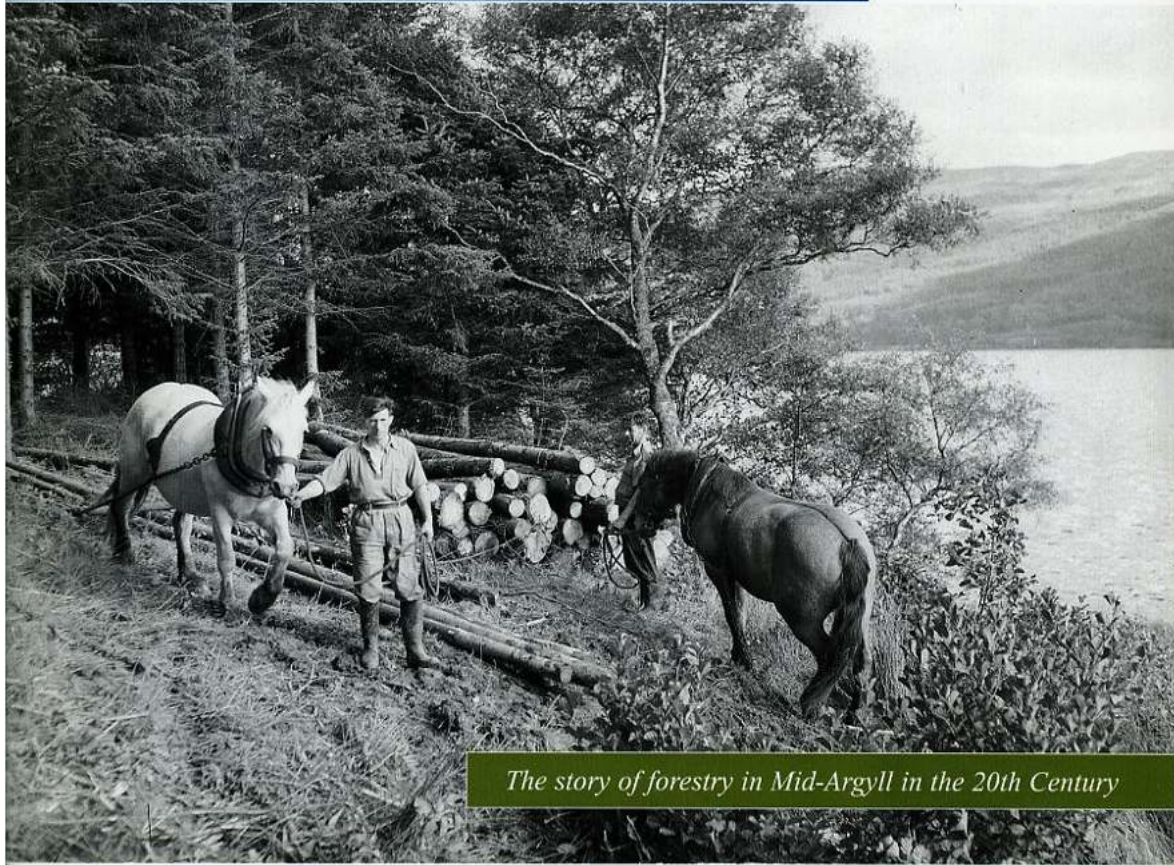


*'Smell of the rosin
noise of the saw'*



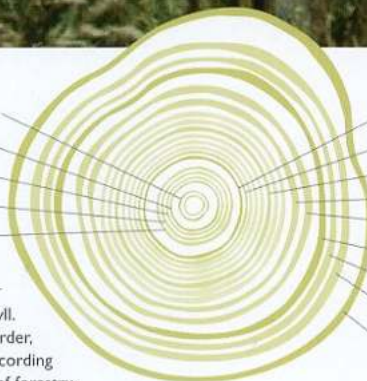
The story of forestry in Mid-Argyll in the 20th Century



Charlie Mitchell, Archie MacDonald and Alasdair 'Yean' MacVean taking a break, Eredine Forest, 1979

- Introduction
- The Early Years (1907 - 1945)
 - Inverliever
 - Knapdale & Eredine
 - Second World War

One hundred years of forestry in Argyll.
This booklet adopts a chronological order,
with three main phases, each divided according
to time period and aspects of forestry.



- The Boom Years (1946 - 1968)
 - Working in the Forest
 - Living in the Forest
 - The Pecking Order
 - Women's work
- After the Gale (1969 - 2007)
 - Transition and Thatcherite reforms
 - The Eighties: Privatisation & rationisation
- Today

foreword

The history of the Forestry Commission is irrevocably linked with the changing rural culture of Scotland in the twentieth century. Few families who have lived in the North and West do not have some link, tenuous or direct.

I joined the Forestry Commission twice, each time in Argyll so I am biased in thinking that it is an ideal location to begin what will clearly become an enduring project. I changed from urban to rural and never looked back. I quickly discovered the extent to which the Commission attracted loyalty and many, including myself stayed for most of their working lives.

The Forestry Commission has evolved dramatically, from the early days with an often insular, pioneering approach, focused on bringing back the trees, to an organisation which understands the wider functions of forests and the responsibilities which that brings to the environment and to communities in Scotland. At all stages of this evolution the Forestry Commission has had a reputation for making things happen due partly to the rich array of individual characters and partly to the culture of the organisation itself. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, evolution gave way to a number of quantum leaps. The first was a commitment to put conservation of landscape and environment at the centre of forest practice. The other in my view has been in our interactions with people and in particular rural (and now urban) communities.

In reality the "Commission" always had people who knew about and cared for wildlife and the environment and its social conscience came in many guises. So these changes often came as a result of internal, as well as external, influences. The Commission pioneered many of the techniques which allowed trees to be established in often hostile conditions (the many interviews reflect this) and the increasing numbers of foreign visitors coming to look at forestry in Scotland are surprised at the scale of this success.

It has been the rediscovery of our links with community and culture that has brought us into contact with people like Jim Hunter of UHI and Robert Livingston of Hi-Arts who have a reputation in their own fields for getting things done and without whom this project would not have come to fruition. Jim Hunter introduced us to Hugo Manson who has shared the skills of recording history with an ever increasing band of enthusiasts who now know that it takes a great deal longer to prepare for and process an interview than it does to carry one out.

When this project started it would have been impossible to anticipate the scale of enthusiasm and knowledge that has emerged. The project has only succeeded as a result of all those who have been involved in setting up microphones, recalling events and rooting out photographs, forest signs and other fascinating memorabilia. Now even I know what a blog is!

Bob Dunsmore



Introduction

Two men walk through a forest grove of 120-foot-high conifers in a remote corner of north Knapdale, Argyll, in the heart of the ancient kingdom of Dalriada. The older, silver-haired man, George Ivison, well into his eighties, is telling his companion about this forest, owned since 1930 by the Forestry Commission. There are, he says, *'still some original 1930 Sitka here... only about 50 trees but for some quirk has evaded all the winds.'* The two men are talking about the older man's 'life in forestry', the last 30 years of which he spent living and working in these Argyllshire forests. The trees they are discussing are not old by Argyll standards. There are many more ancient oak trees in this part of Scotland, but these Sitka spruce stand tall, testament to the success of this conifer, which naturally belongs on the west coast of North America, but which became the twentieth century linchpin of commercial Scottish plantation forestry.

Some twenty miles north of Knapdale, in a former Forestry Commission house at Durran on the shores of Loch Awe, Charlie Mitchell, a quietly spoken septuagenarian who has spent his whole life on the lochside, tells his story. Not only did he start his working life with the Commission at the tender age of fifteen in 1946, but his father before him worked in Inverliever Forest on the west shore of the loch from as early as 1912. This too retains a cluster of cathedral-sized conifers, Mackenzie Grove, planted in 1910, which has also escaped the Scottish harvesting cycle and damaging gales. Both men and trees are inextricably part of the same history.

Mackenzie Grove on Lochaweside. Named after Ian Mackenzie, a forester remembered for his dedication in these forests

*'still some original 1930 Sitka here... only about 50 trees
but for some quirk has evaded all the winds.'* - George Ivison

Inverliever was bought in 1907 by the Government's Office of Woods and Forests, becoming a Crown forest. Its place in Scottish forest history is assured as one of the first models for large-scale afforestation, where important early experimental work on planting on poor, wet and windy Highland terrain was attempted. That this early state-owned forest predated the formation of the Forestry Commission in 1919 gives some indication of the effort put into lobbying for a national forest, stretching back to the early years of the century.

Forestry today is built upon foundations laid down by powerful men, who in the early years of the twentieth century believed that large-scale afforestation would turn what was then perceived as wasteland into productive forest and help stem the flow of people from rural areas to British cities and beyond. War had torn through efforts by private estates to create a timber industry, making state intervention even more imperative in the minds of the instigators of state forestry. They are lauded for their efforts. But without men like Charlie Mitchell and George Ivison – and indeed many women too – who grafted for most of their working lives to build that timber reserve into what it is today (in Scotland some 1,129,247 acres of forest), the noble ideals of the Commission's founding fathers would not have been realised.



