



Science and Business News: September 2004



One year on....

As I embark upon my second year as CEO at Forest Research, I have been reflecting on what challenges the organisation and its staff are likely to face in the year ahead.

The last year has been a demanding one but, although both the forestry sector and the UK science base face considerable challenges, the year has been characterised, above all, by the wealth of new opportunities which have arisen:

- We have enthusiastic endorsement from FC's new Director General, and from the Commissioners, to build the international reputation of FR as a leading international centre of excellence for forest research.
- A large number of organisations, ranging from Universities to blue chip companies, have expressed enthusiasm to work more closely with FR in work which will show how forestry can assist innovation and add value to other sectors, such as health and natural resource management.
- Finally, practitioners' genuine desire to manage land sustainably offers significant opportunities for FR, whose staff's skills span such a wide range of disciplines.

I am simultaneously pleased and concerned that staff are working so hard to secure these opportunities. The ability to prioritise well will be one of the chief skills which we will all require during the coming year. I believe that one of our most compelling priorities must be to build excellent long-term collaborations.

Long term collaborations succeed only when there is true symbiosis. Whatever the topic, we first need to critically assess what FR can offer its clients and collaborators and to assess whether FR's planned course of actions will keep it at the forefront of the field in question. This requires FR to be constantly alert to its external horizons.

We then need to strike a careful balance between giving customers value for money and not under-pricing the cost of our participation. In short, we require financial and scientific excellence in equal measure. The opportunity cost of participating in projects which do not meet both criteria is simply too high.

Professor Jim Lynch, Chief Executive

Arrivals and new appointments

- Welcome to Dr. Atalanta Christophers, (known as 'Xanthe'), who will join FR on 4 October as Director of Communications. Xanthe has most recently been Head of Publishing and Communications at Barnado's, and has also worked for Natural Resources International. She has a BSc (Biology), MSc (Parasitology) and a PhD.
- David Beattie, joined Tree Health Division at Alice Holt, to start his research project on 'Species boundaries in Phytophthoras', on 20 September. David is a postgraduate research student registered at Imperial College and the funding for the project comes from Defra.
- Jeff Sharp from (London, Ontario) has joined Forest Management Division at NRS as an IAESTE (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience) trainee. He is working on different projects in the stability, timber quality and silvicultural systems programmes.
- Jacqueline Neal, who has been assisting Ecology Division at Alice Holt with dormouse surveys in Ribbesford Wood (Worcestershire) during her sandwich year, has been awarded a one year contract extension.
- Tim Silverthorne has commenced an EngD, based at Alice Holt, which will be jointly supervised by Forest Research's Social Research Group (EHSD) and the University of

Surrey. Tim will be working at the interface between the social and natural sciences in the area of land regeneration.

- Jeremy Wingate will begin a PhD studentship in October, based at University of Surrey but co-supervised by FR and University of Surrey. He will examine the value of charcoal in land remediation.

Divisional structures take shape

FR's five science Divisions are approaching completion of their restructuring. Each division has now appointed a deputy head and has also nominated representatives for QA, ICT and for health and safety. Most divisions are planning to meet in the autumn to refine organisational details.

- **Biometrics Division**

Head - Sam Evans; Deputy Head - Geoff Morgan; QA rep - Tracey Houston; ICT rep - Tim Randle; Health & Safety co-ordinator - Tim Randle.

Biometrics Division now comprises six programme groups:

Surveys and Measurement Group, (which includes remote sensing group; woodland surveys unit and tree measurement unit); Software Development Group; Data Centre; Statistical Modelling Group; Forest Resources Evaluation Group; and Forest Ecosystem Modelling Group.

- **Ecology Division**

Head - Chris Quine; Deputy Head - Jonathan Humphrey; QA rep - Brenda Mayle; ICT rep - Jason Hubert; Health & Safety co-ordinator - Liz Poulson.

Ecology Division will meet on 16/17 November in Rockingham.

- **Environmental and Human Sciences Division**

Head - Andy Moffat; Deputy Head - Paul Tabbush; QA rep - Mark Broadmeadow ; ICT rep - Andy Moffat ; Health & Safety co-ordinator - to be confirmed.

EHSD will be organised under four sub-groups: Social Research Group, led by Paul Tabbush; Environmental Change Group, led by Mark Broadmeadow; Land, Regeneration & Urban Greening Group, led by Tony Hutchings and the Soil, Water & Heritage Group, led by Tom Nisbet.

