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From the Editor



You will see from Don Amer's poignant letter that he feels the end of FCA Today is imminent. He knows well the shortage of copy from members and that the very few contribute the most. I hope he is wrong. But it's up to the membership. I can add little more to Don's letter. It's a heart felt appeal. Surely it's not going to wither, readers must want it to keep going.

Richard

Dean FTS Reunion Dinner

The Dean FTS students' reunion dinner will be on Saturday 21st September, 2019 in the Verderer's Court at the Speech House.

This event is being run by Jerry Gissop and Martin Fletcher. The third mail out to those on our e-mail address list will be sent in mid-August, asking for a firm commitment and menu choices.

If you have not received this e-mail by 1st September, let Jerry or Martin know immediately.

Contact Gerry on gissop@hotmail.co.uk or Martin on martinfletcher42@gmail.com

This aims to be a prestigious event, the entire Verderer's Court is booked.



Speech House, Coleford, Gloucestershire

DEAN FORESTER TRAINING SCHOOL



REUNION DINNER

1905 - 1971

SATURDAY 21st SEPTEMBER, 2019

THE VERDERERS COURT

THE SPEECH HOUSE

FOREST OF DEAN

Sic Vos non Vobis

Not for Ourselves but for Others

Forestry Commission Association AGM 2019

Minutes of the Forestry Commission Retirement Association Annual General Meeting Held at the Crown Hotel, Mundford, Norfolk 21st May 2019

1. Present

Arthur Miller, Jean Miller, Charles Dickens, Richard Toleman, Simon Malone, Val Marsh, Trevor Banham, Ken Searson, Margaret Searson, Dorothy Munn, Richard Munn.

2. Chairman

Charles Dickens proposed that Simon Malone, Chairman of the Breckland Group, chair the meeting. Seconded by Arthur Miller.

Simon welcomed visitors to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

3. Apologies: Peter Webb (Peninsula), Rob Guest (Forest of Dean), Bryce Reynolds (North Scotland), Kate Robertson (West Argyll), Ian Blake (South Wales), George Bruce, Keith & Chris Ball.

4. Minutes of the 2018 AGM held at the Mayfield Hotel, Seamer were read and approved by the meeting. Proposed: Arthur Miller and seconded by Ken Searson.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Acting Treasurer's Report

a. Charles Dickens presented his report and accounts that had been audited by Rab Beggs. Charles requested that Rab be paid a fee of £30 for his services. Seconded by Trevor Banham, the accounts and payment to Rab were approved.

Charles reported a balance in the national accounts of £3425.75. He said that the last annual grant of £1500 per annum had been paid by the Forestry Commission in May 2018, there would now be no further grants.

Because the Forestry Commission had closed its file on the FCA and had no further interest in monies granted to the FCA it was agreed that formal auditing might not be necessary in future. This would be reviewed at the next AGM but the acting treasurer would produce a summary account statement at the next AGM and the books for scrutiny by the membership.

It was noted that the funds remaining in the account should finance another 2 to 3 AGMs before they are exhausted.

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FCA AGM 2019 *Continued*

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b. It was agreed that the current membership fees remain at £30 (life) and £5 (annual) but these rates are advisory and actual charges are at the discretion of each Group. It was noted that there is already some variance between Groups e.g. North Wales has an associate membership these members paying £3 per annum.

c. There was then a discussion of what we do with funds in the event that either or both a Group or the FCA nationally is dissolved.

Arthur Miller suggested the following amendment to Clause 12 of the Constitution:

In the event of the dissolution of a Group, the assets remaining after payment of all proper liabilities shall not be distributed among the Group members, but shall be passed to the General Fund held by the FCA Liaison Officer/Acting Treasurer.

If a General Fund is no longer held at National level then the Group may disburse its funds to a charity of its own choosing.

In the event of funds being held at National level being no longer deemed necessary or required, then these assets shall, after payment of all proper liabilities, be disbursed evenly among each formally constituted Group, who would then be authorised to manage their own resources with the agreement of its members.

The amendment was proposed Ken Searson, seconded Simon Malone and formally agreed.

7. FCA Today and Website – Editor's report.

a. Richard Toleman presented his annual report on the newsletter and website. A plea for more content for newsletters was made as it was getting harder to fill each thrice yearly issue. He asked for more Group news input. The chairman, backed by Charles Dickens, thanked Richard for all his hard work during the year. This was endorsed by all present.

b. It was agreed that a honorarium of £150 should be made to Diane Birkett who from the copy provided by Richard Toleman masterminds the excellent design and presentation of the content on our website. Proposed by Charles Dickens and seconded by Simon Malone.

c. Richard said that payment would be due in September to our Web Host Service Provider to enable us to continue to operate our website. The last payment was £150 for three years from September 2016. Charles Dickens said he believed the fee would be in the same region as that paid previously and if this was the case FCA funds would cover payment on this occasion.

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FCA AGM 2019 *Continued*

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d. Richard said that during discussions with Forestry England (see item) it was suggested that they could provide a link to the FCA website from their intranet so that their staff could have ready access to our site.

e. The meeting asked if it would be possible to count the number of “hits” and with this information review the position more objectively the next time payment is required.

8. Group Reports

Delegates present summarised activity reports for their Groups. Charles Dickens summarised reports received from absent Groups. All Groups appear to be financially comfortable relative to their membership needs. Overall membership continues to gradually decline because fewer new members are joining.

(A summary of the Group reports is given in the appendix.)

9. Forestry Commission Centenary

Delegates described some of the official events planned within their areas as well as activities their individual Groups planned.

Charles Dickens reported on a centenary party arranged in March by Central Services in Silvan House that he attended along with many Forestry Commission staff both past and present. This was also a wake for the demise of Forestry Commission Scotland then due to be superseded by the new Scottish forestry agencies.

