

FCA Forest Forum



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FTS REUNION

Saturday 9th October, 2021

Letter 1

Dear All,

2021 marks 50 years since the Forestry Commission ceased training foresters, after more than sixty years of running the Forestry Schools.

Following a successful FTS Reunion in 2019 with 24 ex-FTS students from Gwydyr and the Dean present, with 36 of us in all; the idea was mooted to arrange another one in 2021.

Jerry Gissop and myself – Martin Fletcher, feel this should be for any ex-FTS student. So hopefully this would include Dean, Gwydyr, Faskally, Lynford Hall, and perhaps Benmore, but unlikely Glentress.

We have both thought about a venue and we have come back to the Speech House Hotel in the Dean. Wherever we choose, it is always going to be close for some and more distant for others. In an act of faith the hotel was provisionally booked in 2019 for Saturday 9th October, 2021.

This letter 1 is being sent out to 80 e-mail addresses of ex-FTS students, whose 'names only', are on the list below; there 106 ex-FTS students listed. Those highlighted in yellow are the names for whom we do not have an e-mail address. If anyone knows of a colleague or course member who is not on the list; e-mail addresses, updates on the FTS attended column or any errors, don't hesitate to contact Jerry Gissop or myself.

Letter 1 is to save the date Saturday 9th October. In June or early July, we will circulate Letter 2, asking for attendees and giving an approximate price per person for the dinner. Letter 3 in early September will be asking for menu choices.

Finally does anyone have a template of the Gwydyr or Faskally Forestry School badge to include on the menu card?

Yours,

Martin and Jerry

martinfletcher42@gmail.com Tel: 01590 623 302

gissop@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 01600 775 483

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FTS Reunion

FTS	FIRST NAME	SURNAME	FTS	FIRST NAME	SURNAME	FTS	FIRST NAME	SURNAME
G	Don	Amer		Mike	Houghton	D	Mike	Roe
D	Roy	Baldwin	D	John	Howells		John	Roe
LH	Ted	Baldwin		Mike	Jackson	D	Dave	Rogers
D	Toby	Beadle		Peter	Jones	LH	Eric	Rogers
D	Stephen	Beimers		Gwyn	Jones		Richard	Rourke
D	Jeremy	Benjamin		Ian	Keen	D	Jack	Russell
D	Ian	Blake	D	Tim	Laker		John	Saunders
D	Mike	Blud	D	Dave	Langford	G	Peter	Schweiger
LH	John	Brain	D	John	Latter		Malcolm	Scott
D	Peter	Brett	D	Ian	Ledgard		Trevor	Sears
F	John	Brunton	D	Roland	Liddell		Ken	Searson
G	Tom	Buchanan		Gordon	Little	D	Colin	Shanks
F/D	Keith	Campbell		Glyn	Lloyd		Paul	Sherrington
	John	Charlton	D	Dave	Lyons		Piers	Simon
G	Peter	Clapham	D	Dave	Mackie		Pat	Smith
D	Paul	Cooper		Alexander	MacLure		Mike	Stark
F	Steve	Cooper	D	Simon	Malone	G	Les	Starling
D	Ian	Cox	D	Mike	Mason		John	Stemp
D	Tony	Coxwell	D	Dave	Mercer	D	Mike	Steward
G	Dave	Craze	G	Dick	Mihalop	D	Derick	Stickler
	Cliff	Dampney	G	Arthur	Miller	D	Mike	Stone
D	Peter	Darch	D	Hugh	Milner	B/D	Robert	Strouts
G	Norman	Day		Gavin	Munro		Bruce	Uglow
D	Dick	Daykin	D	Rod	Newborough	D	Ramakrishna	Venkatasamyr
	Garth	Evans	LH	Jack	Nicholson	D	Keith	Wallis
D	Roger	Fitter	D	Peter	Noot		Roger	Warn
D	Martin	Fletcher	D	David	Ollier	G	Mike	Warner
G	Brian	Fletcher		David	Parnell		Dave	Watts
	Colin	Fruen	D	Harry	Pepper	B	Mike	Wearing
D	John	Gilbertson	D	Dave	Pike	D	Peter	Webb
D	Andy	Gill		Christopher	Pound		Tony	Willis
D	Jerry	Gissop	G	Bob	Powell		Roger	Wills
D	Dick	Gossling	B	Jim	Pratt		Dave	Yearsley
D	Bill	Gregory	G	Colin	Price	F.T.S. Codes: B = Benmore; D = Dean; F = Faskally; G = Gwydyr; LH = Lynford Hall		
D	Dave	Gregory	D	David	Rice			
D	Brian	Greig		John	Richards			
D	Gordon	Griffiths		Mike	Richards	Yellow background:		
	Graham	Haddock	F/D	Ian	Richardson	No e-mail address available		
D	Robin	Hendrie	D	Malcolm	Ridges	Green background:		
D	Roger	Hodge		Peter	Robinson	Contact by letter / phone		



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What happened to the Groups in 2020/2021

Bryce Reynard is now acting as both chairman and secretary for North Scotland, Ken Davidson having stood down as secretary.

The post of chairman is currently vacant in Yorkshire, although Dorothy Munn tells me one of their members has offered to take over as chairman from Chris Griffin who sadly has had to stand down.

Rob Guest continues to be both chairman and secretary for the Forest of Dean.

Peter Webb likewise is looking after the Peninsula following the sad loss of his wife, Shirley, who was its secretary.

There is no entry for the old Alice Holt Group but Mike Whitlock has kindly offered to act as a contact should anyone wish to raise a query regarding that part of the world.

As is to be expected, group meetings and activities have been almost none existent during the past year but South Wales did manage to sneak in a socially distanced Christmas dinner just before the general lockdown. However, Groups report they have managed to maintain informal contacts during the lockdown and are looking forward to picking up their programmes come the autumn.

Simon Malone reported that the Breckland Group was still alive and kicking! Clearly Covid restricted all our activities over the last 12 months. Our AGM had been booked to take place on 26th March 2020 at the Crown Hotel in Mundford, our favoured venue. Throughout February, as events unfolded, we dithered as to whether to go ahead or not. The question was answered for us as it became clear that the situation was becoming very serious and there was talk of a probable lockdown for the first time. The Crown were very understanding about our cancellation and we hoped we could return to this venue, perhaps later this summer if things continued to improve. We were also in the advanced stages of planning a spring outing but fortunately we were not committed at the time. Apart from random contacts with each other, the group had been mothballed for the last year. The availability of FCA Today had, I hope, been the glue to keep

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at least some of us together, with around half of the combined membership of members and spouses having Internet access. I had been able to let members know of newsletters and the move to the Forest Forum. We can only hope that the vaccination programme will allow a gradual return to a new normal and hope very much we will see each other later in the summer.

I can report that for England there has been a positive response to the issue of the new FCA windscreen stickers that allow free car parking on Forestry England sites. Indeed, it looks as though I will have to ask Forestry England at Bristol to replenish our supply.

Meanwhile, don't forget that Brian Mahony as our liaison man for England, and is known to the Forestry England staff in Bristol, is also available to answer and help with any problems and queries that may arise concerning that country.

Lets hope that things continue to improve and we can fully regain our freedom to get out and about again and enjoy the spring and summer.

Charles Dickens

****Concessions to FCA members****



Forestry England has agreed to honour the concessions members had under the previous FC regime. So in England we can enjoy the free use of car parks, forest drives and entry to Westonbirt and Bedebury arboreta.

Forestry England has sent special car windscreen stickers to Charles with instructions on their use. He will be sending them to all local secretaries for distribution to members, while retaining a small stock for future use. They are valid to 31st March 2022.

Forestry and Land Scotland and Natural Resources Wales will not be introducing a similar scheme, so this will only apply to members using the facilities in England.

Members not affiliated to a local group can obtain a sticker from Charles at cpdickens42@btinternet.com



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New Liaison Agreement with Forestry England and Forestry and Land Scotland

Now that the government forestry authorities are settling down to operating as three quite separate entities the FCA has reviewed its liaison with Forestry England and Forestry and Land Scotland. To date I have been the sole contact between these bodies and the FCA and all inquiries from new retirees wishing to know more about us being directed to me. I then pass on retirees names and addresses to the appropriate Groups. Rather than my always acting as the intermediary, it was proposed that FE and FLS correspond direct with the groups.

For Scotland, FLS have the contact details for West Argyll and North Scotland groups to pass directly on to new retirees.

For England, the FE Bristol office was reluctant to have to hold details for all the English groups, they preferred to have just one liaison point. I am pleased say that Brian Mahony has stepped forward to take my place as the liaison between FE and the FCA. Brian is happy to take on this role and he is well known to our FE contacts in the FE Bristol office.

Sadly, for Wales, we have made little progress with Natural Resources Wales and taking the views of the North and South Wales groups we have decided to rely on personal contacts between FCA members and NRA forestry staff to promote the FCA.

I will still retain my role as the overall FCA liaison officer but perhaps taking more of a back seat.

Charles Dickens
FCA Liaison Officer

FCA Forest Forum



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The Black Paradise Flycatcher

by Brian Greig

A critically endangered species in the Seychelles is the Black Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone corvine*), which is endemic to the islands. Locally known as the Veure, the male is a handsome bird with glossy black plumage with a deep blue sheen and with long elongated tail feathers. In contrast the female is reddish-brown with a black head and lacks the long tail feathers. The birds are only found on the small island of La Digue, although recently there has been a successful introduction programme on Dennis Island.



