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CHAIRMAN AT COUNTRYSIDE CONFERENCE

session of the "Countryside in 1970" Conference in London, presided over by H.R.H. the DUKE of EDINBURGH.

OUR Chairman, Mr. LESLIE JENKINS, was one of the principal speakers at the closing

Mr. Jenkins spoke of the substantial contribution the Commission is making and has already made in providing facilities for public recreation in the forests. The Commission, he said, could not forget that its primary job was to produce timber to meet the increasing demands of industry - and to produce it efficiently and as economically as possible, in the interests of the tax-payer. "But this does not mean," he went on, "that we have no soul, or do not feel ourselves to be part of the countryside - most of our staff live and work in it."

The Commission, he said, was a pioneer in one aspect of amenity, for 30 years ago the first Forest Park was created, and six more had been opened since. These Parks now provided for hill climbing, sailing, shooting, pony trekking and nature study, even ski-ing. Moreover, they and other areas under the Commission's control gave splendid opportunities for adventure training for youth, while nature trails provided exercise and education for the less adventurous.

Mr. Jenkins gave some impressive statistics. During last season, he said, nearly 600,000 people stayed overnight at the Commission's major camping and caravan sites (that is mainly in the Forest Parks and the New Forest). Picnic sites were also operated in various parts of the country and it was estimated that about four million people had picnicked on Commission land this year. In all, with the Forest Parks, the camping and caravan and picnic sites, and other facilities, it was estimated that the Commission probably provided recreation for nearly five million people.

"The countryside," said Mr. Jenkins, "must be alive and dynamic, a great force in the economic life of the nation as well as a joy to all who desire the peace and relaxation it can offer."

The Chairman's remarks will be of special interest to officers who are so ably "spreading the gospel" through the medium of many talks to voluntary bodies. It is worth recalling that they should be considered against a background where two world wars created a false picture of forestry - a picture of indiscriminate fellings, followed by dereliction, followed in turn by planting on a huge scale. It is perhaps only now, more than 40 years since the Commission was set up, that the true picture of enlightened forest management is really beginning to emerge.

**WORKING PLAN MYSTERIES IN THE MUSIC SHOP

in charge of South East England since 1949.

MR. R.H. SMITH is the third Conservator to retire within the last two months or so, having been

After obtaining his degree at

Cambridge in 1927 and then taking a course at the then Imperial Forestry Institute at Oxford. Mr. Smith applied for a post with the Commission and, pending his interview, worked as a ganger at Tintern under the supervision of Mr. G.B. RYLE, then a District Officer. At the Commission interview he found himself in the waiting room with Forester A.H. GOSLING, who was to become our Director General. Turning down a proposal that, before joining the Commission, he should study forestry on the Continent, Mr. Smith returned to the family business in Co. Tipperary, where he was born and had lived in until 1921, when the family home was burnt down during the "troubles". Returning to England, he was offered a post as District Officer in North Wales, and this he accepted. He remained there until 1936, when he was brought to London on acquisition work. At the outbreak of war he was transferred to Exeter and soon afterwards to Bristol to become personal technical assistant to Assistant Commissioner A.P. LONG. Later he returned to acquisition work, which he continued until 1941 in which year he went again to North Wales, this time as Divisional Officer. In 1947 he moved to Woking, then back to London again on acquisitions until 1949.

Mr. G.B. Ryle writes: "So Dick Smith has joined the list of retired forest officers. It was in 1929 that I first met him in the little Shrewsbury office over a music shop, and to the strains of gentle piano accompaniment we were jointly advised on the mysteries of working plans by his Divisional Officer, Mr. O.J. SANGAR. I connect Dick with music because although as a rule he is pianissimo, I know that sometimes, when he is certain of his ground, he becomes fortissimo. On these occasions he has invariably been shown to be right. I am sure that Dick's best work has been done while in post as Conservator, South East England, both silviculturally and socially. In most Conservancies the social problem is of rural depopulation, but he has had the job of promoting and maintaining good relations with many private woodland owners, some of whom have been businessmen with a newly acquired interest in land and woodlands. Perhaps we have tended to regard the South East Conservancy as a little one, simply managed, but this is far from the case."

****PRESS AMONG THE XMAS TREES**

THE jobs of some of us are sometimes quite closely associated with the festive season. Members of the Information Branch, for example, who in pre-Christmas days spend some time exhorting the public not to accept gifts of Christmas trees from overseas (newcomers to the staff may not know that the importation of all conifers is banned, due to the risk of introducing certain pests and diseases, which we have not got at present, into our woods). Then there is the spate of requests from the Press for information about Christmas trees to take care of, and requests for facilities to take photographs of their production. This year, as of late, work in this connection has been reduced by setting aside a single day where, in a selected forest, there could be a "free for all" for reporters and cameramen.