10. Outlook for the FCA

a. Scotland

Charles Dickens reported on his conversations with the Forest and Land Scotland. Indications are that they are willing to promote the FCA to staff retiring or leaving but would not continue the concessions to FCA members wishing to visit forests in Scotland.

b. Wales

Charles said he had contacted Natural Resources Wales via John Browne, formerly FC Wales, but that little progress had been made on re-establishing a liaison with NRW.

c. England

Richard Toleman and Charles Dickens reported on their discussions with the Forestry England staff in Bristol. Led by Michael Seddon, Forestry England confirmed that for now FCA members would continue to enjoy the concessions regarding their forestry visits but they cautioned that this was under review and the future was uncertain. (The concessions

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FCA AGM 2019 *Continued*

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grant free entry to Forestry England's car parks, forest drives and the Bedgbury and Westonbirt arboreta plus 10% discount in Forestry England shops all on proof of identity.)

Conversation with Forestry England is ongoing regarding FCA membership identification that would be universally recognised throughout that organisation. Difficulties were mentioned regarding vehicle number plate recognition used by some forestry car parks and forest drives.

As Forestry Holidays is now run as a separate business from the forestry agencies, Charles Dickens said that as far as he knew discounts on holidays on Forest Holiday sites are no longer available.

11. Appointment of National Liaison Officer and Website Editor

Charles Dickens and Richard Toleman agreed to continue in their roles with the FCA. They told the meeting that they were not getting any younger and serious consideration should be given to their replacement or the continuation of these roles. The meeting unanimously and gratefully accepted their offer.

12. A O B

The meeting asked Dorothy Munn (Yorkshire Group) to forward our Best Wishes to Chris Griffin (their chairman) for a speedy recovery following his illness.

13. Forestry Commission Association AGM for 2020

North Wales agreed to host next year's AGM on 12th/13th May 2020 and this was accepted by the meeting.

The venue and arrangements would be announced in due course.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.35pm.

Val Marsh

Secretary, Brecklands Group

May 2019.

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

FCA Annual General Meeting 21st May 2019

Appendix – Summary of Group Reports

North Scotland

Membership is remaining steady and a few new members have joined.

Two outside meetings were arranged, hydro schemes in Glen Affric and on the outskirts of Inverness to an apiary, a timber construction company and a vegetable grower.

At the well attended Christmas dinner 17 former FC employees recorded that they had collectively worked in 72 locations and with an average service life of 33 years had accumulated 561 years service.

Membership: 30 plus 20 spouses/partners.

West Argyll

The Group has held monthly meetings from October to March with a diverse mix of speakers including a missionary on the Congo and Thailand, the local FDM on the Scottish Forestry Strategy plus a quiz night.

Membership: 13 plus 5 partners. No new members this year.

North Wales

Averaging 20 members per outing there were trips to the home of Hedd Wyn, Bala Lake railway with lunch at the Eagles Hotel, Llanuwchllyn and Plas Newydd, Llangollen.

Numbers attending outings are continuing to decline but mid summer lunches at the Eagle Hotel with better than average attendance. No new recruits, no affinity to the greater family of the old Forestry Commission.

Christmas lunch was well attended.

Membership: 50 plus 25 spouses. 3 Regular Associated Members (RAMs – non FC people who enjoy FCA company and actively attend meetings and outings).

South Wales

Three meetings held: 10 members with a personal guide to the Wales National Botanical Garden with the world's largest single span glasshouse and a woodchip fired boiler; 9 members to Bryn Pica Re-cycling Facility and 20 to the Christmas dinner at Castle of Brecon Hotel.

Membership increased by four during year by recent retirees from Natural Resources Wales.

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FCA AGM 2019 Appendix - Summary of Group Reports *Continued*

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Yorkshire

Four outside visits were arranged to Durham cathedral; the national memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire; Breezy Knees Gardens and York Chocolate Factory; National Coal Mining Museum and Yorkshire Sculpture Park; Whitby via the NYM Steam Railway. Average attendance 40 members. 66 attended the Christmas lunch in Pickering.

Membership: 48 plus 25 spouses. 3 members died during year – Geoff Haw, Chris Hodgson and Betty Falkland.

Peninsula

Due to the age of the membership, travelling is a major handicap. However two lunch meetings held during the year. The Group are to be involved in a national event at Eggesford marking the FC's 100th anniversary. This will take the form of planting an avenue in December.

Membership: Peter Wood, a founding member, died during the summer.

Brecklands

Outings arranged to Springfields outlet centre, Spalding; a walk round the Hidden History trail near High Lodge, Thetford Forest and a tour of a local distillery! Plus an excellent meal at the Crown Hotel, Mundford, in January.

Membership including spouses – 73. Sadly 5 members/FC colleagues died during the year.

Do you have any articles for publication in this magazine?

Send your articles to the editor

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

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



The National AGM – Breckland Group – 21-22 May 2019

by Simon Malone

Can it really be four years since our Group last hosted the National AGM? Once safely arrived in Mundford village in the heart of Thetford Forest, 10 delegates and spouses met in the afternoon at The Crown Hotel for the AGM. A smaller turn out than usual with the absence of the delegates from Peninsula branch, unable to make it out of the south-west due to unforeseen problems with their transport.

The delegates discussed the comprehensive agenda prepared by Charles Dickens, FCA National Liaison Officer. As usual the host branch chaired the meeting which took place over some 2½ hours and the minutes are on page 3.



Reminiscing over a delicious meal

The traditional evening meal later in the day saw the delegates' numbers increased to a total of 20 people when joined by local branch members and three members of the local forest team.

The company enjoyed an excellent meal followed by an after-dinner talk on the theme of Climate Change and how local forest management is having to respond to current and predicted climate changes.

This talk was to set the scene for the field visit on this topic scheduled for the following morning.



John Bruce, Head of Land Management

The illustrated talk was given by John Bruce, Head of Land Management, accompanied by Rachel Riley, Forest



Your FCA Today Editor seemed to be enjoying himself!

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The National AGM – Breckland Group *Continued*

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Management Operations Manager and Georgina Lever, archivist.

