

SLASHER



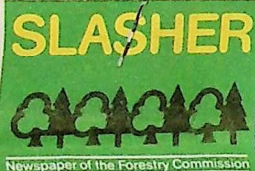
Newspaper of the Forestry Commission

December 1992

No. 358

MPs see for themselves

DEAN SERVES AS
MODEL EXAMPLE



Slasher is the in-house newspaper for all staff of the Forestry Commission.
Editor: Tracey Francis.
Correspondents:

SCOTLAND

North: Bryce Reynard — covering Forest Enterprise (Dornoch; Inverness; Wester Ross; Fort Augustus; Lochaber; Moray; Buchan; Kincardine; Lorne; Loch Awe; Tay; Kintyre) and Forestry Authority (Highland; Grampian; Strathclyde; Perth).

South: Tom McCutcheon — covering Forest Enterprise (Cowal; Aberfoyle; Ayrshire and Arran; Lothian and Tweed; Newtown Stewart; Castle Douglas; Ae; Borders) and Forestry Authority (Dumfries and Galloway; Lothian and Borders; Edinburgh).

WALES

Forest Enterprise: Brina Evans.

Forestry Authority: Milwen Lewis.

ENGLAND

Forest Enterprise: North and East: Sandra Willey — covering Rothbury; Kielder; Lakes; North York Moors; Sherwood / Lincs; Northants; Thetford; Suffolk.

Forest Enterprise: South and West: Carol Gill — Midlands; Marches; Forest of Dean; Chilterns; Wilts and Avon; West Downs; Cornwall and North Devon; Somerset and South Devon; New Forest; South Downs; Weald.

Forestry Authority: Brian Llewellyn.

RESEARCH

Northern: Martin Abrahams.
Southern: John Parker.

Representatives of the House of Commons Environment Select Committee visited the Forest of Dean in November as guests of the Commission.

The visit was linked with the first inquiry undertaken by the newly established Environment Committee, which aims to explore the relationship between forests and the environment, and to assess the environmental impact of forestry policies and practices in England. The visit supplemented evidence already presented to the Committee by the Commission on behalf of the Government, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment and MAFF.

The Forest of Dean was selected as providing a suitable model of modern multi-purpose forestry, demonstrating how well timber production, recreation and the demands of wildlife can co-exist. Renowned for its beauty, the Dean was also one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution, and there are still 12 active small mines in which locally-born miners have the right to dig coal and work stone throughout the Forest. Alongside this the District as a whole produces about 70,000 cubic metres of timber per year, maintains wildlife habitats including nine Sites of Special Scientific Interest and receives hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

PICNIC SITE

At Abbotswood on the eastern fringe of the Forest the Committee members were shown the management of oak, with the emphasis on high quality timber, and the management of Douglas fir in a well-visited woodland. They were also taken to Beechenhurst Lodge to view redevelopment of a picnic site catering for around 300,000 visitors each year.

The Committee rounded off the visit by taking oral evidence from Robin Cutler, David Grundy, Forest Enterprise Regional Director (S & W England) Roger Busby, and Patrick Leonard, of the Department of the Environment. A number of other organisations have still to provide evidence to the Committee, including the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain.

Despite the wet weather, the day proved an excellent means of viewing forestry policies in context and seeing the varied demands on modern forests at first hand.

Country watch

Idyllic rural areas can also be crime blackspots, as many visitors find when they return from a country walk to find their car vandalised or ransacked.

Now West Downs FD has become involved in the operation of 'Countryside Watch,' launched in conjunction with Dorking police, Surrey Council and the National Trust.

The scheme, the first of its kind in the Surrey area, encourages visitors and residents to stay alert — and cut country crime.



THE EURO TREE GRACES PALACE

Christmas comes early to Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, the main venue for the European Community Summit in December.

Glentworth Forest District supplied this 30 ft Scots pine to stand in the courtyard for the Summit, which will be attended by delegates from all 12 EC countries. The 14th century Palace, at the foot of Edinburgh's Royal Mile, will host all the major meetings.



INDOORS ... Robin Cutler and his team of Patrick Leonard, Roger Busby and David Grundy prepare to give evidence at Coleford.



OUTDOORS ... Deputy Surveyor John Everard (second right) explains the workings of the forest to MPs.

NATIVE WOODLANDS GET MAJOR BOOST 16-man 'brains trust'

Native woodlands and management have been given a major boost with three developments in the last few weeks.

ONE: A 16-strong "brains trust" has been set up as the Native Woodlands Advisory Panel under the chairmanship of part-time Commissioner Michael Strang Steel.

Made up of specialists from different fields, the panel will advise the Commission as it seeks to establish a strategic approach to the conservation and extension of native woodlands.

Referring to the remnants of Scotland's original native woodlands, which now cover only 1 per cent of the land area, Commission Chairman Raymond Johnstone welcomed the initiative.

"The Advisory Panel will be able to provide the co-ordination needed, take a broad look at developments in the public and private sectors and give a focal point for those involved," he declared. "It will also provide a forum for discussing the very important land use issues that arise."

The panel will also promote the conservation and extension of woodlands by natural regeneration and planting, and will identify any research necessary. Oak, ash, wych elm, cherry, alder and willow will be among the trees to be particularly encouraged.

Forestry Minister Sir Hector Monro predicted the move would receive wide support.

TWO: An ambitious conservation initiative from the FC has been launched with the opening of Scotland's first Caledonian Forest Reserve outside Aviemore.



Chief Conservator Wales, David Hughes (left) with the first award winners of a new scheme, Mark and Sue Hudson.

Part of a £3.5 million plan to end the destruction of ancient woodlands, it will lead to 15 reserves being created before the year 2000.

The first named reserve, opened by broadcaster Jimmy Macgregor, covers 750 hectares at Glenmore Forest below the Cairngorms.

Graham Hamilton, Regional Director, said: "The benefits for wildlife and our successors will be priceless."

THREE: First awards have been made under a new scheme to encourage high standards of woodland management in Wales.

The merit award scheme (Gwobr Teilyngdod Rheolaeth Coetir) will seek to promote the benefits of good woodlands management. The scheme was launched by Chief Conservator Wales, David Hughes at a farm near Ruthin owned by the first award winners, Mark and Sue Hudson.

Conservators will nominate woodlands each quarter and there will be one annual national award.

More award pictures: Page Two

NEWS IN BRIEF

Beacon Europe

FORESTRY AUTHORITY England are offering advice on tree selection and protection for the tree circles to be planted throughout Britain to mark 'Beacon Europe' and the introduction of the Single European Market on December 31.

As part of 'Beacon Europe' 1000 beacon fires will be lit across the 12 countries of the EC. Tree circles will also be planted throughout the EC countries to create living symbols of European unity.

Star tree

FOR the fourth year running Kielder has donated a 50 ft Christmas tree to the Daily Star offices in London. A 30 ft Kielder tree has also gone to British Rail in Newcastle.

Close shave

CONGRATULATIONS to Hafren Forest Craftsman Glyn Jerman, who raised more than £1000 for the Montgomeryshire appeal fund for the Royal Welsh Show by not having his beard trimmed for 18 months. It was finally shaved at the show by opera singer Sir Geraint Evans.

THETFORD
Warrenner Colin Hunt's work to keep the Stag Picnic Place litter-free hasn't gone unnoticed. A message left for him read: "His Lord said to him, well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord!"

Project

A PROJECT TEAM has been set up at Headquarters to look at the implications for the Commission of the new Health and Safety regulations covering display screen equipment, effective from next month.

Deadline

THE next edition of *Slasher* will be published at the end of February. Copy must be received by Friday, January 22.

