

SLASHER



Newspaper of the Forestry Commission

No. 342

August 1989



The Forestry Commission stand at the Royal Welsh Show received the Royal accolade when the Duke of Edinburgh dropped in on his tour of the show. There he met Mrs Mary Breeze and Brian Prosser behind the counter. For full report of the show, and of our "winners galore," turn to the centre spread.

The challenges and the key to our success

IN his first major speech as new chairman of the Forestry Commission, Raymond Johnstone has firmly rebutted the environmentalists and other critics.

"Forestry has a good story to tell . . . too little credit has been given for our positive attitude," he said.

Mr Johnstone was speaking at the opening of new offices for Scottish Woodlands Ltd.

He said: "The forestry industry in Britain is on a sound footing, and there is a healthy demand for British timber. Of course I cannot fail to be conscious of the unease felt by many who foresee a significant decline in new planting following the changes made to the forestry support arrangements in last year's Budget."

"I would make two observations . . .

"First, any changes of this nature are bound to lead to a period of adjustment while the industry concerned adapts itself. This is not peculiar to forestry. The industry can take heart, however, from the firm and unequivocal backing it continues to receive from the Government."

Sound footing

"Forestry Ministers have made it clear that they expect the dip in new planting to be a temporary one, but if the rate of recovery proves to be disappointingly slow then they will look at what might reasonably be done."

"Second, last year's changes were necessary if forestry was to be put on a sound footing. I am sure we have every right to look forward with confidence and build on what I regard as a firmer and more acceptable long-term base."

Mr Johnstone added: "I have naturally been very much aware of the outspoken criticism of the effects of forestry voiced by environmental pressure groups over recent years. Much of this criticism has been ill-informed and exaggerated. The problems portrayed have often been echoes of past perceptions and practices which are now changing, and too little credit has been given for the positive attitude that the forestry industry is displaying towards its wider responsibilities."

"I shall, among other things, be looking for opportunities to get alongside my opposite numbers in the conservation agencies — to seek their co-operation and mutual understanding in an effort to help defuse the perceived conflict between forestry and the environment."

No complacency

"We must be careful not to be complacent. The public are becoming increasingly conscious of environmental issues, and rightly so. They are particularly concerned over the loss of tropical forests and the "greenhouse" effect, but we in this country can play a part and show an example by increasing our tree cover in which will be of benefit to the environment."

"Forestry has a good story to tell and all those involved have a part to play in putting it across. The key will be to maintain our standards and to demonstrate that forestry can fulfil multiple objectives while developing in harmony with other interests."

"In this context I welcome the preparation of indicative forestry strategies by a number of Regional Councils. This is a constructive development which should greatly reduce conflicts between competing land use interests."

"I have referred to the challenges which face us, but there are, of course a number of opportunities. It certainly makes sense to plant trees on land currently producing agricultural surpluses; there will also continue to be opportunities for sensitively-designed afforestation in the Scottish uplands; and schemes such as that in the central belt of Scotland for creating new urban forests deserve every support. We in the Commission will do all we can to stimulate them."

"Above all, however, I am anxious to keep in touch with grass-roots opinion. I shall be very ready to listen to what all sections of the industry — processors, landowners, consultants and foresters — have to say: to learn at first hand how they view the future, and what they see as the problems and opportunities."

A GOOD STORY TO TELL — CHAIRMAN

SIR DAVID SAYS HIS FAREWELLS 'TO THE BEST JOB IN BRITAIN'



In the tradition of past departing Chairmen, Sir David Montgomery added his portrait to the gallery of holders of that office when he said his recent farewells to the Forestry Commission.

Watched by Director-General Gwyn Francis and members of staff, he unveiled the picture in headquarters in Edinburgh.

One of his last acts as Chairman was to write to the Editor, this:

"I would be very pleased if you would allow me a small space in your columns to thank all members of the staff of the Commission, who have done so much to help and support me during my time as Chairman."

Although there have been a number of serious problems and issues which have confronted us in that time, the future for forestry and the Commission must be a bright and challenging one. As we move through the '90s into the 21st Century, and despite the more extreme view of some politicians, economists and environmentalists, the case for the expansion of the forest industry in this country and the Commission's role in that expansion is compelling."

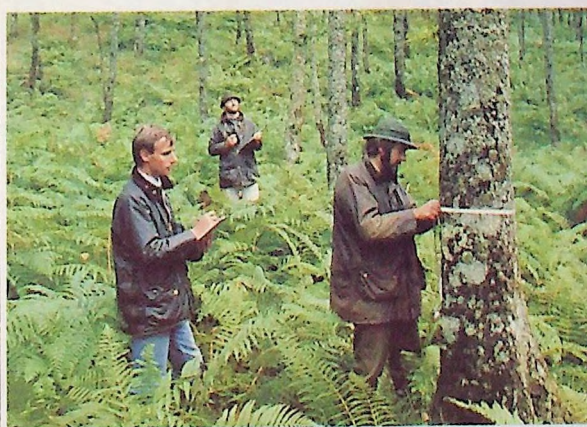
"I have very much enjoyed my time as Chairman and have felt very honoured to have held what one eminent forester called "the best job in Britain." I wish Raymond Johnstone, as my successor, and you all the very best for the years ahead."

David Montgomery, August 1989



The new Chairman, Raymond Johnstone, with the Director-General, Gwyn Francis, and Commissioner Roger Bradley.

Tree survey ends



WITHIN a few weeks we should be seeing the latest tree health survey report. John Innes has completed his 4500-mile trip around sites throughout Britain, covering 310 plots and examining at least 10,000 trees.

Although he is waiting to analyse the records from the districts, he feels that the broadleaved trees are in better health than they were a year ago but there are signs of a deterioration in Sitka spruce which might be attributed to the drought conditions of this summer, accompanied by a build-up of spruce aphids.

Our picture shows John with Ian McNicol and Nick Evans surveying oaks at Loch Lomond (Rowardennan).

Hero of blaze

AN FC forest craftsman has been hailed as a life-saving hero after rescuing a neighbour from his blazing home.

Dennis Milson, from Morgannwg FD in South Wales, heard a faint shout from 75-year-old William Thomas Rees after the pensioner had returned home and put on a chip pan before nodding off in a chair.

Dennis said: "I heard Bill and could tell that something was wrong. I looked out the back window and saw smoke, and then flames in Bill's kitchen. I shouted to my wife, "Bill's house is on fire," and then I rushed in the front and took Bill out."

Mr Rees, who had collapsed in the hallway, added, "After I had nodded off, the next thing I remember is that the place was filled with smoke and Dennis was very brave. He carried me to fresh air and the safety of the street, and then went back to fight the flames."

The local Fire Officer said: "Obviously we could commend Mr Milson for his actions on this particular night."

HERO ON WHEELS



FULL REPORT ON BACK PAGE

HEROINE IN THE AIR



FULL REPORT ON BACK PAGE

HEROES OF A CREEPING INFERNO

— PAGE THREE

Commissioner appointed

MR Terence Mallinson has been appointed as a Forestry Commissioner for a four-year term, from October 1, to replace Mr George Hutchinson.

Mr Mallinson (59), is president of the Timber Trade Federation, chairman of the UK National Hardwood Campaign, and president of the UK Institute of Carpenters.

He is a former chairman of Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA) and president of the Institute of Wood Science.

Mr Mallinson visited Indonesia and Malaysia in June / July this year to meet Government and trade representatives concerned with the sustainability and regeneration of the Far East tropical forests.

He has been chairman of Epping Forest Centenary Trust since its inception in 1978.

A real battle on our hands

NOTHING is safe. Not one single asset the FC manages for the nation (apart from the New and Dean Forests) is exempt from the Government's new sell-off policy.