John set the scene with statistics of past, recent and predicted climate scenarios and how these changes are already impacting on the management of Thetford Forest. Thetford's commitments to SSSI and SPA status are largely based on its importance to two internationally significant bird species; Woodlark and Nightjar. In turn the significant populations of these birds are dependent on the clearfelling and restocking regimes practiced in the forest over several decades. Dothostroma Needle Blight, (Red Band Needle Blight), has had serious impacts on the growth of Corsican pine in the last 15 years with some 9000 hectares of under 40 year old pine affected. Best practice to mitigate this problem has been to very heavily thin such plantations at a very early age. Importantly, there is currently a ban on any replanting with CP. Because of the unique problems in Thetford forest caused by low rainfall, late spring frosts, problems with *Heterobasidium annosum* and the very complex soils, replacement species are not easy to find. The most promising are: Douglas fir, Silver firs, Western Red Cedar, Japanese Red Cedar and Serbian spruce. All these species will be difficult to establish other than in an underplanting or shelterwood regime. This, of course, would reduce clear fell area with consequent diminution in the bird species populations and which would be counter to the legal demands of the SSSI and SPA designations. As the forest is bound to these commitments under European law,

the difficulties faced by local staff are significant.

Georgina Lever, Century Archivist, gave a short insight into her role researching historic facts, data and old material. Her role is to travel the length and breadth of England seeking and recording these artefacts with a view to preventing further losses of valuable historical information. The project is geared to the 100th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Forestry Commission in 1919.



John Bruce welcoming delegates to the field visit

The following morning a group of 19, led by the same local team, and who were joined by Establishment Forester, Andrew Whistler enjoyed site visits into the local forest in warm spring sunshine.

We visited several sites where local staff set the scene by showing some of the problems associated with restocking clear fell sites in the face of Thetford's difficult current climate challenges.

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The National AGM – Breckland Group *Continued*

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We moved on to an area where strip felling of mature Corsican pine is being trialled with a view to restocking with more tender species which will benefit from the local micro-climate created by felling 40 metre wide strips through the mature crop.

Pausing to inspect a 19 year old crop of Corsican pine badly infected by Needle Blight, we began to understand the need for very heavy and early first thinning. This is expected to reduce infection by opening up the crown of the crop to allow movement of strong air currents, which is beneficial in slowing and reducing the spread and severity of this fungal problem.



A tricky point to mull over

Our final stop was to a plantation of Corsican pine which also contained an element of natural regenerated Scots pine.

This had been whole tree thinned very early and very heavily using a chipper. The area had then been underplanted using a range of species currently alien to Thetford's past silviculture. These include Douglas Fir, several species of Silver fir, Serbian spruce, Japanese red cedar, Western red cedar etc.



Andrew Whistler in an underplanted stand

The party returned to the Crown Hotel where coffee and biscuits were available before delegates departed on their long journeys home.

Simon Malone, local branch chairman, thanked John Bruce and his colleagues for the very generous amount of time they had given us to enjoy a most interesting after-dinner talk and field trip. He also thanked delegates for travelling long distances to attend the conference.

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Website Message Board

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

www.fca-today.com

The National AGM – Breckland Group *Continued*

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Delegates, spouses and local staff gathered at the underplanted area for the familiar group photograph

Diary Dates: The North Wales Group has kindly offered to host the 2020 AGM.

Dates are 12th / 13th May 2020



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William's Cleugh Pine Pollinations 2013

by Graham Gill

Background

In about 1955, Mr Valdemars Blankenburgs, a civil engineer with the Forestry Commission and a World War II refugee from Latvia, reported and photographed some self-sown Scots pines growing on a remote hillside above Kielder Forest. Blankenburgs was a keen photographer and took a great interest in the forest environment, making many observations on its vegetation. His photograph of the William's Cleugh pines was reproduced opposite page 41 in the Border Forest Park Guide (Walton, 1958).

At the time, these pines were believed to be possible survivors of the indigenous forest cover, but others disputed that view.

Interestingly, the caption in the original 1958 version of the Forest Park Guide read "*Native Scots Pines, Last Relics of the Ancient Pinewoods, in William's Cleugh, up the Scalp Burn, Kielder*". By the second edition, second impression 1964, the caption had changed to "*Self-sown Scots Pines, in William's Cleugh, up the Scalp Burn, Kielder*". In 1961, Herbert Edlin, the Forestry Commission's Publications Officer, published a short paper (Edlin, 1961) presenting the case for and against the pines' native status, but with no firm conclusions.

Angus Lunn (2004) in his New Naturalist book "Northumberland" reconsiders the arguments for nativeness again with no firm conclusion, Manning et al (2010) used bioclimatic modelling to show that the local climate, soils and vegetation fell well within the envelope for Scots pine. Cavers et al (2010) reported results from an analysis of chloroplast DNA from the William's Cleugh pines: many of the chloroplast genotypes at William's Cleugh were found at varying frequencies in Scottish populations of native pines; some at William's Cleugh were not found in any of the Scottish populations previously analysed. It was not

possible to prove or disprove "nativeness" from the genetic data.

The Surviving Trees

Five mature trees survive in the area of the William's Cleugh fenced enclosure (numbered 1-5 in Anderson 2004). A single mature tree (WC06) which died in 2016 stands lower in William's Cleugh. There is a mature tree (WC07) by the Scaup Burn (NT65439991) and another (WC08) by the Carry Burn (NT65400015).



The five mature trees in the William's Cleugh enclosure. Photo courtesy of Northumberland Wildlife Trust

Edlin (1961) described one "mother tree" in the area that is now in the enclosure plus 5 "daughter" trees. The "mother" tree was 25 feet tall and 3 feet in girth which he guessed - based on size and site - was about 100 years old. Of the 5 "daughters", the tallest was 10 feet high and possibly 20 years old.

So of the 5 mature trees present today, I guess one is the original "mother" tree and the other 4 are "daughter" trees which, if they were 20 years old in 1961, would now be 76 years old. I guess the fifth "daughter" has been lost.

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William's Cleugh Pine Pollinations 2013 *Continued*

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This ties in with Russell Anderson's ring counting (Anderson 2004 and 2005) where tree 4 was the oldest at 153-160 years old, and trees 1, 2, 3, 5 younger and close together at 59 - 80 years old. Russell considered that these 4 trees were probably naturally regenerated from tree 4, established during a 15-20 year period when grazing and browsing pressures were low.

