



Newsletter

December 2002

We wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy Hogmanay

People News

Welcome to:

- Stuart McBirnie & Linda Tedford who have joined TSU (N) at Newton as Research Workers.
- Frankie Lowe who has joined Entomology at AH as a Research Worker.
- Christopher Vials who is joining Statistics and IT Services as an analyst/programmer.

Congratulations to:

- Shaun Mochan (Silv N), who after 3 years of part time study has now completed his Masters degree in Forest Science at Edinburgh University. Shaun's dissertation 'The Effects of Windblow on Timber Quality' is about to be published.
- Andy Moffat (ERB) has been invited to join the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council, Peer Review College.
- Colin McEvoy (Silv N) Health & Safety Advisor @ NRS, who has achieved a pass with credit in the NEBOSH Certificate of Occupational Safety and Health.

Transfers:

- Chris Jones has been appointed FR's Liaison Officer for Wales, a post that he had occupied for several months on a temporary basis.
- Carlos Perez (Silv N) has now transferred to Forest Planning.

Farewell to:

- John Budd (TSU S) who is retiring from Forest Research. John joined the Commission at the age of sixteen as 'the boy' in the New Forest. John has spent the majority of his time as a beat forester in the south of England and has gained the reputation of a sound practitioner being able to deliver targets in a thoroughly professional way. For the last 12 years John has been with Forest Research working chiefly at Headley Nursery running field trials. The practical experience he brought to these activities has proved invaluable; attention to detail coupled with down to earth pragmatism has ensured that work entrusted to him is carried out to the highest standard. His contribution to the overall management of Headley Nursery has been recognised by his peers who hold this facility in high regard. John's contribution to the management and improvement of the grounds and gardens at Alice Holt has been appreciated by all that work there. Best wishes for the future John.

Science & Business News

FR in new GIS partnership

FR, through its membership of the AGILE group of GIS research organisations, is set to benefit from a new Memorandum of Understanding signed between AGILE and the Californian GIS organisation, ESRI. ESRI has been the leading developer of GIS software, world-wide, for more than 30 years. The new agreement consists of providing ESRI educational literature to AGILE members and provides internship at ESRI headquarters for selected students from AGILE members.



Another rare find for Duncan Williams

One of Britain's rarest spiders has recently been discovered by staff of TSU Newton whilst working on peatland experiments for WEB on FE ground in Fort Augustus Forest District. Duncan Williams (Lairg Fieldstation) encountered the spider *Araneus alsine*, whilst in the process of vegetation monitoring. *Araneus alsine* belongs to the same genus as the so-called garden spider commonly encountered on large conspicuous orb-webs spun on tall vegetation in a variety of habitats throughout the British Isles. *Araneus alsine* however seems distinct in having a preference for spinning its web in much shorter vegetation occurring in damp, sheltered, open areas in woodland. The species is highly distinctive, very often deep red ground colour, with a pattern of yellowish dots on the abdomen giving the spider a curious resemblance to a plump, ripe strawberry (hence the common name, Strawberry spider). We believe this new sighting is only the third for Scotland and fifth recorded UK sighting of *Araneus alsine* since 1979.

Pathology wins Defra contract

Pathology Branch has been successful in winning a contract from Defra to compare populations of *Phytophthora ramorum* (the Sudden Oak Death pathogen) from Europe and USA, in support of pest risk assessment, management and policy. The research is already underway and should be completed by the middle of 2004.

Keeping tabs on squirrels

A joint project between WEB and TIB will examine the use of molecular markers to fingerprint individuals in red and grey squirrel populations. If successful this will provide methodology for the study of population and individual ranges which could be used to develop appropriate forest management strategies for squirrel populations. Support for this work comes from the CE's discretionary fund. Helen Whittaker (TIB) will carry out the molecular laboratory work.

Squirrels have been much in the news recently. Mark Steven of Radio Scotland interviewed Brenda Mayle (WEB) in connection with the ending of squirrel immunocontraception work. The interview was broadcast on 9 November along with interviews from Bob MacIntosh and David Bellamy. It is available on the BBC website www.bbc.co.uk/radioscotland and will play on demand when the 'out of doors' icon is opened. Brenda also attended the Scotland and England Squirrel Forum meetings, to provide an update on current research progress and priorities.

Woodland Ecology win new contracts with SNH

Woodland Ecology has obtained two contracts with Scottish National Heritage: on impact monitoring for Beaver reintroductions (led by Helen Armstrong), and on balancing woodland/moorland priorities in Scotland (led by Jonathan Humphrey). SNH is also to part fund (together with FC Scotland) a project on Forest Habitat Networks (led by Duncan Ray).

