

1. Forest

Area additions and disposals:-

Acquisition - Nil

Disposals - Sale of Culfeldie Farm	Agricultural	Plantable
- Return to Crown Lands)	32	-
of part of Hills Farm)		
New Stynie Holding)	69	16
Field at Orblisten)		
New Mains Holding)		

Forest details are now as follows:-

Plantations	Bare	Agricultural	Unplantable	Forest Total
Acc.F.C. Total	Plant-	F.C.DOAS Total	& Other	12,401 acs.
2139 6931 9070	able	28 337 365	897	
2138	2069			
	2070			

2. This has probably been the wettest summer for some time past. Flooding of the Speyside areas took place in late July instead of the usual August. No action has been taken since last years report on erosion and accompanying wasage of plantations. The warren plantations C237 & C238-P.51 are in one particular spot, being rapidly washed down the river.

Much erosions & blocking by fallen trees with the subsequent washing out of roads took place in the Fochabers burn area. Approximately £188 were spent on repairs some of which are temporary.

Weed Growth.

The wet summer caused a tremendous growth of weeds of all types. The fact that more weeds required cutting held back the treatment of some areas causing a great deal more care to be applied to the later weedings in order to find the plants, this increased the cost per acre to sometimes near-silly figures. Delayed weedings also caused some damage to areas recently Beat-up, particularly where small plants had been used.

3. Wage Payments

The following heads were overspent:-

A/c. No.	Operation	Estimate	Overspent by	Remarks.
110	Drains New	£1271	£212 ✓	Underestimated
130	Beating Up	925	25 ✓	Underestimated
134	Weeding	5409	1037 ✓	Underestimated
	Rds. New. Flood damage	66	20 ✓	
1201	Leave	1590	80 ✓	
1205	Stones	393	40 ✓	
1211	Clerical & Survey	300	17 ✓	
1303	D. Office Clerical	380	20 ✓	
541	Vermin Payment	-	11 ✓	
			£1,512.	Total overspent.

The following heads were underspent by:-

A/c. No.	Operation	Estimate	Underspent by	Remarks.
101	Burning Heather	£1,142	£429 ✓	Revised
(Prep)	Scrub, Ploughing	2,096	19 ✓	
105	Plant, Under-Plant	2,096	19 ✓	
	& Manuring.		7 ✓	
112	Fences New	55	176 ✓	Work carried over.
140	Drains Repair	694	27 ✓	
144	Fences Repair	70	106 ✓	
150	Roads Maintenance	520	298 ✓	Deliberate saving
160	Fire protection	1,220		
165	Other Protection /			

3. Contd.

A/c.No.	Operation	Estimate	Underspent by	Remarks.
165	Other Protection	£2,378	629 ✓	Deliberate Saving
403	Seed Collection & Extraction	250	31	
301	Marking	190	28	
302	Felling	25	-	
304	Extraction	140	31	
305	Measuring	4	-	
306 (x Cut)	Processing	175	58	
312	Mining Timber-Carriage	30	13	
312	Other (Firewood) Carriage	350	267	
603	Maintenance Vehicles	193	15	
604	Service Journeys	90	29	
1201	N.H. Insurance	1142	56	
1201	Sick Leave	696	32	
1201	L/T Wet	1283	75	
1202	Transport of Workers	226	33	
501	F.W.Houses Repairs	403	35	
502	F.W.Holdings Repairs			
513	Kiln & Forester Houses Repairs			
3106	New Office			
513	Dist. Office Maintenance	Total	£2,398	

4. Local Supervision

Staffing.

Numbers as for last year, two Foresters and one assistant Forester. One Forester is largely on surveying & marking thinnings. A change over of one Forester and on Assistant Forester in June & Aug. respectively has caused me to do a deal more work myself but since this leads to more efficient control it can only be classed as a good thing.

Staff in detail.

- One Head Forester - Self.
- One Forester - Efficient on marking of thinnings & survey. Deficient on labour control & organisation.
- One Forester - Reasonable at Ganger level. Too recently arrived for a firm of opinion - seems to have lost the place at an earlier stage.
- One Assistant Forester. - Keen and showing promise.

5. Labour.

Present Labour Staff of 69 includes 28 fishermen (winter only).