Edlin also described the tree lower in William's Cleugh which we know as WC06 and is now dead. In 1961 it was 20 feet tall, 2 feet round and had 2 "daughters" again about 10 feet tall and 20 years old. I guess these "daughters" no longer exist, but I don't know when they were lost. Russell's ring count put tree 6 at 125-133 years old.

Edlin also mentions a tree about a mile up the Scalp (Scaup) Burn from Williams' Cleugh and another about a mile above that, both, he thought, about 100 years old. So those would be tree 7 Scaup Burn (in the new enclosure) and tree 8 Carry Burn. Russell Anderson cored these trees in 2010 (Manning 2017 *pers. comm.*) and estimated the Scaup Burn tree (WC07) to be 101 years, and the Carry Burn tree (WC08) to be 148 years.

The William's Cleugh Enclosure

In about 1992, Forestry Commission wildlife ranger Gordon Riley collected cones from the trees in the centre of William's Cleugh (WC01 - WC05) (Bill Burlton, 2018 *pers. comm.*) for Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT). Anne Pickering (2018 *pers. comm.*) germinated the seeds which were then grown on by NWT. In 1995, the plants were transported to site in 5 litre pots and planted by NWT in a deer-fenced enclosure (erected by Forestry Commission tractor driver Jimmy Potts and Kielder forest craftsmen (Bill Burlton, 2018 *pers. comm.*)).

Forestry Commission Forester Marie Clay collected cones from the ground below WC01 - WC06 in 2003, extracted the seed, 38 of which germinated. Several germinants failed, leaving 26 seedlings which were grown on in her mother's greenhouse and subsequently planted out in the William's Cleugh enclosure in 2006 (Marie Clay 2018 *pers. comm.*).

The Pollinations

In 2013, the tree lowest in William's Cleugh (tree WC06) was in terminal decline, showing very little green foliage. Here was a last opportunity to collect pollen from this tree and apply it to female flowers (technically "strobili", but in this article I use the tree breeders' convention of referring to the male and female structures of conifers as "flowers") on the 20 year old trees in the enclosure, thereby allowing for the continuation of the WC06 genes.

Materials and Methods

Isolations

On 02/06/2013 and again on 09/06/2013 I isolated female flower buds while still within their bud scales on 6 Scots pine trees within the William's Cleugh enclosure. These were all the female flower buds I could find. I numbered these trees WC101 -WC106 and labelled the trees with two plastic plant labels attached to a branch at approx 1.5m.

Isolations were made from the ground or with the aid of a 1.8m step-ladder. Isolations were made with either a) a 40mm diameter acetate tube approx 180mm in length with a foam rubber bung in each end or b) pollination bags 550mm x 158mm x 158mm with clear acetate window secured to the tree branch with wire twists.

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William's Cleugh Pine Pollinations 2013 *Continued*

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Isolations were labelled with plastic plant labels attached with wire twists showing tree number, isolation number followed by T or B to indicate bag or tube, and the number of female flowers enclosed. Isolations were checked carefully to ensure there were no non-isolated flowers outwards from the label.

The development of male flowers was monitored, and male flowers were harvested from tree WC06 at a stage when no moisture exuded from a flower when squeezed between forefinger and thumb. Male flowers were harvested from the upper reaches of tree WC06 with the aid of a 6 m pole pruner and the assistance of Anthony Johnston of Northumberland Wildlife Trust. Male flowers were transported in brown paper bags, and then dried on paper in trays on a sunny window sill for several days. Pollen was extracted by tapping the flowers and stored in glass bottles.

Pollinations

Pollination took place on 20/06/2013 when the female flowers were believed to be fertile, when the flower bracts were in a horizontal position. Pollen was applied by means of a 10cc plastic syringe with 18G needle, injected through the pollination bag, or by inserting the needle alongside the foam bung of the isolation tube, and the pollen directed at each female flower in turn. Puncture holes in the pollination bags were sealed with sticky tape. In total, 32 flowers were pollinated, all with pollen from WC06. Flowers were released on 20/07/2013, with labels left in place apart from one where the single flower had failed to develop. In total, 27 developing cones were released. Cone development was checked on 12/07/2014. Labels were removed from a further 5 isolations where cones had failed to develop. In total, 16 cones across 5 trees were developing.

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William's Cleugh Pine Pollinations 2013 *Continued*

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Pollen collection

Cone Collection, Seed Extraction & Nursery

Cones were collected on 12/01/2015, and kept separate by mother tree. A further 3 cones had failed to develop. In total, 13 cones from 4 trees were collected. Some 40 or so open pollinated cones were collected at the same time from the 20 year old trees in the William's Cleugh enclosure and treated as a bulk collection. Cones were air dried and then dried further in a domestic oven at approx 50°C for 3 hours. Seed was extracted but not counted, and no attempt was made to de-wing the seed or to separate full and empty seeds. All seeds, with the controlled pollination seed being kept separate by mother tree, were sown in March 2015 in trays of seed compost covered with sharp sand and grown in a sun room. Seedlings were transplanted individually to 7cm pots and grown on in the sun room and outdoors until being lined out in garden soil on 25/07/2016. In total, 48 controlled pollination plants from 3 mother trees were lined out, along with 61 plants derived from open pollination.

Planting

On 12 April 2018, 47 controlled cross plants were planted out in William's Cleugh enclosure with individual tree plastic mesh protection by

NWT volunteers. By 18 July 2018, 2 plants had died, 43 survived and 2 not checked. The 54 open-pollinated plants were planted out by NWT volunteers in Kielder Wildwood near Scaup Burn with similar protection on 17 April 2018.

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Treasure Trove in Thetford

by Brian Greig

While recently attending a family wedding near Mildenhall, we stayed for a few days in Thetford. Memories came flooding back of the numerous visits I made to Thetford Chase, when working in the Pathology Branch based at Alice Holt. From looking back at my old diaries, I found that from 1960 to my retirement in 1995, I had spent over 1000 days, equivalent to over two years, working in Thetford. How many hours and miles travelled in journeys from Alice Holt to Thetford, I have not bothered to calculate. The figures must be huge!

