The SLASHER
FORESTRY COMMISSION News & Views
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DEATH OF FORESTER L. R. KERFOOT

IT is with deep regret that we record the death of Forester L. R. KERFOOT, of Hay Forest, South Wales. Mr. Kerfoot, who was 51, was born in Chile and educated in Warrington where, on leaving school, he was articled to an accountant. He joined the Army at the outbreak of war and served throughout in the Royal Corps of Signals, mainly in the Middle East and North Africa. He had always wished to become a Forester and, on demobilisation, and after working for the Admiralty at Risley, he finally joined us at Crawen Arms, in 1947. From there he went to the Gwydyr school and then to South Wales, where he served at Brechfa, St. Gwynno and Ebbw before being transferred to Hay in 1953. He was promoted to Forester in 1954.

Mr. Kerfoot was of quiet and cheerful disposition and was greatly liked and respected by all with whom he came into contact. He died in hospital in Birmingham and was buried in Warrington, where his funeral was attended by forest workers and other friends. He leaves a widow, to whom we extend our deep sympathy.

**FORESTER RETIRES

FORESTER C. J. HOPKINS, of the North Wales Conservancy, has retired after 30 years with the Commission. Since 1948 he had been in charge of Bechan and Carmo forests, having during the war years worked with H.T.P.D.

In recent years Mr. Hopkins has suffered ill-health, aggravated by an accident sustained towards the end of last year, but his friends will be pleased to hear that he was "picking up" again by the time his retirement became due.

Colleagues subscribed to a farewell gift and the presentation was made on their behalf by Divisional Officer J. R. HAMPSON, with District Officer R. E. STUMBLES and Head Forester A. C. W. EVANS in attendance. We wish Mr. Hopkins better health in the future and a happy retirement.

**NEW LINE IN LITTER!

FORESTER J. FRANCE of Wharncliffe Beat, South Yorkshire Forest, writes:

Rubbish, junk, old bikes, baths, carpets, rags, bottles and bones, we in the industrialised West Riding of Yorkshire get more than our fair share of things dumped in those parts of the forest near the main roads.

Last month Messrs. HARVEY, SWIFT & BROOK were beating up in Lowe Wood and came across a new line in unlawfully deposited litter and one which, for a change, the police were very willing to remove for us, as the owner was still looking for it; he being a Sheffield butcher who had been raided the previous Saturday, losing £313. And our find? The safe, now a write-off, and 50s. still usable.

**WORKING HOLIDAY IN NORWAY

THREE young forest workers at Fountains Forest, North East England, have shown commendable enterprise and enthusiasm for their calling by spending a working holiday in Norway. They are DAVID SHEPHARD, MICHAEL SHUTTLEWORTH and DAVID SCURRAH and reports of their adventures make interesting reading; unfortunately they are too long to be reproduced here in full, but David Scurrah describes how, "after much letter-writing", they obtained temporary posts in a Norwegian Forestry School. After an arduous journey which involved camping en route, the boys reached their destination - Evanstad, a hamlet nestling beside the River Gloma in the heart of the Asterdal.

"It is the severe winter and scarcity of population", says David,"which cause the most obvious difference between Norwegian and British forestry practice. With many acres of forest available it would appear uneconomical, say, to drain the marsh to make it productive.

"In the area where we worked, the only trees grown were spruce, Scots pine and birch. Standard practice seemed to be to fell a strip of forest perhaps half a mile or a mile long and one or two hundred yards wide. One of our jobs was to plant Sitka. We had been used to spades and planting bags, and very straight rows. Not so in Norway. We were given light-weight mattocks and planting baskets with a flap to cover the plants and keep them moist. In the middle of the basket is a partition, so that in areas where the soil is very poor, additional, better soil, could be carried. We also erected and operated a double-drum winch and carried out some thinning work.

"One thing the Norwegians are glad not to have is rabbits; instead they have large numbers of elk which ruin trees when they are mature; in fact they cause damage similar to that done by the debarking carried out in Britain by deer. Perhaps it was as well we left when we did for the elk shooting season was about to start. Although we saw only one such animal we were told that there were thousands in the forests; numbers are controlled and as a result there is an annual hunt in which tractors, cows and cars are used, and even men are shot in the process! Once at Everstad, we were told, a father had been accidentally shot dead by his own son."

Points made in David Shephard's report: "Log chutes were frequent, as were the sawmills that bordered the rivers. We saw a road-making gang in action; the roads they were building consisted of a soft sand, bulldozed out and then rolled. No metalling was done, despite the fact that these roads cost as much as ours at home. We encountered about ten wasps' nests per acre, not to mention the mosquitoes. Ditching is never done by hand. When planting we were told that as long as the rows ran from one end of the wood to the other, this was good enough; full use of tree stumps and heaps of rubbish had to be made, even if it meant going a few feet out of line, to provide the plants with shelter."