A few months ago the FC was trumpeting the establishment of 46 Forest Nature Reserves. We now know that they will also be part of the great "rationalisation," as will any other area of conservation or environmental interest. All this because we have been so efficient over the past 8 years that we are now being asked to dispose of ourselves "with vigour" — constitutional sadism.

It still amazes me that so many people with the FC, think the new policy is a good deal. "Just think what it might have been!" they cry. I'm not stupid, neither are the rest of the staff. We all know that we could have been privatised. The fact that we have not does not make this new policy any more palatable. The last issue of *Slasher* printed the Unions' press release in response to the policy and everything we have been told since then has served only to strengthen our opposition to this asset-stripping exercise.

We have had some people trying to convince us of its merits with exhortations of "it's only 11%". Yes, we all know that also, but it really does not appease. It's just like the movies: a good dose of brandy, a branch in your mouth, then you're told, "Don't worry son — it's only coming off below the knee!" No thanks.

Forestry needs expansion and that means Government support for the Commission. Plant and machinery throughout the industry are coming on stream heavily dependent on future supply from the FC. What we need is a long-term forestry policy, not year-to-year planting targets that can be blown off course too easily. A strategic plan that takes us well into the next century; not a de-stabilising, short-sighted policy effectively reducing the Government's commitment to us.

We still don't know what the staffing implications will be. Not even an indication or a formula by which the FC can substantiate the assertion that Industrial staff losses will be no more than have occurred under contractorisation and mechanisation or that Non-Industrial losses will not be significant.

The question of public access remains unanswered. If land is sold to any individual or a private organisation, can a condition of sale be continued public access? Any such legislation would be a major departure from what is ridiculously known as "tradition" in Britain.

It will be interesting to see how this will be tackled but the mentality regarding public and private even reared its head at one of the early War Cabinet meetings 50 years ago. Someone asked the Air Minister, Kingsley Wood if the forests of Germany could be set alight from the air, to which he replied, "Are you aware that they are private property?"

Returning to the Industrial workforce topic, many of you will have seen the centre pages article in "Landworker" on the state of staff morale. People

with years of service to the Commission are queuing up to apply for voluntary redundancy. Under the heading "Is there a future for us with the Forestry Commission?" forest workers tell why they are so disillusioned with life in the FC.

This should concern us all. The FC's Management Plan states that between now and 1992 the Non-Industrial workforce will be reduced from 2169 to 2135 with the Industrial workforce dropping from 3880 to 3125.

I recall a previous Director-General expressing concern that there was too much talk of low morale. "If you talk morale down — that is exactly what will happen."

Unfortunately for this scenario, people do not suddenly turn up for work on a Monday morning having caught low morale over a weekend; it happens because they are being ground down and cannot see the chance of improvement.

The unions, particularly the TGWU and GMB, already have a battle on their hands trying to talk morale up. We are in the business of getting staff behind the FC and committing themselves to it. This, however, can only be done when staff see a future for the FC and that means all levels of management considering very carefully the implications of pursuing certain targets.

There is no doubt that this will be difficult to achieve in the current climate where the £ is the bottom line. It is our duty to fight together for the future of the FC and try to change policies which are not in our interests but, as my Industrial colleagues have said, it's hard to get ready to fight anything when the vanguard have been made redundant.

The Minister for Sport, Colin Moynihan, could be in for a rollicking from the PM before Parliament sits again. A couple of weeks ago he was widely reported as having suggested that there should be players' and supporters' representatives on football club boards. Great idea.

I cannot, however, see the PM being too happy about it. "Look Moynihan, if we push your line we'll have the lefties clamouring for union representation on company boards. Not a chance — go and tell the Press the heat got to you!"

It's a nice thought, but worker representation on boards is probably just too much to hope for at the moment.

British Rail's slogan, "We're getting there," has been taken a bit too far by Scotrail so far as a certain AO in Buchan FD is concerned. She was helping her sister on to a "Sprinter" train in Elgin, when, unfortunately, the train sprinted off — presumably to keep to the accurate timetable.

Our intrepid colleague managed to alight at Keith — 17 miles from Elgin and her car.

I understand one of the comments on her annual report this year is, "Takes too much time on minor tasks!!" (Only joking, Lesley!).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All part of our service

Dear Sir,
Please pass on my grateful thanks to one of your Rangers for rescuing a "Damsel in Distress."

My husband and I were walking our two dogs in Hurn Forest on Saturday, July 8, when I caught my foot in the undergrowth, fell and broke my ankle. This was at 9 pm and my husband had to run the mile back to the car and phone the Verwood Ranger, who immediately left home to come to my aid.

As you can imagine, it was quite scary to lie in the forest with two young dogs for company and darkness falling. I was also feeling quite foolish and embarrassed at having to call your forester out so late.

I need not have worried!! When he arrived, only 45 minutes after my fall, he brought the Land Rover right up the track to where I lay, loaded me, my dogs and my husband on board and gently conveyed us to our car. All this with utmost courtesy, kindness, good humour and minimum of fuss. While I know what a nuisance it is to be called out at night, he made me feel as if it had been no inconvenience at all and that he was happy to help me, saying, "it's all part of the service."

Well, here's one "damsel" who was very grateful to this kind knight in shining Land Rover and who was much better able to cope because of being treated so kindly and considerately.

Please convey our grateful thanks to him and be advised that we are very impressed by our first contact with the Forestry Commission.

Without the help of your ranger, my injury would have been far more painful and I might well have done further damage. As it is I have been able to return to work and am progressing very satisfactorily.

Thank you again,
Yours most gratefully, June Somers (Mrs.), 4 Moreland Road, Bournemouth.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here is a letter which describes the sort of devotion to duty found in so many FC staff. This is frequently not recognised, other than at local level, and involved action well above, and beyond the normal call of duty.

The Ranger concerned was Vic Parry based at our Ringwood block. A month or so earlier, Vic and his wife Pam opened their house, in the middle of the night, to police, FC staff, and relatives of a young timber contractor who had been found dead in the forest. Well done, Vic.

Lost tribe

Remember the plaintive plea from Blairadam in our last issue? Here's the reply sent from HQ...

Dear Dr Livingstone,
I was pleased to read that you are alive and well and currently administering to the needs of the long lost Blairadam tribe.

You showed your usual wisdom in persuading the local tribesmen to stop beating those damned drums and appeal for help via the "Slasher."

As it happens the "great white chief" and his advisors have approved plans for the introduction of an improved system of communications known as Team Briefing which provides not only for information from the "great white chief" to reach you and your worthy tribesmen on a regular basis but also provides for feedback from them to him. All this is achieved by the tried and trusted method of verbal communication between the tribal chieftain and his people and so should not cause too much of a culture shock for the Blairadam tribe.

I do hope that the Blairadam tribe and all other lost tribes in this vast empire of ours will find that Team Briefing is the answer to their current problems and I would ask you to do your best to contain any rebellion for a few more months while we complete plans for their salvation.

Yours sincerely, Doug Goddard, alias Departmental Communications Officer (elect).

Here and there

Emrys honoured



EMRYS HUGHES, retired Forest Craftsman from Llanrwst proudly sports the BEM awarded in the New Year Honours.

Mr Hughes, who worked for the Commission for 42 years, was a member of the TGWU for 46 years and beat steward at Deudraeth. He is very active in the local community and has just completed a term as chairman of Ffestiniog Community Council and is still a community councillor. An elder of the local chapel for some years, he is convener of Ffestiniog Primary School and treasurer of the League of Friends of Ffestiniog Old People's Home.