Thanks, Jack

AS this issue goes to press, *Slasher* says a very special goodbye and thank you to Edinburgh-based designer Jack Sutherland. With a lifetime's experience in newspapers, his valuable advice and sound knowledge of newspaper layout have been instrumental in establishing *Slasher* as the newspaper it is.

See page 5 for a Christmas message from DG Robin Cutler.

DO you have anything you'd like to buy, offer for sale or advertise? In response to demand, *Slasher* is hoping to start a classified column, free to staff. Send your ads to the Editor or your correspondent.



Two dates with Charles

At Westonbirt (left) Prince Charles planted the first of 40 trees to mark the 40th anniversary of the Queen's accession.

The tree is a *betula chichubuensis*, a rare birch from Japan — there are believed to be no more than 20 such trees worldwide growing in the wild.

The planting site, to be known as 'The Royal Anniversary Glade,' will eventually boast trees from all five continents. "We were very careful in the choice of species," explained Tony Russell, Westonbirt's Visitor Service Manager. "The glade will look good all year round because we've selected trees that look their best at different times of the year."

After a private stroll in the Silk Wood the Prince met Westonbirt staff, including Superintendent Richard Paton, Propagator Tony Butler, Database Manager Margaret Ruskin and

Dendrologist John White. He also met arboretum workers Les Hoad and Tom Maisey, who between them have spent almost 60 years tending Westonbirt's collection, and is seen here with John Simmons, chairman of the Friends of Westonbirt; Rod Leslie, environment manager; and Hugh Angus, Westonbirt's curator.

The Prince was presented with a small *Fagus sylvatica* — 'Prince George of Crete' — beech cultivar.

The second date for the Prince was at St James's Palace, when he presented the Duke of Cornwall Award for Forestry and Conservation. Grizedale Forest was a joint runner-up, and (pictured right) Brian Mahony, as Lakes FDM, is seen receiving a silver medal. First prizes went to St Giles Estate in Dorset; and Sterigot Estate, Louth; the other runner-up was Dinam Estate in Powys.



Slasher and its readers came under the microscope in November when correspondents from all over the country gathered at Headquarters to talk about your newspaper. The Editor was left in no doubt about the strengths and weakness of *Slasher* at present, and the meeting discussed ways of improving both the gathering and presentation of news and views around the country. We'll do our best to make sure you see the benefits soon!

Big response

Many thanks to everyone who returned the questionnaire circulated with the last issue of *Slasher*!

We had a good response, which will be of enormous benefit in helping to shape the paper and increase its effectiveness over the coming months. Sadly the first thing it highlighted was the areas which have had problems receiving their *Slashers* at all. Our apologies to the areas concerned — we're hoping to get the difficulties sorted out soon.

Returning to the questionnaire, it seems that most of you are happy with the format of *Slasher*. More than 60 per cent favoured the newspaper format over a magazine, with 70 per cent wanting a publication that was the same length or longer. The majority of people felt that publication every two months was the most suitable, and that the use of colour and number of illustrations are about right.

There was a high demand for news about people and about what is happening within the Commission, with occasional technical items requested as the opportunity arises. But the overwhelming request was for a regular Letters page, with more than 80 per cent of you wanting to hear what other people have to say.

That's good to know — though it goes without saying that for you to read letters to *Slasher*, someone has to write them! Time to put pen to paper and beseege the Editor or your correspondents with your thoughts.

The survey returns also contained some excellent suggestions — and a special thank you goes to the office which supplied every forestry pun you can think of (sprucing yourself up, wearing a fir coat, etc.) They made the Editor's day!

We will be implementing your suggestions as best we can over the coming months ... keep reading!



BRINGING YOU THE NEWS ... Editor Tracey Francis (left) with *Slasher* correspondents from all parts ... back row: Brina Evans, Bryce Reynard, Nancy Mackenzie (East and South Scotland Retirement Association), Tom McCutcheon and Martin Abrahams; seated front: John Parker, Sandra Willey, Brian Llewellyn and Carol Gill.

A father of forestry

OBITUARIES

John McEwen, surely Britain's oldest forester, died in Blairgowrie on September 22, just one day short of his 105th birthday.

A native of Glenlyon in Perthshire, John was a forester for 56 years.

He trained at the Cullen Estates of the Earls of Seafield before working at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, where he also took classes in forestry, mathematics and English in his own time.

In 1920 he joined the newly formed Forestry Commission, where, as Forester-in-Charge of the Aberdeen Division, he pioneered the Commission's first forest at Monaghty, near Elgin.

In 1922 he organised the Commission's foresters in Scotland into the Worker's Trade Union, which became part of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

His career in forestry included periods as District Officer for North Wales and Senior Inspector to the Forestry Department in Ireland before joining the home-grown timber department of the Board of Trade in 1941. At the end of the Second World War he joined with Frank Scott in consultancy and timber valuation work.

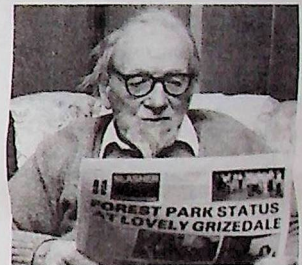
A member of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society since 1909, Mr McEwen was only the second forester to become president when he took the chair in 1961.

A committed and active socialist all his life, Mr McEwen will be especially remembered for the project begun in retirement — that of identifying land-ownership for the whole of Scotland. *Who Owns Scotland?* was published in Edinburgh in 1977, and has since become required reading for anyone with an interest in British land use and its history.

Our sympathies are with the families and friends of the following staff and retired staff, who died recently.

ALAN BOOTH, 16 September. Alan had worked in the Chilterns for 33 years. Well-liked and renowned for his creativity, he will be sorely missed by colleagues.

COLIN DALE, June. Colin was a plant operator based for most of his career in Kielder and Rothbury Forest Districts. He retired in March on medical grounds. Well known and liked in the community, he enjoyed most sports and had won a range of



John McEwen, pictured reading *Slasher* on his 100th birthday five years ago.

daughter-in-law and two grandchildren.

TREVOR SAUNDERS began work with the FC aged 14 at Llanover Forest. His long career included spells in Tintern North Forest and Michaelston Afan, where his hard work helped to transform one of South Wales' most inhospitable valleys. His work on the woodlands flanking Offa's Dyke at the Whitehill crossing and A40 roadside plantings are a fine memorial to him. He leaves a widow, Ena, son, daughter and son-in-law, and a grand-daughter.

JIM THOMAS of Penrhiw and **GWILYM DAVIES** of Bedw, Llanpumpaint, both stationed at the old Brechfa Forest District.

DICK TREW, aged 75. Dick retired as an executive officer in North Wales Conservancy office in Aberystwyth, where he was based for 20 years. He had previously worked for the GPO and the Ministry of Food before joining South Wales Conservancy in Cardiff. He leaves his wife, Doris.

HAROLD WALKER, 3 September. Harold worked for 46 years at Blengdale Forest, now part of Lakes FD. He leaves a wife, Margaret, and seven daughters.

WALTER WILLIAMSON, aged 61, from a heart attack. Walter retired from Dumfries in August 1989 after working in South Scotland and Headquarters. His wife Dorothy is in hospital in Elgin recovering from a stroke.

ALEX BANKS. Former surveyor and civil engineer, Alex worked for 27 years with the Commission in Cairbann, Aberdeen, Perth and Aberfoyle before retiring a few years ago on medical grounds. He leaves a wife, Elizabeth, and three sons.

