

FCA Forest Forum



Winter 2022-3

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Articles

Two Identical Feet

by Gordon Griffiths

Gordon Griffiths sent me this recently. Although the initial date of publication was 1971 he never received a helpful reply. Anyone have any ideas?

When God made man he unfortunately gave him symmetrical feet, and not identical feet. This was a mistake. It would be of considerable advantage to the forester serving with the Field Surveys Branch to have identical feet.

As a Field Surveys forester I have to take a map and check forest boundaries to see if the fence line coincides with the legal boundary. I walk up and down hills all day long, from the heather covered mountains to the steamy damp locality of rivers and streams. Due to these extremes it is difficult to know what footwear to use - boots for the hills or wellingtons for the damp boggy surrounds of streams.

Now I dislike wearing wellingtons; with all respect to the Duke, they are hot and make the feet sticky, and are not so comfortable as a correctly laced leather boot. The dilemma would be eased considerably if I could wear one of each and change them from one foot to the other. I would use the 'wellington foot' to stride streams and boggy patches, and change footwear when one foot became too hot or the leg became sore from the other familiar complaint 'Wellington Boot Rub'.

Maybe some experienced forester could help?

Gordon Griffiths

Forester

Field Surveys Branch

Brechfa, South Wales.

October 1971.



Articles

Brechfa Forest Garden

by Ian Blake

I was fortunate, amongst a gathering of about 50 foresters, to attend a RFS visit in July to Brechfa Forest Garden which is showing the true worth of visionary FC Staff who planted a cornucopia of tree spp in the 1950s and early 1960s probably to assess their suitability for forest use. The site is becoming ever more important given the current climate change scenario. The background to the visit is outlined below.

Royal Forestry Society visit to Brechfa Forest Garden

Friday 1st July 2022

Hosted by NRW and Forest Research

Background

Brechfa Forest Garden covers a site of some 11 ha near Abergorlech on either side of a ridge dividing two tributaries of the Afon Gothi. The Forest Garden was established in the late 1950s and early 1960s by local foresters with the apparent objective of creating a collection of species to assess their suitability for forest use. In all the site currently contains 72 plots of 70 different species; 39 are conifers and 31 broadleaves. Although early data is scarce, an invaluable list of seed origins and planting treatments has survived. Some establishment records also survive from 1965, 68, 83 & 88.

The plots are located at elevations between 150m and 250m and are on slopes of both northerly and southerly aspects. Before planting, the whole area was open hillside grazed by sheep.

The climate is very favourable to tree growth with a mean annual rainfall of 1700mm and accumulated day degrees of 1375 – 1650. The plots lie within the 'warm moist' climatic zone as defined by the Ecological Site Classification (FC Bulletin 124) which makes the site suited to growing species from similar climatic zones worldwide. This climatic zone also represents a significant proportion of Wales at lower elevations below 400 meters.

Forest Research (FR) took on management of the site in 1982 and undertook work to clear neglected plots, brash trees and open up access paths. For a number of years plots were assessed as funds permitted. A number of mensuration sample plots were established in 1982 of which two are still active Macedonian pine (*Pinus peuce*) and coast redwood

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Articles

Brechfa Forest Garden *continued*

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(Sequoia Sempervirens). The site is now managed by Natural Resources Wales.

An assessment of the plots in 1998 (Danby and Mason) recognised their value as a living demonstration of a wide range of trees growing under forest conditions. This has become more relevant as we seek to increase the diversity of our woodlands to address climate change and its effects. At the time of the 1998 assessment the importance of maintaining records and replacing failed plots was stressed as was the recognition that information derived from the plots would illustrate the appropriate selection of species adapted to the sites where they were to be planted.

A recent audit has highlighted a gradual decline in many of the plots with 27 of them now classed as remnant with just a few examples as Specimens remaining. It is safe to say that at this time the Forest Garden is in a holding pattern with only basic input from both FR and NRW and this would be a good opportunity to discuss the future of this important Welsh resource.

