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**THE BURMAN RIVER FLY CAMP
by Ralph Schmidt**

In May of 1947, I completed my second year in forestry at UBC. That summer, I was lucky enough to get a job on a BCFS forest survey crew in the Kyuquot Forest on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Our party chief was George Silburn who, some years later, was in charge of the Reforestation Division. Our chef (his meals were much too tasty to call him "cook") was Don Cruikshank. We had a very capable skipper named George McHugh. Our field crew consisted of two timber cruisers (Sig Techy and Bob Breadon) and three compassmen (Bill Young, Don Easton, and me).

The *B.C. Forester* served as our mobile base camp. When we cruised the accessible areas near the shore, we returned each day to the luxury of our boat: home-cooked delicious meals, hot showers, and dry comfortable beds. However, when we tackled the hinterland we went on "fly camps" and reverted to a rather primitive lifestyle. We called them fly camps because instead of using a tent which weighed ten pounds or more, we used a rectangular piece of very lightweight, water-resistant, silk fabric for a shelter.



Recycled paper

On these expeditions our backpacks were crammed with an assortment of food (mostly dehydrated), various items of equipment, cooking and eating utensils, raingear, sleeping bags, and a heavy jacket. The entire pack would weigh sixty to seventy pounds.

The summer of 1947 was unusually wet. It rained on more than twenty days in July. It was not good weather for flycamping. Somehow, we learned to cope. So we shrugged our shoulders and made the best of it. On the other hand, the impact of extremely wet weather upon streamflow sometimes creates life-threatening situations. In our work we very frequently had to cross streams – just about every day on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Only occasionally did we find a log crossing in a convenient place. Heavy rainfall could transform a relatively placid, shallow, slow-moving stream into a deep, treacherous, raging torrent.

On fly camp our diet was anything but gourmet. It adequately sustained our vigorous lifestyle but it was not very tasty. Fresh meat was a luxury. We could only bring enough for the first two days of fly camp. Beyond that, it would spoil. Prem became our standby after day two. Bread didn't last too much longer either. As a substitute we would bake bannock in a frying pan over an open flame, often with blackened, charred results.

Our last fly camp of 1947 involved hiking across much of Vancouver Island. We trekked from Muchalat Lake in the west, over the Gold River divide, to the end of steel in the Salmon River Valley. Aside from not getting enough good food, and becoming dog-tired most days, and getting wet every second day, and getting a dozen wasp stings to my face, it was not my worst fly camp that summer. In my opinion, the most miserable fly camp was our trip up the Burman River.

There were two incidents worth mentioning about our trek up the Burman Valley. As we made our way inland from the coast we stayed very close to the river. Unbeknownst to us, we walked over an area where the river had undercut the bank. For at least fifty feet we were supported only by a web of tree roots. The soil had eroded away and there was a ten-foot space between this root mass and the water below. Only one guy's foot managed to squeeze through a hole in this tangle of roots. It was Bill Young's foot. Not just his foot, his entire leg was buried, right up to his crotch. He did not suffer any serious damage, despite the heft of his seventy-pound backpack. The four of us stopped in our tracks when he fell, and were absolutely stunned when Bill uttered a swear word. It was the one and only occasion all that summer that Bill used profane language.

About a half hour later, we arrived at a huge opening in the forest. It was a good half mile across and extended from the mountain top to the river. There was no vegetative cover. No timber, no shrubs, not even any moss. Just heaps of bare white granite rocks. Some slabs were as big as a house. The previous year, there had been a very powerful earthquake (Richter scale 7.3). The epicentre was in Strathcona Provincial Park just a few miles to the east. It caused an avalanche that diverted the river to the opposite side of the valley. Since the river had been diverted across the valley to the steep mountainside, we were forced to cross the avalanche itself. Our caulk boots were more of a hindrance than a help. They could not grip onto the bare rock, so we slipped, skidded, and screeched slowly across this strange terrain.

Our destination was the junction of Bancroft Creek and the Burman River. We planned to camp inside the fork, stay overnight, and split our group into two crews. But first we would have to cross Bancroft Creek to get to our campsite. Forging the creek was no problem. The water was not very deep, only up to our waists. Incidentally, when we forded a stream, we first removed our socks and safely tucked them inside our shirts on top of our shoulders in the interests of maintaining dry footwear.

The next morning Sig Techy and I headed up Bancroft Creek while the other three continued along the Burman River. As we lifted our backpacks to start our morning trek, huge dark clouds moved in and it began raining steadily. It did not stop for three days. Sig and I walked all morning and then made camp in a grove of alders near the creek. We cruised a short strip up the mountain that afternoon. When we got out of our sleeping bags the next morning, we noticed that the water level of Bancroft Creek had risen substantially. We should have regarded this with alarm, and taken precautions, because when we returned at supper time, we discovered that the river had flooded our camp.

