



## *Contents*

## **FCA Today**

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*Visit the FCA website at [www.fca-today.com](http://www.fca-today.com)*

## From the Editor



Just two items from me this time. Guess what the first is. I hear you say that there he goes again. I am cleaned out of copy. The dark days of Winter are a good time to bang on the

keyboard. What about a write up of all those events of the passed Summer. So many of the groups were active then, so let us all hear about it. Surely some of the recent articles will encourage more of you to contribute. The "Old Regulars" keep the newsletter going. We need others to help out.

The next is 100 years of the Forestry Commission in 2019 which will be both a celebration and a wake. There is an article in this issue by Graham Hamilton about events in Scotland. He also refers to activities in England and Wales. 2019 is a celebration of 100 years of forestry

expansion in both the FC and private sector. All retirees can feel proud that their contribution to forestry has resulted in the vibrant industry we have today.

I suggest that all groups think of ways to celebrate this unique occasion. Why not plant a centenary tree in a special place so that it lives on for the next 100 years. Have centenary barbecues and bonfires. Involve local people and organisations and be proud of our results. But also tell of your plans and events to other retirees through our newsletter. Our celebration should be the great event of 2019. Get plenty of photos and write up events for publication in later issues of our newsletter.

But it is a wake in the sense that, at least in Scotland and Wales, the FC has, or will be disappearing. It will remain in England. But don't let its demise spoil the fun. A wake is a great celebration of life. The FC should go out with glory and a bang, not a whimper. Forestry For Ever!



## Dean FTS Reunion Dinner

The ex Dean FTS students' reunion dinner is on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2019.

### BOOK NOW

Jerry Gissop and Martin Fletcher have booked the Verderers' Court at the Speech House for the reunion dinner on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2019. They look forward to receiving e-mail addresses from more old *(but still sprightly! Ed)* Dean FTS students, particularly those at the FTS from the late 50s and early 60s. Martin's e-mail address is [martinfletcher42@gmail.com](mailto:martinfletcher42@gmail.com)

Now is the time to catch up with friends before the Big Slasher gets you.



Speech House, Coleford, Gloucestershire

## FCA AGM 2019



The 2019 AGM and forest visit will be hosted by the Breckland Group and it will take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Final details about the venue are not yet confirmed but the local Forest District staff have confirmed their availability for the forest visit and will also be providing an after dinner speaker.

The theme this year will be "Silvicultural responses to climate change in East England." Delegates will learn that the concept of Thetford as a pine forest is changing and a wide variety of species are now being planted.

Details of accommodation, meals and costs will be available in the near future.



## Jamie's Tool Collection

*Text and photographs by Jamie Awdry and Harry Pepper*

Jamie's life-long passion has been a love of heritage rural implements both large and small and during this time he has amassed a collection ranging from Fordson tractors to timber scribes. Each item has been painstakingly and sympathetically restored after having been acquired by purchasing from auctions, stalls at agricultural shows or individuals, as well as much appreciated gifts from former work colleagues. Skips, outside redundant forest offices following forest amalgamations, have proved to be a rich source of discarded tools and equipment.

All the tools featured here are of FC origin and all the associated anecdotes are also FC related. The tools would most likely have been purchased using the official FC Tool List. The cover of the one shown was issued in 1959 and the last recorded amendment to it was made in 1968. Once new tools were received they were entered on the forest stock list.



An annual stocktake of tools was made and every three years a tool audit was carried out by some bigwig from Savile Row or Basingstoke depending on the decade.

A completed and signed off loss report form was required for any and every tool that was not available for presentation for inspection.



The above image shows what is believed to be a pit saw although this is not certain. It has two interchangeable handles. The blue and yellow yard stick marked in inches and feet gives an indication of the length of the saw.



The Sandvic raker-tooth cross cut saw generally replaced conventional toothed cross cuts, probably for two main reasons. Swedish steel was considered at the time to be of superior quality to that forged in Sheffield, and therefore remained sharper for longer, and the raker tooth design gave a superior cut requiring less effort from the sawyers, provided of course, the saw was maintained properly. To this end Sandvic employed a peripatetic tool instructor, a Mr Vidar Carlson and he visited most FC forests, as well as the Forestry Training

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## Jamie's Tool Collection *continued*

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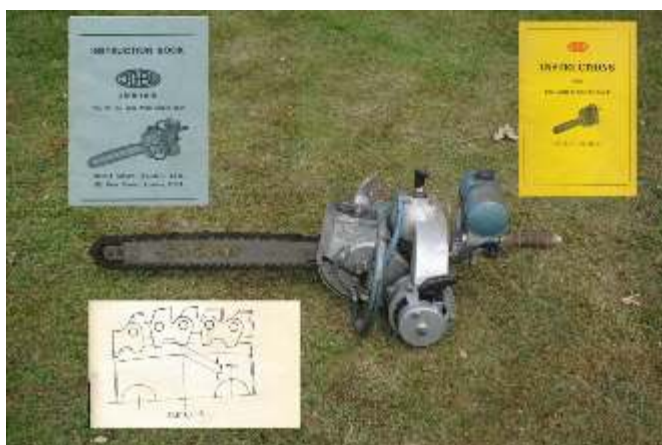


Schools giving excellent instruction in saw sharpening. Also available was a maintenance instruction booklet.

The stance of the two sawyers is interesting and must have put a considerable strain on the lower back as well as making it difficult to maintain a level saw.



The kneeling position, in our experience, was more usual if not standard practice.



The Jo-Bu was an early example of a lightweight (25lbs) 'one-man' chain saw. Previously chainsaws such as the Danarm, of which Jamie has two examples, were somewhat unwieldy and often required two men to operate them.

Cyril Hart in his book Practical Forestry states that in 1956 power saws were not widely used because they were too heavy. However, Jamie's 1959 Tool List was amended and on page 18 all references to crosscut saws were removed in 1968 suggesting that by then the once ubiquitous crosscut was obsolete.