Twenty years ago, just after my retirement as a Forest Pathologist for the Forestry Commission, together with my colleague David Wainhouse from the Alice Holt Research Station, we visited the Seychelles to investigate the cause of a wilt disease that was killing Takamaka (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) trees on the main island of Mahe. Takamaka is a littoral species and in the Seychelles grows on the beaches along the coast but can also be present inland in woodland areas. The Takamaka disease was killing a large number of trees on Mahe in the coastal regions, especially on the beaches where the Takamaka were important features as shade trees. The Seychelles Government were also anxious to prevent its spread to any of the neighbouring islands, in particular to La Digue, where a small area of Takamaka woodlands had been designated as the Veure Nature Reserve, which was the only known breeding site for the Black Paradise Flycatcher. During our visit we carried out surveys for the disease on La Digue and several other islands, but no instances of the disease were found apart from those on Mahe.

While on La Digue we were fortunate to have good views of both male and female Flycatchers on several occasions. To my knowledge the Takamaka wilt disease has not reached La Digue and the resident population numbers remain at just under 300 birds.

Incidentally, we were also lucky enough to see Black Parrots on the island of Praslin during our visits to the Seychelles.

The project involved three visits to the Seychelles and mostly involved surveys and fungicide trials on trees situated on the beaches - not a bad job for my first year of retirement!



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Life in Retirement

by Simon Malone

I am sure that many retired FC staff are doing voluntary work of one sort or another to help fill and add interest to their retirement hours and to give a little back to their communities. Amongst the things we do, my wife and I joined a small group of volunteers helping to create an attractive garden on our local railway station in Thetford.

Greater Anglia is the franchise holder serving East Anglia and has operated a Station Adopter scheme for several years. Nearly all the East Anglian stations have an Adopter Group helping to enhance and improve their local stations.

Thetford station has one of the larger garden areas running some one hundred metres along the entire length of the Norwich bound, Platform 1. Averaging about 4 metres in depth this is a fair size garden to manage. Platform 2, Ely bound, has no garden as such but is adorned with hanging baskets and tubs.

The group had been running for a couple of years before my wife and I joined back in 2012. At that time there was still a very long length of overgrown land to rescue from a jungle of brambles and convert into an attractive garden. Our small group of some eight regular volunteers meets formally once a month to tackle the work but members turn up informally whenever they have the time to reinforce this.



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The only picture we have of the garden before it was adopted I had taken a couple of years earlier, purely coincidentally, when I photographed Sir Nigel Gresley, a steam special passing through. At that time the garden was totally overgrown in brambles.

In the early days and when the area under cultivation was small, we were grateful to receive hundreds of bedding plants donated Spring and Autumn by a local stud. These gave a colourful display but, hampered by the lack of a water supply, successful displays of the Spring flowers were unreliable and difficult to achieve.

More recently, we have slowly converted our plantings to perennials and shrubs needing a less water demanding system.



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We have received support from local businesses and the Town Council in the form of finance to help us and we installed an ornamental seat with sponsorship from a local estate agent.

The British Trust for Ornithology has its headquarters in Thetford and has supported us by provision of feeders and bird boxes and subsequent monitoring of their success.

To date the main occupants have been house sparrows and their young have been recorded and ringed.

Bird feeders dotted along the length of the platform encourage blue and great tits, robins, jackdaws, collared doves and wood pigeons, as well as the sparrows.

A semi-resident muntjac deer can be a nuisance at times taking delight in browsing some plants.

At the furthest end of the platform is an area previously used as a rubbish tip and associated with earlier use of an adjacent allotment area. This is heavily contaminated with broken glass, plastic materials and old wire netting and such like. Rather than attempt to clear this, which would be



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a daunting task, we have allowed the area to flourish semi-naturally, simply cutting back annual weed growth and removing the arisings once a year in the Autumn. Interplanted with daffodils for a spring display, it is a low maintenance area with a rich diversity of wild plants.

The group has also planted a native broadleaf hedge along the back of the garden. This screens the garden from a footpath accessing the platform and which now runs between the allotments and the garden. Species planted include hornbeam, cherry and hawthorn.

Greater Anglia encourage the groups with annual awards covering a number of categories and Thetford has received awards several times.



Our garden is one of those included in the Thetford Open Gardens Day each year and is regularly commented on favourably by passengers and passers-by.

These pictures show some views of the garden as it is today.

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Lockdown Interest

by Brian Greig

One of our interests during lockdown has been watching the birds in our garden in Jubilee Lane. We have bird feeders in the front and back gardens which we fill with sunflower mix, fat balls and nyger seed, scraps and water for drinking and bathing.

Since 2016 we have taken part in the RSPB Guildford group garden bird scheme, which requires records of bird sightings to be submitted each Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring. This past winter has seen the most species since we started recording, with 34 different ones on at least one occasion. The list in the past few months has been remarkable for birds infrequently seen or are rare visitors such as tree creeper, lesser redpoll, siskins, blackcaps, stock doves and collared doves. We also take part in The British Trust for Ornithology Garden Survey by submitting weekly bird counts.

The regular species seen on most days are blue, great and coal tits, robins, dunnocks, blackbirds and wood pigeons. Other birds seen at least once a week include great spotted woodpecker, long-tailed tits, jays, crows and magpies, while we would normally see at least once a month one or more goldfinches, song thrushes, nuthatch, goldcrest and bullfinches. Other species seen on only a few occasions are house sparrows (only once or twice a year), chaffinches, greenfinches, wrens and starlings.



Early in November every year, two to three redwings arrive to feed firstly on the holly berries and then on laurel, but are then not often seen again. However, later last Winter a flock of nine birds suddenly appeared and stayed for a couple of days. Also over Winter we have spotted buzzards, occasional red kites, grey heron and a single mallard flying overhead. Tawny owls are heard calling nearby in the trees behind our garden and last week we found their feathers scattered on the back lawn, which presumably were from a kill by a sparrowhawk.



We would expect to see more house sparrows as these are quite numerous in other gardens in Boundstone and Rowledge. Likewise, we know that bullfinches are locally more frequent, but their scarcity may be a blessing as they have a penchant for eating buds on fruit trees. We are also surprised that sightings of sparrowhawks are so uncommon. Overhead, hirundines (martins, swallows and swifts) are hardly ever spotted and geese are only occasionally seen flying past while kestrels are also rare.



The late Alan Mitchell, the great tree expert and keen ornithologist who at the time lived in Gorse Cottage in Jubilee Lane, told me that nightingales could always be seen on the site before the land was cleared to build our property in 1972!!





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Fact or April Fool

by Martin Fletcher

During my career of forty years in the FC, I was the proud owner of three of the traditional brown and green striped ties. These were purchased several decades apart as its predecessor wore out.

An observation was made about 20 years ago that the bandwidth of each of the coloured stripes was gradually decreasing over time with each new tie purchased.

Using the scientific knowledge I had acquired some 60 years earlier when working for the Atomic Energy Authority, measurements of the bandwidths were made, and those of the green and brown stripes added and an average taken. These data were then plotted graphically, as shown below. It then became apparent that there was a clear correlation between the decreasing average width and the decline in the total number of employees in the FC. I wondered whether this was a clandestine ploy by the senior management of the FC to advance a hidden message.

The data for the decreasing bandwidth were plotted on the x axis of the graph, against the time in years on the y axis (blue line). When I started as a forester in the mid 1960's there were 13,500 employees. This had dropped to the region of 3,500 by the turn of the century.



Bryce Reynard modelling a tie of unknown vintage relative to tie width

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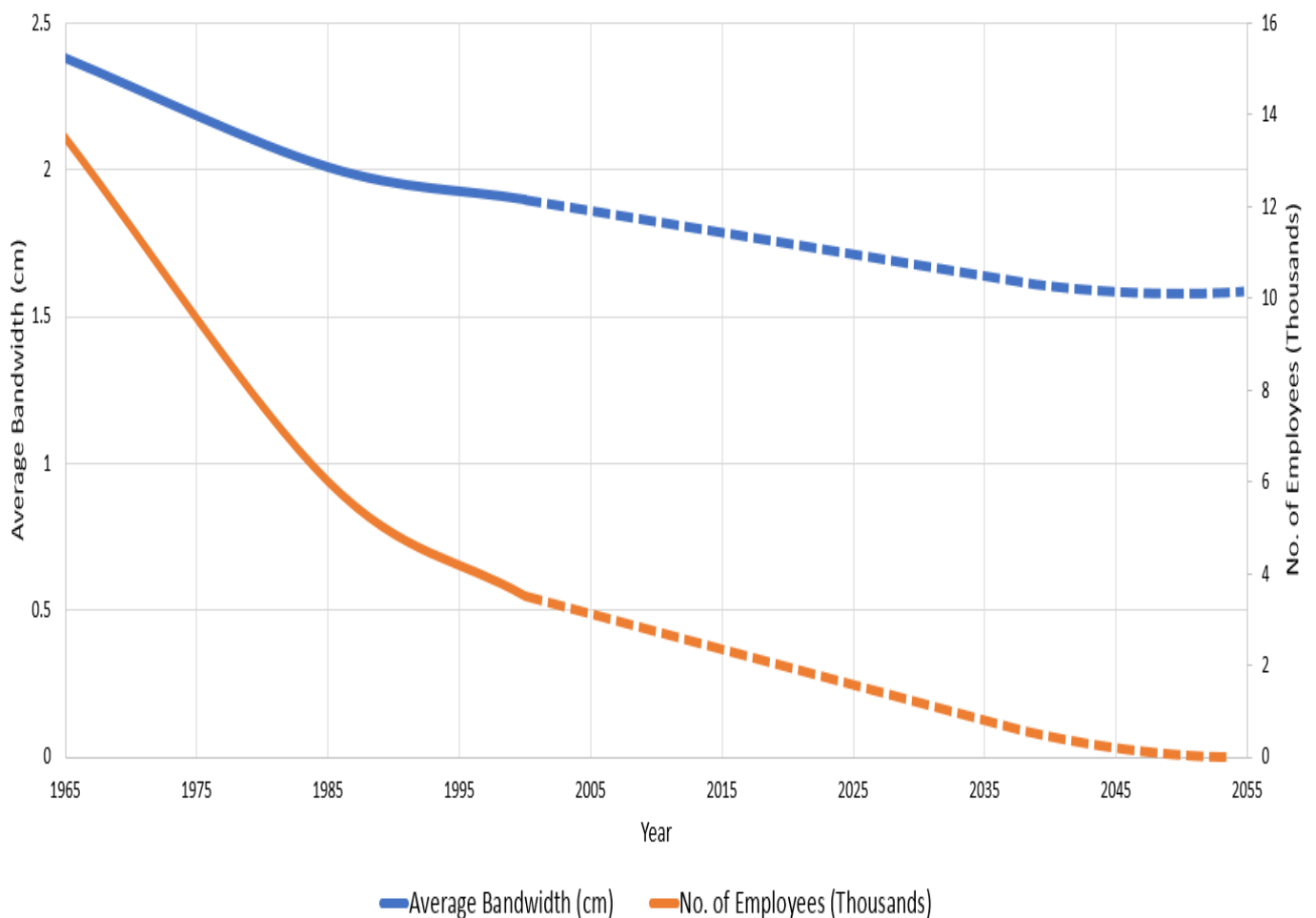
These data of employee numbers were plotted on the x axis against time in years on the y axis (orange line). It then became apparent that this curve was asymptotic. In other words, this curve would never cross y axis of the graph.