Everything was wet, including our sleeping bags. We packed up. I think I squeezed a couple of gallons of water from my sleeping bag before I stowed it in my pack. We made camp nearby on higher ground and spent a miserable wet night. The next morning we broke camp and continued our trek. After cruising a strip on the way downstream, we began searching a sheltered area where we could camp overnight. That afternoon Bancroft Creek began to flood over low-lying areas. A good part of the time we waded in knee-deep water. Between the wet and the devil's club, we were not having a good day.

There was plenty of evidence of ancient avalanches in this very steep-sided valley. We thought they could well have been generated by earthquakes long, long ago. As we crossed one of these overgrown ancient avalanches, we discovered a huge boulder about thirty feet long. It was leaning considerably, so that along one side it sheltered a large area from the rain. There was a stretch of bedrock that was dry. We were elated. At last we had found a camping spot. It was six feet wide extending the full length of this massive slab.

We were very tired and we were very wet. Every stitch of clothing was saturated. We dumped our heavy, wet packs and immediately started a fire. The first thing we prepared was a steaming bowl of Lipton's noodle soup, strongly fortified with Oxo cubes - a very satisfying beverage. Our dinner consisted of fried Prem, Kraft dinner and Bulman's dehydrated carrots. For dessert, we ate a package of Dad's cookies, plus a square of Baker's semi-sweet chocolate.

After dinner, we checked out our sleeping bags. They were sopping wet. Sig decided that he would try to dry out his bag, so he put together a crude wooden frame by the campfire and hung his sleeping bag out to dry. I felt too tired to do likewise. In any case, I thought it could take an awfully long time to dry it. Instead, I quickly removed my boots, my rain-test hat and my jacket and then squirmed and wriggled into my sopping wet sleeping bag, still wearing my wet clothes. I immediately fell asleep and slept like a log, despite a mattress of solid rock.

The next day, we broke camp and resumed hiking along the creek until we were again at the junction. We were supposed to join the other crew and camp in the fork of the river. Our food supply for the rest of the trip was located there. Unfortunately, we had to cross Bancroft Creek. What had been a calm, shallow stream a few days ago was now a raging torrent. We checked out the place where we had forded the stream. The water was now very deep and with a swift current. Obviously, we could not wade across. We slowly walked along the streambank in the hope of finding a tree that we could fall across the stream. We finally chose a redcedar growing at the water's edge. It was about two feet in diameter and tall enough to reach a gravel bar exposed about twenty feet from the opposite shore.

We had only a short-handled survey axe. We took turns, and after hacking away like beavers for nearly an hour, the tree finally fell down and landed on the gravel bar. The top broke off and was swept away by the current. We carefully walked on the fallen tree, then stepped off into chest-deep water, and waded the last few feet. We met the other three guys there, had a very unexciting meal, and retired. The next morning we again crossed Bancroft Creek on the cedar log, and trekked down river.

When we finally arrived at the mouth of the Burman River, we were a woebegone group. It was a result of wet clothing, empty stomachs and a somewhat sour attitude toward this challenging fly camp. We expected to see the *B.C. Forester* anchored in the bay, awaiting our arrival. All of us were anxious to take a shower, change into dry clothes and sit down to one of Don's appetizing meals. But the boat had not arrived. Moreover, the rain had not completely stopped. There was still a little rain falling. To find shelter we walked to a nearby prospector's cabin. The door was unlocked. No one was home, so we entered. What a relief to take off our heavy, wet packs.

We had completely depleted our food supply, so we looked around the cabin for a snack. There were several cases of canned clam meat, nothing else that was edible. We were hungry so we opened up a couple of tins and started munching. Soon, we realized that we could no longer hear the rain on the roof. We went outside and saw the sun emerge from behind the clouds. There was now more clear sky than cloud. Sunshine glistened and sparkled from little ripples in the bay.

Suddenly, the *B.C. Forester* appeared around the point. By the time the anchor was dropped, the sky was absolutely clear. We glanced nervously at each other because we could anticipate exactly the words our party chief would use to greet us. And he did not let us down. As he brought the outboard to the shore and stepped out, he shielded his eyes against the brilliant sunshine and greeted us: "What a glorious day! Most people would spend a lot of money to come to a place like this. And you guys actually get paid to be here."

By this time, we had already tucked away the memories of wet weather camping into the back of our minds, and we silently nodded in agreement with him. The next year both Bill Young and I requested to return to the west coast of Vancouver Island to finish up the Kyuquot survey.

