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**A decision has been made on the future of the FCA Annual General Meeting.
Read the announcement on Page 2.**

From the Editor

Another newsletter is on the website but it was a struggle and is shorter than usual. Copy was thanks to the stalwart few and an article which first appeared in Scottish Forestry. Come on! Surely you have the time and desire to contribute now that you can't get out and about so much, but you must want FCA TODAY to keep going. This will be the only means of communication between members. Only through our newsletter will you know what your friends and colleagues are up to. Just support it. Just do it!

Richard



Forestry Commission Association Annual General Meeting 2020



Sadly the AGM planned for this year has been cancelled. It was to have been hosted by the North Wales Group in May but was postponed until September but has now been cancelled. With the current uncertainty about group gatherings the feeling among the membership was a general reluctance to attempt to have a meeting this year. As to convening future AGMs, bearing in mind that attendance has been falling off in the past few years and the cost of hiring a venue and reimbursement of Group delegates' expenses, it was felt that the funds we currently hold nationally would be better spent in maintaining the website. Therefore the AGM held in May 2019 in Thetford is to be regarded as our last.

However, the FCA continues through the local Groups who will continue to communicate and liaise via Richard Toleman who masterminds the FCA website and Charles Dickens, Liaison Officer, through contacts within Groups, Forestry England, Forest and Land Scotland and Natural Resources Wales.

Forestry Commission - Endings?

by George Stewart

Well, that's it then. The Forestry Commission which we have all come to know, if not necessarily to love, has come to an end in Scotland after 100 years. It is quite an event. It is universally known to the public and there can be few foresters who have not had dealings with the Commission. To those of us who were fortunate enough to have served in the Commission its end in Scotland cannot do other than bring sadness.

So has the Commission's presence in Scotland been beneficial? It was set up in 1919 as a British national body with the primary objective to expand the forest estate in Scotland and repair the damage done to our woodlands by the need for timber in World War I. It promptly set about the acquisition of land and the establishment of new forests, and it has been fortunate in having been able to keep to that straightforward, but by no means easy, task for the last 100 years. As a rather strange government body it has escaped being done away with in times of crisis, and avoided being incorporated in larger countryside institutions. Another important feature in my opinion is that it has always had a forester as the Director General as the head of all operations. It is greatly to be hoped that the new bodies set up in Scotland to continue the Commission's work will take note of this.

There do not seem to be figures for the size of the forest estate (which was then virtually all in private ownership) in Scotland when the Commission began its work, but from a 1924 survey we might assume that it was a little under one



George Stewart

Photograph © copyright Kelly McIntyre.

million acres (405,000 ha). The current figure is 1,457,000ha (3,600,000 acres) of which the Commission, now in the name of its successor body Forestry and Land Scotland, accounts for 32% or some 469,000ha.

As a working forester I tended to look at forestry as a practical matter - there are jobs to be done, let's get on with them - so I never really got round to articulating any overall objective, but on reflection I think I would now say it is to enhance the wellbeing of the countryside. This might be

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Forestry Commission - Endings? *Continued*

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George on his 100th birthday

achieved in three ways. First, to protect the beauty our countryside offers and improve its accessibility. Leaving aside well known areas, foresters have at their disposal large areas of natural beauty where simple walks can be provided in peace and quietness.

Secondly, the wellbeing of our wonderful wildlife is an obvious priority. On good sites much can be done, but on poor infertile sites in the 'wet west' we have to recognise it is much more difficult to guarantee diversity. Patience may be required.

The third aspect of the countryside where we should aim to enhance wellbeing is the inhabitants who live and work there. Jobs are important and foresters can help greatly. If one hectare of productive forest can yield about 400 tonnes of wood and if you consider the tens of thousands of hectares planted in the last fifty years, foresters are responsible for a great harvest, and, with restocking and forest maintenance, a continuing one. The

number of jobs created in forestry is a very important contribution to employment in the countryside.

And what about the unintended consequences of this long legacy? I am sure that until recently no one gave any thought to carbon dioxide capture. But I wonder how many million tonnes have been locked away in the Commission's and private sector plantings?

As a long serving member of the Commission I thought that in this farewell note I might give a few personal observations on what I believe have been reasons for its being a successful and reasonably contented body. The early Commissioners were landowners and foresters themselves and they seem to have set out to run this new body just like another country estate. My time in the Commission covered the middle decades of its one hundred years and from the beginning I felt I was part of the management of a very large estate acting



George with Nander Robertson RSFS President and Syd House

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Forestry Commission - Endings? *Continued*

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with a love of the land and a concern for those who worked on that estate. Indeed it is perhaps not overstating the case to say that its staff have been its making. Land owners, agents and engineers worked happily together, and aside from possible dissatisfaction over promotion I never came across anyone who did not enjoy their job. The afforestation figures for the Commission are considerable and amount to a worthwhile achievement. And of course grant aid helped in the establishment of forests and woodlands on private estates and land owned by other bodies.

Another contribution of the Commission to Scottish forestry has been in research. Planting of the more difficult sites through infertility and exposure has become possible. Indeed it could be said that this work was too successful as it led to the planting of sites which would have been better left alone. On the whole, however, I

think it may be said that the Commission has had a successful 100 years in Scotland.

