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RETIREMENT OF MR. A. D. PALMER

TIME marches on, and farewell has been said to Mr. A. D. PALMER, Chief Clerk in the office of Director, England, who retired this month after many years' service with the Commission and to forestry. He was probably the last of those stalwarts who helped to see the Commission through early, difficult days when so much had to be done without precedent.

A native of Sheffield (writes the Editor)

A. D. Palmer is a true Yorkshireman by nature as well as by birth; having made up his mind (which was always scrupulously and impartially done) he would be loath to depart from his point of view, which implied that more than a small measure of obstinacy was present in his "make-up" - "call it 'determination'", he would say, humorously, when found to be immovable on a point of issue. Be that as it may, many young officers owed much to A. D. Palmer for his tolerance and encouragement, for he regarded it as a bounden duty to offer the best possible training to all who served under him.

"As a long-standing friend and colleague of A. D. Palmer," writes Mr. W. E. COGGINS, formerly Principal at Headquarters and now himself retired, "I have been invited to pen a few lines by way of tribute to him and his work: this I gladly do, for I have known and worked with Palmer throughout practically the whole of his career.

"A.D.P., as he came to be known, was one of a small band of clerical staff (including such people as F. W. HAMILTON, B. R. DAVIES, E. R. B. HANCOCK, E. S. J. HINDS, E. R. LEWIS, M. E. W. MACKENZIE and myself) who made up the Forests Branch of the old Office of Woods and who were loaned to the Commission on its inception in 1919 to set up the office of the Assistant Commissioner for England and Wales. We were all subsequently transferred to the Commission on 1st April, 1924.

"A.D.P. joined the Office of Woods in 1916 as a Boy Clerk and I can well remember this fresh young lad from Yorkshire making his debut in the office. He proceeded, through his career, from Boy Clerk to Assistant Clerk (present-day Clerical Officer), Divisional Accountant in Inverness from 1927 to 1936 and to H.E.O. in the Establishment Branch at Headquarters. During the latter part of the 1914-18 war he was in the Army and was for some time in the Army of Occupation on the Rhine. At the beginning of the second world war he was seconded to the Timber Supply Department and became personal assistant to the late Sir Gerald Lenanton, the Director.

"On the reorganisation of the Commission in 1945, A.D.P. rejoined as an S.E.O. in the Establishment Branch and in turn was promoted to C.E.O. and S.C.E.O. He took over the post of Chief Clerk in the office of the Director for Scotland in 1957 and not long afterwards, on the retirement of Mr. E. S. J. HINDS, became Chief Clerk in the office of Director, England.

"I always found A.D.P. a most likeable person and one who was always anxious to help his colleagues, young or old. He was meticulous in all his work, the high quality of which earned his promotions and the award, in 1953, of the O.B.E. During his younger days A.D.P. was an enthusiastic footballer and turned out regularly for the Office of Woods team. He is a keen motorist and no mean gardener, evidence of which could daily be seen in his button-hole, for he specialises in the growing of pinks and carnations.

"I am sure that all members of the staff with whom A.D.P. came into contact will join me in wishing him a long and happy retirement."

Tributes were paid to A.D.P. on the occasion of a presentation, made at Savile Row, by Mr. J. R. THOM, Director, England, on behalf of many well wishers. The Director General, SIR HENRY BERESFORD PEIRSE, was present and the gift took the form of a cheque with which, it is understood, garden furniture will be purchased to supplement the gift of a bookcase, already chosen.

****WATER, WATER: BUT NOT EVERYWHERE**

OUR recent note on the tremendous rainfall in forest areas in Wales appears to have aroused considerable interest - it will be recalled that an estimated 17,300,000 tons fell on Coed-y-Brenin and 19,130,000 tons on Dovey forests in 48 hours.

One of the most intriguing features is that seemingly the heavens were opening in some areas, but elsewhere, and in some cases not so very far distant, rainfall was so low as almost to constitute a drought in some catchment areas. In the Bristol Waterworks Company area, for example, the shortage of water was severe and at Litton (Chewton Mendip) amounted for the 12 months ended last November to only $26\frac{1}{2}$ inches - 60 per cent of the average of 43.4 inches. The Company's area had an exceptionally dry winter in 1963-64 and rainfall for the three months to December, 1963 was only 3.17 inches, less than we had in one day (13th December, 1964) at the aforementioned Welsh forests. Rainfall in the catchment area for February this year was only 0.17 inches, the fourth lowest for a February in records which date back to 1855.