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| Item                                                   | Description                                                                            | Size                                | Substance, Age, and Maker | Remarks                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ROSSER FRAMES:-</b>                                 |                                                                                        |                                     |                           |                                                                               |
| 1                                                      | Tapered                                                                                | 34", 30", 36"<br>39", 42"           | 8 (SV)                    | 36" for 4-man falling cross-cutting                                           |
| 2                                                      | Non-tapered, deep                                                                      | 30" - 36"<br>42" - 48"              | 10 (SV)                   | 36" for 4-man cross-cutting                                                   |
| 3                                                      | Non-tapered, adjustable                                                                | 36" - 42"<br>48" - 54"              | 25 (SV)                   | 36" for 4-man cross-cutting                                                   |
| <b>Blades for the above saws (purchased in 10's):-</b> |                                                                                        |                                     |                           |                                                                               |
| 2                                                      | Hardpoint Raker tooth                                                                  | 36" - 48"                           | 21 (SV)*                  | 'Thru-away' blade for falling soft woods                                      |
| 3                                                      | Hardpoint Rag tooth                                                                    | 24" - 42"                           | 5 (SV)*                   | 'Thru-away' blade for hard-woods, small softwoods, and for cross-cutting      |
| 6                                                      | Raker tooth 4" deep                                                                    | 30" - 48"                           | 125 (SV)                  | Obsolescent                                                                   |
| 7                                                      | Crosscut saw (large tooth, non-tapered, four-chatter, raised hollow back thin to bank) | 34" - 36"<br>38" - 40"<br>42" - 44" | 250 (SV)<br>915 (SV)      | 'Speed' and 'Superspeed' quality<br>* 43" recommended for hard-woods thinlogs |
| 8                                                      | Grooved (2 cutters and raker)                                                          | 42" to 48"                          | 915 (SV)                  | For hard-woods                                                                |
| 9                                                      | Crosscut handles                                                                       | -                                   | 325 (SV)<br>611 (SV)      |                                                                               |
| 10                                                     | Long type                                                                              | -                                   | 216 (SV)                  |                                                                               |
| 11                                                     | One-man crosscut                                                                       | -                                   | 225 (SV)                  | Recommended for crosscut work on large brown trees or cross cutting           |

The design of the Jo-Bu power saw was particularly interesting in that the 'chipper' chain ran along the outside of a 19inch guide bar (lower left inset) unlike modern saws where the chain runs in a groove within the guide bar. The saw was powered by a 78cc two stroke engine.

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## Jamie's Tool Collection *continued*

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A line, from left to right, of 3lb, 4lb, 5lb, 6lb and 7lb Elwell axes.

The Elwell axe featured exclusively in the Tool List.

At Neroche forest in the mid to late 1950s, the 7lb Elwell reigned supreme.

A small contingent of Polish workers wielded them to great effect. They shortened the axe handle by cutting off the heel and that, they claimed, made the axe much more manageable. This action was much to the annoyance of the Head Forester Jimmy Fowler. He considered it to be unsafe practice as he insisted the heel, or fawns-foot handle, as it is sometimes known, was there to reduce the risk of the axe slipping out of the hand.

However, as the Polish workers had all been through much of WW2, they took no notice of such protestations!



The Canthook (top) was primarily intended for turning logs and the log jack (below) for lifting them.

FC Booklet No. 8 of 1962 states that a log jack can be described as a canthook with a block fixed on its underside, onto which a log or pole can be lifted about 7 inches above the ground.

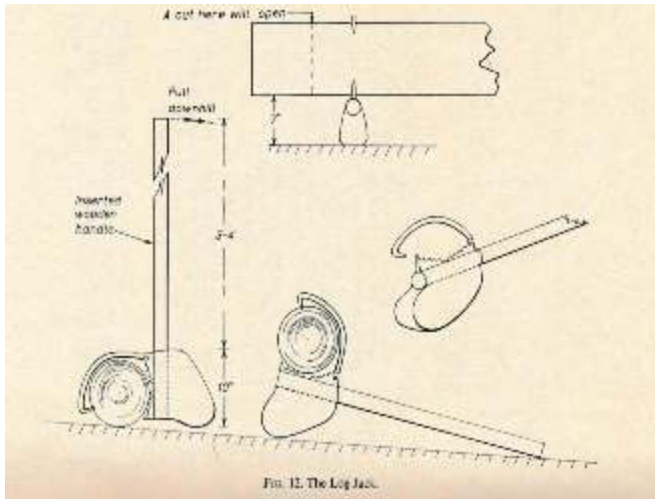
This was to assist converting poles into lengths with a 'Bushman' bowsaw, without damaging the saw blade.



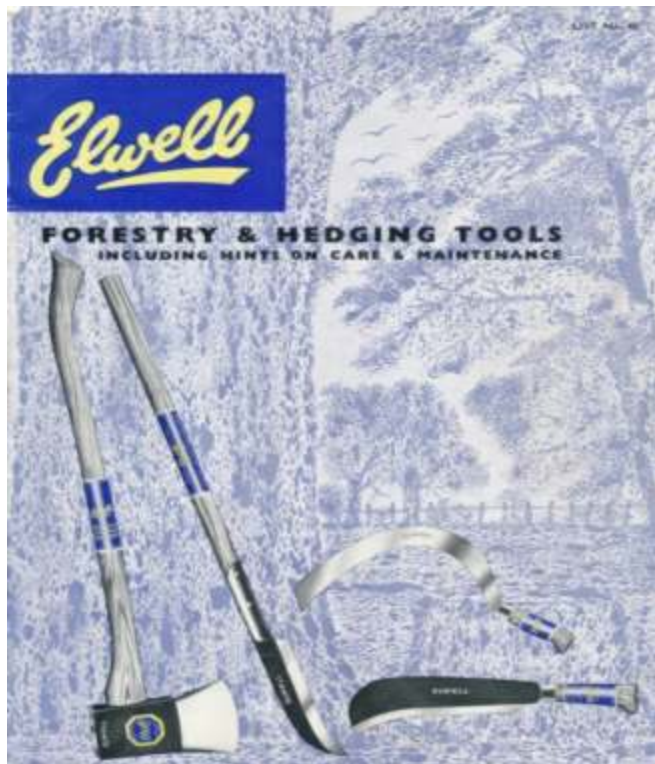
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## Jamie's Tool Collection *continued*

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The above is taken from FC Booklet No. 8 Aids to working conifer thinnings 1962.



The slasher shown here on the front of the undated Elwell catalogue is more than just a tool. It was a symbol that was used as the title of the FC newspaper.



