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FORESTER'S ANNUAL REPORT F.Y. 63

SPEYMOOUTH FOREST

A. General Review

Long sustained snowfalls in the early part of the F.Y. flattened all vegetation, of the softer types, killing grasses, whins in some cases and even heather in many cases. The results of this were twofold:-

(1) The vegetation was very dry and extremely dangerous fire conditions arose even when the snow was only cleared in patches and this danger lasted for several weeks. In one fire during this period we lost 10 acres. A point of interest is that following the 10 acre fire the police satisfied themselves that a cigarette end thrown from a car caused the outbreak and I must agree that the vegetation condition makes this most likely.

(2) Our family of red-deer, which live on Castlehill area and feed on good grazings in the wood and turnips and potatoes belonging to the nearby farmers, found themselves without grass in the early spring and began to graze on Douglas fir 7 ft. high and to chew the bark of scots pines of a similar, or greater height at about 5' above ground where it hadn't yet roughened. Many hundreds of trees were affected and it appears to be the first year in which this has happened. This was not scraping by horns in an effort to remove "fur" as no shreds of bark were found. I imagine that the sap had started to rise in the trees while the surrounding vegetation was still very dry and the deer had sensed this and begun to eat the sappy material.

Following the very dry spring spell we have had much more than average rainfall and really dry spells have been scarce. This wet summer has increased the grass and weed growth tremendously and when one has over 500 acres of this type of weeding, it was very frustrating to find that an area weeded only 2 weeks earlier was requiring weeding again while other areas, just as urgent, had not yet been weeded once. Labour will require to be supplemented by schoolboys during summer holidays in F.Y. 64.

The severe blast conditions which prevailed over much of the early spring had a severe effect on plants on top of Whiteash and Slorachs Hills, particularly where the plants were showing through the snow. Plants most affected were P.C. and S.P.

There was some slight frost damage to the summer planted S.S. in the Aulthash area in late September. Fresh shoots on some dozen trees were showing frost damage.

B. The Year's Work

(1) Finance

Speymouth labour estimate was	£22,765
Speymouth expenditure was	18,911
Other forests expenditure was	5,303
Total spent	24,214

Brush burning Overspent by £757. Additional preparation needed to cope with summer planting and to get ahead of the Hydraulic tine which arrived earlier than anticipated. This was unestimated.

Planting Overspent by £503. This was due to the necessity of having to plant 101 acres on behalf of Aultmore Forest because conditions were too bad on their hill. A further 19 acres were planted as summer planting. The 120 acres were unestimated.

Drains New Underspent by £157. Labour urgently needed for weeding.

Beating Up Overspent by £214. Underestimated as noted in my annual report of F.Y. 62. In addition 19 acres of failed areas which had been re-planted were later classed as Beating Up.

Fences New Underspent by £64

Weeding Overspent by £1,122. This is where all the money saved on other heads went. An enquiry into the areas and amounts of weeding required revealed that we have over 500 acres under weeding some of which required weeding several times. We are already spending next year's money on this job. A map and a schedule for weeding are just as important as a thinning plan.

High pruning Overspent by £112. Using labour in bad snow conditions

Brashing Underspent by £100. We pooled this and pruning.

Drains Repair Underspent by £400. Labour required on weeding.

Fire Protection Underspent by £465. Weather condition made this possible.

Other Protection Underspent by £1,140. Labour used on brush burning and weeding. I hope I won't be sorry for this one!!

(2) Organisation, Staff, Labour and Training

Time work must continue to be the basis of all work here for the present.

Staff is - head Forester, a Forester and five Gangers, one of whom is in charge of the trapping team and another is in charge of thinning operation at Scootmore. A third ganger takes charge of the 15 - 20 men who are sent annually to Aultmore Forest. A number of Grade I men are used freely for supervision of squads.

Labour on the forest is as follows:-

- 5 Gangers
- 15 Grade I workmen
- 4 Grade II workmen
- 26 Grade III (Salmon Fishers)
- 4 Grade I trappers
- 1 Forest Clerkess
- 1 District Office Clerkess
- 1 District Office Cleaner
- 1 Tractor Driver (Mobile)

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If a proper relief system were in operation one Forester could run this forest using Gangers for supervision.

Training The tools instructor held a brashing course during the year but since we haven't done any great amount of brashing any gain is likely to have been lost by now.

(3) Developments in Technique

I should love to be able to put a paragraph in here but I have nothing to report.

(5) Seed Collection

We were scheduled to collect 15 bushels from Seed Stands. This was abandoned when four men produced a handful after half a day's work.

(6) Plantation

1. Establishment. As reported last year S.S. in mixture

is improving each year. The pure S.S. in heather shows no improvement and arrangements to spray with 2 - 4 - D Ester 50% by helicopter should be made soon.

2. Maintenance. The upkeep of drains programme was not completed due to the urgency of weeding operations. When are we going to get plants of a size which can be planted in grassy areas, where ploughing is impossible, and which will survive the weed growth between weedings? C.P's in all weedy areas have shown considerable losses this year.

3. Improvement. Reference last year's report on root development. There has been no further evidence of young trees blowing over.

4. Protection Fire. After the very dangerous spell early in the year, during which we had 4 fires and lost 10 acres of plantation, there was no real period of high fire danger. The money spent under this head was largely spent on routine protection measures.

5. Protection Other. During the year we destroyed 177 rabbits which were suffering from myxomatosis indicating that the disease has not yet died out. A further 815 rabbits were killed. 136 brown hares, 12 white hares, 6 adult foxes and 15 cubs were also killed during the year. I didn't spend £1,140 of the estimate on this head and I have probably carried the using of trappers on other work to the limit of what should be risked. The trappers have now resumed their normal duties.

(7) Production

1. Preparation and Extraction

Felling

Hardwoods by F.C.	3,991 c.ft.	
Hardwoods by Merchants	5,161 c.ft.	
		<hr/> 9,152 c.ft

Conifers by F.C.	1,602 c.ft.	(Roadline)
Conifers by Merchants	Nil	
		<hr/> 1,602 c.ft

Thinnings

Conifers by F.C.	Nil	
Conifers by Merchants	62,197 c.ft	
		<hr/> 62,197 c.ft

Grand Total 72,951

Clear fellings are confined to blown areas and scattered trees on acquired woodlands and both these and thinnings are being carried out according to plan. I make no comment on other timber operations because working is confined to the standing sale system.

2. Sale of produce, Markets and prices. Methods of sale are covered in 1. and any comment on prices and new outlets would be superfluous.

(9) Mechanical Equipment

Two Jo-Bu brush saws are in use on this forest and they go through a power of work when compared with hand tools. The Mobile Mechanic looks after repairs on these and all other machines which it would be pointless to list. Maintenance is carried out by the operators and drivers and the Mobile Mechanic does a spot check at irregular times in order to keep up the standard of work. Major jobs are sent to repair workshops.

(11) Working Plans

So far as I can see most of this work is completed and the writing up is all that remains.

(14) Sociological Aspects

Having read the last line of last year's report on this subject I can find nothing to add.

(15) Forest Influences

There will be no significant developments for a number of years unless we have a major flood or some such disaster.

(16) Amenity and Access

It has been decided by the Conservator that the Quarry garden, a one time local beauty spot, will be revived, in modest form, over the next 10 years. This will be welcomed locally as an attraction which has been sadly neglected since the Duke of Gordon handed it over to Crown Lands.


HEAD FORESTER

8-10-63