

# British Columbia



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## B.C. FOREST SERVICE TRAINING SCHOOL (1947) by Ralph Schmidt

"It is worthy of record that, due to the inexperience of the personnel available, it was necessary to run a training school for cruisers and compassmen for two weeks before the parties went into the field. This training proved to be well worthwhile in that all personnel received the same training and the crews were able to turn in a satisfactory length of strip from the start of operations."

Annual Report of the Forest Service for 1947

Decreasing staff levels during the Depression plus trained manpower shortages during World War II had a negative impact on Forest Service personnel capability. After the war the demand for forest inventory information increased considerably, spurred on by the enactment of Tree Farm Licence legislation.

Four field parties were scheduled for the 1947 forest survey, but only a handful of experienced summer help was available. To alleviate this shortcoming a decision was made to operate a training program during the first two weeks of the field season. At the same time, this training program would provide a modicum of forest inventory training to a smaller student group in range and land-use surveys.



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The training school was based at the Cowichan Lake Research Station, where camp facilities were already in operation to support reforestation programs on adjacent lands, and to accommodate research personnel.

Compared to the present, the Cowichan Lake camp was a primitive outpost in the wilderness. It was serviced by a narrow gravel road which had been built by hand with wheelbarrows and shovels by the young men of the Youth Training Program during the Depression. A minimum area had been cleared to facilitate camp construction, and the surrounding forest pressed in closely on the buildings. The cook house had a giant-sized wood stove which had to be fired up during the early hours of the morning if breakfast was to be served on time. Each morning two or three deer would wait at the cook house door for handouts of hot cakes.

The bunkhouses resembled barracks, and each one sported 8 army cots (and army blankets). A couple of bare light bulbs (40 watt?) hung from the ceiling. Lights out was at 10:00 PM. A converted 45-gallon oil drum provided wood-fired heat. Sanitary facilities were minimal, but very sociable - an eight-seat Johnson Bar situated as far as possible from the cookhouse.

The training program was directed by Mickey Pogue and Ced Telford. From time to time they were assisted by various staff members from Victoria and by temporary staff who had obtained field experience in the 1946 surveys.

Some of the training took place at the Cowichan Lake station. Dendrology, pathology, plant indicator species, and second-growth inventory. However, much of the training was conducted on private land in the Robertson drainage, owned by the Hillcrest Logging Company, which operated a sawmill at Mesachie Lake. Much of the valley bottom and lower slopes had been logged by railway, and provided a variety of sites for demonstrating regeneration survey techniques. Timber cruising training took place higher up the mountains in tributary drainages covered with predominantly mature forests of even-aged Douglas-fir.

At the end of the training program the field parties headed off to their individual areas for the summer. Two of the field parties (Kyuquot and Smith Inlet) operated from BCFS launches. These boats, about 65 feet in length, provided sleeping, dining, and office accommodations.

The timber cruisers and compassmen identified in the following field party rosters were predominantly UBC forestry students who attended the training school at Cowichan Lake.

#### Kyuquot Field Party

Forest Service launch: B.C. Forester

Party Chief: George Silburn

Cruisers: Sig Techy, Bob Breadon

Compassmen: Bill Young, Don Easton, Ralph Schmidt

Smith Inlet Field Party

Forest Service launch: Forest Surveyor  
Party Chief: Wally Hughes  
Assistant Party Chief: George Allison  
Cruisers: Hugh Lyons, Hank Sweatman  
Compassmen: Bob Huestis, Bob Fisher, Barry Ford

The other two field parties were land-based, and pickup trucks were the order of the day for transportation. A general rule seemed to prevail, with cruisers riding in the cab and compassmen eating dust in the box.

Prince George Field Party

Party Chief: Davis Carey  
Cruisers: Bill Grainger, Stan Lockhard  
Compassmen: Al McMinn, Ernie Jones, Ed Waddel

Sayward and E&N Field Party

Party Chief: Harold Cliff  
Crew: Art Schofield, Dave Owen, Doug McLeod, George MacKenzie,  
Stu Foreman, Murray Austen, Danny Danyluk.

Trainees in the range and land-use groups were under the general supervision of Jim Milroy, who had conducted a range survey in 1946 in the Kamloops Forest District. In addition to forest inventory training, these individuals were instructed in techniques used in range surveys. Ed Smith and Sig Peterson subsequently joined Jim Milroy and two other staff members from Kamloops (Tom Wallace and Al Paulson) to form a 5-man range survey field party in the Kamloops Forest District. Tom Hyslop, another Cowichan trainee, worked for the Department of Lands.

While assembling this information from various individuals, long-hidden memories of experiences during the summer of 1947 came to light, and some of these are repeated here:

"Mickey Pogue had great physical stamina and endurance, and he did his best to instill this in his proteges while training them. Each day in the field commenced with a prolonged climb of the steepest slope he could find, and ended with a downhill race back to the truck."

"I'll never forget the expression on the face of the fisherman when the Forest Surveyor lacerated his fully-loaded gillnet in Smith Inlet."