But in theory this curve cannot go on to infinity. There will become a point in time when, on the x axis, the orange curve will fall below one employee.

When will this occur and who will be the final employee?

Answers on a post card or by e-mail to the Editor of Forest Forum.

Fact or Fool - FC Tie Bandwidth Versus Number of FC Employees



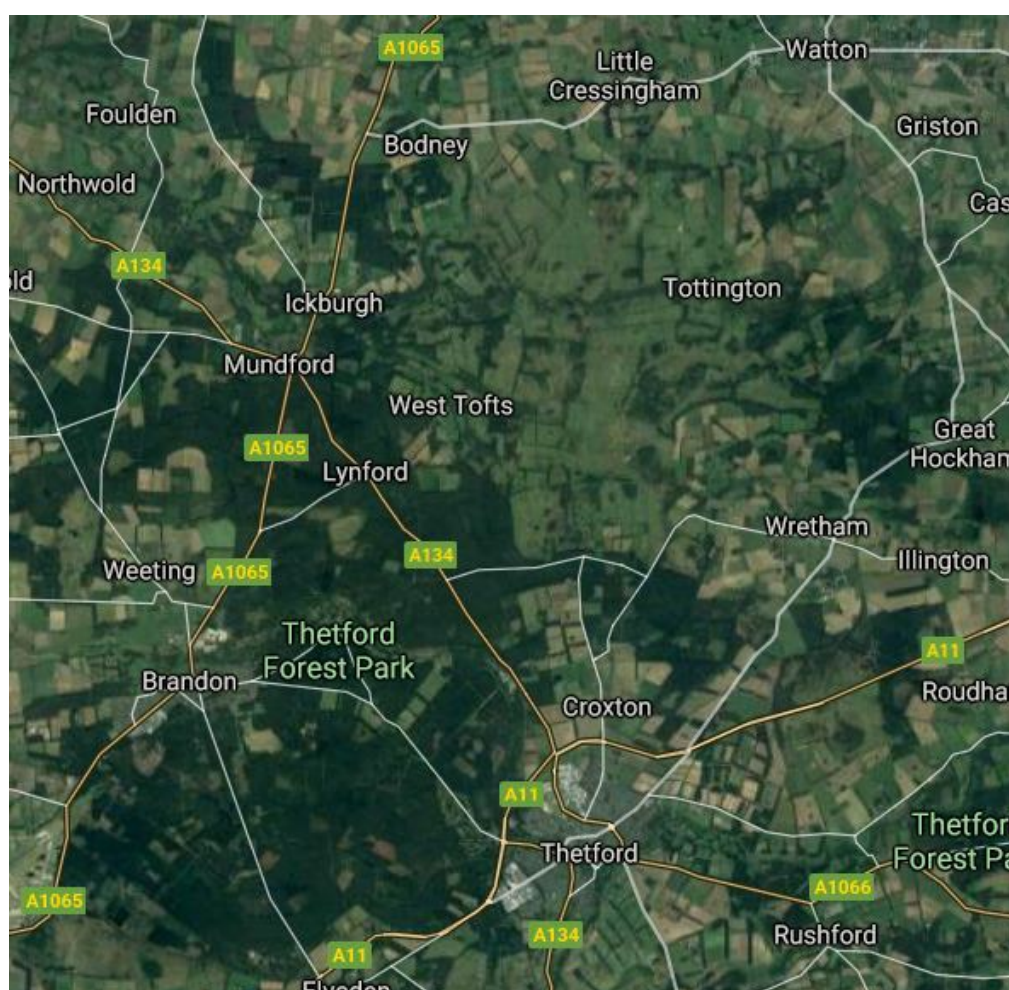


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A Norfolk Battlefield

by Simon Malone

Most of us are aware that the Ministry of Defence is one of the largest landowners in the country with a number of very large training areas dotted around such as Salisbury Plain, Brecon Beacons and Otterburn in the north for example. Here in Norfolk there is also a very large training facility.



The "Battle Area" as it is known locally or STANTA, Stanford Training Area to give its official title, is an 18,000 acre area primarily on Breckland heath although some areas of agricultural land are included. Situated some two miles due north of Thetford town, it sits adjacent to the main block of Thetford Forest, the two areas combined making a very large area of non-farming land with a combined significance for conservation and mixed semi-natural habitats.

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The battle area came into being in July 1942 at the height of the war when it was deemed essential to provide a large training facility in the east of the country to speed up the progress of the war and in particular to prepare for the invasion of Europe.

The villages of Stanford, West Tofts and Tottington, the parish of Sturston and significant parts of the parishes of Lynford, Ickburgh, Hilborough, Cressingham, Merton, Thompson and Croxton were all commandeered by the army and their inhabitants ordered to leave. The three villages were very small but, overall, around a thousand people were destined to leave their homes. The requirement to abandon the villages and re-house their occupants caused great distress and also put enormous pressure on local housing in an area of the country very rural in character and with a low level of population and housing stock.

At the time the inhabitants were promised that they would be able to return after the war, but successive governments have failed to meet this promise and the area has been held by the army to this day. The only promise adhered to was that former residents would be allowed to return occasionally to visit the graves of past family members. Indeed, the four churches in the area involved were pretty much the only buildings to be protected from the training activities of the military as they prepared for the invasion of Europe. Few other buildings have survived but there is still a scattering of more substantial buildings here and there. The four churches still standing are at West Tofts, Langford, Stanford and Tottington.



West Tofts church is still used occasionally.

I have been lucky enough to visit the churches a couple of times, once in the company of a retired military land agent and a retired officer and once as part of an organized tour group who make a study of Norfolk churches.

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Langford, Stanford and Tottington churches



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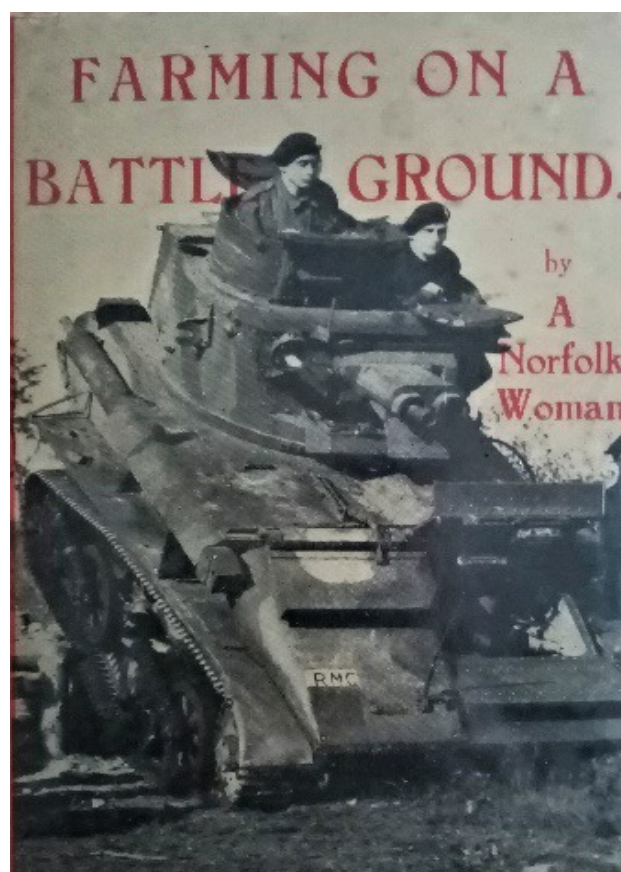
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All the churches are maintained in a weatherproof condition by the army and that at West Tofts has its interior maintained and furnished and is occasionally used by the public especially at times of religious significance such as Christmas. The others are empty inside and Stanford church cannot currently be entered as it is deemed unsafe structurally.

A female land agent, a rare occupation for a woman in the 1930's, wrote a book entitled "Farming on a Battleground" detailing her experiences as an estate manager before and during the takeover of the area by the military. She wrote under the pseudonym "A Norfolk Woman" but her actual name was Lucilla Maud Reeve. After the army occupation she moved to live in a collection of huts on her former Estate just outside the newly created Boundary. She was so upset by what had happened that some years later she took her own life. She was buried in unconsecrated ground outside the churchyard of Tottington church.



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Later, when the army fenced the burial area to prevent troops ravaging it, her grave was included within the fenced area and so she is now one of the many resting peacefully in this quiet, deserted area.



In one of the chance coincidences in life, my own family history studies have connected me with Tottington. A sister in law of an aunt married a John Worby in London in 1925. I have traced the Worby family back to the late 1700's, all living in Tottington. John and his brother Frederick both fought in the Great War, sadly Frederick did not come home. Both are commemorated on the War Memorial for Tottington which, unusually, names the returned as well as the fallen villagers. The memorial stands in the nearby parish of Merton to where it was moved when the army took over the area in 1942.



