intents and purposes therefore, they were normal Green and Red quality logs. As time went on and blue stain became very difficult to avoid some lots

were sold as not guaranteed to be free of blue stain.



Timber from the log store was subsequently offered for sale via the usual tender and auction processes in use at the time. It was sold by tonnage at a time when logs were usually sold by volume at Thetford. Customers had been offered trial loads prior to the first sales in order for them to test for any problems in the milling and end use processes, and gain knowledge and confidence in the logs which were to be offered for some time ahead.

Timber removed from the log store after over 2 years was totally waterlogged and around 30% heavier which had implications for haulage costs to customers. After more than 2 years in store the bark came off the logs very easily when handling for loading. Such logs were very slippery and great care was needed during loading and making secure for transport. The worst scenario was the loading of frozen, bark free logs during winter. There was very little blue stain in the stored logs and it was believed

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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that such stain as was found had already been present in logs at the time they entered storage.

The external appearance of the logs after such a long time under water was most unattractive, being covered in slime and with a generally blackened look but the milled timber, although of a slightly orange colour was found to be quite acceptable by our customers. Customers found the wet logs easy to mill, there being very little resin left. As much of the bark fell off the logs were also very clean and free of grit. There was a loss to customers due to the absence of bark, a valuable by-product in their mills.

High Lodge Forest Centre was being constructed at around this time and locally grown pine was used for the cladding and flooring. Much of this came from logs which had been wet stored.

Post clearance activity - Prep. ground and restocking.

This started in earnest as the clearance was nearing completion. Essentially the ground was no more difficult to work on than after normal felling, apart from the occasional oversize root plate. M I Edwards, a Thetford based chipping contractor, had a fleet of chippers in operation at the time and he helped deal with the brash. A smaller contractor, Alistair Beddall, also had a single chipper in operation. Single furrow shallow ploughing and hand planting, largely with CP and SP then followed. Some sites had heavier vegetation re-growth due to the elapsed time between clearing and restocking, but this was easily dealt with by

spraying. Re-stocking took around 5 years to complete and a down side to this is that today's forest is very even aged, and this will need to be dealt with in the not too distant future.

Return to normal harvesting

After about 24 months, the end was in sight and the south beat team was the first to be brought back and start the process of normal work again. On their return we settled down to normal harvesting work and at that time, all felling continued to be carried out by men with chainsaws. However we had trialled the use of harvesting machines as part of the wind blow clearance work in the Kings Forest area of Thetford, and the decision was now taken to start introducing such machines as the permanent way of harvesting at Thetford in the future. For a short period, two harvesters and their crews who had finished clearing windblow in Kent and Sussex, had also helped to clear windblow at Kings Forest, Thetford and this added to our experience of using such machines.

The first such machine formally deployed at Thetford was an Akerman/Lako clear felling harvester and this was soon followed by two other smaller harvesters to carry out the range of 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 more and more difficult. The harvesters were introduced over a period of about two years

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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and we were able to mechanise the entire programme with the exception that four or five of the younger chainsaw operators would continue to fell the very biggest trees, or those where environmental considerations were such that the relative sensitivity of manual felling still had a place. Happily there were no redundancies while this transition to machines took place, with older men coming off chain saw work to carry out other lighter management work in the forest instead.

