

**UK Agroforestry Forum
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester
8.30 pm, 17 June 2002**



1. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Euan Brierley	Cranfield University
Valerie Brown	Centre for Agri-Environmental Research
Bob Clements	IGER, North Wyke
Gerry Lawson	CEH, Edinburgh
Mark Malins	Wiltshire College - Lackham
Oliver Rackham	Cambridge University
Karen Russell	Horticulture Research International
Zewge Teklehaimanot	University of Wales, Bangor
Jim Vale	IGER, Bronydd Mawr

2. Minutes of the 2001 Annual General Meeting

One change, to replace “School of Biology” with “Ellerslie Hall”, was proposed by Lynton Incoll and accepted by the meeting. The amended minutes were accepted unanimously.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 *Minute item 16. “The Future of the Forum”*

Steve Newman reported that the Committee had discussed the benefits of the Forum seeking charitable status. The funding available under charitable status would provide a healthy secretariat and other organisational facilities such as covering the costs of invited speakers. Charitable status would require a modified constitution and the election of trustees with legal responsibility for the operation of the charity and the management of its funds. He pointed out that most successful scientific organisations in the UK had charitable status. Arnold Beaton reported that charitable status would allow the Forum access to grant aid from a range of charitable institutions. A model form for applying to the Charity Commissioners for charitable status was available.

If the Forum achieved charitable status, there would be a need to produce audited accounts for the Charity Commissioners and the Inland Revenue. However, there was no need to employ professional chartered accounts if the turnover was less than £10,000 in which case a Forum member or other individual, who was independent of the trustees, could act as auditor. Following submission, it would take from six months to one year for charitable status to be approved depending on the complexity of the case made.

Alan Sibbald formally proposed that the Committee should fully investigate the benefits and disadvantages of charitable status for the Forum and should report back with recommendations to a future general meeting of the Forum. The proposal was seconded by Roger Sheldrick. The proposal was put to the meeting and it was carried.

Action: Committee

Steve Newman considered that a European Agroforestry Forum was the best way forward because most land-use issues were influenced by European policy and there was a greater

body of agroforestry interests in Europe. The Forum's survival and influence would be enhanced by a European breadth. Lynton Incoll, having consulted European colleagues, thought that the uni-lateral conversion of the UK Forum to a European forum by simply changing its name would not go down well with potential partners in Europe. A French member of the Forum had suggested a European federation of agroforestry groups with "chapters" in each country or region; he agreed with this approach. The UK Agroforestry Forum would be one such chapter. David Pilbeam cited the European Society of Phytochemists as good example of a Europe-wide development. The Society had started as a UK organisation but had arranged meetings around Europe before changing its name.

Alan Sibbald formally proposed that the Committee should take the initiative in fostering communications with European groups interested in farming with trees with a view to creating a federation or association of farming with trees organisations. The proposal was seconded by Arnold Beaton. The proposal was put to the meeting and it was carried.

Action: Committee

4. **Chairman's Report**

The chairman delivered the following report:

"This will be the last meeting I will attend as Chair of the Forum, a position I have been proud to hold for 8 years. The Forum has had a huge impact on my professional life over that period and I hope you will allow me the luxury of a little time to reflect on how the Forum and my own work have evolved over that period and within that framework.

Most of you will be aware that the embryonic Forum arose from the formulation of a National Network Silvopastoral Trial across six sites in the late 1980's. Meetings for this and working with others who had novel ideas on how to introduce trees to farming systems quickly gathered a range of scientists who soon established a similar silvoarable network trial and conducted basic science on the performance of trees at wide spacings and their attendant ecological interactions. Discussion groups on all these aspects of agroforestry research quickly formed the main nucleus of the Forum.

The importance of both these network trials in the evolution of agroforestry in these islands cannot be overestimated. They helped secure a funding base for research, attracted funding from wider afield, brought great creditability through the scientific rigour imposed on their management, yielded much basic research on trees and their ecological interactions and helped initiate Technology Transfer activity.

