

# Set our Tribal Forests free

*Dreaming of what would serve the children of Earth, Grandmother Spider saw many things that seemed discordant to the harmony of the whole. She became troubled by the nightmarish visions at the edge of her web. She knew that all of her dreams would comprise the Web of Creation and that all living things would have those experiences that she was spinning into the tangible world. Grandmother Spider reached out to the Great Mystery and spoke of her concern, asking the Creator to ease her worry. The voice of the Great Mystery spoke to Grandmother Spider's heart and said, "There is no reason to fear these challenges that have been placed within Web of Creation. It is through testing and tempering the substance of our human children that they will find their inner strengths and release the weaknesses of their own creative abilities, growing into their potential and their wholeness. The desire to overcome lives within them and fires their ability to create and to grow. Without challenges, the Two-legged humans will never know desire, and without desire, there is no Creation." [1]*

*"It is their duty/responsibility to their family, animals and all of nature, to keep this land protected and in harmony. Everything in nature has a power in it. All spiritual people should unite on a spiritual path. To save this land is a mission assigned by the Great Spirit."*

Thomas Banacyca Talks about the Hopi Prophecy

*"The true indication of a societies well being is not gross national product but gross national happiness."*

The King of Bhutan, Himalayan region.

*"The ownership and possession of land brings power to individuals over their own affairs. Those on the ground, in touch with the land, know better than their remote landlords or misinformed bureaucrats how to work the land and bring it to optimum use."*

John Mackenzie from Borge in Skye.

*"If you want to evict us, sue the Creator!"*

(mis) quote of Roberta Blackgoat, Dine'h (Navaho) Tribal elder.

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## Trees are Teachers

A tree is many biomass zones: the stem and crown (The visible tree), the detritus and humus (the tree at the soil surface boundary), and the roots and root symbioses (the underground tree).

The living tree is constantly decomposing, much of it transferred, reborn and reincarnated into grasses, bacteria, fungus, insect life, birds and mammals.

Natural broadleaf woods contain up to 60 native species of trees and shrubs, as well as a wide variety of flowering plants and ferns - a large diverse wood with over 200 species. A diversity of plant species in turn live with a variety of insects, birds and other fauna. Some tree species, notably oak, willow, birch and hawthorn are outstanding in the fauna they support, with blackthorn, aspen, elm, hazel, beech and Scots pine also being important.<sup>[2]</sup> The Oak tree is associated with over 32 species of bird, 34 species of butterfly, 271 species of other insects, 168 species of flowers, 10 species of ferns, 31 species of lichen and a number of fungi.<sup>[3]</sup> "take care of the habitats and the animals will look after themselves...the greater the variety of plant life the better the chance of providing the necessary conditions for most animals."<sup>[4]</sup>

Where does the tree begin and end in this ecosystem?

When a squirrel buries an acorn (apparently recovering only 80%), it also acts as an agent for the oak. When the squirrel digs up the columella of the fungal tree root associates, guided to these by a garlic-like smell, they swallow the spores, activate them enzymatically, and deposit them again to invest the roots of another tree or sapling with its energy translator.

The root fungi intercede with water, soil, and atmosphere to manufacture cell nutrients for the tree, while myriad insects carry out summer pruning, decompose the surplus leaves, and activate essential soil bacteria for the tree to use for nutrient flow. The rain of insect faeces may be crucial to forest and meadow health.

Which is the body or entity of the system and which is the part? An Australian Aborigine might give them all the same "skin name", so that a certain shrub, the fire that germinates the shrub, and the wallaby that feeds off it are all called waru, although each part also has its own name.

It is a clever person indeed who can separate the total body of the tree into mineral, plant, animal, detritus, and life! This separation is for simple minds; trees can be understood only as a total entity which, like ours, reaches out into all things. Animals are the messengers of the tree and, and trees the gardens of animals. Life depends upon life. All forces, all elements, all life forms are the biomass of the tree.

Each part of the tree is also an individual. A large tree has 10000 to 100000 growing points or meristems, and each is capable of individual mutation. Trees produce their seed from many flowers. Each branch can be genetically unique, (grafts perpetuate these isolated characteristics), with individual responses to energy and other stimuli. Like ourselves trees are an cooperative amalgam of many individuals; some of these are of the tree body but many are free living agents. <sup>[5]</sup>

## The history lesson

For too long now we have sighed and tried to forget the pain of our forced removal, eviction and disconnection from our land, impoverishing ourselves and the land as power and money obsessed landowners have sought to take as much profit and pleasure for their own use as possible: Enclosing the land held in common, to the exclusion and poverty of us, the original free inhabitants of England Wales and Scotland. How much illness, misery and ecological devastation has this caused?

Quite contrary to the rubbish we usually hear about the ill health of native tribal peoples, before the 'wisdom' of western 'civilisation' is available to enlighten, the health and well-being of the native peoples is generally very good. Especially when contrasted with the quality of life in industrial and feudal Britain. William Wood, who lived in New England said the Native American Indians did not know ..

“... those health wasting diseases which are incident to other countries, fevers, pleurisies, callentures, agues, obstructions, consumptions, subfumigations, convulsions, apoplexies (strokes), gouts, stones, tooth-aches, pox or the like; but spin out their days to a fair length, numbering threescore, fourscore, some even a hundred years ...” [6]

Early explorers and settlers were unanimous over the generally blissful health of tribal Indians. A Dutch account from New York related that:

" ...it is somewhat strange that among these most barbarous people there are few or none cross-eyed, blind, crippled, lame, hunched-backed, or limping men; all are well fashioned people, strong and sound of body, well fed, without blemish." [7]

Was this lack of disease because of some sort of culling or other 'treatment' of sick or different people? or are Tribal Indians part of the Earth so that if the Earth is well then so are they? The Indians close connection with the land gives them a true reality that keeps them well and also healing plants, songs and dances to keep themselves and the Earth well in body, mind and spirit. (For more info on the medicine of native people see Native American Medicine by Virgil j.Vogel, Song of Heyoehkah by Heyemeyohsts Storm and Shamanism by Mircea Eliade.) Mother Earth is a healer and teacher when we let her be. Tribal peoples live in communal permanence, as a culture that respects the living Earth . Western man in his 'youthful reaching for the sky' is seen by tribal groups as the younger brother who must learn to respect his home or he will destroy his Mother Earth.

American Indians were not the only tribe trashed and relocated away from their homes and way of life by people crazed with power and hungry for land. The same thing happened to us, here in England, Wales and Scotland although for some of us, occurred so long ago to our ancestors that we have forgotten when or why or how we got where we are today. For others of us the wound is still fresh. John Murdoch reports in *The Highlander*, 1873:

“We have to record a terrible fact that from some cause or other a, craven, cowed and snivelling population has taken the place of the men of former days. In Lewis, in the Uists, in Barra, in Islay, in Applecross and so forth, the great body of the people seem to be penetrated by fear. There is one great dark cloud hanging over them in which there seems to be terrible forms of devouring landlords, tormenting factors and ubiquitous ground officers. People complain but it is under their breaths and under such a feeling of

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depression that it is never meant to reach the ear of landlord or factor. We ask for particulars, we take out a notebook to record the facts; but this strikes a deeper terror. "For any sake do not mention what I say to you" says the complainer. "Why?" We naturally ask. "Because the factor might blame me for it."

Murdoch concludes that:

"The language and lore of the Highlanders being treated with despite has tended to crush the self reliance without which no people can advance." [8]

**In the spirit of the Diggers, Levellers, Ranters and Agitators, and the Welsh, Irish and Scottish land reform movements from medieval to Victorian times, Crofter communities are now reclaiming their lands. The 21,000 acre North Lochinver Estate in Assynt, Sutherland recently changed hands from the meat baron, Lord Vesty, to the Assynt Crofters Trust; "even if we did have to buy back what was rightfully ours", stated the Crofter's Trust.**

**Isabel MacPhail, an Assynt crofter commented,**

**"Really it's a bit like the end of colonial rule, gradually our imaginations are unchained..."[9]**

In 1993 a community buy out was achieved by the crofters of Borve and Anniesdale on Skye. Others are planned.

The Scottish Office has announced that **all the publically held Crofting estates are to be returned to the crofters themselves.**

So the tide, inevitably, has begun to turn. In Scotland and elsewhere the formerly dispossessed are claiming back and looking after their tribal homelands for themselves.

More info about the reclaiming and regeneration of our land see contacts list at the end of the paper

In straying from Mother Earth mankind threatens to consume Her. As a child of Mother Earth he is also threatened with destruction. Many people now have realised what is going on: the futility of living in a (non) culture of financial profit maximization, removed from reality and separated from the land.