Potential Future Objectives

There are a number of potential objectives to maintain, develop and enhance Brechfa Forest Garden. These could include:

To provide a display of an extensive range of trees growing in forest conditions to aid species selection to increase the diversity of woodlands.

To act as a trial for species anticipated to be suited to predicted climate change in Wales.

To illustrate and support Welsh forestry policies for increasing woodland diversity.

To provide a collection of trees as an important resource for research and educational purposes.

To provide a destination for visitors as part of the wider recreational attraction of NRW woodlands in the Abergorlech area.

To raise the profile of the role NRW is playing in providing evidence for the need to change woodland management practices in response to a changing climate.



Articles

What I Did in the Forestry Commission *by Peter Walker*

I started my career with the FC in 1956 when I was chosen to attend Gwydyr FTS in North Wales. Prior to this I completed National Service with the Royal Signals as a wireless operator, being based in exotic locations such as Catterick, Colchester and Salisbury Plain - no overseas posting for me unfortunately.

After completing the forestry course at Gwydyr in September 1958 I was appointed assistant forester at Rheola Forest, Neath, where I first encountered the legendary Norman Smith (some might say infamous) and the likes of Gordon Morris, Charlie Wild and Alun James. Mr Smith sent me to work with John England in Crynant Forest where I was introduced to opencast coal mine restoration planting.

The following summer I was transferred to Michaelston Forest, later part of Margam Forest, whose forester-in-charge was another local legend, Emyr Lloyd. I was placed in charge of a ground-prep gang at Baglan mountain, overlooking Port Talbot steelworks, which was too steep for ploughing. The area was subsequently planted with pine, which suffered many fires during its establishment period.

My next move was eastwards to Ebbw, as a forester, where Trevor Jenkins was in charge. I had become a beat forester by this time and was responsible for planting, harvesting and maintenance programmes, including horse-logging down the steep-sided slopes. The frozen winter of 62/63 proved a big challenge, particularly on areas receiving little sunlight. Planting was very late that year as you can imagine.

I had another change of job in the Spring of 1966 when I was in charge of planting a section alongside the M4, near Newport, before it was completed. This was extended along the M4 after it opened. We were provided with motorway passes to enable us to park on the hard shoulder, but it took a while for the police to get use to our presence! There was a section of the motorway which was very

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Articles

What I Did in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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difficult to plant, due to residual concrete, but we used a jack hammer to break up the compaction. That's motorways and open-casts for you! I was also heavily involved with the planning and preparation of the Cwmcarn Scenic Drive, which opened in 1972 with an initial entrance fee of 12½p - I wonder what it is now?

1973 was another significant milestone, my promotion to head forester. This meant a move to Cymmer Forest where Jim Barraclough was chief forester. He left shortly after I arrived and was replaced by Keith Thomas. It was there that I encouraged the then assistant conservator, David Hughes, to use foam as a forest fire retardant. This became very successful in helping slow down fires which could then be tackled by water and fire-beaters. This was one of my proudest achievements.

In 1976 I was transferred to Tintern Forest in the Wye valley where John Howson was the chief forester. However, much of that summer was spent dealing with forest fires back at Ebbw due to the extended hot and dry conditions. During this time our family was separated as the house at Tintern wasn't ready. Whilst I was living in a caravan in Tintern, my long-suffering wife Christine and our children were still in Cymmer. Eventually we moved into an FC house in Botany Bay, Tintern.

There I became head forester in charge of production amongst some of the best timber in Wales. The Douglas fir in particular was outstanding and always sold well at the nearby Monmouth auctions. There is a wonderful broadleaf and conifer mix in the Wye valley and I'm proud to have contributed to the local woodland management.

In the 1980s Tintern Forest was amalgamated with Wentwood and Ebbw Forests to form South East Wales Forest District where former district officer David Parsons was in charge. The chief forester H&M was Don Hoskins, who was instrumental in setting up the very

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Articles

What I Did in the Forestry Commission *continued*

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successful Wentwood pitprop & stake plant, thanks to receipt of the Brandon depot equipment. A stake treatment plant soon followed and the Wentwood site became synonymous with production of good posts, stakes and rails for some years after the closure of the coal mines.