**JAMES ROBERT ANDERSON, B.C. DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
AND FOREST POLICY ADVOCATE**
by David Brownstein

James Robert Anderson (1841-1930) was born at Fort Nisqually in Washington state, which was at the time a part of the Hudson's Bay Company commercial empire. The young Anderson, one of thirteen children, was "the almost constant companion of his father," Mr. Alexander Caulfield Anderson (1814-1884), who was the HBC employee in charge of the fort. James Robert received his early education from his father, and the family lived at various fur-trading posts in New Caledonia until 1850.

In that year, nine-year-old James Robert travelled from Fort Colville to Fort Victoria with his eldest sister Eliza to attend the latter fort's school. The two children travelled with their father over the Brigade Trail to Fort Hope, then via boat to Fort Langley where they were met by Governor James Douglas. The last leg of their journey to Fort Victoria was accomplished by canoe. As he grew older Anderson worked as an accountant in Victoria for different businesses and the provincial civil service. He and his wife Mary Shaw Harbel (1842-1916) spent their leisure hours as amateur botanists in the lands surrounding the capital.

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture was created in 1894 when J.R. Anderson was appointed to the post of Departmental Statistician, and as such he became the first Deputy Minister. The main functions of the department – Anderson was the only employee – were to collect and interpret statistics to support British immigration and agricultural settlement. Through the reports of his volunteer correspondents in different regions and his occasional trips through the province, Anderson was witness to the often unintended effects of landclearing operations.

In converting forest land to agricultural spaces, immigrant farmers logged large areas. They removed the huge stumps with stumping machines, gunpowder, and auger-bored holes filled with lamp-oil set alight. These fires were prone to escaping control and the areas burnt represented not only lost timber, but on the coast they regrew with persistent weedy ferns and *Epilobium angustifolium* (commonly called fireweed). Further, Anderson's observations of unintended forest fires resulting from logging operations inspired him to take an active interest in the province's non-agricultural lands. He asked his correspondents how summer fires were initiated and how they could be best prevented. Anderson's interest in the 1896 revision of the *Bush Fire Act* reflected the view that, in British Columbia, forestry and agriculture were closely connected.

J.R. Anderson extended his job description and collected forest fire statistics in the early 1900s. Further, in a 1901 paper for the Canadian Forestry Association he suggested the establishment of a system of forest rangers "similar to that which existed in Germany." He published two more articles in the *Canadian Forestry Journal* detailing provincial forest fire statistics and another describing "The Deciduous Woods of British Columbia." Anderson, by then 67 years old, contracted severe pneumonia and regretfully retired in September, 1908.

During his retirement Anderson continued the botanical activities that he had pursued his entire career, hoping to complete work on the Departmental herbarium he was amassing. The provincial government enacted two policies that realized projects Anderson had championed during his time as Deputy Minister. These were the creation of Strathcona Provincial Park in 1910, and the establishment of the Forest Branch in 1912. Later, under the banner of the Natural History Society of British Columbia, Anderson wrote a book on the "Trees and Shrubs, Food, Medicinal and Poisonous Plants of British Columbia."

Published in 1925, Anderson's book was supported by the Department of Education and intended as a school reference work. The volume contained natural history descriptions and economic biographies of B.C.'s flora as had been collected by Anderson's father during the course of his Hudson's Bay Company travels. J.R. Anderson's book concluded with a chapter entitled "Our Forests and Their Protection" contributed by the Forest Branch, Department of Lands. The reader was treated to a biology lesson that emphasized the non-economic value of forests with overt moral implications. In countries that allowed forest depletion, the reader learned, "progress slackened, and the people became decadent." Persia, Greece and Spain were offered as examples. Anderson's book exemplified the shifts in British Columbia nature study that took place over the course of his lifetime. He provided a link between traditional amateur natural history practice and the same in the service of government.

Then blind, on April 9, 1930 James Robert Anderson was struck by an automobile and killed while crossing an intersection in Oak Bay. He was remembered by his close friend and fellow naturalist CC Pemberton as "a great credit to the whole educational system and training of his time." By injecting his extra-curricular natural history interests into his job James Robert Anderson's approach encompassed work on trees at the turn of the twentieth century when seemingly few in government were interested in forest management.

Further reading:

- Anderson, J.R. 1901. Forestry in British Columbia. *The Canada Lumberman*. May 1901, pp. 10-12.
- Anderson, J.R. 1905. Forest Fires in British Columbia in 1904. *Canadian Forestry Journal*. Vol. I, No. 3, July 1905, pp. 100-104.
- Anderson, J.R. 1906. Forest Fires in British Columbia. *Canadian Forestry Journal*. Vol. II, No. 2, May 1906, pp. 81-83.
- Anderson, J.R. 1906. The Deciduous Woods of British Columbia. *Canadian Forestry Journal*. Vol. II, No. 3, August 1906, pp. 114-120.
- Anderson, J.R. 1925. *Trees and Shrubs, Food, Medicinal, and Poisonous Plants of British Columbia*, Department of Education, Victoria, B.C.

