



FOREST RESEARCH

Newsletter

MAY 2002

Dendrochronic by Alan Harrison

Cut a disc and see the rings,
The growth, the trends, the seasons' swings
The dark of autumn, dense and slow.
The light of springtime's rush to grow

Can you find when you were born?
Can you tell if it was warm?
All is locked inside the rings
For those with time to look for things

People News

A big welcome to:

- Lois Canham who is starting a PhD studentship with NRS, based at Stirling University, to study habitat usage by Capercaillie.
- Carlos Perez who has joined Silv (N), to assist with an aerial photography project.
- Mattieu Hommel who is currently working with the Pathology team at NRS to study the fungi of young Birch.
- Dr Lucio Di Cosmo from the University of Tuscia, who will be working with members of the Silv(N) team (Upland Native Woodlands and Silv Systems programmes) this summer. He will be looking at light regimes in managed native pinewoods and stand dynamics in upland mixed ash woods.

Congratulations to:

- Gary Kerr (SSRB @ AH) has been awarded a PhD from the University of Wales, Bangor. His thesis 'Factors affecting the early growth and form of *Fraxinus excelsior* L. in Britain' is available in the library.
- Samantha and Mark Broadmeadow (ERB @ AH) on the birth of their new daughter Jessica Alice. Early bird Jessica arrived before Samantha started her maternity leave.
- Steve Smith of Silv(N) and his wife Ruth, on the birth of their daughter Abigail.

Secondment

- Colin Edwards of Silv (N) will be seconded to PPD from 1 May until 26 July 2002.

FR's First Research Associate

Forest Research has recently instituted a new emeritus title of **Research Associate**, to be awarded to persons (usually ex-employees) with a long-standing connection with the FC. Research Associate status will be awarded at the discretion of the RMB. This award is to encourage continued communication and the exchange of ideas and knowledge between current members of staff and the Associate.

Prof. Steve Petty (WEB retired) is the first person to be awarded Research Associate status. Steve, who is a highly regarded bird ecologist specialising in raptors, gained his PhD for work with tawny owls. He joined the FC in 1960 and retired in 1997 when Ardentenny outstation closed. Anyone wishing to contact Steve may do so through WEB at NRS. Congratulations Steve.

Science & Business News

First occurrence of Sudden Oak Death pathogen in UK

Following a routine inspection by Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate staff, the Sudden Oak Death pathogen (*Phytophthora ramorum*) has been found on viburnum plants in a nursery in West Sussex. The diagnosis was made jointly by staff from FR and CSL. This is the first occurrence of this very damaging pathogen in the UK. The origin of the outbreak in the UK is not clear but Clive Brasier and Joan Webber (Pathology AH) will be carrying out further investigations.

FR participates in TFRG initiatives.

FR's membership of the Tropical Forest Resource Group (TFRG) is starting to bear fruit. In June, FR will be one of five organisations hosting a small group from

India, to plan a training contract for Indian Forest Service managers, which will take place in England later in the year. FR has also been invited to contribute to TFRG's 'Current Methods' course in July. Further collaborations are in the pipeline for the group, which now includes The Eden Project as a member.

Centre for Terrestrial Carbon Dynamics Opens

The Minister for Science, Lord Sainsbury, launched the CTCDC at a ceremony on 25 April. The University of Sheffield hosts the centre and FR is one of the collaborating partners along with University College London, York and Edinburgh Universities. The centre is devoted to understanding the role of terrestrial ecosystems including forests in the carbon cycle

FR elected to AGILE council.

Juan Suárez has recently been elected to the Council of the Association of Geographic Information Laboratories of Europe (AGILE). The association is now 5 years old and has 64 members from 21 countries. AGILE aims to influence EU policies on Geographic Information Science and industry applications.

New defences against *Hylobius*

Threatened with the possibility of losing the chemical Permethrin from our arsenal for fighting the pine weevil, urgent experiments to find a substitute are under way. These include a series of field tests of various formulations of an alternative chemical. The TSU field stations have had to race against time to set out a total of 50 000 plants for this year's trials, at 32 sites nation-wide. The race has not been without its hiccups, but the teams have won through eventually. Congratulations and thanks to all TSUs, north and south, for their efforts and co-operation.

TSU(N) Health & Safety Spotlight

TSU(N) has improved its Health and Safety regime at its field stations over the past two years, with the active support of FE Health & Safety Officers. All but one of the field stations has now been Safety 'audited' by the Regional Health & Safety Officer, Jim Burns. Areas covered were Risk Assessments, COSHH Assessments, Local Safety Policy Statement, FASTCo Safety Guides and FE Safety Standards, Training Records (e.g. chainsaws, climbing), Inspection and Maintenance of Equipment and

Clothing, and Contract Management. The audits have proved very successful, improving confidence in our systems, benchmarking our compliance and identifying areas for improvement. As a follow through to these audits, TSU(N) was pleased to have Jim Burns as their guest at their recent branch meeting. This allowed discussion and practical resolution of some issues and usefully reminded us all of the danger of complacency.

New TSU Climbing Unit Co-ordinator

TSU(N) has decided to centralise co-ordination of its climbing teams, which will now be co-ordinated by Andy Kennedy at TSU Newton. This will relieve the need for each field station to have its own climbing team.

Men in bras!

The 'Mistree Machine' is an enthusiastic group of fundraisers based at Alice Holt who are taking part in a sponsored walk on 11 May to raise funds for Breakthrough Breast Cancer and the Bristol Cancer Help Centre. They will cover a distance of 26 miles around a (hopefully) moonlit London. One slight snag, even the guys have to wear a bra! If you would like to support their efforts please contact Katie Jones to make your pledge.

April Visits/Conferences

Several members of Pathology Branch staff (Grace MacAskill, Heather Steele, Joan Rose and David Rose) involved in disease diagnostic and advisory work attended the Diagnosticians Meeting hosted by CABI at Egham.

Joan Webber (Path) will be meeting with staff of the EA, Wales, to finalise a 4th phase of joint work by EA and FR on the Phytophthora disease of the alder.

Jim Pratt (Path) attended the 2nd meeting of the EU Concerted Action project on Modelling the impact of *Heterobasidion annosum*.

Forthcoming Events

- 3 May: NRS HOB meeting
- 10 May: AH HOB meeting
- 13 May: Emergency Aid for Appointed Persons course, Alice Holt
- 30 May: Jubilee Celebrations
- 31 May: Jubilee Holiday

A note for everyone's diaries at AH

On the 30th of May there will be a celebratory lunch to mark the Golden



Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen. In the afternoon we hope to have further activities so please keep an eye on the notice boards.

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Next Newsletter

Deadline for contributions to the June Newsletter is Monday 27 May.