Charlie Mitchell, in his younger days as forest worker at Eredine

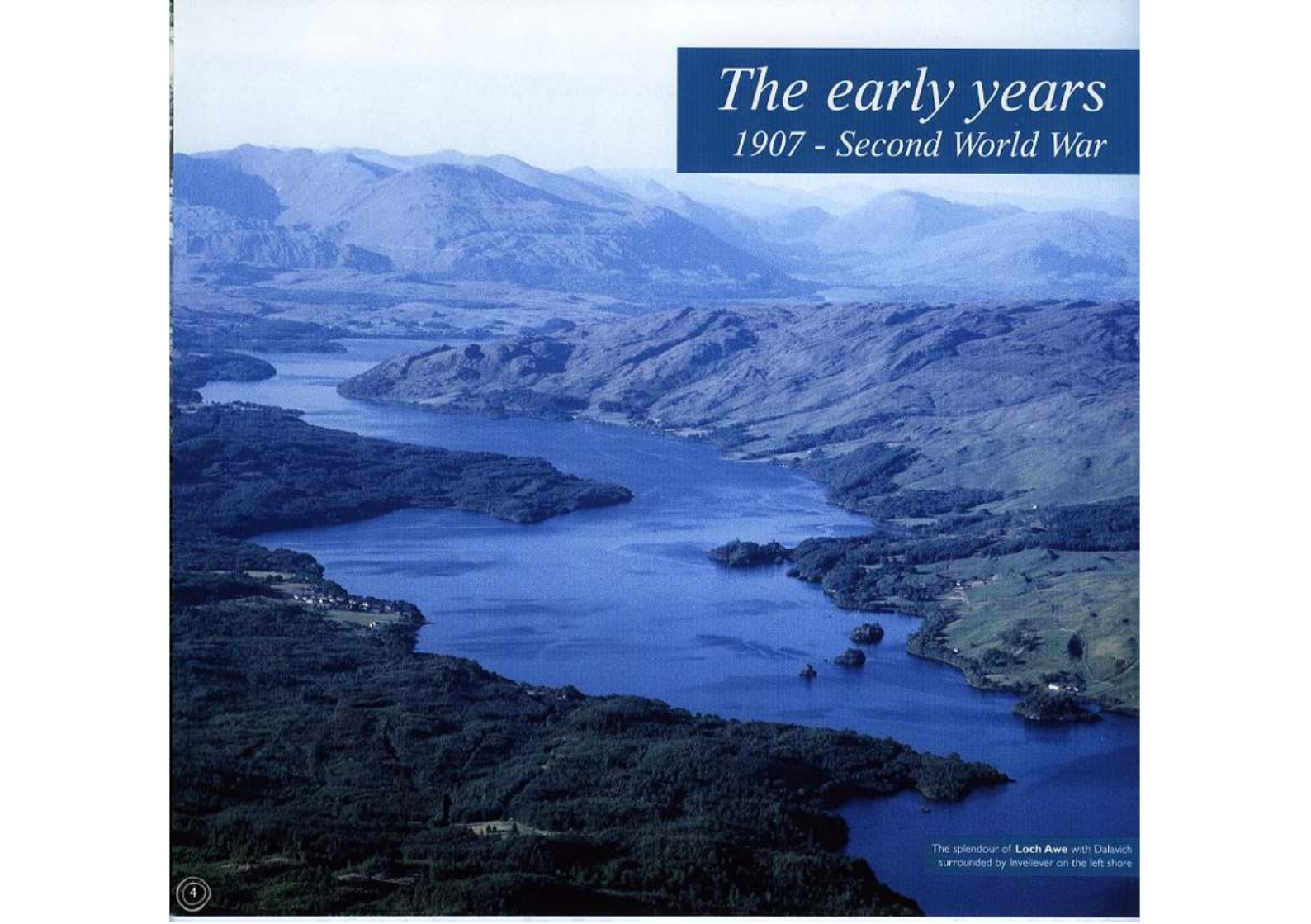
Courtesy: Charlie Mitchell

This is the story of forestry in and around Knapdale and Lochaweside, knitted together from the personal recollections of those who worked in 'the forestry' and whose lives were touched by its force through much of the twentieth century. These people invested their lives and labour in forestry (without, it might be said, much remuneration), created communities in remote and depopulated places, lived their lives, brought up their children and helped create one of the most significant changes in the Scottish landscape in many centuries.



George Ivison, retired forester, amongst the magnificent 120-foot Sitka spruce, near Achnamara

Photo: Hugo Manson

An aerial photograph of Loch Awe, a large body of water surrounded by rolling hills and mountains. The water is a deep blue, and the surrounding land is covered in green vegetation. In the background, there are more mountains under a clear sky. The text 'The early years' and '1907 - Second World War' is overlaid in the top right corner.

The early years

1907 - Second World War

The splendour of **Loch Awe** with Dalavich
surrounded by Inveliever on the left shore

Inverliever

'The State afforestation of the Highlands as a commercial enterprise. That is what Inverliever represents, and nothing more. It is but the first step on a long road which will eventually lead to the acquisition of several millions of acres for State forests.' - R. C. Munro-Ferguson, M.P., 1908

It took some very influential pro-forestry landed gentlemen and five years of concentrated wartime extraction resulting in a seriously depleted British forest reserve – not greatly replete in the first place – to stir politicians into action.

On 1 September 1919 the Forestry Commission came into being, its chairman the aristocratic Simon Fraser, fourteenth Baron Lovat, one of the biggest landowners in Scotland at the time. Amongst its commissioners was Sir John Stirling Maxwell – well known for his experimental work on his high-lying Corrour estate in the central Highlands and whose forester had become the first forester at Inverliever. A further commissioner was the Australian, Roy Robinson, a later chairman (1932-52), and a man who also had a long association with Inverliever.

Writing about Inverliever in 1951 near the end of his life, Robinson said: 'I desire to stress that Inverliever is and will continue to be a pilot scheme for many other forests'. By this time it was the biggest man-made forest in Britain. Those who know about Inverliever's past – often families long associated with Lochaweside – are proud of its place in forest history. One man, Tommy Stewart, who first came to work on Lochaweside in 1948, describes it as 'a lovely place then, the biggest forest in Britain ... a picture, ... a lovely forest. All and tidy.' And he should know, for he is a third generation woodsman, whose father and grandfather before him also spent their days working in forests all over Scotland.

The door to forestry was opened on Lochaweside (and later in Knapdale) because of the shrinkage of the Poltalloch estate, anciently owned by the Malcolms and commanding some 82,000 acres in its nineteenth-century heyday. By the end of the century, however, the Malcolm family fortunes were on the wane, thanks perhaps to the effects of reduced returns from their Jamaican sugar plantations not being matched by spending cuts at home. In 1907 the Malcolms sold Inverliever and other Lochaweside lands, amounting to over 12,000 acres, to the Government for £25,000 (equivalent nowadays to nearly £1.5 million).



It took time and effort to establish a tree nursery, fence areas for the first plantings and erect bothy accommodation for the workforce. As a result, planting did not begin at Inverliever until the 1909-10 season. By 1914, nearly 1.5 million young saplings, over half of the 2.5 million trees planted by then, had come from a newly established tree nursery at nearby Ford. Charlie Mitchell's father, William, was part of that early Inverliever workforce, probably helping with the initial plantings, but doubtless also using his gamekeeping skills to clear the ground of rabbits and deer. He returned to this work later when he became full-time Commission keeper – or 'trapper' as it was then known – on Eredine Forest in the 1930s.

In a 1952 report on Inverliever, it was recorded that, on purchase, the population living on the four farms that had made up Inverliever (Salachry, Torran, Arichamish, Barmaddy & Cruachan) had been 55. The majority were involved in farming. By 1913, the population had increased to 87, with roughly a 50:50 split between farming and forestry. By early 1952, the population was an incredible 285, over 200 of whom worked in forestry. By this time the Commission's holding on west Lochaweside, with the addition of Inverinan, had substantially increased. Clearly this was already a remarkable success story of rural regeneration, with better to come. In the early years, 'the forestry' gave work to many young men, who might otherwise have had to leave the area to find a job.



©Patricia & Angus MacDonald/Aerographica



Courtesy: Charlie Mitchell

Charlie Mitchell, Archie MacDonald and Alasdair 'Yean' MacVean taking a break, Eredine Forest, 1979



Courtesy: Heritage North

Forestry officials at Corrour Lodge, including front row, seated in middle, Sir John Stirling Maxwell, circa 1932



Brashing involves the cutting of lower branches of the tree in order to allow access and to reduce knots in the timber. Now seldom used in forestry, this silvicultural technique was an integral part of conifer forestry in the early days.



The stunning landscape of Knapdale from the air, south of the Crinan Canal, with the Paps of Jura in the background.

©Patricia & Angus Macdonald/Aerographica

Knapdale and Eredine

Inverliever and other Crown forests passed into the hands of the newly fledged Forestry Commission in 1923. In 1930, Poltalloch estate, still in financial straits, sold it a further 20,000 acres. This was a large chunk of Knapdale, including Arichonan, the site of a notorious forced clearance in the nineteenth century whose ruins still lie deep in the forest. With its stunning sea lochs and inland lochans nestling between long, craggy south-west aligned ridges, the area was then largely an assemblage of hill farms,

*'Sheep cleared people
out of the area and then
the trees came and
cleared the sheep out ...'*

Charlie Mitchell

some of which were soon sold to their former tenants. Few roads of any substance penetrated this remote and heavily indented seaboard of Argyll and those that lived here then must have been well used to isolation and self-reliance. It was not ideal terrain for forestry – only half the area was regarded as plantable and the Commission continued to run large sheep farms on the holding. In hindsight, perhaps it should not have been a priority purchase, but, in these early days, the Commission Acquisition Officers often had to take what they could get, hopefully at knock-down prices. But, despite the thin, rocky soils, the mild climate has promoted good growth rates, including the magnificent 120-foot Sitka so admired today.

It should also be remembered that the first ten years of the Commission's existence was marked by uncertainty, when Lovat and his colleagues had to fight not only swingeing budget cuts but also calls for its abolition. However, the Commission survived, and Knapdale began to be transformed. In the early 1930s, Inverinan Estate became the next Commission acquisition on



Cairnbaan Camp in the 1930s when it was built as an instructional camp for the unemployed

© Folklore Museums



Eredine Forest from Inverliever, Loch Awe.

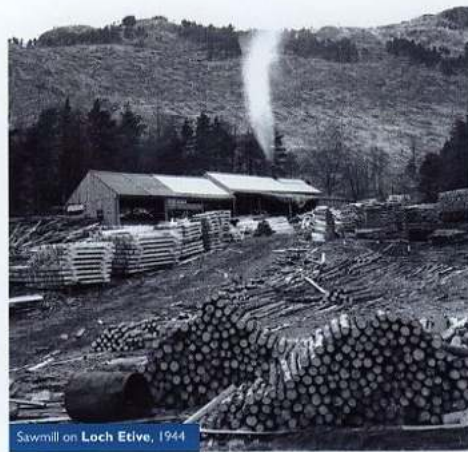
Lochaweside, with Eredine Estate purchased soon after. By this time, William Mitchell and his wife Agnes and their family were living in the Commission's hostel at Cruachan towards the north end of Inverliever Forest. Here Mrs Mitchell found work as the housekeeper and cook. The couple's stay came to an abrupt end when the hostel, timber-built and housing about twelve men, burnt to the ground – it was thought a candle flame had set alight a billowing curtain. Luckily, no lives were lost, but the Mitchells were left with only the clothes they were standing in. Agnes Mitchell lost her job when the hostel was not immediately rebuilt, so the family moved across the loch to the newly acquired Eredine Forest. There William Mitchell was given a forestry croft at Upper Braevallich and put to work clearing rabbits and deer from the areas earmarked for planting. Charlie, Jimmy and their older brother, Willie, grew up here. All of them eventually went to work with the Commission.

During the depression-hit thirties, a tin-hutted camp was built at Cairnbaan, nestling on a hillside by the Crinan Canal in a largely tree-less landscape. This provided living quarters for men desperately in need of a job, who came to be trained in a new industry with considerable promise. One of 38 such Instructional Camps set up in Britain in the 1930s, it was built by the Ministry of Labour to ease severe unemployment in central Scotland's industrial and mining centres. The Commission used the Cairnbaan buildings as offices, workshops and homes long afterwards. Indeed one remains a Commission workshop today.

This influx of unemployed men, largely unused to country living, came to bolster the local Commission workforce and help establish the first forests of Knapdale. It's easy to imagine that, for an out-of-work coalminer, used to spending hours in a cramped, grimy hell-hole only just big enough to crawl through, it was an invigorating experience to find himself in the unpolluted air of the Argyllshire countryside, even if, ironically, he was planting trees that might eventually be turned into props to support the roofs of future coal mines. It is not known how many stayed the course. It was back-breaking physical work with very little social life, although camp life and the camaraderie that was common among forest workers would have had its lighter moments. However, for many of these young men, their life in forestry was short-lived. War was looming, taking them away to the battlefields of Europe, North Africa and the Far East.

Second World War

Wartime contingency planning was already well underway before 1939 and, once again, timber would play a critical role in maintaining the British military machine. However, the insecurity that dogged the Forestry Commission in its first ten years had clearly affected land acquisition and planting rates. Progress had been steady, but probably slower than expected. By the time war broke out, the Commission had acquired some 1,444,000 acres of land in the UK and had planted 434,000 acres. However, few Commission forests were mature enough to provide the necessary raw material for coal mines, munitions factories and shipyards. Private estate forests, including some ancient pinewoods, such as those in Strathspey, would again bear the brunt of wartime felling. However, Inverliever, which had some trees approaching 30 years old and therefore suitable for small-dimension pit props, was fit for purpose.