"Both the Kyuquot and Smith Inlet surveys suffered an abnormally wet summer in 1947, with rain on 22 days during the month of July. It amazed me that not one serious accident occurred when the crews forded streams running at flood levels."

Whenever I think of the white pine blister rust problem, I try to bring back the memory of the towering, straight-stemmed mature white pine trees which were a component of the stands in which we trained to become timber cruisers at Cowichan."

"George Silburn was capable of a remarkable range of facial expressions. His eyes sparkled with interest and enthusiasm when he described the attributes of a 'thrifty' stand of Douglas-fir. A dramatic contrast took place when he counselled the skipper about the rate of diminishing job security associated with the consumption of alcohol aboard the B.C. Forester."

"Every effort was made to provide thorough training. During a dendrology exercise a difference of opinion arose as to whether a particular tree was a grand fir or a Douglas-fir. This was resolved by Al McMinn climbing 50 feet to obtain a foliage sample."

"The BCFS placed considerable emphasis upon economy of operation and this applied to food as well as everything else. The E&N field party cook (recently from Saskatchewan) thought that he was exercising cost-saving initiative when he baked an over-ripe salmon which had been marooned on the banks of the Oyster River. He returned to his homeland much earlier than anticipated."

"Memories of heavy, sodden backpacks, Bulman's dehydrated vegetables, sore shoulders, wet socks, wet sleeping bags, wet firewood, no-see-ums, bulldogs, burnt bannock, burnt rice pudding, Prem, and devil's club."

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NO SOUP FOR LUNCH  
by Jack Long

During the depression years of the 1930's, "relief camps" involved in forest development projects were established in British Columbia. In the spring of 1939, a hundred-man Forest Development Project operated at Green Timbers, clearing land close to the camp buildings with the use of stumping powder. One morning about 11:30 AM a large stump was blown and a piece of root from the blast found its way through a skylight over the kitchen stove, landing in a ten-gallon stock pot of soup heating for lunch.

You can well imagine the mess this created! The cook, a big jolly Englishman named Jarvis Bristow, met the disaster with great composure. At noon, lunch for 100 men was on the table was usual -- without soup. This might have developed into a major crisis had not Jarvis kept his cool. Most camp cooks I have known would have been headed for the office asking for their pay cheque and transportation to town before the soup had time to settle in the deepest recess of the kitchen. Perhaps there is a moral attached to this little episode.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The Association's 1989 Awards of Merit have now been formally presented to the three selected groups (see the April 1990 newsletter) at appropriate functions. Time for members to consider and recommend individuals, agencies, companies, and associations who warrant recognition through 1990 Awards of Merit.

Special thanks are due to J.D. (Doug) Little for the donation of a great set of photographs depicting logging and milling operations in the area east of Prince George during the 1920's and 1930's. Donations of such historic photographs for display purposes are welcomed and appreciated.

In addition to regular articles, short "news items" describing initiatives and programs underway pertaining to B.C.'s forest history are also published in the newsletter. Don't hesitate to send these in, as the executive and members like to be kept informed of meetings and work in progress.

Finally, we regret to confirm that in spite of the "ridiculously low" annual fees, the FHABC is not a benevolent association. Thus, this is the final newsletter that will be sent to dues-paying members who have not yet sent in their 1990 dues. Remember, your membership expiry date is on the address label. To continue receiving the newsletter and remaining a member in good standing, please send a cheque for \$5.00, or cash, (especially for our American members, since the bank charges us \$2.00 to deposit a cheque from a U.S. bank) to the Treasurer FHABC, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8.

Commencing with the 1991 dues, we intend to allow members to pay for several years in advance, thus enabling one to "lock in" at the dues structure in existence at the time.

Bill Young  
President

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FORESTRY SHORTIE

The following is the text of a letter written by Raymond English in October of 1959 to the Vancouver District Forester at the Marine Building in Vancouver. This letter was passed to me by FHABC member R.L. Helfrich of Kamloops.

According to Mr. Helfrich, Raymond English was a shakewhacker and sawmill operator in the Chilliwack Valley. His application for a Special Use Permit is from the files of the old Cultus Lake Ranger Station.

Bob DeBoo, May 1990

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# Forestry Shorties.....



