

The United Kingdom Falkland Islands Trust

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1993 NEWSLETTER

THE TRUST. The United Kingdom Falkland Islands Trust (UKFIT) will be twelve years old by 1st June 1993. Its primary policy continues to be one of offering support to the Falkland Islands' farming population by running a long term organic husbandry agricultural programme. The Trust works closely with the Falkland Islands Department of Agriculture and with farmers wishing to cooperate. It undertakes, also, work in the social and educational field.

Guided technically by its two very experienced consultants, Mr David Stickland (MD Organic Farmers and Growers in Britain) and Dr Jim McAdam of the Department of Agriculture of Northern Ireland, the Trust has a number of long term projects in being. The consultants visit the Islands regularly to advise on, and direct, the work.

The four main objectives are to provide technical consultation and expert advice; to introduce and progress agricultural projects; to assist in the commercial development of agricultural products in the Islands and their marketing in the European Community; and to provide funds for project material.

Projects are financed from the Fund's charitable base and supplemented by donations or grants from other interested bodies, including the Falkland Islands Development Corporation. Whilst the Trust has been able to maintain the impetus of the projects to date, the lowering of interest rates and the general effect of the international economic situation will inevitably result in some slowing down of the work. However, it is hoped that any financial deficiencies will be overcome by finding additional sources of funding.

TRUSTEES. Two new trustees have been welcomed to UKFIT to help strengthen its direct liaison with the Falkland population. They are Mr Robin Lee as a Trustee in Stanley and Captain Paddy Vincent (RN) who has family connections with the Falkland Islands and long standing links with the Falkland organisations in Britain. The Trustees meet quarterly in Falkland House, London, to coordinate the programmes and business. Recently, Mrs Lovett, a British Army Widow from the Argentine occupation, has come to work voluntarily with the Trust as a skilled Honorary ██████ archivist.

A FORWARD LOOK. In April 1992, the President, the Rt Hon Lord Strathcona, sent a Trust Paper to all concerned persons in Britain and the Falkland Islands surveying the future for organic farming on the Islands. The paper stressed the desirability of a coordinated agricultural programme; a subject that was expounded further by the Chairman, Major General N St. G Gribbon, Dr McAdam and Mr Stickland when they addressed the Falkland Islands Association Seminar in Cambridge during the summer. The Trust projects fall within the ambit of this survey.

FINANCE. Working from its Capital Base of £50,000, the Trust appreciated the further financial assistance from the Falkland Islands Development Corporation which has allowed the Tree Development Project, now in its fourth year, to continue at a satisfactory pace. Furthermore, a grant of £2,000 from the Dulverton Trust is allowing a new woodland to be started in West Falkland to put into practice the lessons learnt, so far, from the former project.

PROGRESS IN ORGANIC HUSBANDRY. (By Mr David Stickland) Organic farming is now a global business and those countries involved, seriously, are tending to gear their organic standards to those of the EC Regulation 2092/91.

While organic production is an expanding market of the future, in percentage terms, it is still very small with nowhere to go but upwards. Countries like the Falkland Islands, with virtually organic production as the normal system, have a great opportunity to grasp a portion of that market and benefit accordingly.

However, organic production is also a system that offers a chance of cheating to gain the premiums available, so that systems of inspection and certification are being established in all serious countries. The Organic Farmers and Growers (O.F. & G.), are involved in several countries creating these systems and inspecting and certifying their crops. It has to be done properly, particularly when exporting to the EC, one of the largest current markets for organic produce.

FORMATION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS FARMERS ORGANIC GROUP.

(By Mr David Stickland) Bearing in mind the above, O.F. & G., on behalf of the Trust, are working with various persons in the Falkland Islands to set up a system that will allow any Falklands organic product to be sold globally, especially into the EC.

Mr Owen Summers, the Agricultural Officer, has been approved as the official farm inspector. The results of his inspections will be passed to Councillor Kevin Kilmartin who, in turn, will check the forms and details to see that they are ready to send to the O.F. & G. Organic Certification Service. He is thus the direct Falklands link with the Certification Executive.