Sawmill on Loch Etive, 1944

Courtesy, University of St Andrews

Lochaweside during the War became home – if only for a few months or years – to a procession of forest workers, male and female, who were strangers to its shores. Charlie Mitchell, then a young lad living near the timber yard below Durran, remembers them well. Men from the Canadian Forestry Corps came first and built two log cabins at Cruachan on the opposite bank of the loch. Skilled lumberjacks, used to vast forests of great-girthed trees, they stayed there, Charlie recalls, for about a year, perhaps tackling the biggest and best trees first before moving on to the next forest. Later, the cabins were improved and a contingent from the Women's Timber Corps (WTC), affectionately known as 'lumberjills', moved in. The WTC was a section of the better-known Women's Land Army set up in early 1942. These young women – many from the city and unused to manual labour – were involved in every aspect of timber production, including felling with axe and saw, **snedding**, dragging the logs down from the forest with horses and, on Loch Awe, rafting them over to the timber yard on the opposite bank. Years later, one of those girls, Anna Henderson wrote how horrified she and her companions were when sent to the isolated and primitive Cruachan camp, until they were befriended and welcomed by a local girl, Peggy MacEachen (later MacIntyre). Peggy later worked in the forestry, with her sister, Mary Ann, who married Tommy Stewart.

Further up the loch, at Ardbrecknish, another contingent of about ten lumberjills was billeted in a manse. The felling here was on private estates,



Lumberjills – Paddy, Jean, Betty Doull, Anne Officer, Anna Henderson – enjoying a break from work at the Durran 'Dump', 1942/43

Courtesy Jimmy Mitchell

'making a fire trace, nine-foot wide ... to stop fires getting into the forest, digging it, that was all on my own' - Jimmy Mitchell

including clearing a hillside above Portsonachan and rafting the logs over to Kilchrenan, where they could be more easily transported to Taynuilt railway station. Even the loch's islands, such as Innishail, were cleared of trees.

Although the emphasis was on felling during the war, forest establishment was not entirely abandoned. The Commission had been split into two divisions in 1939: the Forest Establishment Department which dealt with normal activities; and the Timber Supply Department, dealing with war needs and coming under the Ministry of Supply from 1941. Planting continued, and, for lads like Jimmy Mitchell, nearing the end of his schooldays at the outbreak of war, working for the Commission seemed almost inevitable (as it did for his two brothers). Jimmy's first experience in Eredine Forest in 1940, at the age of fourteen, would surely have been



Lumberjill rafting logs during 2nd World War

Courtesy: Perth Conservancy, from 'Meet the Members'

'It made me. I wish they would take me back.' - Mary Macdonald

enough to send most boys his age howling back to their mother's apron strings. For the first week or so, he was on his own, as he recalls, 'making a fire trace, nine-foot wide ... to stop fires getting into the forest, digging it, that was all on my own.' Hard work indeed. If that was not enough, the next task allotted to Jimmy was planting, again on his own: 'I didn't know whether I was putting them the right distance, or the right place.' However, he had no choice but to persevere and was eventually put to work with the rest of the squad, which at least offered some companionship. An inauspicious start perhaps, but Jimmy stuck it out with the Commission at Eredine for a further 48 years.

Snedding involves the removal of branches from the felled tree. Also referred to as 'cleaning', it was originally done using a small axe.



Mary McDonald was brought up in Kilmichael Glassary. Her father was a local authority roadman in nearby Lochgilphead and Church Officer at Kilmichael, where the family – Mary, her older brother, Hughie and a younger sister, Jane – lived in a small flat attached to the village hall. She was a sickly child, rarely able to go to school, her parents fearing that she would not reach adulthood.



'Wee' Maggie Campbell and Mary MacDonald, the best of friends

Courtesy: Mary MacDonald

But Mary not only survived childhood, she spent much of the war labouring in the woods of Argyll – in all weathers – felling with cross-cut saw, snedding with axe and processing on a saw bench the trees that would help with the war effort. Today, a spirited 92-year-old, sitting in her home in Kilmichael, Mary fondly recalls her war years as a 'lumberjill'. 'I enjoyed every bit of it, we were all happy together.' There were about twelve other girls in the house at Glendaruel and they all got on well together. Mary's special friend was 'wee' Maggie Campbell, with whom she shared a room. She recalls the fun and banter: Maggie shouting over to her from bed, 'Haw Mary, How are you? Have ye still got yer purse?' Once Mary was pinned to a bed while the other girls put lipstick on her, something she never ordinarily wore. Of course, it wasn't all work, and the girls would go to dances at the weekend, often as far away as Dunoon. For Mary, so long cosseted at home because of childhood illness, it was liberating. Perhaps time has faded the memory of just how hard the work was and how difficult the conditions could be, but the sheer delight in the way these memories are recounted today is testament to how happy that period in her life was. 'It made me. I wish they would take me back.'

The boom years

Late 1940s to 1968



Horse logging near Kilmaha, on the shores of Loch Awe, 1958

Working in the forest

Cross-cut and Horse

With hostilities over, Britain's timber reserve was shattered, especially its private woodland, more so even than after the Great War. However, state forests like Inverliever had also been depleted and work to assess the extent and condition of what remained began, as did the task of replenishment. Forestry seemed to emerge from the war without gaining any significant technological and other innovations. Some lessons had been learned from the Canadians, although cutting high (leaving a high stump when felling a tree) continued to be frowned upon by Scottish foresters and timber merchants. New equipment such as the **blondin tackle** was adopted, but essentially tree growing, tending and harvesting used traditional methods. This was still the era of the cross-cut saw and horse.

'We could coup a hundred trees an hour.' Tommy Stewart today describes the remarkable output, which he and his father achieved in the woods of Lochaweside, using the two-man cross-cut saw in the late '40s and '50s before the motor-driven chainsaw was introduced. 'That's quick', he goes on to say, 'that was about as good as you could get.' The two-man team then had to 'clean' the branches from the fallen trees with an axe – 24 per hour in Tommy and his father's case. That, indeed, is as good as it gets. In a day that invariably started at 6 am, walking to work or being picked up by a Commission lorry, with hardly a break, an hour for lunch, and with knocking-off time not until around 5pm, this was truly hard labour. Tommy and his father were highly skilled fellers, son learning from father, who in turn had probably learned his woodsman skills from his father, Tommy's grandfather. This was often the case. Buddy Gillies, living on a forest croft near Cairnbaan, was taught by his father, Len not just how to handle horses but shoe them too.

In more established forests like Inverliever, **first thinnings** were being taken out by the 1950s, but many forests were still in the establishment phase and nursery work, ploughing, draining and planting remained the main activities. It was still tough work. Most lads who went into 'the forestry', often as young as fourteen or fifteen, started with more menial tasks. Charlie Mitchell recalls his first weeks, working at Eredine nursery on hands and knees, weeding the seedlings, row after row. Duncan MacDougall from Kilchrenan on the opposite side of Loch Awe recalls his first week at Inverinan Forest as a fifteen-year old forest worker in 1948, also weeding for the first fortnight. Forestry followed the seasons. After the nursery work, the next job



Blondin tackle wire ropeway being used by Canadians on Loch Etive, 1944

***Blondin Tackle** was a cable ropeway used during the Second World War; which carried felled timber in bundles from felling to loading points, or even into the sawmill.*

Courtesy University of St Andrews.

was cutting bracken with a 'heuk' or hand hook, and then onto grass, if that was threatening to choke newly planted young conifers. 'The midges were terrible,' says Duncan, recalling how clouds of this diminutive Highland menace emerged from disturbed grass. And you had to be mindful, 'to clear the plants without cutting the trees!' Duncan chuckles. For these young lads, their muscles still developing, there were few tougher initiations into the world of work. They were put into the squad, expected to do the same work as older more experienced men, but without getting the same wage. Even on this low rung of the forestry career ladder, pay depended on grade and you didn't get a grade until you were 21. As Buddy Gillies wryly remembers, until then you were 'just a boy.'

With summer over and the vegetation dying back, it was time to prepare for springtime planting the following year. In these days, much of the land earmarked for planting was 'bare ground' – rough hill grazing which had never been planted before and was usually undrained. Drains would be cut, often by hand, to draw off water from the sodden, peaty soils. Forest workers like Alex Bell, who came with his wife to Dalavich in 1956, recall how eight to nine months of the year were taken up by the drudgery of draining. It is no wonder that many gave up and went into less physically demanding occupations. Autumn and winter brought wind, rain and snow. Deciding when the weather was too bad for work to continue was the job of the ganger – the decision sometimes depending on



TIMMY MITCHELL, WILLIE MILLER, JIMMY O'NEILL & CHARLIE MITCHELL

Courtesy Jimmy Mitchell

how many drops of rain fell on his cigarette paper! But a rain-enforced stop didn't necessarily mean retiring to the comfort of a bothy or shelter. It meant staying in the forest or on the open hill, for the only way off was by lorry which wasn't due till 4 or 5 pm. If you were lucky, shelter might be found with the horses, which had rough stables built for them in the forest. However, shelter mostly meant huddling under a dirty tarpaulin (sometimes known as a hap), which was taken off the lorry on arrival for precisely that purpose.

At stopping-time in winter, as Alex Bell recalls 'You'd be walking out of the wood in the dark' But that was not the end of labouring for this Dalavich resident – he would then have to go home and cut firewood for the house. For Alex, the chores done, the antidote to a hard day's work was to be found on the loch. 'As soon as I came in, I went fishing, first chance I got.'

Spring heralded the planting season, usually from March until May. Planting was paid on a piece-work basis – so much per hundred plants – and was welcomed by forestry workers as an opportunity to earn more cash than they got from their standard weekly wages. Planting involved several techniques, depending on the nature of the ground.

Most commonly, on the wet peaty soils of the west, mounds from the drainage furrows ploughed by a tractor the previous autumn and winter would be cut out and individual trees planted on each mound. On steep ground – and there was plenty of that in Argyll – the tree would be ‘flat planted’, that is straight into the ground. Of all the jobs in forestry, this is the one that has never been mechanised.

‘We could coup a hundred trees an hour.’

Tommy Stewart

Bob Dunsmore, currently Conservator for the Commission’s Highland area, recalls the sheer drudgery and monotony of this task in his early days as a forest worker in Argyll. The emotions felt at the end of a wet day of planting are still raw. As he recalls, nearly 30 years later, ‘*You just try to think of things to keep you going, set yourself targets.*’ Bob’s own targets were a certain number of trees to be planted by a certain time, up to 2,000 trees a day, often climbing steep hillsides with a hundred or so saplings in a bag slung over his back. His year-and-a-half with the squad instilled in him a respect for, and empathy with, those that he would later supervise as he worked his way up the Commission’s ranks. For Duncan MacDougall, this was the work that he did season after season, for much of his 50 years at Inverinan Forest on Lochaweside.

But this kind of work did not dampen spirits. Buddy Gillies, probably one of the Commission’s longest serving forest workers when he retired in 2006, recalls the camaraderie. ‘*We’d be singing and shouting all day.*’ For Buddy, these were the best of years. It was certainly brutal work and he later developed ‘white finger’, a common affliction among chainsaw operators before safer equipment came in. But it was ‘good crack’. Bob Dunsmore sums up what it meant to work for the Commission in those days, before massive mechanisation, the drive for productivity and workforce rationalisation took over. ‘*It was all about living life, there wasn’t an obsession with the job. The job was part of life. You worked hard, but enjoyed life.*’ Few of the men and women whose memories have been recorded in the course of this project would argue with those sentiments.