Following Don Hoskins' retirement I was promoted to district forester H&M and remained in the district until my retirement in July 1995.

I send regards to anyone who remembers me: Peter Walker



Peter is sitting in the front row on the extreme right



All articles are on the
fca-today.com website



Articles

Valediction

by Arthur Miller

It is planned for the Forestry Commission Association to close, as a National Organisation in Autumn 2023. However, local Groups of the FCA will continue for as long as there are willing members.

In addition, the Forestry Commission has been split up between the three countries and is no longer a cohesive organisation with a common purpose.

These two events have inspired me to look back at the FC through the lens of my own career, to remember the achievements of the FC and to thank all those who made it such a success.

I have heard it said that the FC was set up simply to produce pit props, and that it was also fuddy duddy and old fashioned. That perception is far from the truth, and does not fit with my recollections of the organisation. True, it was set up at a time of National emergency, when there was a shortage of timber, but it was also charged with producing a sound Forest Estate in the UK, to administer that estate and to research and develop Forestry in the future. Quite a remit!

I joined the industry in 1959, straight from school. I realised later that the FC was then 40 years old. I went on to celebrate its 50th anniversary in Thetford, the 75th in Edinburgh, and the 100th at the top of Clocaenog Forest in 2019. I also had the pleasure of working with Foresters trained by the FC in the 1930s, so I have acquired a deep and wide understanding of the organisation. My recollections are my own, and may not reflect the experience of others, but that is life.

My first job was with Pulford Estates, the contracting arm of the Grosvenor Estate at Chester. We did all sorts of things, from clearing devastated woodlands to nursery work and dangerous trees.

In 1961 I obtained a place at Gwydyr Forester Training School for a very intensive two year course. By the end we had covered 17 different subjects, the whole gamut of Forestry at that time. We were also quietly taught to become professional in our demeanour and were called 'Mr' from day one to get us used to authority. The Education Officer was Gwyn Francis, who went on to become Director General. He was a firm but fair disciplinarian, and I learned a lot from him. It was also the early days of chainsaws, we were taught

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Articles

Valediction *Continued*

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how to use and repair them. Our Instructor, Bob Kemp, was only just ahead of us! As each new development came along, he studied it, worked out how to explain it, and then instructed us in the very latest methods. One does not appreciate such dedication until after the event.

I have been very lucky in my career, having been involved in several major projects in Forestry and the Forestry Commission, and saw the way that the organisation responded to problems and updated the methods whenever possible. The FC was never old fashioned, just a bit cautious from time to time.

After leaving Gwydyr, I joined Field Surveys Branch, part of Management Division and spent some time surveying Forests in Wales and England. At that time there were no comprehensive details of individual forests. The teams went into a Forest, surveyed all the roads, rides and fences onto 6inch scale maps (1:10560) and produced a full summary of the forest, a new set of maps and a full set of Compartment records. The end result was put into the hands of the local staff, who could then produce a Working Plan that would last for 5 years. It was devised by the FC to enable them to forecast volume production, the likely revenue and potential new planting sites. It was a modern system of inventory, standard throughout the FC, giving consistent results. At that time many forests were just coming on stream with timber production, and it was essential to know what the potential out turn would be.

Whilst in Field Surveys I was involved in three major projects. Metrication, Thinning Control and Census. All examples of how the FC and its senior officers were tackling the management of crops and resources into the future.

In 1971, the country went Metric, but much work had to be done in preparation. Metric Yield class tables had been prepared, and teams were sent out to complete quick surveys of forests. We checked a sample of the estate for stocking rates, converted all the yield classes and whole area into metric values in time for the metrication everywhere. I was involved in the Survey of many of the forests in the old East England Conservancy.