Memorial tablet in West Tofts church

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Throughout the time since the military takeover public access has been largely precluded other than occasional permissions given to individuals or groups for research purposes or conservation work. Live firing of small arms and heavy artillery is practiced almost daily and air support from nearby bases is an everyday occurrence. A large area in the centre known as the impact zone is the focus of a considerable amount of explosive activity.



As a result of the lack of everyday use by the public and the need for the military to train across a semi-natural landscape of heath, woodland and small lakes the entire area is today seen as hugely important for the conservation values it possesses. Breckland heath is considered a very valuable habitat and the scale of the holding on the battle area is the largest single area of such habitat in East Anglia. This gives some inkling of what the entire area of Breckland must have looked like up to and through the 19th century. For this reason land management is kept to the minimum with sheep grazing the predominant means of managing the heath.

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There is some tree planting and woodland management to give the military the diversity of training landscapes it requires. Stone curlew and unique Breckland flora are among the most important interests.

In 1942 when the boundary was drawn around the battle area a number of areas planted and owned by the Forestry Commission were annexed. Agreement was made that these plantations would continue to be owned by the FC until maturity with access for routine management to be allowed throughout their rotation. I would assume that in 1942 these would have been established pole stage plantings, largely of Scots and Corsican pine as was the adjoining main area of the forest and probably planted in the late 1920's and early 1930's. This is borne out by the fact that the areas were felled as mature crops in the 1990's when they were some sixty or so years of age. There were five discrete blocks of woodland involved totaling around 250 hectares. Three of the blocks were immediately against the training area boundary and the other two a short distance inside.

I was involved in the final management of these areas, planning their felling over about a six-year period. Due to the demands of the military that their training schedules were not interrupted, the actual timing of each felling was very much dictated by the army.

For each of the areas the army saw value in retaining parts of them to accommodate their training needs and by agreement we negotiated the sale of some of the timber standing.



In the photograph the area in the centre was felled by the FC with the areas top right and bottom right retained by the army. The scattered smaller blocks are of mixed hardwoods subsequently planted by the army to meet their training needs.

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Volumes were assessed by tariffing and using average tree size a value was agreed based on the standing sale value of equivalent timber in the main forest at the time. The military authorities, being a very security minded organization, insisted that all those working on the ground be issued with passes and given full safety briefing before work commenced. This entailed all staff, supervisors, machine operators, local mechanics and even the tariffing team attending a briefing at the West Tofts camp, the administrative centre for the battle area. Here we had to sit through a short film largely showing shots of grenades, mortars and other explosives being used, punctuated by frequent commands to "Be Alert – Stay Alive". I never did find out what a lert was! Photographs were then taken and passes issued. At the time all the felling was carried out by our own work force, but timber haulage involved any number of private hauliers coming and going.

The military mind was far from happy with this but was eventually persuaded that these private individuals could be permitted access as long as a member of FC staff was on site at the time.

Felling and dispatch of the timber was a routine operation but marketing the logs was fraught with worry. After 60 odd years of military presence some timber was spoiled by the invisible presence of nails, wire and even bullets. Often the first we knew of this was an angry call from one of the mills we supplied. Visits to the mill to be shown the logs and the damaged saw bands were followed by arduous negotiation with the military authorities to obtain recompense. I was always glad to see the last logs off the areas!

Finally, and on a lighthearted note, followers of the Dad's Army series may be interested to know that this long running series was filmed largely in Norfolk and Suffolk with scenes featured in the battle area. Many of the actors and film crew used the various small hotels in Thetford as their base during filming. Capt. Mannering's effigy is on a bench beside the R. Little Ouse.



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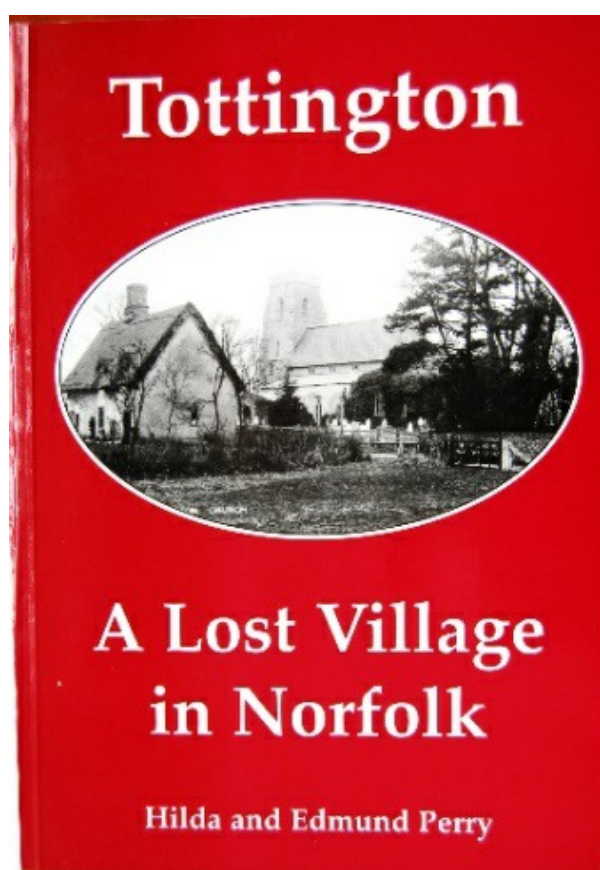
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REFERENCES: For those reading this online, the link below takes you to a publication by the Breckland Society which describes in considerable detail the military history and usage of the area up to the present day.

<http://www.breakingnewground.org.uk/assets/Uploads/Mil-Hist-Report/BRECSOCMILREP.pdf>

This local book is a mine of information about Tottington village



Published c1939

*This article has brought back memories. I started my National Service in late 1955 and was posted to Bury St. Edmunds. We frequently used the battle area for training and it was here that I gained my first awareness of forestry and thought it an interesting career. I also learned the value of volunteering for night patrols, often wading through streams and lakes. You could get the next morning off – a good skive! **Ed.***

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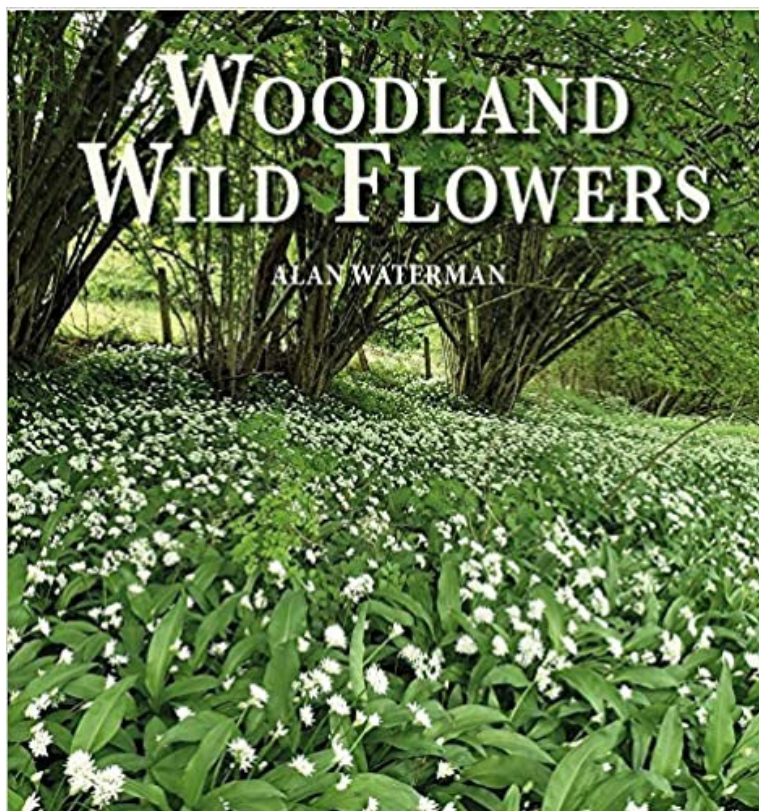
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Woodland Wild Flowers



TITLE: Woodland Wild Flowers
AUTHOR: Alan Waterman
PUBLICATION DATE: 6 May 2020
ILLUSTRATIONS: Colour throughout
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Continued from previous page **Woodland Wild Flowers**

As director of a Field Study Centre, Alan Waterman has taken thousands of students and keen amateurs on woodland natural history walks. This book represents his life's work conveying the joy and fascination of our wild woodland plants to the general public. Over 170 woodland flowers are illustrated and described here. The final section of the book explains how our woodlands have been shaped by our history, and gives a lively overview of how plants have adapted in order to thrive there, in various degrees of shade, acidity and moisture. This book will enhance the experience of all who walk in woodlands, observe the changing seasons, and would like to know more about the beautiful plants that grow there.

- Over 170 woodland flowers are illustrated and described on full or double-page spreads throughout.
- The only contemporary book on the subject to show which wild flowers can be seen in the woods as they appear each month.
- Woodland walking is associated with positive mental health and there is increasing public interest in enjoying forests.



HIGH SUMMER

(JULY AND AUGUST)

This is a great time of year not only for woodland flowers, but also for all the insects, especially the butterflies, which feed on them. If one can find an open woodland glade rich with Marsh Thistle, Wildflowers, Meadowweet, Common Valerian and the first of the Hump Agrostes, then one could be in for a butterfly feast, and that is exactly what they are doing. During the late July open-spread umbels where they can land easily and then work their way round, probing each little flower to extract a tiny bit of nectar. Butterflies, including the Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Tortoiseshell and Comma, abound and some years they are joined by an influx of migratory Painted Ladies. Also visiting are the bees, including the Bumblebees.