Summary

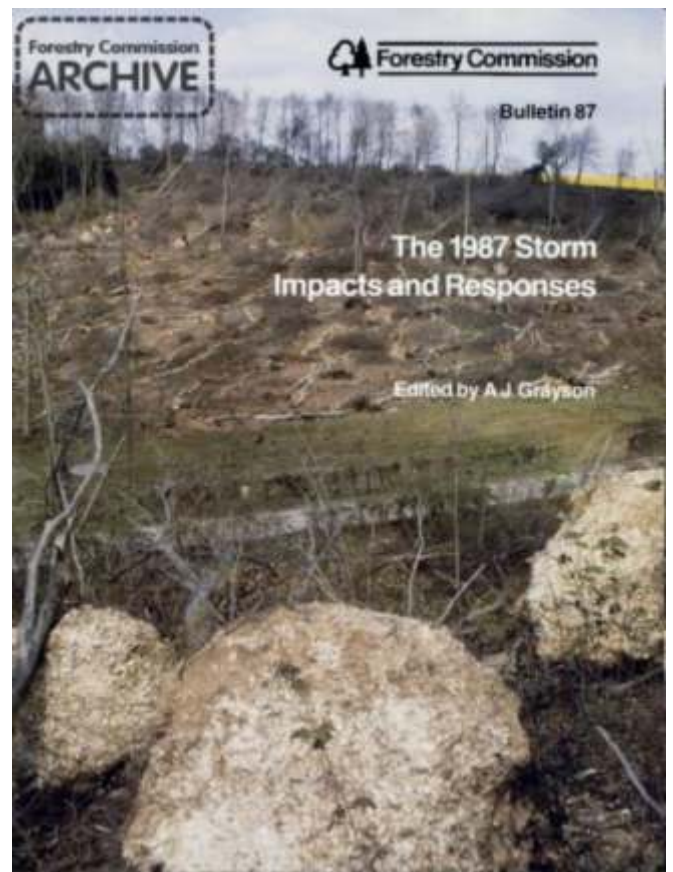
Was the project a success?

Bearing in mind the scale of the devastation and the huge volumes of timber involved, the answer must be yes. Certainly costs were higher and as time went on the value of the logs harvested was falling, but for forestry work to continue in the area, the land would need to be cleared in any event. The timber put in to the log store was a small part of the timber harvested in total, but holding it off the market helped to support prices during the 2 to 3 year period involved. Haulage costs and the costs of running the store did eat into the value of the stored timber, but much useful data was gained from the project and in the event that some similar catastrophe should occur in the future, then wet log storage could be considered with the benefit of having some experience of the costs and benefits involved.

References

Forestry Commission Bulletin 87 "The 1987 Storm - Impacts and Responses" was

written soon after the storm to summarise the events, describe the initial response and organisation and draw conclusions about the problems encountered and as a learning reference for similar events in the future. This publication carries a comprehensive list of other references on the subject of windblow nationally.



Forestry Commission Bulletin 117 "Water Storage of Timber - Experience in Britain" was written in 1996 after all the data had been analysed and this summarised the organisational requirements, benefits, and difficulties of the operation to advise any possible future use in the UK. Costs for the whole project are also analysed with a final total cost of between nine and ten pounds

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30th Anniversary Recollections of the Great Storm *continued*

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per m3 including site preparation, haulage, irrigation costs and loading.

Statistics

I won't go into great statistical detail, such information is available in the forenamed references, but a few of the basic facts may be of interest. It should also be noted that this article is about my own personal experiences in Suffolk, and that the counties of Kent and Sussex in particular were as badly affected by the storm, as to a lesser degree were other counties in the south east of England.

Suffolk losses: Forestry Commission: 430K m3 - conifer only. Very little broadleaf damage.

Suffolk losses: Private Woodlands: 80K m3 - conifer and 200K broadleaf.

This represents 27% of original Suffolk Forestry Commission conifer blown.

Approx 10% Suffolk blow was snapped.

1400 ha were blown down in Suffolk and Thetford FD's.

Blown volume in Suffolk FD equated to 14 years of normal harvesting production.

Thetford losses: Forestry Commission: 173K m3 blown conifer.

Thetford Wet Log store - final volume stored was 70,000 m3 on a site area of 4ha

It is salutary to realise that after 30 years, the new plantings are now half way through their rotation and that the many members of the public who visit the Sandlings forests are today unaware of the terrible damage caused back in 1987, as they enjoy the beauty of the forest as it is today.



Thoughts of Tree Aid - Thirty Years On

by Brian Tipping



I was pulled up short on receiving an invitation to Tree Aid's 30th celebration - not by the kindness of it, though that was pleasing -

but by this latest stark reminder of advancing years!

Thirty years ago, with Tree Aid just registered as a charity, I sat in a dingy, shabby office near Euston Station at what can only be described as an inaugural meeting of early enthusiasts. They included trustees, foresters, woodland managers, timber trades people, academics and other well-wishers, perhaps 12 all told. Also present was a trio of ex-Forestry Commission senior staff living in Somerset and quietly persuaded out of retirement to set up, and for a spell to run the charity day-to-day. They were Leslie Troup, Jack Massey and Brian Tipping. We quickly made Leslie Honorary Director and called ourselves the Director's Team. At that time the founding Chairman of Trustees was Neville Fay, later succeeded by Simon Stephens; their inspiration and dedication is to be remembered.