We know deep down that this is our land but what is to be done?...Oh well, never mind, go and make a cup of tea and turn the telly on. Hold on a mo, feeling the pain of separation is real, emotion can communicate with other people, and allow us to begin the process of our healing. I don't want telly, not mindless pap anyway. I want to communicate with real human beings, with nature. I have a vision of forest parks with no vehicle and air traffic. Miles of Oak, Ash, Birch, Rowan, Heather, Scots pine, Holly, Hornbeam Aspen and Yew; of wildflowers and fruit trees, of Wolves, Eagles, Bears, Mountain Lions, Beavers and Otters and People. The People living, working and playing in harmony and unity. Creating a beautiful permanent culture of self-built homes, of forest gardens, of balanced communities. Is this part of the past or future or both? A great man said "I have a dream" ... "but", say the doubters, "it could never work", "unrealistic", "pass me a pint of lager", "Where's my drug dealer?" To them I say get real. You wouldn't fill your home with poison, would you? Not if you had a choice. What about the people on the streets, turned mad by deprivation and physical and psychological abuse? We need warm, safe (for us and the Earth) homes not boxes; and land to work on, not jobs in Mc rip-off Ltd. What about the mixed race children ritualistically abused by babylon vampire system? Have you no pity? <sup>10</sup>

Well, one thinks. It could not be too difficult. After all this is a mostly rural group of islands, there is plenty of room, only thing is most of it is owned and controlled by a minority for

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their own private interests. (For more info about who owns and controls our land in the UK read, "This Land Is Our Land" by Marion Shoard.) However, much of our land is already under public stewardship. Why not allow local communities to manage our local common and Forestry Commission lands for themselves? We can make tribal permanent agriculture design plans showing how we would sustainably live on the Earth. Not management's proposing to extract as much financial profit from the land, for various business and interested parties, in as short a time as possible. No more of that please; times passing, times passing, finding it difficult to breathe freely yet? Feel the knot of anxiety yet? You will. Time still to change.

The place where I live is by a mountain called Mynydd Llwydiarth (which freely translates to Mountain of the Grey Bear). Originally the land of Ynys Mam Cymru (Mother of Wales, known today as Anglesey), was the tribal lands of the native people who roamed, farmed, and revered the communal forests. This was a permanent and stable agriculture, producing a surplus of arable crops for the mountain people of Cymru, who perhaps traded their surplus stock and metal ore.

**The further we move from communal permanence, the greater the risk of tyranny, feudalism and breakdown, and the more work for less yield. In recent history the inhabitants were overthrown by the needs (or greed's) of commerce and centralised power. Expatriate landlords enclosed large areas of the tribal lands and the native inhabitants were forced to emigrate or work for the new order. Many areas were cleared of forest and made into 'baronial' sheep ranches. Thus was the fate of Mynydd Llwydiarth.**

Forty years ago the land, (around 245 hectares), was bought with public money and vested in the care of the Forestry Commission on a 999 year lease. The Forestry Commission (FC) was established in 1919 to buy land for the nation and plant it with softwoods, which Britain had run short of during the First World War. Timber supplies were tight during the Second World War also, and in the 1950's this fight for survival still loomed large in forest planning objectives: These were to produce the maximum quantity of timber in as short as time as possible for the use in mining pit props and pulp for paper production (coal and propaganda!), in times of national emergency.

A generous 'dedication' scheme provided private landowners with afforestation grants if they agreed to dedicate their land to forestry and follow FC management guidelines (the planting of high density alien conifers); and for astute forest owners an even better tax position than farm landowners enjoyed.

The Tax position for private forests was simplified in 1988 and is still very "sexy" (vomit)

**No Income Tax on timber sales. No Capital Gains Tax on timber sales. No Inheritance Tax payable on forest lands subject to two years of ownership.**

These tax breaks encourage short term (40/50 year cycle) volume production (of the fastest possible growing trees).

Talk about a good scam for landowners who as we all know hold the best interest of this land dear to their hearts! And please note:

**Alien conifer species planted in Britain's relatively mild climate grow so quickly that the wood is useless for construction timber or firewood, good only for pulp and chipboard: most of the UK's construction timber is imported.**

This sort of land management, for political and business interests, is why there is Earth Crisis. [1]

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I've heard from FC staff that there is even grant aid assistance in the actual wood pulp production with domestic softwood trees. Now apparently we do need wood for paper pulp production. But these days with recycling paper schemes in every settlement, and the World Wide Web (WWW) and Electronic mail (E-mail), it cannot be justified to promote the use and planting of softwood trees that are good for nowt else; apart for, of course, the private buyers (of the timber), the contractors (who carry out the actual felling), and the pulp mill owners. Oh and of course forest owners.

Basically a market had to be found for these massed ranks of conifers waiting around for a national emergency (like a few nuclear bombs going off???) to happen. Once the market was created, the vested interests of landowners and forestry business have made sure that softwoods and softwoods alone became the 'raison-detre' of UK afforestation; and reason why the word 'afforestation' to most people means a dark, horrible and disempowering nightmare. Anyway, flax and hemp make better quality and longer lasting paper than softwoods and you can make cloth out of hemp and flax as well. So there!

So the aim originally of the FC was to produce a strategic reserve of softwoods for use in wartime. The plantings on Mynydd Llwydiarth reflected this objective being of pine, larch, sitka spruce, 'other conifers' and a small area of broad leaves, all grown the standard 5 foot apart. In the case of Mynydd Llwydiarth it was considered uneconomic by the FC to thin out the trees as they grew, so now we have a forest of trees 30 to 50 foot tall and 5 foot apart. Its sort of like a giant's field of wheat that you walk through or force your way under, hair full of twigs. With 'weeds' of rowan, holly, oak, birch and ash germinating from long dormant seed. Sometimes growing up and away in a rare clearing, but unfortunately often dying through lack of light.

Until recently in the Earth's history vast areas of England, Wales and Scotland were covered with a wilderness of broadleaf trees, Scottish pine and great Yew trees (which can live for over 5000 years, like the ancient Yew tree at Fordingham ), and human beings lived as part of the land.

Underneath head office and research level, the Forestry Commission has been split by the government into Forest Authority (FA), who administer local research, and advise on planting schemes such as the woodland grant scheme (WGS), and Forest Enterprise (FE) who decide and enact local forest policy, with reference to Forestry Commission head office policy ( FC headquarters for England and Wales based at Edinburgh, Phone 0131 334 0303) and after liaison with various statutory bodies, i.e. the Countryside Commission, local archaeological trusts, local authorities, and their mates in the golf club! FC and overall UK forest policy is decided by the government (apparently): the Scottish Office (Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth), Welsh Office (Secretary of State for Wales, William Hague phone 01222 825111 and ask for his private office) and in England the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Foods (Secretary of State for MAFF is Douglas Hogg).

I took a glance at the latest Forest Enterprise management plans for the felling and replanting of the trees on Mynydd Llwydiarth available from the area FE office (the North Wales area office is at Llanrwst, telephone (01492 640578); Mr Trevor Owen has overall responsibility for operations.) Planting designs at present still seem reflect the Tilley Lamp glow of air raid shelters because replanting plans right the way through till 2020 are almost entirely of Sitka spruce, Japanese larch, and Noble fir. The current generation of FC management and report writers no longer seem to remember why FC plantings are of this 'strategic' nature, now citing just about every reason you could think of (apart from the real ones) to *carry-on planting!* (an indefinite carry on at your local FC forest until **you** do something about it.)

To name just a few of the 'reasons' for coniferisation (presented in glossy brochures to tourists, locals and politicians): local employment, recreation and amenity, wildlife conservation (butterfly rides, riparian corridors, red squirrels, etc) and ecology and

economics (intensive planting of softwoods, managed to 'maximise financial returns' are always favoured in economic analysis's presented by FC 'research': The lie that softwood plantations are economic (indeed 'the most economic') type of forestry will be exposed by my hopefully clear analysis:

Why does man have a need to tame nature into blocks and straight lines so that he can say "look what I have done?....."

## The actual costs and benefits social, economic, environmental or otherwise of FC softwood forests:

### 1 Employment.

The Forestry Commission's own research states that in the FC's Wester Ross estates, the Full Time Equivalents (FTE's) per 1000 hectares, for all forest operations, managed under a regime of maximising financial returns are 2.55. This means 1000 hectares of FE forest in Wester Ross provides a grand total of 2 and ½ jobs, when following FE management guidelines for maximising fiscal returns. [12]

### 2 Financial

At present, FE forests are basically managed to maximise 'financial returns'.

**Financial returns:** In studies of forestry, financial valuations of tree planting are usually worked out by converting hypothetical future cash flows to present day values (Net Present Value) by applying a sort of reverse interest rate known as the discount rate to future returns ( Present Return, PR) and future costs ( Present Cost, PC), and Net Present Value (NPV) is the difference. NPV presumes that we prefer £10000 now rather than in, say, 40 years. (What about old age and our descendants?) This technique ignores non financial 'externalities', which are usually negative for conifer plantations, and therefore is good news for pro conifer interests and is easy for simple minded economists to work out. How does one put a monetary value on the full 'externalities' of Oak forest?

Even by assessing worth of conifer plantations by discounting future financial flows (The FC's preferred method), returns are poor in the extreme, as we shall see.