There had been some variability in thinning regimes, with various thinning types being applied, given such descriptions as Low thinning, Crown Thinning and Silvicultural Thinning. All valid as descriptions but no good at giving a reliable sense of volume yield. The FC introduced a system of thinning control,

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based upon Yield Class and stocking. Any system of thinning could be applied, so long as measurements of volume were taken, and intensity was kept within the Guide lines. The Thinning Control Booklet was issued and Field Surveys staff were involved in giving courses to local staff on how to apply the principle. It was fascinating to see how sceptical people were to the idea, until they applied their own theory of thinning and saw how close the results came to the recommended values. The result was that stands were thinned on a regular basis, were not over or under cut and the volume production could be calculated on an annual or periodic basis. Active and controlled management in action, in an organisation that had a lot of ground to manage and needed a clear idea of future revenue.

In 1966 Field Surveys was involved in a Census of Woodlands. This is a huge subject in itself, but the basic questions are, 'What is the woodland cover of the UK? What species do we have? What is the standing volume?'

All these points were asked on a regular basis, by Senior Officers, Industrialists and Local Authorities. There was a Census Officer, by name, Mike Locke, based in Headquarters, whose job was to update the records from annual returns and to keep a running total. But Forests are dynamic, the people submitting the updating data are human, and after a time the information becomes out of date. Hence, another Census of Woodlands.

I was fortunate to be involved in two Census projects; in 1966 as a surveyor, and in 1978 as part of the Management team, working alongside Peter Thallon, Bob Waters, Mike Locke and Roger Twallin. In completing the latter survey, I absorbed many of the lessons from previous projects.

There are several stages in a Census; the Sampling scheme, the Survey, the collection of data and the production of the final report.

The Sampling scheme depends upon the resources to hand. In the 1920s reports were sent in as part of Agricultural returns, or by local surveys by volunteer surveyors, but the results were inconsistent.

In the run up to World War II, there was a survey to discover how much woodland and timber was available. The survey was based on the old County Series maps, using a random sample of one in five sheets, surveying an oblong

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Valediction *Continued*

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the North West corner of each sheet six inches deep and nine inches wide, covering a scale area of 1.5 square miles. Unfortunately, events caught up with the survey, and it was not completed.

During the War, a 'flying' survey was undertaken, but again the results were inconclusive because of time constraints and the accelerated pace of felling.

Data processing was all completed by hand, using volume tables, and adding machines.

In 1947 it was necessary to carry out another survey, to see what was left of the Forest estate. Initially it was confined to woodlands of 5 acres or more. The sampling scheme was based on a random sample of the County Series quarter sheets at a scale of 6 inches to the mile. Every woodland on the sheet was visited, assessed for species, age, stocking and volume. The interesting change was that the Field Data Sheets were converted to Hollerith Punch Cards, enabling the data to be processed mechanically, and so, making use of the latest techniques.

A further survey followed in 1952, when it was realised that there was still a great deal of timber in small woods and hedgerows. The estimate was that there was half as much volume in those categories as there was in larger woods.

In 1966, another Census was set up, using 1:10560 (6 inches to the mile) maps. The sampling scheme was based on a randomly selected 1 in 7 sample of one kilometre squares. Forestry Commission woodlands were excluded, because that data was already available. In addition, the sample strips used on the previous Hedgerow survey were reassessed. On this occasion, the data to be selected was the usual species, age, description and stocking, but it was all recorded on forms that could be scanned by an optical reader. Once again, the FC was using and testing the latest technology.

For the start of the next Census in 1978, several major changes were made. The estimate of total woodland area was based on the Woodland plates, that were used by the Ordnance Survey to put the green diagrams onto the one inch to one mile maps. The plates were initially processed by Conservancy Drawing Offices by marking up the boundaries of FC and Dedicated woodlands, and then digitally scanned to give a total area directly for each block of

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woodland. The sampling scheme was then selected from each of the block sizes available, so that all could be sampled fairly. Great use was made of Aerial Photographs, for both the woodland and the hedgerow survey, together with ground visits.

On this occasion, the data was recorded directly onto hand-held electronic devices, and sent by a modem and normal telephone line to Alice Holt, ready to be processed on computer. Another use of what was available at the time.