****MINISTER VISITS FORESTRY SCHOOL**

THE Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt. Hon. JAMES GRIFFITHS, M.P., who is now responsible for forest policy in the Principality, recently made his first official visit to a Commission forest and to the Gwydyr Forester Training School. He saw students at work in Gwydyr Forest and others receiving instruction in the saw shop and elsewhere.

Later Mr. Griffiths planted a tree at the school and, through Alderman GWYNFRYN DAVIES, Forestry Commissioner and Chairman of the Welsh National Committee, was presented with a school tie. Among others representing the Commission were Mr. J. Q. WILLIAMSON, Director, Wales; Mr. F. C. BEST, Conservator, North Wales; Mr. E. H. M. HARRIS, Education Officer, Gwydyr; and local officers.

****PASSING OF TWO CLERICAL OFFICERS**

WITH deep regret we record the passing of two popular Clerical Officers in the S.W. England Conservancy Office, both of whom will be sadly missed.

The sudden death of GRAHAM EDWARD CLARKE at the relatively early age of 53 came as a great shock to all who knew him. He went to the Conservancy in January, 1954, from the Ministry of Food and served in the Acquisitions and Establishments sections. Despite the handicap of failing eyesight, following two operations a few years ago, he maintained a great sense of humour and was always a cheerful and helpful colleague. In his younger days he was a keen footballer and was an ardent supporter of Bristol Rovers. He leaves a widow and three children, to whom we extend our sympathy.

ANDREW (JOCK) KERR died after an illness, we are sorry to learn, of some three months' duration. He joined the Commission in June, 1955, and served in the Accounts Section. A most helpful colleague, with an active and enquiring mind, he contributed some good ideas to the Staff Suggestions Committee. Prior to joining the Commission, he served with the Ministry of Works from June 1948 and before that was a regular soldier, having joined the Highland Light Infantry in 1920. He served in India, where he was W.O. Secretary for several years and was

responsible for the Calcutta Horse Show. He also served in Burma in the Indian Army Ordnance Corps and was mentioned in Despatches. He rose to the rank of Major and during the second war was in charge of ammunition and supplies to a great part of the Army in Burma.

Our sympathy goes to his widow and son.

We are also very sorry to report the death of Mr. CHARLES JOSEPH DOLBY, formerly of the Audit Section of the Finance Branch at Headquarters, who retired little more than five years ago. Mr. Dolby was well known to many of our colleagues because his work took him to the various Conservancy offices. Before joining the Commission he had served in the Army and Royal Air Force for about 30 years, leaving with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

**THE ARK IN OUR MIDST

FORESTERS are always having to remind the general public, and particularly the critics of "Exotic" trees, how many of the more familiar species are in fact introductions - the sycamore and horse chestnut, for instance (writes Mr. P. F. GARTHWAITE, our Wild Life Officer).

Foresters, however, may not realise how much the same holds good for the mammals, birds, reptiles and fish. The grey squirrel we all recognise as an alien, but few realise that of the 53 species of land mammals living and breeding in the British Isles today nearly one quarter are introductions. Ten out of 200 species of birds, two out of eight snakes and lizards, and 10 out of 44 fresh water fish are aliens, not to mention two species of frog introduced sometime in the last 1,000 years.

But this is nothing to what might have been in the heyday of the attempts at introduction in the last century, when there was actually an "acclimatisation society" formed for the purpose of increasing the variety of our fauna. Since the accession of Queen Victoria some 50 species of mammal, 100 kinds of bird, a dozen each of reptile and amphibian and three dozen fresh water fish species have been either deliberately turned loose, or have escaped to the wild.

The history of these as well as those which have succeeded in becoming, whether we like it or not, part of our fauna is told in a fascinating book "The Ark in Our Midst", by the well known naturalist R. S. R. Fitter. In it he traces the history of all the introductions, where and when they were made, and the outcome. He also traces the important attempts, some successful, some not, at transferring animals from one part of the British Isles to another.

Reading this book cannot but lend point to the Commission's policy of prohibiting the transfer of animals to its forests or of permitting the capture of animals for transfer elsewhere. Since my appointment as Wild Life Officer I have had numerous requests of this sort, among them one for the introduction of wild boar into Thetford, and another for the Canadian Beaver into the Highlands, with lesser proposals such as capercaillie to Kielder, blackgame to Sussex, grouse to Dartmoor, sika deer from Wareham to Angus, roe from Dorset to Leicester, and the goshawk from Sweden to assist in the control of the grey squirrel!