- Gangers - 4
- Grade 1. - 22
- Grade 11. - 7
- Grade 111. - 30 (Includes all fishermen).
- Boys 18 & under - 3
- Clerkesses - 2 (1 District office).
- Cleaners - 1 (District office).
- 69

- Summer staff - 41
- Winter staff - 69

Labour position is unbalanced - 8 years ago when we started taking on the Fishermen in winter we had a large planting programme and a moderate weeding programme. This meant more work in winter and less in summer. The position is now reversed: we have a small planting programme. One redeeming ^{feature} ~~fortune~~, if it can be classed as such, is that a goodly part of the weeding programme is Gorse

5. Contd.

Gorse & Broom and can be cut during winter with the extra labour.

6. Forest operation.

(a.)		<u>Estimate</u>		<u>Actual</u>		<u>Remarks.</u>
<u>A/c.No.</u>	<u>Operation</u>	<u>Acres/Chains</u>	<u>Cost.</u>	<u>Acres/Chns.</u>	<u>Cost</u>	
101	Scrub	63	120/-P/A	142	76/-P/A	More Acre less scrub.
101	Burn	229	10/-P/A	206	4/8P/A	Relaxed restriction
101	Plough	246	22/-P/A	169.5	14/4 P/A	Some contrac work.
105	Plant	414.5	80/-P/A	425.25	77/-P/A	
105	Manuring	414.5	17/-P/A	420.75	18/8P/A	
110	Drains New (Hand)	1420 chns.	18/9P/Chn.	1471 Chns.	19/- P/A	
110	Drains New (Plough)	200 chns.	2/- P/Chn.	542 Chns	-/11.	Conditions better than expected.
112	Fences New	50 chns.	22/-P/Chn.	72 Chns	13/3	Use of pig netting
130	Beating up	279 Thousands	54/-	286 Thousands	70/-	Under estimated.
134	Weeding	690 acres	62/-	1455.5 acres	88/-	Excessive
140	Drains Rep.	2318 chns.	12/8	1587.5 chns	9/-	Minimum Completed to assist weeding.
144	Fence Rep.	-	-	78 chns.	10/11	Unexpected requirement

(b)

Planting

Planting commenced w/c 17/11/58. and was completed w/c 25/5/58. Some P.C. treated with Didimac died out.

Natural Regeneration does not succeed on any large scale.

Prep Ground, Ploughing on Speymouth whenever heather grows ought to be a Must. On areas where no ploughing was done there is evidence of check setting in.

Weeding.

The planned weeding programme was not completed. Some when areas were left over to FY59 in an effort to cope with heavy grass areas holding small plants. In some cases areas which were considered past weeding required to be weeded to assist B/U plants and sometimes simply because the grass was so much stronger and higher than usual.

Whins are still the main threat to keeping our programme up to date.

Cone Collection.

We collected 114½ bushels of cones of average quality. There was no abundance of cones available.

Pruning .

We did some pre-selection for thinning guidance and we marked the selected trees by pruning up to 12 - 15ft. This method of selection was restricted to the smaller sized pole-type woods where pruning might be worthwhile.

Progress in establishment of Plantation.

This is still slower than it might be due to a variety of reasons among which are vole damage causing a deal of B/U and Gorse growth tending to grow with the crop instead o being killed off.

Thinning Progress and Yields. /

6. Thinning Progress and Yields.

Progress is normal and according to thinning Plan. In the Deer Park areas we are instructed to thin carefully with the aim in mind to put timber on to these trees which already have a sufficiently long clean stem.

The long - term thinning sale is proceeding as planned with Messrs. Ridloch so far succeeding in purchasing all the additional lots ^{opened}.

Fire Protection.

The last two seasons are likely to cause us to be slightly less vigilant in our fire protection.

Fires during season - nil.

We now have 4 G.E.C. Packsets. One acting as Control in the firetower with the others on machines. This could be improved by the use of a "Mobile Set" on the Land Rover. Nevertheless we have a working organisation which has assisted materially in cutting the cost per acre of Fire Protection.

The G.P.O. have failed to give us their usual prompt attention to Fire Protection. telephones. It is now some months since I asked, through my District office, for a telephone to be transferred. This job has still not been done.

Cost per acre -- FY57 = 3/1.

Cost per acre -- FY58 = 2/0½.

Other Protection.

Rabbits are in the increase. Hares also seem to be increasing in some parts. Deer appear to be about average.

Myxomatosis is inside the forest on our northwestern boundaries but there appears to be too few rabbits in other parts to allow the disease to spread.