Example of NPV calculation:

In the Wester Ross case study the discount rate used was 8%.

as  $NPV = PR - PC$

and  $PR = S [R/(1+d)^t]$

and  $PC = S [C/(1+d)^t]$

where R is the revenue in year t and C the cost in year t ,d is the discount rate, and S is the sum of discounted financial flows for revenues and costs respectively.

so  $NPV = S [R/(1+d)^t] - S [C/(1+d)^t]$

If £10000 is received and £3000 is spent in forty years time what is the NPV? Its OK I'll work it out!

Discounting at 8%:

$PR = 10000/(1.08)^{40} = £460$

and  $PC = 3000/(1.08)^{40} = £138$

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so NPV = PR - PC = £460 - £138 = £322

(so if it costs us more than £322 now to plant it up, then it will lose us money!)

It used to be argued by the FC and other large scale conifer planting interests that the future returns from FC type forestry investments should be discounted at a lower rate than other public sector investments to allow for the social benefits of forests related employment (Thus giving a higher NPV. Try plugging in a lower value for  $d$  in the above example). However, 2.55 jobs per 1000 hectares does not seem to me to be sound social use of our land when unemployment, and the social problems caused by it, are endemic in rural and urban areas.

Actual NPV figures for FC plantations using NPV type analysis, again produced by the FC themselves, show that far from being in any sort of way financially profitable, the FC plantations produce negative returns. For example, the Wester Ross study produced a NPV (£/hectare), at a discount rate of 8%, of minus 1,489 £/hectare. [13]

**Now, you're telling me that local people using our own initiative couldn't sustainable manage their own land, in such a way as to give them more jobs and cash?, and a better quality of life; It would be hard not to.**

At present, standard Treasury methodology also suggests the financial accounting, of the following externalities:

**Recreation:** By discounting: PR from hypothetical 'willingness to pay' questionnaires, and PC from the cost of the provision of the recreation opportunities. The difference being the NPV, or financial worth, of Recreation (apparently!). Whatever happened to Freedom to roam ?

**Carbonisation:** the removal of free carbon dioxide into plant material (carbon fixing): The financial worth of the carbon fixing abilities of trees discounted to NPV. How on Earth can they narrow down the interconnected web of life necessary to life on Earth to find out the financial value of carbon dioxide fixing ability of trees? I won't bother to look it up myself because this is getting plain silly. Mathematical formulae to value trees. If I were an Oak tree I'd laff. Or cry.

However, holding a straight face for one moment, in the Wester Ross example, inclusion of discounted (at 8%) recreation values and carbonisation (at 6%) improves the financial value to minus £1,215/hectare. If this negative financial value of blanketing conifers is the best land use that the 'experts' at the FC in Edinburgh can come up with maybe we should give the job land use decisions to local kids. I'm serious, they could do a land use project, draw up plans of their ideas. I'm sure they'd have more vision than the sitka spruce robots at the FC. A project with vision is practical. A planting scheme without vision is obsolete.

Of course landowners and agents who plant the land with conifers make a lot more than minus £1215/hectare, but they do so because of the grants and tax breaks.

**I present and explain all this maths to help to show people what sort of nonsense has been used to legitimise the continued clearance of the countryside of people so money and power accumulation can be pursued by (gradually fewer and fewer) landowners; And how this objective is so important that it seems to override all others. So important that it can influence large state organisations and so cause to be generated an entire pseudo scientific forest appraisal method so validating in the minds of politicians, students and the gullible the necessity of this behaviour. Irrespective of the damage to us and our land. How can our land be managed**

**(approximately 1 million hectares and that's just the state forests) with this corrupt philosophy? How can we let them ? The land is ours, and we are the Earths.**

Many of the cost benefit analyses simply compared NPV of industrial forestry projects with NPV's of the only other perceived land uses such as sheep ranching and 'game' rearing. In the 1950's and 1960's, because of the social benefit of rural employment, the discount rate in NPV calculations of forestry returns were adjusted downwards to favour afforestation projects. These days through mechanisation and contracting out there is not much rural employment associated with FC estates. All these 'traditional' rural land uses rate pretty badly in terms of employment, finance, and energy input/outputs. Sheep ranchers rely on public subsidy for between 50% and 75% of their income. A large sheep farm covering hundreds of acres typically employs one man full time. At the grazing rate of about 1 per acre, how many people, for how long and with how many chemicals and drug injections do 500 ewes feed? Hardly a profitable land use. A few hundred acres of hill country, forest farmed with the absolutely massive variety of food trees, should provide a mountain of food in the high protein and healthy form of nuts and berries as well as decent timber. There's a lot of blinkered thinking and pro animal farming propaganda to overcome. I'll never forget the hill farmer on 'One Man and His Dog' saying that if there were no sheep in the mountains then we'd have to mow them to keep the grass nice and short. He was serious as well.

Admittedly the strong tradition of shepherding in mountain areas of Cymru and England has given the people strength and some employment and food. Now sheep farming is not profitable; it was for cash profit that landowners enveloped the hill county with sheep removing any 'unprofitable' obstacles such as peasant holdings and trees (recently being given generous grants to carry on the 'work'): What is the point of maintaining a sheep farming museum? The flocks could be of mighty Oaks. All it takes is a change of consciousness which will be necessary sooner (hopefully) rather than later to halt the descent into 'profit chasing chaos' which has lead us into a situation of subsidy maintained animal farming standing on the brink of collapse as the stress of pushing animals into food producing units of production is evolving organisms such as BSE. It is up to us human beings to break the chains that bind us all to a hopelessly outdated and destructive system. We need some honesty on this land and farming issue. The public subsidies that farmers are given could be diverted to the establishment of edible food tree nurseries on individual farms, with the aim of planting up the hills with forests of edible harvest. Many sound livelihoods can be based around trees; use your imagination!

Defining "yield" just by the total amount of timber produced on a piece of land is nonsense anyway. I quote Bill Morrison:

"It may be this approach itself which is the true limit to yield! A true accounting of yield takes into consideration both upstream costs (energy) and downstream costs (health, both social and environmental). The 'product yield' may create problems of pollution and mineral loss, health (*and social disharmony*), and cost more than it can replace " [14]

### **3 Recreation and amenity.**

Recreation in a conifer plantation is limited to walking and sometimes mountain biking along roadways and the occasional footpath . This is better than walking round the M25, but what's been lost? Maybe a blaze of purple heather in August and endless views of the sea and the sky. A conifer factory holds little for the mind and spirit. Think of a native woodland, of constant variation and balance between plants and animals, of majestic Oak trees, of clearings full of wildflowers and iridescent butterflies. How one can put this into a figure in pounds and pence, as some cost benefit studies have attempted to do I've absolutely no idea.

As for the 'recreation' value of pheasant shooting maybe someone could explain to us (anyone got a camcorder?) the 'sport' involved in killing an animal that has mobility little better than a farmyard chicken.

### **4 FC Intransigence.**

The Forestry Commission and the two subsidiary organisations basically have a lot to answer for. They are self-perpetuating hierarchies; conifer culture has become a way of life. Forestry workers relate how FC management were at one time completely conifer obsessed, destroying any native species in their way: Ring barking 3000 year old Scottish pine trees. It was only with continual lobbying and years of complaints from the public about the dark swaths of sterile softwood plantations enveloping our hills that forced at least a superficial change of planting designs. Any suggestion of genuinely ecological/economic sustainable management is dismissed by them, even now, by mention of economics, of broadleaf strips alongside footpaths, wind velocity, butterfly corridors and of course red squirrels. (not that I'm anti-red squirrels but there is a wider issue here. All our futures, including the red squirrels depend on a balanced and healthy Earth which conifer factories do not provide).

The FC is reluctant on the ground to encourage and participate in real local management of FC holdings merely demonstrates selfish interest at work. And this is in spite of a Government commitment to local participation in FC forests. To quote a letter from FC head office, "The Government are...very keen to increase the scope for local community participation in forest management throughout Britain."<sup>15</sup> Is the FC local management putting this aim into practice? - no around here they merely promote 'how well' they are managing the forests for us. In fact the local FC management have said that Mynydd Llwydiarth Forest is not open for any sort of community participatory management. Why?

**Lets hope that FC management have have a change of heart. There is a definite quickening of the pace of local communities taking back into their own, the tribal forest and common lands: To the benefit of the Earth and us living as part of her.**

### **5 Forest operations contractors.**

The FC has been instructed by government to contract out felling and planting to local contractors. This usually happens with a net loss of front line jobs for locals, but with obvious massive financial gain to the private contractor. These contracts are tendered out and the winning tender kept secret. The private operator has only his contract to keep him within conservation (both wildlife and archaeological) guidelines. There's only his conscience stopping him from trashing an iron age cairn, for instance, exposed during the clear felling or rather demolition of a conifer 'coupe'.