They have reached a watershed in some ways and those that are left to manage them will be faced with a plethora of problems in a more harsh funding environment and rapidly evolving policies for land use. It may be almost heretic to suggest it at this gathering but we must be careful that the huge effort required in the almost slavish maintenance of these sites does not become a 'white elephant' which drags down with it all the resources we have to devote to agroforestry research. This could, in-turn, stifle efforts which must be made in other more innovative areas, encompassing a much wider view of how trees can be introduced into farmed landscapes. It is still true to say that the lessons we have learnt from these network sites have shown us other directions we might go in and we should not be hindered from going down that route by the effort required to maintain the network we have put so much into establishing. If we cannot break from the millstone which some of these sites might be envisaged as we are slowing up the development of agroforestry because of the very resource which has inspired the success of the

programme in the first place. I hope it does not have to come to such a stark decision but it is something which we should bear in mind.

In the early days the Forum was almost exclusively a gathering of researchers. Subsequently, as funders demanded to see the application of this research and pressure on programmes mounted, there was a need to embrace technology transfer and to investigate practical application of on-farm systems. In this context we made good advances in Northern Ireland because our research and Technology Transfer sectors remained under the one umbrella. This change in emphasis drew in a wider range of participants and I am happy to say that I feel the Forum embraced this change well, as was reflected in the themes of the annual meetings. A concerted drive was made in Bangor in 1998 to push agroforestry out to a wider audience of farmers, foresters and those interested in a more multifunctional approach to woodlands on farms. This achieved some success, particularly in Wales. Since then the Forum has moved into a further phase which embraces the previous two and adds the dimension of influencing and becoming embedded in land use policy. Your committee has been particularly active in this area over the past year. In 1999 the Forum established a logo, a constitution, formal committee structure and made a positive representation to the Forestry Commission. This helped firmly establish its role within the UK as a first contact and consultation point for agroforestry.

Since then we have had foot and mouth disease which greatly disrupted our work but perhaps we can exploit the new thinking on land use and rural development which has arisen in the wake of this and other crises which have beset the farming industry.

One of the very encouraging things for me has been the increase in the number of foresters who have participated in the Forum and contributed to a group which largely involved agriculturists and biologists in the early days. I doubt if there are many true agroforesters in the UK today – this is where we sadly lag behind our tropical colleagues. I would greatly welcome more input from actual agroforesters into the group, the thinking they bring tends to be innovative and multidisciplinary and is probably needed more than ever.

So I feel we have come along a long road as a group and our deliberations have followed the natural progression of the scientific method i.e. research through to application and implementation. In this respect the silvopastoral agroforestry toolbox - an advisory package for farmers and advisors, which Alan Sibbald has been working on - is a shining example.

The main strength of the Forum has been in the people who have made it up. As an informal, non-membership group it has been a close-knit body of people who have developed strong professional and social bonds over the years. This has been one of the greatest benefits it has brought me personally and I would like to thank all those over the past eight years who have served with me on the committee and indeed participated in any way in the Forum.

It would be totally invidious of me not to single out for special mention Alan Sibbald – Mr Agroforestry – who also retires from the Committee after this meeting and who has been the driving force behind the Forum since its inception. The Chairman has little work to do - the Secretary a lot - and Alan has made the Forum what it is today. It has been my

privilege to work alongside him and to get to know him over the years we have both been associated with the Forum. The bond we have made will stand us in good stead and I believe it has stood the Forum in good stead.

I know I hand the Chair over to very good hands when Lynton Incoll takes over. The commitment of Leeds University and Lynton's contribution to the Forum has been monumental over the years and I can think of no more fitting person to take up the reins at this time. To him and to the new committee, I give my very best wishes. To you, as a Forum, thank you - may you go from strength to strength. I will be happy to continue to support you from the back benches!"

Jim McAdam
June 2002

5. Matters arising from the Chairman's report

Arnold expressed thanks, on behalf of all those present, to Jim McAdam as retiring Chairman and Alan Sibbald as retiring Secretary, for all their work and leadership during the past decade.

6. Secretary's report

Alan Sibbald reported that most correspondence dealt with matters which were on the agenda. He had received a letter from Steve Pritchard of Bendall's Farm containing information about an agroforestry course to be held on 7 and 8 September. This information has been added to the Forum web site.