And of course, the James Robert Anderson papers held in the B.C. Archives in Victoria.

David Brownstein is a Ph.D. candidate at UBC and is writing a thesis that describes the contributions of natural historians to subsequent forest management schemes. He can be contacted by e-mail at dbrownst@interchange.ubc.ca

LEMON LOOKOUT LIVES AGAIN – UPDATE **by Stuart MacCuaig**

Phase one of our business was launched on August 1, 2004 when our little highway-side store opened to the public. We sell souvenirs, camping supplies, snacks, and drinks from a 390-square foot log cabin which was freshly-built for the purpose.

You'll recall that we have leased a decommissioned 3-storey fire lookout tower that looks out over British Columbia's beautiful Slokan Valley near Nelson, B.C. Now we're at work bulldozing the 4½-mile road that twists and turns up the mountainside to the tower.

The entire road has to be ditched, and water-boxes must be installed at various points to channel rain and snowmelt. This erosion control will be enhanced by seeding the entire road with a mixture of native grasses and wildflowers. When this is done we will launch phase two which consists of driving day visitors up to the mountain top to picnic and hike.

Our final phase of development will conclude in June, 2005 when we deposit our first overnight guests at the tower and leave them to reign over their 360° 900-square mile view. This is splendid wilderness isolation being one mile straight up from sea level. Truly remote, but the accommodation is civilized. Guests bring their own sleeping bags to use on the bunkbeds, but they'll find fresh drinking water in the tower's taps, and a night-use flush toilet in the building.

Steaming-hot showers are available in a showerhouse just steps away from the tower, and there is no waiting for the water to heat between showers. The compact kitchenette has a propane fridge and stove, and basic pots, dishes, and cutlery. The tower's in-wall propane heaters will keep our guests toasty if the evening turns cool.

If you have never stayed overnight in a fire lookout tower you really should consider it. Ours is the first and only such rental in Canada, but the U.S. Forest Service has been renting its unused towers for years in the Pacific Northwest. During the day the view is simply staggering: lakes, rivers, valleys, and mountains are breath-takingly displayed.

At night, away from the light pollution of the city, you stand within the very vault of the universe – seeing stars and planets more clearly than you've ever seen them before. Full moon nights are indescribable.

We are now accepting reservations for the 2005 season (June 1st to Sept. 31st).

Call (250) 355-2992 or e-mail us at: info@skycastlelookout.com for details.



75 YEARS OF REFORESTATION CELEBRATED ON APRIL 17, 2005 AT GREEN TIMBERS

As described in newsletter number 62, the first plantation was created by the Forest Branch in 1930 after a permanent forest nursery site was established at Green Timbers, in Surrey, in 1929. Although the Forest Branch planted logged-over land on an experimental basis in 1932, on West Thurlow Island, operational planting did not begin until 1936.

The Green Timbers property was part of a large old-growth forest and was renowned for the 200-foot tall trees which bordered the Pacific Highway – the only old-growth forest along the highway between San Diego and Vancouver. After efforts to preserve the property failed, the last stand was felled in 1930, bringing to a close seven years of logging by King and Farris Company, which operated a sawmill at Newton.

The Inaugural Plantation was established on March 15, 1930 and still exists today. An arboretum was added along with a group of Garry oak and an experimental plot of red pine. The Forest Service Ranger School, later renamed the Training School, was built in 1945 (see newsletter number 67) and graduated its first class in 1946.

On April 17th the Minister of Forests, the Hon. Mike de Jong, assisted Surrey Green Timbers Heritage Society President Peter Maarsman, community activist and Green Timbers Heritage Society Past President Wady Lehmann, and Surrey Mayor Doug McCallum to plant a ceremonial tree to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Green Timbers and representing the 5.5 billionth tree planted in B.C.

The Forest Service's interest in Green Timbers has diminished over the years but they still have two "archived" plantations which were established to study Sitka spruce and the leader weevil and western white pine and the white pine blister rust.

For further information about Green Timbers see the Green Timbers Heritage Society website at <http://www.greentimbers.ca/>



This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. Please submit newsletter material and send changes of address to the Editor: John Parminter, # 3 – 130 Niagara Street, Victoria, BC V8V 1E9. Phone (250) 384-5642 home or (250) 356-6810 office. E-mail: jvparminter@telus.net

Membership in the association is \$10 yearly, or \$45 for five years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, BC V8L 4E8. Phone (250) 656-9276. E-mail: edonon@islandnet.com

The President: Stan Chester, can be reached at 5686 Keith Road, West Vancouver, BC V7W 2N5. Phone (604) 921-9880. E-mail: stanchester@shaw.ca