

A tree to mark Forestry jubilee

The diamond jubilee of the Forestry Commission was celebrated at South Conservancy headquarters in Dumfries on Friday morning when, fittingly, a young tree was planted in the grounds to mark the occasion. It was fitting, too, that the planting ceremony should be performed by a former South Conservator, Mr J. A. B. Macdonald, O.B.E., who now lives in retirement near Moniaive.

At an informal get-together of staff and friends before the planting ceremony Mr John Davies, the present South Conservator, recalled how, when the Commission was formed towards the end of November, 1919, the Scottish Commissioners planned to be first in the field by planting a commemorative tree. So they assembled on the night of December 8, but at breakfast time the following morning they discovered that the English Commissioners had beaten them to it.

Mr Davies went on to say that he had been reading the history of

the Commission and he felt it was appropriate at that time to pay tribute to the very remarkable men who had been the early pioneers of the Commission and, through the years, had successfully transformed the face of Scotland.

So far as that day's ceremony was concerned, he felt the obvious choice for the leading role was Mr Macdonald who, as south conservator from 1950 until 1965, had done so much for the Commission during a period of enormous technical advance and expansion. Mr Macdonald had joined the Commission in 1922 and was one of the very few survivors of the early 'twenties.

MEMORIES...

In reminiscent mood, Mr Macdonald recalled his early days with the Commission, which he had joined on Jan. 3, 1922, so that he had been 2½ years too late to cover the diamond jubilee period. He began work at Glenbranter on land which had been bought from Harry Lauder and a year later had been moved to Edensmuir, Fife, as foreman in charge. In 1925 he had been invited to join the research Branch, and so began a 26-year spell of fascinating work, interrupted by a spell at the Imperial Forestry Institute at Oxford and some years as sample plots officer on statistics for Great Britain, followed by four years as chief in West Scotland. After the war he had returned to full-time research work and had taken part in many fascinating exper-

iments from Yorkshire to the Pennines and as far afield as the Shetlands.

In 1950 he had been posted to the South Conservancy to follow John Thom as Conservator, and when he retired in 1965 he had handed over to John James who, in turn, had been succeeded by the present Conservator, John Davies.

In his years with the Commission, Mr Macdonald concluded, he had met and worked with many outstanding

personalities, but the clearest memory he had after all these years was of the powerful driving force of Sir Roy Robinson who, in addition to being active in the creation of the Commission, had seen it through its early years until it was firmly established by the end of the last war.

The company then moved out into the grounds where Mr Macdonald unveiled a suitably inscribed plaque and then proceeded to plant the young tree, a silver birch.

