

Proctor

Visit of
**JOINT INDUSTRIAL
TRADES COUNCIL**
to the
COWAL AREA
on
12th - 13th May, 1964

T I M E T A B L E

May 12th

9.15 a.m.	Leave St. Enoch Station, Glasgow, for Renfrew Airport. Private coach to be used
9.45 a.m.	Arrive airport to pick up air passengers
9.50 a.m.	Leave Renfrew for Benmore via Arrochar and Rest-and-be-Thankful
1.00 p.m.	Lunch at Benmore House
2.00 p.m.	Leave Benmore House for Benmore Forest to see pulp working and leave for Glenfinart
4.00 p.m.	Arrive Glenfinart nursery
4.30 p.m.	Tea at Ardentinnny Hotel
5.00 p.m.	Leave for Dunoon along coast road
	Accommodation at MacColl's Hotel
	Private room for meeting after dinner.

May 13th

9.30 a.m.	Leave Dunoon by boat through the Kyles of Bute for Tighnabruaich (refreshments available on boat)
11.30 a.m.	Tour of Tighnabruaich Forest - leave for Glenbranter Forest
	Packed lunch en route
2.00 p.m.	Glenbranter Forest - Produce working and road-making
4.00 p.m.	Tea Creggans Inn
4.30 p.m.	Leave for Dunoon
5.30 p.m.	Leave Dunoon for Gourock by car ferry
6.45 p.m.	Arrive Renfrew Airport for 7 p.m. flight to London
7.00 p.m.	Passengers for Glasgow leave on bus

GENERAL NOTES ON THE COWAL AREA

1. Introduction

The Cowal Peninsula of Argyll comprises the territory bounded on the west by Loch Fyne, on the east by Loch Long, on the south by the Kyles of Bute and the Firth of Clyde and on the north by the mountain pass through Glenkinglas from Cairndow to Arrochar. Within this area there are thirteen forests, namely Ardgartan, Benmore, Corlarach, Glenbranter, Glendaruel, Glenfinart, Loch Eck, Strathlachlan and Tighnabruaich with three small forests outwith the peninsula at Garelochhead, Whitelee and Leapmoor and the forest of Glenrickard on the Island of Arran.

The total holding of the Forestry Commission in this area was at 1st October 1963 100,206 acres of which 34,883 acres were planted and some 13,900 remained to plant. Administratively this area is divided into two districts each supervised by a District Officer.

2. Area Statement

The allocation of land owned or leased by the Forestry Commission for (a) Forestry and (b) Agriculture was at 1st October 1963:-

	<u>Planted acres</u>	<u>To be Planted acres</u>	<u>Nursery acres</u>	<u>Total acres</u>
(a) Allocated to Forestry	34,883	13,900	62	48,845
	<u>Forest Workers' Holdings acres</u>	<u>Farms, etc. acres</u>		<u>Total acres</u>
(b) Allocated to Agriculture	717	50,644		51,361

3. Climate

The climate is typical of the western seaboard of Scotland with no extremes of heat or cold and with very high rainfall. Annual figures show the average rainfall to be between 80 and 90 inches. Snow is infrequent and does not generally lie for long below 1,000 feet. Any hard dry weather is generally experienced in the Spring thereby increasing the danger from fire. Late frosts are frequent and damaging; winter gales are common and are to be feared

from the thinning stage onwards due to the high rainfall and proximity of rock to the surface.

4. Historical

Prior to the establishment of the Forestry Commission at Glenbranter in 1921, the Cowal area consisted almost entirely of hill sheep farms which carried a low sheep stock with very few cattle.

The first acquisition in the Cowal area was the purchase of land at Glenbranter in 1921 from the estate of the celebrated Scottish comedian, Sir Harry Lauder. From this beginning the present position has developed by the purchase of suitable farms as these came on the market. In 1925 the greater part of the land which is now Benmore Forest was gifted to the State by the late Mr. H. G. Younger and in 1929 Benmore House was gifted by Mr. Younger for the furtherance of forestry education and a Forester Training School was established.

