

WEATHER

From October to December in was open and mild. Snow and Frost started at the begining of January and lasted until the end of Febuary. March was mild, and April and May were hot and dry;practically no rain fell during these two months.June was very cold and overcast,(there was a hard frost on the night 2/3) July and August were dry but not very warm and September was mild.Drought conditions were such that wells dried up in June and did not flow until September.

DEGREE OF SUCCESSNurseries

Up to the end of April perfect weather conditions prevailled and all lifting, sowing and transplanting were completed by the first week in May, but the drought that followed badly affected the germination of the seed especially in the dry parts of the nurseries.

Plantations(New)

All programmes and additions were completed, but it is feared that where undercut 2 year seedlings were planted in dry areas quite a number of deaths have occurred.

Plantations (Old)

Most thinning programmes are up to date. This is lagely due to Messrs Wylie buying standing thinnings from Findon.

Labour

There was a surplus of labour in the Black Isle, and at Urray and Strathconon there was sufficient for normal programmes but at Urray these have been increased which meant that Findon had to send men over to help to plant and weed.

13. PLANTATION FORMED DUEING THE YEAR

All pbogrammes were completed.

Weather conditions were favourable for backend and spring planting. Spring and the flushing of trees were 2-3 weeks earlier than last year, and it is thought that some of the plants suffered due to the Spring drought. The frost on the night of 2/3 June damaged quite a number of S.S. N.S. and J.L. which had been planted in hollows.

It is not expected that there will be such a large death rate in undercut 2 year seedlings as in F.Y.51 but they have not survived nearly so well as the 1+1s.

14. PREVIOUS YEARS PLANTATIONS

(a) Beating up

Due to the shortage of plants beating-up was done on areas where the lack of plants defineately indicated that a large gap would result if no action were taken, and on these lines the operation was completed satisfacorilly.

(b) Progress in established plantations

Millbuie

Old "Granny" S.P. have been removed from plantations eastt of the Poyntzfield - Rosemarkie road, and it is intended to cut out the remainderin F.Y.53

Findon

Progress was made in ploughing up some of the failled areas in Culbokie wood. The ploughing outfit has done some very good work and it is intended that each year more of these gaps will be ploughed and replanted.

Kilcoy and Kessock

A cause of trouble in the young plantations is the growth of gorse and broom. To cut these out adds greatly to the weeding costs, but if it is neglected serious damage results, and this weeding will have to be continued until the plants can out-grow them.

Urray

The young Birch in P.50. had to be cut cut. Although it is a mostly operation it is a necessary one.

Strathconon

Apart from the heavy weeding of bracken the plantations are growing satisfacorilly.

The supply of plants worked very smoothly. With the unexpectedly high yield of P.C. 1 year seedlings at Kilcoy large numbers were sent to other Conservancies and to England.

There were virtually no plants destroyed.

17. SEED SOWING AND LINING-OUT

S.P. sown in both Heathland and agricultural nurseries has grown well and with a high germination. S.S. at Kilcoy (Littleburn and Belton) has been ~~disappointing~~ disappointing the quality and germination on good patches have been satisfactory, but due to the dry conditions other patches have been poor. E.L. of German origin yielded approx. 17000 plants per lb. of seed and were nice plants. Home collected seed produced a better plant but the germination resulted in approx 1800 to 3000 plants per lb. of seed. Seed however from Ardross produced approx 10000 per lb. of seed.

Other species have produced good results.

Lining-out

Back-end lining-out was done on a smaller scale than in F.Y. 51. At both Findon and Millbuie^{SP} Ident. No 48/11E was lined out together with local collected seed. In both nurseries 48/11E were miserable whereas the other was quite satisfactory. The Snow fell before the hard frost set in and this may have prevented "frost lift".^{LINING OUT} On the whole growth has been good and losses have occurred mainly in certain Ident. Nos.

18. STOCKS

E.L. and D.F. are in short supply for ~~P~~ 53 but these deficiencies will be made up with N.S.

19. PLANTATION WORK

The main factor in the silvicultural establishment of plantation is the scarcity of certain species. To overcome this planting distances have been increased and where double furrow ploughing is done every ninth ~~new~~ furrow is missed

Choice of species

Although S.P. is the main species in the Black Isle the practise is to mix in other species wherever possible, and in any area where there is a soil change a different species is planted.

Age and type of plant

2+1 ex Agricultural or 1+1 ex Heathland are still the ideal for planting.

Cleaning and Thinning

These problems will very soon become serious.