HERB BENNET

Geum urbanum

Herb Bennet, also known as Wood Anemone and St. Benedict's Herb, is prolific in wood or anywhere shady, but it can be overlooked as it flowers at the same time as the Buttercup and often in close proximity to it, so at a casual glance all that can be seen are small yellow flowers. Even the leaf of Herb Bennet is similar to a Buttercup leaf. The flowering period is long, from May through to August. It is not related to the Buttercup but is part of the rose family. It has two culinary uses. The root tastes of cloves and is best pickled, washed and dried as the clove taste grows in intensity after drying. The leaves can also be pickled and deep-fried, when served they puff up like french crackers. In dark green by the roots were hung up by the door so that the smell of cloves would ward off evil spirits. The seed head is made up of a bunch of single seeds, each of which has a long spike with a little hook on the end, so its dispersal mechanism is via animals with the hooked seed getting caught there the or indeed on the trousers or socks of humans. There is a similar plant, Water Anemone, which has larger, apricot-coloured flowers. This will also grow in wet woodland and if there is any Wood Anemone nearby, then it will hybridise with it. This results in a complete range of colours of flowers, from pure yellow through lots of intermediate colour to the apricot of the Water Anemone. The name St. Benedict's Herb could be a corruption of 'Blessed herb' or it may be connected with Saint Benedict, as it was believed to ward off evil spirits.



Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil

GREATER BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL

Lotus pedunculatus

The main difference between Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil and Common Birdsfoot Trefoil, is that the former has more flowers per head, between 5-12, and the flowers are pure yellow, whereas Common Birdsfoot Trefoil only has 3-6 flowers and these can include some orange which gives rise to its other common name of 'Sage and Bacon'. The 'birdsfoot' name comes from the arrangement of the seed pods which spread out like a bird's foot. The word 'trefoil' is a reference to the leaves which are composed of three leaflets. The Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil has hollow stems and the leaves are a richer green. It grows in damp and sometimes shady woodland habitats, whereas Common Birdsfoot Trefoil prefers drier and more open habitats such as an airy glade. They are both members of the Leguminosae or Pea family and as such have root nodules which can fix nitrogen. As a result they can live in areas where the supply of nitrogen is inadequate for other species. Common Birdsfoot Trefoil can live on sand dunes and very poor woodland soil.



Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil



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Continued from previous page **Woodland Wild Flowers**



Rhododendrons and Primroses are sometimes quoted as indicator species along with Dog's Mercury but these all seem to segregate quite easily.

In any particular wood, only a limited number of the above species could possibly exist, because some species are restricted to alkaline soils and others only live on acidic soils. Furthermore some species are only found in the south, as a northern woodland might be too cold to support them.

HUNTING FOR WOODLAND WILD FLOWERS

When deciding to write this book about our woodlands and their wild flowers, I initially identified about 150 wild flowers that I wanted to include. I would read the photographs of these plants and then I would write about them. I already had many photographs of wild flowers taken over the years, but there were others which I had to search out. It took about two years to find and photograph the majority of plants included in this book and I was eventually left with about thirty species still to locate.

There are four lines of attack which I employ when trying to find a plant.

- The first is to use the resources offered by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI). On their website one can type in the name of a particular plant and then search on their map and see where the plants may be found in any given ten kilometre square or hectare. These are subdivided into tetads which are two kilometre squares. However, even two kilometres is quite a large area if one is looking for a plant that is only 10cm tall.



MONKSHOOD

Aconitum napellus

This is a native species. Monkshood is very poisonous, causing the rapid onset of life-threatening heart rhythm changes along with possible numbness and tingling, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. Respiratory paralysis and heart rhythm abnormalities can rapidly lead to death and there is no specific antidote. Ingestion, and even touch, can be lethal.

I have only seen one Monkshood specimen growing in the wild. It grows in the shade and can be found in woodland, although it is rare and is often a garden escape. There are many varieties of Monkshood, with variations in the colour and shape of the flowers.

The wild variety has a low profile to the hood, whereas in some of the garden varieties, the hood is quite developed and looks more like a helmet than a hood. The one photographed on the left closely resembles the wild variety although it was in fact cultivated.

Monkshood pollen has been found during pollen analysis of ancient peat cores. However most of the Monkshood plants now growing in Britain are believed to be of garden origin and these are usually not *A. napellus*, but a hybrid with the closely related southern European species *A. variegatum*. The cross is called *A. x coarctatum*, hybrid (or *variegatum*) Monkshood. Generally, a native population will comprise a large colony of thousands of plants whereas garden escapes are more likely to be found as single plants or just a very few individuals.

A similar and related plant is *Wolfsbane* which has the same shaped flowers but they are smaller and a creamy yellow. *Wolfsbane* can also be found in woodlands in the wild, as an escape.



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WOODLANDS: WHY THEY LOOK LIKE THEY DO TODAY

We have had several Ice Ages, the last one only about 20,000 years ago. In between each Ice Age, plants and animals accustomed and we have fossils which show that certain trees existed in these inter-glacial periods. Fossilised remains of Silver Fir and Water Chestnut, both of which pre-date the last Ice Age, have been found in Cornish forest beds.

When precisely the last Ice Age came to an end is much debated but the late Professor Oliver Rackham of the historical ecology department, Cambridge University, maintains that 'Woodland history began 12,000 years ago, when the climate became suitable for tree growth. Trees and woodland plants returned by wind and bird-borne seed from their southern refuges to form a series of wild-wood plant communities. There followed a long epoch of relative stability, the Atlantic period (6,200-3,000BC) with a climate not very different from that of the mid-twentieth century'.



It was during this period that modern Britain separated from mainland Europe. There are several items of evidence which give us a fairly good understanding of what happened.

If today one were to travel to northern Siberia or Canada, to the very edge of the ice cap and observe the vegetation, that would almost certainly be what the vegetation looked like in southern England at the end of the last Ice Age. If one were then to walk today in a southerly direction through Canada, one would see the same changes

in vegetation as occurred in southern England over a period of several thousand years as the climate gradually warmed up.

One would see first the growth of mosses and lichens mixed with small grasses, heathers, crowberries and maybe a low-growing bush called *Cowberry Willow* that is to say, a *Salix herbacea*. This habitat does not support trees and the soil is frozen beneath the surface (permafrost). The temperature only exceeds zero degrees centigrade for a few months each year during the summer and even then, below a depth of about 30cm, the soil remains frozen.

Eventually, trees will start to appear as one walks steadily south through Canada, probably Silver Birch, Poplar and Willow. This is the zone (tundra) known as *tundra* which extends across the northern hemisphere through Canada, Alaska, Siberia and northern Scandinavia.

Mile by mile as one progresses further south, conifers appear and the forests become more dense. The idea that a closed canopy woodland, like that found in Siberia or Canada, would have developed after the last Ice Age has recently been challenged and possibly a more open patchwork of woodland, scrub and grassland would have arisen. Tapa



Common moss and liverwort



Types of grazing animals present, such as aurochs and tarpanes, would have influenced the plant population.

Further evidence of how woodland developed since the last Ice Age can be found in pollen analysis. Pollen analysis can now be linked with carbon dating to get a better idea of time-scale.

Man would have had an increasing effect on woodland even in prehistoric times. In the early years after the end of the last Ice Age, Man was a hunter-gatherer and as such would have had a minimal effect on the woodlands. The human population was tiny and Man was not farming, so there would only have been a small amount of tree felling to provide construction for shelter and for firewood. Man first colonised hilltop sites, because here the trees would have been smaller and easier to cut down with primitive tools. Furthermore, hilltops offered a more secure position with regard to wandering off other tribes and wild animals. Early Man may also have cleared small patches in the woodland to encourage the natural colonisation of plants which provided food such as brambles.

Gradually, around 5000BC, Man became less of a hunter and more of a farmer. This development had a much more dramatic effect on woodlands. Farming hilltops was inefficient because of thin soils and stony, cold conditions so Man shifted his activities down into the valleys. Here he cleared much bigger areas to make little villages and, of course, to create fields to grow crops and in which to keep animals which had been domesticated. The abandoned hilltop sites were still used but largely for sheep grazing, so they developed into moorland, heathland and downland, and did not recover as woodlands.

By the time of the Roman invasion, the English countryside had lost 50 per cent of its woodland and would have looked quite similar to how it looks today in terms of fields, woods and little villages. On the uplands were moors and heaths and



where it was chaly, there was downland. Woodland probably covered only about 10-20% of the land, which is much less than most people would think. It is a common view that there were vast amounts of woodland in the country until quite recently. Legends such as those of Robin Hood have fostered the false notion that woods of England were made up of deep, dark forests but in fact the proportion of woodland in England 2,000 years ago was about the same as it is presently found in France. Most, if not all, of that ancient woodland was either being managed or had been managed at some point, so even the possibility of 'wild wood' existing is quite remote, 'wild wood' being a woodland that has developed after the



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This Book Review of Cherished Plan was first published in the Journal of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society, "Scottish Forestry", Spring 2021.

Book Review by Stephen Tong

CHERISHED PLAN

The Story of Puck's Hut at Benmore

By David Gray

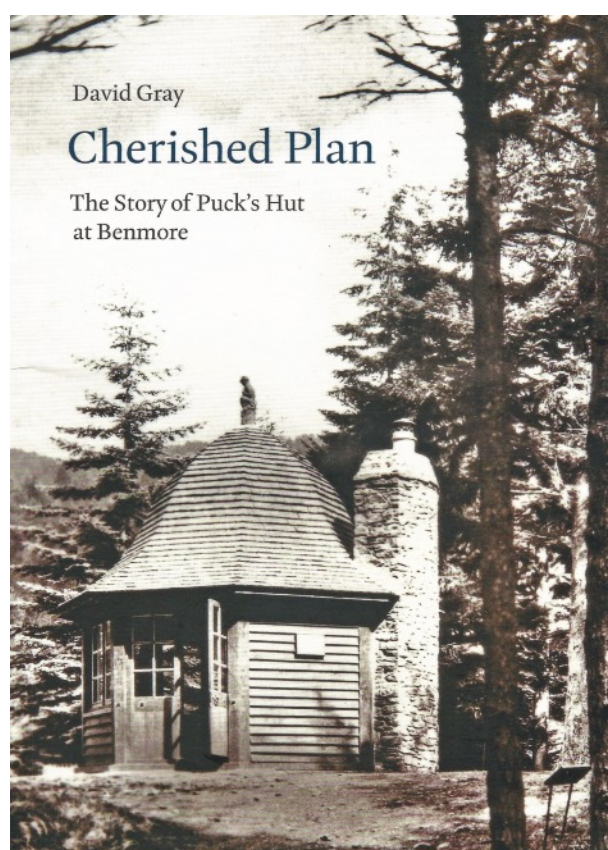
ISBN 978-1-910877-35-7

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh 2020

Softback, 56pp, £8.00

I was delighted to be offered the opportunity of reviewing David Gray's book about Puck's Hut – a very familiar feature to someone who has lived in Cowal for the past 36 years or so, and has been a regular visitor to Benmore Gardens for most of them.