The case of the treasure trove came about in January 1970, when I was carrying out a survey in Thetford, to assess the level of Fomes root rot (*Heterobasidion annosum*) in thinning stumps of Scots pine. This involved examining the stumps for the presence of Fomes fruiting bodies and decay, using a mattock-like tool called a Pulaski. The object of the survey was to determine the degree of infection inoculum in the stumps, as a measure of the risk to the second-rotation crop that would be replanted on the site after the clear-felling of the existing crop. This would be used as a measure to decide if the site required to be destumped before replanting.

We were working in a team of three, George Marshall, later to become a Chief Forester in Thetford, Gordon Griffith and myself. We spread out about ten metres apart in a transept across the plantation. Using our Pulaskis we cleared each stump to check for the presence of fruit bodies and then chopped into the wood for evidence of decay. Suddenly Gordon's

Pulaski struck a metal object in the ground and when uncovered we found it was a silver chalice. After cleaning off the debris we saw that it had engraving showing that it had been presented to the first Earl Nelson, however not to Horatio Nelson but to his eldest brother, the Reverend William Nelson.



At the end of the day I took it to the local village Police Station in Mundford, (yes, there were still village policemen in the early 1970s!) and we were told that several months earlier there had been a robbery at All Saints Parish Church at Hilborough, near Swaffham and a strong box containing church silver, together with some documents was stolen in the break-in. The thieves had abandoned the box and the documents along the roadside of the A1065 south of Hilborough, but the silver had never been recovered.

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Treasure Trove in Thetford *Continued*

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In addition to the chalice, the box had also contained two silver communion plates or patens.

The police informed the church of its discovery and we were asked if we could return to the site the next day with the police to see if we could find the missing patens. We arrived at the site, which was close to Lynford Cross near Grimes Graves and we quickly found the patens just below the surface of the ground, very close to where the chalice had been buried. The church was delighted to have the items recovered and gave Gordon Griffith a book token in appreciation as the person who actually found the treasure.

The reason the thieves had not recovered their buried treasure was never explained. Two theories were put forward. Firstly that they had been caught and imprisoned for some other crime and so were unable to recover the loot. Secondly, and I think more likely, was that once they realised that the chalice and patens were inscribed with Nelson's name and were thus unique and therefore would be difficult to sell, they panicked and decided to bury the items until the hue and cry died down, to be recovered at a later date. The robbery took place at night when the bracken on the site would still have been quite tall and the items were found some considerable distance from the road, making it tricky to find the exact spot in the forest where the silver had been buried.

After Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar, George III created the 1st Earl

Nelson which passed to his eldest brother, the Reverend William Nelson who at the time was the Rector of All Saints Church, Hilborough. So in effect, Nelson was awarded the earldom posthumously. The parishioners of All Saints Church presented the chalice and patens to the Rev. William Nelson as a gift in recognition of his being created an earl.

Postscript

Another particular memory that I recalled vividly, is the night of 16th October 1987, when the Great Storm hit Southern England. I was staying at the Crown Hotel in Mundford and slept through the night, but on waking in the morning found the pub in darkness with no electricity and none of the staff awake.



I don't remember if breakfast was served or not, but I went down to the Research Office in Santon Downham to offer my help. The damage in Thetford forest was severe, but considerably less than in Rendlesham forest, which was virtually destroyed.

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Treasure Trove in Thetford *Continued*

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The massive clear-up operation led to a glut of timber and FC Research at Alice Holt were called in to advise on setting up a log store with irrigation to preserve the timber.

The condition of the timber was monitored over the following three years and samples were collected by Pathology staff to check for any fungal decay. Looking back on this operation, I realised how hazardous it was clambering over the log pile, which became very slippery due to the water from the sprinkler system, especially during icy conditions. I don't remember any risk assessment being carried out at the time, but fortunately no accidents occurred!



The Yorkshire Ports and Plant Health in Our Forests

by Dick Ayre

In the mid to late 90s I was involved in plant health inspections at ports, a taster of which follows. Since my retirement in 2004, things may well be different.

Most folk will be familiar with the everyday round of plant health precautions. Conifer transplants in the nursery were sprayed against aphids and on lifting against the predations of root beetles and bark weevils.

Freshly cut conifer stumps were treated against the spread of butt rot. Surveys were carried out for pine loopers and great spruce bark beetles together with movement order restrictions on infected spruce. There were also surveys for Dutch elm disease and ash dieback amongst others. In the beetle breeding season, cut conifer with bark on had to be removed from the forest within six weeks.

What may not be so obvious is the role of the FC (FA) in watching out for pests and diseases that might be imported through trade. Yorkshire was particularly vulnerable because of the ports in the area. Sea ports in Greater Yorkshire Conservancy are Whitby on the coast, Hull on the north bank of the Humber and Goole, Howdendyke and Selby on the Ouse. In our area there were also Grimsby, Immingham, North Killingholm Haven, Barrow Haven and New Holland on the south bank of the Humber, together with the wharves at Burton Stather, Flixborough, Neap House, Grove, Gunness and Keadby on the Trent. In the 90s when I was involved, nearly 20% of UK timber imports came up the Humber.

Continued on next page ➡



Ips typographus breeding channels on imported spruce dunnage.

Yorkshire Ports & Plant Health in Our Forests *Continued*

Continued from previous page

HM Customs had long been the front line inspectors of timber and trees, but a reorganisation around the time of the FE/FA split resulted in the FC (FA) being the prime authority. Importing companies notified arrivals for us to inspect and hopefully clear. Conifer timber had to be kiln dried or clean sawn and bark free. Mostly this was straight forward, but we had to watch for dunnage packing the timber packs as this was often lower grade timber and not bark free. Non timber importing ships were not required to notify us and were thus a major cause for concern. Lots of steel and other goods came in on the Humber and up the Ouse and Trent from all over the world and we had a constant watch on these. In the season April to October, we weekly monitored the pheromone traps sited at each place.