If horses are not going to be available SOMEBODY HAS GOT TO INVENT SOME MACHINE AND METHOD NOW

Ploughing equipment

The ploughing results are good. Areas have been ploughed which at one time were thought impossible to plough.

Millbuie The result of greencropping was very disappointing. This may have been due to the poor quality of the seed or to the weather but the result was that very little humus was returned to the soil. The Seedbeds sown this year have come up very nicely and weeding has kept pace with the weed growth. With the exception of certain Ident. Nos the lining-out has been fairly good.

It is considered that losses can be cut by seedlings being transferred to Millbuie in boxes and then being sheughed in in the proximity of the lines. It is hoped in this way to cut out unnecessary handling of plants.

The weed-killer experiment holds out great hopes but until the full results are known it should be treated with caution.

Bindon

Lining-out at Mounteagle has been very good. It is considered that this is largely due to the fact that the seedlings came from the heathland nursery on the other side of the road and suffered no damage in lifting and transporting.

Kilcoy

The Littleburns were sown with S.S. and on the whole the results were disappointing as approx. 50 to 60 % of the area was fully productive, the remainder suffering from drought. Where the seedlings have grown they are good lining-out plants. It is considered that the failures are due to the lack of moisture retaining properties in the soil and it is hoped that the application of fibrous peat will assist this.

General Points

General Points

If a heathland bed has to be "picked over" and the remainder left for a year the plants which are left should have ample room for developement.

Where grading has to be done the best plants should not be taken out of the beds and then the remainder lifted. The whole bed should be lifted and the grading done.

In uniform beds seedlings should be lifted and packed into boxes without being counted and graded. They should then be dispatched to the lining-out nursery and sheughed in as near to the lines as possible. This wuld cut out a double count and ensure minimum handling.

Where counting and grading is necessary proper huts should be made and in cold weather they should be heated with a small stove. With a properly designed hut it would be virtually impossible for the plants to dry out. In this way money would be saved and grading would become more accurate.

21. EXPERIMENT AND RESEARCH

21. Experiment and Research (cont)

Five experiments were carried out in the Black Isle.

(a) Saw-dust and peat decomposition

Ten bays 4' X 6' X 3' were built at Kilcoy 6 being filled with saw-dust and 4 with peat. Activators used were Agricoloid, Bio-fluid, Ammonia and Nitro-Chalk. As these were laid down in August it is too early to draw any conclusions.

(b) Watering with Burnt Ale (ex. Distillery)

About 2 galls. in 2 applications were watered in July onto a square yard of Thuja 2 yr. seedlings. The main result was that it acted as a selective weed killer and almost killed off the heather, the only result to the plants was that in late September they looked a better colour than the untreated plants. A experiment on the District Officers lawn produced striking results in growth and colour. It is considered that this might well be worth further trial.

(c) Watering and date of sowing in nurseries

The object of these experiments was to find out if soaking of seed for a week prior to sowing was beneficial whether watering of the beds made any difference and what was the effect of date of sowing. These were tried out at Littleburn No 2 Mounteagle and Blackstand. Soaking of seed had no apparent benefit Sowing between 26 March and 30 April produced even results but sowing on 14 and 28 May produced poor results.

Watering of beds had no marked effect at Blackstand At mounteagle the watered beds were slightly better than the control, but at Littleburn the difference in growth and germination was outstanding.

Watering of beds by means of the wayjax fire pump might have been effective if the soil had not been

22. FIRE PROTECTION

Three fires occurred in plantations. One at Kessock burnt about a quarter of an acre along the right of way behind the Foresters house, luckily the grass only smouldered and most of the trees survived.

At Kilcoy the railway engine was responsible for two fires in Comp. 47 near the saw-mill these burnt about half an acre in total

The weather during April and May was extremely dangerous for fires as there was practically no rain and the days were hot and sunny and often a strong wind was blowing.

The fire-tower at Findon (Mounteagle) was not in use as there was no telephonic communication. It is expected that the Post Office will connect up before 1953.

The bulldozing of rides at Millbuie has greatly helped the accessibility of blocks and compartments, and it is hoped that this work will continue during F.Y. 53.

All equipment worked well when practises were undertaken.

In cases where water will have to be transported on lorries anti-splash boards are being made to prevent wastage.

23. OTHER PROTECTION

Apart from the damage in the Fishtail section (ex Millbuie) by rabbits and hares these pests are kept very well under control. (It was interesting to note that the damage in the ploughed ground at the Fishtail was negligible compared to the unploughed ground.

At Millbuie and Kessock it was noticed that just after the E.L. had flushed about 6 inches of the end of some of the twigs were dead. On examination a small beetle was found; the damage was not severe.