We suggest that it was probably depicted in this way because the slasher was once considered, in some forests at least, to be an unofficial badge of office. The inexperienced forester would mark thinnings selectively with a brush and paint pot. However, once he had shown that he had mastered the art, he was given the slasher, which was then often carried everywhere and not just when marking.

The Fagg hook, Reap hook and long handled staff hook to name but a few, were used for weeding young trees before the advent of chemical herbicides (H.L. Edlin wrote in 1964 that modern herbicides were then beginning to find applications in the control of weeds in forests).

It goes without saying that it was considered most important to keep the hook sharp as the sharper the hook the less the



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## Jamie's Tool Collection *continued*

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effort required to cut the vegetation. To this end, the FC supplied an edge tool gauge which was an aid to ensure the correct sharpening angle on the blade. Gauges like this are probably now a very rare item and particularly so if, as Jamie's is, it is stamped Forestry Commission.

A very sharp edge did of course come with a down side. It was all too easy to cut the tree off, generally referred to as Sheffield blight, when weeding up a row of trees. The Assistant forester or foreman would from time to time walk up the weeded rows of trees looking for severed trees and it was not good news if any or many were found. To counter the inevitable reprimand the tops of the severed trees were carefully buried amongst the cut vegetation or even pushed back into the ground! The freshly cut white end of any visible upright tree stem remaining in the ground was smeared with mud.



Two bark peeling tools left and right are shown with a brashing or pruning chisel in the middle.

The chisel was used to brash standing conifers. However, it was not a popular tool because it was all too easy to damage the bark and the brashing saw (not shown) was generally preferred.

The peeling tool below would be forged by a local blacksmith to a known pattern. The one shown was made by the blacksmith in Dulverton, Somerset. These peelers were used to strip Oak bark for tanning leather.

The bark was removed as soon as the sap started to rise and before bud burst.

Initially the bark was removed from the standing tree from ground level to about 6 feet. The remainder was stripped from the stem and larger branches as soon as the tree was felled.



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## Jamie's Tool Collection *continued*

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The leather tape with a brass dumbbell on the end is a volume measuring tape and was available from and marked "Stanley of London". It is a high quality item with the numbers in hoppus feet embossed into the leather. This one is capable of measuring felled logs up to 40 cubic feet.

The timber scribe was used to carve the log number on the butt end of the felled log. Again this is an extremely well made high quality tool. The numbers were carved using straight lines and arcs.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

These numbers were copied from a note book c1961.

The scribe was also used to mark felled poles for conversion into the lengths demanded by various markets, such as pit wood, fencing and pulp.

This silver bugle with its original cord still attached was given to Jamie by Peter Beale and is probably the most interesting item in his collection.



We know it is ex Forestry Commission because it has Forestry Commission stamped on it.



As far as we can determine, the most likely use for it was as a fire alarm. However, it could have only had a limited range when used to raise the alarm.

Before the mobile phone, reporting a fire was often not that easy unless there was a fire tower, in which case there would be a telephone land line link to the forest office.

The largest forest areas had a radio communications network each with their own designated call sign. However, in the smaller forest areas, the fire duty reporting procedure could be rather different.

The fire duty observers would have their own transport - a bicycle - and would cruise the lanes in and around the forest.

If smoke was spotted or smelt, they would consult the map provided that had the location of all the local red telephone boxes marked on it. Then cycle as fast as they could to the nearest box, which was

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## Jamie's Tool Collection *continued*

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inevitably always uphill, and phone the forest office.



The forest office was often attached to the Head Forester's house and it was not unknown for the Head Forester to invite whoever was on duty to cut a few logs to fuel the kitchen Rayburn, whilst waiting for the telephone to ring.

The fire sign shown here was often located beside the forest gate, together with a stand of fire brooms or beaters.

The brooms were usually made with a Birch or Ash handle and a head of Birch twigs. However, these were superseded by the 'flappy' belt beaters made from colliery conveyor belt that are still used today.

Brooms and beaters were usually made up during wet time, generally in a covered work area in the forest yard.

Ex army Nissen huts were often used to provide the covered area and if you were lucky, there would be a Tortoise stove somewhere near the middle.

On a cold wet day, the air in the hut would be somewhat thick with a combination of wood smoke leaking from the stove, tailor made cigarettes, most likely Woodbines in the South and Park Drive in the North, roll ups of Golden Virginia and Rizla papers and pipes burning herbal tobacco. The latter was a much cheaper alternative to the likes of St Bruno Flake.

The once ubiquitous forest name plate is now a rarity and much sought after. These signs represent an era and ethos that regrettably appears to have largely disappeared.



Michael Dickenson, one of the instructors at the Forest of Dean training school in the 1950s and 60s tried, with mixed success we suspect, to foster a spirit of *esprit de corps* in his students. This is probably not surprising as he was ex RAF and had reportedly been in a prison camp in Japan.

Not all of Jamie's tools are featured here.

There are a number of others including the mighty Rutter, but they have yet to be fully restored. Perhaps when they are and if there is sufficient interest out there, they could be included in a future 'Jamie's tool collection Part 2'.

## An Old Forester Remembers

*by George Stewart*

My life in forestry began in September 1949 when I was appointed a District Officer in the Forestry Commission. That is a long time ago; the working environment was very different from now, and so were living conditions. I thought it might be of interest to record how a past generation worked and lived their lives in the middle of the last century.

I think I must have been a very sensible young man in 1949 as one of the first things I did was to join the Society. The District to which I was appointed (at a salary of £660, £60 of which was a supplement for war service) consisted of four forests in Dumfries-shire. Twiglees and Castle O'er were at Eskdalemuir and Newcastleton and Tinnisburn were in Liddesdale.

Newcastleton was one of the Commission's oldest forests and was just coming into

production with thinning. The other three were in the course of being planted.

Each of the forests was in the charge of a Head Forester. Newcastleton, as the largest forest, had an Assistant Forester. All the four Head Foresters lived in their forests, usually in the farmhouse of the hill farms they originally had been. At Castle O'er a new house had been built on the site.

