



FOREST RESEARCH Newsletter

OCTOBER 2002

People News

In Memoriam

D. R. Johnston, M.A., F.I.C.F. 1921 –2002

David Johnston, Director of Research and Development from 1974 to 1982, died at Midhurst on 15 July as a result of complications following Parkinson's Disease.

David served in the Fleet Air Arm as a Fighter Pilot from 1941 to 1946. After demobilisation, he studied forestry at Oxford, gaining a First in forestry. He joined the Commission as a District Officer in SE England from 1953 to 1957, when he was appointed the Commission's first working plans officer, stationed at Alice Holt. Here and through his subsequent time from 1961 to 1966 as Head of Planning and Economics Branch, David's influence on Forestry Commission practice became far-reaching. He developed the more flexible system of working plans that became standard in the Commission, as well as the concepts of Yield Class and Production Class, their application to production forecasting and the preparation of the necessary guides and drills for field use.

After a short tour as Assistant Conservator in East England David returned to Alice Holt as Deputy Head of Management Services, and two years later became Director of Management Services. In 1974, he succeeded George Holmes as Director of Research and Development, also based at Alice Holt. This phase of his career was marked by a number of initiatives aimed at making the use of research sources more effective. Other jobs included leadership of an EU program on wood as a raw material and the position of Deputy Co-ordinator of Division 4 of IUFRO. David made a decisive contribution to British forestry at a time when the forest service was being pushed harder than ever before to make its work cost-effective.

His extracurricular activities included lectures to FAO courses on wood production planning in the 1970s, chairmanship of the British Association's forestry section in 1975 and of the Commonwealth Forestry Association from 1979 to 1982. In his retirement he acted as a consultant to a number of international organisations. He was an active sailor and a highly accomplished cabinetmaker, the latter hobby leading to the publication of books on the craft of furniture making and a woodworker's guide to wood.

Arnold Grayson, Director of Research 1982 - 1989

Welcome to:

- Victoria Stokes who has joined ERB as an Environmental Physiologist.
- Kate Harris who is transferring to TSU(S) from FE.
- Heather Moreland who has joined the Admin team at NRS.
- Caroline Bristoll who is joining ERB as an ASO.
- Sally Taylor who will be working in the Library and Photographic section at AH.

Farewell to:

- Alvin Milner (Stats & Computing) who is leaving NRS after 10 years to work in Victoria, Australia. Good luck Alvin.

Science & Business News

Lockerbie Successes

FR were well represented at the Association of Professional Foresters Exhibition in Lockerbie last month, their informative displays attracted praise from many quarters, including the FC's DG David Bills and Chairman Lord Clark. Well done to all involved for a superb team effort. A smaller team of FR personnel took up the Tree Aid Challenge held during the APF exhibition. Russell Anderson (WEB), Duncan Ireland and Paul Webster (both TDB) volunteered to compete

in the orienteering, pistol shooting and trailquest respectively. Russell had to withdraw through injury but Bill Mason stepped into the breach. When the results were announced Duncan had scored 930 points out of a possible 1000; Paul collected around half the control points in his allotted hour and made sure that they were the high scoring ones. Best of all, super-sub Bill had won the orienteering phase after deciding to go cross-country rather than follow the forest tracks. Their total score placed them second, behind The Woodland Trust. Bill generously gave his £50 prize money back to Tree Aid. The organisers hope to have collected a large sum for Tree Aid.

Advisory Committee on Forest Research, meeting 2 - 4 September 2002

The Advisory Committee on Forest Research met in the North York Moors in early September to look at the work of the Silviculture branches and Entomology (not at vintage cars!).



In the photo from left to right: Alan Eaves (FE North York Moors), Bill Mason, Michael Usher (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage now Stirling University), Hugh Evans, Ian Blair (TSU Wykeham), Christine Cahalan (University of Wales, Bangor), Steve Gregory (PPD), Mike Jeger (Imperial College, University of London), Brian Kerry (Rothamsted Experimental Station), Peter Savill (Oxford Forestry Institute), Rob Kempton (Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland), Barry Gardiner and Peter Freer-Smith. Christine is new to the committee having replaced Rod Griffin (Shell Forestry). Car (a 1924 Singer TT Special) and dog courtesy of Peter Everitt (Manager, Wykeham Nursery), and many thanks to Gary Kerr for the photograph.