In the period between the two Census surveys, I was posted to Mensuration Section at a very exciting time. Metrication was in prospect. The Section was involved in Metricating the Management Tables, and all the other ready reckoner tables available to Foresters at the time. We were led By Graham Hamilton and Joe Christie. My colleagues were Ted (Cyril) Fletcher, Jim Dickinson and Robin Hendrie.

The basic data was taken from Sample Plots, a series of test plots, covering all the major species, in all parts of the UK, on both Private and FC ground, and investigating many different growth factors, such as spacing and thinning regimes. Some of the plots that I worked on had been felled before I was born, but the data was still good, we just had to metricate it.

Eventually, we rewrote the Management Table program, and produced the Metric Management tables. With the skills that we had learned we carried out a major study into the effects of spacing, produced a Report and built those factors into our Management Table program. We also produced the Mensuration Handbook, which included all the various methods of assessing timber, including such things as Tariff Tables and Form Height Charts. All in Metric, of course. In 2019 I met a Forestry student from Bangor, and asked if those Booklets were still used. The answer was an enthusiastic 'Yes!'

While all this was going on, the Elm Disease struck. The Forestry Commission was instructed by Government to investigate the cause, its spread and likely result.

In a very short period of time, the FC set up a research project in Alice Holt, and a survey covering England from the South coast up to the Midlands. Sample sizes were agreed, a sampling system devised and a full set of 6 inch

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to the mile maps acquired and marked up. Surveyors were brought in, trained and sent on the road.

Within some six weeks, the actual survey was complete, and the full report out by the end of the year. The survey was carried out for some five years, plotting the progress of the disease and its effects. That was a big achievement by a Department that was not large, in the general scheme of things, but was resilient and skilled enough to produce such results in a short space of time.

In the first year I started off in West Sussex and followed the South Coast as far as east Hampshire, staying south of London. Five years later, in the same time period of 5 weeks, my starting point was the same, but my end point was Weston Super Mare, such was the devastating effect of the disease.

In 1975 I was posted to Glentool as Head Forester, Forest Management, dealing with all aspects of Management, and in addition, water supply, sewage, Estate Management and transport. My Chief Forester was Wilf Telford. He was, apparently, reluctant to delegate. But that was not the case, if you took the initiative, he would let you run with it, guide you as necessary, but let you do your own thing. I learned a great deal from him. He once gave a great example of forward thinking in the midst of a crisis. We had a very large forest fire in the Glen of Glentool. Many resources were employed and the situation was difficult. At about 10 pm, Wilf ordered me to go home and sleep! He also told me to be back on site at 6 am to keep a watching brief on the damping down of the fire, whilst everyone else could recover. I sat on my Landrover bonnet for over 12 hours, as various squads came and went in the final control of the fire.

My penultimate posting was to Cheshire Forest District as Forest District Manager.

The posting covered the District of Cheshire, Manchester and Merseyside, Delamere Forest and Delamere Nursery. They all had their challenges, but the biggest was Delamere Nursery.

Between 1984 and 1993 we increased the total plant production from 2.5 million to 12.5 million. There was a great deal of help from the rest of the Commission, but it could not have been completed without the unswerving

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Valediction *Continued*

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attention and hard work of Charles Blackwood and Tim Cockerill, as well as our gangers, Alan Garner, John White and Graham Spruce. In addition to increasing production we had to modernise our stock taking, stock listing and invoicing systems. The initial hard work and development of the paper work and record keeping was in the capable hands of Ellen Holland.

Part of the increase in production came from the development of the vegetative reproduction of Sitka Spruce. That is, the use of cuttings. From a standing start in the early 80s the commercial development was eventually to produce about one million plants per year. Quite a feather in the cap of the Forestry Commission! A couple of Private Nurseries were working on the Project but the Commission led the way.

