



Science and Business News: August 2004

Ben Bradshaw visits Alice Holt

The Forestry Minister for England, Ben Bradshaw, visited Alice Holt in July, to get an insight into Forest Research's work. During the visit, Mr Bradshaw discussed a number of topical issues, which included climate change, wood fuel, *Phytophthora ramorum* and squirrel management. Mr Bradshaw seemed to enjoy the visit, commenting "it is only when you talk to people at the sharp end that you appreciate the amount of detailed research that goes into helping protect Britain's woodlands ~ and why Forest Research is held in such high esteem."

Anthony Bosanquet, FC Commissioner visits Alice Holt

The FC Commissioner Anthony Bosanquet also visited Alice Holt during July, to catch up on latest research developments. Topics discussed included: the work of the Social Research Unit; hydrology projects; continuous cover forestry; and the work of Ecology Division, particularly in its work on squirrel management and on the joint landscape project 'BEETLE' currently being undertaken by FR with the Countryside Commission of Wales. Mr Bosanquet, who is based in Monmouthshire, is already planning a follow-up visit to Forest Research's Talybont centre.

CEO visits America

Jim Lynch visited California and Oregon in July to see Sudden Oak Death sites. While there he had discussions with Oregon State University, the various divisions of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Environment, with views to developing collaborations with FR.

Breakthrough in battle against *Rhododendron ponticum*

Colin Edwards, of Forest Management Division, has successfully trialled a stem injection control method in Western Scotland and Wales, which is being hailed as a breakthrough in the control of one of Britain's most invasive alien plants, hybrid *Rhododendron ponticum*.

The removal of the largest plants has until now posed the greatest challenge and expense to managers, their continued presence in the environment the greatest threat to the species' long-term eradication, as mature bushes can produce up to a million seeds a season, continually re-invading surrounding habitats. Injecting herbicide directly into the stems of large rhododendron results in their death within six months. Not only is the dead material then easier to remove, but the application of the herbicide is more precise than in traditional methods, uses less product producing overall cost savings.

The National Trust for Scotland's Inverewe gardens, famous for their extensive *Rhododendron* collection, has recently been using the stem injection method to control seedlings from their hybrid *Rhododendron ponticum* windbreaks invading surrounding woodlands.

FR's Internet site has more details of FR's [rhododendron control programme](#), as well as the recent [press release](#).

IoW magistrate highlights red squirrels' importance after radio hoaxes

During 2003, the Isle of Wight radio show presenter, Alex Dyke, arranged two 'phone in' stunts, by broadcasting calls from a man threatening to release grey squirrels on the IoW. The release of grey squirrels would be catastrophic to the indigenous and much cherished IoW red squirrel population. The Forestry Commission was amongst the organisations whose help was enlisted in a major hunt for the 'squirrel man'. Eventually, the calls were found to have been staged by Dyke, in a bizarre attempt to boost ratings.



Brenda Mayle (Ecology Division) was called as an expert witness to the case, in which Dyke was found guilty of wasting police time. When sentencing Dyke, the stipendiary magistrate highlighted the importance of red squirrels as "a national asset", and which had made the hoaxes such a grave offence.

Buckets of success

An excavator bucket designed by Steve Morgan, of Ae's Technical Development team, is one of 28 innovations which have been short listed for the IdeasUK Annual Conference this November. Noticing that discharging clay/gley soils from excavator buckets was time consuming and put stress on both operator and machine, Steve designed an excavator 'riddle' bucket, from which it was easier to shake out cohesive soils. The new bucket was tested in Kielder Forest District and proved a success, with operators recognising a variety of benefits which, it is calculated, will save FE up to £416K p.a. on excavator mounding at restock sites.

Having already won the 2003 FC FIRS Chairman's award, Steve's design was then selected from 116 entrants for the IdeasUK national award short list. IdeasUK is the only non-commercial association in the UK dedicated to employee suggestion schemes and reward and recognition processes. It is a membership organisation, which serves both the public and private sectors. Its national Annual Conference awards prizes to eight categories of ideas which have arisen from its members' employee suggestion schemes.

UNESCO praises Selvagens Islands eradication programme

One year after Forest Research completed a rabbit and mouse eradication programme for the Parque Natural de Madeira on Portugal's remote Selvagens Islands, UNESCO has warmly commended the conservation work undertaken on the islands. The islands' native flora has enjoyed a dramatic renaissance following the eradication of invasive mammals, chiefly rabbits and mice, which was led by Roger Trout of FR's Ecology Division. Commenting on the quality of conservation at the site, UNESCO stated that the eradication programme was 'an excellent example of what can be achieved' and the groups responsible 'deserved the highest praise for the excellent quality of management and their sustained commitment to the conservation of the site.' Disappointingly, however, UNESCO has decided not to inscribe the Selvagens islands on the World Heritage List.

Antipodean speakathon gets underway

Hugh Evans of Tree Health Division is visiting New Zealand in August, to deliver a seminar on Forest Research's UK plant health work to the Forest Research institute at Rotorua and to speak about invasive organisms to New Zealand bio-security group based in Wellington. Hugh will then travel to the IUFRO Conference in Hanmer Springs, to deliver two joint papers developed with Nigel Straw and Christine Tilbury, on pinewood nematodes and horse chestnut leaf miner. Hugh will then be joined by Tree Health Division's David Wainhouse, to attend the International Entomology Conference in Brisbane, Australia and deliver two further papers, on pest risk analysis and plant resistance.

Forthcoming Events

Between mid September and early November: FC England will be holding a series of 10 regional seminars on the [Conservation and Restoration of plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites \(PAWS\)](#). The seminars are intended to update woodland managers on PAWS restoration practices. Ralph Harmer of FR's Ecology Division and Richard Thompson of FR's Forest Management Division will be speaking at many of the events, giving practical guidance on how to achieve effective restoration.



17 September: 10:10 - 10:30, Andy Hall of Forest Management's Technical Development group will present an Alice Holt Staff seminar on 'Woodfuel developments in the UK'.

23-25 September: APF 2004, Warwickshire. Forest Research will be exhibiting at the [APF 2004 biennial International Forest Machinery event](#). The Forest Research stand will describe new guidance on best practice for winching and ground preparation techniques.

28-30 September: Forestry Woodchain Conference, Edinburgh. Forest Research and BRE are holding a [Forestry Woodchain conference](#), bringing together the latest international research throughout the forestry wood chain. The event will be held at Edinburgh's Herriot-Watt University.

1 October: COST Action Workshop on Wood Processing Strategy, Edinburgh. A one day [workshop on Wood Processing Strategy](#) will take place in Edinburgh immediately after the Forestry Woodchain conference. An initiative of the EU Cost Action E44, the workshop will feature presentations on the current status of industries in COST member states forming the woodland industry chain.

27-28 October: [Strategic Tree Risk Management: Developing Defensible systems](#), Worcestershire. A conference organised by the International Society of Arboriculturalists (ISA) with the support of Forest Research, will be held in Droitwich Spa.

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