FR's Research Update Seminars well attended

130 land managers from SE England attended FR's 'New Focus on Ancient Woodlands' seminar at Sparsholt college. Speakers from FC England, FE and FR followed their indoor morning presentations with outdoor demonstrations. 50 delegates attended FR's 'Working Woodlands in the West Midlands' seminar at Wolverhampton Science Park. FR speakers were joined by speakers from the FC West Midlands Conservancy, the Heartwoods Initiative and Loughborough University.

Social Forestry Unit success

The Social Forestry Unit has also won two new contracts: with Lancaster University, to consider how forestry decisions are made and with the New Economics Foundation, to evaluate Forest Schools in terms of community development and learning. The Social Unit has also been assisting FE Wales on a difficult governance issue involving a new wind farm.

Framework programme 6

The new European R & D funding programme Framework 6 was launched in November and its 1st call for proposals have just been published (17 December). Overall, the substantial increase in funding has been welcomed by the research community. However, the EU ambition to restructure its research base means that

- Research needs are more tightly focused than in past frameworks
- Most projects will be much larger, employing new instruments.

FR Project Leaders can find out more about Framework 6 and FR's involvement in it on the FR Intranet and in recent FR Funding Opportunities Bulletins.



November & December

Visits & Conferences

- Liz O'Brien (SSRB, Social Forestry Unit) has recently completed a 3-month research project in Vermont, USA. The research focused on public and institutional perspectives on forests and trees in that part of New England. A series of interviews were undertaken with individuals from organisations including state, federal and private foresters as well as environmental and community organisations. Public discussion groups were held with people from different parts of the state in both urban and rural areas. Her research was given a most enthusiastic response by US Forest Service researchers and Liz established many new contacts, with a range of American NGOs and government bodies. Liz's research paper on 'Human values' has been accepted for 'Forestry', and is due to be published early next year.
- Barry Gardiner & Elspeth MacDonald (Silv N) attended the fourth progress meeting of the European Union 5th Framework 'Compression Wood' project. The project is being co-ordinated by Forest Research and runs for 3 years until 1 June 2004. The meeting included an interesting visit to 2 sawmills owned by Siat-Braun, one of the industrial partners in the project. Norbert Winkler, from EU the commission, also attended the meeting. Mr Winkler, who has responsibility for overseeing a number of 5th Framework projects, was pleased with the progress reported. Further information can be obtained from the project website, www.forestry.gov.uk/compressionwood.
- Jonathan Humphrey (WEB) gave an invited presentation on 'Opportunities for enhancement of biodiversity in UK forests' at a one day COFORD-sponsored seminar on biodiversity in Cork.
- Max Hislop (Silv N) gave a presentation entitled 'Who needs Forestry' at the CECS seminar in Edinburgh.
- Tom Nisbet (ERB) survived the sushi and presented a paper 'Sustainable forestry and protection of water in Great Britain', at a meeting on 'Forests and Water' in Japan.
- Brenda Mayle (WEB) attended the Welsh 'Deer Initiative' conference and presented information on 'Methods of estimating deer presence'
- Alice Broome (WEB) presented a poster on 'Juniper condition and status in Scotland' at the 'Plant Conservation in Scotland' symposium.
- Russell Anderson (WEB) presented a paper 'Properties of organic soils and how they are affected by afforestation' at the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management meeting.
- Samantha Broadmeadow and Tom Nisbet (ERB) have completed their report 'The effect of riparian forest management on the freshwater environment' as fulfilment of a SNIFFER contract.
- Mark Broadmeadow (ERB) attended a UNECE CLRTAP Workshop on 'Establishing Ozone Critical Levels' in Gothenborg, Sweden, as a national expert.

Forthcoming Events

19 December: AH Christmas Lunch

20 December: NRS Christmas Lunch

25 & 26 December & 1 January: Staff holidays

2 January: NRS Staff holiday

22 January: Visit to AH of MSc students from Imperial College London and Arboriculture, Tree and Woodland students from Kingston Maurward College.

Conundrum

I'm not a horse but might fence one in
Remaining behind as the Romans gave in.
My fruits of the summer bring seasonal cheer,
But most of my wood goes for coffins I fear.

The answer to last month's conundrum is Lodgepole pine, *Pinus contorta*. Used by the Native Americans as Teepee poles and widely used as nurse species in mixture with Sitka spruce.

Next Newsletter

The deadline for the next newsletter is Wednesday 22 January 2003.