I was once told that Delamere was the most comprehensive Nursery in the country. We grew all the major species, as well as many minor varieties. Techniques included open nursery, polytunnels, precision seed sowing, cuttings, transplanting, undercutting, cold storage in a humidified atmosphere and plant grading indoors, so that plants were despatched in the best of condition. The FC also pioneered the use of Co-extruded plastic bags (black on the inside and white on the outside to control temperature), and the introduction of palletised delivery systems. The result was that survival after planting increased from about 70% to 97%! I was once called to a forest in South Wales because they were worried about their beating up costs. We visited many sites during the course of the day, but did not manage to catch up with the beating up squad. Survival was that good.

The best professional compliment ever paid to me was by a Private Nurseryman, who told me that we frightened him. We produced good stock, at competitive prices, and we were doing it by the book! Once again, the FC as a body had produced the goods.

I was also made Minerals Officer for North England, giving opinions and planning support for all sorts of Industrial sites such as Mines and Quarries. That was interesting, and I mentally thanked the likes of David Fourn and Ian Carolan, who had done sterling work in Soils section, in developing methods of restoring brownfield sites.

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Valediction *Continued*

My final posting was to Clawdd Newydd as Conservator (North Wales) as part of the Forestry Authority. We were responsible for approving and monitoring planting grants, felling licences and Dedicated Estates. We were also on call to give advice, when needed, and to consult with Local Authorities and Snowdonia National Park, as appropriate. We represented the FC at several local and Welsh national Shows. Our staff was John Roe, Les Starling, Peter Jones as Woodland Officers, and a small clerical support group led by Carol Jones.

In summary I have seen, first hand, the development of many techniques in all aspects of Forestry, and many of them are still in use today, accepted as normal practice, without giving due credit to the FC.

And the other? It somehow engendered a family feeling, a work ethic and a sense of integrity. If it had not done so, the Forestry Commission Association would not have been founded and continued by those who appreciated and enjoyed the common bond.

Finally, I would like to thank all those members of staff who have contributed to my career, to the backroom boys and girls who kept our paperwork straight, and also to all those Forest Workers who marched across hill and dale, with spade in hand, a bag of plants on their back, to put plants into the ground. Without them, we would all have been out of a job!

Forestry Commission Association



Articles

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Using a Tree Bike



Timber extraction, 1960s style



Converting to Pit Props



More photographs on next page ➡



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*Joe Kingsmill, Roger Mitchell, Ash Brown, Arthur Miller, Brian Lloyd Jones
Gwydyr Forest 1962*



*More photographs
on next page*



Ideal Plant, right size, good roots



Articles

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*New Polytunnels at Lobslack Nursery 1992.
We found that Polytunnels of this shape gave the best conditions
for light, ventilation and irrigation*



*It was not all Forestry!
Arthur regularly led a group of riders on an annual cycling event.
100 miles in 12 hours. Riders had to be at least 50 years old.
We usually completed it in much less than the 12 hours*



Lives in Brief

Gordon Morris

Gordon Mervyn Morris



Who passed away peacefully on Monday 21st November 2022
Aged 95 years



Beloved husband of Jean.
Much loved dad of Nigel, Elisabeth and Stephen.
Cherished Grampy of Gareth, Rhys and Alex.
Loving father-in-law of Catherine and Clare.
Dearly loved brother, brother-in-law and uncle.
Gordon will be greatly missed by all his family and friends.

Ian Blake and his colleagues have memories of **GORDON MORRIS** who was born in 1927 and died aged 95.

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Lives in Brief

Gordon Morris continued

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Gordon was raised in Lydney, Gloucs. where he attended Lydney Grammar School and played rugby for the School and also Lydney RFC. He was then called up for National Service and probably due to his height served in the King's Troop of the Grenadier Guards. On completion he joined the FC and attended Gwydyr FTS in the late 1940's before receiving his first posting as an Assistant Forester at St Gwynno Forest, Pontypridd. Whilst at St Gwynno Gordon played for both Pontypridd & Newport RFC at lock forward, narrowly missing out on a Wales cap as Alun James recalls.