Thanks to friends

LETTERS

As we report above, a regular letters page received strong support in the recent survey. But we need something to put on it — so get writing! If you have opinions to air, ideas to share or a message to put across, *Slasher* wants to hear from you. Send to: *Slasher* Editor, Public Information Division, Forestry Commission, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT.

Dear Editor, I would like to convey to all my FC friends and working colleagues both past and present my very good wishes for their help, assistance and support over the past 18 years. Thank you for your kind thoughts, good health and good fortune to each and every one. *Keith Ball, SDO Headquarters, retired September.*

Auchen Trust

Dear Editor, Through the auspices of your column, I would like to express my gratitude to the following who have responded very generously to the Auchen Trust Appeal Fund: Staff in S(S) Region; retired S(S) staff; FA staff in Glasgow,

Lockerbie and Galashiels; S(S) Social Club, who arranged a charity lunch; Laurie Tyson, auctioneer extraordinaire; Retirement Association branches in Glasgow, mid-Argyll and Edinburgh; former S(S) staff presently in Headquarters and New Forest; the FC Benevolent Fund; Cartographer Brian Stewart and Landscape Technician Pauline Dear, who designed a Christmas card; Joe Meehan, FDM Ae and past President Lockerbie Rotary Club; Civil Service Benevolent Fund; FE staff at Kielder; North York Moors staff; and RWO Anne Telfer.

At the time of going to press the grand total raised is £4376.80 against a target of £5000 and the Christmas cards are on sale.

On behalf of Kenny Clark and his wife, thanks everyone for your generosity and support. — *Mary Boyle, South Scotland Regional Office, Dumfries.*

● The Auchen Trust was set up to raise funds to provide Karen Clark, daughter of retired Ranger Kenny, with independent accommodation. Karen has cerebral palsy. If anyone would like further details of the Trust, or to make a contribution, please contact Mary.

Excellence awards



Forestry Authority Centre of Excellence Awards were presented to two woodlands in October.

Grindon Grange Demonstration Woodland, established by Cleveland Community Forest, received the award for its resounding achievements on farm land.

The Royal Forestry Society's property at Hockeridge and Pancake Woods, on the border

of Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire received the second award for its management of a 74-hectare multi-purpose forest.

From left are Clive Davies, Director, Cleveland Community Forest; Jim Vaughan, chairman of Community Forest steering group; and James Ogilvy, Conservator, Northumberland & Durham Conservancy.



Dave's not tongue tied ... just Czech it out!

If you don't know your modrin from your jedle Douglaska, Morgannwg Forester Dave Ely-Brown is the man to help you out! When a 700-strong International Guide Camp came to the Gower peninsula, Morgannwg FD Staff were happy to help. Senior Wildlife Ranger Gerald Cutcliffe's evening badger-watching walks held the Guides enthralled. To Dave fell the task of escorting a group of Czech guides. "My knowledge of Czech was non-existent and only two guides spoke English!" he says. "It took a lot of

Here and there

arm-waving and gesticulations to understand each other!"

But Dave did pick up some basic Czech on the trip. "Modrin" means larch and "jedle Douglaska," Douglas fir. Sitka spruce is "Sitk smrk," Norway spruce, "Norsky smrk"; and the Scots pine, "Skotska Borovice." So now you know!

Sitting pretty



Appropriately with impish grin, District Forester Dave Pedler is perched on one of a special group of 'magic mushrooms' to be found in Cardinham Woods, Cornwall and North Devon FD.

Local artists Creative Madness turned 18 off-cuts of wind-blown Douglas fir into larger-than-life mushrooms, each modelled on a species native to British woodlands. Set in an attractive streamside area of open broadleaved woodland, the mushrooms blend in surprisingly well!

The scheme is the latest initiative in the steady development of recreation within the woods.

Picture by Tony Freeman Press Agency.

New Verderer

The Queen has approved the appointment of John Barry as Official Verderer of the New Forest with effect from February 13.

A Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, he has links with the New Forest stretching back over 300 years. He takes over from Lord Manners, who retires after 10 years in the post.

MONTH BY MONTH, A LOOK BACK ...

The year in perspective

The FC's 72nd annual report and accounts, published in October, is the last to appear in this form.

Future reports will, of course, reflect the changes made in the reorganisation of last April.

The old style was established following the 1966 restructuring of the Commission's accounts.

The Report for the 12 months ended last March 31, records the steps taken, both in legislative terms and in management, to meet the objectives of Government forestry policy.

The variety of measures taken and the areas of responsibility are reflected in this selected perspective of events ...

APRIL 1991: The Secretary of State for Scotland, Ian Lang, announces in Parliament that our RAC's, will, in future, publish the advice they put to us following their consideration of disputed planting and felling applications.

MAY: Northern Research Station mounts an exhibition to celebrate 21 years of forestry research by our scientists.

JUNE: Our Woodland Grant Scheme is extended and relaunched to give a comprehensive and wide-ranging level of support.

JULY: We publish a collection of papers entitled *Forestry Expansion — A Study of Technical, Economic and Ecological Factors*.

AUGUST: The work of the Commission's cartographers and the varied use of maps by our staff are shown in a display at 'Mapping the Nation,' the Ordnance Survey exhibition to mark its 200th anniversary.

SEPTEMBER: A composite statement of forestry policy is issued on behalf of Forestry Ministers,

and published under the title *Forestry Policy for Great Britain*.

OCTOBER: The Valleys Forest Initiative is launched by Cardiff by the Secretary of State for Wales, David Hunt. The Initiative is a commitment to develop further the public benefits offered by the forests in the industrial valleys of South Wales.

NOVEMBER: Government proposals for the new Farm Woodland Premium Scheme are made available for comment.

DECEMBER: A revised edition of *Forest and Water Guidelines* is published. The updated version makes recommendations on how the impact of pollutant depositions can be minimised.

JANUARY 1992: Wiltshire County Council is added to those local authorities listed in Schedule 1 to the Watermark Disease (Local Authorities) Order 1974 which can take steps to prevent the spread of the bacterium *Erwinia salicis* (Watermark Disease of Willow). At this time the disease is confined to a small isolated area within the county.

FEBRUARY: The Commission announces that all chainsaw users will require a certificate of competence to operate a chainsaw in Forestry Commission forests and woodlands.

MARCH: As a follow up to the Forestry Expansion papers, a conference 'New Forest for the 21st Century' is held. Delegates from the forestry industry, Government departments, environmental agencies and other interested bodies are invited.

• Forestry Commission 72nd Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1992. Price: £13.80.



Teamwork

This talented team of Libby Jones, Mark Forrester, Frank McCulloch, Chris Tracey and Elspeth Macdonald took 11th place when they competed with 19 other teams from Scottish business, industry and public sector, at Heriot Watt University for a weekend of physical, mental and artistic challenges.

Events aimed at encouraging teamwork included building a wall, rowing on a swan-inhabited lake, transporting buckets of 'toxic waste' across a muddy obstacle course and posing as a shepherd herding his blind flock into a pen.

Double-take

If TV's Rab C. Nesbitt has a fit of the jitters, Glasgow's Charlie Southgate could be the ideal understudy.

Charlie, Messenger at the Forestry Authority's Scottish Regional Office, dressed up as Britain's best-loved slob and walked off with top prize in a Rab C. lookalike contest in November. With the man himself, actor Gregor Fisher, as judge, Charlie proved the likeness was more than skin deep by acting out a Rab-style set-to.

The reward was a weekend for two in London, including tickets for a West End show.

But it took a Glasgow barmaid to give Charlie the best accolade of all. When he took his family for a celebratory drink — still dressed as Rab — she refused to serve him. That's how convincing he was! See what we mean — that's Charlie (far left) with Gregor Fisher and runner-up Jim McDonald from Govan.