7. Treasurer's report

Paul Burgess reported that the expected surplus of funds from the 2001 annual meeting at Leeds University had not materialised. He had not, therefore, opened a bank account in the name of the Forum.

8. Election of the Committee

The following Committee members were elected unopposed:

Chairman	Lynton Incoll	University of Leeds
Vice-Chairman	Gerry Lawson	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Secretary	Paul Burgess	Cranfield University
Treasurer	Gerry Hoppé	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland
Member*	Steve Newman	Biodiversity International & University of Leeds
Member*	Patrick Norris	Great Western Community Forest
Member	Zewge Teklehaimanot	University of Wales, Bangor

* - Formal confirmation of Ordinary Member co-opted to the Committee after the 2001 AGM.

The existing members of the committee include Fergus Sinclair (ex-officio, Editor of Agroforestry Newsletter), Barbara Hart (co-opted), Tony Waterhouse (co-opted) and Tom Dutson (ordinary member).

Following the Committee election, Lynton Incoll proposed a vote of thanks to Arnold Beaton, retiring Committee member, for the long and invaluable service he had given to the Forum and to the Silvoarable Network; Lynton described Arnold as the Father of Agroforestry in the UK.

9. Strategy Papers

- 9.1 *England*: Paul Burgess reported that a draft strategy had been presented to the December 2001 meeting of the Committee. He also reported that the English strategy had been promulgated through the various submissions made to reviews of policy in England relating to the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food and the Forestry Commission's Consultation on Sustainable Woodland Management.
- 9.2 *Northern Ireland*: Jim McAdam highlighted the differences between the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland and the rural development departments in other regions of the UK. This had resulted in a rather different strategy which he would expand upon in a paper to be presented to a later session of the meeting.
- 9.3 *Scotland*: Alan Sibbald reported that the FC Devolution Review which is now in progress would change the relationship between the administration of forestry and farming in Scotland. He would await the outcome before proceeding to update the draft strategy presented at the Committee's December 2001 meeting.
- 9.4 *Wales*: Fergus Sinclair reported on a presentation he had made to the Welsh Assembly and to a meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society of England at Stoneleigh. The Welsh strategy is based upon a landscape-scale approach which he would expand upon in a paper to be presented to a later session of the meeting.

10. National Policy Matters

Jim McAdam reported on the various submissions that had been made, on behalf of the Forum, by the Committee. These included submissions to:

- the Commission on the Future of Farming and Food (England);
- the Forestry Commission's Consultation on Sustainable Woodland Management (England);
- the Forestry Commission's Forestry Devolution Review.

The Committee was presently preparing a submission to the FC/DEFRA Policy Review of Woodland Creation in England under the WGS and FWPS. The review document and further information on the review are available from the FC and DEFRA web sites

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-59yhgx>

Members were invited to send to Paul Burgess (email: P.Burgess@cranfield.ac.uk) comments which could be included in the Forum's submission well before the submission date of 7 August 2002.

Action: Paul Burgess

11. Technology Transfer.

- 11.1 *R. Crowe's Report*: Lynton Incoll reported that the technology transfer paper that had been prepared by Richard Crowe was available to members on the Forum's Download site (<http://www.agroforestry.ac.uk/download/>).
- 11.2 *Demonstration Site (Stoneleigh)*: Arnold Beaton reported that the silvoarable demonstration site had been grassed down by RASE without reference to him, and could not be used for demonstration this year. Arnold further reported that the trees would need to be pruned this year; four man-days of work would be required. Mark Malins and Fergus Sinclair had offered assistance and Arnold would co-ordinate the pruning later in the year.

Action: Arnold Beaton

12. Forum Newsletter

Fergus Sinclair reported that two issues of the newsletter had just been published on the Forum Download Site. These contained useful and informative papers. He asked the general questions “is the newsletter providing what people want?” and “are people prepared to provide material for future issues?”.