Many sites of great antiquity exist on forest lands such as Mynydd Llwydiarth and are at present enveloped by dense conifer plantings. Whether or not the hut circles, cairns, burnt mounds and forts of the ancestors in the Mynydd Llwydiarth area (The KikBran, Raven People) are intact or not (1996) nobody knows because the sites are very difficult to locate. The last survey of sites in this area was the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments (Wales) Inventory of Anglesey, published in 1937, before the pine plantation was planted.

A communal forest means that the work is shared among the people of working age in the community. Local people would take care of their ancestors' homes and burial places if we were allowed to manage our own land.

### **6 Carbon Sink.**

Trees use carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to make leaves and branches and so on, thus the argument goes, saving us from greenhouse effect incineration. This is as true for conifer plantations as for natural forests. Trees have a massive effect on the ecosystem of planet Earth. The Biomass of natural forest surpasses that of mono-plantations in both

quantity and quality. The ecology, energy transactions and climatic effects of forests is a massive issue of which carbon fixing is one small but obvious part.

## 7 Ecology.

Which leads us on to ecology. The interior of a sitka spruce plantation is so dark and acidic as to allow only the most hardy and versatile species to survive in this man-created uniquely hostile environment. This is obviously not a balanced ecology. And what happens when we unbalance nature? Just ask a mad cow. What sort of species are going to evolve into the niche? Looked at this way these intensive monocultures are disordered - a constant struggle by straight line enthusiasts to maintain a field of single species, and nature constantly probing the castles defences. How much better to go with the flow of nature and look for ways of co-operating with the Mother Earth by planting systems with diversity. We find natural order in the apparent chaos of nature. Monocultures encourage diseases and pests. Single species fields require constant dosing, by tractor or plane, with toxic chemicals to maintain them, at a very high energy input. This is probably what will be necessary to maintain industrial forestry monocultures in years to come. The length of tree planting cycles compared with grain crop cycles just means that it will take longer for an endless stream of pest and disease organisms to evolve and invade the seriously warped ecosystem of a spruce monoculture, and then the dousing with biocides and remedies that are necessary to maintain this unbalance. This is happening already; I quote from Tree Spirit [16] :

“...The beetle Ips typographus, is considered the most damaging to trees in Europe, and has the potential to devastate Britain's one and a million hectares of spruce forest.”

The FC is attempting to halt the spread of this beetle using a predator species. It is not known if this will work or what the consequences will be.

The abuse of Biocides and inorganic fertilisers have already polluted water supplies and even rendered completely useless areas of the Earth which then need years of tending before plants grown on them can be safely eaten.

There are age specific diseases in plants as well as people. Single species and single aged ecosystems are vulnerable to complete failure or endemic disease. Most existing and proposed FE plantations are of the same aged trees planted in single species 'coupes' and so vulnerable to age specific diseases, and justified with flawed economics. That what really gets to me. The bureaucrats and politicians (with mad human closed mind disease) fighting an unjustifiable position. Think of your children, and your children's children...The system of single minded 'profit' maximisation is not fulfilling the true profit potential of our land and people. It is totally messing up our land. Wake up before it is too late.

**In reality the overall benefits of the conifer plantations are nothing like the FC say that they are in areas of finance, employment, ecosystem health, conservation (both of nature and archaeology) and in fact are or will be contributing to our economic, social and environmental problems.**

Monoculture plantations are actually highly disordered and create continuing disorder and disharmony by their existence, requiring constant inputs of energy to maintain them. Nature creates order. Sometimes unthinking man imposes his own (dis)order onto nature. The conventional piecemeal approach in cost benefit studies is really never going to show the full benefits and costs to us all of a particular land use. It takes a lot to divide up a forest into all the above categories when really we should be viewing the forest as a whole and will never see the picture until we do so.

Bill Mollison, from his book, Permaculture, a Designers Manual :

“ ... Order is found in things working beneficially together. It is not the forced condition of neatness, tidiness, and straightness all of which are, in design or energy, disordered. True order may lie in apparent confusion; it is the acid test of entropic order to test the system for yield. If it consumes energy beyond product, it is in disorder. If it produces energy to or beyond consumption, it is ordered....Thus the seemingly wild and naturally-functioning garden of a New Guinea Villager is beautifully ordered and in harmony, while the clipped lawns and pruned roses of the pseudo aristocrat are nature in wild disarray...order and harmony produce energy for other uses. Disorder consumes energy to no useful end. Neatness, tidiness, uniformity, and straightness signify an energy-maintained disorder in natural systems. ” [17]

What is the price of monocultural conifer planting in terms of all inputs and outputs, compared to forest communities living in balance on their land? the Earth?

## Permaculture

**We need to think of all of the of the inputs and outputs that go into land uses: This is the anylsis done in Permaculture:**

### **Financial**

Subsidies and profit. A conventional farming or forestry operation produces its 'profit' from inputs of public subsidy. A Permaculture/Tribal system achieves its income by reducing production costs and increasing diversification.

### **Energy**

Inputs such as machinery, fuels, fertilisers, biocides into conventional agriculture. Outputs like useful firewood, calories in food production and of the use of the available solar, wind and water energies (ignored in conventional farming and ideally maximised in Permaculture)

### **Environmental**

Changes in soil composition and mineral levels, efficiency of water use and soil water storage.

pollution produced (poisoning of atmosphere, soils, water by fuels, biocides, and fertilisers in 'conventional' agricultural practices. Soils are created and made healthy again in conservation farming/permaculture,water conserved and pollutants removed.)

### **Conservation accounting; Life forms richness**

Ecosystem Health.

Genetic richness in crops and livestock Soil life (Biomass).

Forest biomass and wildlife richness.

Loss to pests.

Spread of Earth Healing beliefs and methods to neighbours

### **Social Accounting**

Employment, quantity and quality: (A few boring jobs in 'straight' agriculture and many multifarious livelihoods in Permaculture/conservation farming.)

## Tribal Forests

Food quality produced.  
Availability and suitability of products to local people.  
Human and environmental health.  
Life quality.

Human habitation and agricultural systems should be designed looking at the effect on the whole...(Obviously this cannot simply be reduced to £sp. One could, however, assume that life on Earth would be uninhabitable for human beings without trees, the rainmaking abilities of trees is renown. Thus all economic activity will cease unless we stop abusing the planet. Perhaps the cost of destroying a tree is beyond any price. Put that in yer environmental assessment matey.)

This way of looking after the Earth is called Permaculture (Permanent Culture)

"the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. Without permanent agriculture there is no possibility of a stable social order."

Dreamtime definition of Permaculture.

### **The Prime Directive of Permaculture:**

**The only ethical decision is to take responsibility for our own existence and that of our children. MAKE IT NOW.**

### **The Ethical Basis of Permaculture :**

#### **CARE OF THE EARTH:**

**Provision for all life systems to continue and multiply.**

#### **CARE OF PEOPLE:**

**Provision for people to access those resources necessary to their existence .**

#### **SETTING LIMITS TO POPULATION AND CONSUMPTION:**

**By governing our own needs, we can set resources aside to further the above principles.**

[<sup>18</sup>]

When we are allowed to use our natural Earth given initiative, we, the people have always made the best choices for our land.

Self interest means Symbiosis  
awareness and trust  
communal  
share  
love  
now  
be

## **The Rio Earth Summit International Principles...**

...endorsed by the UK Government, these have stated that:

“Forest resources and forest land should be sustainably managed to meet the social, economic, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations.” [19]

Do the Forestry Commission management policies meet these needs?

And:

“Governments should promote and provide opportunities for the participation of interested parties, including local communities and indigenous people, industries, labour non-governmental organisations and individuals, forest dwellers and women, in the development, implementation and planning of national forest policies.” [20]

Do the Forestry Commission involve all local peoples in decision making?

The Rio Principles also state:

“National forest policy should recognise and duly support the identity, culture, and the rights of indigenous people, their communities and other communities and forest dwellers. Appropriate conditions should be promoted for these groups to enable them to have an economic stake in forest use, perform economic activities, and achieve and maintain cultural identity and social organisation, as well as adequate levels of livelihood and well-being, through, inter alia [21], those land tenure arrangements which serve as incentives for the sustainable management of forests.” [22]

These Principles are now the basis of official UK forest policy as stated in Sustainable Forestry, The UK programme [23], so how about putting them into practice?

**If the present land tenure arrangements block community well-being then they should be changed to arrangements that allow for peoples natural initiative and self reliance to function.**

At the UNCED Rio Earth Summit the UK government made a commitment, through national, regional and local government, to take some positive action about development- that development should be environmentally sustainable - Agenda 21. [24]

What is environmentally sustainable development?

The Bruntland Report for the Royal Commission Environment and Development definition:

“Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The United Nations Environmental Policy definition:

“improving the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco - systems.”

My definition - Actions in life: give to the Earth more than I take.

The idea of the Rio summit Agenda 21 is supposed to be an evolving process that empowers local people encourages Earth friendly “development”.