Mrs Judy Summers of the Farmers Association is gathering together the farmers who are interested in taking part and who may form the basis of an organic group within the Falklands' Farmers Association.

Finally, overseeing the project is Mr Robin Lee who represents the Trust in the Falkland Islands. Being able to enlist the local aid of such people is a great help in getting the project off the ground and the Trust is grateful for their cooperation. Now it is a matter of gradual progress to develop some business, to project the "greenness" of the Falkland Islands and everything grown therein and, through UKFIT, to assist the Falkland Islands agriculture wherever possible.

THE MARKET. (By Mr David Stickland) Of particular concern to the sheep farmer is the interest, in the United Kingdom and Europe generally, in organic wool. "Come back and see us when you have a supply of certified organic wool." That is the answer now being given to O.F. & G. marketing people. Also, "Especially if it is suitable for the knitwear industry." So the challenge is there, the contacts made. Now we must supply the product and then we can start to negotiate any premium. A further point about contamination. In the past, fungicide sometimes put on the hessian used for the wool bales has contaminated the wool. The same could apply to man made fibres. In this connection, O.F. & G. has had tea contaminated by ink from a felt-tip pen marking the sacks of tea as 'organic'. Contamination by all these "harmless" chemicals can create a real problem. The answer is never to be lulled into taking anything for granted, nor listen to the assurances of the salesman unless he can back everything in writing, if need be.

TRIALS TO IMPROVE GRASS NUTRITION. (By Dr Jim McAdam) The series of long term trials to investigate the effect of liquid kelp extract on grassland continues. Two trials are being carried out on whitegrass pasture at Fox Bay and Bold Cove.

At Fox Bay, kelp extract has now been applied at different rates for three years on small plots of whitegrass in a properly replicated trial (24 plots) in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture. Final yield measurements have now been made and a detailed analysis of all the species in each plot carried out to see if the persistent application of kelp extract has brought about any change in the value of the pastures (in terms of productivity and quality). A large number of samples from this trial have now been analysed. While it is clear that, in the short term, commercially produced liquid kelp extract applied at a high rate does not increase growth of whitegrass, slight (but significant) improvements

in quality of the pasture have been found.

At Bold Cove, kelp extract is being applied to large unreplicated plots on the farm of Mr Jimmy Forster. Port Howard farm cooperate by applying the extract. Samples taken for analysis after three years show that application of kelp extract has had a slight effect on pasture quality, but the improvement is slow.

Liquid kelp extract is being produced from the Trust's own pilot digester plant (run by Mr Tim Miller at the Market Garden) to add a repeat dressing to a reseeded field used for hay at Beckside Dairy. In this connection, it is important that results are available from trials carried out with locally produced extract.

TREE ESTABLISHMENT TRIALS. (By Dr Jim McAdam) The main thrust of the tree development work is still directed towards trials to investigate the best planting technique for Falkland Island conditions. So far, trees which are "pit" planted survive better than those which are "slit" planted (eg. 89% vs 79% after two years at Fitzroy) and the addition of composted kelp in the pit improves growth. Sitka Spruce are doing better than Lodgepole Pine on the infertile site at Stanley (96% vs 63% survived respectively) whereas the reverse is true (74% vs 89%) at the more fertile but wetter Fitzroy site.

The *Macrocarpa* trees grown from the Trust's specially purchased New Zealand hybrid seed are continuing to grow well and will be available for a small plantation at Pebble Island and the woodland project funded by the Dulverton Trust at Port Howard. Trials continue with *Eucalyptus* trees at the Market Garden, Stanley, and two species seem to be suitable for Falkland Island conditions. The Trust continues to provide advice on tree planting.