Lynton Incoll pointed out that, on the basis of experience, people will not provide papers from their contributions to the annual meeting, even if pressed. He also expressed the view that the original form of the newsletter with sections on “new faces” and “letters to the editor”, the latter sometimes provocative, made enjoyable reading.

The format, internet-downloadable or hard copy, was discussed and it was proposed that a review of Forum publishing should be carried out and a strategy tabled for next year’s annual meeting.

Action: Fergus Sinclair & Committee

13. Membership

Alan Sibbald reported that the Forum’s mailing list contained 180 names. These could be assumed to be interested if not active since none had asked to be removed from the list. The Committee is reviewing its membership strategy with a view to broadening the member base.

Action: Committee

14. JISCmail discussion list

Lynton Incoll (joint list owner with Jim McAdam) presented the following information on the JISCmail mailing list to the meeting:

Activity since June 2001 AGM:

Date	Number of Messages	Comments
Post 26/6/01	2 On “Sweet leaves”	Query about shrub species
7/01	1 NERC Remote Sensing	Advertisement of service
	3 Robert Hart’s Forest Garden	Forest Gardens
8/01	1 Agroforestry Meeting Germany	Invitation
2/02	1 Message from list owners	Notice of intention to close the list
4/02	1 Message from list owners	Notice of closure
	1 Association of Temperate Agroforestry	Invitation to join this closed list from Sarah Workman
	1 Forest Garden Network	Invitation to join Martin Crawford’s informal network
22/4/02	List closed by JISCmail (It was started at DANI in mid-1997 by Jim McAdam’s group).	

Lynton went on to describe how, at the 2001 AGM (Minutes, item 12), despite low activity in preceding months, the Forum decided to keep the mailing list and to review its use. It can be seen from the above log of messages that there were seven messages in the two months after the AGM, but for the six months up to February 2002 there was no activity. The Forum list owners, at the request of the JISCmail Helpdesk, asked for a volunteer to try to kick start the list by generating discussion. There was no volunteer forthcoming so the list owners decided to close the list as it appeared to be serving no useful purpose. He remarked that despite the demise of the list, the original initiative of the DANI group is to be applauded.

15. **Forum Website**

Alan Sibbald reported that the most active and successful area of the web site was the document download area. He asked for more information from members to update the remainder of the site.

Lynton Incoll suggested that it would be useful to include a page of historical information on the Forum on the web site since its roots could be traced back for more than sixteen years. He also proposed a vote of thanks to Alan Sibbald for creating and maintaining the web site.

Following his retirement as Secretary Alan Sibbald had agreed with Paul Burgess that he would act as webmaster for the Forum for one more year, while the registration of the domain name "agroforestry.ac.uk" remained with the Macaulay Institute.

Action: Alan Sibbald

16. **Future meetings**

- 16.1 Forum 2003: Tony Waterhouse of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) made a short presentation on SAC's plans for the 2003 meeting. The emphasis of the meeting would be on wood-pasture, a move away from the more traditional emphasis of the Forum's meetings. The site included areas of recently planted farm woodlands and there were several other wooded sites and institutions of interest in the locality. He pointed out the attractions of the site and its locality and the ease of access via rail and road. The dates would be 23rd to 25th June 2003 returning the meeting to the traditional third week in June.

Action Tony Waterhouse

- 16.2 Forum 2004: Alan Sibbald reported that the proposal made by Tom Dutson for a meeting at the University of Central Lancashire's Newton Rigg site in Cumbria with the theme "Trees and upland farming: past, present and future" was still on the table for the 2004 meeting.

Action: Tom Dutson & Newton Rigg staff

17. **Date and location of next Annual General Meeting**

Fergus Sinclair questioned the late-evening timing of the AGM. He suggested that evenings were most useful for networking with colleagues at the Forum meeting and that the AGM appeared to be "peripheral" if it was held in the late evening.

It was agreed that the next AGM would be held during Forum 2003 at SAC's Kirkton and Auchtertyre site. The timing of the AGM would be decided by the Committee.

Action: Committee

18. Any other business

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 10:45pm.

Recorders: Alan Sibbald and Paul Burgess
27 June 2002/17 Sept 2002