Development is supposed to improve the quality of life of people (and because we are all part of the Earth) all Earth dwellers and the Earth herself. What is need are visionary policies. Not plans or agendas but vision and the strength to put the vision into practice. Vision does not come from committee meetings or data gathered by statistical analysis. Vision comes from people.

## **Community land initiatives: What people have been doing in response to Earth Crisis and local needs**

The way is open to take control of our lives.

Many local councils have appointed Agenda 21 officers helping to implement environmentally sustainable development. Truly sustainable development means....

Many towns and cities now have community Permaculture gardens, edible ecosystems that local people can enjoy as a place of relaxation, food and firewood. One is the Springfield Community Garden in inner city Bradford: a place where the people of all backgrounds, abilities and gifts grow their own organic food and cook it as well in a well fitted out communal kitchen. [25]. Many more community gardens are being planned.

“No epicure dish served at the most exclusive restaurant can compare with fresh fruit, organically grown without chemicals, picked from one’s own garden.”

Robert Hart

The Land is Ours campaign organised a re-occupation and reclamation of a abandoned and razed industrial site in Wandsworth, London. An amazing project showing what can be done with derelict land for low impact housing, food growing, leisure and learning space.

Perhaps in some rural areas change can seem more daunting. The gap between the haves and have-nots, the owners of property and the landless, more established in feudalism. However fear is purely illusion and once the process of freedom is begun it cannot be stopped.

Take your power back. If you have access to some land why not start a forest garden? Some starting off ideas for a permanently mulched forest/perennial garden in appendix 1 and a list of edible trees and shrubs in appendix 2 [26]

”To really make a change, there needs to be increased devolution of power away central government to local government. Local authorities in turn need to put a lot more effort into informing and involving the communities they serve. The Local Agenda 21 projects which local authorities are (supposed to be) undertaking go at least some way towards this, and it is likely that we will see significant changes in decision-making as communities learn how to effectively use their power and put their views across, and local authorities learn how to listen and respond.” [27]

There are several community ‘millennium’ and wildwood forests planned in Scotland: Woodlands of diverse community benefit. One among many planned is The Forest for a Thousand Years, the largest project within phase one of the Millennium Forest for Scotland (MFS) is an initiative run by the Royal Scottish Forestry Trust Company. RSFS Forest Trust Company received £800,000 from the MFS Trust, enabling them to buy the land. The project will return 3000 acres of former sheep farmed land around Loch Lomond to pre

clearance condition - forests of oak on the loch side, Scots pine on the rugged slopes and sub montane scrub on the highest ground, rising up to Ben Lomond at 3,194ft. Two thirds of the site will be left unplanted and pockets of existing land left unplanted to encourage natural regeneration. Another is the Carrifran Wildwood project (<http://www.scotweb.co.uk/environment/wildwood/>). This is a project to recreate, in the Southern Uplands of Scotland, an extensive tract of mainly forested wilderness with most of the rich diversity of native species present in the area before human activities became dominant . The wildwood will not be exploited commercially and the impact of humans will be carefully managed. Access will be open to all, and it is hoped that the wildwood will be used throughout the next millennium as an inspiration and an educational resource.

Others include the Borders Wildwood as well as projects centred near urban areas. Craigmillar Urban Forest Project has also been accepted for funding by the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust (MFT). The local community plan to reforest Craigmillar area of Edinburgh, giving themselves good work, the kids a place to learn the land, and a place for the community to relax. Many other Millennium projects are planned both with the MFT and otherwise. Reforesting Scotland has been a principle visionary project-enabler for local communities to sow the seeds of change in Scotland.

The Woodland Trust (01476 574297) have 50% funding from the millennium fund for the acquiring of land, planting of the trees and subsequent management of community woods. How about communally owned and locally managed by local people 'Millennium' Permaculture Forests for Cymru and England?

## **The Scottish Campaign for local owned and run public forests and the Exodus Collective initiative**

There exists in Scotland, the Rural Forestry Development Program (RDFP) a partnership of three organisations - Reforesting Scotland, Rural Forum and the Highlands and Islands Forum.

This sort of idea could work in Cymru and England also.

The purpose of these organisations within the RDFP partnership are:

*Reforesting Scotland*, (a charity) utilising its members with local contacts to arrange and conduct local case studies and workshops and professional expertise to facilitate a national seminar.

*Highlands and Islands Forum* to use its local contacts as well, and its experience with organising events to organise the national seminar.

*Rural Forum* (a charity) with its stronger administrative capability organise the fund raising and finances.

The first RDFP appraisals were held in Laggan, Tomintoul, Borge, Carsphairn, Achnamara and Douglas Valley.

Recently (June 1996) there have been local RDFP events in Kyle of Lochalsh, Cannich, Wallyford, Skerray and Moniaive.

### **How the Scottish Rural Development Forestry Programme has evolved:**

Case studies were done:

## Tribal Forests

These looked at the situation of people and forestry around Scotland and what current activity there is in these areas. Participatory methods were used to get as many different local views and perspectives as possible. They were then sent back to local people for approval before they were circulated.

Format of case studies:

About 10 pages in length, with copies of social, land use and land tenure maps which were drawn by local people; plus graphs showing things like population structure, employment and seasonal activities and diagrams showing different groups and organisations and links in their area. They also gave information about forestry activities and different local views on forestry and other rural issues.

National Seminar:

The Scottish RDFP ran a national seminar in Laggan village and invited representatives from many different communities with a known interest in forestry along with representatives from agencies such as the FC, the Scottish Office and other interested groups. The case studies were used as a basis for discussion at the seminar, helping seminar participants to identify what the real issues of rural development forestry are. The seminar then discussed all the problems and opportunities involved, and from this the beginnings of an action plan were produced.

Holding appraisal workshops:

With the same participatory approaches used to generate the case studies. Local forestry action plans are produced and the Programme then makes some funds available to immediately implement part of the plans.

[<sup>28</sup>]

**The purpose of RDFP is to enable local communities to analyse and plan the local forestry situation.**

Local communities need for self management of their own forest resources revealed in these appraisals influenced the Scottish Office backed Forest and People in Rural Scotland discussion paper [<sup>29</sup>], which recommended local participation in the management of forests in their neighbourhood.

As a result of all the activity in local communities, Scottish Forestry Minister, Lord Lindsey, announced a **seemingly radical change in rural development policy: giving the local management of Forestry Commission land to local communities if a case can be made for local economic or social development**. The policy change was initiated by the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsthyth, who was influenced by the initial RDFP local participatory appraisal events.

The RDFP has been given resources from the Scottish Office for a number of local participatory forestry appraisal events over the next few months:

**“Anybody who would like an RDFP team to come to facilitate local meetings and interactions with a wide cross section of the people in your locality to help assess if a local community bid for a forest disposal (or indeed any forest/woodland proposal) would be locally supported and feasible, then get in touch...”** [<sup>30</sup>] See contact address listed below.

RDFP recommend that before contacting them, that the people of local communities write to the Forestry Minister at the Scottish Office (who control the FC in Scotland) expressing their interest in a Forestry Commission disposal. However the FC was not at all happy with the proposed local ownership initiative. [<sup>31</sup>]

## Tribal Forests

After a four year campaign, it seemed that the Laggan people had won control of Strathmashie Forest: an amazing forest policy breakthrough setting a radical precedent with regard to state owned land which could be followed throughout Scotland Cymru and England.

The change generated the following statements of hope:

Dr Ian Richardson one of the Laggan community campaigners:

“It has been a real tonic, particularly to the young people who see in this Laggan forest initiative a means of having a life in their own place.” [32]

Dr James Hunter said of the development,

“It is considerably more significant than the proposed transfer of all the publically owned Crofting estates which has been attended by such publicity. In the first place the Laggan forest represents a considerable asset in financial terms, thousands of acres of mature timber. The Crofting estates are restricted to the marginal land on the western periphery, but there are publically owned forests throughout the country. A precedent is now being set in Laggan which could lead towards the Scandinavian model of community-managed forests. These provide stability of local employment through environmentally-sensitive management.” [33]

Michael Forsythe, The Secretary of State for Scotland stated that Laggan is to have its forest.[34]

The situation as of October 1996 is that the FC have offered a “partnership” to the Laggan Community in which it is proposed that the Laggan community initiative take the junior role whilst the FC proffer their years of accumulated wisdom!

Land is what it is about. This struggle for control of the land has been going on for years....Imagine, Community owned land. Our land! To do with as we wont, Freedom of mind and spirit!

Will the state wholeheartedly give back Laggan her Forest?.....

So the few can keep control and fill their pockets the whole is being made to suffer. Those guilty include landowners, big forestry contractors, and I dare say the infamous Masons who are a ‘invitation only’ rich people and businessmen’s club with some trappings of the occult. To use knowledge of the divine for purposes of moneymaking selfish power and control is evil - when you open your eyes and see what effect it has on people and the Earth. How about BSE for a start. That really is no joke. Truth and our own resolution to move forward breaks their power over us. Even in Scotland where land reform has never before been so high on the agenda, the colonial ‘old guard’ appeared to have had more influence over government policy than local communities (maybe that’s because they (land/property ‘owners’) are the government.) They’ve been taking and taking and taking from our land and the people for years. Our birthright is the land we live on.

