

The ELASHER

FORESTRY
COMMISSION
News & Views

Issued by
INFORMATION
OFFICER

No.202

October, 1964

HEAD FORESTER RETIRES

North West England Conservancy, retired at the end of last month.

AFTER 49 years' service to forestry, Head Forester I. ("Ike") ADAMS, of Mortimer Forest,

Mr. Adams started his career in 1915 when, as a boy of 14, he commenced work in the Dean. He went to the Forestry School there from 1919-1921 and then, on finishing his course, remained in the Dean until 1939, when he joined H.T.P.D. At the end of the war he went to Mortimer and was promoted Head Forester in 1951. Before a large gathering of colleagues and former members of the Commission staff, the Conservator, Mr. J. S. R. CHARD, presented Mr. Adams with a cheque; and on behalf of the staff and workers of Mortimer Forest, Forester W. SHELLEY handed him a clock and transistor radio.

Mr. Chard recalled that he first met Mr. Adams at Abbotswood more than 30 years ago and added that the latter's long experience with Douglas fir, coupled with that of production operations, had been of the utmost value to Mortimer during large scale thinning. Indeed, the fine stands of Douglas would be a reminder to all who saw them of Mr. Adams' work.

"Head Forester J. H. ADAMS, brother of 'Ike', writes our correspondent, "retired after 51 years' service. He commenced in the Dean in 1908 and was in the New Forest when he finished work. There must be something about those early days in the Dean which led to longevity, because Head Forester A. E. WALKER commenced there in 1906 and also went on to serve for 51 years."

**FOR THOSE IN PERIL.....

THE association of the Forestry Commission with the life of Cardiganshire was emphasised by a ceremony at New Quay to dedicate a navigation light at the harbour entrance. Since the original light was demolished by storms some 40 years ago, navigation into the harbour had become increasingly hazardous, especially for the New Quay lifeboat in stormy weather. As a result, a local committee raised a fund to purchase a light and the special equipment needed to meet the high standards demanded by Trinity House. The Commission was approached for a heartwood oak mounting-post 18 feet tall and a foot square. A suitable post was prepared from Welsh oak, and the cost of this was met by all grades of our staff in Cardiganshire, who have a notable record of support for life-boat affairs.

At the service dedicating the light to the dead of two world wars, the Commission in Cardiganshire was represented by Mr. J. R. HAMPSON, Divisional Officer; Mr. D. H. WALLACE, District Officer; Forester Ll. JONES; and Forest Worker J. MORGAN. Many expressions of thanks for the post (now beautifully finished and oiled) were made by local dignitaries, and our representatives were somewhat abashed to note that the bronze plaque mounted on the post as acknowledgment to "Forestry Commission Staff in Cardiganshire" was as prominent as that displayed in commemoration of the whole scheme.

**DEATH OF FOREST WORKER

WE deeply regret to have to record the death last month of Mr. JOHN MORRISON, Forest Worker at Achnashellach, North Scotland Conservancy. Mr. Morrison was engaged in felling operations when, it is understood, the direction of fall of the tree was changed by a gust of wind. Instead of falling away, it fell back on to him, killing him instantaneously. Mr. Morrison was 61.

**CADETS FORM FOREST PATROLS

SOME readers will recall that it was the South Wales Conservancy that pioneered the first school forest to be extensively worked and intensively managed. It may be that the same Conservancy is leading the way in another venture to encourage young people to assist the Commission in its aims and, at the same time, learn something about forestry themselves.

Following a recent bad fire at St. Gwynno Forest, the Officer Commanding a unit of Army Cadets offered the services of his lads for fire patrol duties. The offer was promptly and gladly accepted by Mr. J. T. FITZHERBERT, Divisional Officer, who felt that, if possible, the association ought to benefit the Cadets as well as the Commission. With this in mind he started an experimental scheme whereby Cadets who patrol the forest may include this as their public service qualification for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. It is being tried out in the Rhondda Forest, where the surrounding hills give plenty of scope for exercise, and where vandalism causes great concern.

A series of tests has been worked out for the bronze, silver and gold medals, the emphasis being on patrols as a form of public service, and further forestry training being given by the local Forester. Hopes are high that the scheme will succeed and expand, for it could be of immense help in the checking of fires and maybe in the prevention of damage by irresponsible people.

****THE BOTANICAL CONGRESS**

ABSORBED by their numerous day-to-day jobs, field foresters may be in danger of forgetting that forestry is a branch of Applied Botany; and, of course, the risk is greater for those who are indoors all the time (writes Mr. J. M. B. BROWN, Alice Holt Lodge). It was fitting, therefore, that the Commission sent representatives to the Tenth International Botanical Congress in Edinburgh. It was my privilege to be one of these.