One effect of this sporadic killing of rabbits and hares is that quite often there are insufficient to fill a crate for despatch and the weather is often too warm to permit us keeping them until a crate can be filled.

Voles did a great deal of damage in a number of widespread areas this year. This attack appears to be settling down ^{now}.

Several areas of S.P. are affected by a dying - back of side branches. We suspect a form of Pine Blister but have sent off samples to Alice Holt who do not know the trouble but are investigating it.

Cost of Protection per acre -- FY57 = 4/6.

Cost of Protection per acre -- FY58 = 3/10¼.

Rabbit clearance areas. There is a rabbit clearance scheme on the west side of "Spey" which is proceeding satisfactorily. There is none "east of Spey".

Myxomatosis is at present having no effect on numbers or distribution on the general area of the forest. It is to be found only near the Innes House boundary where they appear to have a fair number of rabbits.

Changes in numbers and distribution.

This is best illustrated by comparing the numbers killed in FY57 & FY58:-

	<u>Rabbits.</u>	<u>Hares.</u>	<u>Deer.</u>	<u>Foxes.</u>	<u>Pigeons.</u>
FY57	735	618	21	22	198
FY58	1117	525	34	21	180

As can be seen rabbits are either increasing or we have killed more in preventing them from doing so.

Damage done by Squirrels /

Damage done by Squirrels. (Red and Grey.)

There are no grey squirrels and the few red squirrels do no damage worth noting.

There is always a certain amount of damage done by deer but this doesn't reach serious proportions.

Fencing.

Length of rabbit netting erected - nil.

New Fences	72 chains	}	Stock fence Boundaries
Upkeep.	78 chains		

28½ Rolls pig netting used.

Costs of fencing generally.

Stock fencing costs with us for this year were 13/3 per chain. for labour against an estimate of 22/-. We estimated 47/- per chain for materials and ran under this slightly. the average contractor requires £3 - 15/- to £4 per chain for all-in erections so we aren't too bad. I know nothing of other F.C. fencing costs. ~~Repairs to~~ fences requires watching. It can be very costly for little or no return. It would sometimes be best, when removal is essential to give the materials to some small farmer for the removing rather than pay our own labour.

Effect of Myxomatosis on fencing. - Nil.

Fellings Thinnings and Sales of Produce.

Thinning here amounts to marking and measurement since we are almost antirely an to standing sales. A new Technique of felling thinnings has evolved from the use of Power Saws. The tree is cut nearly through and left leaning against its neighbour - no effort is made to put it down - sufficient trees to last a half or a full days snedding are treated like this and the snedders complete the felling with an axe as they come to each tree. this ensures that unsned trees are not lying in piles causing difficult and costly work. It also ensures that the power saw is in use for a reasonable period at a time even with a small squad. Our danger is that large wolf trees may be left leaning on and forcing over lighter better trees which it is intended will be kept in the crop. If this procedure were restricted to half a day at a time it might not be serious, but if left alone the Contractor is liable to cut a days work, ~~as in~~ one case, go off for a few days to some other job leaving a score or so of partly felled trees leaving in the wood. This could perhaps be investigated elsewhere with a view to including a clause in the conditions of sale to cover the procedure.

FY58 area felled = 41.85 acres.

FY58 area thinned = 165.75 acres.

Mechanical Equipment.

In its present state the Land Rover is unfit to carry a tank with 60 gallons of water a 400 ft. live hose reel and an Allman pump fitted on the front. Much stronger springs are required throughout to do this job, particularly at the rear. The efficiency of the fire fighting unit is first class for its size.

Maintenance and Repairs.

The mobile mechanic could hardly be bettered for the job he does - Spares are received with the minimum of delay from Blackhall. Altogether they appear to be doing a good job.

Developments in Techniques and Equipment /

Developments in Techniques and Equipment.

On this forest we use raised tanks at about 9 feet high for filling a tank on a lorry and transporting the water to a fire. In order to release the water from the static tank into the lorry tank we used screw valves purchased locally. In spite of all our efforts we had a goodly number of these damaged by frost. We repaired them but some went again and this time they wouldn't repair. We thought of using salt to prevent freezing but in addition to being costly the risk to pumps and other equipment was too high. Finally in conjunction with the local Blacksmith I have fitted valves inside the tanks without screws and controllable from outside the tank. Being in the water they don't freeze and there is nothing to damage anyway. If this is of any use to others more detail can be had on request.

General.