The forest offices consisted of wooden sheds, usually in the garden. My centre was to be Langholm and I found a house in Bentpath, a few miles north of Langholm. Coincidentally, it was the same one as that lived in by Jock Maxwell Macdonald and his wife when he worked in this area in the 1930s. It was large and very cold in winter! There were two oases of warmth - the kitchen with its Aga and the sitting room with its coal fire.

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Construction of the first forest road in Newcastleton Forest to the Kershope Burn (and thus to the Kershope Forest and England), August 1950. The author is in the foreground.

## An Old Forester Remembers *continued*

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For transport the Head Forester had a van, with the exception of the Tinnisburn forester who had to make do with a motorcycle and sidecar. His house was very isolated and he did not have a telephone. He had to take his motorcycle to the main road and use a public call box if he had some urgent business.

My transport was a Morris 8 painted in wartime dark green.



Aluminium chute crossing the Tweedenburn on tubular scaffolding. Newcastleton, May 1951.

Ground preparation at the three forests in the course of establishment was carried out to a simple pattern; a single furrow Cuthbertson plough was used and turfs were cut from the plough ridge and spread to give a planting distance of about five feet. Maintenance consisted mainly of keeping drains in good order and, of course, fire protection. Controlled burning of forest edges was standard and fire towers were manned at all dangerous times.

At Newcastleton thinning and road building were beginning. Felling was by bowsaw with log extraction by horse. There were two Forest Workers Holdings and the horses were kept there. I can remember the great interest caused by a demonstration of a chainsaw. One forester trying it out for the first time moved the saw back and forward just like the bowsaw to which he was accustomed.

Newcastleton had a small area which had been windblown - the first example of a sight which became only too familiar. Plant production had not been centralised and Newcastleton and Castle O'er both had small nurseries. We all, of course, worked on Saturday mornings, and I usually spent them in my 'office' - a room in my house.

Living in a fairly isolated place without a car presented us with many practical difficulties. We shopped in Langholm for all 'necessities' (food rationing was still in force). Necessities included paraffin for our oil heaters. A bus ran from Langholm to Eskdalemuir. My recollection is that groceries ordered in Langholm could be collected from the bus at the end of our track.

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## An Old Forester Remembers *continued*

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My official car could not, of course, be used for private purposes. However, two of my forests could only be reached through Langholm and it was thus possible to combine shopping with an official journey.

One evening my wife and I were invited to dinner near Langholm. The problem again was transport. However, it was solved by both of us going to Newcastleton - passing our host's house on the way - where I officially spent the day. We changed at the Forester's house and then presented ourselves to our hosts on the way home without any deviation from my official route!

The following year we were able to buy a car. It was still not easy to find one in the early 1950s and they were very expensive. This one cost me 90 per cent of my annual

salary, but it transformed our lives. Despite the car, our life was fairly lonely. We relied greatly on the radio, which I am sure we still referred to as the wireless. I remember with particular pleasure a Christmas party when we, that is all the Foresters and their wives, were gathered round the piano singing the old Scots songs we had all learned in childhood. Simple pleasures but they have left happy memories.

The Conservator for the south of Scotland visited us from time to time, but our main contact with him was at a monthly meeting held in Dumfries; not only could we be brought up to date with forestry matters in the wider world, but also socially. It was the only time we could meet and talk to our fellow District Officers.

After two years or so I was moved to an entirely different job. I was appointed the Private Woodlands Officer for Roxburgh, Peebles and Selkirk and I was to be based at Selkirk.

I had become attached to Langholm - the Muckle Toon - and had even played cricket for the town, thinking little of walking (before I had a car) the three miles to Langholm, playing a match, and then walking home again.

I knew I would also miss the days out in the forest in all weathers, followed by tea in the Foresters' warm kitchens - they all seemed to have Rayburns. These had been two formative years and I owe a great debt to the fine men I had the privilege of working with and who taught me so much.

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## An Old Forester Remembers *continued*

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My new job involved the general promotion of good forest management and in particular the furtherance of the Woodlands Dedication Scheme.

I managed to find a farmhouse to live in near Selkirk, on the road to Clovenfords. It was again fairly lonely and for the first year, the electricity depended on the ability of the cattleman to start the charging engine in the evening, but it was to become perhaps the happiest home of my life.

The contrast with my previous job could scarcely have been greater: from mainly afforestation on relatively poor land in the uplands, to the management of long established woodlands on much more fertile land.

To visit the very varied woodlands in this lovely countryside, was both a wonderful experience and an education for a young forester.

I learned what it meant to cherish the land you manage. I remember in particular, a day spent at Bowhill with the Duke and his Head Forester. Their discussions - and arguments - were a revelation to me. The Society's excursions at this time also greatly added to my education. I look back on my time at Selkirk with special pleasure.

All good things have an ending and in due course, it was decided I should move to follow another aspect of the Commission's work - all large organisations tend to work like that.

I felt my moving from Selkirk marked the end of my 'beginnings' in my forestry career.

I have written this memoir about my early days in forestry as a record of a life which is very different from today. I believe these beginnings in the lovely country of the Borders, formed a sound foundation for the rest of my life.

### **Author details**

*Following six years of war service and a degree at Edinburgh University, George Stewart's career was entirely with the Forestry Commission. After appointments in different parts of the country, including a period as Conservator West Scotland at the time of the devastating windblow of January 1968, he became the Commissioner for Forest and Estate Management and served in that position until retirement in 1979.*

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*Visit the FCA website at [www.fca-today.com](http://www.fca-today.com)*

## Stacking Wood Art



Here's something for all you log splitters and stackers. I've just looked at my log stack and realised that it doesn't even begin to look like wood art. In fact I have to be

careful it doesn't collapse when I remove some to take into the house! Although I am a little suspicious that the illustrated log stacks are designed more to impress than to be a conventional log store.



The YouTube link will give you more fun viewing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BnZZzvIDrE>

As a bonus, look at the YouTube links to wood art in the home:

<https://youtu.be/TAt21e4dKOc>

<https://youtu.be/4Ymp7hmae14>

Unsurprisingly, stacking wood has been developed in Norway where I understand that it displays a male prowess.



However stacking wood art is altogether another subject. So I must be careful on this one as I am sure there are outstanding female stacking wood artists, and on this, male prowess may be a myth. I am certain the ladies would challenge the men and would never be outdone. Remember the Timber Jills of WW2. They did all that the Timber Jacks did and, I am sure, stacked timber just as well.