Len Stewart, laying in a tree, Lochaweside, 1952

Courtesy: Margaret Gould



The planting squad on a winter's day in Inveliever Forest

Courtesy: Janet Quarron

First Thinnings was the felling operation, where up to a third of a forest was cut at around 20 years to give the remaining trees room to grow bigger.

Winds of Change

A seedling is planted, it reaches for the light and, with the passing of time, becomes a tree. The life of a tree is ever-changing, and so too has been the life of the Forestry Commission. But there have been key moments. For many in Argyll, one such turning point was the hurricane, which swept through the county overnight on the fifteenth of January 1968. It seemed to many then that forestry in Argyll would never be the same again. Whole forests were devastated, vast swathes of timber flattened and thousands of trees snapped like matchsticks. Everyone remembers that night and its aftermath. But even before the 1968 gale, a wind of change was blowing through forestry in Scotland.

When Buddy Gillies followed his father into forestry in 1956, the old ways were still to the fore. His father was a horseman, and Buddy was accustomed to working with the massive Clydesdales used to drag from the forest trees felled by axe and cross-cut saw. Within a couple of years, however, Buddy got his first powersaw and for the next 26 years that became his livelihood. Weighing 41 pounds and with a two-foot blade, it was, he recalls, a 'big thumper of a thing'. But it revolutionised felling and massively increased productivity.



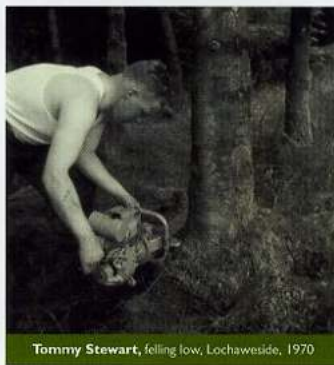
Courtesy: Norman Davidson

On Lochaweside, Charlie Mitchell got his first powersaw about the same time and Tommy Stewart came from Dalavich to see it work. He too was converted, and the days of the cross-cut were numbered, though some lamented its demise. John Rees, a retired forester who spent most of his working life in Argyll, started out as a forest worker in England in the early 1960s. He recalls his first encounter with a powersaw, used for felling enormous old yew trees with a six-foot blade that needed two men to work it. *'It was really heavy, [and] hard, hard work,... not that much easier than a cross-cut...horrendously noisy, no ear muffs, your head ringing at the end of it. I preferred the cross cut',* John muses, describing the sound of blade against wood, *'sing ching sching...as it cut through the wood, and the wildlife all round you...you could hold a conversation with the chap at the other end, but the powersaw was the way forward apparently.'*

No sooner had the powersaw arrived in Argyll than tractors and winches also began to be more commonly used, gradually making the horse redundant. During the late 1950s, more and more trees were ready to be

thinned. A well-established sawmilling firm, Wilson's of Troon, opened a mill at Cairnbaan, converting mainly thinnings into pit and pallet wood, and some also going to the emerging pulp market. At Strachur in Cowal, a pulp mill using Swedish technology was also set up, part-funded by the Government.

The market for pulp was rapidly developing, which could utilise the small diameter, short-length timber from the thinnings then being produced from the profusion of Argyll forests planted in the 1930s. Lochaweside forests carried on producing pit-props and, for a time, a privately owned pit-prop yard continued to operate on the site of the wartime operation at Durran. But pulp and chipboard were seen as the future, keeping the industry buoyed up at a time when the forests of Knapdale, Eredine and Inverinan were producing large amounts of the low-quality timber required for the wood-pulp process. A big event, not only for Argyll but for the whole of the Highlands, was the opening in 1965 of the Wiggins Teape pulp and paper mill complex at Corpach in Lochaber.



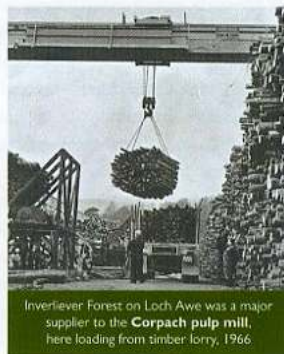
Tommy Stewart, felling low, Lochaweside, 1970

Courtesy: Margaret Gould

I preferred the cross cut...sing ching sching...as it cut through the wood, ...you could hold a conversation with the chap at the other end,' - John Rees

Around this time, the raison d'être of state forestry – which, since 1919, had been to provide Britain with a strategic timber reserve for any future wartime emergency – changed fundamentally as the nuclear bomb marked the end, it was believed, of conventional warfare. Now economic and social objectives came to the fore. With timber finding a ready market in Britain's new and established wood-using industries, harvesting and marketing became an important part of the Commission's work. This had far reaching consequences – the shortening of the harvesting cycle to produce material suitable for pulp and chip processors, ever increasing technological developments to improve efficiency and, for the worker in the forest, as Buddy Gillies recalls, 'the more you could do the more you could make [money].'

The 1960s were years of mechanical revolution. There was a gradual shift in forestry workers' skills range. Some, such as Buddy Gillies and Alex Bell, became skilled powersaw operators. Others, like Duncan MacDougall and Charlie Mitchell, began operating machines like winches or the increasingly efficient tractors used for



Inverliever Forest on Loch Awe was a major supplier to the Corpach pulp mill, here loading from timber lorry, 1966

Courtesy: the late Alec Pyper

ploughing and draining. It was a good time to be in forestry and squads were still large. Buddy, when he started in 1956, was one of a squad of 96, fourteen of them women. This was the heyday of forestry. But soon, with growing mechanisation and work – especially harvesting – increasingly contracted out, the number of Commission employees began to fall. In 1960 there were over 12,000 forest workers, but by 1970 there were just under 7,500. Locally, this meant that the numbers dropped from 46 employees living in Dalavich in 1952 to 12 in 1970. But if the Commission's workforce was declining, this was partly offset by the greater role of contractors, like Tommy Stewart and his father, who had set up their own business and diversified into haulage. It was a subtle change, and with the boost given to the industry by the Corpach pulp and paper mill, hardly perceptible. Employment in forestry would eventually fall dramatically, but during the sixties, it still felt like the best of times for people working in the industry. As Charlie Mitchell recalls of those days in mid Argyll, 'Forestry was the main thing.'

The 1968 gale

The New Year revelry is not quite over for one 18-year old Cairnbaan lass, Diana McKinley (now Logan), as she and her young lad set off for a Sunday night dance in Oban. The weather is perfectly normal for a mid-January evening when they leave home, but by the time they're driving back in the early hours they are in the midst of a tempest – the 1968 gale. Just south of Kilmartin, near home, Diana and her boyfriend come on a tree that's down over the road; they abandon their car and seek refuge behind a wall. Meanwhile, the girl's father is worried and sets out to look for her. By some miracle, he finds Diana and her boyfriend and brings them safely home. However, their story might have had a very different ending, because that night half the forests of Argyll, from Loch Awe to Campbeltown, seemed to be flattened by hurricane-force winds. Twenty people lost their lives and around 2,000 were made homeless in west-central Scotland. Today Diana laughs as she recalls her experience, sitting in



Forestry ball, late 1960s, including Diana Logan, then MacKinley, fourth from right

Courtesy Janet Quarten

the Forestry Commission's office in Lochgilphead. But it was terrifying at the time, a dramatic moment etched on the memories of Argyllshire folk – especially those involved in forestry.

'If the ground had been flat you would have seen Ireland.' That's Tommy Stewart talking about the gale's aftermath as viewed from Dalavich. He goes on: *'It was a terrible mess, broke everything. Just stumps of trees left. The gale ruined it.'* He means the forest and he is not alone in that view. In Knapdale, where the forests were maturing well, it *'took all the good big timber out...spectacular trees, huge things, all just snapped off as if someone just cut them off with a knife'*. Buddy Gillies recalls that it took six weeks

just to clear the road to his parent's house at Dunan, only a mile from the main road at Bellanoch. And, though Eredine Forest did not suffer as much, being less exposed to the winds that night, the Mitchell brothers still recall the many roadside trees, mainly broadleaves, which fell and cut Eredine off for two days.

'In a night everything was gone that had been growing for 40 years.' - Buddy Gillies

The clear-up would take years rather than months, but the first task was to open the roads. Only then could thoughts turn to tackling the devastated forest. The trees were sometimes piled three or four high on top of each other. It was an extremely dangerous undertaking for even the most experienced chainsaw operator. However, cutters and other personnel, some of them quite inexperienced, were drafted in from as far away as Kent, so there were more than a few injuries. If it was hazardous work for men, then it was nearly impossible for horses. Winches were the answer, and the horse never recovered its footing thereafter. But not all was doom and gloom. Because of the need to get the ground cleared as quickly as possible, Buddy Gillies says, there was *'good money to be made in piecework'*. And Charlie Mitchell, who became a digger operator after the gale, was much in demand for his deft handling of the digger on precariously steep slopes, littered with debris, but which needed to be drained and planted as quickly as possible.

The 1968 storm was not the only one to hit Argyll in the twentieth century. Duncan MacDougall, who started with the Commission in 1948, recalls a bad one in 1953 and, from an older workmate, Peter McNicoll, he heard tales of another severe storm in 1927. That one, it was said by Peter, reduced a stand of more than 1,000 Douglas firs to seven or nine trees. As Duncan says, *'That was the end of that plot'*. But the '68 gale is remembered as a turning point among Argyllshire forestry folk. When George Ivison came to Achnamara in 1972, four years later, the Commission were still dealing with the aftermath.



As an assistant forester in charge of production of the 12,000 acre Knapdale forest, and with 20 years experience, one of George's jobs was to supervise the work of 25 fellers and eight winches – two men working each winch. But despite all this activity, eight of the 24 forestry houses built in Achnamara in the early 1950s were empty and George had his pick of where to stay. It wasn't long before forests began to be amalgamated; Inverinan was effectively merged with Inverliver in 1970. Amalgamations often led to the closure of the local forest office. Not long after George started at Achnamara, the office there was moved to Cairnbaan, a sign of the times with more to follow.



Achnamara in its picturesque setting at the head of Loch Sween, 1958

'The planting of forest workers on the land is a more anxious and much more expensive business than the planting of new trees' - Sir John Stirling Maxwell, 1930

Living in the Forest

Holdings and Hostels

Right from the beginning, the Commission's founding fathers wanted to retain population in rural areas, particularly the Highlands, where out-migration remained a constant and unyielding trend. Lovat's aspiration was realised initially through retaining some agriculture within recently purchased landholdings – partly through the creation of small farm holdings, or crofts. These were let to forest workers, who were allowed time off (unpaid) to work their crofts, particularly at key times such as harvest.

Buddy Gillies grew up on a forestry croft near Cairnbaan. His father worked Clydesdales in the wood, at a time – just after the Second World War – when all felled timber was dragged to the roadside by horse. The Gillies family's 70-acre croft had to be looked after before or after work and at weekends – especially when there were big jobs like ploughing and sowing to be done. Everyone mucked in with the chores. Buddy's father would be up at 5am, milking the cows and seeing to the horses before going off to the wood, the children taking milk cans on a barrow, and dropping them off on their way to school at Bellanoch, a mile down the road. Harvest was the busiest time, and Buddy's mother took charge of haymaking. 'I've seen us out at three in the morning if the weather was good', recalls Buddy. It was a hard life, but a healthy open-air one, which suited Buddy, who went on himself to work for the Commission for 50 years.