So we got under way with a lot to learn. There was exactly £1,000 in the funds, donated as a pump primer by Quaker Peace and Service. Peter Filby, retired bank manager, was recruited to look after it and keep the books. This self-styled Director's Team told ourselves (and our wives) that

we would give the venture one day a week for 6 months, meeting in each other's homes. But we had not reckoned on becoming so committed that we were still at it after 6 years!

At the start we had nothing to sell but idealism, though it would help a lot to be working in the wake of Band Aid and Live Aid and their huge fundraising success in providing emergency relief in poorest Africa. Tree Aid's alternative strategy was to challenge poverty in the longer term. It had already been settled that effort should be concentrated in the Sahelian region of Africa. Here the charity SOS (Sahel) was working and through them and similar agencies, small scale planting schemes could be identified and tested against our own criteria. Ed Debba in Northern Sudan was the first community supported. The objective was to link the schemes with friends groups who would do the UK fundraising; villagers would themselves set up tree nurseries and plant and protect the young trees. Friends groups were active within the Forestry Commission's regional structure, in the larger forestry companies and through the professional societies. For a time the linking idea offered high promise, we thought, but it became difficult to sustain interest among all the groups, largely because information gathering from the sharp end was unreliable. Although we had to concede that the scheme was too ambitious for the resources of its day, there was no doubt that it had much value in advancing awareness of Tree Aid over the country.

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Thoughts of Tree Aid - Thirty Years On *continued*

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Support was welcomed from universities, notably from the forestry departments of Aberdeen and Oxford and a group, fostered if not led by Roger Busby, was formed to advise on the technical competence of planting schemes coming forward. This would be the forerunner of today's Programme Policy Group.

The Royal Forestry Society was there at the beginning – and indeed now continuing through no less than our Chair, Sophie

Churchill, OBE, President of RFS. Distinguished persons held in high esteem became patrons and did much more than lend their names.

Alongside the planning and manoeuvring we designed and wrote fundraising leaflets and posters, gave talks to schools and clubs, took stands to the Royal Bath and West Show and such other local events as offered opportunity for promotion. 'Sculptree' was started at Longleat.

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Tree Aid Directors' Team with wives c2005 in John's garden, Farnborough.
Gwen Tipping; Jack Massey; John Fletcher; Edna Massey; Brian Tipping

Thoughts of Tree Aid - Thirty Years On *continued*

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A feature of this publicity was being able to reproduce an encouraging message from HRH Princess Anne in which she said that Tree Aid'has exciting potential and I wish every success to your endeavour in developing this work in the years ahead'.

Results of fundraising efforts tended to be a bit erratic and a really good prospect might give but a small return, whereas a fat cheque could arrive from someone who had just taken a fancy – so we kept on going.

Arrangements were made with Charities Aid Foundation to manage covenanted donations; an efficient way of gaining reliable income. Much time was spent appealing to Grant-Making Trusts. More than 60 were approached and around 20 made grants and, although most were 'one-offs', some committed to annual donations if reminded.

It would have been interesting to have kept a note of the value of costs sponsored and things given. Everything from paper clips to display stands was covered. We bought nothing and consumed our own smoke.

Individual firms were generous – Nicholson Nurseries for typical example produced Christmas cards (woodcuts of course!) and sent them to trade customers with a Tree Aid newsletter slipped into their annual catalogue.

A sadness of the time was the death from cancer in 1991 of our good friend Leslie Troup OBE whose term as Honorary Director was barely three years. He had

written to me a few weeks earlier saying, 'I am glad to hear Tree Aid moves on. It is always good to have a sound foundation. Many a meteoric rise has descended as quickly as its showy ascent. Better a steady accumulation of candles than a fading rocket'. Spot on for relevance! Leslie was succeeded by John Fletcher, outstanding in his profession, who was appointed CBE in 1992 and later as President until 2007 continued to serve Tree Aid with great distinction and selflessness.