## "All Aboard!"

*by Julian Evans*



*Where it all started. The cruise ship MV Magellan off Tobermory, Mull*

A dream opportunity in retirement must be joining a cruise ship for a free ride as a guest lecturer. Like most readers of FCA Today, just a dream it was. But I use the past tense, for in the last 18 months my wife and I have enjoyed three cruises, one to the Canaries and two in the waters around the British Isles. And because some of the talks have a tree theme, I thought readers would be interested in how it came about.

Two years ago, my wife and I gave each other the same 70<sup>th</sup> birthday present, we went on our first ever cruise, a circumnavigation of the British Isles. We sailed from Tilbury on Saturday evening and the next morning went to the on-board church service. Half way down the aisle to our seats in the auditorium, the cruise director, who runs all the passenger entertainment, intercepted me and said, 'You look like a minister, would you do our second Bible reading?' I had a Bible under my arm but, honestly, no dog-collar!

The mystery deepened. The reading was Phil. 8-18. The cruise director had simply checked a website for that Sunday's read-

ings and this was it. The reference Phil. was surprising; it was not Paul's letter to the Philippians, familiar enough to many, but the short one to his friend, Philemon, whose slave, Onesimus, had run away, become a Christian through Paul's preaching, and was now returning to his 'owner'. Paul told Philemon that Onesimus would now be far more useful to him. I give this outline since it is the gist of what I said to the congregation before reading this unfamiliar passage, so as to give context. At the end of the service, the cruise director thanked me enthusiastically and we gave it no further thought.

By the following Friday, we had failed to visit the Outer Hebrides, and scheduled stops in the Scillies and the Channel Islands were cancelled owing to the sea state. This meant a full day at sea and no ports of call where we could disembark. The cruise director would have to put on more entertainment for disgruntled passengers. I dropped him a note to say that I had on a memory-stick my God's Trees presentation, and would he like an impromptu talk? I was paged over the ship's intercom at midday and then at 3pm that afternoon (in the same auditorium where the church service had been), I had an audience of 150 passengers. The cruise director listened for the first 20 minutes and left. And that was how I came to be recommended to the company as a guest lecturer.

So what is the deal? My wife and I have a free cabin in exchange for my giving 4 – 6 talks and conducting the Sunday church service.

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## "All Aboard!" *continued*

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*What you discover looking out from the ship's bistro bar over Rotterdam!*

So far, the latter has included one Christmas and one Easter day service. The lectures have topics like 'Britain's remarkable woods and what's happening to them', 'Mary Jones and her Bible', and 'How to write a book and get it published' as well as 'God's Trees'. Lecture is a rather grand name as, really, interest and entertainment come before information in presentation style.

Things are, of course, a little more complicated. First, I don't know more than a few months in advance whether I will be offered a cruise. Secondly, the company needs to know the subjects and outlines of each talk. Thirdly, I must have enough available for each full day at sea which usually means at least 10 topics to offer. Fourthly, an hour after embarking, I am given the programme which can mean two talks on some days and then none for several days. Indeed, during the Easter cruise this year, on the morning after embarkation, I had the Easter Day service to conduct, all pre-prepared by me on Powerpoint from hymns to readings to

sermon headings, followed immediately by my first talk, 'Trees in the Easter story'. Finally, as the cruise progresses, I have to be ready to give an unscheduled talk at short notice if the itinerary changes.

It's really great fun and a great privilege and I enjoy the opportunities, and what a way to spend some of one's retirement.

But I have a confession. The God's Trees talk that so impressed the cruise director was not the first time I'd given it, it was probably the fifty-first! Since publication in 2013 of my coffee-table book, *God's Trees – trees, forests and wood in the Bible*, numerous requests have been made to give presentations. As I write, the total is now up to 100 or so and the book itself has proved so popular that a second edition is due out this autumn (2018).

I had never planned to become an on-board guest lecturer, but then in life does one ever know what the future holds? For us as Christians, my wife and I can only smile at what God had up his sleeve metaphorically speaking.

### Reference

Evans, J (2018) *God's Trees – Trees, Forests and Wood in the Bible*. Second Edition. Day One, Leominster. 198 pp.

If you want to get in touch with Julian about a talk, do e-mail him on: -

[<julianeans.patula@gmail.com>](mailto:julianeans.patula@gmail.com)

*\*Julian Evans was formerly the Forestry Commission's Chief Research Officer (S) at Alice Holt Research Station and currently chairs the FC's Expert Committee on Forest Science.*

## Retirement and TFSR

*by Martin Fletcher*

Tools for Self Reliance (TFSR) is the charity I chose to work for on leaving the FC in 2003. It has been going for nearly 40 years and the idea came from Glyn Roberts who lived in Gosport. Returning home after two years VSO spent in Africa in Tanzania, "Mum" he said, "if only they had better tools, they could do so much more to earn a living for themselves and their families". Mum said, "Well there are your Dad's tools in the garage and your friend Brian down the road, his father has died and he had many tools".

Brian and Glyn measured from a map the length of roads with domestic housing in Gosport, Fareham, Lee-on-Solent, Portsmouth and Southsea and working on two garages of tools per road, soon calculated they could fill a container to ship out to Tanzania. So began a national charity in the crypt of a Baptist chapel in Gosport with requesting and collecting tools, which were then sorted, cleaned, sharpened and refurbished by volunteers for artisans in Africa. Their strap line today is "Practical Help for Practical People".



It is now a charity covering the UK with tools and also sewing machines, coming in from over 30 TFSR groups from Aberdeen to Bristol. Almost 700 people volunteer their time to ensure the continuing success of Glyn's original idea. These groups collect tools locally, do some sorting and refurbishing and, in few cases, make up complete tool kits. Glyn's idea and concept has spread to other countries, particularly in the Netherlands.

There has been a huge metamorphosis since the Baptist chapel basement many years ago. In 1984 TFSR was able to purchase in the village of Netley Marsh near Southampton, a 1.5ha freehold of an old farm yard, barns and buildings, as well as a semi-detached three bedroom house close to Southampton docks.

