

F.Y.55 Annual Report

Black Isle District

5. The Year's Work

The following are the monthly rainfall figures, in inches, as recorded at Channonry Point:-

Oct	5.18
Nov	1.77
Dec	4.70
Jan	.98
Feb	1.73
Mar	.75
Apr	.88
May	2.15
June	1.02
July	.42
Aug	.46
Sept	1.66

Total for the Forest Year = 21.70 as compared with 23.12 in F.Y. 54

Snow 11th-22nd Jan about 6 inches fell and it had melted within two weeks. 14th - 28th Feb there was over a foot at Munlochy and serious drifting occurred, luckily the snow was dry and powdery when it fell and it did not stick to the branches of the trees and very little damage has been reported. There was a fall of snow on 18th May

Drought From the 14th May to 1st Sept there were only 4 days in which more than .12 inches of rain fell (.26 on 13th June, .18 on 30th June, .27 1st July .38 on 8th Aug.) This means that for three and a half months there was virtually no rain. There has been serious water shortage in the Black Isle and most springs have dried out.

Autumn. The frost on the night 26/27 Sept 1954 caused a great deal of damage to the 1 year beds of SS in Kilcoy (Littleburn) with the result that half the plants were useless. It was so wet during the period that very little back-end lining-out could be done as the ground was unworkable.

Winter. There were spells of hard frost and on several nights 32 degrees of frost were recorded.

Spring. It was late this year, and by the time the lining-out and sowing had been completed in mid May the S.P. and E.L. had only just started to grow which was 2-3 weeks later than F.Y.54.

Summer. Dry and hot. Luckily from the nursery point of view the drought did not start until the lining-out and sowing had been completed, and in the seed-beds the taproots were always in moist soil. It is estimated that 1 year seedlings have twice the length of taproot as compared with a normal year, and it is hoped they will make side shoots this autumn.

In the plantations the drought has had marked effects on the J.L. Where they were planted on the dry sandy gravel knowes many had died by the middle of August. Other species have grown fairly normally

As a comparison with last year, in which there were long wet periods, this year the plantations have, with the exception of the J.L., grown normally, whereas in the nurseries at the end of September most species had grown better than last year and the E.L. had grown about twice as much.

General Forest Notes

Millbuie. Parts of P.38 were cleaned and brashed; this might be slightly early for S.P. but the results of late de-wolfing in Kessock Forest have shown the necessity of getting in early to do this operation.

Findon. Thinnings of Bogbuie has started although Comp. 1-9 which were sold to Wylie four years ago have not yet been touched.

Kilcoy. The thinning programme was not completed due to cleaning for planting taking longer than expected. As there is no planting programme for F.Y.56 it is hoped to catch up with the programme.

Kessock. Operations have been carried out according to plan.

12. Plantations made in the Year under Report

On the whole the age and size of plants supplied have been adequate. In some places it would have been an advantage to have had bigger plants, especially where there was strong whin growth on the area. The drought of the summer has caused some deaths in localized patches on dry and not too well vegetated areas. These have dried out badly and caused death.

Preparation of ground at Millbuie (Flowerburn) included the clearing of scrub and ploughing. This was all completed well in advance of planting. At Kilcoy the scrub clearing was greater than expected; in Holywood Birch growing with J.L.(AP17) had to be cut in order to plant a more profitable crop. At Baywood where there was older hardwoods the felling took longer than expected.

Allocation of species was adequate.

Weeding in these areas has not been serious.

13 Previous Year's Plantations

(a) Beating Up has been on the whole fairly normal, but the S.P. in some cases has been on the small side, this applies to areas where there is a strong whin and broom growths in Kessock and Kilcoy. Plants for B.U. must be big 2+1 or about 12 inches tall so that the plants have a chance to compete in their first year with these weeds, if small plants are used the competition is too great and they are smothered.

(b) Weeding. This is still an expensive item at Kessock and Kilcoy, but it is hoped that it will be unnecessary as the trees are starting to smother the weeds.

Cleaning and Brashing was started in P.38 & 39 Millbuie. The system used was to put in the squad telling them to brash only the best formed trees. This meant that there was no marking to be done by the Forester and the result allowed access through the plantation. The unbrashed trees were mainly wolves, suppressed and badly formed ones and it was quite simple for the Forester to mark the cleaning. the result was excellent and when the squad gets more practise it is hoped that the cost of the first cleaning will be reduced.

It is vital that S.P. be dewolfed at an early stage as the harmful effect of a late cleaning is being felt at Kessock.

In spite of the drought there have only been three fires in the plantations. 2 at Millbuie which only burnt from the road to the firetrace, and one which burnt half an acre on Ormond Hill in Kilcoy. There have however been numerous cases where either some of the squad or the Forester have had to fight a fire in the near proximity of the march, the most usual case being the stationing of men on the railway line at Kilcoy whenever a train was passing and a strong wind blowing from the south. x

The cost of Fire-protection per acre of plantation per forest was:- x

Millbuie	-/10
Findon	1/6
Kilcoy	1/10
Kessock	2/3

It would greatly help if fire pumps were standardized in order to help in interchanging parts between units.