He was then transferred to Rheola Forest where he met his lifelong partner, wife Jean, and they subsequently had three children Nigel, Stephen & Elizabeth.

Peter Noot recalls working in Rheola Forest under Gordon as an assistant forester in 1965, when he was in charge of a felling gang

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Lives in Brief

Gordon Morris continued

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near Glynneath, and told me of the many happy memories he has during the time they worked together.

Whilst a Forester at Rheola, Gordon joined Swansea RFC and played 194 times for the Club between 1956-62, including one season as Captain. By now he was known as "Chopper" Morris due to his job and style of tackling! Following his retirement, Gordon became a Team Selector for many years and kept in close contact with the Club he loved. In recognition of these achievements, he was presented with his "100 Caps" cap by Swansea in 2018.

Gordon was transferred to Margam Forest on promotion to Head Forester sometime around 1966 and spent a number of years in and around the Afan Valley under the auspices of Chief Forester Emyr Lloyd.

Mike Blud worked with Gordon at Margam/Michaelstone at this time. As he recounts:-

"Here is a little story from the past.

One sunny day Gordon went into the forest to cut firewood dressed in his usual safety gear----trousers, open neck shirt and SLIPPERS.

Chainsaw starts, a few blocks are cut, then a customary Gordon curse "Christ almighty days!"

He had literally missed cutting his foot off by the thickness of his sock!

When Gordon, Jean and daughter Elizabeth called in unexpectedly two years ago, we went through this little story. Gordon maintains his footwear was far more robust---SLIPON Shoes!!!!!!"

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Lives in Brief

Gordon Morris continued

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It was in July 1969 that Ian first came into contact with 'the man mountain' in an incident that remained as vivid to him now as it did then! He was a trainee forester based at neighbouring Cymmer Forest and was seconded to help set up Croeso '69, an exhibition to celebrate the FC's 50th Anniversary, in The Bryn. He was tasked to find turf as floor covering inside one of the marquees. Whilst driving around he happened upon a grassy area on the forest boundary and started digging. Suddenly a land rover appeared and ground to a halt, whereupon a giant of a man leapt out, his long arms waving like windmills, and with a deafening roar declared 'what the f*** do you think you're doing?'

He tried to explain but was then informed in no uncertain terms that the land was part of Maesteg Golf Course - So embarrassing!!! It took years for him to live that down with Gordon. Thankfully they became friends and colleagues over the years and it was a privilege to have known him.

Gordon was then transferred to Cymmer Forest District, promoted to chief forester and spent several years in charge of probably the most difficult FD in terms of establishment, due to the many fires that occurred each dry Spring. As Duncan Lee recalls "I was with Gordon at Cymmer between 1976-1984 when forest fires were intense. His team leadership at these times was tremendous. RIP Gordon"

In 1984 Rheola, Afan & Cymmer FDs were combined into Coed Morgannwg FD, based at Resolven, under the leadership of Ron Melville who knew Gordon well and states "I was extremely fond of Gordon, both with his forestry hat on and outside FC hours. A sad loss". Gordon was appointed district forester FM at this time and became team leader of the establishment, restocking and maintenance of the 29,000 hectares within the South Wales Valleys which

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Lives in Brief

Gordon Morris continued

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included an annual restocking programme of c.400 Has. A mammoth task that was undertaken with great success.

Alan Hubbuck recalls "Only met him once, but I remember the handshake, my hand took about an hour to recover".

Gordon retired from the FC in 1987 then was instrumental in the establishment of Afan Landscapes, Port Talbot, becoming its CEO and a Director for several years prior to taking a well earned rest. The Company has gone from strength to strength since its formation which is a tribute to Gordon in itself.

A man with a tough exterior but with a heart of gold.





Lives in Brief

John Keenleyside

Norman Davidson has told me of the death of **JOHN KEENLEYSIDE**. He started his forestry career serving time as an apprentice forester for five years on Ford and Etal Estate near Berwick on Tweed. After attending a three month forestry course at Raby Castle Estate, Durham he was allocated a two year placement at Glentress Forester Training School from 1951-53.