By the end of 1993 Tree Aid had put down roots and was getting known as a committed charity making its mark with the other NGOs working in Africa.

Unsurprisingly, we had been dubbed the 'Foresters' Charity'. Income had positively improved year on year from £6,578 in 1987 to £52,908 in 1992/93 and it was time to take stock. Enough had been seen of the success of projects already funded to realise that growth must continue; the question was not whether but how and the answer was simple - more money.

Tree Aid's fundraising style would have to change in a charity world that had become so competitive, indeed aggressive. The present all-volunteer base would have to go and that required quite a challenging mind-shift. We needed especially an experienced, salaried fundraiser, persuaded to join by our widening objectives.

A Development Plan was written in 1993. It attempted to see where we might be in three years' time.

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Thoughts of Tree Aid - Thirty Years On *continued*

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Looking back, it was probably over-ambitious, not really understanding the resources needed in the hard-nosed charity world that we were growing into. But it did serve as a useful discipline, maintaining the impetus and confirming the way ahead. And in 1994/5 income had still risen to £73,373 which was pretty good.

Enter Miranda Spitteler – full of ideas, confident and ready for the job. For the next 15 years or so she led Tree Aid's fundraising campaigns with much success, becoming Chief Executive and then Director. Her record speaks for itself.

Jack Massey and I continued a couple of years longer but certainly from the opening of the first Bristol office, recognised it as high time for the old guard to make way in favour of a new management regime.

Progress in recent times has been way beyond anything the founders could

conceivably have dreamt of. More than 13 million trees have now been planted by communities across the Sahel region and last year income reached £1.85 million.

The 2016 Annual Report shows Tree Aid to be in the top flight of charities working in Africa. I can scarcely believe what I read there - it is strangely emotive to me. The range of activity is staggering.

How is it ever possible to acknowledge the effort of our past and present trustees, staff, volunteers and thousands and thousands of supporters? But then, at the least, we may all count ourselves fortunate that we have something to give.

To conclude: Jack Massey and John Fletcher both died in 2010, Jack in March, John in September. Collections at their funerals were donated to Tree Aid. Some legacy, theirs, and the work goes on. That says it all.

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.

Breckland Group FCA

by Eric Rogers

In early September, members and a few friends met at the Swan Inn at Hilborough for lunch. And very good it was, too. After lunch we were transported in a covered trailer, pulled by tractor, for a visit to a large sporting estate nearby for a tour, escorted by the head keeper and his two under keepers.

The Estate is well known for an enlightened wildlife policy, particularly in respect of the grey partridge and the very rare stone curlew. This part of Norfolk, between the Brecks and the Fens is, even today, rather remote. The underlying geology is chalk with a thin sandy soil which is acid. Most of the area was heather heath grazed by sheep, but in the 19th Century, and indeed today, it supported large estates given over to game shooting. The days of sheep have long gone and most of the estate is leased to a large Fenland vegetable grower (particularly of carrots).



In the 19th Century it was common to have sandstorms. Edges and roadsides were planted with Scots Pine hedges, some of which remain, much distorted. Recently, possibly due to global warming, ivy has become rampant in the pine and, if not removed, will smother them.



There were a number of meres in the estate, one of which we visited. Some years ago it was much larger, but suddenly drained away into the chalk and re-emerged half a mile away.

Unusually for a sporting estate, birds of prey are not rigorously persecuted. I seem to remember a young sea eagle being in the area for some time a few years ago.

Our thanks to the keepers for a very interesting afternoon and to our recently retired Head Ranger, who now carries out deer control on the estate. A very interesting visit.

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

Administration & Finance Officers and Some HQ Staff c1973

by Brian Tipping

Many editions have carried group photographs of earlier years, but I cannot recall one of the redoubtable Administration & Finance Officers. Here is one of their conference in about 1973 (Forest of Dean I think). Apologies to those whose names now escape me and thanks to anyone with a better memory who can fill in the gaps.