The award was presented by the Marquis of Anglesey, Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd, at what he described as a "joyful" occasion.

Help others

THE Civil Service Benevolent Fund is continuing its recruitment drive by asking senior managers to become more aware of what the Fund can do to help staff in difficulty.

In each week of 1988 grants totalling £18,000 were allocated to 120 staff and families; the fund provided residential and nursing home care for 286 serving and retired staff and their dependants at 10 homes; and gave convalescent care to 50 staff recovering from surgery, illness or injury.

Currently about 22 per cent of the Civil Service support the organisation with regular contributions through deductions from salary.

For information about the fund, and how you can help it to help others, contact Mr B. Lewis, assistant director fundraising, Civil Service Benevolent Fund, Fund House, Anne Boleyn's Walk, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey, SM3 8DY.

LEGAL EAGLE

AN assistant treasury solicitor responsible for handling some of the Commission's conveyancing work, principally in West England, has dispelled the commonly held misconception of a London-based solicitor in pin-striped suit with little knowledge or interest in things rural!

Andrew Scarfe, who heads one of the conveyancing branches in the Treasury Solicitor's Department, has just bagged his last Munro, having conquered all 277 of them — mostly during the last eight years. For the uninitiated, a Munro is a Scottish peak over 3000 ft.

His final expedition this summer involved mopping up the last few Munros in places as far apart as the Orkneys, the Cairngorms and the Isle of Mull.

Fitness trail

CHILTERN FD recently hosted their fourth annual open day in Wendover Woods, Buckinghamshire. The event followed a hectic schools week, which gave a chance for about 1000 children to gain an insight into forest management.

The launch of a 1500-metre Fitness Trail coincided with the open day. The trail was opened by Robin Brew, 1984 Olympic swimming team captain, and now sports advisor with Aylesbury Vale District Council. The trail was built by local staff, with help from apprentices from RAF Halton.

FELLING CONTEST

THE Royal Scottish Forestry Society's national tree felling contest is at the FC's Tentsmuir Forest, Fife, on Saturday, October 21. Entry forms available from J. F. Welstead, John Clegg and Co., 2 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, EH1 2AS. (Tel. 031-229 8800).

After the storm

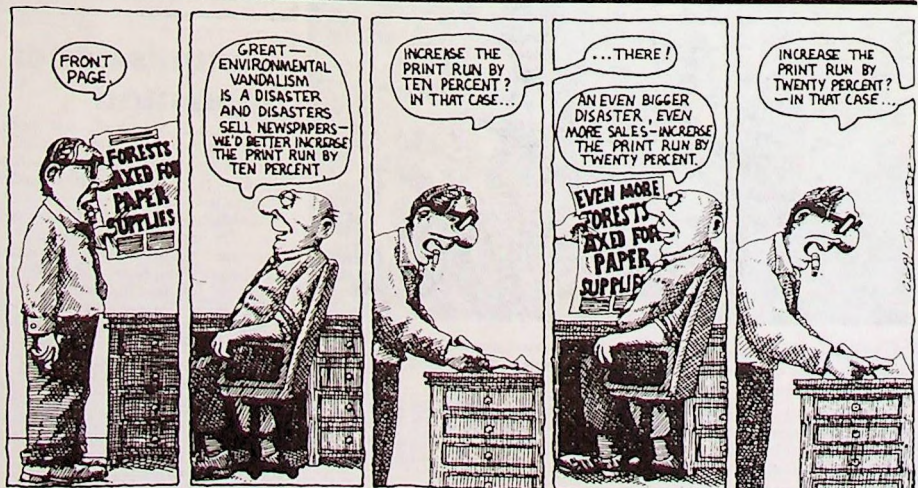
STAFF from West Downs FD and the research division were kept busy with inquiries at this year's Games Fair which was held at Stratfield Saye, near Reading. Theme for the FC display was "After the Storm."

Fly lads!

In their first team competition (from left), David Gilmour, Alan Lindsay and Alex Bolton of Lothian and Tweed Forest District swept the board clean at the Civil Service Sports Association (Scotland) fly-fishing competition on Loch Leven, Fife.

On what turned out to be a very hot and bright day not too many fish were caught overall by the 60 or so competitors. However, Alex out fished all rivals to win the best-catch trophy (a brown trout of 1 lb. 2 oz.) and the best basket trophy. The three lads together then cleaned up the team trophies.

Alex represented Scotland at the National Civil Service Sports Association competition on August 24 at Rutland Water, Leicestershire.



The ever-growing demand... this cartoon was recently published in UK Press Gazette, to whom our thanks for permission to reproduce.

● The super summer brought its problems . . . as highlighted by this dramatic and colourful account of a major fire at Fourlaws in Northumberland. Forestry Commission men fought tirelessly for days on end to control the flames that would not be controlled. Our report is by GEOFF T. ROSTRON, of Rothbury District.

The creeping menace that hit Fourlaws

It was born sometime during the morning of Wednesday, July 19, a tiny flicker of flame among the heather.

Conditions were just right for its survival: weeks of hot sunshine and no rain had dried the peat right down to the bedrock and the old rank heather was brittle to walk on.

During the morning it rapidly grew in size and ferocity. By mid-day it had spread like rings on a pool, moving rapidly in all directions, climbing crags and crossing streams.

Men had arrived by this time and were attempting to control it, but it played games with them pretending to be subdued and as fire crews shouldered their fire beaters and turned away from the extinguished area it would explode into life again more fierce than before, burning men's boots, singeing eyebrows and enveloping fighters in blinding choking smoke. Its shape soon consolidated into an irregular ellipse, the two fronts of the fire several hundred yards long.

Changing tactics

Reinforcements were called for and fire teams from all over Northumberland and beyond moved in with pumps and water from Sweethope Lough brought up to try to bring the flames under control. Day and night the crews worked on and by Saturday the 22nd the fire had changed its tactics — it went underground, eating its way foot by foot, yard by yard, through the peat and erupting into life around tree roots as they burrowed through peat. During the day men and machines worked through the dust, smoke and heat, pulling and heaving on miles of hoses, snaking up rides and over rocks. Fire Brigade pumps ran constantly day and night, not stopping even to refuel.

During the night the nightshift moved through the choking, stinging, eyewatering haze, torches hung round their necks, picking their way through blackened

skeletons of pine trees and over crags, dragging heavy high pressure hoses and blasting each hot spot as it flared into life.

There was swearing, curses and even laughter as night and day started merging into one long grind of fire duty, eating, sleeping and more fire duty.

Lively python

LAUGHTER when one of the fire team collapsed with a sigh on to a safe cool patch of grass to have a drink and a sandwich only to see his haversack erupt into flames as the fire moved underground and reached through to the surface at that exact point.

CURSES when at 2 am the county tractor with a water tank arrived out on the blackened moor only to have flames erupt from the ground under the tyres.

SWEARING when one of the Fire Brigade crews were a little enthusiastic with the water pressure and caused two Forestry Commission men 400 yards away to have an all-in, no holds barred wrestling match with a very heavy and lively python of hose, spitting out 400 gallons of water in just a few minutes.

Lost creatures

For ten days the fire smouldered on, sometimes quiet and seemingly out, then flaring up again in the least expected spot.

On the 11th day the fire was officially out. The area of heather and trees destroyed is now a matter for the record. Not recorded are the birds, frogs, snakes, etc. that were destroyed.

Today, August 14, I walk the perimeter of the fire. There is a strange silence and the smell of destruction, blackened skeletons of hedges and fire beaters, a pair of gloves in a pool of black water, the fingers burnt out. I looked for a plume of telltale smoke and feel relieved to see none. I watch a Peregrine fly over the crag and see two Roe feeding on the new green grass shoots that have sprung up amid the charcoal.