Lord Lovat was the first chairman of the newly formed Commission and I understand he was very keen to get planting going as soon as possible. This he achieved in Scotland by planting the first tree on 9 December 1919, thus the original Commission achieved its 100th year in Scotland short of a mere few months. I was born three days later and I have done a little bit better by making the full 100 years!

The author acknowledges the help of Judy Norwell in the preparation of this article.

This article first appeared in the Scottish Forester Winter 2019. George agreed to my request to reproduce it for those not members to read. He told me he is keeping well but his leg is suffering a little from an earlier skiing accident in February this year. He's irrepressible! He just keeps going. Ed



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www.fca-today.com



FC Anniversary 1969

by Martin Fletcher

We have had many splendid photographs and articles of tree planting events to commemorate the 100th FC anniversary. A few items and a photo of staff at Silvan House for the 75th anniversary, but none of the 50th in 1969. As a young trainee forester fresh out of the Dean FTS, I had been posted to Speech House Walk in the Forest of Dean the previous year.

The 50th anniversary was commemorated in the Forest of Dean, under Tony Joslin as Deputy Surveyor. There was an exhibition in New Beechenhurst Inclosure on the site of the old levelled colliery tip at Beechenhurst and on the surrounding open ground with working exhibits in Compartment 505 P22 DF plantation to the north. This plantation had an interesting history. The previous 21 year old P00 crop of DF caught fire in the hot summer of 1921 from a locomotive spark from the adjacent railway line and it was replanted the following winter. Interestingly because forest fires do not readily travel downhill, there were and maybe still are, a few P00 DF down in the south west corner of this sub-compartment.

Head forester Mike Dunn was the supremo allotted to the task of organising the whole three day event to be held in early June '69. The site lent itself extremely well with ample parking for cars and coaches and demonstration space for a wide range of forestry activities. These included chainsaw felling of the 47 year old DF in Cpt 505, extraction by County 754 tractor with a double drum winch using sliding chokers and wedge eye socket and extraction with Igland double drum skyline

winch (see photo). There was also a McConnell saw bench pointing stakes, and a Cundy peeler working on larch billets for a local firm called Formwood. All this machinery contrasted with a working pitsaw from an earlier era.



*FC 50th Jubilee Exhibition
New Beechenhurst June 1969*

On the forest management side there was a fencing demonstration using the recently introduced 12.5 SWG high tensile spring steel wire and C8/32/6 sheep netting. An area of bracken and grasses had been swiped earlier in the year and planted with NS, a staple planting species for the Dean at that time. I was given the herbicide spraying demonstration to organise, which was on the edge of the levelled pit area.

Herbicide representatives from BP had plied us with plenty of free chemicals to use such as paraquat, diquat of the bipyridyls, ammonium sulphamate, propyzamide, asulam, atrazine and emulsifiable 245-T. These had been applied to the demonstration site some

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FC Anniversary 1969 *Continued*

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months earlier, so the resultant dieback of grasses and bracken could look realistic.

Applicators were hung on suitable mannequins provided by BP Silvapron D and Silvapron T. These were CP15 and CP3, Cooper Pegler semi-pressurised sprayers. By then the Falcon and Three Oaks fully pressurised sprayers had been consigned to history. The CP sprayers were demonstrated using different jets whether for prep ground or weeding. With the latter we had on show the washing up bowl on the end of the lance for a contained spray or the cone to be placed over the tree to protect it. Only water was used in the sprayers on the demonstration days. (See photo with school children and myself facing the camera in shirt and FC tie.) Mistblowers for 245-T were around but not included while the low volume and ULV applicators were still with Technical Development Branch.

The forestry spot gun for insecticidal stump treatment against the pine weevil (*Hylobius*) and the black pine beetle (*Hylastes*) was shown using the adapted veterinary drench gun used on cattle and horses. This backpack mounted sprayer was ideal to quick fire a fixed dose of insecticide of 10 or 15ml at each stump and could be used on clear fell sites at walking speed.

The three day event, which took considerable organisation by Mike and his team, enjoyed glorious June sunshine and was considered a great success. It was conducted entirely by Dean staff with 18,000 people attending, of these about 6,000 were schoolchildren.

The Forest of Dean event matched the attendance figures at the 50th Anniversary Show held at Margam Forest in South Wales and also exceeded many other FC 50th anniversary events.



Harry Oram

by Peter Schweiger

Here's an interesting life story of HARRY ORAM who died in April. It was sent to me by Peter Schweiger, his lifelong friend.

There was no overlooking Harry when I first saw this tall chap with an enormous white crash helmet as he rolled up to the Nissen hut on a small moped at Ampfield wood. It was a Monday morning in July 1965 and I had been with the gang a few months to do my practical training as a forester.



Arthur Griffen our ganger cast his eye over this latest of a string of newbies wearily and when Harry had removed his helmet I said to him, "If you stay with us till lunch time you will be OK." We were on weeding by hand with a rip hook in one hand and a forked stick in the other, bending down cutting the grass, bramble, bracken and black thorn along the rows of small trees. Well he turned out to be quite a grafter for a 16 year old and not only stayed till lunch time but remained in the Forestry Commission for the next 45 years, working his way around the United Kingdom up the ranks of forester.