On gaining his 'Foresters Certificate' John was posted in August 1953 to the Silviculture North outstation of Forest Research at Wykeham near Scarborough, North Yorks. At the time Wykeham had three different types of nursery; agricultural, heathland and woodland and a Research reserved area with over 80 experiments dating from the 1920s. And so began John's long association with silviculture and forest research.

In 1956 Bush Nursery at Penicuik was his next location where the nursery produced plants for use in forest experiments and was also the base for Genetics (Tree breeding) staff searching out Plus trees and collecting breeding material from them. Part of John's work was helping with the grafting of collected scions on to established root stocks in nursery beds. Following this, John worked in Silviculture North in three different locations at Ardross, Drumtochty, then Lairg arriving there in 1970. His work regime was diverse and included establishing seed orchards, collecting tree breeding material, setting up tree mixture experiments, tree provenance trial plots, fertiliser trials and even some sand stabilisation work at Dunnet sands.

In 1972, after promotion to chief forester, John moved as chief forester to Ardgartan Forest, West Scotland Conservancy. He said that this was a severe shock to the system as he had not worked in a Conservancy forest unit up to this point in his career. He had a steep learning curve, but with a good team backing him, John enjoyed his seven years there. Forest Research called again in 1979 and John was back as chief forester based at Newton Nursery, Elgin,

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Lives in Brief

John Keenleyside continued

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responsible for all research work north of a line roughly from Aberdeen to Fort William. Tree mixtures were in the spotlight but also the potential propagation of cuttings from the very limited amounts of high quality Sitka spruce seed being obtained from seed orchards. John and his excellent team worked on and refined the methods of producing high numbers of cuttings from the limited seed available and improving the success rate of growing cuttings. They discovered that by adding composted pine bark to the rooting medium, the success rate was approaching 100%. John wrote up the results in the RSFS Journal to promote the system to the forest industry. He became a member of the IPPS (International Plant Propagators Society) and presented a paper on Propagation of Forest Trees to the annual meeting of the IPPS at Lancaster University, attended by delegates from all over the world. He also personally visited a number of private forest nurseries throughout Britain advising on best practice. All this was described by John as a wonderful experience.

Following the reorganisation of the Forestry Commission forests, John left Research and became forest district manager at Inverness Forest District for three years before retiring in January 1990. He and his wife Margaret continued to live at Forres. Both were staunch pillars of St Laurence Parish Church as well as to the town of Forres where John was involved for a great many years in growing, advising and assisting in every way with the spectacular annual Forres in Bloom events.

John was a fountain of knowledge on forestry people and their characters and perhaps one story is worthy of being recounted here. This is an extract of his story describing the rigours of bothy life and food in the Dublin Bothy at Ardross in late 1950s. "The next thing I discovered was that when the butcher's van came on Saturday, this was another big occasion. He sold Wattie the biggest lump of boiling beef on the van with the amount of string holding it

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Lives in Brief

John Keenleyside continued

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together, equal to the amount of string in the meat! This was the start of its long career.

On Sunday it cooked all day on an ex Army cooking stove which consumed 1cwt of coal per day. On Monday the meat was carefully hauled out and diced vegetables put in. These were carefully gathered with a spoon with holes in it and placed on the plates, a little stock added, so Monday - Scotch Broth. On Tuesday a handful of dried peas were added and carefully retrieved with the now famous spoon, so Tuesday - Pea soup. On Wednesday the left over tatties were added and stirred in, no need for the famous spoon, Wednesday was Potato Soup. Thursday a little water was added. The inmates called it allsorts soup. On Friday more water was added, they called it Siren Soup as it was all clear, this ended the career of the soup. No soup on Saturday. The Beef itself was Boiled Beef Monday, Cold Beef Tuesday, Minced Beef on Wednesday to end its career. On Saturday at lunchtime when the meal was finished the only thing on the pantry shelf was the salt and pepper pots half empty, everything else had been devoured."