As you would expect, the heart of the book concerns itself with what the hut represents and how it came into being. In that regard, there is an absolute wealth of detail which has been diligently researched and interestingly presented. Excellent photographs are distributed throughout the book and do a great job of creating a feel for the period in which the main elements of the story take place. The reader is treated to insights which can only make him want to visit the hut again, at the earliest opportunity, in order to regard aspects and features hitherto unappreciated. One is also given a very good picture of how much work went into designing and creating this memorial, selecting the perfect (but inaccessible) location for it, putting up the building and then taking it down again to be rebuilt somewhere more secure.



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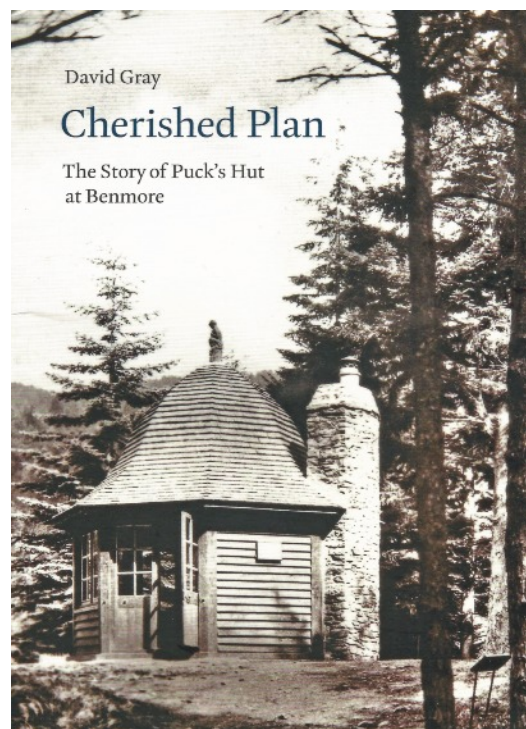


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Cherished Plan

Cherished Plan also does an excellent job of setting out the early history of Benmore and explaining its evolution in the wider context of horticultural and forestry developments of that era. The links between the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society (an earlier name of the RSFS) and the Forestry Commission are particularly interesting. A little glimpse is given of just how important forestry is in Cowal and how it has shaped our communities and our landscapes. The book works equally well as a guide for the first-time visitor to Benmore or a source of much information that local residents ought to know, but probably don't. Amongst other things, it explains why there is a small and relatively obscure gorge in Glenbranter that was planted with such a wide variety of rhododendron species.



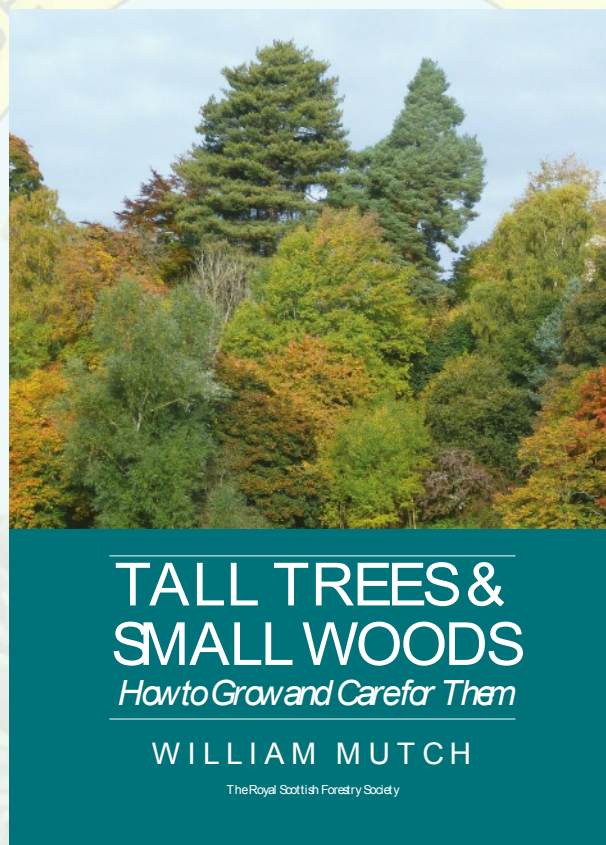
Having partaken of the rich and vibrant histories set out in this book, one cannot help but reflect, with some sadness and nostalgia, about changes that have occurred and times that have passed. It is a great pity that concerns about damage necessitated the hut being removed from the location which had been so carefully selected for it. It is an even greater pity that politics and poor funding caused the FC to lose so many of its woodlands, its capacity for research and education, its status and, ultimately, its very existence. Finally, in my opinion, it is very sad that Puck's Hut has lost its fireplace, its chimney and, by virtue of its proximity to other buildings, its original purpose as a rest hut. I always sensed that there was some sort of intangible emptiness in the spirit of the building from the very first occasion that I visited it. Thanks to this book, I now understand what is missing.

Stephen Tong



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Tall Trees and Small Woods



As a lover of trees, woodland owner or somebody who just likes to muck about in the woods—this is the book for you. It is a comprehensive guide to growing and managing woodlands written in a straightforward style with explanatory line drawings and colour illustrations.

This iconic book by the late Bill Mutch has been updated by the RSFS to reflect 21st century forestry practice while still retaining the charm of the original. The author was Head of the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources at Edinburgh University and first President of the Institute of Chartered Foresters. His research and publications covered forest economics, forest recreation, farm woodlands and deer management.

Tall Trees and Small Woods covers all practical aspects of woodland creation: selection of the right tree to suit soils and climate, planting, pruning and after care. Planning and design of multi-purpose woodlands. Hedges and farm woodlands, marketing, harvesting and timber production are all covered, together with the wider role woodlands play in the lives and well-being of people and wildlife.

Hardback, 300 pages, price: £22.50

Pre-publication price: £ 18.50 valid for orders received by 31 January 2021

10% discount to RSFS and RFS members

Order online or order form overleaf.

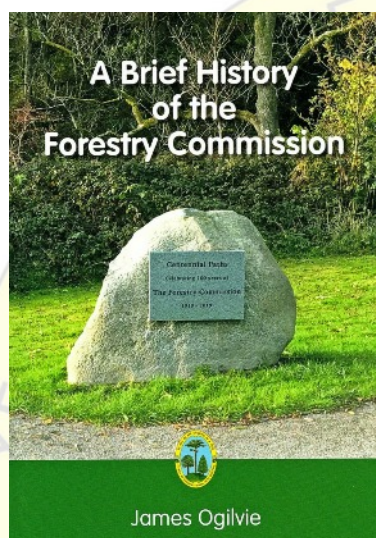
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A Brief History of the Forestry Commission – 1919 to 2019



James Ogilvie's very readable booklet tells the story of 100 years of British State forestry in a delightful nutshell. The author had a lifetime career in the Forestry Commission, manages his own prize-winning woodland and has raised thousands of pounds for Tree Aid.

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FCA Forest Forum



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Archived - Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

On reading the obituary for Harry Oram it brought back memories of my time as CME in Cambridge in 1993/1994.

A visit to the New Forest was always welcome and I remember a story that Harry told about the unique difficulties of managing forest operations in such a high profile location. Many people of influence lived in the area and they would object to anything being done in the forest which did not conform to their understanding of how a working forest should be run.

One woman complained that the forest was being changed beyond all recognition from what she remembered as a child during WW2. Harry took great satisfaction in taking out copies of aerial photographs taken by the German Air Force in 1942 and proving that her memories were not as accurate as she imagined. The New Forest area had a number of temporary airfields established there for the duration of the war.

The FC has made significant use of aerial surveys over the years and in the '70s had its own single engine aircraft fitted out with a camera. The Chief Photographer at Alice Holt, I believe, had been a pilot during the war and had made a case to have an aerial survey aircraft which he would fly (after getting the FC to pay for his civilian licence).

His assistant, who would operate the camera, had some concerns about the health of the ageing pilot and managed to persuade the Commission to pay for some flying lessons. However as a typical cost saving exercise they only paid for him to have lessons on how to land the aircraft in the event of the pilot becoming ill.

Regards

John Martin





Archived - Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

Congratulations to you and Diane for coming up with an alternative to FCA Today, the birth of Forest Forum which I hope will encourage more input with interesting anecdotes and articles from retirees. It is very hopeful to see the abundance of copy which you have already received to get the first edition of Forest Forum off to a good beginning.

On reading it through, three items attracted my attention, they were, "Get on Yer Bike" by Ted Baldwin; "The Gwyder Forest" and "Some Happy Memories of Dean FTS 1965-67". Ted Baldwin's career mirrored mine to some extent, in that Ted began his career at Kielder in 1951, before leaving to go to Lynford Hall FTS. I went to Kielder in 1959 having qualified at Gwyder FTS in 1952, but it was Ted's description of the modes of transport which students had at Lynford Hall that were of interest. I found something similar when I arrived at Gwyder FTS in 1950.