Given time the place may return to normal. Or is that fire still smouldering down among the rocks? Only time will tell.

Off to Russia

HEAD of the FC's research division's seed branch, Dr Peter Gosling, is to lead a "seed dormancy" meeting at the Soviet National Academy of Sciences next year — the Commission's contribution to Glasnost, so to speak.

Dr Gosling was invited to become chairman of the International Seed Testing Association's forest tree and shrub seed committee at this year's ISTA congress held in Edinburgh.

Forestry featured more prominently on the agenda than at any other of the previous 21 congresses.

This year's event was attended by more than 400 delegates from 70 countries, and most came to discuss agricultural and horticultural seed testing.

In a welcome on behalf of the Government, Mr Hamilton, emphasised the importance of trees as both "a cash crop and essential element of the global eco-system."

Since the establishment of the Commission in 1919, he said, "the area of productive forest in Britain has more than doubled with widespread Government and private sector plantings."

"The great bulk of the planting has taken place in Scotland — an activity which our not always kindly climate actually favours."

With special reference to seed and the FC, he emphasised how "from the outset the FC recognised the vital importance of striving to improve the quality of our forests by ensuring that they are established only from good quality seed."

Congress included not only business sessions but also a scientific symposium. The increasing international importance of forestry came through at both. At the scientific meetings, whereas tem-



Some of the ISTA delegates at Alice Holt.

perate tree species have usually received most attention, the storage and dormancy problems associated with tropical tree seeds stole the show.

Excitement generated by this research appeared to stimulate numerous volunteers to come forward at the business sessions and offer future help.

The post-congress forestry tour was attended by 15 participants representing every continent except Antarctica.

It covered Roslin; seed origin and progeny trials at Wark in Kielder

Forest; container and bare root nursery production facilities as well as vegetative propagation at Delamere nursery; a visit to the Oxford Forestry Institute; seed facilities at Farnham; and a brief stop at the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens at Wisley; and Wakehurst Place.

The programme (covering approximately 800 miles in five days), also squeezed in a look at Hadrian's wall, a trip on Windermere, and a visit to Mary Arden's House (girlhood home of Shakespeare's mother) in Stratford on Avon.

Butterfly quiz plea

Has the hot and dry summer of 1989 produced record numbers of butterflies in your area? Or has the drought depleted the population?

The Nature Conservancy Council and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology are carrying out a joint monitoring scheme throughout Britain and would welcome information.

Dr Ernie Pollard of the NCC says: "Early indications suggest the number of most species have increased. Some species are exceptionally abundant but in drought areas there may be problems."

For further information, contact Dr Pollard on Cranbrook (0580) 240674.

Record breakers!



Inside, outside . . . musical notes and musical chairs.



Uphill with the yompers . . . and down dale with the fell runners at Kielder.

KIELDER YOMP SETS THE PACE

COUNTRY dancing, a barbecue, jugglers, much music . . . and record breakers. PLUS uninvited guests.

Yes . . . the midges were biting when the fourth Kielder Folk Festival got into swing this month.

The rain was falling, too — but that didn't put a damper on the fun o' the festival which attracted a strong attendance, with numbers well up on last year.

With a much broader family appeal, the festival hopped off to a packed start with a family country dance ably accompanied by a local seven-piece group — the Hollybush Dance Band.

Athletic events the following day resulted in some spectacular performances: the 17 mile yomp (with 20 lb packs) record was slashed by a staggering 22 minutes to 3 hours 36 mins. by John Humble; first in the fell race was Les Stephenson, covering the 17 miles in 2 hours 45 minutes; and over the same course a new event, the Challenge Walk, resulted in a fastest time of 3 hours 55 mins. for L. Barnes.

First FC competitor home was Graham Pyatt from NRS who collected a trophy for his fell race time of 3 hours 8 mins.

The "yomp" race involved running, or walking, a 17 mile route through Britain's largest forest — including a climb of over 3000 feet. A tough challenge made even tougher by the fact that each "yomper" had to carry a 20 lb pack!

During the Saturday a plethora of entertainment was varied from a bouncy castle and Punch and Judy show to jugglers and music-making; and a chance to ride in a Shire horse-pulled wagon.

The historic courtyard of Kielder Castle — the FC visitor centre and focal point for the Border Forest Park — provided an elegant setting for a DIY barbecue.

Musical competitions in the castle attracted a wide following from young and old alike.

Chief among the attractions of the weekend was a concert given by the folk group "Whippersnapper" featuring ex Fairport Convention fiddler Dave Swarbrick and ex Level 42 guitarist Kevin Dempsey. Together with support group 2nd String, Whippersnapper enthralled a full house with their professional playing. As a grand finale to Saturday's entertainment, a Scottish country dance went on until the wee sma' hours.



Struth! It's hard work.

WINNERS GALORE!

THE strength of an organisation is built on the calibre of its workforce . . . and there's an abundance of ability in the Forestry Commission.

Make no mistake, awards galore go to prove that. And visitors galore who are drawn to FC properties, exhibitions and other events underline the fact.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people get an inside view of how our forests thrive and how the industry as a whole flourishes.

This summer, a whole galaxy of VIPs have joined the throngs to see the FC at work.

LIKE the Duke of Edinburgh, who joined the crowds at the Royal Welsh Show, where the FC won two gold awards.

LIKE the Duke and Duchess of York, who visited a joint FC and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds exhibition at the other end of Britain.

LIKE the then Minister of Agriculture who presented a major award to the FC's Low Fell, Grizedale, Forest in Cumbria (see foot of page).

LIKE David Bellamy who joined in . . . yes, yet another FC award-winning ceremony: and

HOW OUR FORESTS PROVE A MAGNET FOR THE CROWDS

like Harry Secombe, whose Highway programme will put Roslin on the TV map next month (Sept. 17).

Winners galore . . . meeting winners galore. Forestry Commission winners, of course.

LIKE the gold medal winners at the Royal Welsh Show — the FC stand which featured training and safety with chainsaws. In charge of the stand was Don Case, head training officer in Wales, who was assisted by Gerwyn James and Jim Sauter. And yet another gold medal winner at the show was the FC display, "Welsh Forest Harvest", the work of a team headed by Brian Pulford and Derek Bayliss from the Wales recreation staff.

Yes . . . the Forestry Commission is a winner!



The Duke of Edinburgh inspects some of the FC publications at the stand, where he talked to Mrs Mary Breeze (Newtown FD) and Brian Prosser (Llandoverly). He asked them which was the most popular publication and was told the FC recipe book was a best seller.



Pictures by Graham Robertson, FTC.



Bird call

THE Duke and Duchess of York were among the thousands of visitors to a special exhibition in Inverness showing how the Commission and the RSPB are working on conservation projects in North Scotland.

The exhibit included an artificial osprey nest, a bird hide and an excellent computerised audio backing of bird calls.

Later in the summer a smaller version was the feature of the FC stand at the Black Isle Show, Easter Ross, where it attracted a constant flow of visitors who kept FC and RSPB staff busy answering questions about the conservation programmes.

Our picture shows Tony Hinde explaining FC work to the Duke and Duchess below the occupant of one of his artificial osprey nests.

GANGER WINS BA



RAY BEASLEY, a ganger based at Hereford beat of Dean & Three Counties Forest District and employed mainly on DOT work, has received his BA degree in mathematics.

Ray commenced his six-year course with the Open University in the early 1980s, studying 15 to 20 hours a week for 32 weeks each year. He also attended summer schools and numerous evening classes.

Assistance with fees etc was gained through the Civil Service further education scheme.