In the middle 90s as a woodland officer engaged on private woodlands in Greater Yorkshire Conservancy, I was re-named plant health officer and together with John Hendry, spent my days for two years working on the docks inspecting and releasing incoming cargo, monitoring pheromone traps, issuing export licences as well as keeping a watch on the airports and checking inland premises, sawmills and the like, for traceability of imported timber. Occasionally we had to issue remedial orders to fumigate or burn infected goods.

While full time on plant health inspections, we quickly realised how vulnerable the UK was to the import of pests and diseases injurious to our forests and woods. In my two years' work I submitted just over 100 reports of failure to comply with our import regulations under the Plant Health Act.

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Fumigation of non-kiln dried imported conifer timber found with bark on

Yorkshire Ports & Plant Health in Our Forests *Continued*

Continued from previous page

Between Christmas and New Year, a thirty foot Norway spruce was found at the back of a shed on Hull's Alexandra Dock. No import licence had been issued and after realising it was pest and disease free, enquiries revealed it had been sent from Norway as a present to New Holland. The ship had been diverted mid voyage to Hull and the tree dumped out of sight. Customs were given an order to prevent it leaving the docks and a burning order issued to the shippers.

A large spruce wood crate was found on Hull docks, containing the wreck of a German war time fighter bomber from the Norwegian/Finnish border. The timber covered in bark harboured *Ips typographus* by the hundred and was subjected to an immediate burning order. A large frame steered skidder, listed on the ships manifest as a tractor, was found by accident on Immingham docks, complete with all the usual accumulated forest debris and bits of conifer bark and bound straight for work in a UK forest. An immediate steam cleaning was ordered. How lucky were we?

At Howdendyke it was realised that there was a recently imported consignment of shot blasting grit on spruce wood pallets that had large quantities of bark attached. Following an explanation of the Act, the importers hired a pallet turner so that the offending pallets be could be removed and burnt on site. Pallets had already been sent inland to Derbyshire, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester and these were followed up and burnt.

These four cases highlight the everyday work of the plant health officers of the day and how easy it was to import pests and diseases injurious to our forests.

And now in 2019, *Ips typographus*, a non-resident bark beetle has been found in Kent and movement orders issued to prevent its spread, together with local surveys. According to Dr Neil Chrystal in 1937, this beetle is capable of rapidly increasing to enormous numbers after windblow and attacking spruce with fatal results. It is a commercial threat to our forests which highlights the danger of imported pests and diseases.

Perhaps the most frightening incident was in May 1996 at New Holland. About 30 *Ips typographus* were found in a newly set pheromone trap. Adjacent were three flatbed articulated lorries loading imported steel onto freshly cut double slabbed Norway spruce dunnage (bark oozing resin on the unsawn edges). This was an attractive site for beetles to lay eggs. The lorries were from Annan in South Scotland. Was the next stop for the lorries, after offloading the steel, the spruce forests of Galloway and could the possibly infected dunnage be thrown off the lorries in a forest before loading pulp wood? The chief entomologist turned white when I told him this story and he realised the possible implications.

We maintained close contact with the head of plant health in Edinburgh, together with entomology and pathology sections in Alice Holt.

Sunny Days With the Breckland Group

by Simon Malone

On a warm, sunny June day the Breckland group's spring outing set off from Santon Downham in the heart of Thetford Forest, bound for a ride on the North Norfolk Railway heritage line, better known as The Poppy Line.



With a near record attendance of 43 made up of Group members and spouses, members of Thetford Garden Club and members of various clubs in Mundford village the coach made good time, arriving in the seaside town of Sheringham by mid-morning.



With an hour or so to spare in Sheringham, the party had free time to potter in the nearby shops and stroll to the sea front in bright sunshine before catching the steam special for the 30-minute ride to Holt Town. Here, we were met by our coach to take us on the short trip into the town centre for a 2-hour break where the party split up seeking pub lunches, cream teas and the shopping delights offered by this picturesque Georgian town.

Holt is a pretty Norfolk town, characterised by a plethora of small independent shops, and an abundance of flint buildings and any number of eateries to indulge oneself in. In the summer months, visitors can travel the mile or so between the rail station and the town centre either by a genuine London bus or an open wagon drawn by a pair of Shire horses.

Our coach later picked us up, returning us to Holt rail station where we boarded, this time, a diesel railcar for the return trip to Sheringham and the drive home.

Continued on next page ➡

Sunny Days With the Breckland Group *Continued*

Continued from previous page

The Poppy Line is a popular tourist attraction in this area offering wonderful views of the north Norfolk coast and a mixture of wooded areas and small fields as it makes the steep ascent to Holt. The five-mile trip takes about 35 minutes and as well as scheduled tourist trips, lunch specials and other events are on the programme during the summer months.

A great day out, made all the better by the perfect weather which turned out to be the best day by far in a week of very unsettled weather this June. Sharing with other local groups proved a success, for without them the numbers of our own group available to share the outing would have made the whole event prohibitively expensive.



Do you have any articles for publication in this magazine?

Send your articles to the editor

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

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



Eighteen Visit Grandad's Shed

by Arthur Miller

Tucked away on the Island of Anglesey, near the village of Llangaffo, is a group of unassuming looking farm buildings. However, turn in the gate, and there is a brightly painted Hawker Hunter aircraft parked on the front lawn. It is the precursor to a fascinating collection of vehicles that has been put together by one family. The name is 'Tacla Taid', advertised as an Automobile Museum. But it is more than that!

We know this because 18 members of the North Wales Group paid a visit on 30th May and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.



Photograph by Les Starling

On entering the Museum, one is faced with a collection of vintage vehicles, ranging from a Rolls Royce to a Ferguson tractor. From a bicycle to a mechanical workhorse that used to be found in docks and warehouses in the days before forklift trucks. The remarkable thing is that most of the vehicles have been restored and are in running order.



Photograph by Les Starling

There are Minis as a van, a pick up, and a car. Rover 3.5 litre saloons, a right hand drive Buick, Ford Zodiac and Zephyr and a full range of cars that most of us would recognise from our youth.

Among the collection of tractors are Fordsons, Nuffields, Fieldmaster and a caterpillar tractor fitted with a winch that spent all its working life on Forestry Commission ground around Bala.



