



Tree Scribe

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A NEW FORCE IN THE INDUSTRY



The Tilhill board. Back row, from left, Andrew Miller, commercial and products director; Sandy Macpherson, forestry director; David Hadden, finance director. Front row, Len Yull, Highland regional director; Peter Johnson, chairman; Martin Wilkinson, operations director.

A message from the Chairman

The national budget of 1988 has proved to be a watershed in forestry policy in the United Kingdom. It has also led indirectly to the formation of Tilhill Economic Forestry. The two oldest and most reputable names in private forest management and nursery production have merged to form a new force in the industry. The merger has been promoted with the substantial backing of Booker plc and the valuable guidance of the members of the Booker Countryside board, whose work will increasingly be in evidence.

The early weeks of the merger were necessarily preoccupied with the restructuring and relocation of facilities. More than a hundred professional forest staff now operate in two dozen forestry districts, giving nationwide coverage – a source of forestry skills unparalleled in the private sector. The nurseries of the merged company are well equipped and able to meet a wide species range with the highest quality of service. The forest survey department gives us and our clients a competitive advantage with its latest technology and, in the acknowledged excellence of our wildlife and habitat skills, we have the comfort of knowing we are doing admirable conservation.

However important the merger has been internally, it has of itself changed nothing on a national policy basis. Misunderstandings of the contribution and value of plantation forestry remain widespread, as does real knowledge of what motivates the amenity and restorative planter. The board of Tilhill Economic Forestry will be playing its part in influencing attitudes, and we must now all have the confidence to speak up for forestry and back it up at local level through sensitive work and a willingness to put over the case to the unconverted.

Our clients are facing change and living in the same rather depressed economic scene. They will expect the most cost-effective quality service which can be provided. It must be innovative and dependable rather than rigid and repetitive so that, as managers, we can maximise the returns they value most without losing the essential ingredient of personal contact. We will always be expected to be competitive. The

senior management of this new company looks forward to the challenge of these changes and is determined to provide the leadership so that our products, service and standing will set the pace for the next decade.

Tree Scribe invited the former Nature Conservancy Council chairman Sir William Wilkinson to outline the relationship between the interests of conservation and those of coniferous and semi-coniferous forestry. His article is on the back page.

We welcome his contribution, and are pleased to note that there is much common ground. However Tilhill Economic Forestry, as well as the Government, is looking for a significant increase in new planting over current depressed levels. With current land values, it is unrealistic to expect more than a modest portion of the new planting to come from lowland forestry on former arable and enclosed pasture. Expansion of upland afforestation will be necessary. The successful and innovative forest products industry requires a reliable long-term supply of raw material, and the landward areas of Britain require the consequent inputs to the local economy.

We are in agreement that responsible forestry does not seek to plant bogs and mires and the high hills; but responsible forestry does want to be down the hill as well as off the hill. Carefully designed afforestation of degraded sheepwalk, ecologically impoverished by centuries of overgrazing means change, rather than loss, for nature conservation. Down the hill afforestation can avoid the most important upland wildlife sites and, well-designed, creates valuable new habitat.

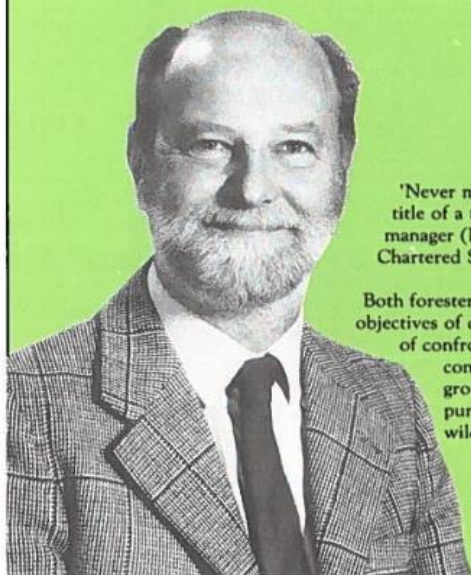
FARM OPEN DAY

After a highly successful 1990 Open Day at Radcot Bridge Farm at Farringdon, Oxford, a second demonstration day is to be held on June 20, 1991. In spite of enduring the wettest and windiest day of the summer of 1990, more than 800 people attended a stimulating day's demonstrations last year. We are hopeful that many more will turn out this

year to enjoy and be educated by our woodland demonstration plots, augmented this year with new game coverts and, as well as headland and hedgerow bottom management, techniques which introduce wildflower and meadow mixtures to enhance the conservation value of farm land.

The day's events begin at 10 am and continue through until 6 pm. All visitors are welcome.

NEVER MIND THE TIMBER, FEEL THE MOSS.



'Never mind the timber, feel the moss.' This was the title of a talk which Baxter Cooper, senior wildlife manager (Highlands) gave to the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Rural Practices Division in April.