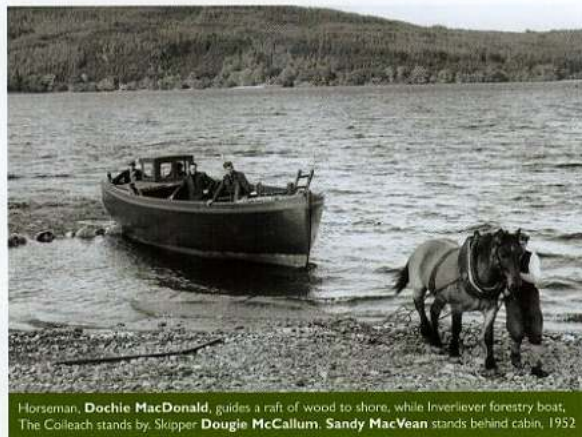
Buddy's father was a shepherd before working for the forestry. Indeed, many of the early workers came from estates bought by the Commission and were used to working on the land. Charlie and Jimmy Mitchell's father had been a gamekeeper before coming to Inverliever, switching back to private estate work on Inverinan Estate after the Great War, prior to its purchase by the Commission. After the Cruachan hostel fire in 1931, the Mitchells moved to a nine-acre forest croft on the newly-purchased Eredine Estate. Forest holdings, or crofts, were a popular option for local people, providing the security of paid employment (a guaranteed 150 days annually) alongside the opportunity to work the land and supplement their meagre Commission wages. Before the Second World War, when forestry expansion was gradual and its labour needs were not enormous, this approach worked reasonably well, although the Commission's chairman, Sir John Stirling Maxwell, still acknowledged the challenge associated with providing homes for the expanding workforce.



Sir John Stirling Maxwell, founding
Commissioner and chairman, 1927-32

One solution was to house employees in hostel accommodation. This was particularly useful for single workers or young trainees who would only be around for a year or two. Cairnbaan and Cruachan both had hostels in the 1930s.

After the war, forestry geared up again, providing good job prospects for the many ex-servicemen returning to 'civvies', as well as a whole cohort of Eastern European men, unable to return to their now Communist-run homelands. Hostels re-opened for business – at Cairnbaan, Cruachan, Inverliever Lodge, Inverinan and Braevallich, becoming home to a varied collection of single men of all ages – trainee foresters, refugees, former soldiers, and sundry drifters. Theirs must have been a spartan life, but convivial by all accounts, a haven for some who, for whatever reason, would never really fit into family life. Jimmy Mitchell well remembers the hostel at Braevallich, which he says initially housed trainee foresters and later Eastern Europeans. Relations were good with the locals, so good, in fact, that Jimmy became unofficial barber to



Horseman, **Dochie MacDonald**, guides a raft of wood to shore, while Inverliever forestry boat, The Colleach stands by. Skipper **Dougie McCallum**. **Sandy MacVean** stands behind cabin, 1952

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the hostel. He also penned letters for a lovesick Polish worker, who was wooing a lady in Edinburgh. So successful were Jimmy's love-letters that the Edinburgh lady asked him to marry her!

With re-forestation in full swing by the 1950s, and mostly still by hand-working, the need for labour became critical. In the early '50s, several newspaper articles appeared extolling the industry's virtues. The increased workforce created an unprecedented demand for additional housing. But, there wasn't enough land to give everybody a croft, and the hostels were only a stopgap. The Commission needed to provide modern and permanent living conditions, and encourage stability – forestry was, after all, a long-term commitment. In those days, when each forest was separately managed, and roads and public transport still fairly primitive in the Highlands, the solution was to build clusters of houses intended solely for the Commission's workforce. The era of the forest village had begun.



Haymaking in Argyll c.1920s/30s

©National Museums of Scotland / SCPAN

'I've seen us out at three in the morning if the weather was good' - Buddy Gillies



Home made montage - view of Dalavich, 1956

Courtesy: Margaret Gauld

Forestry Villages

'All there was ... was the croft, Dalavich croft. This [the village] was just crop fields' - Tommy Stewart

History may deposit these mid-twentieth century clusters of forest workers' houses into a box marked 'Failure' and in a sense that is where this Forestry Commission attempt at social engineering belongs. Today, after all, few of the 1,400 or so houses built by the Commission are lived in by people working in forestry and fewer still are owned by the Commission itself. Many are holiday and second homes, and the communities they constitute certainly cannot be called 'forestry villages' any more. Their attractive backwoods location, away from today's hustle and bustle of town life, is, ironically, often cited as one of the reasons for their failure as forestry settlements. People who came, especially from the cities, to live and work in them were often unable to cope with the isolation and left. Broken marriages were not uncommon. Wives lacked employment opportunities, other than the prized clerkess job in the local forest office – a job that was seldom vacant. They were also unable to enjoy familiar daily routines and the social experience of going to the shops or the cinema. And, because public transport was often non-existent in forestry villages, their inhabitants were reliant on the Commission to give them a lift to the nearest town for provisions.

'Once... someone just drove into the village and told the fella to just turn around, they went back the same day.' This comment about a potential resident of Achnamara, a forestry village completed in 1952, comes from George Ivison who himself arrived there in 1972. But George's own experience was completely different. Achnamara, in a picture postcard setting by Loch Sween, appealed to him. He liked the place, he liked the life, and he stayed.

Significantly, George's story of over 30 contented years in a forestry village is just one of many that can be heard from the residents, past and present, of places like Achnamara, Dalavich and Eredine in support of what was offered by way of housing, work and social life. These tight-knit communities were unique in their complete domination by, and dependence on, the Commission. Self-reliance and self-sufficiency were required of anyone who came and stayed for any length of time. It was a tough life for everyone, but it had its rewards and many still regard these villages with great affection and lament the passing of that uncomplicated, if difficult, life. Their stories are worth telling not least because they underline the still prevalent idea that experiments in re-populating the Highlands were never successful.

Tommy Stewart sits by the fire in No. 31 Dalavich, his home for 50 years. He came to the village with his father in 1948 as a 17-year old. Both then worked for Carmichael's, the timber merchant, staying in digs at nearby Barmaddy Farm. Tommy's mother and sisters followed a year later, when the family was able to rent part of Cruachan croft, further down the loch. When asked about his first memory of Dalavich, Tommy replies quite seriously, 'Nothing!' He explains: 'All there was...was the croft, Dalavich croft. This [the forestry village] was just crop fields'.



Courtesy, Margaret Gould

By 1952, when the village was officially opened, there were 31 Finnish-type prefabricated wooden houses lining a newly-created street, running parallel to the loch. The following year a further 16 houses were built. Dalavich lies in the parish of the same name and already had a church and school, which Jimmy Mitchell had attended in the early 1930s. In response to the arrival of Dalavich's new residents – many from cities like Glasgow – a new school was built in 1952 with an opening roll of 51 pupils. This suited the Commission very well. Tommy recalls the official opening, when Sir Beresford Pierce, then the Commission's Director General, rather patronisingly, 'told us it was our duty to have children and their duty to give them work'.

In the event, forestry jobs would become scarcer, and Sir Beresford's promise would not be kept. But during the 50s and 60s everything 'was boom'. People, especially from the grimy overcrowded tenements of Glasgow, were attracted by the promise of a house with a garden and modern amenities like an indoor WC and bath. A job for life with a pension at the end of it provided further appeal. But the reality could not always

match the dream and more folk seem to have left than stayed, not bargaining for the sheer physical graft of forestry work, the isolation, the lack of services...and the midgie! That said, in 1959, when Alex Bell was lured from the city, there was only one house vacant in Dalavich. By then, there was a small shop and post office, with two grocery vans coming each week.

'It was hard work for her, but she enjoyed it – she was young.' - Alex Bell

'It was hard,' Alex recalls. 'The houses were cold and you couldnae afford coal, had to go out and cut your firewood'. Today Alex, now in his seventies, still talks with a gritty Glaswegian accent, softened slightly by almost 50 years of Lochaweside life. He acknowledges the hardship, especially for his wife, bringing up four children on a wage of just £7 per week. 'It was hard work for her, but she enjoyed it – she was young.' Nor is this just nostalgia. Back in the 1950s, the Bells were in their twenties, living in a youthful community that was full of young families. Alex recalls the card schools and dances in the village hall. 'We were in and out of each others houses'. Tommy Stewart firmly believes that these were happy days for Dalavich residents because 'you couldn't get out'. With little chance of travelling to town, no television until 1976 and poor radio reception, Dalavich people simply had to make their own entertainment.



Margaret Gauld and Fiona McMillan (Tommy Stewart's sisters) outside the first social club, now an FC workshop

Photo: Moiri Stewart

Dalavich was lucky: it had a social club in the shape of an old Commission shed from Glentroot, which opened for business in 1973. The club became a focal point, for dances, whist drives, coffee mornings – all the social activities that keep a community vibrant. There was also a large playing field where football matches and other games and events could take place – Dalavich had a very active ladies football team in the '60s and '70s. And for Alex Bell and other keen anglers, there was the loch itself, a haven for swimming, boating and fishing – weather permitting!

The other forestry villages in the area were not so well endowed. If you lived in Eredine or Achnamara and wanted a drink, you had a long walk ahead of you. Most people did not have cars, not even the foresters, and were dependant on lifts in forestry lorries or vans into Lochgilphead. Nonetheless, the villages were lively places, to begin with at least. After Eredine was built – a cluster of 23 houses – there

was a drive to get a hall. Eventually, the villagers got one and the usual array of events could be held. Electricity only came to the village in 1966, some 13 years after it arrived in Dalavich, so there was no chance of television until then. The life that went on in these villages in the fifties and sixties might seem to our modern, media-driven, consumer society to have been isolated, even deprived, but it was not unfamiliar to anyone who grew up in the Highlands at that time. For the city dweller, swapping town for country life, it was undoubtedly hard to get used to; the children would likely adapt much better than their parents. It is not surprising, therefore, that turnover was high. But some, like Jock Hunter, came because they wanted a better lifestyle. Jock took a substantial pay cut, when he left Glasgow to take up a job as forest ranger in Eredine Forest in 1971. Jock recalls his first impressions, 'When I came here I thought I was getting away from Glaswegians, but ninety percent of the village here was Glaswegians.' But to this day, he still lives in Eredine and works for the Commission. And others, like Alex Bell and George Ivison, also stuck it out, indeed embraced the life, and helped to make these communities good places to live.