So often as we would leave the Nissen hut to walk down to the compartments where we were working, he would think of an appropriate song. It was all hand tools then and we had our 4 and 5 pound axes and would sing "Hay ho, hay ho, it's off to work we go" etc. The dozen of us on the gang enjoyed chasing each other up and

down the trees weeding in the summer. We had a break every couple of hours drinking a small amount of black tea in a thermos cup while lying in a ditch by the ride with great back support and feet raised. Harry had a great memory and a lovely way of recounting stories, putting on the various accents of actors he had seen on TV.

Harry lived in Eastleigh near Southampton and I went on Wednesdays to an evening course at the Tech to do O level German. Before the class I went for a swim to freshen up at the Western Docks and would pop into Harry's home on the way to the class. Another of the gang lived in the same road and he had a small motor bike to travel to work with. I had a grey mini van.

We had an open shed where we pointed fencing stakes with our axes when it rained and when the chestnut stakes ran out we played darts in the mess hut. The tortoise stove would be lit and the windows would steam up. One time a chap climbed on the roof and poked a holly bush down the chimney and we all fled the hut coughing and spluttering from the smoke.

Our dart playing became better and some of the gang would meet on a Thursday evening in the White Horse in Ampfield. I am amazed how many pints we would drink. The owner of the brewery lived in a big house opposite the pub and when we went to the loo, we would think the drains ran under the road to the brewer to recycle.

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Harry Oram *Continued*

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Harry and some of the gang came up to my home near London for my 21st birthday. Quite a party and although it rained it did not stop the fireworks. I let off a rocket under an umbrella I was holding and it shot up into it and did a few laps before just missing the spectators. A lucky escape.

The gang was a happy lot and we made up nicknames for ourselves. Harry said his hand writing was not too clear and when he wrote the O it looked like a D so his name changed to Dram. The tractor driver was another tall chap, so of course his nickname was Lank. The head forester liked to give Lank extra jobs to do on his garden and as Lank was there so much we thought he had been "adopted". My nickname was "Swiggs" I cannot imagine why.

I met up with Harry in 1968 when I was on an exchange course at Faskally FTS and Harry had gone to help clear up the wind blow at Crinan. The weather was blazing hot and we met at a pub. I phoned home to wish my father a happy 60th birthday. It was the last one he had.

Every Christmas time for several years we would have a reunion. It was a chance to buy one of Arthur's turkeys and a tree and play darts. The sign of a wasted youth they say. Over the years the meetings became less frequent but there were still some.

One reunion was at Ampfield and we looked at the now massive red oak and Norway maple we had planted and weeded along Jermyns Lane near the Hilliers nursery. We parked in a gateway and

walked into the wood. Huge piles of Douglas fir logs were stacked up and it made us realise that the trees we had planted had now been harvested.

Over the years we met up and it was great when Harry retired and bought a mini bus. He used it to give tours of the New Forest for small parties. He took us to see the Sway Tower built in the 1880s of non reinforced concrete and told us its history.

Harry loved to research things and spin out the stories. On another trip we went to Thetford and visited the Grimes caves where flints were mined.



I did not recognise Harry at first when he came in with his bride Karolina at the wedding in 2016. Due to chemotherapy he had gone bald, but the grin was still there. He chose the date to be Remembrance Day 11th November so he would not forget.

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Harry Oram *Continued*

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He had met Karolina at the Foresters Arms in Brockenhurst and a long lasting courtship worked well for them both.

Karolina loved animals and Harry had a small holding with about 20 dogs, cattle, horses, hens and goats. They got along well and Karolina brought her son Mischka who was 10.

Harry had a battle with cancer for several years and would always return from hospital after treatments, so Mischka was

very upset when Harry did not return after his last treatment.

Harry organised a wonderful weekend for me and four other former workmates last September when we stayed at Whitemead Park. He had hired a flat and the attraction had been the Dean Forester Training School Reunion Dinner. We enjoyed meeting our contemporaries and recalling our past.

Harry was a great character and drew quite a circle of friends who will miss him.

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.



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

A Factor Reminiscing

by Charles Dickens

In a pub in Basingstoke many years ago I was given a choice, Cardiff or Inverness. Earlier that day I had motored down from Leicestershire where I was working as an assistant land commissioner with MAFF helping to administer the Farm Improvement Scheme, in essence a third capital grant to farmers to invest in new farm buildings and land improvements to further the Government's drive for increased agricultural efficiency and production. My response to a trawl by the Forestry Commission wishing to fill vacant area land agent posts led me to an interview with John Gwynn, a pub lunch and the choice.

So in July 1971 I headed north with my wife and a toddler son to a new job and life in Inverness, then a comparatively wee town nestling at the head of the Moray Firth and at the end of a long and windy A9. Why Inverness? Simply because it was a part of the world unknown to me and I wanted to try something completely new ... or was it John Gwynn's salesmanship?