Both foresters and conservationists are confused about the objectives of conservation and can be trapped in positions of confrontation, said Baxter in his talk. However, he continued, the new forester realises that woods grow more than just trees. Forestry is now multi-purpose, and as conscious of its production of wildlife as of timber. Our understanding of wildlife processes in the forests we manage will do much to improve communication and avoid conflict with conservationists.



HENRY (MICK) CAIRNS

It is with regret that we announce the untimely death of Henry (Mick) Cairns, squad foreman at Jedburgh. Mick joined Tilhill 23 years ago as a forest labourer and worked mainly in the Borders, but included a short spell in Yorkshire when the branch there was first opened. He started his working life on a farm, moving on to become a gardener before joining Tilhill. He was a man with a multitude of skills and could turn his hand to all kinds of work. He and all his wide experience are sorely missed at Jedburgh.

He leaves a wife Kath, a son Colin and three daughters, Kendra, Penny and Debbie.

GAME CONSERVANCY

Yorkshire district manager Tim Liddon recently attended the Game Conservancy regional conference at Castle Howard.

Tilhill sponsored this worthwhile event this year and Tim gave a 30-minute presentation to an audience of more than a hundred people from all walks of life, from estate owners to game-keepers. His illustrated talk highlighted the need to

maximise the value from Estates and Farm Woodland Schemes and suggested that the value should be made up from a number of different aspects such as commercial timber production, game potential, shelter, amenity and nature conservation, etc. Heavily stressed throughout the presentation was the fact that timber production and game potential are two mutually-complementary objectives.



Above: Yorkshire district manager Tim Liddon (right) looks on as Mark Pritchard of the Forestry Commission hands over the signed Woodland Grant Scheme documents to Mrs Brenda Collins, owner of the Warden Law site near Houghton-le-Spring.

Right: Baroness Trumpington and Sir Derek Barber with the first farm woodland planting at Thames Chase in the background.

The creation of *Community Forests* around England's cities is the aim of a major initiative led by the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission. Over a dozen locations have now been announced. The concept is aimed to revolutionise countryside land use in the close vicinity of our major conurbations.

Tilhill Economic Forestry applauds this initiative and has shown itself an enthusiastic supporter. At each of the first three forests, the first hectare has been donated and planted by us.

The first was the Great North Forest. On December 20 last year, Tim Liddon's planting on the farm of Ted Collins at Warden Law, Houghton-le-Spring, marked the 'launch' of the Great North Forest. The event was well attended by Tyne Tees Television and other media.

A further hectare was planted in the Forest of Mercia on February 27. The Director of the Forest of Mercia, Mr Graham Hunt said, 'This tree planting project on the Little Wyrley Estate is an excellent example of the way in which both sponsor and land owner can co-operate in development of the Forest. The site will be used to show other land owners, farmers and other organisations throughout the region the benefits of tree planting and how to look after new woods and we are very grateful to Tilhill Forestry for supporting us so generously.' Richard Sochacki orchestrated a most successful planting, which was named Colliers Wood, near Cannock in Staffordshire.

A large turnout of personalities attended the launch of the Thames Chase Community Forest on March 12 at Hatch Farm, recorded by Anglia TV and TV South as well as several newspapers and journals. We again have planted, and will maintain for several years, the first hectare in the Community Forest. Baroness Trumpington, Sir Derek Barber and Mr R. Hancock all commended the co-operation between the many bodies involved in the Community Forest launch.



A patchwork quilt illustrates the overall concept of how Community Forests are envisaged to develop in the future. A close integration is anticipated of various woodland plantings, open recreational spaces, wildflower meadows, car parking, visitor centres with, where appropriate, development of farm buildings and facilities for possible alternative uses.

Sir Derek Barber, Booker Countryside's Chairman, commented, 'Community Forests can make a constructive contribution to the land use debate. A better environment can only come from a healthy rural economy. Production working farms are particularly important elements of Community Forest areas. We are delighted to have been invited by Mr Furlonger to start off the improvements to the landscape of his farm and hence Thames Chase.'

Further offers have been made to the National Forest and Cleveland Community Forest for Tilhill Economic Forestry to be involved at an early stage in the implementation of their ambitious plans.

Tilhill Economic Forestry staff arranged and organised a seminar held on April 10 to share our technical expertise and experience with planners and Community Forest personnel. We are closely involved with the Forestry Commission on weed control trials and, on a previous arable site at Radcot Bridge Farm at Farringdon, Oxford, this has given us a 'state-of-the-art' knowledge on the latest herbicides that are available for effective economic control of the wide range of weeds which rampage across rich fertile farm sites.