**ON WOODLAND CRAFTS

WE are indebted to Mr. A. A. CUTHBERT, Utilisation Officer in South East England, for some interesting comments on woodland crafts, dying and otherwise. Many of these, says Mr. Cuthbert, have become highly mechanised industries now existing far from the source of supply of the raw material.

Today, he goes on, I personally know of no barrel hoop makers. Neither do I know of any manufacturers of besom brooms, but many of the older farm hands and forest workers will still turn out a good one. Brushwood is bought in fair quantity for this purpose only by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and H.M. Prisons. The production of machine-made bass brushes at highly competitive prices is an obvious reason for the decline in the craft and a firm in the Weald of Kent produces great numbers of broom heads, turned from Sussex and Kent birch, which are sent elsewhere for filling with bristles.

Charcoal burners. Local manufacture of charcoal is also rare. A few larger firms are producers but they generally require big quantities of cordwood on any one site before they consider the job economical. Portable iron kilns (round) are used. A firm at Battle, Sussex, is one of the few which will process wood locally and may set up a kiln on sweet chestnut cants which they purchase to burn the odds and ends unsuitable for other purposes. A Chichester firm has kilns in West Sussex where cordwood from all over Sussex is burned.

I know of no coopers. The advent of the steel beer barrel and the relatively high price of the home produced variety has resulted in the craft being virtually abolished. Cricket bat makers. No local makers known. The soils of East Sussex do not lend themselves particularly well to the growth of the cricket bat willow. On the basic soils close to the chalk in East Kent the species can grow well but the timber is normally sold to industrial undertakings for large scale manufacture. Gate Makers. It is difficult to buy a good gate manufactured by a local craftsman in East Sussex today. Certain estates turn out extremely good ones for their own use but by far the bulk of supply must be attributed to large scale working of a firm at Biddenden, Kent, and another at Robertsbridge, Sussex. Fencing. The sweet chestnut industry is one which has retained a great deal of its craft and custom and is undoubtedly thriving - an estimated 2,000 acres of chestnut coppice is cut in Great Britain, mainly in Kent and Sussex, annually. It is surprising in this modern age to see the coppice cutters largely using the tools used for centuries, working quietly in the woods and still on essentially a localised basis - East Kent is a remote world to an East Sussex coppice cutter. There are signs, however, of a break away from tradition, even here. The roar of the chain saw is now being heard in place of the axe; sign of the availability of French palings in bulk is causing some concern and the demands of a modern society for bulk supply of a consistent commodity must tend to lead to a loss of individuality. Hedgers: A well laid hedge is increasingly rare. There is a possibility, however, that this craft may well survive. The availability of efficient mechanical hedge trimmers may help. Hurdle makers: Again, few in number and the interwoven fence made from thinly cut slices of larch or Douglas fir seems to be fast replacing this market. With a rapidly increasing population in S.E. England, the demand for privacy increases and this has led to this highly competitive alternative. Ladder makers. The competitive factory article, conforming to the Statutory Safety Regulations, has taken over this market. Trug makers. The only maker known in East Sussex is at Hurstmonceux, where the normal trug is manufactured in small quantities, using sweet chestnut. Oak shingle makers; rake makers; thatchers; wheelwrights and cartwrights. None known to me.

**PERSONAL

WE much regret having to report the death of Mrs. L. M. J. HAMILTON, of Southwick, Sussex, widow of Mr. FRANK HAMILTON, formerly Secretary of the Commission.

Good wishes go to District Officer A. E. FLYNN, Aberystwyth, and Mrs. Flynn on the birth of their third daughter. And to Mr. D. E. Earl, District Officer, and Mrs. Earl, on the birth of a daughter. Mr. Earl, formerly District Officer in the North East England Conservancy, is in Kampala, on secondment to the Government of Uganda.

**THE BIG BLACK FOX

I wonder, writes Forester B. E. SUTTON, Witley Forest, South East England, how many of the Forestry Commission staff have seen a wild black fox? Until I and one of my workers saw it for ourselves, neither knew that there were such creatures in England. When first seen during early summer he was all black, a big handsome fellow. It would be most interesting to learn whether this animal is as rare as we think.