A little apprehensively I entered 60 Church Street and bumped into David Seal on its doorstep. On discovering who I was, his welcome immediately put me at ease, whereupon I was directed to the office of Andrew Bearhop's the conservancy land agent and my new boss.

I soon learned that my post had been vacant for some while because it was quite difficult to get people to transfer that far north, but then again once people had settled in, they were most reluctant to

leave. Thus began my happy 26 years as an FC land agent or, in Scotland, a factor.

Coming from the deep south and being a born and bred Englishman, I was a little worried on how I would be accepted by the highland Scots, particularly those in the far west. "You'll be the new factor then" was often the greeting of a soft spoken crofter. I will always remember the hospitality they offered. On conclusion of business with one such gentleman, he said "You'll be having a wee refresh afore ye go." Naively thinking that a welcome cup of tea was being offered, it resulted in my downing half a tumbler of neat whisky at eleven in the morning. I do not remember what I did that afternoon.

For landlords a good rent review increased their income, for tenants a revised rent did not adversely affect their profit. The poor factor is the pig in the middle. The art is keeping his landlord happy, but not falling out with the tenant. I often carried out a rent review with no mention of figures at all, but both sides having a good idea of what the rent should or might be. Success for me was an acceptance by the tenant of my formal notice and my landlord being content with the outcome.

In my early days with the FC, a majority of the workforce was housed often in FC houses, often in remote locations, e.g. Glenbrittle on Skye and Glenelg in the Ratagan forest, with the forester-in-charge also FC housed close by. Keeping these people happy in their houses was quite tricky and it was where a good clerk of

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A Factor Reminiscing *Continued*

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works, a land agent's right hand man, comes into his own by treating all tenants with a fair and even hand over repairs and maintenance. The secret was keeping the lady of the house happy, or at least content, with her home. The bane in taking up a new land agent post was the often heard plea that your predecessor had promised, say, a new bathroom but he had done nothing and what was I going to do about it. "Had I promised a new bathroom?" I would reply. If the lady's answer was "No" I would quietly say that was my answer too!

Although I was not directly involved in the forestry side of the business, forestry rubs off on you and you soon learn to appreciate the work done by your forester colleagues. When out of the office, I would, if time permitted, call into a forest office (preferably at tea break time). Often a "seeing as you are here" comment would preclude some problem the forester had regarding such as a boundary fence. On one occasion I was out with Pat Garrow, chief forester, Rannoch, in the Black Wood, a remnant of the great Caledonian Forest, when he stopped before a magnificent "grannie" Scots pine and said it was his coffin tree. I never knew if his coffin boards were cut from that tree, but I learned something about the Caledonian pine forest and also the capercaillie that lived there.

Such is the nature of the business that one never remains forever in the same place and the lure of promotion, i.e. extra cash,

meant a move to Perth in the old East Scotland Conservancy. It was during my time there that the organisation of the FC began to change. When I arrived in Perth, there were 11 beat forests on my patch. When I left after 10 years in 1986, these were drastically reduced to three large forest districts in the interests of efficiency and cost saving. However it was for others to determine how effective these savings had been, but I did notice a gradual loss of local, on the ground knowledge, that was invaluable when sorting out boundary disputes or claimed rights of access by adjoining landowners.



The forest village of Shenval, Balnain Forest lying between Drumnadrochit and Cannich. The houses are a typical Scottish Special House design of which the FC built many. The forester's house is tucked behind the trees set a little apart from the workers' houses.

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A Factor Reminiscing *Continued*

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One regret was that I never got to occupy a new district office in Aberfoyle. My regret was that being responsible for the new building, the land agent's office had the best outlook. Instead I finished up in the Black Banana overlooking the Corstorphine road and Edinburgh Zoo!



The forest village for the Ratagan forest on a headland at the head of Loch Duich. The white building reflected in the water is the forester's house, usually a detached house set just a little way from the workers' houses that were almost always semi-detached.

A beautiful location but could be a bit lonely on wild, cold winter days.

Clearly I had been enjoying myself out in the sticks, so the powers that be thought I was better tied to a desk and I became part of Estate Management Division (EMD) working to Richard Illingworth. Sadly EMD is now assigned to the dustbin of progression (some people call it evolution). Much as I enjoyed, and now missed, the freedom of having my own patch, my horizon was greatly widened to the whole

of Great Britain. One of my responsibilities was keeping the estate code, the land agent's bible, fully up to date. The fun was discovering and trying to understand the subtle differences between Scots and English landlord and tenant acts and ensuring my colleagues in the field could follow my revisions. I wonder if the code still exists?

Looking back on my time in Silvan House, it is remarkable how attitudes have changed towards the recreational use of the forest. There had always been an open access policy provided you walked. A debate had started on allowing cyclists access, but we had no idea then that this could develop into the popular mountain bike trails there are now in many of the forests. These days they even allow "Go Ape" addicts to swing among the trees. Such goings on would have given this poor land agent sleepless nights regarding the FC's legal liabilities in allowing this to happen.