WEST FALKLAND WOODLAND PROJECT. (By Dr Jim McAdam) As mentioned, the Trust has been awarded a grant by the Dulverton Trust to establish a small sustainable woodland in the Falkland Islands. It is envisaged that this woodland would be planted and established following some of the guidelines emerging from the Trust's trials and maintained and nurtured with locally produced resources (ie kelp-based organic fertilisers). Following soil analyses and considering factors such as accessibility, a site has been chosen adjacent to Port Howard settlement. Approximately 500 *Cupressus Macrocarpa* trees will be planted this winter. The trees will be 'pit' planted with composted kelp and, in future years, will be fertilised with the locally produced kelp extract. The Trust is grateful for the enthusiasm shown and assistance given by Mr Rodney Lee and Port Howard Farm. Further planting will be undertaken in 1994.

SOIL EROSION. (By Dr Jim McAdam) Although the Trust has not yet commenced any trials to revegetate eroded areas, this is obviously an important area and one which merits trial once resources become available. In many areas of the world trees are used to combat erosion and to cover bare clay areas. Such a project would be a natural progression of the Trust's tree development work. In addition, regrassing with Marram and Tussac grass (as was successfully demonstrated on bare clay patches on Keppel Island in the late 1970's and early 1980's by Mr Sam and Mrs Carol Miller) merits more widespread trials. Perhaps some farmers might be willing to fence off some eroded areas and carry out small trials? Mr Lee Chandler has carried out an interesting study of erosion around the Port Stephens area and some of the general principles emerging from this will be studied and evaluated.

EDUCATION LIAISON. Since its inception in 1981, the Trust has shown an interest in supporting the Department of Education in Stanley. In recent years, a small annual grant has been made to assist the development of science facilities at the School. Following Mr David Stickland's visit in 1992, a scheme has been launched to enable some of the children to undertake research work on agricultural subjects within the UKFIT programme. Apart from the practical value of such work, it may encourage a farming interest among some of the children to the future benefit of the Islands. The Trust is assisting financially towards a hut for the Girl Guides.

THE UKFIT FALKLANDS LINK. As the UKFIT becomes better known, so the personalities connected with the work and domiciled in the Falkland Islands grow in number. Particular mention goes to: Mr Robin Lee of Falkland Landholdings Ltd., Trustee; Mr Owen Summers, Farm Inspector for O.F. & G.; the Farmers Association; Mr Kelvin Kilmartin for organic liaison with the EC Commission; Mr Tim Miller for new marketing products; Mrs Phyllis Rendall for student trials and Mr David Eynon for development of kelp products. Within the agricultural projects, particular mention goes to Mr Rodney Lee (Port Howard), Mr Jimmy Forster (Bold Cove), Mr Malcolm Ashworth (Beckside Dairy), Messrs Gerry Hoppe and Steve Howlett (Dept of Agriculture), Messrs Tom and James McGhie (Pebble Island), Mr Nigel and Mrs Shirley Knight (Coast Ridge), Mrs Lyn and Mr Tony Blake (Little Chartres), Mr Simon Miller (Stanley) and Mr Ron Binnie (Fitzroy). Already mentioned, the Trust is grateful for the help given within the tree development project to Mr Tim Miller at Stanley Nursery.

KEEPING IN TOUCH. The UKFIT considers it very important that Government and the Farming community in the Falkland Islands are kept informed on its work and, where possible, work with it. Considerable progress has been made in this subject recently as is born out by this Newsletter. H.E. The Governor and concerned officials receive copies of minutes of UKFIT meetings, as well as technical reports. Similar action is taken in the United Kingdom. The hope is that farmers, who are not currently engaged in cooperative work, will be come interested and join in under the guidance of Mr Robin Lee, Mr Owen Summers and Mr Kilmartin. This Newsletter is circulated with the Falkland Islands Association Newsletter to assist with its distribution.

BY LORD STRATHCONA, PRESIDENT.

My 1992 message was that any agricultural research and development is a long term effort and that we intend to see our work through to conclusion. This intention continues and substantial progress has been made during the year. The advice of David Stickland and his organic group initiatives are invaluable if commercial advances are to be made into the European Community. Jim McAdam, for his part, painstakingly oversees the tree and grass projects and is always ready to help those with whom he comes into contact on his visits. We continue to appreciate the cooperation that we get and welcome all involvement that others may wish to make.

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Administration Secretary: Mrs K. Dodson. Hon. Archivist: Mrs M. Lovett.