Great for Grizedale



THE Royal Forestry Society's Duke of Cornwall's Award for the management of commercial woodlands in conjunction with wildlife and landscape interests has been awarded this year to the Forestry Commission's Low Fell, Grizedale Forest in Cumbria.

Equal second were the Commission's Deepdale, Dalby Forest, and Viscount Rochdale's Lingholm Woods.

The competition, confined to the Northern England counties of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria, attracted twelve entries and the judges noted the important emergence of positive management to diversify age structure and tree species in woodland planted after the last war.

The 157 hectares of Low fell, Grizedale Forest, was selected as an illustration of multiple land use "showing imaginative interpretation of landscape and wildlife values, integrated at all levels into the forest management." Specific wildlife management areas have been a feature for some 25 years; ponds have been created; bat and bird boxes erected.

The awards were presented by the then Minister of Agriculture, Mr John MacGregor, at the Great Yorkshire Show, Harrogate, when he stressed the value of integration of conservation with timber production on the increasing forestry area. He is pictured with Brian Mahony, FDM South Wales, winner of the Cornwall trophy, and John Mackenzie, FDM, North York Moors.

WILDLIFE PRAISE BY DAVID BELLAMY

THE success of foresters' work in wildlife conservation was praised by Professor David Bellamy when he presented FC's Ron Hoblyn with the top individual award in the "Birds and Countryside Awards" scheme organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in conjunction with Esso.

At a special luncheon in London, Professor Bellamy said: "I welcome the moves that have been made and are continuing to be made by those in the forestry industry to secure the future of endangered species."

The award was in recognition of the work that Ron, Recreation Forester, has carried out in Thetford Forest, preserving rare species of birds on the East Anglian brecklands, including round-the-clock protection for woodlarks, nightjars, goshawks and — until this year — the red-backed shrike.

Through his efforts a pair of red-backed shrikes successfully reared broods in 1986, 1987 and 1988 but this year only one of the pair returned to the nest site.

Ron's meticulous recordings of woodlarks over two decades was



Ron receiving his award from David Bellamy.

vital to the success of a Commission-funded RSPB project investigating the use being made of the forest by woodlarks and setting out guidelines for their management within a normal production forest.

He was also largely responsible for the establishment of the Thetford Bird Trail which is used by thousands of birdwatchers.

Harry's here



Harry Secombe and TV's "Highway" crew paid a visit to NRS at Roslin as part of their forthcoming programme about the town.

Harry chatted to Bill Mason about the work of the research station and was given a tour around two poly houses (above).

The programme is due to be shown on all ITV regions on Sunday, September 17. Another programme, which has already been shown, was Grampian TV's "Country matters", a weekly show which considers various rural communities, industries and wildlife in the North of Scotland.

Norman Davidson, the new FDM at Buchan, explained the role of the Commission and described some of the



work that takes place in Clashindarroch Forest.

Maggi Gilvray, one of the landscape architects, was also able to illustrate landscape design techniques.

Suffolk success



THE FC stand at the Suffolk Show again proved to be a favourite with the crowds, estimated to be in excess of 100,000 and won a "Highly Commended" certificate.

With the thrust on the Farm Woodlands and Woodland Grant Scheme, the message was driven home to land and woodland owners by way of displays and literature inside the Conservancy caravan. The increasing variety and interest of Commission publications won praise.

The most difficult job at any county show is to get "the punters" in. Typically, the average show-goer, interested in rural matters, but not in just another static display, wants to be entertained, then enticed into the stand to get the message over.

To this end, Joe Seichter, long-serving Commission craftsman provided a crowd-stopping display of

chainsaw sculpting (pictured above). Now a Commission campside warden, Joe has been carving the inconceivable from logs for many years.

Horses' heads, owls, storks, chains, tables and chairs were all deftly carved from windblown Scots pine, taken from Rendlesham Forest. The finished results will be on display on the Tangham Trail, designed for use by the disabled, suitably secured!

The spin-off of "customers" into the caravan was noticeable. Once attracted to the site, the visitor seemed less inhibited and more likely to ask questions or pick up literature.

A live broadcast on radio from the FC stand and the sculpting proved, of course, a magnet for photographers.

The only problem remains on how to top it next year with something bigger and better. Any suggestions?

The Guinness Book of Records lists Ae as the shortest place name in Britain. For foresters, it is the hub of training facilities. JACK WADE, the training manager, takes us into the centre in the village, which lies 11 miles from Dumfries and is the home of the FC's Machine Operator Training Centre...

Aye . . . Ae is a top centre!

THE need for a machine operator training centre was recognised in the early 1970's and the decision was taken to establish non-residential centres at Ae and at Rheola in Wales.

Staff for the two centres were recruited during 1974 and early 1975 and started training before the buildings were erected.

An early memory of this difficult period was seeing George Pyrah, our first mechanical engineer instructor, training a loader operator in the practice yard.

Rain was hammering down and the only shelter was under an articulated lorry bed with a log to sit on, a polythene sheet to cut down the wind, and communication to the trainee via a radio handset.

His red face and blue nose are an unforgettable memory!

INCREASE

The Ae centre, completed in the spring of 1976, was staffed by one head forester, one forester and one mechanical engineer.

Emphasis on the early training was on skidders and independent loaders; both machines based mainly on agricultural tractors. In addition, some chainsaw, sawbench and peeler courses were undertaken.

The increasing use of purpose-built machines, eg. the Timberjack and Logmaster skidders, led to an increase in staff at the centre to meet the need for supervisor as well as operator training.

By the early 1980's the training had become so specialised that it could only be provided at a single centre and Rheola was closed.

The late 70's and early 80's saw the first significant introduction of tractor trailer and purpose-built forwarders, plus the first processors. The need for a great deal of FC mechanic training was then identified to meet increased demand for technical expertise in FC workshops.

THIRD PHASE

Development of machines during the 80's, both in size and complexity, rendered the first and second phase of building inadequate. The third phase is now almost complete with the latest extension to cater for specialised engineering training.

As training manager, I am assisted by training officers Les Bryson, Stewart Coombie, Neil McKay, Archie Anderson and John Graves and typist / receptionist Fiona Fitzgerald.

All training officers are registered in the Forestry Training Council's list of approved instructors.

Although the bulk of the training to date has been for FC personnel some training has been made available for staff at educational establishments both in the UK and from abroad.

Additional courses are run by peripatetic B&T instructors using the centre facilities.

SNOW TIME!

In this latter group I recall an operator from St Helena who came for training on a tractor / trainer skidder outfit. He arrived in Britain at the start of one of our wintry spells and his first requirement was for warm clothes and a set of waterproofs.

However the look of delight on his face and the way he reacted to his first contact with snow (in this case ten inches deep) on a clear day at the top of Ae forest was unforgettable.

Many of the courses run at the MOTC are not available anywhere



John Graves in the new classroom at Ae.



Michael Gentles (York FD) and Hugh MacNeill (Torlundy Repair Depot) with instructor Archie Anderson.



Foresters being trained in the use of chemical sprayers.



Jack Wade give instructions to supervisor Neil McKay.



John Graves gives instructions on hydraulics to Border FD pair Bob Bathgate and Gordon Robson.

else in Britain. The range of courses are listed in the FC Training Code and may be described as:

Operators, mechanics and supervisors take part in courses such as Skidders, Forwarders (Tractor trailer and purpose-built), Processors, Harvesters, Scarifiers,

Hydraulic systems, Electrical systems, Harvesting systems and Trainability testing.

Staff are also available to provide advice on working systems, operational practice, safety procedure, engineering problems and accident investigation in all the topics listed.