It remains to be said that the lads, to undertake this trip, used the whole of their annual leave, together with some special unpaid leave.

**"OFF-BEAT" UTILISATION

NOT so long ago, writes Mr. R. CARNELL, District Officer, S.W. England, itinerant people sought to earn a little money by gathering what was supplied by nature and selling it in large towns and cities. Ferns used to be in great demand for the fishmonger's display slab and at one time small graves were something lined with moss. There appears always to have been a fair demand for evergreens during the winter and many a young birch wood has been denuded of twigs which, taken back to the camps, had wax flowers attached and were then hawked from door to door. Similarly Box clippings were sold as picked, or sprayed with aluminium paint with table decoration in mind. Moss is now used as a base for wreaths and over the last 10 - 15 years there has grown in the South West a demand for conifer clippings, the favourite being Thuya - sometimes referred to as "Lobbi" in the trade. Next on the list is Lawson cypress, Tsuga, Silver fir and Douglas fir; there is no demand for the spruces or deciduous larches. Fir cones, too, are in fair demand, and this has become greater as the popularity of floral display associations increase throughout the country; they must, of course, be bone dry and are best supplied by seed extraction kilns.

Rather curiously, this trade in foliage, moss, and what have you, must be fairly high on the list of the monopolies, and yet it is evident that the public do not suffer from exorbitant prices. Supplies are collected in the South West, hauled by lorry to Covent Garden and sold to the wholesaler in lorry loads. He splits up the loads and distributes to the major towns and cities, some of the material no doubt finding its way back to the South West.

Moving eastwards, there must now be an established colony of people in Surrey who gain their livelihood from foliage and moss collection. In one way or another they all appear to be related or else carrying on an ancient feud. They seem to own the lorries they travel in and work all the hours of daylight, often sleeping in their vehicles for two or three nights in order to get a full load for Covent Garden.

In order to regularise the position and on the principle "Better to have the devil you know, etc.", efforts have been made to enter into agreements of various kinds with the foliage collectors. Some are for five years with others for as short a period of six months. Other types of agreement cover the lorry load or, in the case of Box, per dozen bundles. Moss collection lettings are always separate from foliage. Conditions of sale are fairly rigid, the main clauses being (1) only secateurs to be used; (2) a definite limit in height to which a tree can be pruned or clipped; (3) no fires to be lit; (4) no caravans without permission; (5) no game to be taken; and (6) payment, if not in advance, then before removal from the forest.

Finally, one comes to the question of whether entering into such agreements is worthwhile? Receipts have been as high as £500 a year and as low as £50 but it is felt that the time spent by field and office staff in supervision is not always commensurate with the financial returns.

**RUSSIAN EXPORTS

CROSSBILLS that reached this country in strength via Scandinavia in 1963 are thought to have originated in Northern Russia.

A new British species of bat has been discovered, appropriately enough in the roof of the Nature Conservancy's research station at Furzebrook, Dorset. The Grey Long-Eared Bat Plecotus austriacus had only been recorded in Britain once before, when one was collected in Hampshire around 1875. Now a colony of 15 to 20 has been found, together with about 40 Common Long-Eared Bats P. auritus and five other species.

Incidentally, what is the funniest title you've ever seen in a scientific paper? Can you beat this one? "Co-existence of the two related stink bugs, Nezara vividula and N. antennata under natural conditions." By Keizi Kiribani, Nobuhiko Hokyo and Janichi Yukawa, in Researches on Population Ecology, Vol. V, No. 1, June 1963 pp. 17-22 Kyobo, Japan. (All this in case you are interested in looking it up).

An unusual visitor flew into Breckland recently and was tracked down in the middle of Thetford Forest. It was a small puffin, obviously off course, and it was seen in the forest at Mildenhall by Mr. H. A. E. TILNEY-BASSETT and Mr. C. REDFORD.

The little black and white bird, with its bright orange bill, was spotted with the aid of headlights of a landrover. It was fed by our colleagues on fish and then handed to a local R.S.P.C.A. Inspector, whose intention was to have it set free at Yarmouth.

**THE AWFUL ORDEAL

FORESTER W. ARNOTT, of Andover, South East England, recalls "the awful ordeal of a Parkend builder some 45 years ago".