The major part of the Benmore Estate is under the administration of the Forestry Commission but the policies are controlled by the Younger Trust and the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. These policies occupy an area of about 100 acres in the vicinity of Benmore House and are open to the public. The policies are managed as an annex to the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, specifically for rhododendrons and conifers. Its great value lies in the fact that a large number of plants, conifers in particular, cannot be grown in Edinburgh because of smoke pollution or because of the more severe east coast climate.

In 1936 the forests of Benmore, Loch Eck, Glenbranter, Glenfinart and Ardgartan along with other privately owned estates and the lands of Glasgow Corporation at Ardgool were designated The Argyll National Forest Park. This was the first venture of this kind in this country and has proved a great success in encouraging townspeople to visit the country and to enjoy some of the benefits to be derived from the study of nature and from an outdoor life. In the Forest Park area which covers 58,000 acres there are now two Youth Hostels, camping grounds and a caravan park.

In 1946 part of Strathlachlan Estate was acquired to form Strathlachlan Forest and part of the hill land remained under the management of the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. In 1955 a Hill Farming Research Unit was established on this land at Lephinmore under the management of the Hill Farming Research Organisation.

5. Tree Species

The west coast climate and site conditions are well suited to N.W. American conifers. Sitka Spruce has always been more widely planted than any other species. Up until 1940 Norway Spruce was a more popular choice than it was in later years and today it is only planted on the very best sites. Pinus contorta, Hybrid and Japanese Larch are suitable as pioneers on the more difficult and drier sites. Abies species and larches provide amenity within large blocks of Sitka Spruce. On high ground where exposure is critical there is no evidence to show that any species will grow so well as Sitka Spruce and Pinus contorta.

6. Protection

Fire dangers in the Cowal area can be serious in Spring when vegetation very quickly dries and considerable muirburning is carried on. However, most of the area is remote and sparsely populated so that risks are comparatively low. The tourist season occurs, apart from Easter, after the more severe Spring danger is past. The construction of new forest roads has facilitated access for fire fighting.

Young plantations must be protected from damage by rabbits, deer and other vermin, and also from sheep. Rabbits are tending to increase in numbers after being almost exterminated by myxomatosis. Deer, both red and roe, are present in considerable numbers but are controlled by selective shooting during the open seasons and it has not been necessary to resort to deer fencing.

7. Planting Programmes

Within the two Cowal administration districts there was still some 13,900 acres of plantable land at the beginning of this year and this is being planted at the rate of 1,500 acres per annum. Within the confines of the Cowal Peninsula however, most of the forests are now planted up and by 1965 only two will still have an afforestation programme (Glendaruel, Tighnabruaich).

8. Thinning and Felling Programmes

During the 1939-45 war very small amounts of thinning and clear felling of mature woods was done. After the war thinning started on a small scale due to shortage of labour and problems of economic extraction, but the quantities of timber produced since then have steadily increased as shown overleaf.

5 Year Period

Timber Produced

1948-52		550,000 h.ft.	(18,000 tons)
1953-57		2,994,000 "	(100,000 ")
1958-62		2,663,000 "	(90,000 ")
1963-67	(estimated)	4,141,000 "	(140,000 ")

Extraction of timber from stump has been almost exclusively by horse until the recent introduction of the Isachsen winch. This double drum machine is mounted on a tractor and is capable of hauling timber a distance of 200 yards to the roadside. The horse will continue in use on a much reduced scale in future, working only in parts of the forest where the winch cannot reach.

The Cowal peninsula comes within the supply zone for the Fort William Pulp Mill and in 1966, when this comes into production, it is estimated that 936,000 hoppus feet of pulpwood (31,000 tons) will be despatched from Cowal. Approximately a third of this quantity (325,000 hoppus feet) will be obtained by the clear felling of unsatisfactory crops.

9. Utilisation of Produce

So far all the produce from the Cowal area has been sold for sawlogs and pitwood. Sawlogs are cut from the butts of trees while smaller poles and tops are sold as pitwood for the preparation of pitprops.