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SHOUT ABOUT? LET US KNOW AND WE'LL DO THE SHOUTING FOR YOU. WRITE TO THE EDITOR, THE SLASHER, FC, EDINBURGH. SEND US PICTURES, TOO.

Top men with top service



John Fletcher and Maureen try out their new garden seat.

THE year has already seen the retirement of leading officials, and two more who have joined their ranks are John Fletcher, Conservator W(E), and Mike Reaney, the principal civil engineer in Wales Conservancy.

In July, John Fletcher retired after 37 years, spent first in the old NW(E) Conservancy, followed by spells in E(E), HQ and finally 6½ years as Conservator W(E).

On his last day at work he invited all Conservancy office staff to a buffet lunch, at which he was presented with various barbecue accessories. In the evening a dinner was held in the Fry Club at Keynsham, attended by some 140 of John's friends and colleagues from all over the country.

The Director-General presented John with a leather brief-case and John's wife Maureen received a shooting stick, a more permanent memento of the occasion than a bouquet.

The FDM at Marches unveiled a gift of a rustic garden seat made by staff in the Forest District.

John was also given a substantial cheque, which he has donated to Tree Aid, with which he has been closely involved since its inception in 1986. He is now its honorary director and vice-president of ICF and a director of FICGB — thus

maintaining a strong link with forestry in retirement.

Earlier in the year, Mike Reaney OBE bade his farewells.

At a party in Neath, Conservator John Morgan presented an inscribed miner's lamp and cheque which Mike has put towards a beautiful brass Fitzroy gun marine barometer mounted in a gimbal. Mrs Jean Watkins presented his wife Ann with a bouquet.

After the presentation, Mike showed an excellent film of road construction in the 1960's. Informative and amusing too — for instance it demonstrated the use of a roller as an excellent tool to press trousers!

Mike joined the Navy although he was prone to sea sickness. Later he took a degree in engineering at Queen's University, Belfast, before joining BICC, then Lancashire County Council.

After a spell in Nigeria, he joined the Forestry Commission at Llandovery for a brief spell. Mike spent 20 years as Area Civil Engineer at Neath, where he became noted for his precise and thorough manner, set against a strangely oblivious attitude to the passage of time.

His work at Neath was rewarded by being promoted to Conservancy Civil Engineer for South Wales in 1983. On re-organisation, he became Land Reclamation Engineer, where he followed his keen interest in restoration methods and land/tip stability problems.



THE Northern Research outstation moved out of its temporary accommodation in May to a new "home" at the former Talybont-on-Usk Forest Office. The long-awaited move meant farewells to one member of staff — Mrs Violet Griffith, whose personal ID number was Research Worker No. 3, and who decided that at 80 years of age it was time to go.

Mrs Griffith had cleaned the offices since after the war (there is no one around who can be more precise) and served with Inland Revenue, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Defence and several changes of FC departments.

Present and past staff presented the youthful Mrs Griffith with a garden seat (above).



Mike Reaney with his wife Ann and the Conservator, John Morgan.



A stick of verse for Dick

FRIENDS and colleagues gathered in Brechfa to bid farewell to RICHARD (DICK) DENMAN on his retirement after 38 years' service.

He spent all his service in Wales, joining the then North Wales forest of Coed y Brenin in 1951, appointed ex-school ganger at Brechfa in South Wales in 1950, followed by periods of time at Cynant and Tair Onen forests before returning to Brechfa as Chief Forester and subsequently to complete his career as District Manager.

David Hughes (Assistant Conservator, Operations) wished Dick and Mrs Denman the very best for the future and presented a gift of a garden cultivator on behalf of friends and colleagues both from within and outside the Commission.

Mrs Denman was presented with a basket of flowers by Mrs Ceinwen Johnston, AO, at Brechfa FD.

Further tribute was paid to Dick in a Welsh verse composed by Gwyn Owen, MBE, former Press Officer in the old South Wales Conservancy. Gwyn also presented him with a "walking stick," made by his own hand, as a "sign of his friendship and co-operation over many years" and accompanied by the following words:—

*A walking stick — not just an aid,
More like a trusted friend unpaid;
A lick of varnish, a polish or two,
It will support you all life through;
And, if in trouble, no need to shout,
You have a friend with a lot of clout.*



It's 'bye in Brecon

COLLEAGUES and staff have said "farewell" to ganger GORDON WILLIAMS, of Beacon FD, who retired after 37 years.

He started in the old Coed Taf Forest and worked on a succession of jobs on both forest management and harvesting and marketing including driving a Holder and Sifer. For the last six years he was supervising standing sales, where his expertise and local knowledge will be greatly missed.

Gordon's late wife, Betty, was District office clerk for about 10 years.

Our picture shows Bob Farmer, forest management officer, presenting him with his long service certificate. Colleagues contributed to a pair of binoculars which were presented by

David Evans, FDM Chilterns, formerly of Brecon District.

Up in Edinburgh, Mrs DENISE STEWART retired in August after 14 years service. After three years in Engineering Division, Denise went to purchasing branch where among other things she specialised in the procurement of VME, herbicides and pesticides. During that time she made many friends throughout FC and in the commercial field.

A prodigious reader, Denise was presented with book tokens plus money towards a garden seat. She intends to continue her short story writing... perhaps we will see a special short story for "Slasher." How about it, Denise?

Best wishes from Wales



BRYN MORGAN of Dolgellau FD, retired recently following a long period of illness.

He had spent 42 years in the Commission having started as a schoolboy of 14 years. Bryn's mother felled and extracted timber in Dyfi Forest for seven years in her younger days.

Conservator John Morgan is seen presenting him with his long-service certificate at Ceinws. We wish him better health in his retirement.

Two other retirements in Dolgellau FD... MORRIS JONES, although originally a "Dyfi" man, spent some time in what was formerly Hafren Forest after reorganisation of 1975 before returning to the fold in 1984. His latter years were spent on FM duties. One of his man hobbies is singing and he is a member of Machynlleth Male Voice Choir.

Morris treated his family, friends and former colleagues to a party where FO III Meirion Morris presented him with his long-service certificate for 35 years.

HUMPHRA EVANS retired in May after 25 years. Initially an H&M worker, he completed his service on FM as a workmate of Morris Jones. A craftsman in more ways than one who will be sorely missed when it comes to doing all the small specialist building and carpentry jobs required in the forest.

DMB Yorke, FDM Dolgellau, wished Humphra a long and happy retirement on behalf of all forest staff.



MERVIN EVANS, mechanic 1 at St Hilary Workshop retired recently after 23 years with the Commission at both Mile End Workshop and St Hilary where he was based in the Afan FD.

At the Ferry Boat Inn, Briton Ferry, Mervin laid on a buffet for all who attended at his own cost.

Michael Toland, workshop manager at St Hilary, presented him with a fishing rod and tackle from all his workmates in both workshops and Forest Districts of South Wales.

... and in Scotland



BOB CRINGEAN, workshop foreman at Heathhall, retired in May after more than 38 years in South Scotland. Assistant CME David McQuillan presented him with his long service certificate and wallet of notes collected from friends and colleagues.

Keeping the ball rolling

YET another group of the FC Retirement Association has been formed... this time in Suffolk, where about 50 former employees of the FC have banded together as The Breckland Group.

About 30 attended the inaugural meeting at Santon Downham, and 25 apologies for absence were received, the majority indicating they would be joining. Next meeting on September 20 at Santon Downham (start 2.30 pm).

The first chairman is Steve Chapman, who can be contacted at 2 Birds Croft, Great Livermere, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 1JJ.