Photograph by Les Starling

Continued on next page ➡

Eighteen Visit Grandad's Shed *Continued*

Continued from previous page

The specimens include a front end loader prototype mounted on the back end of a Fordson Major tractor, with the driving controls all facing towards the rear. Most odd!



Photograph by Les Starling

There are farm implements like a circular saw mounted on the back of a little grey Ferguson. All from the days before Health and Safety. Very few guards, and hardly any stabilisers. We were all very brave (or naive) in those days.

The ladies of the Group enjoyed the vehicles, and also the posters and display cases dotted around the room.

The conversations all tended to centre on 'I remember that' or 'I drove one of those!'. Talk about nostalgia!

Outside, there is a collection of military vehicles, including a Scout Car, recovery vehicles and a couple of lorries.

They are all used on parades, Re-enactment days and in films. And to prove it, at the end of the day, as we were about to leave, a convoy of six vehicles including a vintage Albion coach, a Bedford fire engine and other vintage trucks turned up.

They had been out all day on hire, looked immaculate, and were carefully parked in the garage with the rest of the gems.

The photographs give a better idea of the collection, and we are indebted to Les Starling for his skills as a photographer.



Photograph by Les Starling

Continued on next page ➡➡➡

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

Eighteen Visit Grandad's Shed *Continued*

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For the curious, Tacla Taid is Welsh for Grandfather's tackle, kit, gear or informally stuff.

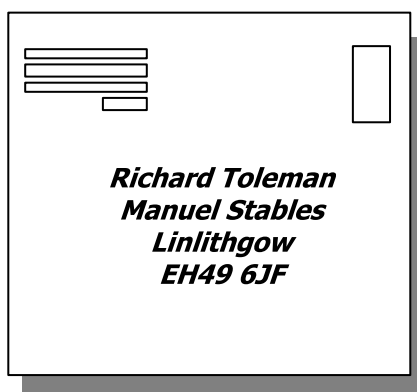
It is a shed that any Grandad would be proud of.

Of course, sustenance is required on any visit. The refreshment room serves hot meals, drinks and a mouthwatering selection of home made cakes all in the name of 'Caffi Nain'. You guessed it! Grandma's Cafe.



Photograph by Les Starling

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*



Logs to Burn

Dorothy Munn sent in the following poem which was written out by her husband's father and hangs on her wall.



The poem has been attributed to Honor Goodhart and was printed in Punch on 27th October 1920. It has been used in folk songs as detailed on the following website:

<https://mainlynorfolk.info/danny.spooner/songs/logstoburn.html>

*Logs to burn; logs to burn;
Logs to save the coal a turn.
Here's a word to make you wise
when you hear the woodman's cries;
Never heed his usual tale
That he has good logs for sale
But read these lines and really learn
The proper kind of log to burn.*

*Oak logs will warm you well,
If they are old and dry.
Larch logs of pinewood smell,
But the sparks will fly.*

*Beech logs for Christmas time;
Yew logs heat well;
Scotch logs it is a crime for
Anyone to sell.*

*Birch logs will burn too fast;
Chestnut scarce at all;
Hawthorn logs are good to last
If cut in the fall.*

*Holly logs will burn like wax,
You should burn them green;
Elm logs like smouldering flax,
No flame to be seen.*

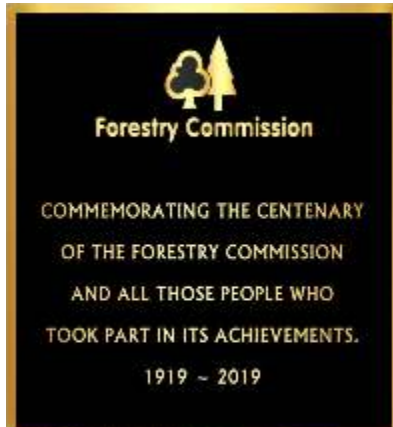
*Pear logs and apple logs,
They will scent your room;
Cherry logs across the dogs
Smell like flowers in bloom.*

*Ash logs all smooth and grey
Burn them green or old,
Buy up all that come your way
They're worth their weight in gold.*



100 Years at the Forest of Dean

by Rob Guest



On Friday 29th March a number of FC retirees from the Dean and as far afield as North Wales gathered in the spring sunshine, together with a sprinkling of current FC staff,

to celebrate 100 years of the Forestry Commission. The Forest of Dean group of FCA had organised a plaque to mark the centenary and the gathering was for the official unveiling of the plaque. It was estimated there may have been 100 there – one for each year of the Commission's existence!

Jim Sauter, who had worked for many years in the Dean with both Training Branch and as Operations Manager for the West of England acted as MC for the event. Brian Mahony, a previous Deputy Surveyor of the Dean, addressed the gathering on behalf of retirees and in particular praised the contribution of FC staff in ensuring the success of the Commission.

Kevin Stannard, the present Deputy Surveyor, then spoke on behalf of current staff and indicated their determination to continue managing the forest estate to benefit all sectors of the community. These two were then joined by Royston James, who was the attendee that had started



work with the FC earliest. He joined the Bream beat in the Dean in 1949 when he was 15. The trio then unveiled the plaque. The event was marked with much greeting and gossip between old colleagues and some continued on to the Rising Sun at Moseley Green to extend the socialising. A most enjoyable and successful day!





Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

Further to my previous contributions to FCA Today, I am about to enter yet another phase of my life, the final one as far as house moves are concerned.

It is now twenty one months since my wife died and the loneliness in my life has got the better of me, which has caused me to review my situation. Loneliness is especially worse in the evenings due to the lack of adult conversation. In an attempt to overcome this loneliness and keep the brain active, I set up a model railway in "00" gauge and that has been a form of therapy which has got me to where I am now. However, at the age of 89 years, I have been thinking what the future holds for me, and that caused me to think the unthinkable, that of moving house with all of its memories.



I have therefore, been looking at a McCarthy and Stone development here in Blairgowrie. They build one and two bedroom apartments to a very high standard for retired people.

So after much heart searching and talking to my family, I have purchased a one bedroom apartment. One reason for this action is that with thirty seven apartments in the development, and with a residents' lounge, the

chance of meeting like minded people is increased without the need to go out.