Together with the accumulated knowledge we have acquired over many years, we are very well placed to combine the skills of forestry, farming and landscaping in the Community Forest. We have made a promising and supportive start at the embryonic stage of the Community Forest concept. We intend to capitalise on good relationships we have built up and of the quality work we have so far produced in the Great North Forest, Forest of Mercia and the Thames Chase Forest.

SENIOR WILDLIFE MANAGER HONOURED



Ronnie Rose and his wife Florence after the Buckingham Palace ceremony.

Ronnie Rose, the senior wildlife manager for the former EFG properties in south Scotland was honoured with the award of an MBE in the New Years Honours List.

Ronnie, his wife Florence and son Ronald attended the investiture at Buckingham Palace on March 19, when Ronnie received his award from Her Majesty The Queen.

Ronald Robertson Rose was born in 1936 at West Lodge, Balmoral, where his father and grandfather before him had been stalkers on the royal estate.

He started work at 14 with the Forestry Commission and, apart from tree-and-a-half years when he served with the Gordon Highlanders in Cyprus during the emergency, he remained with the Forestry Commission until 1970 when he was a Forest Ranger at the Queen Elizabeth National Park.

He joined EFG in 1970 to look after the wildlife management at the recently established Eskdalemuir forest in Dumfriesshire. Since that time, his views on the management of wildlife in commercial coniferous forests have become well-known throughout the forest industry in Great Britain and abroad.

Each year, hundreds of people including forestry students from most of the British training establishments visit the Wildlife Centre at Burncleuch, Eskdalemuir where Ronnie expounds his views, usually extremely forcefully, on wildlife management.

Ronnie and Florence have three children, two girls - Caroline and Yvonne, and a son - Ronald who, after obtaining his B.Sc. in Forestry from Aberdeen University, joined the wildlife team at Eskdalemuir.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Congratulations to the following staff of Tilhill Economic Forestry who have passed their ICF part II examinations and are now all Chartered Foresters: Carl Bridges (Carmarthen), George Hay (Kirkby Lonsdale), Neil Hughes (Stirling), Stewart Maginnis (Oxford) and Peter Matthews (Perth).

Congratulations to Dick and Miranda Hoare on the birth of their first child, Georgina Anne, at Canterbury on March 20....

... and to George Hay and his wife Gill on the latest addition to their family, Murray, who was born on February 23.

BATTLEFIELD SITE

Yorkshire district recently successfully advised a client on the purchase of a 63-acre site called Wilstrop Wood, which lies due west of the City of York and is adjacent to the Civil War battlefield of Marston Moor.

This attractive mixed conifer and broadleaved woodland is not only on the NCC Inventory of Ancient Woodland, but also has the graves of warriors dated from the battle. During the battle, there were heavy skirmishes on the ground next to Wilstrop Wood and now some of the last examples of warrior graves can be seen in the property. Other graves were destroyed by agricultural workings in 1891. With the assistance of the County Archaeologist, these graves have now been identified for their future protection.

ON THE MEND

Two senior Tilhill managers who suffered heart attacks earlier in the year are now on the mend.

Bill Dorrington, manager of south-west district, had a heart attack in January and was taken to the Royal United Hospital at Bath. Fortunately, he made good progress by following doctors' - and his wife Audrey's - instructions assiduously.

Bill has made steady progress since, and was given clearance to take up his duties again at the end of March on the understanding that he would work only part of the day and

gradually build up to a full day's work over a period of weeks.

Nurseries' manager Robin Sym suffered a severe heart attack in February and was in the Royal Surrey Hospital at Guildford in intensive care for a time.

He has subsequently made slow but steady progress and, a month after being taken ill, was tackling daily exercise by way of walking, and exercise on the hospital's treadmill and other equipment.

Robin is very cheerful and, although he has shed half a stone or so, looks fit, and continues to be positive about the future.

FORESTERS & CONSERVATIONISTS

By Sir William Wilkinson

What can commercial forestry offer to nature conservation? Many changes have taken place in forestry over the last four years: the basis of Government support has altered, and new grant schemes have been introduced, targeting new types of investor and higher quality land. These changes signal fresh opportunities for a closer working relationship between foresters and conservationists.

The basic aims of nature conservation of course have not changed. Our central purpose is to maintain the richness and diversity of our natural heritage – to ensure that the wildlife communities of each region remain viable and distributed across their traditional range. This may sound like an argument against any alteration in land use; and it is true that certain habitat types benefit from minimal change. For example, the wildlife of hay meadows and ancient coppice woodland depends on the continuance of traditional management. But these long-established habitats are now relatively uncommon, especially in the lowlands. Much more common are the large expanses of intensive farmland, the arable fields and improved grassland. Currently the nature conservation value of these areas is low: wildlife is sparse and poor, and mostly confined to the banks, hedgerows and ditches of the field boundary. Planned and considered change in these areas can therefore be highly beneficial. The creation of new woodland can greatly enhance wildlife value, and commercial forestry can therefore develop a real partnership with nature conservation. The main questions that need to be considered are WHERE, WHAT and HOW?