I think it is worth discussing these issues to show to what lengths those who are profiting from the current land situation will go to prevent the people getting our own land back. The truth will set you free, or at least show what we are up against and how we can free ourselves. Now I know this is not an issue for some because they are unaware or unaffected by the ‘power’ (of the state) which uses fear to subdue and control people: I remind you of my opening quote from John Murdoch in the Highlander. I feel quite

## Tribal Forests

dispirited at times of the lack of comprehension or even care from some property owners. Now come on you lot there's no escape. Biomass one is small and delicate (and strong!), we are all connected. I've personally experienced many lifestyles, and the purest and most poetic and yet saddest is the homeless. A lot of settled folk don't care to see the pain of their fellow man. The homeless, once with homes, warm and safe can share with a knowledge of truth that cuts like a razor. Maybe too close for some...even in the Permaculture movement? Surely not. Not for Bill Mollison (the Australian Permaculturist), who gained wisdom from working with aboriginals. Bill went to work with groups of Australian aboriginals. He found that they were lunched out and ill on brew, dispossessed and waiting for the white man to kill the Earth. Together they created a life for the future through a way of thinking new to many western minds, as old as the Earth.

Is business and money your god? I hope not.

"The environmental issue was postponed for 40 or 50 years while the male dominators of this world played their Capitalism/Communism game. Now all we hear about is trade agreements and free trade. Don't let anybody kid you, free trade is simply a license to peddle crap everywhere. It seems that (our leader's) loyalties are not to the species, or to the planet, but to the bottom line. In civilised society, putting the bottom line ahead of civilisation and planet would be a hanging offence -- but not here."

"What we have on our side is that if they win, everybody dies."

Terance Mckenna

The Earth is calling for change. Take your money away from those who are mismanaging it for you in your name. The Ecological Building Society invests in environmentally sound projects. Telephone 01345 697758.

At the Long Meadow Community Farm in Bedfordshire: In the spirit of the Diggers a group of people seek to restore their community and land. <sup>[35]</sup>: A community initiative providing strength and empowerment to local people though land ownership and restoration of contaminated land to productive use; A derelict farm rebuilt by the Exodus Community Initiative and stocked with a variety of animals which all the local community can look after and enjoy. Think of the benefit to kids from the council estates of Luton and Dunstable to have a place in the countryside to learn about the land and to get together in peace and party harmony

However, the Bedfordshire Police dont seem to agree. They have attempted various malicious prosecutions of key collective members (fabrication of evidence). The latest attempt being a murder charge, which fortunately the jury threw out after hearing that Bedfordshire Police tried to get a witness to lie. If anyone doubts the links between the Masons and the police then I suggest they open there eyes. At the inaugural Police and Security Expo (July 2-4 1996 in Manchester's G-Mex) among the guns, batons and CS gas openly for sale (to policemen) was a company offering 'a complete range of Masonic Regalia and Leatherware'.

Whoso wreaks injury with a rod  
On creatures fain for happiness,  
When the self hereafter he seeks happiness,  
Not his, it may be, happiness to win.

Buddhism. Udana 11

## Tribal Forests

Maybe those holding political power will see the need for community land ownership initiatives. It is in their own interests. The need for community land ownership and management is a need rising from the very being of the Planet. The Earth is being damaged by our present exploitative ways of life. Local people can feel the need for sane ways of living on this planet. Putting such needs into practice means they are acting for and part of Planet Earth. It does not mean no business: But it does not mean a system of land ownership and businessmen that seek only to make money for themselves. It does mean ways of living on the land that take no more than we give. In practice this can mean things like vital organic vegetables in gardens and farms (not chemically dependent plants), distributed via community vegetable box schemes, skill exchange, low impact housing and transport, community land initiatives and Permaculture/forest farms. As the prophet Robert Marley, food, cloth and shelter.... On derelict and mismanaged land previously landless people can try out and develop ideas like forest gardening and Permaculture. Regain self respect and help heal the Earth.

the Exodus Community Initiative want to purchase (with a £70 000 mortgage from the Ecological Building Society) the land that they have been given licence to live on and look after. £1 shares in the farm will be available to local people and thus everyone will be able to have a tangible connection with their land. Its called empowerment.

As the deeds to the farm are held by the Department of Transport (compulsorily purchased for a long abandoned M1 expansion scheme) why not return Long Meadow Community Farm to local people - The Exodus Collective. It is public land so why should the public have to buy it back from ourselves? No doubt the Exodus collective have no desire to be part of a partnership with the government or any other 'big brother' as such a relationship would limit their creative freedom of thought and action.

“The Poorest man hath as true a title and just right to the land as the richest man...true freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the earth.”

Gerrard Winstanley of the Diggers

The link between the Exodus Community Initiative and the Laggan Community Initiative is the return by local need and demand of the land to local people, and the rekindling of tribal roots with the Earth: The freeing of minds and creative potential of multifarious livelihoods. Which replaces the exploitative economic system that is ruining our home Mother Earth, with Earth caring beliefs which see us as we are, part of the whole. We are all part of the whole. For more info about the trials and tribulations and successes of the Exodus Collective telephone 01582 508936.

And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

Exodus 10,3.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Genesis 2.15

Perhaps the state fears radical, catalytic change of land ownership and management. What about local independence and self reliance. The present government have professed to support this kind of initiative; encouraging community lead social and economic revival. Land reform in places like Pure Genius (The Land is Ours Permaculture site in

Wandsworth), Long Meadow, Tinkers Bubble, Springfield Community Gardens and other Permaculture sites and hopefully Laggan are the much needed vanguard of a flowering of land reform all over the nation. Hopefully government will realise that all that people want is to be able to manage our own land to feed ourselves and rebuild our lives, communities and environments. We are family.

We need to have total freedom of mind and action to allow us to fully flower as individuals and so release our natural given creativity; and thus manage our own land beneficially. How much illness has been caused by those who are willing, irrespective of the cost in human and environmental terms, to pursue their own agendas of profit? Land and communities need restoration. Let us show that we need and can look after our land ourselves.

The people of Laggan and everywhere really have no need of the 'help' of civil service bureaucrats. Where is food forestry on the FC's agenda? A system of bureaucratic 'advisers' and grant givers are always going to be lagging behind invention and initiative. With the inventiveness of free thought we can live off a relatively small area of land in such a way that is truly sustainable. We must think "am what I doing contributing to the whole?" Real social forestry is community owned and run forestry.

At last real community forestry is definitely on the agenda in the UK. It is nothing unusual in mainland Europe to have village managed forests. Why do we have to be spoon fed soft pap here? Is the central power so weak that it is frightened of giving local people real autonomy? It should be us telling them what to do.

Perhaps the Age of Aquarius is the beginning of the end of exploitative ownership of our land. I really hope so. If you use your awareness and look at the evidence you will see that the Earth is beginning to feel the strain. How much more can she take? We need to get ourselves and the land and our communities back into long term healthy, sustainable, balance. Imagine the possibilities. Not 1000 hectare agricultural and forestry holdings employing 2 or 3 people and taking massive subsidies to make a 'profit', but many people living comfortably in sustainable permanence on the same amount of land.

Many local councils are supportive of self built low impact housing but the lack of central government support for such new thinking is delaying progress. John Gummer, the ex-'environment' minister, was responsible for reversing a local planning agreement for a Permaculture village, Tinkers Bubble on the grounds that Permaculture is subsistence agriculture, and therefore (apparently) not a suitable use for agricultural land. Well, conventional agriculture is less than subsistence. It uses more resources than it produces. It is positively dinosaursial. And anyway, Tinkers Bubble Permaculture village produces a surplus of food and learning and is still in the development stages. The present position is that the European Court ruled that the people of Tinkers Bubble have a right of housing for themselves and their children. There should be more local community power over planning decisions. Many of us know there is an urgent need for sustainable land livelihoods. If anyone doubts the viability of small scale and permanent agriculture, I suggest that they read some of the Permaculture literature or better still visit an agricultural community in Scandinavia <sup>[36]</sup> or the Alps or one of the many Permaculture holdings and communities both in the UK and World-wide. <sup>[37]</sup>.

I think Permaculture is about relearning and consciously advancing on the knowledge of the land that we, it seems particularly in the UK, have forgotten or been unable to practice since having our roots torn out of the land and then contemptuously used merely as a units of production, be it on the land or in cities. Not to say there are not some caring employers in the countryside. I've worked for a very caring, gentle, kind, teacher of a farmer who built up his farm gradually over the years, buying back the land that he worked on as a lad.

All Forestry Commission holdings in the UK are potentially open to "disposal". Local people have as much right, need, ability, indeed duty in Cymru and England as in Scotland to make a future of their own land.