There have been casualties in that my model railway is no more. However, I have been fortunate in that much of it has been sold to local model railway nerds.

Because I shall be moving from a three bedroom bungalow, to a one bedroom apartment, I have had to part company with a lot of furniture and bric-a-bac that have accumulated over sixty three years of marriage.

My house went on the market on a Tuesday in May and I received an offer on the Friday of the same week. My date of entry is to be 4th July.



In conclusion, I suspect that the Summer edition of our FCA Today could be the last, which is very sad. I have enjoyed sending contributions which I hope were worthy of wider reading by members, and also reading contributions from other members.

I wish Richard Toleman and Charles Dickens well and thank them for all the hard work that they have put in to keep FCA Today going for so long.

Don Amer

Continued on next page ➡➡➡



Letters to the Editor *continued*

Continued from previous page



Can you identify them?

Dear Richard,

This photo came up on Twitter with the legend that it was the Commissioners at Rannoch in 1960: - <https://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-200-835-C>

I think given the date, it may include Steven and Carlisle, maybe Steven pointing and Carlisle on the right looking at the map. Does anyone know?

A list of the Commissioners at the time would be here but I've no idea what they looked like: - <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/archive-forty-second-annual-report-of-the-forestry-commissioners-1960-1961/>

It would be interesting to put some names to the photo. Can anyone help? If so, please contact me at wilmagh@gmail.com

Wilma Harper.

To help memory recall, the 1961 Commissioners, the DG, Deputy DG and Director Scotland are listed on the following page. Also pictures and details of Henry Steven and Jock Carlisle.

Continued on next page ➡



Letters to the Editor *continued*

Continued from previous page



Can you identify them?

Were any of these Top Brass in the picture?

The Forestry Commissioners at 30th September, 1961 were: -

The Earl of Radnor

Major D. C. Bowser

Lt.-Col. Sir Richard Cotterell

Mr. E. Gwynfryn Davies

Mr. Edward Bryan Latham

Capt. J. Maxwell Macdonald

Mr. Lloyd O. Owen

Sir John Stirling of Fairburn

Major Sir William Strang Steel

Mr. T. Taylor

Director General: Sir Arthur Gosling

Deputy DG: Mr. James Macdonald

Director of Forestry Scotland: Mr. A. Watt



Henry Marshall Steven, CBE, LLD, [1893-1969] was Professor of Forestry at Aberdeen University for 25 years, between 1928 and 1963. He was educated at Bathgate Academy and was a graduate of Edinburgh University, B.Sc. in Forestry, (1915) and Ph.D. (1921).

Between 1919 and 1930 he was a research officer with the Forestry Commission, then its divisional officer for the North East of Scotland until his appointment to the Chair in Aberdeen in 1938. Between 1939 and 1943 he made a significant contribution to the Ministry of Supply, Timber Production Department, and was President of the Society of Foresters in 1950-51. In 1963 he became Chairman of the Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee. The founder of the journal *Forestry*, he was its Editor from 1926 to 1945. He also made numerous contributions to forestry and other scientific journals. He was made a CBE in 1959 and retired in 1963. Professor Steven married in 1921, and had three sons.



Jock Alan Carlisle was born in 1924 and educated at Uppingham School. He served with the Royal Air Force between 1942 and 1945 and graduated from University College of North Wales, Bangor, in Forestry and Botany (1950). A research fellow he completed his Ph.D in forest ecology in 1954. His survey of the native pinewood of Scotland between 1950 and 1956 culminated in the publication of this book. Between 1957 and 1968 did research on forest hydrology at Oxford University and worked in the Nature Conservancy's Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, studying nutrient cycles in Lake District oakwoods. He has worked in Canada since 1968, initially for the Federal Government as Senior Scientist in a tree genetics and breeding program. For the past 15 years he has been a consultant, writer and journalist, [presently on his fifth book], and now lives in Ontario with his wife, Joan.

Life in Brief

John Roe has informed me of the death of **ANGUS MAXWELL**.

Many members of the old North Wales Conservancy will be saddened to hear of the death of Angus at the great age of 97.

Angus was brought up near Jedburgh, southern Scotland and was called up to do army service as soon as he became of age.

While serving in Italy he met his future wife Jean, a service woman who hailed from Maesteg, Glamorgan. Their time serving in the same unit was brief but they maintained regular correspondence.

On demobilisation Angus gained employment with the Forestry Commission at Forest of Ae. Here he gained much experience, and was promoted to foreman grade. During this time he was corresponding with Jean and making the train journey to

Maesteg when leave was available.

They married and set up home in Ae forest district in 1950, here their son David was born. Angus gained promotion to Forester grade when he moved to Dolwyddelan Beat Gwydyr Forest North Wales where there was a large planting programme. Within a few years they were moved to Ystwyth forest where Angus was forester for Myherin beat and residing in the Hafod section. Subsequently he was transferred to Radnor Forest as Head Forester in Charge.

Promotion to Chief Forester led to his move to Crychan Forest residing in Tirabad, Llangamarch Wells, and later moving down to Builth Wells where they bought a house, where he resided until his death. Angus was promoted to District Officer Llandovery District where he remained until he retired.

He was respected by all who knew him and were well aware of his outspoken views and beliefs, being quick to admonish and help those having difficulties, and quick to praise good work and deeds.

Sadly, Jean died in 2009 after several years of devoted nursing by Angus. Even more shockingly, David died suddenly 18 months ago, but Angus remained philosophical with the support of his daughter-in-law Lynda and granddaughters Heather and Dawn.

There was a large gathering of church members, neighbours, forestry colleagues, bowling and dancing clubs at the thanksgiving service held at Alpha Presbyterian Church Builth Wells on 6th July followed by the interment of ashes at St Mary's.

Angus is survived by Lynda, Heather, Dawn, and an infant great granddaughter who reside in Kent.



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

FCA Today Magazine

The next issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available on the www.fca-today.com website in **December 2019**.

Articles for inclusion in the next issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st November 2019.

The publication dates of the FCA Today magazine are: - **Spring edition: 5th April, Summer edition: 5th 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?



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