Which reminds me of my input towards the construction of the visitor centre at High Lodge in Thetford forest. All new capital projects used to come to the Estate Management Division for evaluation and recommendation on whether or not a project should be funded. The High Lodge project landed on my desk and I regret, in hindsight, that I doubted it would succeed because the sums did not convincingly add up to it providing an adequate return on the money to be invested. Judging by the success it has been, I'm glad I was overruled, but at the time it was not a

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A Factor Reminiscing *Continued*

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foregone conclusion. And you can swing through the trees there too.

Desk computers arrived during my time in Silvan House together with very noisy dot matrix printers. No longer did I draft letters and reports in manuscript but had to learn how to type. My hand/eye co-ordination was not good but a sympathetic typist somehow turned my typos into readable documents.

Computerisation was all new at that time. I became heavily involved in setting up a system whereby estates' expenditure would be linked directly into the new FC's accounting system, so that each land agent could see expenditure against each of his properties in relation to his budget. Not only expenditure, but also the recording and resetting of the capital value

of each of the properties every three years. A specialist firm was called in to devise a program and we set to work. Only it didn't work and I will never know what really went wrong, but in those days I am certain naivety was a major reason. Give me a clerk of works and a well thumbed notebook any day. The project? I believe it was ditched.

Then in 1997 I was tempted by the FC's early retirement scheme, banked the golden handshake and spent the next eight years working with the National Trust for Scotland – but that's another story.

As for the FC, I'm glad I responded to the trawl that crossed my Leicestershire office desk all those years ago.

Do you recognise the location on Page 15? »»»



An iconic view of Inverness Castle and the River Ness

A Factor Reminiscing *Continued*

Here's a test for you.

This picture was taken on the West Coast looking NW from Noride (anagram).
What can you see?



[Answer on Page 26.](#)

(Don't look until you've had a shot!)



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 Page 26 of this magazine.

www.fca-today.com

The Royal Forestry Society

by Simon Lloyd

Many members of the FCA will know of the Royal Forestry Society (RFS). Indeed some are RFS members. At its heart the RFS is a community of people with a common interest in the science and practice of silviculture and a commitment to sharing knowledge and experience freely for the better health of our woods and forests.

People from all walks of life, from the interested amateur to those with the greatest expertise enjoy taking part in RFS events, especially woodland meetings, and more often than not learn something new on every occasion.

RFS members value the Quarterly Journal of Forestry (QJF) which is unique in bridging science and practice, and the fortnightly E-news, a comprehensive and wide-ranging digest of news and events.

In recent years the RFS has greatly expanded its outreach work. Teaching Trees helps primary school children to learn that woods are not an accident of nature but the product of great skill. Future Foresters encourages young people to consider forestry as a career to help grow the pool of talent at all levels and disciplines able to address the challenges and opportunities forestry faces in the years ahead.

If the RFS sounds like an organisation where you will meet like-minded people and stay connected with forestry and foresters in a relaxed and enjoyable way, why not consider joining? Just email membership@rfs.org.uk using the code FCA2020 and you will receive a 25% discount on your first year's membership or £3.59 per month for the first 12 months. Offer ends 30 September 2020.



RFS members enjoying a day out

The Royal Record of Tree Planting

by Brian Greig (Tree Warden, Parish of Rowledge)

As part of the celebrations to commemorate the Coronation of George VI in 1937, trees were planted in Recreation Grounds and Parks throughout the British Isles, the Empire and even in the United States of America.

A detailed record of the planting was published in book form in 1939 as "The Royal Record of Tree Planting". The front piece is below. This is an enormous book which lists all the plantings in Britain by counties, broken down to parishes. The plantings in the Dominions and Colonial Empire are also recorded, as are those in the United States.

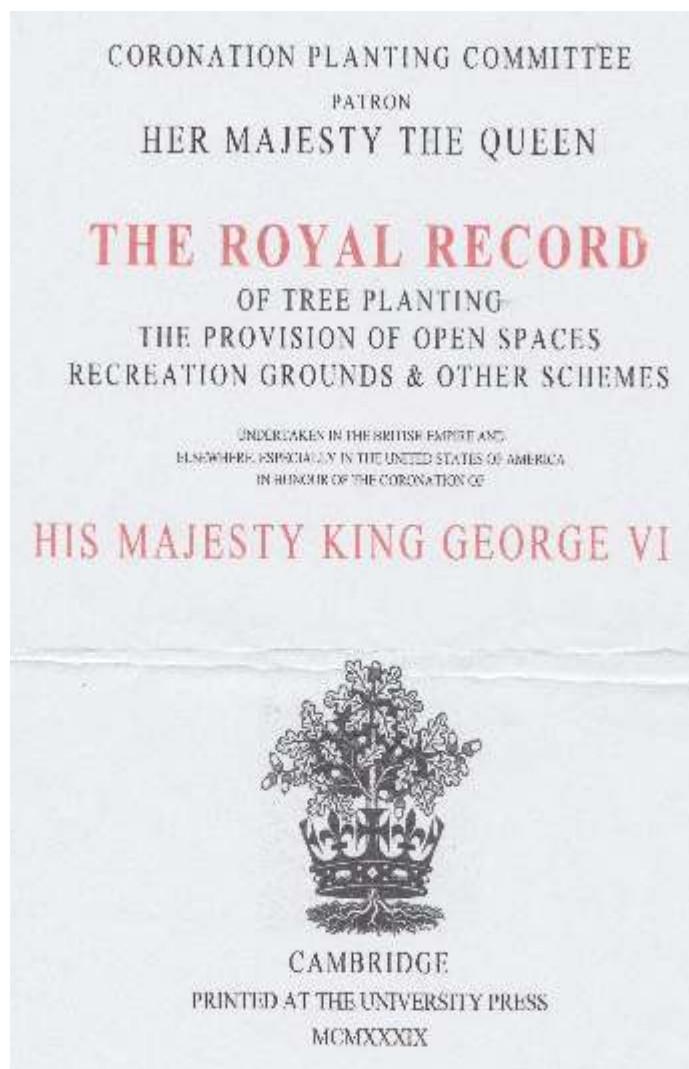
The *raison d'être* for the scheme is shown in this extract from the foreword of the book (shown below), which mentions the King George's Playing Fields and implies that the tree planting is complimentary to the provision of open spaces.