From the left: -

- Front row** : Len Bowman, Arthur Searle, Malcolm Shapcott, John Parker, Philip Nicholls, Commissioner A&F; Bill Cormack, ? A&FO, NW(E); A&FO, ? NE(E);
- 2nd row** : Douglas Pringle, Murray Hunter (FC Sec.), Sid Cruden, ?Head E&T, Unclear, John Taylor, Tom Macbeath,
- 3rd row** : H&M, HQ; Brian Cann, Mike Henderson,
- 4th & back row** : Geoff Bowers, Joe Hogarth, Norman Stutter, Brian Tipping, Walter Williamson, Dennis Boyd.

Now come on all you admin staff. You have to respond to this. Don't leave all the contributions to foresters!



Letters to the Editor

Hello Richard,

When sorting through some old papers, I came across the following poem written fifty years ago by a head forester after a visit by his district officer to sort out plant demands for the forthcoming planting season. It struck me as being potential material for FCA Today.

"I can't accept your plant demands,
The pines we must reduce.
We'll have a walk across the moor
And look for ground for spruce".

We saw the rocks, we saw the stones,
For pine its only use.

"It's better than it looks" he said.

"I think we'll try some spruce".

We saw the different kinds of heath
On podsols tight and loose.
He kicked them with his foot and said
"It's good enough for spruce".

What's underneath the unploughed land
Is harder to deduce.
We thought Contorta would be safe.
He said "We'll risk some spruce".

On better ground we'd pondered much,
Our thoughts far from obtuse.
We thought of larch and silver fir.
He said "We'll stick to spruce".

On poorer ground we'd thought of pine.
He said "That's no excuse.
If in doubt, Contorta's out.
You're safer with the spruce".

Beneath some birch a grassy slope.
We thought we'd introduce
Some Grandis fir to make a change.
He said "What's wrong with spruce?".

We left the hill and headed home,
Our totals to produce.
'All others' came to one per cent,
Leaving ninety-nine for spruce!

As far as I know, the poem was the work of (the late?) head forester Hugh Mackay when in charge of Farigaig Forest in North Scotland. I am sure that the basic theme would bring a reminiscent smile to the faces of quite a few old-stagers in the ranks of the FCA, and provide an interesting contrast to current practice!

Regards,
Alan Low





Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

Can I thank your readers for their help in locating a copy of Forest Record 44, 'A Creosoting Plant in Thetford Chase'. A photocopy of FR 44 is now at the Santon Dowham office.

The black and white photos were looked at with much interest; there being little H & S in the days when I worked on the plant, over 50 years ago. Local staff who had worked on this elaborate but very practical and efficient creosoting plant have long since retired.

However if anyone was prepared to release an original FR 44, as issued to many of us, then I am sure it would be well received into the East England FD archives.

The group photo on page 21, sent in by Graham Belton in the last issue of FCA Today interested me.

No 27 – I once met Charlie Bloor, when he was Head Forester at Yardley Chase in early 1965 and remember that he was one of the few Head Foresters to be promoted to DO I in WW II to meet a wartime shortage.

No 6 – is this the Mr Connell, who went on to become Conservator SW (E) and was instrumental in procuring and developing new firefighting equipment including radios?

No 13 – perhaps one of the Hendrie dynasty could tell us if this is Bob or Arthur?

No 11 is presumably their father, the doyen of the early days of Thetford Chase Forest. I am told he used to blow the fire horn at the Flint Nappers Arms in Brandon to summon the men for their pay.

An interesting anecdote about Fire Horns. We were dismantling a number of small redundant sheds at the Thornhill Nursery in Savernake in 1979, when we came across a cache of five fire horns in mint condition. Each inscribed 'H.M. Forestry Commission' on the chromium plated surface. They were a Reid operated instrument producing an effective sound up to half a mile, to summon men quickly for firefighting, from a nursery or worksite. I presented mine to the Bucks Horn Oak office in the mid-nineties. Do we have any more stories of these instruments and when did they fall out of use?

Yours,
Martin Fletcher





Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of being invited out to lunch with three charming ladies long since retired from the Bristol Conservancy Office. We met in Bruton where I live now. Conversation ranged widely, as could be imagined, and drifted into talk of the FCA News. This led later to my receiving back copies of the FCA Today magazine, including the 60th edition with its plea from you for pieces to publish. And that began to prick my conscience for I had contributed little to the Association for years.