There are two types of pumps required in the Black Isle (1) The Allman which is very useful for burning vegetation such as heather and gorse, it is very economical with water and has a very good wetting effect. The use of this type of pump which can be used on a Landrover which can trail a 50 gall tank was found to be invaluable at Millbuie. (2) A colume pump such as Scammell, Wayjax or Hathaway. In the Black Isle Millbuie has a Scammell, Findon has a Hathaway, and Kilcoy has a Wayjax. If all the volume pumps in the Black Ilse could be of the same make interchange of parts would be very useful.

Should a fire get into the plantation the transporting of water will be a major problem. If more rides can be bulldozed to make fairweather roads the task of fighting a fire would be very much easier.

Rabbits Myxomatosis which started in July-Aug 1954 has spread throughout the whole of the Black Isle and has killed nearly all the rabbits. The Black Isle has now been issued with a Rabbit Clearance Order and it is hoped that the farmers will start this back-end to kill the few that have survived. Before the order came into effect our trappers were working within a half mile strip outside our fence. They blocked up holes and snared and trapped our neighbours areas.

A pests officer has been appointed by the D.O.A.S. to help in the clearance but it is felt that until there is a prosecution under the Act only the better farmers will try and rid their farms of the last rabbit.

Hares. Both white and brown are numerous in the District and efforts are being made to keep them under control.

Roe Deer. These are on the increase, especially at Millbuie where P.C. is a particular favourite and many have been barked.

Birds. The small migratory birds such as the Finches did not cause as much damage in the 1 year seed-beds as last years. This might be due to the point that they passed either before ^{germination} or as is more probable, after the seedcap had been cast. The Capercaillie is still a very serious problem in the heathland nurseries of Kilcoy. One hen that was killed was found to have 670 SS seedling tops and 340 seedlings ~~with~~ which had previously been eaten in her crop.

Insects. The Looper Moth seems to have reverted to its normal few; the pupae count made by the Research Branch did not disclose more than the occasional one per square yard.

Fungi. There have been a great crop of ground fungi, they nearly all appeared after the light rains which fell in September. One disturbing factor occurred in the S.P. stack in rides at Kessock. Thinnings of S.P. started in Allanglack Wood and

dragged out by April 55. The logs were stacked just after they were felled in bings of 20-30 stems. They were sold at rideside in July and at the end of September when they were being conveyed they were found to be rotten. There were no signs on the ends of the logs but it was noticed that the bark was falling off and that there was a white fungus on the stems which had lost weight and were light to handle. This occurred mainly to the East end of the rides where the ends were closed by trees, and it is thought that the size of the bings,,lack of ventilation in the rides and the hot weather conditions were ideal for the fungus to work so rapidly.

Meteorological. Apart from the information given in Sect. 5 there is nothing of special note.

The cost of protection, other than Fire, per Forest per acre of plantation was:-

Millbuie	2/2
Findon	3/3
Kilcoy	4/2
Kessock	3/-

The resurvey of Millbuie Forest has been rather slower than expected, but it is hoped that it will be complete by the end of F.Y.56.

The stock maps including species, volume categories, etc for Findon, Kilcoy and Kessock are complete and the Plans of Operation showing the volume of the growing stock are also complete for the three Forests.

Record Form 4

SUMMARY CONTROL SHEET

Name of Forest

F.C. Conservancy

Plan of Operations dated

File No.

Areas in acres to nearest tenth

Volumes where applicable

Forest Year	Operation	C. Fwd.		Total for Year				Cumulative Total to End of Year				Completed Cumulative Totals to Date		Explanation of Difference and of Departure from Routine or Prescribed Procedure		
		Completed Cumulative Totals		Prescribed (Plan of Operations Form 4)		Completed (Record Forms 1-3)		Excess (+) or Deficit (-)		Pre-scribed		Completed			Excess (+) or Deficit (-)	
		Area	Vol.	Area	Vol.	Area	Vol.	Area	Vol.	Area	Vol.	Area	Vol.		Area	Vol.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)						
1st	KESDOC															
19..	(1) Planting, Sowing or Natural Regeneration	.5		4.1		+.1		4.5		4.6		4.6				
	(2) Thinning	63.8	12484	1024	14000	953	18602	7.1	1602	1644	31600	159.1	31086			
	(3) Felling	.2	58	.3	570	+.5	570			.5	628	.5	628			
2nd	FLANDON or Natural Regeneration			3.7				3.7		3.7		3.7				
19..	(2) Thinning & Cleaning	x		1480	23300	88.6	16679	59.4	6621	1480	23300	88.6	16679			
	(3) Felling															
3rd	KIKCOY			130.3				130.3		130.3		130.3				
19..	(1) Planting, Sowing or Natural Regeneration	x		220.2	24639	136.3	37019	83.9	9380	220.2	24639	136.3	37019			
	(2) Thinning															
	(3) Felling			21.0	19961	21.0	19661			21.0	19961	21.0	19961			
4th	MILK RUIE			211.2				211.2		211.2		211.2				
19..	(1) Planting, Sowing or Natural Regeneration	x		8.0	3540	8.0	3540			8.0	3540	8.0	3540			
	(2) Thinning			45.0	4300	45.0	4300			45.0	4300	45.0	4300			
	(3) Felling															
5th	(1) Planting, Sowing or Natural Regeneration															
19..	(2) Thinning															
	(3) Felling															

x New Plan of Operations