For its third get-together, SOUTH WALES group had a great day out in Afan Country Park, Mike Reaney showed 21 members how the former

coalmining and brickmaking area had been transformed from a derelict site to the green and wooded glades of Margam Forest in South Wales' first tip reclamation scheme. He also organised a quiz which was won by Ray Cole, with Phyllis Jenkins a close second.

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 5. Visit to old gold mine workings near Dyfed at 11 am. Contact Gwen Owen, secretary.

Editor's note: Group officials are asked to provide dates of forthcoming events well in advance of the dates set. Copy for our next issue (October) should be in our hands by September 12th. Please print all placenames and times clearly in the format as given in this report. Send to Editor, The Slasher, FC, Corstorphine, Edinburgh.



Retired members of the South Wales group on their Margam outing.

Nancy, Mavis bid farewells

TWO stalwarts of the office — one in North Scotland, the other in Nottinghamshire — have retired after more than 60 years' service between them.

They are Mrs Nancy Smith of the Black Isle (just two days short of 36 years' service), and Mrs Mavis Hinds, AO, of the FD office at Edwinstowe, Mansfield, who had 24 years with the FC.

The rabbit



BILL TAYLOR has retired after 45 years' service which began when he was 15 at Fetteresso. After Forestry School his travels took him to various Forest Districts in Wales until 15 years ago when he became FM Forester at Bennachie.

Friends and workmates presented Bill with a watch, cheque and luggage for a three week holiday in Canada. His wife Madge was given a bracelet and flowers.

Being a lover of rabbits, Bill is seen here receiving a Bennachie rabbit from keeper Sandy Anderson. The girls from Buchan sang him a song reminding him of many of the fun moments at Ordiquhill.

... and the lucky dog

CRUMBS! There's a dog eating our lovely cake! But it was all just a part of the fun when John Grayson said his farewells at Market Rasen, North Lincs, after 38 years' service.

The magnificent cake was made by colleagues' wives, and at the cutting ceremony, John could not resist giving a first morsel to the terrier than insisted on getting in on the act. John was also presented with a power sander.

A Sussex man through and through, John started at Friston on the Sussex coast in 1951 and apart from several years in mid-Wales he spent all of his time in East England, working his way around the Conservancy, meeting and making many friends as he went.



Friday, July 21, saw Nancy's last day of her career, all but five years of which were on the Black Isle as forest clerk. Since 1984 she was an AA and then AO at the Longman Workshop.

Her main interests of travel and bowls have been extended in her retirement by the gift of a video recorder from colleagues.

Mavis's farewells were said just three weeks earlier, on Friday June 30.

A presentation party was attended by sixty friends, colleagues and family — appropriately at the Robin Hood Inn in the heart of Sherwood.

Mavis was popular and highly respected for her unique style of management in the forest office. John Butterfield, EO from personnel Cambridge, formally thanked her for her excellent service and for the outstanding contribution she made to steering through computerisation, sometimes in difficult circumstances.

He also recounted one or two amusing incidents from Mavis's past regarding cycling to work over bumpy forest roads in the early hours of the morning and being the innocent victim of "dangerous practices in the bedroom!"

Terry Birch, District Forester H and M, informally presented Mavis with gifts of her choice namely, a bottle garden (pop bottle and packet of cowslip seeds), a painting set (rusty old tin and second hand creosote brush) and a flower vase (jam jar containing wild flowers looking the worse for wear!).

Austen Gale, Andrew Powers and Janet May followed with the formal presentation of a professionally made up bottle garden, a full watercolour painting set and easel, and a lovely Edinburgh Crystal flower vase.

Hilary Cockayne presented Mavis with a beautiful basket of flowers, and Suzanne Gizzard gave Lionel Hinds a bottle of malt. THREE more recent retirements were those of...

Bill McCook, forest craftsman in Moray Forest District N(S), who had 41 years' service.

Dave Wright, ganger at Wykeham Nursery, after 42 years' service which began at Langdale Forest.

Archie MacFadyne, former tractor driver, lately FM Squad, Kilmichael, Loch Awe FD, after 35 years' service.

We hope to carry pictures and fuller reports of these retirement farewells in the next edition.

You can help Belize forest

Would you like to help out in an international scheme to save the flora and fauna of Belize?

The aim is to acquire and preserve a superb tract of tropical forest and its associated wildlife.

If you want to know more about how a small contribution can help to maintain this tropical rain forest, contact Jon Westlake, Forestry Commission, Victoria Terrace, Aberystwyth, Wales SY23 2DQ, tel. 0970 612367.



Nancy, flanked by Ken Roscoe, A and FO North Scotland and Nancy Grant, says goodbye.



Mavis with husband Lionel and some of their gifts.

Ron's number's up!



VINTAGE car owner Ron Marnie, FDM Buchan, received a fitting farewell gift on his retirement from Cost Centre 513... the number plate X513 FDM. Truly appropriate!

Friends, colleagues and ex-colleagues gathered at Huntly from near and far for his farewell, and as anyone who knows the "Fuehrer" will appreciate, all speeches contained recollections of hilarious events and conversations throughout Ron's varied career as an FDM and a training officer.

A bouquet for Mrs Marnie, an antique tantalus (with starter bottle of the "eratur") and the unique number plate were presented before Huntly's answer to the Pasadena Roof Orchestra carried everyone off into Saturday morning.

OBITUARY

David Robertson

DAVID ROBERTSON, Chief Forester at Achray Forest until retirement in late 1981, died suddenly at his home on July 18.

David started his forestry training at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh before the war. He then joined the Ministry of Supply (timber control) until 1945 when he started work with the FC at Barcaldine. From there he worked in various forests such as Glenduror Knapdale and Balquhider before going to Achray in 1964.

David's eye for detail resulted in Achray being recognised as one of the most picturesque and attractive forests combining timber production with recreation, wildlife and landscape values.

David leaves a wife Molly, children David and Joy, and four grandchildren.

Bernard S. Gordon

THE funeral of Mr Bernard Stephen Gordon of Ingoldsby Lodge, took place at St Bartholomew's Church, Ingoldsby.

Mr Gordon died of a heart-attack while bowling at Corby Glen the previous week.

Aged 63 years, he was a retired forester with 30 years' service in the Forestry Commission.

When he left the Army after service in Burma he went to the Forester Training School at Lynford Hall, in Norfolk and Ben-Moor Forester Training School in Scotland. His first forest was on Thetford Chase in Norfolk, moving to Yardley Hastings, Northampton and then to Ingoldsby in 1967.

He was a past chairman of the Midland Shetland Pony Show and a retired school-governor.

Alan Joseph

THE funeral took place on July 7 of Alan Joseph, mechanical inspector, who died at work at Dyfnant Forest on June 29.

Alan, a 41-year-old bachelor had been a mobile mechanic and inspector for over 12 years, outstationed from Chirk Workshop, covering the Dolgellau, Newtown and Ceredigion Forest Districts. He had an expert knowledge of forestry and civil engineering machinery.

More than 400 people attended his funeral, including a large representation of FC staff, friends and colleagues.

Thanks

Dear Sir,
May I through your columns thank all colleagues and friends for their concern, encouragement and "visitations" during my stay in Carlisle Hospital following my recent injury in a road accident. As I was 140 miles from home, the visits were most welcome, and hardly a day went by without the sight of a friendly face.

A potted-up natural regen. SS evoked considerable interest among the nurses.

Thanks again, Charles Blackwood, Cheshire Forest District.

These sporting types LIGHTLY GOES ALAN THE ACE!



Ready for the off... Alan at Land's End.



Phew... it's over! After 872 miles.

Challenge to all Yompers

COED Y Brenin's 7th annual yomp took place in early June in the hills and valleys of Dolgellau Forest District.