Most readers will be aware that a special issue of postage stamps commemorated the Congress. And, incidentally, Professor W. T. WILLIAMS of Southampton, in a broadcast, strongly criticised the botanical stamps, on which four pretty flowers were shown. He believed that the stamps might tend to perpetuate a mistaken view that botany is a subject fit only for old ladies. He thought a choice more appropriate to the highly technical subject which botany now is would have been an electron microscope, a spectrophotometer, a computer or other pieces of complicated apparatus at the service of mid-20th century biologists.

Among the many sections of the Congress, mostly concurrent, it was often hard to choose which symposium to attend but I generally kept to one of the cognate subjects of applied botany, experimental ecology and plant sociology. This was a heady experience in a hall where, with the fans in action, you could hardly hear and, without them, the atmosphere soon became stuffy. Professor TUXEN'S opening lecture, delivered in clear and deliberate German and aided by numerous well chosen illustrations, presented no great difficulty, but several later contributors in French or German were less easy to follow. A Hungarian made a fairly long speech in German and, for the benefit of those whose German was at Grammar-school level, obliged with a repeat in Latin!

Fortunately English generally became our standard means of communication. A good many Russians attended and for some language was a serious problem. I gained much from several Russian speakers but they, or their departments, seemed niggardly with illustrative material and we sometimes suffered from their urge to cram a vast quantity of statistics on to a single slide; if you were near enough to read, you had no hope of assimilating everything in the time allotted. Small wonder if my undigested fragments of notes gave me a sore head when I settled down to prepare a report.

****DEAN SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS**

FOUNDED in 1904, the Dean School commenced its 60th birthday celebrations with a cricket match between former and present students, the "Old Boys" winning by seven runs. Tea was prepared and served by a hard-working group of Foresters' wives whose efforts, like those of Mrs. LONG (the School Matron) and her staff, on the following day, were really noteworthy.

The School was honoured on the second day by the presence of our Chairman, the EARL WALDEGRAVE, and LADY WALDEGRAVE; Mr. J. Q. WILLIAMSON, Director Wales; and Mr. C. A. CONNELL, Conservator of Forests for South West England. Lady Waldegrave presented forester certificates and prizes to eleven senior students and course certificates and prizes to 23 students from overseas.

In his address, Lord Waldegrave spoke of the importance of timber in our economy and of the good prospects for young foresters now taking up service in Britain's forests.

Lord and Lady Waldegrave, with Mr. Williamson and Mr. Connell, joined the Education Officer, Mr. J. GOODWIN, and his staff and senior and overseas students at lunch, and a bar and buffet were arranged in the Senior Lecture Room for the remainder of the large number of guests. An exhibition of school work was organised by the students, an interesting feature being the demonstrations of pit sawing by Messrs. LACEK and KYAMA. The old saw they used had been restored by them to full working order.

The day was pleasantly rounded off by an invitation to "Old Boys" and their wives to visit Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin at their home. There the skittles competition for a bottle of whisky was won by Mr. PAUL REYNOLDS. The younger and more energetic people attended a dance at the Swan Hotel, organised by the students.

**DOGS AND HEDGEHOGS

"I was interested to read the recent explanation of how labradors pick up hedgehogs without harm," writes Mr. J. W. GRADWELL, District (Estates) Officer, South East England. "But how does a dog eat a hedgehog (complete with spines) and survive? My dachshund did just this some ten years ago."

"We were unaware of his illicit meal until my wife found him on our bed, obviously feeling uncomfortable. Unfortunately, before she had time to remove him, he produced his recent repast - spines and all! Once he had rectified his earlier mistake in this way he was perfectly cheerful and lived to a ripe old age. He continued to take an interest in hedgehogs but I rather suspect that he no longer regarded them as food. At no time, however, either before his unfortunate experience or after, did we find any evidence of his indulging in the practice of creating a 'moat' around a hedgehog."

**NEWS FROM MISS ANN BROOKS

IT was very pleasing to hear from Miss ANN BROOKS, formerly Senior Executive Officer in the Office of Director, England. Writing from North Queensland, Australia, she sent along a photograph of some gigantic Kauri pines; these, she said, are reported to be 800 years old, their girth is 23 feet, and height to the first branch is 70 feet. And they each contain 12,000 linear feet of timber. They stand in a National Forest Park amid jungle and close to a lake (Lake Barrine), which occupies a natural crater of about 240 square miles.

The Forest Park is 2,400 feet above sea level. "I am sure of this," says Miss Brooks, "for the coach in which I travelled down took 206 bends -- hairpin ones at that -- in ten miles. I went up through the mountains by deisel train and was told that several thousand soldiers were trained in the area for jungle warfare, despite some deadly snakes.

"It is a most beautiful part of Australia. I also visited Green Island, a tropical coral isle and gazed my fill through a glass-bottomed boat at life on the barrier reef -- fish of fantastic colours and giant clams, some 250 years old and each weighing 5-6 hundredweights."