But what to write about? It would be boring merely to recount personal doings – though being chairman and then president of the local horticultural society for 20 years and a churchwarden for 25 had their moments. Family history research was also occupying and disclosed that, in my native Lancashire, Thomas Typpinge was presented to the Queen's Commissioners for "felling 1 hollow oak stub and carrying the same out of the forest [of Bolland] worth 6d".

At the other end of the country on the western edge of the New Forest at Moyles Court lived Dame Alice Lisle, sister of Lady Tipping. Today Dame Alice is probably best known (and maybe to not a few Commission folk) for having the pub at Rochford named after her. This would be distinction enough were the reasons for it not so tragic. They arise from the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685 when Dame Alice was charged with harbouring two supposed escaping rebels in her home. This was untrue but she was brought for trial before the infamous Judge Jefferys, found

guilty by him and sentenced to death despite the jury twice returning a not-guilty verdict. The King refused a pardon but reduced the death sentence from burning to beheading and she was executed on the block at Winchester on 2nd September, 1685. Soon after the accession of William and Mary in 1689, an Act of Parliament repealed the conviction and the Lisle estates were restored. Colonel Tipping MP (for Oxfordshire), Dame Alice's nephew, was recommended to "take care of it". And he did.

This little tale is taken from a family history book which I eventually wrote and published with the proceeds going to Tree Aid. Aha! - so after a wordy introduction we come at last to the real purpose of my modest article. Quite simply this is to bring readers up-to-date with the huge success story that became known as 'The Foresters' Charity'. Leslie Troup, Jack Massey and I took on the running in 1987 and began fund raising through Friends' Groups set up around the country, notably in the Commission. No doubt, colleagues who were introduced in this way still lend their support.

Tree Aid celebrated its first 30 years in July 2017 and I was asked to remember how things were in the early years. So I got down to it. I wrote the article that you can read in this issue.



Brian Tipping

Dean Forestry School Reunions

by Jeremy Gissop



Many of you will have heard of the sad passing on of Bart Venner this year.

As you will know, for many years Bart organised the Dean Forestry School Reunions to great effect.

Unfortunately the data base of previous reunion participants cannot be found, so Martin Fletcher and I have undertaken to try and bring together a new data base and organise another reunion.

Therefore if you are an ex student of the Dean or know people who attended the Dean Forestry School, perhaps you could send me your email address and I will pull a data base together, discuss it with Martin and get back to you in the fullness of time.

You can contact me at: -

gissop@hotmail.co.uk

It would be good to see you all again.



Send your articles for publication in this magazine to the editor



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

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



Arnold Grayson - A Further Appreciation

by Mike Whitlock

I had expected that someone would have written about Arnold Grayson's career with the F.C., particularly his contribution to forest economics and his time as Director of Research. I did not feel competent to do so, but as Arthur Miller has written of his experiences of Arnold, I feel prompted to write about his human side.

To many people, especially those present at his lectures on forest economics, he may have been seen as a formidable figure. Net Discounted Revenue (NDR) was a new subject to most foresters, so they found it difficult to understand the concept.

Arthur refers to the triumvirate of "Johnson, Grayson and Wardle", but I am more familiar with the grouping of 'Johnson, Grayson and Bradley', the authors of "Forest Planning". Incidentally, Arthur's reference to Philip Wardle leads me to say that Philip and his wife Janet are still very much with us. They, together with Ray Herbert joined the Alice Holt group of the FCA just before the group became unviable and closed down. They had left the F.C. early in their careers and, unfortunately, did not know of our existence when the group was really active. I am in touch with Philip, as I am with the other former group members.

Returning to the subject of this article and the human side of Arnold Grayson. I once had an interest in economics and he kindly lent me a book on the subject written by an American professor. It was a big book but probably quite readable. I lost interest, having lots of other things to do at the time, so I returned it to him largely unread.

Another incident comes to mind - a relatively recent one. Arnold phoned me to enquire about Monica Hopkin who had started working at the Research Station soon after it opened; probably straight from college. She was the (unofficial?) head of the typing pool. I assured Arnold that she was still active mentally although physically handicapped. She was a regular attendee at the group's events from the outset. When I next saw her, I told her that Arnold had been asking about her. She then told me that he had visited her. This shows that he was also interested in and appreciated the contribution of people who were not part of the higher levels of the organisation.