PICTURE COURTESY OF THE SUN SCOTLAND

Stand by to repel Yaks

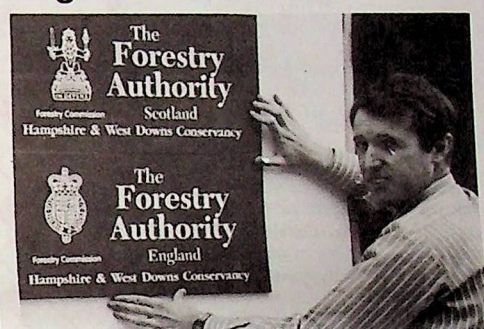
Thetford H & M Manager Barry Griggs has proof that Forest Enterprise poles have reached the parts other poles cannot reach.

Last Christmas he received a letter from Operation Raleigh asking for a supply of poles for building temporary shelters in Outer Mongolia, where trees and timber are virtually non-existent. Rounded poles, pressure treated, were duly despatched, and Barry thought no more of it.

But in October a letter of thanks from Colonel John Blashford-Snell, the expedition leader, indicated that Commission poles have qualities most foresters would never dream of. His letter concluded: "Your poles were excellent and extremely useful for fencing off the base camp and paddocks. They withstood the attacks of Yaks rather well."

Remember that the next time you come across a felled tree ...

Signs o' the times



HICCUPS are bound to happen in the best-run of offices or organisations ... and here's a cross-Border mix-up that had Hampshire and West Downs Conservancy all of a chuckle. Alan Betts suggests the caption: Confusion in Hampshire as Scottish devolution spreads its wings!

FUNd-raising

In a hectic week of fund-raising at Alice Holt Lodge in mid-November, staff raised about £900 for Children In Need. Events co-ordinated by Mary Trusler and Anne Yeomans included a raffle, a bring-and-buy cakes and produce stall, a tupperware and jewellery sale organised by Janet Methley, and a car wash day organised by Peter Jokiel and Peter Crow. A grand 50:50 auction of more than 200 lots was run by auctioneer Dave Elgy, who reserved the right to sell any lot to members of staff, regardless of whether or not they had bit for it and, indeed, whether or not they were present at the auction! A number of lots changed hands more than once!

... and HAIR-raising



She doesn't travel to work by broomstick, but Bristol colleagues tread carefully around Operations/FM's Karen McKend (right) since she spent a week as a witch as one of 14 volunteers in Roald Dahl's play *The Witches* at the Bristol Hippodrome. "The play is staged by a professional company, but they wanted local amateurs to make up the witches' group," she explains. The volunteer coven's lines were said as a group, but the spotlight was firmly on Karen at one point — when she crawled over the table to be turned into a mouse! With 11 performances in all it was a good theatrical debut for Karen who is now interested in joining an amateur dramatic group. A word of warning for Commission staff — "I had to take off the dark wig I normally wear for the play, because everyone knows real witches are bald. But I've no idea who else might be a witch — you can only tell by pulling someone's hair to see if it's real. If you don't spot who they are, you could be the next one turned into a mouse!"

Picture courtesy of Bristol United Press Ltd.



It's a cracker!

Got a few minutes to spare in the run-up to Christmas? Put your feet up and have a go at our cracker of a crossword!

The quick clues are for those in a hurry, the cryptic clues might take a little longer — but you can combine the two if you like.

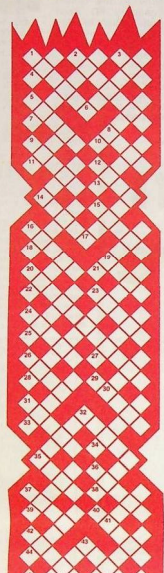
Send your completed crossword to the Editor by 29 January and enter a draw for a bottle of bubbly! Solution next issue.

- UP
- Strange split (5)
 - Older, wiser members of community of trees (6)
 - A South American country's speciality for Christmas (7)
 - Sits on a log with hood (5)
 - Kiss mothers a little at Christmas (6)
 - But first idle in the warmth of the yule log (5)
 - Cover that's rich at Christmas (4)
 - Infant's mother found in pyramid (5)
 - Infants in crib, a best bed (5)
 - Stumped flier seen in desert (5)
 - Tied up for the Christmas season (4)
 - Sounds like it's after the third long bridge (5)
 - Way of cooking Christmas pudding or stir-frying meats (5)
 - Spicy livelihood for a story-man (11)
 - Riches... go by old pounds and pence (4)
 - Tug seen at Blackpool (5)
 - Sounds like the heart of an organised body (5)
 - Fruits for the 25th and 26th December (5)
 - Down with cold colour (4)
 - Be sweet and soft and avoid the issue (5)
 - And 44. Eternally young, like a Christmas tree (9)
 - Pecadilly's the place for clowns? (6)
 - Crockery for Midnight Mass for example (7)
 - Sounds like a Christmas tree — but fluffy (3)

- DOWN
- Confound what you see (6)
 - Great noise follows a boy into Panomine (7)
 - In need of a drink without sugar (3)
 - Jack is right in soft mixture (5)
 - Roote headless and slowly melt (4)
 - Preserve what rises from the Christmas hearth (5)
 - Frolic in the theatre (4)
 - Elite from Jersey (5)
 - Remains of fire at end of Christmas month (5)
 - Written exam for soft mimic (5)
 - A backward flying service goes a long way (4)
 - This play develops with a leaner twist (7,4)
 - Piped music machine that's found in a body (5)
 - Part of a tree that's said to be found in front of a ship (5)
 - Owl-like, we surround little island (4)

...AND HERE ARE YOUR QUICK CLUES

- UP
- Puzzling (3)
 - Senior members (6)
 - Nuts (7)
 - Winter bird (5)
 - Short form of (5)
 - Flare (5)
 - Confected (4)
 - Child's ward for "Mother" (5)
 - "...in the Wood," Panomine (5)
 - Desert animal (5)
 - Current (4)
 - River (5)
 - Water vapour (5)
 - Spicy sweetmeat (5)
 - One of the Kings' gifts (4)
 - High building (5)



- DOWN
1. Bemas (6)
 2. Panomine character (7)
 3. Arid (3)
 4. Freeze-up (5)
 5. Lodgings (4)
 6. Leak (4)
 7. Result of fire (5)
 8. Old form for Christmas (4)
 9. Calf (5)
 10. Desert topping (5)
 11. Cinder (5)
 12. Part of strategy Ploley put to the nation (5)
 13. ET returns to our planned way (5)
 14. Twenty have written down music (5)
 15. Searches for lodgings (4)
 16. Collection of vessels in the street where the press used to be (5)
 17. We hear you will shortly get the Christmas fable (7,4)
 18. Christmas message for vegetable and church (5)
 19. Like this puzzle, it goes with a bang! (7)
 20. Season to relish (6)
 21. The very best leading man reaches the end (5)
 22. The ups and downs of tiny Archiborn village were recorded on literature issued on an organised walk. These showed that in the early 1800s, there were two tenants and three labourers in the village seven years later there were four tenants (10)
 23. By 1841, a census return listed 48 occupants but the notorious Highland Clearances put the tenants down to just one by 1871, with 16 occupants. Only two families were resident that year, the Jacksons and Fletchers, both shoemakers (10)
 24. A branch of a tree (5)
 25. Old form for Christmas (4)
 26. Describes the Maori (4)
 27. Which Archiborn State (5)
 28. Village Walk was led by Mrs Kaneham, chairperson of the local Natural History and Antiquarian Society (10)
 29. The old road which linked Archiborn to the next community had been cleared of windblow and stunted before the visit so that people could see the effort that had gone into building it (10)
 30. To achieve a flat surface parts of it had had to be built up like a stone dyke; and to cross a fast-flowing burn a "bridge" had been constructed with two large flat slabs of rock (10)
 31. Next year it is intended that the site will be sprayed to keep the bracken down (10)
 32. In our picture of the party on the village walk above are two members of Kintyre FD staff, AGs Corinne Cheetham (right) and Michelle Davidson, partly hidden by local historian Mrs Kaneham (back to camera) (10)
 33. Across the country to Dalbeattie, Castle Douglas, where local plantations of 200 hectares of mature plantation in the Forest of Pines now designated Dalbeattie Town Wood (10)
 34. The scheme is designed to strengthen links between the forest and townspeople, symbolised by a commemorative stone, which bears a logo designed by high school pupils (10)
 35. FD Manager Miss Weener speaks of the upgrading of recreational facilities in the wood, and the determination to maintain an area of high conservation value on the town doorstep (10)
 36. A booklet to mark the event included articles on flora and fauna, local history and geology by local people and schoolchildren (10)