**TREE PLANTING IN JAPAN

THE National Land Afforestation Promotion Committee in Tokyo asked us to provide some tree seed which, to refer to their letter, will enable them to sow this seed in Japan. It appears that, with the Olympic Games being held in Tokyo, tree planting will be one of the commemorative projects and seed of trees characteristic of each country taking part in the Games were being sought. It will serve to produce trees which, to quote the Committee again, "will provide as an everlasting example of international friendship." The Commission has sent along some seed of pedunculate oak, beech, sycamore and Scots pine.

**PUT ON THAT DIVING SUIT!

YOUR recent story of the somewhat decrepit mechanical loader which ended its days in 20 feet of loch water somewhere in North Scotland, writes Mr. J. R. FLETCHER, District Officer, N.W. England, prompts me to enquire if there are any further items of equipment, belonging to the Commission or its contractors, languishing in watery graves.

Skin diving is a fascinating business and it can also be rewarding. Together with another member of the Matlock branch of the British Sub Aqua Club I recently dived in a North Derbyshire reservoir to locate an autoscythe which had parted company with its operator during grass cutting activities.

After grovelling in nil visibility at 30 feet for half an hour or so the scythe was located and the rope attached; after a short haul it was back on dry land. There are more pleasant places in which to dive. But whatever the conditions - to a depth of about a hundred feet - it would be interesting to hear of any underwater problems which are taxing the ingenuity of local staff anxious to avoid the ignominy of seeking permission to write off a wet but otherwise sound piece of equipment.

**OSPREY EGG ANALYSIS

THE Royal Society for the Protection of Birds announces that analysis of an osprey egg from the clutch that failed to hatch on Speyside this year showed 4 ppm. of DDE and less than 0.5 ppm of Dieldrin and DDT. Although it is possible that these small quantities had no direct effect on fertility, there is already evidence that sub-lethal doses of chlorinated pesticide residues in predatory birds disrupt nesting behaviour patterns sufficiently to lower nesting success significantly. In this connection, it is notable that an osprey pellet found near the nest-site contained a fragment of egg shell, indicating that the parent birds may have themselves eaten the egg. This is possibly an example of the 'abnormal and pathological behaviour', which included egg-destruction, that Dr. D. A. Ratcliffe of the Nature Conservancy associated with sub-lethal doses of pesticide in peregrines.

Now from birds to spiders. The British Spider Study Group reports the discovery of a substantial number of melanistic forms of the zebra spider, Salticus scenicus, on a coaldust-coated brick wall at the Stockport Gas Works. The main predators seemed to be house sparrows, and it is possible that melanistic variants possess greater chance of survival than normal forms. If the melanism* is inherited, it is possible that a similar situation may be shown to exist for spiders as for many species of moths subject to melanism, where its incidence is directly correlated with darkness of tree-lichens, which in its turn is linked with atmospheric pollution.

* Melanism. Concise Oxford Dictionary: "Darkness of colour resulting from abnormal development of black pigment in epidermis (outer skin), hair, etc."

**PROMOTION

WE are pleased to record that the promotion of District (Estate) Officer Mr. W. A. J. JOHNSON, of South Scotland Conservancy, to Divisional Officer has been authorised, following a recent board.

**THEY TOOK CARE

MEMBERS of the Social Centre under the auspices of the Exeter Society for the Blind recently enjoyed a forest visit - to Haldon, where they picnicked. It was pleasing to note the thoughtfulness of those taking part in this excursion -- each blind person who smoked carried an ashtray, to make sure that no cigarette ends or hot ash were dropped.

**AND NOW -- LOGGING BY BALLOON

A possible "breakthrough" in cable logging techniques is foreshadowed in a journal devoted to timber interests. Full-scale operational tests in balloon logging, it is reported, are to be carried out by a company on Vancouver Island. They will be started as soon as three balloons, each to be inflated with 75,000 cubic feet of helium, are delivered from the United Kingdom. If successful, it may be possible to open up thousands of acres of forests in British Columbia which at present are economically or physically inaccessible.

Balloon logging, the company believe, will obviate the need for road systems and expensive cable rigging, permitting the use of "light lines and fast yardsters". Logs would not be lifted clear of the ground -- one end of the log would trail thereon. But the lift would eliminate hang-ups, minimise breakage of logs and damage to soil and standing trees; and would be safer for logging crews.

Wind has been considered a deterrent in the past to the use of balloons, but the modern balloons, the report goes on, have aerodynamic qualities which cause them to behave like kites -- to face into the wind, with consequent greater lift factor. It is thought that they could be used in logging with winds up to 50 miles an hour.

**THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

A contributor recommends that "to stop rural depopulation the Commission should plant gooseberry bushes on the hills."