By 1952 increasing supplies of small softwood were coming onto the market and it was considered that this presented an opportunity to prepare and market supplies of home grown timber. The Cowal Ari-Sawmilling Co., Ltd., was therefore formed in July 1953 and an "Ari" sawmill, developed by Swedish specialists, was set up at Glenbranter Forest in 1954. Since then the local forests have played an important part in supplying the mill with a steadily increasing proportion of their annual requirements. The annual intake is approximately 240,000 hoppus feet (8,000 tons) and at present the Cowal forests supply more than half of this quantity.

The demand for pitwood and mining timbers has fallen considerably in recent years and this has necessitated a general reduction in thinning programmes. However, with the advent of the Fort William pulp mill, a new market for the same class of produce is assured.

10. Labour

The labour force in the Cowal area is now 318 some of which are

employed on the construction of forest roads, Estate work and on the maintenance of mechanical equipment. In addition there are some 30 contractors working in the area and a varying number of timber merchants' employees.

11. Estate Management

The number and type of tenancies in the area are:-

<u>Tenancies</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Area acres</u>
Forest worker Holdings	49	717
Farms	22	35,874
Grazing lands	53	
Totals	124	36,591

In addition there are 22 Foresters' houses, 137 Workers' houses and a further 37 houses mainly substandard which are let to merchants, contractors and other persons who are not Commission employees. The turnover of tenants in the Cowal area is approximately 10%.

12. Roads

It will be evident to visitors to the Cowal area that the steep and rocky sides of the valleys present many road construction problems. One mile of road is required for approximately 100 acres of forest so that the eventual total requirement of forest roads in the area is 450 miles. This construction of roads is done by forest labour, often using hired plant and machinery, and to date 177 miles have been completed and work proceeds at the rate of eight miles per annum.

BENMORE FOREST
(as at 1.10.63)

1. Supervision

Benmore Forest is in the South Cowal District under Mr. W. B. Sutherland, District Officer, Mr. J. Jackson, Head Forester in charge, has two assistants.

2. Area and Planting Programme

Benmore Forest extends to 9,300 acres of which 3,266 acres have been afforested with 280 acres remaining to plant. The planting programme is 80 acres per annum carried out partly by students from the Forester Training School. There is a nursery of 18 acres and the balance of the land is used for various agricultural purposes.

3. Timber Production

The thinning of the acquired woods has been in progress for some years but the thinning of Forestry Commission plantations did not begin until 1946. Production has for some time been at the rate of 70-80,000 hoppus feet per annum but this will be increased in 1966 to 150,000 hoppus feet. There are a number of older acquired woods which are now mature. The poorest of these are now being felled while the best stands are being retained as long as possible because of their special interest and amenity value.

4. Roads

All plantations in production now have a complete road system except on small areas where ground conditions make road construction economically impossible.

5. Staff and Housing

The permanent staff on the forest consists of some 38 men, some occupy the six holdings and seventeen houses on the forest and there are additionally eighteen houses let to non-service tenants. The Forest Workers who do not occupy Forestry Commission houses come from the adjoining villages or from the nearby town of Dunoon.

6. Benmore Arboretum

One of the main interests in Benmore lies in the plantations and specimen trees which were planted on the Estate by the late

Mr. Younger and the previous owner, Mr. James Duncan.

The specimen trees, mainly north-west American species are scattered throughout the policies but can be seen at their best in the Arboretum which will be visited. These were planted during the years 1871 and 1872 and are approximately 93 years old.

7. Kilmun Arboretum and Forest Plots

181 acres of the forest is managed by the Research Branch for the growing of groups and plots of as many unusual tree species as possible. Plantings began in 1930 and increasing interest is now attaching to this project which now includes 275 separate plots and groups.

8. Forester Training School

In 1929 Mr. Younger gifted Benmore House to the nation for the furtherance of forestry education and the Forester Training School was established at Benmore in that year. Since 1929 approximately 460 Foresters have been trained at Benmore. The Course is for two years and includes both theoretical and practical training with accommodation for 30 trainees.

GLENFINART FOREST
(as at 1.10.63)

1. Supervision

Glenfinart is in the South Cowal District under Mr. W. B. Sutherland, District Officer.

Mr. R. G. Murray, Head Forester, is in charge with three assisting staff.