At that time, says Mr. Arnott, the builder was a lad apprenticed to an undertaker in the Dean village and had had his first experience of laying out a dead body and measuring it for the coffin. When he left his employer it was late and very dark save for the fitful light of a shrouded moon. He made his way towards home on the lonely roadway behind The Firs, that wanders through Oakenhill towards the Church. Suddenly upon his ears came the most terrible wailing and shrieking he had ever heard in his life. It is not surprising therefore that the poor lad, fresh from the sight of his first corpse, stood absolutely petrified; but when out of the darkness he saw a huge figure bearing down upon him, he ran for dear life and not unnaturally when he arrived home he was in a state of near collapse.

The following night a brave little band of villagers marched to the spot which the lad had so vividly described and, sure enough, they had not long to wait before they heard the awful noise. The bravest of them stood their ground and there by the light of a lantern they perceived a District Officer (who shall be nameless) of Scottish descent and of rather massive proportions, recently returned from the war, marching majestically down the ride, in the full regalia of his Clan, grossly intent on improving his playing of the bagpipes.

I am informed that the builder has never walked that way since.

Editor's note. If this incident happened the best part of half a century ago, there would presumably be no objection to naming the piper. We have our own idea as to the identity: can any readers speculate?

**MONY A MICKLE MAKS A MUCKLE

WE see from the official record of "Sales of Standing Coniferous Timber from Forestry Coniferous Areas", released to the Press recently, that: (a) the average price realised in year ended 30th September, 1963, was 1s. 2½d. (b) the average price realised in year ended 30th September, 1964, was 1s. 3½d.

A difference of 1d. per hoppus foot may not look very much. But multiply it by the 12,917,798 hoppus feet sold in Forest Year 1964 and the difference amounts to £53,828. 12s. 6d.

Worth bargaining for!

**TRANSFERS

THE following transfers have been notified to Headquarters. Foresters: W.R.C. BEATTIE from Eilanreach N(S) to Battan N(S); R.D. DAVIES from Coed-y-Brenin N(W) to Dean School; W.J.P. DYCE from Clash Liath N(S) to Ratagan N(S); W.E. DYE from Ardfin W(S) to Asknish W(S); R.G. FIFE from Mendip SW(E) to Okehampton SW(E); E.A. HOWELL from Brechfa S(W) to Ebbw S(W); J.M. McGAVIN from Lochard W(S) to Ardfin W(S); I.D. MOBBS from Kielder (Planning and Economics) to Hamsterley (Planning and Economics); D.J. MORRIS from Brecon N(W) to Bechan D(R); I.C. MORRISON from South Laggan N(S) to Balblair N(S); A.W. OFFICER from Inshriach N(S) to Culloden N(S); J. PARKER from Stratton SW(E) to Exeter SW(E); J. SCOTT from Rumster N(S) to Inshriach N(S); P.L. STONE from Exeter SW(E) to Halwill SW(E); J.W. TAYLOR from Battan N(S) to Eilanreach N(S).

Assistant Foresters: M.J. BOUGHTON from Kesteven E(E) to Rockingham E(E); G. BRUCE from Alice Holt (Planning and Economics) to Edinburgh (Planning and Economics); D. ELGY from Wark NE(E) to Alice Holt D(R) detached duty; E.B. JURY from Kesteven (Planning and Economics) to Thetford (Planning and Economics); C.R. LIVERSIDGE from Edinburgh (Planning and Economics) to Changue (Planning and Economics); B.D. ROBINSON from Aeron N(W) to Penllyn N(W); F.G.O. THOM from Balblair N(S) to Sunart N(S); B. THOMPSON from Edinburgh (Planning and Economics) to Poyntyfield (Planning and Economics); J.J. WADDELL from Alice Holt (Planning and Economics) to Edinburgh (Planning and Economics); J.D.E. WAINWRIGHT from Fineshade E(E) to Salcey E(E); M.R. WIGZELL from Edinburgh (Planning and Economics) to Alice Holt (Planning and Economics).

Higher Executive Officer: Miss M.A.E. FROST from London (Education) to London (Headquarters).

Executive Officers: A.E. BRADFIELD from Lyndhurst (New) to London (Chief Education Officer); P.H. HAMILTON from London (Director (E)) to Alice Holt (Director (R)); E.N. PAULEY from Cambridge E(E) to London D(E); Miss M. PEAL from London D(E) to London (Headquarters).

Clerical Officer: C.P. CALLADINE from London D(E) to York NE(E).

IF YOU DO SOMETHING, SEE SOMETHING, OR HEAR SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY, TELL YOUR SLASHER CORRESPONDENT. THERE IS A CORRESPONDENT IN EACH DIRECTORATE AND CONSERVANCY OFFICE.