A rare moth in the north

Staff of TSU Newton working in Sutherland have recently recorded a rare moth found only in a few montane districts in Europe, and only in east Inverness-shire in the UK. Duncan Williams (Lairg Fieldstation) found the larval form of *Swammerdamia passerella*, which is restricted to dwarf birch, *Betula nana*, as a larval host plant, during fieldwork on peatland experiments for WEB. A brief survey subsequent to this initial discovery revealed the moth to be abundant in several locations, all with *Betula nana* nearby and on FE ground in Dornoch Forest District. This small moth cited, as being of 'very restricted distribution' was formerly known only from a few sites centred on Glen Affric, at altitudes of 300-600m.

As yet *Swammerdamia passerella* has apparently never been recorded in the wild, in the UK as an adult. All records being of larvae feeding in their characteristic webs on the host plant. Further surveys in 2003 at these recently discovered sites could potentially result in field observation of adults on the wing for the first time in a British population.

Alternatives to Clearfell

FR together with FTS have run an 'Alternatives to Clearfell' (ATC) course at Glenmore forest for Inverness FD (the second of the pilot sites in Scotland) and will be doing another for Woodland Officers at Novar Estate in early October.





Chinese Accord

Following the recent 4 day tour by a Chinese forestry delegation, which included a tour and presentations at NRS, FC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with The State Forestry Administration of China. The MOU is a statement of intent to develop co-operative relationships between FC and China, it opens pathways of communication for future research collaborations.

October

Visits & Conferences

- Around 40 tree-breeders from across the Nordic countries and Baltic States gathered at a hotel in Eddlestone near Edinburgh recently to discuss 'Clonal Forestry? Who are you kidding!' As technology advances quickly in the areas of cryopreservation and somatic embryogenesis, the realization of clonal forestry is becoming quite a possibility over the next 5 to 10 years across countries with more applied programs such as Sweden, Finland and Britain. Although the tongue-in-cheek conference-title implied an air of unrealistic optimism when proposed 16 months ago, already more people are of the opinion that the planting of tested clones in our forest could become a reality if we really want it to. The quality of presentations was excellent and it is intended to publish them all on the FC website. As well as scientific presentations, there were others on the commercial application of clonal forestry and the possible problems that might face. Rick Worrell reminded us of the environmental and societal aspects, which will have to be addressed if clonal forestry is ever to get out of the laboratory. This is a topic that we shall be hearing more and more about in the future and the conference got the ball rolling nicely. There is always a good turnout of Scandinavian people whenever Scotland hosts this event, it could be down to the anticipated quality of organization although the whisky tasting and special Scottish-fare evening may have a small part to play!
- During September Barry Gardiner (Silv (N)) attended the 4th IUFRO workshop on silviculture and wood quality modelling in British Columbia and presented a paper entitled "Towards a Timber Quality Model for Sitka Spruce". Whilst in Canada Barry also spent two days at Laval University in Québec working with Dr Jean-Claud Ruel and Alexis Achim to review progress on Alexis' PhD thesis, which is concerned with the stability and timber quality of Balsam fir and white spruce in Eastern Canada.

Forthcoming Events

11 October: NRS, 'Introducing your Intranet', a seminar led by Paul Subbachi, 10.30 in the NRS library.

15 October: FR hits the road with its Welsh Seminar 'Establishing Quality and Native Woodlands' to be held at The International Pavilion, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells.

15 October: AH, as part of European Week for Health and Safety a BMI nurse will visit AH, for further details please contact Hayley Oldale, or refer to her email of 17 Sept. NRS staff have been invited to join the events at Silvan House.

18 October: AH, Research Staff Update Seminar, 'Spruce Aphids in Wales' by Nigel Straw.

23 October: AH, David Bills will update all staff on the outcome of the Forestry Devolution Review and progress with the FR Quinquennial Review, staff restaurant at 13.30.

1 November: AH, Research Staff Update Seminar, 'The latest mysteries of Sitka spruce seed dormancy', by Peter Gosling.

7 November: 'Global Warming and the Health of our Trees' an Aboricultural Association seminar in association with FC, FR and Leeds City Council, will be held at The Mansion, Roundhay Park, Leeds. To book contact Luke Steer on 0113 288 6200.

Conundrum

Revered by Celt and Pagan hordes,
I stand my ground while all else falls.
I lent my strength at Agincourt,
And remain a sentry at Christian's door.

With thanks to Alan Harrison. Answer next month.

Next Newsletter

Deadline for contributions to the November Newsletter is Wednesday 23 October.