Please be advised that with paper and pen,  
I make application (as do many men),  
To use just one part of the Government's woods,  
For a road to haul shakes and deliver the goods,  
For unless I can haul from my sale on the hill  
The timber will never get near to a mill,  
And I'm told by your men who officiate here  
That according to law -- which I hold very dear --  
Before building a road, or even a trail,  
I must first get your authorization by mail.  
So a Special Use Permit is what I request  
For a right of way through a Provincial Forest.  
And I furthermore found that before I could write  
I must survey and submit a map of the site.  
So last Tuesday I called at the Ranger's abode  
And got one of his men to come look at the road.  
So we went to the bush, and for your information  
Spent a day and a half tying in the location.  
To fulfill every jot of Her Majesty's needs  
We crawled through a lot of Her Majesty's weeds.  
And we climbed up a hill 'til I felt like a rag  
And tried to locate a timber sale flag.  
Though we searched every bush, every stump, every tree,  
Its location is still a deep mystery to me.  
So we quit and returned to the place where we parted  
Not a bit better off than we were when we started,  
And talking it over, decided to go  
And see if we could find the flag down below,  
Which we finally did after more of the same,  
And by now I was tired and weary and lame.  
So we took a short rest, then we started again,  
And we measured our way from the flag with a chain,  
Blazing the line so it's easy to see,  
And every ten chains we went, squaring a tree,  
'Til at 35 chains we came to the part  
Where I figured I wanted my road to start.  
And here's where we finally started to map  
The right-of-way shown on my SUP App.  
So there, my dear sir, is the story in full,  
And honest to God, I'm not slinging the bull,  
And begging your pardon I'd just like to state  
That although I consider the Forestry great,  
I certainly will never again ever plan,  
To go into the bush with a forestry man.  
So consider my troubles, and think of my strife,  
And think of my seventeen kids, and my wife.  
Consider the data, and please sir agree  
To issue a Special Use Permit to me.

NEW BOOK

"Axe Makers of North America" - by FHABC member Allan Klenman

This new book is the product of 20 years of collecting and researching the axes of Canada and the U.S.A. - who made them, where, and why? Fully illustrated, with three appendices detailing the makers and axe labels.

The book will retail for \$18.95 but advance orders are being taken at a special rate of \$10.00, plus \$2.00 for postage. This offer is good until June 30, 1990. Receipts will be issued upon clearance of cheques and copies of the book will be mailed when they are received from the printer (by mid-August).

Please indicate the number of copies desired, and include a cheque for the appropriate amount, along with your name and full address to: Allan Klenman, # 407 - 3260 Quadra Street, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8X 1G2. (604) 383-2321

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THE TIE HACKING INDUSTRY IN NORTHWEST B.C.

The forest industry in northwestern B.C. emerged with the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, and was a major force behind the development of the Bulkley Valley. Tie hacking camps sprang up along the entire route of the line, supplying ties for initial construction, and later for tie replacement. Ties were hewn from hemlock, spruce, or pine, although pine was preferred.

In the northwest, tie hacking operations were initially concentrated west of Smithers, along the Skeena River. By the 1920's when tie replacement became necessary, the industry focussed on the pine stands in the Bulkley Valley and Lakes District.

Most tie camps were small, often family operations employing between two and six men. These camps were too small to take contracts directly from the railway, but supplied ties to larger subcontracting companies.

The Hanson Lumber and Timber Co., owned by Olaf Hanson, received major tie contracts from the railway and served as the principal contractor in the Bulkley Valley and Lakes District for many years. Initially centered in Prince Rupert, he moved his company office to Smithers in the mid-1920's. By the end of that decade a second tie contractor, the Sivert Anderson Company, took over most of the contracts east of Houston.

Tie hacking was seasonal work, available between September and April. During the winter the tree sap was down in the roots, and snow permitted the use of horse-drawn sleighs to haul ties from the bush. This provided work for Bulkley Valley farmers, who were freed from much of their farm work during the winter months. Tie hacking provided a much-needed income supplement to the often meagre returns from farming.

Using a broadaxe, the average man could hack 20 to 25 ties per day. At the larger commercial camps, he received 20¢ per tie, an income of \$4 to \$5 per day. However, the commercial camp operators deducted a dollar a day for board at the camp.

Haulers received 5¢ per tie and hauled two loads a day, each consisting of an average of 60 ties. Thus, they were able to earn approximately \$6 per day.

Bulkley Valley Museum

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#### NEWS ITEMS

##### Central B.C. Railway & Forest Industry Museum

The Prince George Railway Museum Society was incorporated on March 22, 1983 and began collecting, restoring, and exhibiting railroad equipment of bygone eras. Some years later, the society broadened its horizon to include a forest industry theme. Thus, there is now an active program to collect and restore artifacts representative of the northern interior forest industry. One particular item of note is a logging arch truck which was originally built (in 1943) to haul U.S. Army 155 mm artillery field guns in Italy during World War II.

While in Prince George, this rapidly-expanding museum is well worth a visit. The museum society issues ten newsletters per year and annual membership dues are \$25.00 (full member), \$12.50 (associate member), and \$10.00 (student/senior member). Information can be obtained through the Central B.C. Railway & Forest Industry Museum, P.O. Box 2408, Prince George, B.C. V2N 3S6.

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This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia and is distributed at no charge to members of the Association, libraries, and to certain institutions. Items on forest history topics, descriptions of current projects, requests for information, book reviews, letters, comments, and suggestions are welcome. Please address all correspondence including changes of address to the Editor: John Parminter, # 1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5.

**Membership** in the Association is \$5.00 yearly. The date of your membership expiry is shown on your mailing label. Membership renewal forms will be sent to you when your renewal date is reached. Should you wish to obtain further information please write to the Treasurer: Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8 or the President, Bill Young, 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.