2. Area and Planting Programme

The total area of land at Glenfinart is 8,712 acres. All available land, totalling, 3,242 acres, has been planted. The remaining 5,470 acres are used for forest workers' holdings or agricultural grazings. In addition there is a Nursery made up of three separate blocks totalling 44 acres.

3. Timber Production

Thinning of the plantations has been proceeding at the rate of 70,000 hoppus feet per annum. In 1966 production will be increased to 150,000 hoppus feet largely to supply the Fort William Pulp Mill.

The very rugged nature of Glenfinart Forest presents extraction problems and some 10% of the area now in the production stage is inaccessible for normal working. Some of these areas have already been scheduled for clear felling as pulpwood.

4. Roads

22 miles of road have now been constructed, some of which have presented our engineers with considerable problems in the form of steep and rocky faces broken by deep ravines.

5. Staff and Housing

The labour force amounts to 3 gangers and 38 workers most of whom are housed locally. The Commission owns 9 flourishing forest workers' holdings and a further 18 workers' houses.

6. Nursery

Glenfinart is one of the main nurseries in the west of the Conservancy for the production of both seedlings and transplants. It is fully mechanised and has a lining out programme of some $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 million plants and some eight acres are devoted to seedbeds.

TIGHNABRUAICH FOREST

1. Supervision

Tighnabruaich Forest is in North Cowal District under Mr. J. A. Goodlet, District Officer. The Forester in charge is Mr. N. Robertson.

2. Area and Planting Programme

Tighnabruaich Forest extends to some 8,853 acres of which 1,817 acres have been planted since 1955. There are 3,081 acres left to plant with a programme of approximately 250 acres per annum. 3,955 acres will eventually be left for agriculture in three farms.

3. Timber Production

None of the plantations formed by the Forestry Commission is yet at the thinning stage.

4. Roads

Four miles of forest road have been constructed in young planting areas for access and fire protection purposes.

5. Staff and Housing

The present labour force is 14 and there is one Forester Supervisor in charge.

There are three Forest Workers' Holdings and two other houses for workers on the forest.

STRATHLACHLAN FOREST

1. Supervision

Strathlachlan Forest is in North Cowal District under Mr. J. A. Goodlet, District Officer, Mr. A. Gillies is the Forester in charge.

2. Area and Planting Programme

Of the total area acquired (7,615 acres) 2,743 acres have been planted to date. There is no more land immediately available for planting, but some 266 acres at present managed by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland may be handed over to the Forestry Commission in 1966. Then there will be 4,606 acres remaining with agriculture. This includes the area of Lephinmore Farm, a Hill Farm Research centre.

Meanwhile work is concentrated on the maintenance of the young plantations.

3. Timber Production

None of the plantations is as yet at the production stage. First thinnings will commence about 1970.

4. Roads

2½ miles of forest road have already been constructed for reasons of access and fire protection.

5. Staff and Housing

The present labour force is 11 and this is adequate for the maintenance work in hand.

There are two Forest workers' Holdings and nine other houses for workers.

GLENBRANTER FOREST

1. Supervision

Glenbranter Forest is in North Cowal District under Mr. J. A. Goodlet, District Officer, Mr. D. J. MacRae, Head Forester in charge, has three assistants.

2. Area and Planting Programme

Of the total area acquired (9,073 acres) 4,192 acres have been planted and there are 500 acres remaining to plant. The planting programme this year is 200 acres.

Planting started in 1922 and Glenbranter is therefore the oldest of the Forestry Commission forests in the Cowal area.

3. Timber Production

Glenbranter is the most productive of the Cowal forests and some 2,500 acres have now reached the thinning stage. Production from thinnings over the past ten years has averaged 235,000 hoppus feet per annum (or approximately 7,000 tons). Markets have been mainly pitwood and sawlogs, the smaller dimension material supplying the former and the larger butt cuts from the bigger trees the latter. Glenbranter Forest has played a major part in satisfying the demand for logs at the Cowal Ari Sawmill. For this year production is estimated at 323,000 hoppus feet, the work to be shared between forest workers, contractors and timber merchants.

In 1966 production on the forest will be doubled by clear fellings in the poorer crops in addition to the normal thinning programme. All the smaller material will be diverted from pitwood markets to the Fort William pulp mill and sawlogs will be sent to the Cowal Ari Sawmill.