The Forestry Commission have stated that they will not "hand over forests to local communities free of charge" <sup>[38]</sup>, but **Why should local communities have to pay for**

**what is already ours?** These forest lands are our land so why not let us manage them ourselves?

What is needed is a RDFP in England and Cymru as well as Scotland. It's a headstrain for me to get around phrases like "participatory appraisal events": but if this is what is necessary to convince politicians and civil servants of the benefits of local common ownership and community management of forests then I'll do it! For a start my house needs a new roof and ideally lining with wood to make it really snug in the long Welsh winters; and I don't want your £24000 grant to do the work either. The FC land at Mynydd Llwydiarth and other forests occupies land common to our tribe. At present it is not being sustainably managed. The RDFP team in Scotland can hold training workshops in the approach they use to enable local communities to analyse and plan the local forestry situation (Contact Andy Inglis at the RDFP, contact address given below): They can assist in the holding of a RDFP event outside of Scotland.

Contact the Secretary for State for Wales, and in England the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and let them know if you want your local FC forest back. The best way for forest lands to be run sustainably is with local communal ownership. This is shown again and again throughout the world.

Communities need to reinvigorate. Why are there so many social problems like unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, homelessness and mental illness? Go and sit through a session of the local magistrate's courts and you see these problems again and again. If people could have access to ownership and control of the land taken from them many years ago and recently bought by the state with public money then their natural spirit and abilities will have the chance to flower. Many areas in the rest of Europe already own and manage their own forests: Scandinavian, Alpine and Pyrenean communities have done so for as long as anyone can remember: From forested alpine villages to Norway's wooded fjords.

In the village of Vallorcine near Chamonix in the Alps the village commune own a sawmill and workshop with a "gite" (camping hut/bothy) and campsite by it in the visitor season full of trekkers, and at other times forest and woodworkers. The hills and mountains around the village are a mixture of lush meadows, cut for hay as the seeds set and again in the autumn, open pine woods and higher up, flowery pasture, and contentedly grazing cows with bells around their necks! Amazingly flavoured and cheap cheese is made, a different variety on each farm, from their milk. The people of the village have an endless supply of top timber to make houses and sheds from, masses of firewood to see them through the winter and visitors to enjoy it all. And the workshop, full of machinery and tackle can be left unlocked most of the year even though the village is on the mountain pass from France to Switzerland. The village is typical of many in the area.

## ...The Future...

In a natural meadow and forest the hum of life is truly psychedelic, the wildflowers overload the vision, the bird song a concert. Every view is unique: the natural chaos liberating to the mind and spirit. Think of the benefit to the land and woods and creatures of the woods themselves; and also to the people on holiday from cities, a break from the tension and strife, a chance to tune into true wilderness. Pairing buzzards screaming to the world of their aliveness.

Once again I do behold these steep

## Tribal Forests

and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
thoughts of more deep seclusion;  
And connect the landscape with the  
quiet of the sky.

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not  
been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But often, in lonely rooms, mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed  
them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations  
sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the  
heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration.

William Wordsworth

"The finest of all rock ferns is *Adiantum pedatum*, lover of waterfalls and the lightest waftings of irised spray. No other Sierra fern is so constant a companion of white spray-covered streams, or tells so well their wild thundering music. The homes it loves the best are cave like hollows beside the main falls, where it can float its plumes on their dewy breath, safely sheltered from the heavy spray-laden blasts. Many of these moss-lined chambers, so cool, so moist, and brightly coloured with rainbow light, contain thousands of these happy ferns, clinging to the emerald walls by the slightest holds, reaching out the mossy wonderful delicate fingered fronds on dark glossy stalks, sensitive, tremulous, all alive, in an attitude of eager attention; throbbing in unison with impulses, moving each division of the frond separately at times as if fingering the music, playing on invisible keys."

From: Our National Parks by John Muir

From The Caledonian Forest to the Great Oak woods, trees and forests have been a permanent part of the collective unconscious. It is time for what has been unconscious, for too long, to become conscious...

Forest of the Moon Lake Lady.  
I sat there upon the rocky outcrop  
the wind howling like the wolves of ancient past  
looking over miles of vast woodland swaying with the timeless breeze  
clouds racing in the skies  
rains to feed her body  
soaking it up  
reaching out her woody fingers  
dancing with joy  
The great fire over the mountain illuminating all the wisdom  
I could ever need  
soaring high above I could see a great Eagle flying so free  
watching over her Mother.  
Forrest deep Oaken leafs  
no need to speak

## Tribal Forests

rich with life  
soft mosses for faery feet  
deep moist caves  
where bears may sleep  
Lake of the Moon Lady  
where secrets lye so deep...  
Hazel grove where we used to meet  
chanting freedom of  
fiery flames  
leaping into darkness  
Mighty gods standing dancing  
roots penetrating into darkness  
the ancient wisdom always living  
in your bark. Yes! in your heart  
silver light cool as the breeze  
soaking riding through the trees  
for here lye's the treasure of life  
for here are the laws where the owl speaks and the rock hears  
Where we are free to sing of the Goddess  
The Moon lake Lady.  
Moonfox.

Return our land, so we can plant it with wildflowers, vegetables, fruit trees, broadleaf trees and pine (For Gods' sake no more 'commercial' sitka spruce plantations PLEASE!) A forest like Laggan or Mynydd Llwydiarth holds unlimited potential; For Example: Local sawmill, woodcraftsmen such as pole lathers and carvers, eco-village (low-impact self-built ecologically sustainable living space. There is certainly a need for homes), nature reserve, campsite...Your imagination is limitless...

Only small areas should be felled at one time and replanted with biodiversity and sustainability...

## Some ideas for Community forest:

Please note that these are just my ideas. The participatory forestry appraisal technique allows local people to explore land use past present and future themselves and to find the best use for their own land themselves. They may or may not want the following options. It is for them (us) to decide not for anyone to tell them (us) what to do however well intentioned. Anyway here's my dream community forest:

Eco-village of self-built ecologically sustainable dwellings. Low energy housing. Designed to gain maximum benefit from the energies in the environment. For example glass fronted south facing dwellings placed in sheltered micro climates will save on heating costs. Maximum use of renewable energy. Self contained and warm. This will require some change in the planning law. Councils like West Lothian in Scotland have shown that low density low impact housing in a well wooded landscape can be a solution for revitalising communities. <sup>[39]</sup> Planning laws are not fixed (that's not meant to be a joke).

Visitor's Accommodation and campsites.

Archaeology and heritage display trails. Education and training.

## Tribal Forests

Nature displays and trails. Learning and teaching.

Sweat lodges. Relaxing saunas.

Small sawmill and workshop area. Locally made timber: planks, boards, fence posts, furniture and houses! A New England and Cymru and Alba of Saxon, Gael, Celt, Asian, African, Viking, Arabic... We are all on the Mother Earth, living and sharing wherever we are, aware, free and confident to express our culture. We are all related: Rainbow Tribe.

Tree Nursery. Collecting seed and growing the stock of new trees.

Wildflower Nursery. Propagate locally occurring plants.

Mobile greenwood pole latheing in the areas of the forest being worked.

Coppice:

Hazel, chestnut, ash and willow. Uses: poles for pole lather's to make bowls, chairs, tables, pipes etc. Tongue and groove flooring and roofing shingles. Hurdle timbers. Charcoal. Basket weaving.

Orchard:

Apple, pear, cherry, damson, greengage, plum, damson (there lovely eaten on a January day bottled without sugar) cobnuts, almonds, and assorted soft fruits, surrounded by windbreaks of trees and hedges. Uses: lots of fruit, nuts and honey! Fruit trees with vigorous roots can be coppiced so yielding both young wood and fruit. [<sup>40</sup>]

Mixed broadleaf:

Many uses. High value timber and firewood. Acorn flour from oak acorns. Nitrogen fixing from alder. Fungi both free ranging and cultivated on logs of hardwoods. High value this use, I've seen oyster mushrooms going for £2.50/lb in a local shop. Hardwoods can produce 4 times their weight in fungi. Berries such as bramble, cranberry, blueberry and bilberries (summer pudding!).

Species Rich Meadow Areas:

Anyone who has seen an Alpine or Hebridean meadow will appreciate the need for these. They make top hay as well! (Cut as seed sets.) Also after establishment a surplus for sale or distribution of seeds and wildflower and herb plants.

Lakes:

Sustainable Fish rearing, swimming and lazzzing etc.

Hemp and flax:

For high quality cloth and paper.

**Forest Gardens/Farms** (how we will grow our food in the future)

“The hills in my vision have farming which fits them and replaces the poor pasture, the gullies and the abandoned land which characterizes today so large a part of the U.S. These ideal farms have their level and gentle sloping land protected by terraces, their steeper parts are planted with crop trees of mulberries, permissons, honeylocust, grafted black walnut, grafted heartnut, oak, and other harvest yeilding species. The crops are worked out into series to make good farm economy.”

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“Symbiosis - ‘ living together’ or mutual aid - is the basic law of life. Evolution is a holistic process, the development of ever more complex, integrated organisms, involving a spiritual element which ensures that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.”