However, there might have been some better planning. Betty Maule, wife of Stan, the head forester in charge of Eredine Forest in 1979, gives her account today from a wife's perspective. She thinks the District Officer



Jock Hunter, outside his home (formerly the Forester's House) in Eredine

Photo: Charlie Green/ica

'The idea was very good, it would have worked if they'd ... put the houses where the people would have lived...' - George Ivison

responsible for building Eredine simply said, 'Well that's a nice view, we'll build the village here'. It was, she believes, in the wrong place. 'It wasn't the life for the wives.' And she is not alone in that view. To be sure, Eredine has a 'nice view'. But when the village was first created, the road to it, in Charlie Mitchell's words, was 'just two tracks with a grass strip in the middle', and the nearest shop of any consequence was 20 miles away. Achnamara, some ten miles over a winding single track road from Lochgilphead, was not much better, though at least it had a shop. George Ivison, who still lives in Achnamara, sums it up when he

comments, 'The idea was very good, it would have worked if they'd ... put the houses where the people would have lived. ... if they'd attached these 24 houses to Cairnbaan, there was a school... a shop... a pub ... but it was too far here [in Achnamara].' By the time George moved to Achnamara as forester in 1972, he had the choice of eight houses that were standing empty. It was already a dying community. By then, jobs in forestry were simply no longer there to attract new blood, and the Commission was starting to dispose of its houses, either by letting them out as holiday homes or by passing them on to the local council. Two went up in flames and were not replaced. It was a process that would continue through the next three decades; only Dalavich, with its chalet development, held its own against a tide of increased mechanisation and the relentless drive for enhanced productivity and efficiency. This was progress, but it would puncture the soul of these already fragile communities.

The pecking order – rank and file

In the post-war period, long before the concept of 'care in the community' had been thought up, looking after the workforce and their dependants was the norm in places where the Commission dominated. As Bob Dunsmore explains, the Commission was one of the 'last bastions of the old colonial approach'. Patriarchal, hierarchical and dependency-based, undoubtedly, but by the same token, the Commission looked after its own and assisted the communities in which it operated. This included providing logs for pensioners, supporting children's parties, giving lifts into town, time off during family crises and providing work to local folk with disabilities. It was a massive institution controlled from London and latterly Edinburgh, but, because it was land-based, the Commission required local supervision. It developed into a network of semi-autonomous forests run along military lines, overseen by chief or head foresters (or both, depending on the size of the patch) with foresters and assistant- or under-foresters carrying out the day-to-day management of the forest. Foresters, especially if they lived in isolated localities such as Dalavich, were looked up to; like the minister, the doctor, the teacher, they were pillars of the community. The head forester was in charge of a forest (Inverinan, Inverliever and Eredine were at one time all separately



The 'Pay Parade', lining up to sign for the pay packet, 1963

controlled) and, although he must adhere to Commission policy, he had considerable autonomy and decision-making powers within his fiefdom. Depending on his character, he could be a respected leader, held in high regard by his workforce and superiors, or intensely disliked and the butt of squad jokes.

The pecking-order did not stop at the forester. Below that level, the forest workers, known as the industrial grades, were also ranked. At the top of the tree was the ganger; he too could wield considerable power and the threat of being 'sent doon the road', or sacked – a threat not infrequently made by a 'crabbit' ganger – was enough to send a lazy or rebellious squad member back to work. Sometimes there was also a foreman overseeing the work on the ground. Even within the squad there was a subtle pecking-order, besides the 'boys' or women who were customarily paid less. Forest workers could either be in a harvesting squad, working mainly on felling and extracting trees, or in the maintenance and planting squad. Of the two, the fellers were the elite, often earning more because of their good piecework rates and generally let off the more onerous duties like fire fighting. The maintenance squad, on the other hand, although with a more varied range of tasks, often had to endure more laborious and less appealing work like planting or spraying chemicals. In and around Dalavich, other workers looked up to Len Stewart, Tommy's father, an old woodsman who was a highly skilled feller.



Senior FC official demonstrates planting technique to local forester, Davy Anderson and forest worker, Fetteresso, 1952

Courtesy: the family of Dony Anderson

'last bastions of the old colonial approach'

Bob Dunsmore

As Alex Bell says of him, 'he was Mr Forester hi'sel. He knew what he was doing'. That respect counted for a lot in forestry life and it was something that foresters had to earn. Not all gained the respect of their squad or their boss, but if they did then loyalty came too, and a highly effective team was created.

Unfortunately this rarely lasted for long. Foresters were frequently transferred, often with promotion, to other forests. Like the country bobby, they were never allowed to stay too long in one place – they might 'go native'. This was the fundamental difference between the life of the forest worker, who often stayed in one forest all his working days, and the forester, who could work in as many as half a dozen forests during his career – an unsettling lifestyle that was particularly hard for wives and families.

Women's work

Within each forest's team, often forgotten, but essential to the efficient management of the forest – was the 'clerkess'. Often related to a Commission employee, she ensured the smooth running of the office and, crucially, made up the pay. Betty Maule, after living with her forester-husband, Stan in five forests, eventually became the clerkess at Eredine. Diana Logan, whose father worked with the Commission road squad, went straight from school at 16-years old into Cairnbaan office. She recalls the end of her interview, *'The last thing he said to me, was "Can you make tea?" And I said, "Yes", and he said "that's the main thing."*' That was the job for the youngest clerkess.

The office routine revolved around the process of getting in timesheets on a Monday, working out wages, drawing cash from the bank and then every Thursday, rain or shine, supervising 'the pay parade'. A throwback to the strong military influences in the Commission, this required all the workers to line up in order to receive their pay packets, which they then checked, and signed for. Dismissed! Affectionately remembered by some, regarded as too strict by others, it is one of the many rituals and features of Forestry Commission life that was cast aside in the 1980s, when forest amalgamation and office closures heralded a new, modern – more business-like – approach to running the nation's forests.



Betty Mays (and lassie), one of the forestry squad on Dunardry Hill in the 1960s



The Forestry Commission are having an all out effort to harvest 10 years supply of seeds and our picture shows some of the thousands of cones which have been harvested in Knapdale Forest.

(Above) Hector, Catherine and Janet - the cone gatherers
(Below) Janet Quarton demonstrates bracken cutting for the Union magazine, c1986

Janet Quarton, above, gets equipped for a day's graft in Knapdale forest. Below — hard at work.



All images this page courtesy Janet Quarton

From the early days of modern forestry, women have worked in forestry, and although few in number, there were female forestry graduates as early as the First World War. The heyday for women labouring in the woods must surely have been from the 1950s to 1970s, when many girls got their first job weeding in Commission nurseries. Once they left school they were taken on and did a whole range of tasks, the same as the men and, until they were 21-years old, on the same wage as the lads. The work involved mostly planting, brashing, weeding and marking trees for thinning. It was a time when there was a huge demand for workers, and women, from the Commission's perspective, met this demand as well as men. Duncan McDougall well recalls the girls he worked with in the late 1940s and the 1950s – Annie McNicholl, Betty Burnett and Chrissie McPhee. They all did the same work in the woods and enjoyed it – 'We were teenagers together.'

'The last thing he said to me, was "Can you make tea?" And I said, "Yes", and he said "that's the main thing" - Diana Logan

Everybody was laughing and joking.' Some girls continued working in the woods after they married. Tommy's Stewart's sisters worked in Inverliever, as did his sister-in-law, Peggy McIntyre. It was a family concern – many girls like Annie and Betty went on to marry forest workers, and sons and daughters often kept the link going. Duncan's wife, Joyce, was herself the daughter of Inverinan forester, George Kilshaw, becoming a clerkess in the forest office.

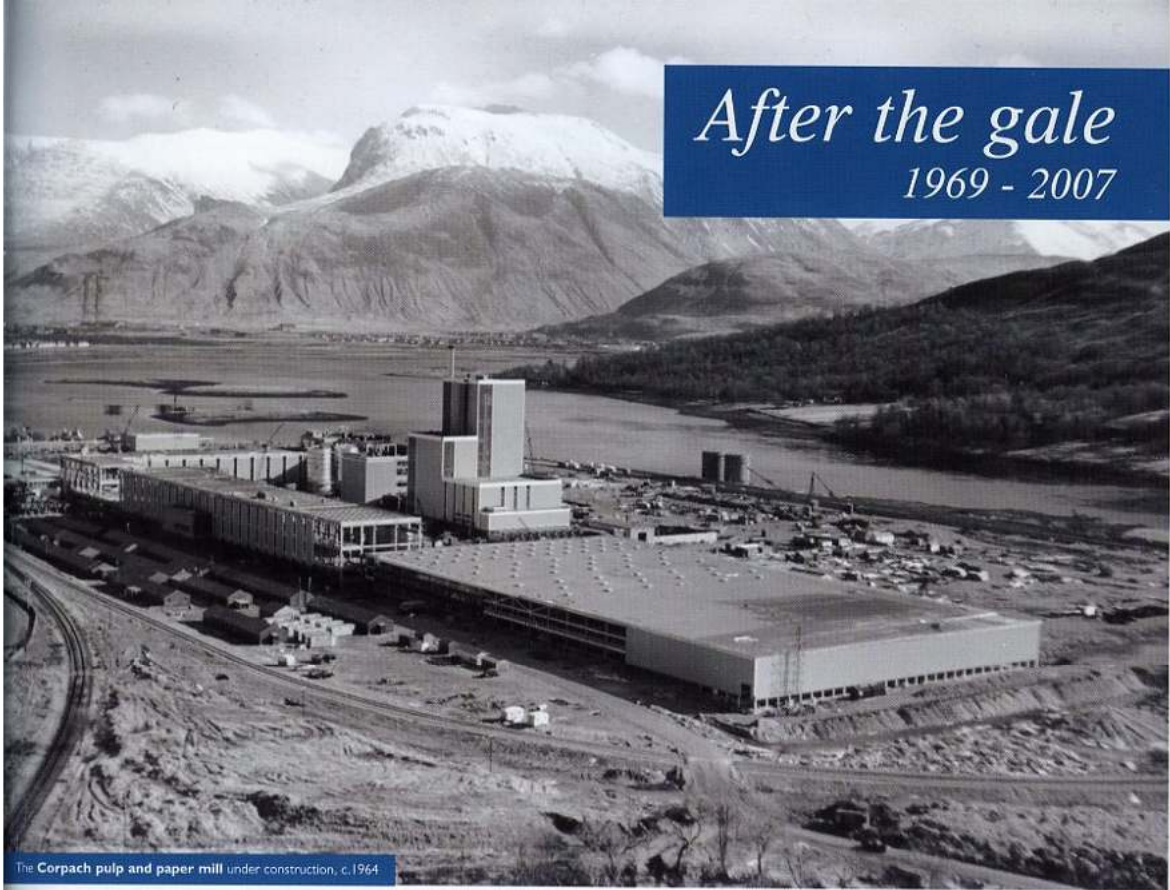
Even in the 1970s when George Ivison came to Knapdale as forester, he recalls having four women in the squad. *'Two of the best planters I had were girls,'* George remembers. One of these women, Margaret McCallum, is now a forester based in Lochgilphead. Another, Janet Quarton, still works at the Lochgilphead office. Janet started work as a 15-year old in 1963; her first task was stripping bark off logs that would be used as pit-props. At that time, there were other women working in



Courtesy Janet Quarton

the Knapdale forest, including Betty Mays, Daisy Bell, Betty Stewart and Cissy Houston; the latter two had both come to work in the woods just after the war. Janet recalls, *'More or less doing the same work as men, but paid a lot less'*. Janet has worked for nearly 40 years with the Commission, with only a seven year break in the seventies, most of that time on the squad. Only after her return in 1977 did she get the same pay as her male workmates. Before that, women were arguably at the bottom of the Commission pecking order, but from all that has been said by their male work colleagues, they are held in high regard and valued as first-rate workers and good friends.