4. Roads

So far 50 miles of forest roads have been constructed and all thinning areas are now considered fully roaded. A few more miles will be required later as the younger plantations develop. Reconstruction work is at present in progress to improve the overall standard and safety of the roads before the boom of pulp traffic commences.

5. Staff and Housing

The present forest labour force consists of 25 forest workers and 20 contractors (including six employed by timber merchants on standing sales). In addition there are five employees at the area mechanical workshop.

There are 14 Forest Workers' Holdings and 18 houses for forest workers.

6. Cowal Ari Sawmill

Mention has already been made in the introductory notes of the establishment of this modern sawmill in 1954. The Company suffered in the early years of working from the shortage of suitably skilled men. This has been overcome by the erection of new houses at Strachur by the Argyll County Council. The tour will pass this new housing scheme.

LOCH ECK FOREST

1. Supervision

Loch Eck Forest is in North Cowal District under the control of Mr. J. A. Goodlet, District Officer. The Forester in charge is Mr. A. M. Stuart, who has one assistant.

2. Area and Planting Programme

Of the 5,501 acres of land acquired by the Forestry Commission 2,393 acres have been planted with 25 acres remaining to plant. The remaining 3,083 acres are used for agriculture. The planting programme is on a very reduced scale and will be completed within the next few years.

3. Timber Production

At the end of the Second World War thinning was started in Loch Eck Forest on a fairly heavy scale. Production has fluctuated a good deal however owing to the variability of markets which have been mainly for pit props, and some sawlogs for the Cowal Ari Sawmill. The average outturn from thinnings over the past ten years has been 53,000 hoppus feet per annum. In recent years, with the decline in the demand for pitwood, thinning has necessarily been below potential but the impending pulp mill at Fort William will shortly demand stepping up production to full capacity. For this forest year the volume from thinnings is estimated at 81,000 hoppus feet.

4. Roads

25 miles of road have been constructed on the forest and the area is now considered fully roaded. Reconstruction work is at present in progress to improve the overall standard and safety of the roads before the boom of pulp traffic commences.

5. Staff and Housing

At present Loch Eck employs seven forest workers and six contractors.

There are eight houses for forest workers and one Forest Worker's Holding.

ARDGARTAN FOREST

1. Supervision

Ardgartan is in North Cowal District under the control of Mr. J. A. Goodlet, District Officer. Mr. R. S. Angus, Head Forester in charge, is assisted by two Foresters and an Assistant Forester.

2. Area and Planting Programme

The total land area of Ardgartan is 20,929 acres of which 6,862 acres are under plantations. The remaining 200 acres plantable land will be afforested this year. The rest of the ground, mostly unplatable high tops, is allotted to hill grazing.

Planting started at Ardgartan in 1925 at about 100 acres per annum rising to 300 acres then falling off at the outbreak of the war. During the war years there was very little planting but approximately 300 acres have been planted annually since then.

3. Timber Production

2,500 acres of plantation are now at the thinning stage. Production from thinnings over the past ten years has averaged 71,000 hoppus feet per annum (or approximately 2,000 tons). Markets have been mainly pitwood and sawlogs. This year production is estimated at 102,000 hoppus feet, the work to be shared between forest workers and timber merchants.

In 1966 production will be doubled when the forest will be concerned with the supply of pulpwood to Fort William.

4. Roads

33 miles of forest roads have already been constructed and most of the thinning areas are now accessible. The annual programme is four miles. Terrain is very uneven and road layout and construction are difficult. Reconstruction work is at present in progress before the boom of pulp traffic commences.

5. Staff and Housing

The labour force at Ardgartan consists of 43 forest workers and six timber merchants' employees. There are 28 houses and 15 Forest Workers' Holdings.

6. Caravan and Camping Facilities

The Forestry Commission have established a Caravan Park at Ardgartan on the shores of Loch Long and have installed modern site facilities. In addition a field near to the village of Arrochar has been set aside as a camping ground. These facilities are under the control of a Warden during the season. The number of persons who used these sites during 1963 was nearly 43,000.