Forestry Minister Earl Howe sits a tree on a farm woodland at Alice Holt. Director Research David Burdick and Paul Tabush, principal silviculturist, look on.



Members of Wildlife and Conservation Research Branch line up in front of their display panels at Alice Holt.

A village history

John Parker, Research Commission Officer at Alice Holt, reports: Our series of very special open days in mid-June had the theme "Trees for Tomorrow", and foresters and scientists highlighted their current research initiatives. These clearly demonstrated that trees, woodlands and forests for future generations are ensured of the best possible start in life through the efforts of our Forestry Authority's Research Division.

In an opening speech the Forestry Minister, Earl Howe, commented that our trees for tomorrow were indeed firmly rooted in today's search. More than 2500 visitors attended on the first day, which were particularly aimed at professional foresters, estate owners, managers, divers and others with a technical interest in modern techniques. "We hope our visitors will find that our research is very relevant to them and will help their efforts to grow more and better trees," said Director Research David Burdick. On an exceptionally bright and sunny Sunday, the imaginative plans of the Family Day Committee headed by Janet Methley were well-rewarded with a capacity attendance of more than 400 people. Friends, relatives and the general public saw any presentations of research projects, including "hands-on" demonstrations. Staff were kept busy from 9 am to 6 pm communicating their search findings in a lively and informative way. Attractions such as horse-and-cart rides, the saddle trail, today bear's walk, sniffer dogs detecting decay in standing trees', chainsaw silver and gold.

There was no chance of being 'bored' and every opportunity to take home a positive message about the future of our country's trees, woodlands and wildlife.

So in this roundup of various activities, let's first repair to Alice Holt Research Station, which opened its doors to the public for the first time in eight years.

Up in Kintyre, FD staff have fashioned a strong link with local villagers in other areas such as the Lake District and North York Moors, new avenues to ease the way for the disabled have been opened. And they are not alone as regular readers to these columns well know.

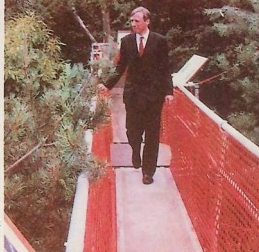
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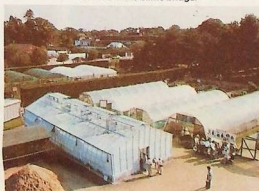
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INVADING THE VISITOR DAY AFTER DAY

Tree roots of success



On the tree-top walkway... Earl Howe studies the tree crowns below, a general view of the research nursery area from the same bridge.



Working with the Calvert Trust for the disabled Enterprise have adapted the terrain to meet particular needs of trail orienteering, allowing able to compete on equal terms with able-bodied visitors. This is believed to be the first permanent orienteering course in the world.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL...

Wedding belles



On the tree-top walkway... Earl Howe studies the tree crowns below, a general view of the research nursery area from the same bridge.



Re-organisation deliberately created quite separate 'arms' within the Commission. Positive promotion has established their distinct identities, and you have been encouraged to develop a 'brand loyalty'.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL...

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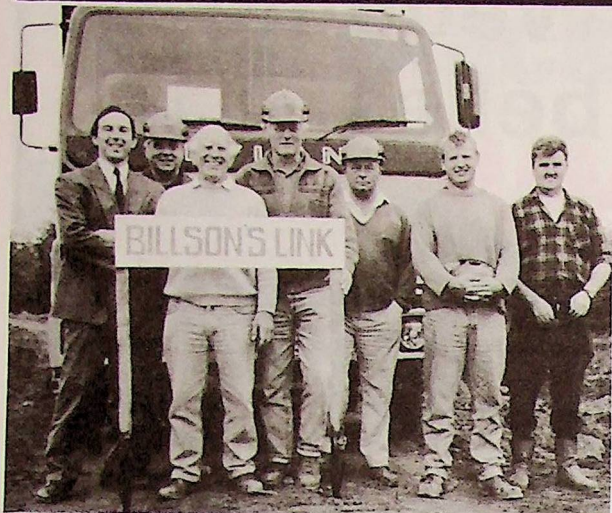


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FORESTRY PEOPLE...FORESTRY PEOPLE...FORESTRY PEOPLE...FORESTRY PEOPLE... FOREST



Willie Billson and colleagues of Ae.

The end of the road is a new beginning for **WILLIE BILLSON** ... and he has a road sign, plus service certificate, to prove it.

Not everyone can claim to have a road named after them — but lorry driver Willie certainly can.

His last months in the Commission were spent working on a road link between Southwick and Kinharvie in the Forest of Ae, completed on his last day of service.

To mark his long career, the road will be known as Billson's Link — especially appropriate as Willie was also involved in planting the forest the road is to serve.

It was the end of an era, too, for Perth road squad when tipper drivers **BILL LINDSAY**, **GORDON STEWART**, **JIMMY DUNCAN** and road foreman **EDDIE McINTOSH** left the Commission with service totalling 145 years between them. Eddie



Perth quartet (from left), Eddie, Bill, Gordon and Jimmy.



Ted Parker with his wife Gladys and Commissioner David Grundy (centre).

Billson's Link

SCOTLAND

plans to spend more time gardening, walking and fishing; Bill will concentrate on bowls and photography; Gordon will be taking photographs and woodturning; and Jimmy is just looking forward to more time at home.

Aberfoyle District Forester **JIM McLEAN** and Forest Officer

ARCHIE SMITH shared a retirement lunch in December, notching up more than 75 years' service between them.

It was up, up and away for Forest Officer **FRANK SMITH**, who plans to follow his 34 years' Commission service with some serious attention to his hobby — gliding. Frank spent most of his career in Research Division (Silviculture Branch) in South England, but most recently he has been based north of the Border in Dumfries and then Perth. Happy landings Frank!

'Free at last' was the message on **TED PARKER'S** lapel when he retired as Head of Personnel Management in May! Friends and colleagues gathered at Headquarters to present Ted with a cheque for garden furniture.

The suitcases and compact binoculars presented to **JOHN DISHINGTON**, Assistant Chief Engineer at Headquarters, will soon be in service as John and his wife Kathleen are planning a New Year cruise. The main boardroom was full as people gathered to say their goodbyes to a highly regarded colleague.

IN WALES ...

IT'S TRUE! Money DOES grow on trees

Well it did for **CYRIL WHITTAKER**, Foreman at Crychan Workshops, who retired earlier this year.