SUBMISSION TO THE KING

May it please Your Majesty: Sir,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE A NOTABLE tribute of loyalty and affection being the record of trees planted and of other efforts to improve and create natural amenities throughout the Empire in commemoration of your Majesty's Coronation. The provision of King George V Playing Fields, now rapidly established in honour of our late Sovereign, is already enriching the country with a great number and variety of open spaces.

Most of the plantings were in recreation grounds, village greens, public and private



parks, on school premises and some on private land.

An important part of the scheme was the involvement of the local communities and the trees were often planted by children from the local schools.

A wide range of different species were planted, the most frequent being common, scarlet and red oak, common and copper beech, various flowering cherries and crab apple.

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The Royal Record of Tree Planting *Continued*

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I visited all the sites in Farnham that were listed in the Royal Record but found that very few of the trees had survived. In the Rowledge recreation ground nine trees were planted:

- 1 Copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica*)
- 7 Japanese cherries
 - (2 *Prunus serrulata*, 'Kanzan'
 - 2 *P.serrulata albo-rosea* 'Shiro-fugen'
 - 2 *P.s.rosea*
 - 1 *P.Sargentii*)
- 1 Paul's double thorn
(*Crataegus Oxyacantha fore pleno coinea*).

One teak and two oak seats were provided and oak gates were constructed at the entrance to the recreation ground. The copper beech tree was presented by



The large image is one of the original trees, which you can see is on the side of the driveway and is now a fine specimen. The small tree is one of three that were planted last year in open spaces in the avenue.



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The Royal Record of Tree Planting *Continued*

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Farnham Urban District Council and planted by the school children. Unfortunately none of the trees have survived.

However an avenue of purple beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*) was also planted in the grounds of Frensham Heights School. It ran along the drive from the house to the lodge which, at that time, was the main entrance.

The trees were presented by past and present scholars and teachers. They were planted about 15yds apart and I managed to find 8 of the about 40 original ones. The photo shows one of the surviving trees which is now a fine specimen.

Last year a benefactor offered to donate some trees to the school and the bursar requested three copper beech that he planted in open spaces in the original avenue. These trees are growing well as can be seen in the photos. It is hoped that

more trees will be planted in the future to at least partially restore the avenue.

In Farnham, trees were also planted in recreation grounds of Badshot Lea, the Bourne, Hale, Weybourne and Wrecclesham, but again unfortunately very few of these trees have survived today.

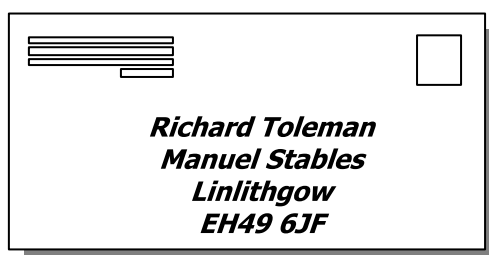
Details of tree plantings for forty four parishes in Surrey are listed in the "Royal Record". It is a pity, as seems probable, that few of these trees have survived from such an ambitious and prestigious scheme, as the trees would by now be fully grown and would be enhancing our local parks and sports grounds. I suspect that many have succumbed to developments, natural causes or old age.

There is a copy of "The Royal Record of Tree Planting" in the library at Alice Holt which gives information on tree planting throughout the country.

Send your letters to the editor for publication in FCA Today



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



by post to:

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A Grim Memory

by Peter Schweiger

What did five elderly men have in common after fifty years? You would never guess. It was WEEDING, weeding small trees in the forest. They came for a reunion in the village of Ampfield between Winchester and Romsey and recalled the summer months bending down with a rip-hook in one hand and a forked hazel stick in the other. The rip hooks looked like sickles and were razor sharp, literally. Testing was done by shaving the hair on one's forearm. The small trees were in danger of being smothered by grass, bramble, bracken or even wild rose that had to be cut away from them without damaging the small trees.

The most difficult to see were Corsican pine in rush grass because the needles matched the colour of the grass. The trees were planted in rows at five or six foot intervals. We swished the rip hook to and fro like tennis players bent double. Spotting the next tree, we used the forked stick to hold the tree down as the rip hook sliced the weed growth. Woe betide us if the forester who was in charge found "Sheffield Blight", a young tree cut off.