Courtesy the late Alec Pyper



After the gale

1969 - 2007

The Corpach pulp and paper mill under construction, c.1964

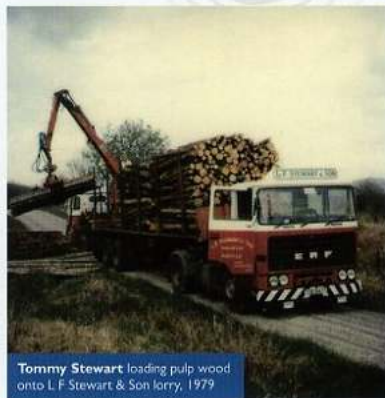
'And everything went fine, everything was boom, until this damned pulp mill collapsed... so the whole place just died.' - Tommy Stewart

The Seventies – Economy and efficiency rule!

If the sixties had been a period of confidence and expansion, by the 1970s, with the Lochaber pulp mill working at full tilt, the Scottish forest estate encompassing some 860,000 acres of forest and timber production at record levels, forestry was booming. Ever more sophisticated machinery was being developed and handwork was increasingly confined to planting and maintenance work. The latter often related to the network of paths, picnic sites and car parks being created within forests. Chemical bombardment of any vegetation thought to be detrimental to the growth of young trees also became more prevalent, replacing the earlier practice of hand weeding. Chemical spraying was loathed by many forest workers, who had to wear cumbersome rubber suits for this task – one also disliked because of the wider impact of chemicals on wildlife. Chainsaw felling was still the norm, but saws were becoming lighter and much easier to handle. Alex Bell went onto saws in 1964, working in a team of four fellers and two winchmen at

Inverinan Forest where they felled, snedded and then winched the trees to the roadside ready to be loaded onto a lorry – as often as not one belonging to L F Stewart & Son, perhaps driven by Tommy Stewart himself – and off to the mill. This work went on all year round, and, if this was not punishing enough, Alex then worked nights for Tommy Stewart, taking timber to the Corpach pulp mill. Alex Bell was a chainsaw feller for 30 years.

'Brutal' is how Buddy Gillies describes the arduous physical work of his 26 years as a chainsaw operator – work that ended in the 1980s when his ganger told him he had to give up felling. His arm, after years of handling a heavy, vibrating saw, no longer had the strength to hold it. 'I couldn't tie the laces of my boots' he recalls. Nonetheless, Buddy looks back on these days working in Knapdale Forest with a satisfaction and pride that comes with the knowledge that his was work well done. 'Aye, I used to love working in the wood, the smell of the rosin and noise of the saw, and goin at it. Otherwise I wouldn't have stuck it... Even if on a cold, wet, snowy miserable day... It was great.'



Courtesy: Charlie Mitchell

The major innovations during this time were in handling the cut timber. To begin with, winches were fairly basic, not dissimilar to the ones used by the Canadians during the war. For the kind of work Buddy was doing, this initially involved an 18-foot high cable-crane winch attached to an anchored tractor, with a pulley attached to a spar tree at the other end; the load was partly suspended, hence the term 'cable crane'. Then the skyline winch came in and this, with a lock and carriage, extended the reach to 600 yards. The winch may have taken the strain of hauling logs to the roadside from man and beast, but 'chocking', as it was called, still involved heavy work for those working the winch. As Buddy explains, 'You try pulling a [steel wire] rope 400 yards up a hill – it's no easy'. To ease the toil, a two-man team would take turn about, half a day operating the winch, the other loading timber onto the pulley. The skyline made timber extraction from steep ground much easier, and new roads were rapidly constructed within the forest to allow lorries in to pick up from stacking points – often along the ridges. On less steep slopes, the skidder became the tireless workhorse. This was a tractor with a winch on the back, dragging or 'skidding' the logs along the forest floor, essentially in the same way a horse would drag logs.



Buddy Gillies operating an Isaachsen winch, for a FC tourist brochure

Courtesy: Buddy Gillies, from original photo taken by George Wilson

*'Aye, I used to love working in the wood,
the smell of the rosin and noise of the saw,
and goin at it - Buddy Gillies*

Meanwhile, on the establishment side, draining and planting equipment was also becoming more effective. The boggiest of ground could now be drained and prepared by an assortment of new tractors, ploughs and diggers. One of the major innovations had been the Cuthbertson plough, originally developed in the late 1940s. However, with the introduction of the 'humpy' plough in the 1960s, deep ploughing would finally break the peaty so-called wastelands, thus far untouched by forestry, scoring them with deep trenches and thrown-up mounds that could then be planted – though it took liberal amounts of fertiliser to ensure a future tree crop.

After the '68 gale, Charlie Mitchell was much in demand with his ditch-digging machine. It was not entirely suitable for draining areas which had been blown and then cleared. But as he says himself, '*I persisted and found ways to make it work*'. This type of machine, called a backacter, also gradually improved and Charlie graduated to a better digger, although it still had only a 180 degree reach. But it did have a cab! By the time he retired in 1987, a more versatile 360-degree machine had been developed and was being rapidly deployed by contractors. This was a far cry from the rutter spade which had been the forest worker's principal draining tool when Charlie had started in 1948. With the demise of the rutter, yet another tool was consigned to the work-shed wall, and, with private contractors taking on more and more of the work he had been doing for the Commission, it was a good time, Charlie thought, to retire.

The seventies were undoubtedly an exciting time to be working in forestry in Scotland and one might imagine that, had the Commission's founders still been alive, they would have regarded the scene with immense satisfaction and not a little awe. The expectations of those who'd had the vision to plan for the creation and expansion of the nation's forest estate had been amply fulfilled.

'And everything went fine, everything was boom, until this damned pulp mill collapsed... so the whole place just died'. Like the '68 gale, the Lochaber pulp mill's closure in 1980 was another landmark event, forever etched in the memories of forestry folk in the Highlands; and for Tommy Stewart, whose words these are and whose haulage business had thrived because of it, this was a disaster. Even before pulp finally stopped being processed in Lochaber, the writing was clearly on the wall for forest communities such as Dalavich. As Tommy acknowledges, the village was already suffering from the reduction of the workforce – with 17 of its houses lying empty as far



Backacter digger in action, draining recently felled wood, 1979

Courtesy: Charlie Mitchell

back as 1970. The decision by the Commission to let these homes as holiday houses merely staved off decline. The Commission's desire to develop recreation and tourism opportunities led to the construction of 43 cabins in the forest at Dalavich in 1981 – Tommy's wife, Mary Ann managed the holiday houses and cabins for 27 years – and a new social club was built, used by both villager and holiday-maker. L F Stewart & Son survived the closure by diversifying into other areas, taking advantage of the developing Highland fish farming industry. Being able to adapt to change was clearly essential for those living in this Highland village, as for many others.

The Eighties – Privatisation and Rationalisation

Charlie Greenlees trained as a forester at Benmore Forestry School in the 1950s, but to satisfy a yearning for learning and an ambition to live abroad, he left the Commission in 1962, firstly to study for an English degree and then to live and work in Finland. On his return to Scotland in 1981 with his Finnish wife Marja and their two children, he went back to the Commission. Things could not have been more different. Today he recalls how new it all seemed after nearly 20 years away from Scottish forestry. He remembers thinking, 'What is a skidder?' A revolution in technology had taken place in the intervening years, and the Commission itself was not the same organisation he had joined in 1957. It had, Charlie felt, started to drift away from its earlier ethos.

The 1980s heralded a time when economy and efficiency ruled more than ever before, the workforce was decimated and Sitka spruce dominated Scottish forests. It was a tough time for manager and worker alike. The drive for economic efficiency in British industry during the '80s under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government affected forestry too. A central tenet of Thatcherism was privatisation of state



Timberjack Skidder in action, 1989

Courtesy: Heritage North

'The machines are tireless,' Malcolm Wield

assets, including potentially the nation's forest holding, but a government review ruled out complete privatisation, instead recommending 'opportunities for private investment in these [the Commission's] assets'. The ensuing 'sell-off' of forests was deeply unpopular among Commission staff – though, on the up side, many Commission tenants took the opportunity to buy their own homes. Overall, this period of rapid change included a further amalgamation of forests and closure of offices, increasing strain on labour relations, when the workforce significantly declined, not just as a consequence of increasing

mechanisation, but also because many forest workers became disillusioned. They were being asked to boost productivity, but receiving no significant increase in their wage packet, and many responded by opting to become self-employed, increasing both earnings and self-esteem. For the Commission, this trend reduced overheads associated with direct employment.

The sense of abandonment, of being treated as a commodity was no greater than in the forestry villages. 'They've really left us here in a very poor state... they just deserted us,' comments Tommy Stewart. He refers to the sell-off by the Commission of the Dalavich cabin business around 2002.

The foresters too, particularly those who had been a part of the old-style Commission, regretted the new ways. As Betty Maule says of the old system, 'There was more pride, because they [the forester] were responsible for that particular area.' With amalgamation, the intimate link between forester and forest was broken. The personal touch was gone. But not all change is necessarily for the worse. Just as cross-cut saws had earlier given way to powersaws, so they in turn began to be replaced by still more advanced technology. In the mid-1980s the extensive Loch Awe Forest District, now run from Lochgilphead, was formed by amalgamating all the Lochaweside and Kilmichael Forests. With the advent of multi-purpose forestry, which required the Commission to consider landscape, recreation and nature conservation issues as part of their approach to forest management and design, foresters increasingly had to undertake other duties related to these interests. Peter Quelch, Loch Awe District Officer under the old regime, became its Forest District Manager in 1985. He recalls the pride he took in planning the restructuring of Kilmichael Forest, 'Eight thousand hectares [c.20,000 acres] in one block, which is big by our standards, and all planted within 10 years practically, in the 50s, ... I think that is the best professional forest planning input I've ever had anywhere.' Peter was also instrumental in developing the district's recreational facilities, and in setting in motion the restoration of Lochaweside's ancient oakwoods.

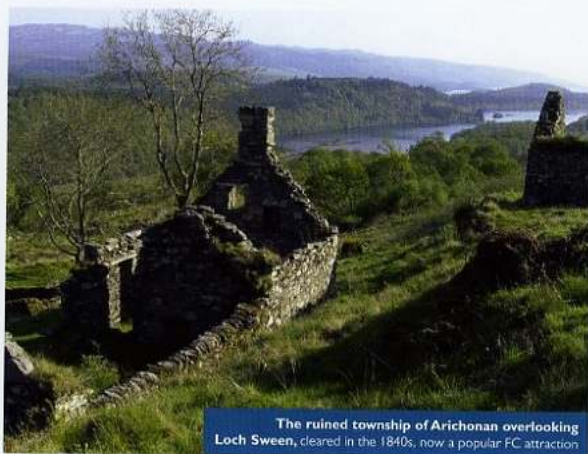


Courtesy: Malcolm Wield

In 1985 Knapdale also became the first in the UK to be equipped with a mechanised harvester. Once again, the Argyll workforce was pioneering something new – in much the same way as their predecessors, nearly 80 years before, in Inverliever. The forester in charge of this latest development was Malcolm Wield. 'The machines are tireless,' he says. 'They were to be aspired to, and [they] brought back a lot of motivation ... Machine operation became the best job for forest workers, and still is.' For all the romance attached to it in retrospect, manual felling had been hard and dangerous. The new machines were safe and comfortable, and their operators had to be highly skilled. With the introduction of mechanised harvesters, Malcolm believes, pride in the job was restored.