Over 100 competitors from North Wales enjoyed the weather and scenery, while overcoming a tough course of about nine miles over a variety of terrain, which included four river crossings.

Each year the course follows a different route, and many of the participants, despite carrying a pack of 25 lbs or 15 lbs for male or female respectively, come back again and again.

One of those stalwarts is Dai Thompson, a Coed y Brenin chainsaw operator, who "always likes a challenge," whether it's the Yomp, rugger, cricket, golf, Corris Challenge or even a quite game of bowls.

This year he was the second quickest Commission entrant, with a time of 2 hours 41 minutes, just 60 minutes behind the overall winner Dave Anderson of Dyfi Forest (Dolgellau FD), who also won the inter FC Challenge Cup.

Dave Barker, pre-OND student at Coed y Brenin, and Chris Edwards, FO III at Dolgellau, fresh from his high altitude training on the beaches of Cornwall, also turned in gritty performances.

Although the minimum age of entry was 17, one of the "unofficial" entrants for the seventh year in succession was 13-year-old David Owen, who first took part at the age of six, when he was carried through the bog on his dad's shoulders. "Dad" is a retired Coed y Brenin craftsman.

This year, the event started and finished at the Maesgwm Visitor Centre, where Gwynedd's Chief Ambulance Officer presented the prizes.

Officials hope that perhaps next year they can welcome FC participants from further afield.

Indoor "camping" facilities are available if required.

However, there's a reminder from the organisers that the Yomp is tough and is there to sort out the men and women from the boys and girls!

LONELINESS of the long-distance runner, perhaps... but Alan Lightly was never lonely on his magnificent cycling effort, with an equally-magnificent family team behind him in his long-distance spin from Land's End to John o' Groats in June.

More than 30 years ago, Alan was a junior time trial champion of Dunfermline and District Cycling Club, holding club records at ten and 15 miles. Then he gave up the sport after national service.

Last year, he took to the saddle again on doctor's orders after a severe fall left him with some injuries — and 11 months later, he completed the full run of the length of Britain, End to End.

All in three days... and all at the age of 54. No mean feat!

How did he do it? Let Alan — who is based at the Commission offices at Itton Forest, near Chepstow, Gwent — tell his story himself, taking it up from the time when a chest specialist recommended he resume cycling after his fall. He writes...

After the initial shock of present traffic and road conditions and getting used to the machine, I was soon addicted and made contact with and joined the CTC (Cyclists Touring Club), Audax UK (Long Distance Cycling Association), the VTTA (Veterans Time Trial Association) and Monmouth Cycling Club. By September 1988 I cycled 180 miles from Monmouth to Thetford, East Anglia, and trained vigorously all winter with an indoor trainer.

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I commenced time trial racing last March and have so far beaten the veterans' standard times for 10, 25, 50 and 100 miles with 30 miles and 12-hour events still to come, achieving a personal best at 25 miles of 1 hr 2 min 7 secs (+ 11 mins 9 secs better than standard), and now qualify for a plaque from the VTTA at the end of the racing season in October.

Long-distance trials have been completed, along with son Alastair, at all four distances 200, 300, 400 and 600 Kms to qualify as a Super Randonneur. These were used as elevation, nutritional and training rides for the End to End attempt.

The Land's End to John o' Groats ride was arranged under the regulations of Audax UK, the UK branch of Audax Club Parisien and Les Randonneurs Mondiaux. Control points and times were planned and approved in advance to a self-imposed gold standard of a total of 80 hours for the 872 miles (including stops for food and rest). The rules also stipulate that the bicycle must be fitted with full length mudguards, lights and carry all necessary spares and tools. Extra clothes, waterproofs and emergency items in front and rear luggage bags, plus two x 1 litre water bottles, more than double the weight of the machine to over 50 lb.

Careful planning was needed to arrange the 18 control locations where my official card (Brevet) could be stamped, signed, timed and dated and my wife Ena and youngest son Andrew drove the support car, which provided the essential food and rest stops needed, particularly in the North of Scotland.

The End to End began from Land's End on Saturday, June 24, Alastair accompanying me (from behind so as not to infringe regulations) back to Llandogo in glorious weather to arrive on schedule at 22.30 (227 miles) despite extensive traffic jams.

Two hours' sleep followed a bath and excellent meal prepared by oldest son Alan and back on the road at 02.30 am, to travel via Hereford and the A49/A6 with controls at Craven Arms, Whitechurch, Preston (where progress was hindered by a street carnival) and Kendal, then over Shap Fell to meet up with the support car and a meal before running into torrential rain in Carlisle and the terrifying dark, busy, wet A74 dual carriageway to Gretna Green by 11 pm (264 miles, total 491 miles).

● ● ●

After three hours' sleep in the car, day three started at 03.30 am nearly two hours behind schedule. A determined effort over Beattock pass recovered most of the deficit to arrive at Elvanfoot only 4 minutes behind. A hearty breakfast, then via the A73, A80 and a tortuous detour to Stirling to avoid the M80. The next control at radio and electronics branch at Dunkeld was followed by a meal prepared by Andrew and Ena before the long climb over Drumochter (1516 ft.) to Newtonmore and via Aviemore to Tomatin over the Slochd pass (1328 ft.) for a last evening meal before continuing to Inverness.

Kessock bridge was hazardous in a strong wind, visibility was bad, and it took some time to find a suitable control at 11.45 pm, having missed the planned control. Rain turned to sleet as the route left the A9 to tackle the short, hillier A836, competing with kamikaze lorries to Bonar Bridge arriving at control at Migdale Hospital at 3.05 am with only an hour in hand to eat and curl up in soaking clothes in the back of the car for one hour's sleep (284 miles, total 779).

On the road again at 04.30 am for the last 97 miles, still into a strong icy headwind but gradually drying up to reach Helmsdale on time at 7.30 am. Then a good meal from the support crew and the never-ending slog through Caithness and the amazing descent and climb at Berriedale. On and on into an ever-increasing head wind wearing all available clothes to arrive eventually at John o' Groats and obtain the final control stamp at 12.55 pm — 872 miles in 78 hours 55 mins., a full 65 minutes inside the gold standard schedule of 80 hours.

Alan concludes: The ride would not have been possible without the unstinting support of my wife Ena and the whole family of Alan the Chef, Alastair the Cyclist, and Andrew the Chauffeur, butler and odd job man."

● Alan estimates that, because of generous sponsorship from FC offices up and down the country, Cancer Research will benefit by close on £1000 from his End to End spin. Which means that he can go into retirement this year from the Commission after 37 years' service, well satisfied with his efforts. Alan's last 22 years, by the way, have been as chief forester in the radio and electronics branch at Itton. He lives at St Antony, The Kymin, Monmouth. NP5 3SD.

England hopes?

THE FC team won their annual cricket match against the Timber Trade XI at Dunnington in June, thanks mainly to a first wicket stand of 77 by North Yorks Moor duo J. Richardson (47) and G. Jackson (53) which was more than half the team's total score of 135. The timber merchants could muster only 114 against excellent bowling by J. Symons (4 for 49) and J. Wright (2 for 11). R. Ayre, J. Richardson and M. Pritchard each took one wicket.

Linda hits the heights



LINDA Hurlock, AO New Forest, took a great leap for charity in June — dropping from a height of 2500 ft. to claim £540 in sponsorship donations for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Together with two other volunteers, she made a first-time parachute jump from a Cessna 206 and landed safely in a field near Goodwood.

Linda, who found the descent "both peaceful and exhilarating" after the initial shock of launching into the world, said that the ground training she had undergone wearing heavy parachute harness had been more painful than the actual impact of landing.



Linda kitted out for training.