WHERE?

Where should new woodlands be planted? This is the most important question, which must be answered satisfactorily if real benefits are to ensue. From NCC's standpoint, the basic rule of thumb is that planting should take place on areas of low existing value for nature conservation. The intensive farmland mentioned above offers some of the best opportunities. In view of the many problems caused by agricultural over-production, forestry offers a valuable alternative use for this land; and the richer soils and milder climate of the lowlands should allow a wider range of species to be used than in conventional upland afforestation. Creating new woodland on these sites will almost always result in a net gain for nature conservation. Industrially derelict land also has good potential for environmentally beneficial forestry.

The converse is that areas of high value for nature conservation need to be avoided. These areas can be difficult to identify without a proper ecological survey, but are often associated with a history of low-intensity management. It will be no surprise that the uplands support the bulk of what remains. It is for this reason that NCC has long been concerned about upland afforestation, and would welcome a shift to the lowlands.

But beware of generalisations! Some areas of the uplands are species-poor and relatively unimportant for wildlife: and in the lowlands, some arable fields support rare species like the stone curlew or ciril bunting. Great care is therefore needed in the selection of sites for new planting. Some regional planning authorities in Scotland are now preparing Indicative Forestry Strategies which are designed to identify broad zones where new afforestation is least likely to conflict with environmental sensitivities; and these should greatly assist foresters in narrowing down their areas of search. NCC would like to see local authorities in England and Wales preparing similar strategies.

WHAT?

What should be planted? The first choice for nature conservation will always be the tree species native to the area: and stock originating from local seed sources is preferred. This helps to conserve genetic diversity and also reinforces the distinctive regional character of native woodland. The wildlife associated with native trees is generally richer than is

the case with non-natives, and more characteristic of the region. Planting native trees can be a good commercial decision: well-managed oak, ash or beech can produce high-quality timber, commanding the best available prices.

But provided the right site has been chosen, non-natives can also produce gains for wildlife: a Douglas Fir plantation is a much better habitat than a barley field or rye grass ley. A wide range of common songbirds will happily nest in conifers, and some woodland birds (such as the goldcrest and redpoll) prefer the conifer habitat. If some native broadleaved trees and shrubs are included on plantation edges and along rides, this will increase the bird populations further and provide habitat for butterflies and other insects. Conifer woodlands can therefore significantly boost the wildlife value of intensively farmed areas. Fast-growing conifers can also be useful in helping to establish new broadleaved woodlands; acting as a nurse crop and providing early income, the conifers strengthen the often fragile economic basis of hardwood forestry.

HOW?

How should new plantations be designed and managed? Careful planning at an early stage can considerably enhance the opportunities for wildlife. Much depends, of course, on the objectives of planting: but all woods will benefit if a conservation plan, however brief, is prepared. Much excellent advice is available on this subject, including the Timber Growers UK Forestry and Woodland Code, and the Forestry Commission's recently-published *Forest Nature Conservation Guidelines*.

But let me stress again that WHERE is more important than WHAT or HOW. If an important wildlife habitat is planted, such as an undisturbed heath or valley mire, than no amount of care in species selection, design or management will compensate: the scheme will represent a loss for nature conservation.

Lowland forestry

It is Government's avowed objective that a greater proportion of planting should take place on low ground of better quality than hitherto. The Farm Woodlands Scheme was introduced in 1988, and the Better Land Supplement, payable under the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme, has just been substantially increased. Government is also providing support for the Countryside Commission's proposed New Midlands Forest and for nine new Community Forests in England. However, it is clear that the incentives to plant intensive farmland are not yet right; the rate of planting under the Farm Woodland Scheme still appears to fall substantially short of the target. The European Commission have announced an intention to provide more encouragement for the afforestation of set-aside land; and a greater use of the CAP budget for this purpose would certainly be welcome.

But the main basis of NCC's support for more lowland afforestation is that pressure on the uplands should thereby be reduced. It is not yet clear that this will happen. Planting under the Farm Woodland Scheme and under the Countryside Commission's lowland forestry initiatives, surprisingly, are not deemed to contribute to the overall national target for afforestation (currently set at 33,000 ha per annum). This target, therefore, can only be met by increasing the rate of upland afforestation – which would necessarily entail further severe damage to some of our most important wildlife habitats. We are, accordingly looking for a GENUINE shift in the focus of new afforestation from the uplands to the lowlands. The arguments, we feel, are all on our side: lowland forestry provides by far the greatest range of benefits to society as a whole, and so should receive proportionately greater support from the public purse. Let us hope these arguments ultimately prevail.