Modes of transport were mainly bicycles, with a few motorbikes. I had a 350cc Douglas motorbike, which was different from others in that the two cylinders were horizontally opposed instead of being vertical, similar to the BMW bikes. But two Welsh students owned Harley Davisons, American motorbikes which were quite something else! Interestingly, whilst I was at Kielder on the Mounces beat with chief forester Tom Fox, I was given an old ex-army motorbike which enabled me to get to all the scattered work gangs on that huge area.

My three months at the Dean FTS introduced me to broad leaved forestry, a change to what I was then and subsequently, used to. The main social activity at Parkend was drinking "Scrumpy", a draft cider, at the local pub across from the school. It was in the February 1952 whilst I was there, that news of King George VI's death occurred and that the then Princess Elizabeth was to be, and still is, our Queen Elizabeth.

I retired in 1989 and "The Slasher " as it was then called, kept me up to date with interesting articles and forest staff retiring. Now our newsletter is in its third re-incarnation, so I look forward to reading more interesting articles under its new name of "Forest Forum".

Don Amer





Archived - Letters to the Editor

Dear Richard,

Ted Baldwin's article in the Winter issue of FCA Today "Get on your Bike" took me back 50 years. The BSA Bantam illustrated was mine! I stayed at Lynford Hall at weekends very few times. It was good to get away from the food dished up by Humphy and "Black Annie" and I used to make my way to my parents home in Hertfordshire.

I managed to buy and maintain the BSA Bantam with the help of a small pension I was allocated after having been shot during my National Service in Malaya. I went to Lynford Hall only a few weeks after being discharged from hospital.

After Saturday morning lectures I set off on my Bantam across Lakenheath Warren. If there was a head wind, I could only manage 25mph! But it got me home. Lynford students had various personal transports, mostly bicycles. Dicky Bird had a nice little sports car, while another from the North had a HRD, top of the range motorbike. I'm sure he could easily manage more than 25mph into a head wind across the Warren!

Happy memories!

Eric Rogers

FCA Forest Forum



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Archived - Lives in Brief

Diane Birkett, our webmaster, has told me that her friend **TONY BUTCHER** who moved to New Zealand in 2001, died peacefully on 19th July aged 87 after a major stroke 6 weeks ago.

It was Tony who introduced Diane to me in 2010 when he asked her to contact me for an alternative when Slasher was discontinued. The first online issue of FCA Today was in December 2010 and included an article by Tony. So it's thanks to him that you're reading this.

Tony was born in Ipswich, and his family moved to Langley, near Windsor when he was a very young child. At about 12 years old, he heard an old forester talk on the radio about his work in the woodlands of Devon. Tony decided then that he wanted to be a forester. When he left school he joined the forestry team on the Royal Windsor Estate.

In 1952 Tony was called up for National Service and joined the RAF, training as an engineer. He was sent to Changi airbase in Singapore.

When he returned to England, he went to Lynford Hall FTS. After graduation he became a forester first at Santon Downham and subsequently at Wigsley and Ampthill. After 20 years of service in the FC he left to set up his own business, Forestry Services.

He leaves a wife, a daughter and son and grandchildren.





Archived - Lives in Brief

Peter Ford has told me of the death of **JIM BURNS** who died from the results of cancer this Easter.

Jim was married to Anne in 1975 at the Newcastle Civic Centre. He soon decided that the college course he was doing didn't suit so in 1975 he parted ways with it.

During his youth he had spent quite some time in Kielder forest with his grandfather who worked with the CEGB (Central Electricity Generating Board). Now being unemployed Jim took to the road and went back to the Kielder that he liked so much. He knocked on the forest office door, met Hugh Stickland and asked him if there were any jobs going.

To his delight there were and within a short space of time Jim had started work with the Forestry Commission as a forest worker. It was a while before he could be housed so he slept in his trusty, old VW Campervan. When housing did become available it was very basic but a place for Jim and Ann to call home. He was put through his paces and soon attended a chainsaw course. Although Jim didn't mention it much he did manage to nick his backside with the chainsaw during the course. Regardless of this incident he passed the course.

The trusty Campervan would often transport them to the Club in Kielder but by the time they came out it was so dark that it was difficult to see where they had left it.

Jim joined the union and gradually rose through the local branch ranks. One of the many projects he undertook was to get free work clothing for the work squad which was successful. Jim spent some 3 years felling trees in advance to the Kielder dam project and thoroughly enjoyed his working life.

In 1980 he had the opportunity to move to Achnamara forest. He continued to make an impression and was persuaded by his forester Peter Ross to try for a place at the Forestry School, Inverness. At that time it was a 2 year course plus 6 months placement. Jim was accepted, joined the course and spent his placement period in a forest local to the college under the guidance of Willie Patience.

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Jim Burns

By 1984 Jim had his qualifications and like all his fellow students chose somewhere they would like to be posted to – the Lakes. So, he was sent to Newton Stewart! He spent 6 very enjoyable years there as a forest officer.

In 1990 Jim was selected to join the training team at Ae MOTC (Machine Operator Training Centre), working under Jack Wade and Stewart Coombie. Many budding machine operators and their supervisors benefited from trainers like Jim who put them through their paces, teaching them new skills and how to work safely.

Although still based in Ae, Jim's next move was to the Health and Safety team under the leadership of Emily Ramsay in 1998. Jim took over from Tom Rainey and he stayed there until his retirement in 2013.

A splendid retirement "do" was arranged for Jim in Glencaple, adjacent to Dumfries, in March 2013. Unfortunately all did not go to plan! Significant snow fall stopped some guests from being able to reach the venue.

Jim did a little more work for the FC after retirement but then decided he would retire properly! In his spare time Jim enjoyed his motorbike, sailing, gardening and walking. Jim, Anne and the family also enjoyed travelling, often by their Motorhome, to France, Italy, Spain and around Scotland. He was also an avid Newcastle United fan.

Jim will be remembered by many in the forest industry, particularly during his training and safety time where he was able to provide many people support, learning, guidance and advice of a very high standard. He was also a fun guy to be with.

Jim is survived by his wife Anne and children Lee, Danny and Megan.

I have received news that **JACK WADE** has died. He was well known to so many in the FC, particularly for his work at the Ae Machine Operator Training Centre. I've not yet been able to find anybody to write up his career but I'm hopeful. He made such a great contribution to training at all levels. He was very competent, well liked and respected and above all, a great character.



Archived - Lives in Brief

Peter Schweiger remembers **HARRY ORAM** whom he first met at Ampfield Wood on Hursley Forest, Hampshire. I had been on the gang a few months and we were in the weeding season. It was backbreaking work bending down with a rip hook in one hand and a forked stick in the other, cutting grass, bramble and other growth that competed with the newly planted trees. People came to work with us and often gave up after a few hours. Harry was 16 and I said to him "If you stay until mid day, you will be OK" He did and continued to work for the Forestry Commission for over 40 years. He was accepted to train as a forester and went to the Dean FTS. I went to Gwydyr in North Wales and whilst I was on an exchange course in 1968 at Pitlochry I visited Harry while he was working on windblow at Crinan.

Harry worked on forests in North Wales, Thetford and Scotland, having girl friends but never marrying. Eventually he returned to the New Forest and was able to buy a house and then a small holding in Brockenhurst. He had a very soft spot for animals and people would pass on unwanted creatures to him. At one time he had over 20 dogs, Highland cattle, ponies and chickens. At his local pub he met Karolina who was working there. She had a young son and in time moved in with Harry helping with the animals. They married in 2016. Harry suffered from cancer and had several spells in hospital. After he retired he bought a mini bus and ran tours of the New Forest. He organised reunions of the Ampfield gang and several outings.

In 2013 he took some of the gang to Thetford and showed us the old training school, now a conference centre.

He was concerned that the New Forest was losing it's traditional industries based on timber production. Trees are multi functional and economics are part of the picture.

Here is a photo of Harry at Thetford with one of his heroes, Captain Mainwaring from Dads Army.

Harry died on 9th April 2020 aged 69.





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WILLIE PREST was born in Moffat, Dumfriesshire in 1938 where he grew up. After working for Annandale Estates he joined the Forestry Commission in Admin and Finance at Dumfries and in 1973 moved to Inverness. Ann and their two young sons joined him in 1974. From an early age Willie was interested in birds and from the outset on moving to the Highlands he became secretary of the Scottish Ornithologists Club (SOC) organising trips such as to a blackcock lek and to view an exceptionally aggressive cock capercaillie at close range. He was particularly interested in the hen harrier, which at that time was making an encouraging increase in the area; short lived as it turned out unfortunately. Although Willie's stay in the Highlands was relatively short, he had many happy memories and made lifelong friends in the birding fraternity, Forestry Commission and church where he was an elder.

In 1977 Willie moved to Edinburgh in a senior role in the Finance Division of the Forestry Commission as budgets officer. He was very dedicated to his work, well respected and known as a straight talker. At the same time he was very encouraging and supportive, and his laugh could be heard down the corridors. He took a genuine interest in people and was curious about everything. His mantra was "management by walking about" which he practiced by walking the corridors of Headquarters – asking questions, taking an interest, being available. As budgets officer he went to Treasury with the Director General and other colleagues. He prepared meticulously and would stand his ground.

Willie looked after public funds as if they were his own and was not really known for handing out money. But, a colleague, Rod Leslie who was environment officer, tells the story of when Willie came down the corridor to ask if Rod could spend £5K (quite a lot of money then) on nature conservation projects before the end of the financial year. The money was used for artificial black throated diver islands and osprey platforms. Willie was delighted!

As is not uncommon in the Forestry Commission, Willie's son Graeme chose a career in forestry and is currently regional manager for Forestry and Land Scotland for North Region.