In the latter years of his life, he had the added burden of caring for his wife who suffered from dementia.

Arnold Grayson (in front of the green & white umbrella) at Alice Holt on 16th August 2013.



Life in Brief

Rob Guest said that on the 3rd August 2017, the Forest Crematorium in the Forest of Dean overflowed with people gathered to say farewell to **Barten "Bart" Venner MBE**.

Bart was trained at the Foresters Training School in Parkend and then spent most of his career based in the Dean. He held several management roles in the Forest before, in the 1980's, transferring to a post advising and assisting private woodland owners throughout Gloucestershire and surrounding areas. Bart's expertise as a forester, combined with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the County, helped many forest owners and also helped him have a huge input into the functioning of the Royal Forestry Society in the County. He served on the Gloucestershire Divisional Committee for longer than anyone can remember, latterly as treasurer.

On retirement, Bart became very involved with the Forestry Commission Retirement Association - chairing the local branch for many years until his death, and taking an active part in the national organisation.

Bart was also a committed member of the Labour party, a local Councillor and he served for a time as Forest of Dean District Council Leader.

He was intensely proud of the Dean, and when it was threatened with sale a few years ago he took an active part in the campaign to prevent this - being an active participant in HOOFF (Hands Off Our Forest)

He was a keen cyclist and had been a founder member of the Dean Forest Cycling Club – a fact reinforced by lycra clad individuals at the funeral. He was also involved in a number of charities – with interests as varied as musical societies and age concern.

He was a friendly popular man and will be sorely missed.

Jim Dewer remembers **MIKE LOFTHOUSE** who died in August. Whether hill walking, bird watching, travelling, researching family history or practising forestry, Mike approached each with energy, diligence and enthusiasm. He and his wife Wendy completed all the Munros and had nearly

finished the Corbetts before ill health restricted his activities. When his children were young, he travelled widely through Eastern Europe on family holidays and in retirement, visited the Galapagos Islands, Japan, Northern Australia, Namibia, the Himalayas and Antarctica on walking and birding holidays. A bon viveur, an entertaining raconteur and a generous host, Mike was invariably good company using richly descriptive language. He gave an amusing account of meeting the writer Muriel Grey on the South Cluny Ridge; she gave an equally amusing, though less accurate account in one of her books.

Mike Lofthouse was born in Liverpool and attended the Liverpool Institute where he was a near contemporary of Paul McCartney. He studied forestry at Edinburgh University and joined the Forestry Commission in 1967 being posted first to Northampton, followed by Norfolk then Shropshire.

He joined Work Study in Inverness in 1974 and over the next six years he and his team produced a series of

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Life in Brief

Continued from previous page

high quality method studies across the range of forestry operations. He had an uncanny knack of putting his finger on the root of a problem very quickly.

His work came to the notice of senior FC staff and he was duly transferred to Harvesting and Marketing Division in FC HQ, from where he played a leading role in the mechanisation of harvesting operations across the FC.

In 1986 he was appointed nursery officer and in 1989 the FC transferred its

nurseries from regional control to a single business unit with Mike in charge.

A programme of rationalisation followed involving the closure of the smaller nurseries and investment and expansion in those that remained.

Mike believed in the benefits of tree breeding and he championed the case for maximising the use of genetically improved 'super sitka'.

In 1999 he was appointed Director South Scotland and retired in March 2005 as Head of Forest Operations, Forest Enterprise Scotland.

Mike fell ill with non-Hodgkins lymphoma shortly after retiring but his fitness and determination helped him make what appeared to be a full recovery.

However his health began to deteriorate two or three years ago, and for the last 18 months he was largely bed-ridden.

He is survived by his wife Wendy, whose nursing care undoubtedly extended Mike's life, his sons Andrew, an artisan baker in Canada, James, a barrister in London and daughter Jocelyn, an Inspector with Police Scotland.

Website Message Board

If you have any news, announcements or any 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

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*

e-mail Group membership enquiries to: -

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 in **April 2018**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st March 2018.

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

Visit the FCA Today website to download the latest edition of the magazine

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,
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