Our backs would ache, sweat would run down our foreheads and sting the eyes, our hands were calloused and scratched despite wearing gloves. We developed great suntans and sometimes we found birds nests and would leave a clump of weeds there to grow on. Each of us was given a strip a chain wide, that is twenty two yards. We marked the edges of our strips with a pole. The pole was eight foot three inches long and eight lengths of the pole made the chain.



The rows of trees usually ran at right angles to the ride into the compartment. Sometimes the row would end at a fence or a ditch.

The trees varied in species. They could be mixed oak and Norway spruce, but more commonly it was Douglas fir. The compartments previously had big beech left during World War Two to provide cover for troops before D-Day but after the war, they had been felled for cash and not replanted. All sorts of natural regeneration had happened with birch usually being the most common.

Continued on next page ➡

A Grim Memory *Continued*

Continued from previous page

During the winters the ground was cleared using slashers and axes. The arisings were burnt in huge fires that would have hot ashes for days. Some birch were left to provide shade for the new trees. There were also some big old yew trees. They were more than we could clear with axes so were left.

Being on piece work and paid so much a square chain, it was a lucky person who had a yew tree in their strip.

The pricing was usually tight so that we had to work hard and continuously to earn our day rate and then extra to get to piece work. The price set by the forester was always accepted with the proviso, "We will give it a try".

The hours were also fixed so one had to finish by 4pm. The rate was capped so that one could not earn more than three pounds a day. Agricultural wages were never generous.



Peter's memories are sure to give readers similar recollections. As a forestry student, I worked on scrub clearance in Huntingdon forest. The gang discovered I had an aptitude for making these huge fires. I had developed this skill while doing my National Service in the Bedfs & Herts Regiment. This became my responsibility. Whatever the weather, each day I had to get a good fire going by the morning break for tea with well placed sitting logs. It had to be even bigger and better by lunch time. By the end of the day it had to be well bedded down with no scruffy part burned branches. But it also had to be ready with suitable branch wood to fire up early the next morning.

There were times when I could keep two or three fires going if there was sufficient material and need. This required good organisation.

Ever since I've been a pyromaniac, the person who takes on all sorts of fires at barbecues, picnics, camping and garden tidying. If there's a chance of a fire. I'll be there! Ed.





Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

Re: Spring Issue of FCA-Today

Besides the interesting content of this issue, several points arose of which I felt were worthy of a comment.

The taster of James Ogilvie's Centenary Edition of *Slasher* evoked several memories in FCA-Today Issue No.69 and more, now we can read the full edition from our screens.

The brown *Slasher* masthead with Special Anniversary Issue was probably fifty years of the FC and it was nostalgic to see other mastheads from different eras of *Slasher*.

In sorting out some papers in the basement of The Queen's House in Lyndhurst, I came across a copy of the No.1 Issue of *Slasher*. This was sent to Lynne Dennison, *Slasher* editor at Silvan House to go in the FC archives. No banner or pictures just four pages of type; perhaps James has come across other early editions?

The commemoration plantation plaque of 8th December, 1919 on page 3 has C.O. Hanson present at the inaugural FC planting; he is also mentioned in Peter Ralph's article on the Dean FTS and his book 'Forestry for Woodmen' was still very much our primer, when at the Dean FTS 50 years later.

The '**Task Ahead**' as James puts it in his resumé of the Ackland Report. The FC did indeed have many tiers of staff and layers of management, the 10 Divisions caught my eye.

The photo shows a Division 5 folder made in August 1929 and used by that Division for the 1930/31 Estimates. In the late 60s many of these old fullsize size folders were being thrown out from filing cabinets.



Peter Ralph mentioned the Giraffe House at Parkend – the version I heard was Dean students were sent to measure the height of the tilt of the FC lorry and did so using the wrong side of the leather-bound Rathbone 66' log measuring tape, so reading off the height in 'links' (7.9 inches) and the answer was used to build the height of the lorry shed in feet, hence the building to this day, being about 35% taller than was necessary.

Finally, the Dean Oak and HMS Victory; the Naval 'oak sawlog acceptance' hammer depicted on page 11, was unearthed near the Speech House in the mid 20th century.

The New Forest and the Forest of Bere have similar hammers and all three were brought together for a ceremonial marking of a P1810 oak log in West Walk at the retirement of Jack Nicholson, the South Downs FDM in 1994.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Fletcher.