Robert Hart

Diverse woodland ecosystems supplying food and timber as well as they are a balanced ecology:

Fruits, nuts and berries (e.g. walnuts, dwarf sweet chestnut, hazel/cob nuts, pecan, almond, wild service tree, greengage, apple, cherry, plum, apricots, medlars, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, black currants, loganberries,)

interplanted with,

herb plants (e.g. lemon balm, mint, tansy, borage, scullcap, rock rose, wood betony, tarragon, thyme,)

and

Vegetables (e.g. perennials like: broccoli, sorrel, Good King Henry, tree onions, wild garlic, sea kale and cardoon. Self seeders like: land cress mustard, spinach and Japanese edible chrysanthemums (shungiku)

with

mini-meadows (buckwheat and lucerne),

and

ponds (watercress) homes for pest predators - frogs and toads, and relaxing to sit by.

Selected so that species are ripening successively through the year.

Self perpetuating because almost all plants are perennial or self seeding.

Self fertilising and watering because deep-rooting trees and bushes draw up nutrients and water for their neighbours, and rotting leaf fall returns nutrients.

Self mulching because quick spreading herbs like mint and balm soon cover the ground between the trees.

Self pollinating because the trees are selected to be mutually compatible or self-fertile and because the flowering herbs attract pollinating insects.

Self-healing because the aromatic herbs deter pests. Frogs and toads eat slugs and bugs. Ladybirds eat aphids;

Wild area of thicket for shelter and hibernation, nesting sites, and a pile of rotting logs and leaves. Wildflowers - the food of many insect larvae; so the web of life weaves on... [41]

Get to it!

Primal Forest and moors, Wilderness:

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The original covering of Cymru and Scotland and England for thousands of years before clearance and enclosure. A place for the wild animals and spirits. Of wolf, bear, beaver, and Auroch. Mystic nature out of the control of man. Spirit of Ancestors.

Forests managed with communal reverence for the common good. Tribal Forests.

Aurochs is fearless  
and greatly horned;  
a very fierce beast,  
it fights with its horns;  
a famous roamer of the moor,  
it is a courageous animal.

Great strength from Earth Energy:

As male energy it is strength in a raw primal way  
like ancient mountains.  
This is what the leader of the herd echoes in his bellow;  
a force that is primal, formative and fertilising.

As female energy it is the flow of natural forces  
in the Earth;  
cleansing, strengthening, transforming and healing.  
Chanting the Word Uruz  
vibrates in the solar plexus and clears blocks  
through the circulation of vital force.

Great shaggy cattle, reminiscent of the Aurochs,  
still roam on Dartmoor.  
Their existence is rooted in the moor,  
and the moor in the Earth,  
and the Earth gives birth to the mighty beast;  
this symbolises the strength of nature

From the Anglo Saxon Runes

**Go and take the forestry estates, they are yours already!**

## **Contacts and self-help initiatives for communities:**

If you have come here to help me,  
you are wasting your time.....  
But if you have come because  
your liberation is bound up with mine,  
then let us work together.

Aboriginal Woman.

(OK)

Exodus Collective: Luton based community restoration initiative. Telephone 01582 508936



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of the white sea on which you look;  
They are calves, they are bright coloured lambs,  
at peace without mutual hostility  
it is along the top of a wood with its harvest of fruit  
under the prow of your little boat,  
A wood with blossom and fruit and on it the true fragrance of the vine;  
a wood without decay or death  
with leaves the colour of gold.

ancient Celtic.

Blessed be.

I hope that people find this inspirational. Please feel free to distribute and/or send comments/ideas to me, King Amdo, Tuatha De Dannan, Pen Y Parc, Pentraeth, Mam, Cymru. LL75 8HJ.

Notes and references.

- <sup>1</sup> [] From Earth Medicine, Ancestors Ways of Harmony For Many Moons, Jamie Sams.
- <sup>2</sup> [] Woodlands a practical handbook, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, 14.
- <sup>3</sup> [] Robert Hart, Wildlife in the Forest Garden, Permaculture Magazine, Spring 1994, 13.
- <sup>4</sup> [] Woodlands a practical handbook, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, 14.
- <sup>5</sup> [] Freely adapted from Bill Mollison, Permaculture A Designers Manual.
- <sup>6</sup> [] New Englands prospect, 74.
- <sup>7</sup> [] Ibid., 114
- <sup>8</sup> [] Reclaiming the Scottish Highlands (Clearance, Conflict and Crofting), Alister McIntosh, Andy Wightman and Daniel Morgan, The Ecologist vol.. 24, number 2, March/April 1994, 66.
- <sup>9</sup> [] Ibid., 69.
- <sup>10</sup> [10 ] Since originally writing this essay, amongst other things I have discovered the root cause of 99% of the worlds problems. Really. I met and began a relationship with a woman activist friend from Cornwall whilst researching the problems associated with medical waste incinerators. She was a victim of the ultimate nightmare experience of 'ritualistic racist child rape'...the 'dark', hidden side of christian freemason patriarchy. Yes this is true, it really does happen, and is not 'just a urban rumour', and the awareness this knowledge, in effect 'how britain is made', can ONLY lead to spiritual evolution/liberation. By the way, I also have knowledge that the Roman Catholic church is equally abusive. Church ov Rome must fall! Jah Rastafari!, Blessed be! You lierally cannot fight the tide Bush and co! This IS the new age.
- <sup>11</sup> [] If you don't believe that there is Earth Crisis then you are shielded yourself from it...how long will your shield hold out?....Take a look at the Gaia site/s on the Internet where speech is less restrained at <http://www.gaia.org>
- <sup>12</sup> [] The Scope for Community Participation in Forest Management, Summary Report, by Bill Slee, Gill M Clark and Patrick Snowden. Published by the Forestry Commission, March 1996. Page 27
- <sup>13</sup> [] Ibid., 26.
- <sup>14</sup> [] Bill Mollison, Permaculture A Designers Manual, 18.
- <sup>15</sup> [15] Letter from B.D. Inglis, Secretariat, Forestry Commision, Edinburgh.
- <sup>16</sup> [] Tree Spirit, March 1996, 8.
- <sup>17</sup> [] Bill Mollison, Permaculture A Designers Manual, 31.
- <sup>18</sup> [] Adapted from Ibid., 5-6.
- <sup>19</sup> [] Part of the Statement of Forestry Principles from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
- <sup>20</sup> [] Ibid., 2d.
- <sup>21</sup> [] Inter alia means among others.
- <sup>22</sup> [] Part of the Statement of Forestry Principles from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, 5a.
- <sup>23</sup> [] Sustainable Forestry - the UK programme, HMSO, 1994a.
- <sup>24</sup> [] Part of the Statement of Forestry Principles from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Agenda 21.
- <sup>25</sup> [] For example 2 among many... Riverside Community Garden, Cardiff. Tel., 01222 220309. Springfield Community Gardens, Bradford. Tel., 01274 753924.
- <sup>26</sup> [] See Permaculture Magazine for lots of ecological solutions for everyday living. (Address given above).
- <sup>27</sup> [] Richard Moyse, The Activist's Guide, The Land is Ours, July 1996.
- <sup>28</sup> [] Freely adapted from Ann Lussignea and Andy Inglis, Ask The People, Reforesting Scotland, Spring 1995, 7,8.
- <sup>29</sup> [] Forest and People in Rural Scotland Discussion Paper, produced by The Forests and People in Rural Areas Initiative (FAPIRA).

<sup>30</sup> [] Ibid., 2.

<sup>31</sup> [] Andy Inglis, The Radical Rowan (newsletter of Reforesting Scotland), June 1996, 2.

<sup>32</sup> [] Reforesting Scotland, Spring 1996, 11.

<sup>33</sup> [] Ibid., 11.

<sup>34</sup> [] Laggan Community Forest Initiative Newspaper, Issue 1, 1996.

<sup>35</sup> [] "one group calling themselves the True Levellers or Diggers, arrived one Sunday morning in 1649 at St George's Hill Common outside Walton on Thames in Surrey and began to dig it up. Their act was intended to be a call for the common people to be allowed to cultivate all forests and wastes." This land is Our Land, Marion Shoard, 57.

<sup>36</sup> [] See the Norway and Scotland: A Study in Land Use, Reforesting Scotland Norway Study Tour 1993 available from Reforesting Scotland.

<sup>37</sup> [] Contact Permaculture Magazine for details of suitable sites.(See address list)

<sup>38</sup> [] BD Inglis, Secretariat, Forestry Commission, Personal Communication, October 1996.

<sup>39</sup> [] See the Lowland crofting handbook published by West Lothian Planning, West Lothian Council, Telephone 01506 775 222.

<sup>40</sup> [] Bill Law, A Permaculture Woodland, Permaculture Magazine, Summer 1994, 6.

<sup>41</sup> [] Adapted from "Farming of the Future - Walter Schwartz talks to Robert Hart", Resurgence, No.114, 13.