Willie retired in 1996. In retirement Willie did a huge variety of voluntary work for the SOC, continued as a committed and dedicated elder at Cramond Kirk and was proactive in the local residents association. He organised tree planting and mass bulb planting on the communal ground around where they lived – leaving a lasting legacy. He travelled widely with Ann and birding friends visiting countries like Namibia, India, Jordan and USA. For many years he went birding every Tuesday with two good friends. Other birders were always pleased to see the three friends with their friendly banter and sense of fun. They were christened "Last of the Summer Wine" – a title they subsequently adopted. Willie is survived by his wife Ann, his sons Graeme and Donald and grandchildren.



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Arthur Miller of the North Wales group is sad to report that **ANDY PHILLIPS** passed away at the beginning of March, aged 73, after a long period of ill health.

Andy started in the Forestry Commission as a forest worker in 1963 at Neroche Forest, moved to Scotland for a short while and was then posted to Clocaenog Forest in 1970. He retired in 2010. During that time he worked in all aspects of forest operations and reached the grade of foreman, which was his position when he retired. He was a keen and effective Union representative and was awarded the MBE in recognition of his hard work.

Andy was closely involved in the life of Ruthin, his local town. He was a member of the country dancing group, was a regular at Cyfilliog church, was involved in the Ruthin Show and for many years he voluntarily tended the flower beds in the town. He was also a keen member of the Royal Forestry Society.

After retirement Andy joined the FCA and made his usual whole hearted and effective contribution to the activities of the North Wales group. For many years he was vice chairman, attending all meetings of the committee as well as our field trips, some of which he organised.

Andrew was consistently cheerful, persistent and effective, both at work and socially. He is survived by his wife Elizabeth, and his two sons David and Mark.

John Roe remembers **PETER BURKE** who died peacefully on 23rd February in a local nursing home. He had been suffering from dementia and many more medical problems involving his admission to hospital for surgery on several occasions. He was in his 79th year.

Peter started his forestry career by working for a harvesting contractor in the Wye valley and then for the Forestry Commission at Tintern. He then went to Gwydyr FTS qualifying in 1966. His first posting was to Ebbw forest under chief forester Trevor Jenkins, where he had lodgings in Abercarn. At this location he met Christine whom he later married.

By 1968 he had been transferred to Rhondda forest, and lived in Ferndale.

1971 was a momentous year as he transferred to Wentwood office to train as a radio technician and in October he married Christine. They bought a house in Shirenewton which was his home for the rest of his life.

In 1977 Peter returned to forester duties working out of Coleford office for Bert Dover on Field Surveys. Following this in 1980 Peter went to Tintern Forest working out of Crown Lodge on forest management for Ron Reid. The office moved to Wentwood and then Neath, but Peter's duties were predominately in the Wye valley until his retirement in 2003.

He is survived by Christine, son Richard, daughter Alexandra, their spouses, and four grand-children, to whom we extend our sympathy, and condolences.



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Linda Westlake remembers her father **CYRIL DANIEL**, but known as Danny to friends and colleagues. He joined the FC as a forest worker at Delamere forest in September 1944.

In October 1945 he went to Benmore FTS and on leaving he moved to Clocaenog forest. He used to tell us about how he enjoyed his time at Benmore and various exploits on his motorbike. At Clocaenog he rose from ganger to foreman and then went on to Coed-y-Goror in 1954. It was at this time that he met and married my mother, the daughter of a forester herself. In this posting he became a forester in 1955, just before the arrival of his son, David. A move to Gwydyr forest followed in 1956.

I was born while he was at Gwydyr, so I remember some of our time there, more especially the times it snowed and we could not get to school as our house was in the forest at Parkview just below the village of Nant Bwlch yr Haearn. Our school was Trefriw some miles away down the hill towards Llanrwst. I have many a time perplexed my pupils (primary school teacher) when I tell them I did not have electricity until I was about 6 and our milk came in bottles which had tops like you might see on a beer bottle! They invariably think I am Victorian!

In about 1963, our family moved to Llanafan near Aberystwyth when my father was transferred to Ystwyth forest. We were there for all my primary years and just as I was going on to high school we moved to live in Tan-y-Coed, Pantperthog near Machynlleth. He had been promoted to head forester in 1968 and moved to Dyfi forest with the forest offices at Corris a few miles from where we lived. He spoke highly of Mr Leighton Jenkins who was the chief forester at the time.

In 1970 we went to live at Forest Lodge at Forge near Machynlleth. During our time there, foresters Colin Olsen, Mike Saddler and then head foresters Keith Thomas and Mike Westlake all lived next door at some point. I met my future husband, who was a Westlake, from next door. He had also been a forest worker until he became a Dyfed Powys Police Officer. His older brother, Jonathan Westlake, joined the FC and went on to serve at forests in England and Wales before going to Conservancy HQ and has only recently retired himself.

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Continued from previous page **Cyril (Danny) Daniel**

He remained at Dyfi Forest until 1982 when he was transferred to be head forester at Ceri Forest near Newtown, Powys. Finally in 1984 he moved to be district forester H&M in the town. In 1988 he retired after 44 years of service. My father bought a bicycle to keep fit, a mode of transport very much in use in his very early days in the FC.

I can remember the many times as a child we would go with my father and his dog in the FC van to do fire duty in a hut at the top of a hill, or were called to help with beating a fire that had started in some Molinia grass. We thought it was brilliant fun and we would never of course be in any real danger! We would at other times collect Molinia as it made perfect bedding for my rabbit and guinea pig. We always enjoyed the opportunity at Christmas time to go up the wood and select a tree to take home for the living room, invariably a fir, not a spruce.



Danny with his wife

Continued on next page ➡



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Continued from previous page **Cyril (Danny) Daniel**

At his funeral service, following his death in Shrewsbury Hospital on 30th October 2020, the ceremony was led by a lovely celebrant who played the dawn chorus of birdsong as he arrived. Everyone who was allowed to attend (Covid rules applied) was able to take an acorn with them to plant in memory of his FC career. Five or six of these have been planted in various locations in Wales.

He was 92 years old and will be much missed by his wife, Rose, and his children, 7 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.



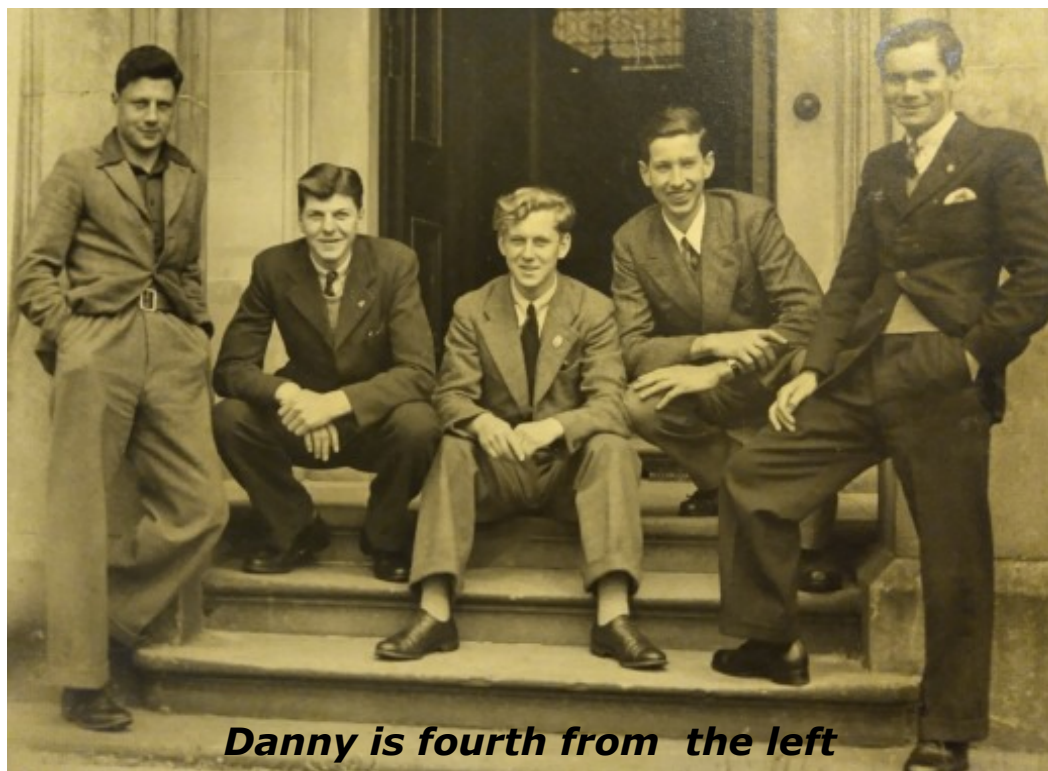
Danny is on the left

More pictures on next page



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Continued from previous page **Cyril (Danny) Daniel**



Danny is fourth from the left



Danny is seated third from the left at Benmore



Facebook

FCA Today Facebook Group by Ian Blake

Some years ago I set up a Facebook group page, FCA Today, initially aimed at encouraging former retired colleagues to stay in touch with the Forestry Commission Association (FCA), albeit digitally. This included former FC Staff now employed by Natural Resources Wales and latterly those who have since joined Scottish Forestry. A decision was approved by Group members earlier this year to also invite family members of FC retirees who had sadly passed away.

FCA Today is a private group, with me currently acting as administrator, simply acting as a means for our 'forestry family' to keep in touch. Presently there are 128 members and it would be great to increase these numbers significantly, but in order to join YOU will need a Facebook (FB) account. I'm aware there are concerns about social media and IT generally, but given the current circumstances, with Coronavirus restrictions and the advent of Zoom get-togethers, perhaps now is the time to 'take the plunge'. You can set the parameters for privacy etc. on your FB page and there's no need for us to be individual FB friends as you can send a request to me via my FB account, or indeed FB's Messenger system. If anyone lacks confidence in setting up an account just follow the links at the end of this piece, or get one of your grandchildren to help you out, I know my two are already well ahead of me in this tech age.



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