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## Retirement and TFSR *continued*

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Once some old buildings had been cleared and the herbage, bramble and other detritus burnt and some of the other farm sheds renovated, TFSR moved in. It acquired a mass of warehouse shelving from an old Sellotape factory in London with some extra ones from the FC at The Queen's House in Lyndhurst.

Subsequently, a substantial legacy and a grant enabled the original building to be extended to double its size. This houses the space for daily arrivals of incoming tools and equipment to be unloaded and sorted. It also includes the machine shop with pillar drill, lathe, bench grinders, grit blaster, wire brushes and a very accurate piece of kit for sharpening twist drills down to 1/8-inch diameter. Next to this is the carpenter's shop, where boxes and crates are made for shipping the tool kits and treadle sewing machines. These are assembled from reclaimed timber from local factories. Finally there is a sewing machine workshop. Each machine being sent to Africa (450 per annum) is stripped down, maintained and if necessary, repaired. Hand operated Series Y Singer sewing machines made after 1921 are required, for which world-wide spares are available. Some 240-volt machines are now sent as electrification is increasing in Africa.

The original dog kennel building houses the warehouse for the storage of unrefurbished and refurbished tools. Above that on the mezzanine floor, sewing machines are racked ready for shipment in stout cardboard banana boxes collected

from local supermarkets. Haberdashery is also collected and sorted and starter kits are made up to accompany each sewing machine. This consists of a 6-bottle size wine box, into which fits a biscuit or sweet tin. In the tin goes a selection of pins, buttons, safety pins, hooks & eyes, needles, scissors, zips, poppers and knitting needles. 10% or 40 of the tins required per annum come from the FC offices at Bucks Horn Oak and Queen's House.



Two ladies sort incoming haberdashery, mainly from 'mum's old sewing box'. They need lots of little boxes or tins to run this production assembly line for the 450 kits needed each year. Any vintage old tins are sold on ebay and £5000 has been raised in the past seven years. Likewise, any spanners that arrive stamped Rolls Royce or Jaguar or other valuable items are sold similarly.

Surplus haberdashery and tool sales are conducted twice a year. The cash generated is important as a container costs £3-5000 to send. The lower price is for consignments of tools to Sierra Leone and Ghana.

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## Retirement and TFSR *continued*

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Shipping costs are higher to Malawi and Zambia, which is round the Cape to Durban and then overland from the port.

Tool kit packing is done by 'long term volunteers' who come under the Erasmus+ Scheme for a year and are accommodated in the house on site. From the kit lists, tools are selected from the refurbished tool racks, marked A – Z, with the standard warehouse system of shelf 1 at the bottom and up to shelf 5. The cross-reference sheet identifies where to find, say nut runners, brick layers line and pin or maybe panel beating dollies.

We volunteers, over 100 in the course of a week at Netley Marsh, select what tools we want to work on for the next tool consignment. About 6 – 8 half shipping container loads are dispatched per annum, with perhaps 100 – 120 tool kits, about 7,000 – 8,000 tools and 50 plus sewing machines. When selecting pairs of scissors, for example, there will be everything from tailors' shears to embroidery scissors. They are sharpened to a very high standard as they have to be able to cut fabric the entire length of the blade, so usually there is about a 40% scrappage rate. My tool refurbishing preference is for sharpening saws, rip, cross cut, hand, tenon or gentleman, and I have found that the engineering skills I learnt in my FC career and when working with the UK Atomic Energy Authority are particularly useful. However, I often do grounds maintenance work, such as drains maintenance (that dustbin account we used to find so useful in our budgeting

days), gutter cleaning and of course tree felling and pruning.

The list in the main workshop states which country the next consignment is for and the tools required. This might be 40 ball hammers, each fitted with a new handle, 60 pairs of gas pliers, 100 medium flat files, 10 shovels, 5 sledge hammers and 30 long spirit levels.

Sale of scrap metal adds to the sale from unsuitable tools. At least 20% of tools delivered are scrap, broken or worn out. Income of £1000 per month derives from sorting out the high value non-ferrous scrap brass, copper, aluminium, lead, electric cable, motor armatures and field windings, 13A plugs, stainless steel and even lowly ferrous metal.



I have covered the UK end so how does it all work the other end in Africa? Tool kits are specially designed for a carpenter and joiner, blacksmith, motor mechanic, bike repairer, shoe maker, tailor, bricklayer. They are made up against requests and then allocated. This allocation is achieved by TFSR working with NGOs in the five African countries where the charity

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## Retirement and TFSR *continued*

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operates. These are Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Ghana. The NGOs identify young people who have had to leave school early and who have not been able to find formal employment. They pursue a 12-month training programme which includes business and life skills training. Kits of tools, equipment and sewing machines are sent to assist in the training and are also given to graduates to enable them to start their own business.

One thing that is important to the creditability of TFSR is follow up auditing. This is carried out annually in all five countries to ensure that money, time and equipment are well spent and provides important feedback to the major cash donors to TFSR.

When TFSR is viewed from outside, two strategies stand out. Firstly, it is a 'bottom up' charity where the help is delivered at

the bottom of the economic chain. Secondly, it is a win win situation.

Best use is made of surplus good quality serviceable tools and equipment in the UK. Also, volunteers appreciate their lifetime skills being utilized. They share with one another quality control techniques and have the knowledge that the tools are appreciated in Africa.

All volunteers use their knowledge to help identify unusual or mystery tools that arrive at Netley Marsh. I have been asked to identify Swedish Axes and a Schlich spade. Some tools like bill hooks are sold through TFSR Cymru and find a ready market amongst small Welsh Hill farmers.



For me in retirement, I feel I am putting something back into the world and utilizing skills I have acquired. Also, I much enjoy the social side over coffee and lunch where volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds mix.

More information can be found at [www.tfsr.org](http://www.tfsr.org) where you can sign up for the newsletter.

## More on Model Railway Therapy

*by Don Amer*

The building of my model OO Gauge railway layout continued for some weeks and involved laying out track in several different permutations to see which layout made the most of the space and track available, and which suited the locos, coaches and wagons that I had purchased.

Wiring the track and track points was a big learning exercise, because the trackpoints or "turn-outs" as they are technically known, had to be operated remotely by solenoids, each of which had to have three wires attached to operate it, and all wires were hidden underneath the base board.