- **Forest Management Division**

Head - Bill Mason; Deputy Head - Barry Gardiner; QA rep - Bill Jones; ICT rep - Steve Lee; Health & Safety co-ordinator - Colin McEvoy.

Forest Management Division has established four science working groups, which will be meeting over the coming months to improve collaboration between the Division's various research programmes in the following areas: Establishment; Harvesting and outputs; Regeneration materials; and Stand testing.

- **Tree Health Division**

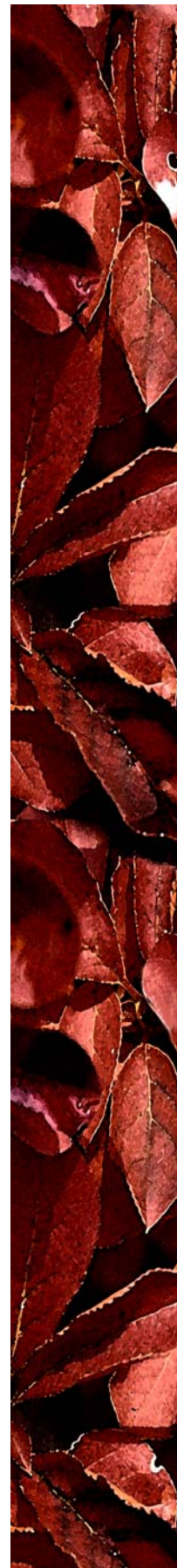
Head - Hugh Evans; Deputy Head - Joan Webber; QA rep - Kath Thorpe; ICT rep - to be confirmed; Health & Safety co-ordinator - Martin Jukes.

APF 2004

Tim Rollinson, FC Director General, was amongst the visitors to Forest Research's stand at APF 2004, the largest UK arboriculture, forestry & woodland show, which took place in Warwickshire from 23 to 25 September. The focus of FR's stand was the new guidance on best practice for winching and importance of ground preparation techniques for root development and stability. FR's new excavator bucket design attracted considerable attention. The stand was shared with Forestry Commission England, which allowed for useful discussions on sharing technology transfer initiatives in the future.

EFI Conference

Jim Lynch and Bill Mason gave keynote lectures at the EFI Conference on 'Continuous Cover Forestry' in Bangor on 5/6 September. The meeting was well attended by FR staff.



Green light for bioindicators

An annual report on the CL:AIRE bioindicators project has been favourably received and further funding obtained to support its continuation.

Phytophthora workshop

Joan Webber, Sandra Denman and Anna Brown attended the IUFRO Phytophthora Workshop in Freising, Germany from 11-17 September. The meeting was co-chaired by Clive Brasier (current Phytophthora Working Group chair), and a total of ten spoken and poster presentations were made at

the meeting. These reported on current FR research on *Phytophthora ramorum* and other *Phytophthora* spp. found in the UK Sudden Oak Death outbreak areas, Phytophthora disease of alder, bleeding canker disease of horse chestnut and the work of the EU FP6 project RAPRA. The second meeting of the RAPRA consortium also took place at the same venue.

Lowland habitat networks

Jonathan Humphrey and colleagues (including SAC) have won a contract to review the potential for lowland habitat networks for Scottish Natural Heritage.

Norwegian soil 'quality' studies

Andy Moffat (EHSD) spent four weeks at Skogforsk in Norway, examining the opportunities provided by long term monitoring data to inform the selection and use of soil 'quality' indicators. It is envisaged that a PhD student based at Reading University will commence in October to further this work.

Incidence of red band needle blight rises

A survey of the incidence of Red Band Needle Blight (*Dothistroma pini*) in the East Anglia Forest District, led by Anna Brown, has just been completed with the assistance of TSU. The annual survey allows the spread of red band to be monitored throughout the district and continues to indicate that the disease is causing very significant levels of damage to Corsican pine in this area.

Rhizosphere Conference

Professor Jim Lynch gave the keynote opening address at the Rhizosphere 'Perspectives and Challenges' conference in Munich in September and co-chaired the closing session. The meeting was co-sponsored by EU and OECD and attracted 450 participants.

Root and butt rot

Kath Thorpe attended the IUFRO Root and Butt Rot of Forest Trees Working Party meeting in August in Poznan and Bialowieza, Poland. She gave a presentation on optimisation of a biological control product containing *Phlebiopsis gigantea* used against *Heterobasidion annosum*. The presentation discussed the FR product PG Suspension and the various strands of work we are engaged in to optimise the product currently manufactured for FE. Ongoing research investigating Scandinavian alternatives which could be used on both spruce and pine and the EU plant protection product re-registration protocols (under EU DIR91/414: 4th stage) were also discussed.

