Obituary for Hanns Helmut Höfle

It was with great sadness that we learned about the tragic death of Professor Hanns Helmut Höfle aged 73. Whilst running a university course in Georgia (Caucasus) in June, Prof. Höfle went hiking in the mountains of the Borjomi National Park. When he failed to return, a search and rescue team was sent out to look for him in what would seem at times treacherous conditions. His body was eventually found two weeks later.

Prof. Höfle began his forestry career in the 1960’s in Baden-Württemberg (South West Germany), gained his doctorate at Freiburg University in 1967, followed by his post-doctorate at the ETH Zurich some eight years later. Following this, he moved on to work for the Lower Saxony Forest Service where he first worked at the forestry machine center in Hannover-Misburg and then later took on the leading role as Forest District Manager at Bovenden. There, great emphasis was put on the education and training of undergraduate and postgraduate students. It was during this period that he developed extensive expertise in the areas of modern timber harvesting techniques and silviculture of mixed broadleaved stands.

Whilst working at Bovenden Forest District he continued to developed his academic career by simultaneously carrying out further post-doctoral studies in the field of forestry technology and work science at the neighbouring Faculty of Forestry Sciences and Forest Ecology at the University of Göttingen. He subsequently became professor in this field at the university in 1981.

Alongside his duties at Bovenden Forest District and Göttingen University, he often lectured or gave expert advice in numerous developing countries. His energy, enthusiasm and dedication to forestry never faded and even after reaching retirement age he continued to lecture at Göttingen University and universities abroad.

Prof Höfle was a very well respected, extremely competent, yet very modest, sympathetic and understanding man, who took great interest in the teaching of students and many others in the forestry sector.
I personally have much to thank him for in that he organized a three month internship at Bovenden Forest District for me, whilst I was studying forestry at Göttingen University. Though I was only at the Forest District for three months, he put a lot of time and energy into producing a very interesting training program, which focused on the implementation of CCF principles at ground level. I learned a lot during my time as a forestry student in Lower Saxony and it was through such additional training on the ground that I further developed my passion for CCF.

It was with great pleasure that I met him again almost ten years later at Stourhead on the CCFG run workshop that he led on “Timber Harvesting Techniques in Stands Managed under CCF Principles”. I am sure many of us have fond memories of his time with us back in May 2010.

Prof. Höfle will be greatly missed and our thoughts are with his family at this very sad time.

Christopher Johannes Guest