In addition, wires to the track were also under the baseboard and brought up through 2mm holes at different intervals to provide power to the track. Finally, I ended up with a layout of three continuous loops which were interconnected by six "turn-outs" and a siding where locos could be parked.

Christmas brought in various OO Scale buildings and accessories to make it a more realistic layout.

My interest in model railways became a talking point with some of my neighbours, elderly and retired, and who wanted to see what it was all about.

It also aroused the interest from two established model railway "nerds", one living nearby and the other living in the south of England, who had been visiting my next door neighbour.

Having constructed a working model railway, raised the question "What do I do now?" Did I now just want to watch three trains running round the tracks.

I could buy more rolling stock and add to the scenery etc but space was limited and my interest would have waned.

So I dismantled the layout and built a new framework supporting a larger 1.5 x 1.8m baseboard. This will give more space to construct an impressive and more realistic layout.



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## More on Model Railway Therapy *continued*

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Back to my original question:

"How do you fill the void left when your companion, friend and wife of sixty three years of marriage dies?"

The answer is still the same, "you can't".

But I have found a way of filling some of those lonely hours with a hobby I find very constructive for me, my family and my great granddaughter as well as making new friends with very supporting neighbours.

I can be contacted via e-mail at:

[nandon79@btinternet.com](mailto:nandon79@btinternet.com)



## Early Days in Alice Holt

*by Ted Baldwin*



On completing my two years forester training at Lynford Hall in the early 1950s, I received a letter from Alice Holt offering me a post as a forest ganger in the Mensuration Section at £3-0s-6p a week. I accepted and was instructed to report to Mr. Hummel and was informed that, as this was my first appointment, I was not eligible for travelling expenses. How this offer came about, I can't be sure as during my time at Lynford I had never shown an interest in or aptitude for mensuration. If I had to state a preference for work in the FC, it would have been for research.

I, along with Rex Howell, presented myself to Fred Hummel at the Mensuration office up the stairs in the old house at Alice Holt. Also there, were John Jeffers and John Christie who were producing general yield tables for the common forest species from the sample plot files.

Our first job was the conversion of data to over bark, or was it the other way around? Anyway, it was before the availability of electronic calculators and we used unwieldy cylindrical slide rules and the deadly "Plus adder". I also remember the formidable "Brunswiga" calculator which, in some ways, resembled the temperamental cash register featured in Arkwright's shop in "Open all hours".

After a month on this tedious task, we moved downstairs to join Mike Locke and his team in the Census Office. There we checked and classified the woodland census forms which

had been prepared by field parties during the year.

After another month, my time at Alice Holt was up and I was transferred to the Northern Sample Plot Party with instructions to report to Alex MacKenzie at Douglas Crescent, Edinburgh. So I packed my bags and headed north.

During my short spell at Alice Holt, I stayed at Moor Park which was an imposing country mansion house near Farnham that had seen better days. In my time there, it was a kind of Church of England college or retreat being run by the aptly named Canon Parsons. The accommodation was basic, but after my experience in various forestry camps, it was adequate.

Long after I left Moor Park, I discovered that it had quite a history. For a period in the late 1600s to the early 1700s, it had been the home of the writer and satirist, Jonathan Swift, as secretary to the diplomat Sir William Temple.

So there you go! Moor Park has another claim to fame. Ted Baldwin lived there, albeit briefly, in the early 1950s!



Moor Park, Farnham, Surrey.

*Photograph by Simon Burchell*

# 100 Years of the Forestry Commission in Scotland

*by Graham Hamilton*



Next year the Forestry Commission will be 100 years old.

There is a strong feeling, particularly among retired staff, that this event is well worth celebrating, as it certainly will be.

However, there are one or two impediments to a united front so far as a nationwide celebration is concerned. In the case of Wales, the Forestry Commission ceased to exist a few years ago and is not going to see the centenary of the organisation as we knew it. Nevertheless, the centenary will be marked in Wales, though the details are not yet available.



There was not much enthusiasm among FC in Wales for the changes when they were first proposed, and the message that has subsequently emerged from Wales is that their reorganisation has not been the happiest of outcomes for forestry or for the FC. No doubt some will not share that view.

In England, the Forestry Commission will continue and there are well established plans to celebrate the 100 year milestone.

The following website describes these plans:

[www.forestryengland.uk/100](http://www.forestryengland.uk/100)

In Scotland, the Forestry Commission ceases to exist on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 and will become 'Forestry and Land Scotland' in the case of Forest Enterprise Scotland and 'Scottish Forestry' in the case of Forestry Commission Scotland (the Forestry Authority). It is disappointing that the FC as presently constituted will fall short of the 100 years milestone by a matter of a few months but that will not be allowed to get in the way of the party.

There have been mixed feelings about the new organisation. Both parts of the organisation will report to the Environment and Forestry Directorate of the Scottish Government. Many commentators hold the view that there is merit in the arrangement where the FC at present is at arm's length from government. It remains to be seen how the new structure will fare.

There has been some murmuring that perhaps not enough attention is being given to the centenary by the FC in Scotland. It is understandable that the staff are perhaps more focused on the future of their respective organisations at present, than on the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the organisation. Of course, the Forestry Act and the birth of the Forestry Commission impacted forestry and the wood-using industries beyond the confines of the FC and these sectors have as much reason to mark the 100 years as those of us who worked for the FC.

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## 100 Years of the FC in Scotland *continued*

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At the annual excursion of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society in Inverness in April this year, in answer to a question, the Forestry Minister, Fergus Ewing, firmly endorsed the idea that this event should be celebrated.

Emerging from that meeting, a committee of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society has been formed to help create a suitable programme of events across Scotland.

The committee are Syd House (RSFS/ICF), Malcolm Wield (RSFS), Peter Quelch (RSFS), Bryce Reynard (RSFS) and Graham Hamilton (RSFS/ICF) (all retired FC), plus Iain Laidlaw (FCS), Carol Evans (Woodland Trust) and Eleanor Harris (Confor).

We are in touch with Forestry Commission Scotland, Forest Enterprise Scotland and Forest Research regarding the evolution of a comprehensive programme, which is not yet finalised.