Timber Properties Programme

Planning of the experiment to investigate the timber properties of and log outturn from improved Sitka spruce has been completed. This work is to be carried out in a progeny trial planted in 1968 in Kershope Forest (Kershope 13). The work gets underway this autumn, with



144 trees being destructively sampled for processing at Howies sawmill in Dalbeattie and a further 48 trees being cut into discs for detailed analysis. Shaun Mochan is project leader for this work with support from Steve Lee and Barry Gardiner.

FR has a new BBSRC Case student with Glasgow University working on this project. He will be concentrating on the detailed wood properties of the trees from the experiment.

Tree biomechanics

Alexis Achim, Stephane Berthier and Shaun Mochan (all Forest Management Division) recently spent a week in Isernia in Italy, collaborating with Monica DeIoanni of Molise University on tree biomechanics fieldwork, funded by the British Council. In addition to the field work, Alexis gave presentations of FR's ForestGALES 2 programme at the University of Molise and held discussions on opportunities for future collaboration, including the development of a mechanistic root anchorage model which would complement FR's current empirical model based on tree-pulling trials. We now look forward to the autumn, when the Italian team will visit NRS.

Indian Foresters train at Alice Holt

A delegation of thirteen Indian foresters from the province of Himachal Pradesh in Northern India recently spent two days with Forest Research at Alice Holt, as part of a two week long training programme organised by Tropical Forestry Resource Group. The main focus of the course was the formulation and implementation of forestry policy, but delegates also participated very enthusiastically in a tug-of-war at the Alice Holt staff 'Olympics' (pictured here).



Socio-economic seminar

Jacki Schirmer, of the Australian National University for Forestry, presented a seminar at NRS entitled, 'Socio-economic impact assessment: approaches to improving best practice and methods of assessing the impacts of the forest sector.'

Wallenburg Prize Ceremony

Professor Lynch attended The Marcus Wallenburg Prize Ceremony, held in the presence of the King and Queen of Sweden, at the Grand Hotel, Stockholm, on 30 September. The Marcus Wallenburg Prize is an international award for scientific achievements in forestry and technology of the forest products industries. Professor Lynch is hoping for British candidates next year.

Forthcoming Events

Note: Forest Research's internet site now details the events in which Forest Research staff are involved which are open to non-FC staff - see

www.forestresearch.gov.uk/events.

Mid September to early November, a series of PAWS workshops

FC England and Forest Research are organising a series of 8 regional workshops across England.

[Details](#)



28 - 30 September, Forestry Woodchain conference

FR's Biometrics Division and BRE are holding a conference at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, to bring together the latest international research in all stages of the woodchain, with the emphasis on quantifying and predicting quality. [Details](#)

1 October at 10:10 a.m., Alice Holt staff seminar: 'Rotten from the butt up'

by Dr Kath Thorpe, Tree Health Division. Venue: Alice Holt conference room.

1 October at 1:30 p.m., Hylobius seminar at NRS Library

Iwona Skrzecz of Forest Research Institute Warsaw, Poland, will present a free seminar entitled, 'Hylobius abietis management in Poland - practice & research'. [Details](#)

14 and 15 October, 'Woodfuel - Getting it Right', Bicton Arena, Devon

Technical Development staff will help deliver two identical one day woodfuel workshops in South Devon, as part of FC England's outreach programme. [Details](#)

15 October, Alice Holt staff seminar: 'Ten things you need to know about statistics'

by Geoff Morgan, FR head statistician. Venue: Alice Holt conference room.

21-22 October, British & Irish Hardwoods Improvement Programme, Perthshire

The BIHIP Annual General Meeting and field day is to be held in Perthshire. [Details](#)

27 - 28 October, International Arboricultural Association Annual Conference

This year's conference will focus on systems to manage potential tree risk and will be held in Warwickshire. [Details](#)

3 November, 'Trees for Life' lecture, University of Surrey

Professor Jim Lynch, FR's Chief Executive, will give his Distinguished Professor's open lecture at the University of Surrey, discussing the value of trees to neighbourhoods and communities, the reduction of energy consumption and alleviation of climate change by sequestration of CO₂ and how trees can be used with micro organisms to remediate contaminated land. [Details](#)

New Book

S Stamatiadis, J M Lynch and J S Schepers (EDS) (2004) Remote Sensing for Agriculture and the Environment. Ella, Larissa (Greece) ISBN 960-88000-8-0. (Proceedings of the OECD Workshop in Athens in 2002 - copy in the FR Library.)

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