Why not try ~~some of these new forests~~ on Contract work instead of direct labour. The trappers could be employed direct and could do fire and other protection as required. A deal of planning, organising and even improvising would be required, as would a forestry Contractor. It's an interesting thought in view of the savings in wet time etc. and in view of the fact that labour from ~~some of the Hydro Camps~~ is likely to be available soon.

Head Forester.

1. Forest

Area Additions and Disposals:-

Acquisitions - Nil.

Disposals -	Agricultural	Plantable
Sale of Culfoldie Farm	32	-
Return to Crown Lands of Part of Hill's Farm) New Stynie Holding) Field at Orbliston) New Mains Holding)	69	16
	<u>101</u>	<u>16</u>

Forest details are now as follows:-

Plantations

Acquired	2138	
P.C.	6951	
Total		9069 acres
<u>Bare Plantable</u>		2070 "

Agricultural

P.C.	28	
D.O.A.S.	337	
Total		365 acres

Unplantable
and other.

897 acres

Forest Total

12401 acres.

2. The Year's Work

Most jobs were affected in one way or another by the wettest summer for some time.

Actual flooding of the Speyside area took place in July. Part of Compartments 237 & 238 - P51 are rapidly being washed away.

Approximately £188 were spent repairing flood damage in the Fochabers Burn area alone.

Weeds grew fast and weeding fell behind causing small plants to be harder to find. Costs rose all round and some plants suffered from under-weeding.

Some Whin weeding has been carried over to F.Y. 59 because of some grass weedings earlier considered unnecessary.

3. over.

Wage Payments.

Account No 110 (Drains New) was overspent by £212. We used the money allocated to A/c No 140 (Drains repairs) which was underspent by £176.

Account No 134 (Weeding) was overspent by £1037. This just had to be done while other jobs remained undone.

Total overspending was £1512
Total underspending was £2398

4. Local Supervision.

Observations:-

C.O. Mackintosh is good on estimating, marking of thinnings and survey work. He is poor on organisation and control of labour.

G.S. Stewart is a recent arrival who replaced J.O. Webster since posted to Blackhall. Stewart seems to have lost the place to some extent but no doubt he will find his feet ere long.

L.C. McCallum is another new arrival, but this time, from Forest School. He is keen and shows promise of being good. McCallum replaced W.J. Gordon who also went to Blackhall.

Staff is now one Head Forester, two Foresters, and one Assistant Forester and is adequate for the job.

5. Labour.

Summer staff	41	
Winter staff	69	
Gangers	4	
Grade 1	22	
Grade 2	7	
Grade 3	30	(includes all fishermen)
Boys 18 & under	3	
Clerkesses	2	(1 District Office)
Cleaners	1	(District Office)
	<u>69</u>	

The labour position is unbalanced at present. When we first employed the Fishermen 8 years ago, we used them on large scale planting. We now plant on a small scale but we weed in summer on a large scale while these men are fishing.

If I were to apply piecework now I should require to cut my staff by about a quarter in order to keep within my money estimate. This would make my summer staff of men 27 and that number just could not cope with the summer work.

6. Forest Operations.

In scrub clearing we estimated to do 63 acres at 120/- per acre. We actually did 142 acres at 76/- per acre, and the reason was a change of programme which demanded less cutting.

In Heather Burning we estimated 229 acres at 10/-. We burned 206 acres at 4/8 each. The reason was the relaxation of restrictions on burning.

5. Contd.

In ploughing we estimated to do 246 acres at 22/- per acre. We ploughed 169.5 acres at 14/4 per acre with our own ploughs and 84 acres by contract.

In Planting we estimated for 414.5 acres at 80/- per acre. We planted 424.25 acres at 77/- per acre.

In Manuring the estimate was 414.5 acres at 17/- per acre. The actual was 420.75 acres at 15/8 per acre.

Drains New estimate was 1420 chains at 18/9 per chain. The actual (by hand) was 1471 chains at 19/- per chain.

Drains New (by plough) estimate was 200 chains at 2/- per chain. In fact we did 542 chains at -/11 per chain. This was an overestimated cost and an underestimated requirement.

Fences New were put at 50 chains at 22/- per chain. We did 72 chains at 15/3 per chain. The additional chainage was unexpected, and the reduced cost was due to the use of pig netting which is simpler to handle.

Beating-up of necessary areas was estimated to require 279 thousand plants at 54/- per thousand. We planted 286 thousands at 70/- per thousand. This is an underestimate of a figure which is very difficult to estimate.