There are, however, several events that are confirmed or in the pipeline which are worth a mention at this stage. The first of these will be a Burns Supper, 'Celebrating 100 years of Forestry Achievement', to be held at the Salutation Hotel in Perth on 25<sup>th</sup> January. This is an RSFS event organised by Syd House. It is expected that all sectors of the industry will attend the supper. Anyone wishing to attend should contact George Moore, Executive Director, RSFS, e-mail [director@rsfs.org.uk](mailto:director@rsfs.org.uk)

Another event being planned by RSFS is the Annual Excursion which takes place

next May, mostly in Argyll. The last part of the excursion will be to Cashel Wood, which is on the east shore of Loch Lomond and which is owned by RSFS. A Centennial Path will be opened by a prominent personage and the 100 years theme will feature throughout the excursion.

There are several key dates in 2019 which mark the various events around the birth of the Forestry Commission, and each provides an opportunity to flag up the whole industry's achievements and to look forward to the impact that forestry can make in the next 100 years. The Forestry Act (1919) which created the Forestry Commission got Royal Assent on 19<sup>th</sup> August and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1919. The first Forestry Commissioners were appointed on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1919. The first meeting of the Forestry Commission was on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1919 and the first tree was planted on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1919.

There is a well-versed story about the planting of the first tree. At the first meeting of the Forestry Commission in London, Lord Lovat, the first chairman, agreed to have a race to plant the first tree for the FC with Lord Clinton, also a Forestry Commissioner. Lord Lovat travelled north by train to Elgin where he received a telegram from Lord Clinton confirming that he had already planted the first tree at his estate at Eggesford in Devon on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1919.

Though he lost the race, Lord Lovat proceeded to Monaughty Forest, where he

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## 100 Years of the FC in Scotland *continued*

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Eggesford, Devon

planted the first tree for the FC in Scotland. We hope to re-enact this next year at Monaughty, possibly the last of the events to celebrate the centenary in 2019.

Among the other events now under discussion are an open day at one or more of the companies of the timber using industry, an Institute of Chartered Foresters conference on the 100 years theme, another conference involving the Woodland History Group, possibly a new woodland created to commemorate the centenary and several other events.

The forestry stand at the Highland Show and at other local shows will be focusing on the '100 years' theme. Opportunities will be sought for TV, radio and other media to get the centenary publicised and to get a positive message about forestry to the general public.

It is also planned to flag up the centenary at any 'non-centenary' events which take place regularly in Forestry Commission and other woodlands next year, e.g. car rallies etc.

I am certain that local groups of the FCA will arrange outings, lunches and other events to celebrate the 100 years of the Forestry Commission.

There is a strong sense of pride in the FC among retired staff and there are several members of the FCA on the RSFS committee.

If anyone has suggestions to make regarding events to mark the centenary, the committee would be pleased to have them. Send them to any member of the committee or to me at:

[grahamjhamilton@lineone.net](mailto:grahamjhamilton@lineone.net)

I hope that we can publish more details of the programme of events in the Spring issue of FCA Today.



### **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](http://www.fca-today.com)



## Letter to the Editor

### Santon Downham's Narrow Gauge Railway

Dear Sir,

I am a Railway Modeller. I was given a copy of FCA Today, March 2006 in which there was an article by Barry Griggs about the narrow gauge railway between the Thetford High Lodge site and Santon Downham. This sparked my interest and I thought it would make an excellent project for me and, hopefully, be something to display at the High Lodge Activity Centre.

I hope to obtain more information from Barry but I should like to ask whether other readers of FCA Today remember anything about this railway. If they do, I would be pleased to receive any further information to help with the project. I can be contacted at [terrymetcalfe@btinternet.com](mailto:terrymetcalfe@btinternet.com)

Yours faithfully,

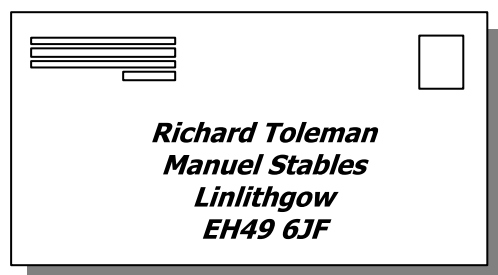
Terry Metcalfe

*The article can be read in the FCA Today Magazine archives for March 2006 on the FCA Today website.*

### Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today



*by e-mail to: [editor@fca-today.com](mailto:editor@fca-today.com)*



*by post to:*

*Richard Toleman  
Manuel Stables  
Linlithgow  
EH49 6JF*

*Visit the FCA website at [www.fca-today.com](http://www.fca-today.com)*

# Life in Brief

Dick Ayre told me that **CHRIS HODGSON** has died at 84. Chris was born in 1934 and raised in Helmsley in the old North Riding of Yorkshire.

After National Service in the RAF, mostly in Malta, he went to Lynford Hall. He then served for many years as ganger leading teams associated with the post war FC afforestation of the moors around Helmsley, mostly from Rievaulx forest, together with the rehabilitation of acquired neglected woods.

His pragmatic and quiet authority with men and his championing of their

conditions gained him much justified respect.

Latterly and until retirement as foreman he enjoyed a wider brief in North York Moors Forest District.

His long experience of leading men enabled him to treat contractors fairly whilst making sure they knew where they stood.

A keen sportsman, he played football for the RAF whilst in Malta as well as enjoying badminton. He perfected a tricky cross back underarm shot.

He played both football, at right half, and tennis for Helmsley and friendly

badminton and squash in the winter.

Chris was part of a family with over 250 years of work in forestry. He was directly related to an uncle, a brother and two nephews, an in-law uncle and brother-in-law together with occasional pre-war estate forestry work by his then future father-in-law and more recently work in Wykeham nursery by his sister-in-law.

He took a stroke seven years into retirement which limited what he could do. His wife Barbara heroically nursed him at home for the last four years.



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**[www.fca-today.com](http://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*

[membership@fca-today.com](mailto:membership@fca-today.com)

## FCA Today Magazine

The next issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available on the [www.fca-today.com](http://www.fca-today.com) website in **April 2019**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

The publication dates of the FCA Today magazine are: - **Spring edition: 5<sup>th</sup> April, Summer edition: 5<sup>th</sup> August and Winter edition: December. Visit the FCA Today website on these dates 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](mailto:editor@fca-today.com)

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



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