Letters to the Editor

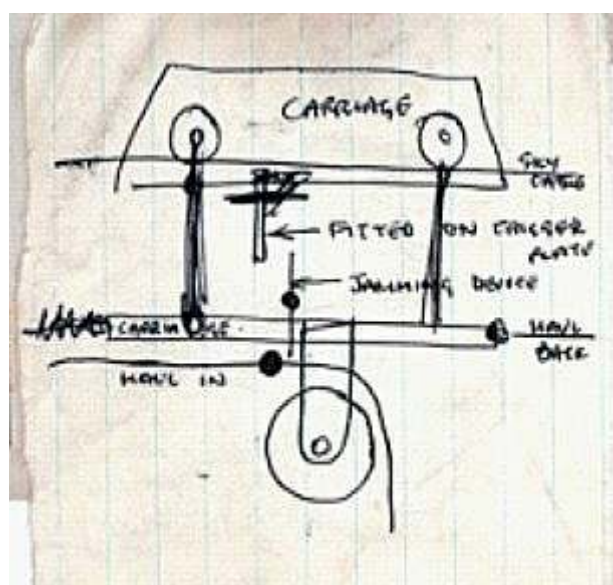
Dear Richard,

I have been scanning photos that I took, developed and printed at Gwydyr. They are all curled and not going to win any photo competitions, but here are some of the Issacson Overhead winch that we used. I wonder if those are still used or there are better systems for extracting over difficult ground.

We also had a horse called Jock because he came from Scotland. He was cheap but the transport to get him to Gwydyr was not. The trick with him was to hook up the load of logs before turning him round in the rack. He would then go galloping down to the ride, poles flying all over the place.

Cheers,

Peter Schweiger.





Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

I know this is a big ask, but I was wondering if any of your members would know where I could find out the starting dates of both my father and grandfather in the Forestry Commission. Both retiring as head foresters.

My father was Ernest Jones who retired in 1980 at Bagots Wood, Staffordshire. I know he was at the Forestry College at the Forest of Dean in 1939.

My grandfather was George Jones who retired in 1963 at Southrey Wood, Lincolnshire. I believe he had something to do with the setting up of a forestry station at the Greystoke forest, Cumbria. I know he was in lumber haulage in 1919 after World War 1.

Edwin Jones. edanddi@aol.com

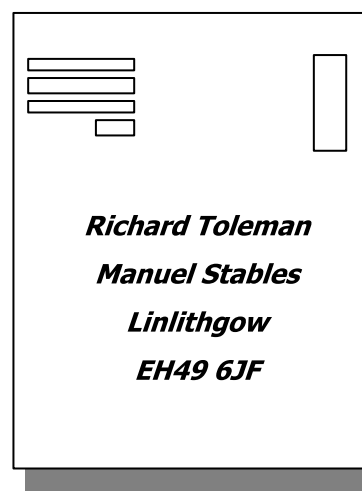
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by e-mail to: editor@fca-today.com



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Life in Brief

Bill Slee's father in law, **JOHN DYCE**, has just died aged 100.

He went to Forest School in Peebles when he returned from the war in India.

Apart from pre-war training on Seaford Estate, he spent his working life as a forester in Easter and Wester Ross and finally at Newton Nursery with Forest Research helping with field trials.

He was a gentle and quiet man, an outstanding field naturalist and one of that post-

war breed of foresters who were strongly motivated by wanting to make the Highlands a more productive environment and a more prosperous place.

I am not sure that, on reflection, he was proud of seeing Sitka spruce planted on places like Kintail and Loch Maree.

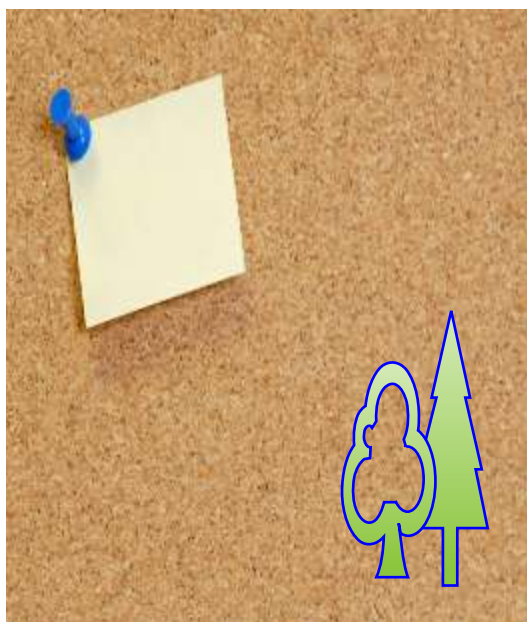
He was ahead of his time in wanting multipurpose forestry, but he was sure that forestry had an important role in the

redevelopment of northern Scotland.

Keith Miller contacted me with the sad news that **JOHN GRIEVE** has passed away.

He attended Faskally FTS from 1964-66 and was a head forester at Lorne FD prior to retirement.

Post retirement he was engaged as a woodland officer in Perth & Argyll Conservancy.



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 Page 26 of this magazine.

www.fca-today.com

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FCA Today on Facebook

by Ian Blake



Visit us on
Facebook

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.

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

Answer to the poser on Page 15. It's taken above Dornie looking across the Kyle Rhea towards Kyleakin. Applecross is in the far distance. Balmacara forest lies on the hillside to the right and Sgurr na Coinnich is across the water to the left. How did you do?

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

If there are enough articles, the Winter issue of the FCA Today magazine will be available on the www.fca-today.com website in **December 2020**.

Articles for inclusion in the Winter issue of the magazine should be sent to the editor before 1st November 2020.

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

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

Do you have any articles for publication in this magazine?



Send your articles to the editor

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