Weeding estimate was 690 acres at 62/- per acre. Actual was 1455.5 acres at 55/- per acre. We are still weeding areas which must be weeded this season.

Drains Upkeep was estimated at 2318 chains at 12/8 per chain. 1537.5 chains were completed at 9/- per chain. This estimate was curtailed to assist in completing the weeding programme.

Fences Upkeep was not allowed for in the estimates, but 780 chains cropped up during the year and were repaired at 10/11 per chain.

b. Planting commenced w/c 17/11/57.
Planting completed w/c 25/5/58

P.C. on Whiteash hill which was treated with Didimac partly died out.

Natural Regeneration Mostly dies out.

Prep- ground. Wherever heather grows on Speymouth ploughing is a MUST. Checking with the resultant poor growth is the alternative.

Weeding on this Forest is still building up and will not begin to tail-off for another two or three years.

Cone collection amounted to 114½ bushels; quality was average and quantity was poor.

Seed Extraction 3513½ Bushels of Cones produced 1707 lbs of seed.

Pruning is now used in some younger woods as an indicator of the particular trees which we wish to be assisted when thinning is taking place. It therefore serves a dual purpose.

Progress in establishment of plantations will become more rapid when we overcome the heavy weeding programme.

Thinning Progress and Yields are, in the case of thinning, according to the thinning plan and yields are round about the prescribed figures in the yield tables.

Fire Protection

Fires during the season - Nil.

Four packset radios now form a working contribution to the planned reduction of costs under this head.

Cost per acre FY57- 3/1
Cost per acre FY58- 2/0½

Other Protection

Rabbits are on the increase ; or at least we have killed more. Hares and Deer are much as they were.

Rabbits killed FY57- 735

Rabbits killed FY58-1117

We have myxomatosis on our west of Spey boundaries but the rabbits are too scarce for the successful spreading of the disease.

Voles have done much damage this year but the attack appears to be settling now.

Compartments 18 & 19 are being severely attacked by a disease which is killing off side branches at an alarming rate. This is now in the hands of the pathologist.

Cost of protection per acre FY 57 - 4/6
" " " " " FY 58 - 3/10½

Myxomatosis is having no effect on numbers or distribution of rabbits. There is a slight increase over last year's figures.

There are no Red Squirrels doing serious damage, and there are no Grey Squirrels existing in the area.

Deer damage is slight and occasional.

Fencing

Length of rabbit netting erected - NIL.

New fences	72 chains	) Stock fences
Fence repairs	78 chains	

Costs of fencing generally

The average Contractor requires £3 -15/- to £4 per chain for all-in stock fencing. We believe that we can do this job at a slightly better price than that but when we add P.C. overheads we are hard put to compete.

Salvage of fences is sometimes more costly than to give them away.

Effect of Myxomatosis on fencing - NIL.

Fellings Thinnings and Sales of Produce

Standing Sales are the order of the day here. Messrs Riddoch have the five year long-term thinning contract, and so far have been successful in buying all other lots offered.

Felling by power saw is more economic when the trees can be left leaning against unmarked trees for halfday ahead. The snedder then pulls down the tree as he requires it. This practice will have to be watched because it tends to loosen the trees which we are retaining.

Area Felled F.Y. 58 - 41.85 acres

Area Thinned FY 58 -165.75 acres

Mechanical Equipment

The 60 gallons of water carried with the Allman Pump on the Land Rover is too much for the springs. The Land Rover would require to be fitted with stronger springs at least at the rear. At present it has only eight inches clearance which is not much use on a hill.

The fire fighting unit is a first class piece of equipment.

Maintenance and repairs

The Mobile Mechanic deals with all of our major repairs and he is an excellent chap at his job.

Spares used to be a sore point but they are now produced through the mobile mechanic and offer no problem.

Developments in techniques and equipment

We store water in 600 gallon tanks erected on poles 9 feet high.

For the release of this water into lorry tanks we used screw valves. Some of these were damaged by frost, repaired, and damaged again to become unfit to repair.

We have now produced a frost proof fitting controllable from outside the tank which has been tested and found suitable. Full details of this fitting can be had on request.

General

I sometimes wonder whether a forest could be run on contract work. with the possible exception of fire protection, other protection and perhaps planting. It's an interesting thought in view of the savings which might be effected.



Head Forester.