A Noble fir tree festooned with notes was a gift from colleagues and well-wishers. The harvest — more than £240 — was handed over by Robin Waddington. It will be used to buy a greenhouse for Cyril's garden. Any more trees like that in the woods, we ask?

Nearly 47 years of service was honoured in Llandovery FD when Forest Craftsman **SAM WALDRON** retired. He received a pair of binoculars, a cheque and other gifts from colleagues. Sam's career came full circle when he found himself restocking areas of the Glasfynydd Forest — the same areas he'd helped to plant in the 1940s!

For thousands of visitors to Wales, the work of Forest Craftsman **PETER MATHIAS** is the first thing they see. For Peter, who retired in August, was involved in landscaping and planting along the trunk roads and bypasses which are the main tourist routes to West Wales. He also worked at Preseli Forest and the nursery and seed orchards at Slebech.

Wales also bid fond farewells to Grader Operator **DAI EVANS**, who started his career in Hafon Forest 45 years ago and has worked for the Roads Department throughout North Wales since 1966; Forest Craftsman **DONALD PONTING**, whose 31 years was spent in the



Cyril (right) with his money-laden tree and Robin Waddington.

Llanwynno area; Administrative Officer **MARGARET BLACKER**, whose presentation cheque will help to buy a CD player; and Executive Officer **JANE HOWELLS**, whose 20-year career included spells in both Aberystwyth and Headquarters.

An impromptu speech of thanks at a Conservancy quarterly meeting marked the retirement of **PETER EVANS** from the Forestry Authority staff after 39 years' service. David Hughes, Chief Conservator Wales, thanked Peter for his hard work and joined colleagues for a quiet lunch on Peter's last day.

A keen walker, Peter will continue to walk the paths of North Wales, doubtless checking the forests are managed correctly!



October saw the departure of the last Forest Enterprise staff resident in Forest of Deer, Buchan FD. Ganger Emslie Wilson retired after 32 years while Senior Ranger Peter Webster took up a full-time university place in Aberdeen. Our picture shows FDM Norman Davidson and AO Jackie Sim presenting Emslie with his service certificate and gift from colleagues, with Mrs Wilson receiving a bouquet from AO Chrystal Morrison.

An ode to Mike



After our retirement round-up in Scotland and Wales, let's cross the Borders to South Downs and elsewhere in England.

In South Downs, the muse descended when colleagues produced a retirement ode for **MIKE WEBB**! Mike's family joined the fun as staff presented him with a 5 lb. 'old timer' axe as well as a cheque.

In our picture above, AOs

ENGLAND

Margaret Davis and Evelyn Overton are handing over the verses which record some of the anecdotes of Mike's time in the area.

Another retirement is that of **BRIAN COLLINS** from Tree Improvement, formerly Genetics Branch, at Alice Holt.

A set of 50 OS Landranger maps was the parting gift (from colleagues past and present) which Brian and his wife plan to put to good use cycling over Southern Britain.

Weald lost a true craftsman in Ganger **JACK HOBBS**, who has retired after 37 years' service. Jack began his career replanting woodlands devastated in the Second World War,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



39 years' service ... Peter Evans, arms folded, is seen right of centre with colleagues at the quarterly meeting held earlier this year.



47 years in forestry ... Sam Waldron after receiving his service certificate and gifts.

Wartime memories of a trainee

The devil's kitchen — and lethal food

Memories of training days 52 years ago — in the early part of the Second World War — are recalled here by George Pringle, now in retirement in Gwynedd.

A glimpse of life at the Benmore Forester School near Dunoon in Argyll, provides a fascinating insight into conditions there for the then young apprentices who had to contend with rationing, war-raging kitchen staff, meat fit only for a dog(?).

In the words of George: "We worked hard, we played hard... all on five shillings (25p today) a week."

He writes: On 15 April 1940, a number of young men aged 17 to 19 from all parts of Britain reported to Benmore, to start a six-month course training to be foresters. A few returned on 14 August 1941, to join others and attend a two-year training course (at the start of the war the FC had tried to condense its normal two-year course into one of six months, but after two attempts had to revert to its original practice).

Everyone who trained at Benmore will have his own memories. Those who were there from '40 to '42 will recall what follows.

Benmore was famous for its food. War-time rationing did nothing to enhance its reputation. Each apprentice — that was our official title — received his ration of butter and sugar on Mondays. He got only part of the full ration of course as a deduction was made in the kitchen for cooking! The jam ration was issued monthly.

After a while the butter and sugar was issued on a Tuesday, then a Wednesday and so on until a full week's ration somehow disappeared. When the issue was late the words "butter" and "sugar" were written on fish bones, or whatever was handy on the long dining tables, as a reminder to the kitchen staff.

The jam ration never lasted a month. Malt extract was not on ration and made a very good substitute. The chemists in Dunoon did a roaring trade!

Bread was the great filler. Sandwiches put many a door step to shame at lunchtime, and at the main meal in the evening, slices of bread were cut into cubes and mixed with the pudding to provide bulk.

Rabbits were abundant and frequently appeared on the menu. We always hoped the kitchen staff would not have one of their frequent rows on the day we were to have rabbit stew. During these altercations one of the staff was inclined to vent his rage on the food for the day. Rabbits were not neatly dissected with the meat cleaver. They were pulverised. The result was a stew full of lethal bone splinters. Nor was it unusual to find an unseeing rabbit's eye peering up from the plate — the head was never discarded in the kitchen.

There was one hot summer's day when the tinned meat brought into the dining room for the main meal — for some reason we were

having it at mid-day — gave a very clear indication by its smell that it wasn't what it should be.

A few of the apprentices took the meat to the top man. "We don't think this meat is fit to eat"; meat examined and a portion dropped to the man's dogs. The meat was gulped down. "The dogs like it." End of discussion. The apprentices decided to have a meatless day!

Every day was a working day. The lecture room was reserved for Saturday morning only. Once in a blue moon we might have lectures during the week. We did all sorts of work. "If you can't take up the tool and show the man how to do it you can't supervise," we were told.

At the beginning of each week the working gangs were made up and jobs allocated. Staff tried to ring the changes as much as possible and so provide a variety of work, but on one occasion, one lad got landed with the same job week after week. He was always with the "dragging out" gang, ie, extracting logs by hand.

After three weeks of this he appeared on parade one morning with trousers open and the unmentionable in full view.

"What do you think you're doing?" he was asked. "If I'm expected to work like a horse, I might as well look like one," he replied. I think he got a change of job.

I know Jock Low tried out metal shutes (was it at Dyfi—Dovey as you knew it Jock—in the '50's?), but we had shutes at Benmore in 1940. What fun we had: nearly launched the first logs into Loch Eck. The speed at which they came off the shute took everyone by surprise. We had to erect a log barricade to stop them.

Another method of extraction was to anchor fencing wire around a rock at the top of a ride and then pay the wire out to the road below. Once there it was attached to a stout piece of timber about seven feet long.

The logs (DF first thinnings) were pulled out to the ride and hooked in to the wire running down the ride. Once hooked on, the log was lifted up and at the same time, four apprentices on the road pulled the carrying wire tight by heaving on the timber to which it was attached. The log then shot down the wire and when the moment was right the four lads released their grip and ran like hell!

Sometimes they got it right and the log skidded to a halt as planned, sometimes it shot across the road. I should make it clear that this was not a public road. Today the Health and Safety Executive would go grey at the thought of such goings on.