Back to the future for Arichonan

It's the mid-1980s in Knapdale and a tall, keen, young forester is presiding over a felling operation. A mechanised harvester is taking out a stand of timber, planted by the Commission in the 1930s, soon after it acquired this part of Knapdale. As the trees are felled and the logs snedded and stacked, it becomes apparent that these trees have been concealing what was once a place of anger and of sorrow. Coming into view are the ruins of the township of Arichonan. Well over a century before, in the famine-stricken 1840s, their landlord had forcibly evicted Arichonan's inhabitants; some who resisted were jailed. The Commission, concentrating on getting as much land as possible under trees, had once paid little heed to the historical significance of places like Arichonan. But Malcolm Wield, the man in charge of the felling programme that brought Arichonan once more to light, was part of a new-style Commission, one that had a much broader remit than in the past. This was the beginning of multi-purpose forestry – the sort that gives consideration to nature conservation, to leisure and



The ruined township of Arichonan overlooking Loch Sween, cleared in the 1840s, now a popular FC attraction

recreation, to archaeology and heritage as well as to the business of growing trees. And so Malcolm took care to ensure that Arichonan's ruins were safeguarded. The township was destroyed at a time when the future of the Highlands was thought to lie in emptying the land of its people. Forestry and the Forestry Commission, from the time of Inverliewer's purchase by the state exactly 100 years ago, have wanted something else entirely: to give the people of the Highlands the chance to live the sort of lives commemorated in these pages. As the many men and women interviewed in the course of this project make clear, the forestry story is not without its downsides. There have been setbacks as well as triumphs. But, for all that, the overall feeling is overwhelmingly positive – a story of achievement in which everyone in forestry, past and present, can and should take pride.

A photograph of three men standing in a forest. The man on the left is wearing a blue button-down shirt and dark trousers. The man in the middle is wearing a yellow shirt with an orange high-visibility vest over it and dark trousers. The man on the right is wearing a green t-shirt and dark trousers. They are all standing with their arms crossed on a wooden path. The background is a dense forest with tall trees and green foliage.

Today

Hector MacDonald, Alastair (Buddy) Peterson, Dougie Blair - 3 of the present-day Knapdale and Kilmichael squad, working on the Arichonan Trail

'We are the tattered remnants of a once mighty race!' - Hector Macdonald

Three men are hard at work on the forest trail to Arichonan, using the tools of their trade, the chainsaw, pinch bar and spade. The deserted village is now one of many attractions which the Commission have established for visitors, tourists and walkers. The three men are Hector MacDonald, Alastair 'Buddy' Peterson and Dougie Blair – getting on for half of the seven-man squad now covering both Knapdale and Kilmichael Forests where, back in the 1950s, scores of people were employed. As Hector cheerily laments, 'We are the tattered remnants of a once mighty race!'

Dalavich today is not a forest village in the way that it was half a century ago. But it remains a lively community, and on a January day in 2007 – the sort of winter's day that brings a dusting of snow to the Lochaweside hills – it becomes apparent to those of us involved in this project that it still takes pride in its forest heritage. In Dalavich's social club some 40 folk have gathered to talk, and hear, about how forestry has touched the area over the last 100 years. An old home movie from the early 1970s shows village children getting a 'cuddy' on one of the work horses, the Dalavich Ladies Football Team running around the pitch in skirts on a sunny afternoon, a wedding taking place; there is lots of laughter, horned-rimmed spectacles are obviously in fashion. This is Dalavich's story, the story of life in Argyll's forests.

Among the audience are some of the people whose recollections we have recorded at length, to be preserved for future generations. Later this same day, Tommy Stewart's sisters, Margaret and Fiona show us places that, for them, are full of memories. But this is not just a day for the oldies. Teenagers are full of pride that their grandfather, Jimmy Duffy, who helped build the mast that brought TV to Dalavich in 1976. And though those same teenagers, like everyone else, bemoan the late-twentieth-century closure of the local school, it's clear that – despite no longer being a purely Forestry Commission village – Dalavich has survived.



Photo: Mari Stewart

Reminiscing about forestry at Dalavich open day,
led by Kirsten Robb, local touchwood history co-ordinator

The places, the people, the trees, all inextricably linked. Duncan's Walk, on Lochaweside is named after Duncan MacDougall. Buddy's Monument in Knapdale, is so-called because Buddy Gillies discovered it while making an inventory of archaeological sites during his last few years with the Commission. Both men, 50 years in forestry.

Two men walk through a forest grove of 120-foot-high conifers in a remote corner of Knapdale. One of them, George Ivison, well into his eighties, is explaining to his companion what he feels for this place, what he feels about his life with the Forestry Commission. *'I've worked all my Commission life in conifers, and [after] a fourth thinning ... sometimes they are about a hundred feet high or more, and it's like being in a cathedral, its absolutely amazing, they're magnificent.'*



George Ivison, retired forester,
amongst the magnificent 120-foot
Sitka spruce, near Achnamara

Photo: Hugo Munson

Acknowledgements

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We greatly appreciate the opportunity given to us by Forestry Commission Scotland. Particular thanks to Kenny Murray and Malcolm Wield for steering the project, and to Bob Dunsmore for having the idea in the first place.

This was a team effort and so special thanks to Hugo Manson, Jim Hunter, Fiona Watson, Roland Stiven, Gordon Urquhart, Charlie Greenlees, Kirsten Robb, Lesley MacFadyen and Sandy McLure. The booklet is based on the story of forestry in Mid-Argyll, embodying material drawn from oral history interviews recorded over several months. The booklet also drew from a number of written sources, some of them listed in 'Further Reading' below.

All illustrations are acknowledged, and we are most grateful to those concerned. Particular thanks go to staff of: Falkirk Museums; the University of St Andrews Archives and Manuscripts Department; SCRAN; Heritage North; Forestry Commission Picture Library & Perth Conservancy.

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Text by Mairi Stewart, UHI Centre for History, and designed by Andrew Howard, Design & Interpretative Services, Forestry Commission Scotland.

Selected further reading

Fowler, John, *Landscapes and Lives: The Scottish Forest Through the Ages* (Canongate, Edinburgh, 2002)

Gray, Affleck, *Timber! Memories of Life in the Scottish Women's Timber Corp, 1942-46* (Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 1998)

MacCaskill, Don, *Listen to the Trees* (Luath Press, Edinburgh, reprinted 2006)

Smout, T. C., (ed.), *People and Woods in Scotland. A History* (Edinburgh University Press, 2002)

People of the forestry

The Touchwood history project began in 2006, when initial contacts were made with folk who had worked in forestry in the locality over the years. Interviews were conducted principally by Hugo Manson and Charlie Greenlees, and completed in 2007. Sixteen interviews were recorded, involving eighteen individuals. Those interviewed included: a member of the Women's Timber Corps who worked for a few short but memorable years in forestry; forest workers, some of whom spent their whole working lives in 'the forestry'; and foresters who moved between forests but who were invariably dedicated to their job. Also vital were women, often forgotten, but making a significant contribution to forestry.

The following photographs include all those interviewed as part of the project. We have provided a brief summary of their forestry work and the dates when they worked in forestry. We are indebted to those interviewed. They have left a lasting legacy – the story of everyday life – work, rest and play – meaningful, poignant, fulfilling, funny, both ordinary and extraordinary.



Alex Bell

In forestry: 1959-2000

Moved from Glasgow to Dalavich in 1959, Alex spent the rest of his working life as a forest worker on Lochaweside, 30 of those years as a feller.



Bob Dunsmore

In forestry: 1970-present

Started as a forest worker in Argyll, Bob studied forestry at University, returning to FC in 1977 as a forester. Now FC Scotland, Highland Conservator.



Mary MacDonald

In forestry: c.1942-c.1945

Born in Kilmichael Glassary, Mary worked as a lumberjill during the war at Glendaruel, Argyll. Post-war she worked in both Oban and Lochgilphead schools.



Duncan MacDougall

In forestry: 1948-1998

Born Portsonachan, Duncan was an Inverinan forest worker all his working life. He spent most of that time on establishment and maintenance.



Betty & Stan Maule

In forestry:

1949-1985 & 1982-1989

Married in 1954, Stan & Betty were in several Argyllshire forests. Head forester at Eredine from 1979 until 1984. Betty joining as clerkess in 1982, both moving to Whitegates following amalgamation.



Charlie Mitchell

In forestry: 1946-1987

Born in Inverinan. Spent most of his working life with the Commission. Latterly, as a digger operator, he retired in 1987.

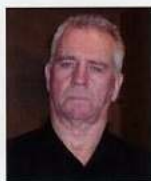


Jimmy Mitchell

In forestry: 1940-1989

49 years with the Commission at Eredine Forest, a leading ganger when he retired in 1989. Like his brother Charlie, born and brought up on the lochsides.

'The job was part of life. You worked hard, but you enjoyed life.' - Bob Dunsmore



Buddy Gillies

In forestry: 1956-2006

Started work with FC as a 15-year old. By seventeen he was felling and continued on this for 26 years before moving to maintenance until he retired.



Charlie & Marja Greenlees

In forestry:

Charlie: 1955-62 / 1981-92

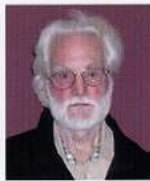
Forester with FC from 1957-62. Moved to Finland 1968, married Marja. Returned to FC 1981. Both worked latterly on forest surveys, Marja from 1993-2003.



Jock Hunter

In forestry: 1971-present

Came to Eredine as forest ranger, mainly involved in deer control. Latterly as conservation ranger, mainly mapping archaeological features in the whole district.



George Ivison

In forestry: 1952-1984

First job after forestry school in 1955 as an 'ex-school ganger' in Wales. Moved to Knapdale Forest as forester in 1972 until his retirement in 1984.



Diana Logan

In forestry: 1966-present

Started in Cairnbaan office as clerkess in 1966 with a career break 1974-79. Diana currently works for the estates department in Whitegates.



Janet Quarton

In forestry:

1963-70 & 77-present

Started in the squad as a 15-year old. After a break, Janet returned to FC in 1977, involved in tarring, establishment & maintenance. She is currently GIS technician.



Peter Quelch

In forestry: 1965-present

Forestry degree at Aberdeen University. Joined FC 1968. Various posts in England and Scotland. FDM for Loch Awe District 1985-1992. FC native woodland adviser 1992-2006.



John Rees

In forestry: 1963-1996

Started as a forest worker before training as a forester. In Perthshire and other Argyll forests before Inverliever. Took early retirement, when FDM for Loch Awe District.



Tommy Stewart

In forestry: 1948-1996

Came from Ballogie to work in Inverliever in 1948. Spent the rest of his working life in forestry, living in Dalavich, operating as a contractor and haulier.



Malcolm Wield

In forestry: 1973-present

Started as forest worker, trained as forester. Various post in Scotland, including forester in Knapdale. Currently FC Scotland, Highland rural development adviser.

Mid-Argyll



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Key to map



Forest



Town/village

Front cover image: 'Horse logging at Kilmaha, Loch Awe, 1958' ©The Scotsman Publications Ltd / Licensor www.scot.ac.uk

Back cover image: 'New forestry houses at Ford, Loch Awe 1950' ©Falkirk Museums

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Mairi Stewart (2007)

'Smell of the resin, noise of the saw'.

The story of forestry in Mid-Argyll in the 20th century
Forestry Commission Scotland, Edinburgh.

FCMS113/FCS(A-H)/NP-2K/NOV07



*This is the story of forestry in and around Knapdale and Lochaweside,
based on the memory of those who lived and work in forestry,
knitted together from personal recollections.*



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