In Argyll the war seemed very remote but in May 1940, Churchill called for volunteers to form the Local Defence Volunteers — later called the Home Guard. In no time at all Benmore had its own platoon. We had no uniforms, no weapons. The WVS made armbands using the tartan of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and stitched the letters LDV on to them. We drilled with pieces of wood cut to the length of a rifle.

● George is living at Glen Caig, Betws-y-Coed, in Gwynedd, LL24 0BL.

RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWEST BRANCH VISITS REAL GEM

The newly formed Edinburgh and South Scotland branch of the Retirement Association opened its account by holding a two-day trip to forests in the Stewartry.

The Edinburgh contingent got to know retired foresters from South Scotland during a walk through Fleet hardwood forest — one wonders how many are really aware of this unique forest gem created by the Commission in the 30's by Charlie Parley, Bob Donald, Bert Steel and others.

The visitors had a first-class guide in forester Jim Wilson and lively talks were enhanced by retired forester Jim Grieve who had taken part in the plantings and had assisted Bob Donald in developing a horsedrawn plough.

The evening after-dinner programme, included talks by Mike Wenner (Enterprise) and John Ogilvie (Authority).

Next morning, reports branch chairman W. B. Sutherland, our bus took us through Kinoughtree (but without the nursery — shades of Hugh MacMillan), Clatteringshaws and the Raiders Road.

"Our hosts Jim Hamilton and Mike Wenner had planned an unforgettable experience embracing demonstrations of landscaping, modern forest planning techniques and wildlife (red squirrel, goats, red deer, eagle, otter etc.)

TWO-MILE WALK

Particularly noticeable was the full part played by women members in the talks, plus the fact that all trippers opted for — and survived — a strenuous two-mile walk through Fleet forest.

A special welcome was given to Frank Johnstone (Estates), who is in his late 80's, and was the oldest of the party.

The branch wish Mike and Jim every success in their efforts to improve public awareness of the Commission's stewardship of this fascinating chunk of rural Scotland.

News from other areas ...

ALICE HOLT GROUP:

Recent events included a talk by National Trust warden Craig Vincet titled 'Working with Nature' and a visit to Wisley Royal Horticultural Gardens. Earlier in the year members visited Frogmore House Gardens in Windsor, only open to the public twice a year; the Flower Festival in St George's Chapel, Windsor; and Hever Castle and Chartwell House (home of Winston Churchill).

To close the year the group will visit Chichester for shopping followed by a theatre trip. The Christmas dinner will be held in a hotel overlooking the Solent.

Would-be members should seek further information from Mrs Lena Birchall, Woodbury Down, Holt Pound, near Farnham, Surrey GU10 4LA.

BRECKLAND BRANCH: A notable visit earlier this year was to Minsmere Bird Sanctuary in brilliant sunshine. Members recorded 71 bird species for the day — including a Glossy Ibis, a rare visitor to these shores.

Coppice call

DR GEORGE PETERKEN has become president of the Coppice Association, set up in 1991 for coppice workers and coppice woodland managers. The association is looking for support, so if you are interested contact Giles Drake-Brockman at Fineshade on 0780 83394/5.

Ron and Peggy — formidable team



The Commission lost two of its 'real characters' with the retirement of Sherwood's RON WHITE and PEGGY BELL, described by colleagues as 'a formidable team.'

Ron's dual role of Estate Clerk of Works and Civil Engineering Superintendent of Works kept him in demand, while Peggy served as Forest Clerk for 14 years before transferring in 1972, 'to keep Ron in line' as his Administrative Assistant. They are seen here with Regional Land Agent Simon Hewitt in centre.

More retirements



Sam Nichols (38 years' service) of North Yorks Moors, flanked by Operations Support Officer Geoff Haw and FDM John Mackenzie.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

and worked on plantings and maintenance on the M25.

Sixty colleagues past and present attended a lunchtime barbecue to say goodbye to West Downs H & M Ganger JOHN SUMNER, who retired in September after 44 years. John was employed mainly on the old Bramhill Forest but more recently in the Alice Holt main block. His local knowledge and experience of harvesting — plus a weekly analysis of the football results — is already missed.

Back north to Grizedale, where goats, ducks and beagling feature highly in the retirement plans of Forest Craftsman TEDDY THORNTON. Most recently responsible for maintaining the Conservation nursery and Grizedale forest trails, Teddy's interests also include his large allotment and making walking sticks.

Fifty friends and colleagues gathered to say goodbye to SAM NICHOLS when he retired from North York Moors. Sam's 38-year career included a wide range of forestry operations, including work with the Civil Engineering team at Dalby. Most recently he rejoined forest staff on timber measuring duties.

Based in the North of England, mainly Yorkshire, for most of his career, Operations Manager PETER CLARK nevertheless made many friends throughout the Commission in his 34 years of service. A watch was the parting gift from friends and colleagues in Greater Yorkshire Conservancy.

Still in that Conservancy ... and District Forester HUGH THOM, the man they called the 'cable crane king,' has also retired — after a career spanning the globe. Many people will remember Hugh's time in Training Branch, which led to spells with the Cyprus Forest Service and the Canadian Department of Forestry, and work in Bhutan in the early 1980s.

A 'This is Your Life'-style presentation marked the retirement of AO WENDY



Brian Collins ... planning a cycle trip with his wife.

SEVERS, when colleagues paid tribute to her abilities and presented her with garden furniture.

Best wishes also go to FA England's Computer Liaison Officer JOHN SELL, who retired after stalwart duty keeping East England's computers running (with a little help from his trusty screw-driver!)

Dean reunion

Dean Forester Training School students from 1964 to 1968 had a reunion dinner in Coleford in October.

Former instructors, students and guests came from as far afield as Belgium and the Seychelles to join the party, with greetings sent from Malaya, Mombasa and Sydney.

MC for the evening was Martin Fletcher of South Downs Forest District. Memorabilia and photographs on display ranged from copies of the student magazine 'Taproots' to old pay rates, and the FTS tie, blazer and scarf were in evidence.

The toasts included, "Our ladies," given by Roger McKinley (1965-67); "Absent friends," by Mike Blud (64-66); "Our instructors," by Gordon Griffiths (66-68); "Dean-trained forester," by Derek Davies; and "Vale Parkend School" by Geoff Waygood.

It is hoped the reunion will repeated in five years' time — in the Seychelles, perhaps?

DEAN FORESTER TRAINING SCHOOL



25th ANNIVERSARY REUNION DINNER 1964 - 1968

**ALL
GOOD
SPORTS!**

Sport retains its natural back-page prominence with a round-up of the more athletic pursuits of our colleagues. We kick off with an account of a marathon effort the length of Britain by a quartet led by Lairg's John Boluski, who had already motorcycled 'end to end' and knew the way. Kielder's Len Thornton doesn't own a bicycle and had never done any cycling. There was clearly only one thing to do. Third team member DUNCAN RAY, of NRS, tells the story ...

Two-wheelers do their stuff

Some think of Jimmy Savile's cigars, others Ian Botham's elephants. One colleague remembers a lone walker pushing a vacuum cleaner through the Drumochter mountains.

Cyclists see the 'end to end' (Land's End to John o' Groats journey) as an equivalent of the Pennine Way for walkers; a journey most people can achieve with preparation and a free couple of weeks.

To keep the cost small and the journey fast, we opted to camp with a borrowed tent and equipment, and take my Skoda driven by Simon Parkin, a sandwich student at NRS. Our planning attracted a range of Skoda jokes. You can imagine them surely — "At least you'll have some emergency transport carrying three bikes with you" ... "Don't forget three tow ropes for the Skoda!"

We arrived at Land's End on a beautiful sunny morning and by 7.30 am were on our way,

covering 86 miles across Bodmin Moor to Launceston. The second day was the hardest: roads in Devon go over hills, not around them!

It took several flagons of Somerset scrumpy to refresh the aching legs. The third day took us to an idyllic camp site near Tewkesbury, boasting a 90-mile day with the remaining flagon of scrumpy.

The following day we made the best of the good weather to reach Delamere in Cheshire, 117 miles further north. The Skoda met us at 30-mile intervals for a welcome stretch of the legs, chat and a cuppa — we became conditioned like Pavlov's dogs, the mouth becoming dry in expectation every time we saw a beige-coloured Skoda on the road ahead!

After a stop in Lancaster to mend a puncture and tighten a loose rear wheel-bearing on my bike we reached Milnthorpe in Cumbria. Eighty-three miles covered, a beautiful campsite in mature oak / ash woods, the 'end to end' half complete, and seasoned campers in side-splitting laughter as my colleagues managed to fit the fly-sheet the wrong way round so that the door of the tent was completely blocked!

The sixth sunny morning in a row saw us in Shap village, where end to enders were nothing new. One enterprising local chap suggested we buy a large pack of sausages from the Shap sausage factory — 'By gum thur big uns — they'll keep three gooin' t' Groot's tha knows'!

After a few hours dodging heavy traffic on the A74 we toasted our safe arrival in Scotland with bangers and mash and a wee dram.

The seventh morning was cooler but our route conveniently brought us to NRS for lunch — Mima's famous tuna and mayonnaise rolls. Another bangers-and-mash supper in Pitlochry was followed the next day by a mammoth ride through Killiecrankie, Drumochter and Slochd on the A9.

Daylight

Making full use of the daylight till 10 pm, we were in Brora, Sutherland, by nightfall. The last few of the 147 miles dragged, as we hoped to see the Skoda parked round the next bend, and smell sausages on the evening air!

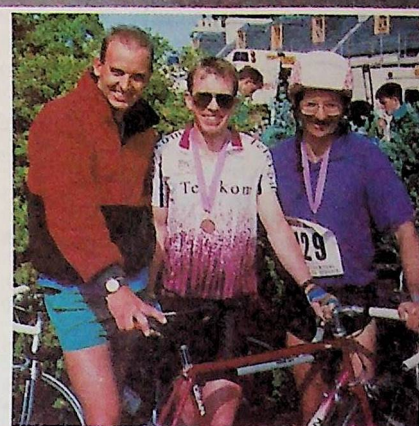
On the last morning we cycled easily over the Ord of Caithness, down and up the steep Berriedale Braes, and across the moors south of Wick. A single cyclist blasted past us going for the double 'end to end' at 160 miles a day, but our backsides told us 901 miles in nine days was enough.

Even when we reached John o' Groats Len wasn't finished: for an extra £10 he had a dip in the Pentland Firth. After a Nigel Mansell-style shower of bubbly we loaded up the Skoda and finished our journey with a delicious curry (we'd eaten more than enough sausages) followed by a marvellous sleep.

Thanks to all our sponsors in the Commission; also Skoda GB, the campsites, and the St Clair Arms for their marvellous hospitality. We raised more than £1000 for two charities, the Royal Hospital For Sick Children's Appeal in Edinburgh, and the Kielder Village First School in Northumberland.



There's only a few hundred left to go and (left to right) John, Len, Duncan and Simon prepare to hit the road. Below, their marathon effort is all over and Duncan (right) hands over the all-important cash for the Sick Children's Appeal. Kielder Village First School also saw the benefit.



Still with cyclists ... and these smiles of success come from (left to right) John Ireland, Frank MacCulloch and Ray Cameron, the North Scotland team who entered the Highland Cross endurance event. A 20-mile run from Kintail to Affric followed by a 30-mile cycle run to Beaully raised £470 for charity.

The challenge of Kielder ...



You could be forgiven for thinking there was more than an oil drum up the pole in Kielder recently. But this strange structure was one of the tasks which earned the Forest Enterprise team fourth place in a nationwide challenge set by Northumberland's outdoor initiative centre Reivers of Tarsel.

The Inter-Company Challenge set ten teams of six several tasks to complete within strict guidelines and time limits over a weekend — including constructing a bivouac and cooking an evening meal in the open. Ropes, pulleys, logs and barrels featured highly but it took a lot more than brute force to solve the puzzles and satisfy the judges. In the task pictured above, the aim was to get the drum as high as possible, and the team contemplate which pole to pull to bring it down again.

The event took place in different locations within the Forest, with the FE team of Mike Sanderson, Bill Burlton, Mike Strachan, Jamie Smith, Simon Blenkinsop and Dick Graham improving on last year's placing to prove that ingenuity, fitness and resourcefulness are well up on the forester's skills list!

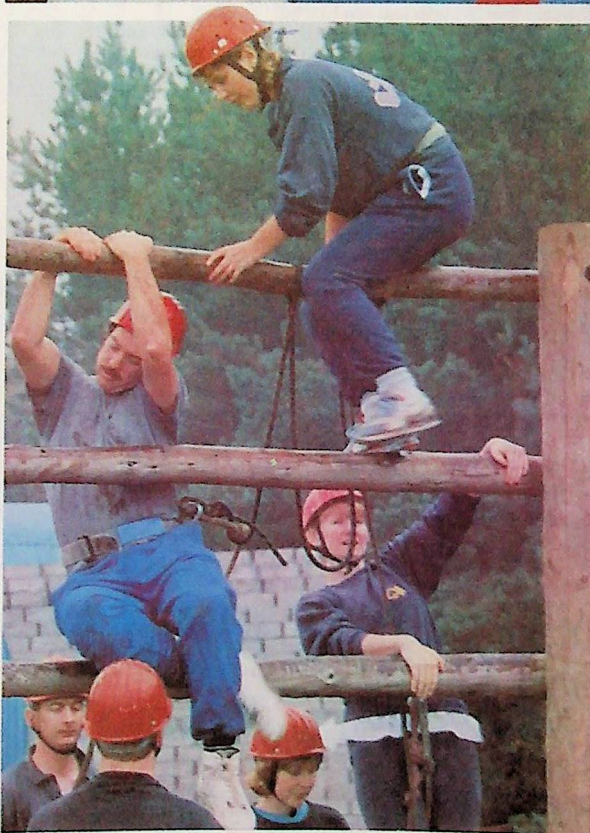
... and in Kintyre



The 'Crew of the Enterprise' from Kintyre went boldly ahead on a gruelling assault course for Action and Research for Multiple Sclerosis.

Andrew Jarrott, Stuart Fish, Corinne Cheetham and James Laing (in line above) completed the course at Lochgilphead in 2 minutes 50 seconds, just missing out on the trophies thanks to problems with the 'Klingons' — to be precise, failing to 'cling on' to the medicine ball, which left them with two four-second time penalties to make up. But wet weather didn't dampen their spirits, and the day raised a total of £8000 for ARMS.

Going over the top



Six Commission staff took the bait and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution saw the benefit when a charity event based on ITV's 'The Krypton Factor' came to Cropton Forest in September.

Events included orienteering, shooting, a memory puzzle, path-finder and intelligence tests, and, naturally, the dreaded assault course. Team work earned third place for the intrepid six, raising £85 through sponsorship for the RNLI. Above, the handy six line up to show they survived ... from left David and Maria Cross, Joanne Brigly, Sally Woodcock, Paul Jenkins, Phil Morton and at left Joanne, Paul and Sally show us just how it's done.

**A MERRY
CHRISTMAS
AND GUID
NEW YEAR
TO
YOU ALL!**