The site on this occasion was Chiddingfold Forest, whose 3,000 or so acres lie on the borders of Sussex and Surrey, not far from Haslemere. There the visitors saw the whole process of Christmas tree production, from planting and extraction, removal of the tops of thinnings, through to the loading of trees destined, in the main, for addresses in London. Proceedings were enlivened by the cooperation of the Sussex County Police who provided a "Z" car and personnel to give point to the precautions taken against thefts. And Head Forester George Cross, of Bramhill, came along with his Alsations. It all seemed to go down well judging by the amount of space given to the subject by the Press, and the time allocated by the various broadcasting agencies.

Mr. J.E. MASSEY, District Officer, and Forester R.E. FRANCIS and BRIAN SUTTON were responsible for the very efficient local arrangements.

On Christmas Fare

Do you want a turkey, a ptarmigan or or two, or perhaps a few dozen larks this Christmas? Pity, in a way, you weren't a householder in 1886; for then, according to a recent issue of Shooting Times, you could have bought in the Central Market of London a cock turkey at anything between 7s. and 11s.;

ptarmigan were only 9d. apiece and, as for larks, think how delighted your wife would have been to dress and cook some of these at only 1s. to 13d. per dozen.

The good old days, these were, asserts the correspondent of the journal in question. You could get a goose for 5s. and a duck for 2s.; or, if you were really a gourmand, 15s. to 30s. would purchase a roe deer. Partridges would have cost you 1s.4d. to 3s., grouse 2s. to 2s.9d., and capercaillie 2s.6d. to 3s.6d.

Yet there are some curious anomalies in the long price list. For example, close on 80 years ago, had you wanted some fresh eggs to grace the breakfast frying pan on Christmas Day they could have cost you 18s. for 120; yet surely it is not so many years ago that you could buy at least small eggs at 2d. each? Hares, in 1886, were priced at 4s. to 5s.; we don't know what these cost in the shops today, but if you've any country cousins they could no doubt fix you up at much the same price. Or could they?

**IN HONOUR OF "J.A.B."

A dinner was held in Dumfries in honour of Mr. J.A.B. MACDONALD, formerly Conservator for South Scotland, whose retirement was reported last month. The event was attended by about 130 members and former members of the Commission's staff, many coming from widely separated parts of the country. Among them were Mr. J.A. DICKSON, now a Commissioner and formerly Director, Scotland, and Mrs. DICKSON; Mr. J.R. THOM, Director, Research, and Mrs. THOM; and a number of serving or retired Conservators.

Tributes were paid to Mr. Macdonald in turn by Mr. J. HUNTER, Head Forester at Greskine; Mr. FRANK OLIVER, formerly Conservator, East Scotland; Mr. J.W.L. ZEHETMAYR, Conservator, West Scotland; Mr. Thom; and Mr. W.N. GIBSON, Assistant Conservator, Dumfries, who proposed the toast to Mr. and Mrs. Macdonald. Mr. Macdonald was then presented with a cheque as a token of the great admiration and affection the Commission staff have for one of the outstanding pioneers of forestry in Britain. The presentation was made by Mr. A.D. HOPKINSON, retired Conservator now living at Rockcliffe, who said he had been responsible for recruiting Mr. Macdonald to the Commission nearly 44 years ago. Miss BETTY McGAW, Clerical Officer at Dumfries, presented a bouquet to Mrs. Macdonald. In his expressing thanks Mr. Macdonald said it was hoped to devote the money to the buying of some antique furniture for their new home in Dunscore, Dumfriesshire. He added that he had been fortunate in the nature and scope of the work given to him by the Commission, and in the very high quality of the staff he had had to help him.

Presentation to Mr. Batters

In York recently, on the occasion of his retirement, a presentation was made to Mr. G.J.L. BATTERS, formerly Conservator, North East England. This took the form of a cheque, handed to Mr. Batters by Mr. IAN MACDONALD, District Officer, and it is understood that this has gone or will go towards the purchase of equipment for Mr. Batters' boat, and some photographic material.

**APPOINTMENTS

THE new post of Controller of Management Services is to be filled by Dr. F.C. HUMMEL, on his return next year from Mexico, where he has been holding an appointment with FAO. Before going to Mexico in 1961 he was Management Officer in the Research Directorate.

Mr. J.M. GWYNN, North East England, has been promoted to Assistant Chief Land Agent; and Mr. R.M.G. SEMPLE, who is with Director, Research, has been promoted to Assistant Conservator.

**M.O.H. PRAISES WELSH FORESTRY

IT seems that forestry is really coming into its own in Wales. Delighted are we to learn that the Commission has been thanked by the Ogmore and Garw Urban Council for "bringing back beauty to the mining valleys." And, for the first time to our knowledge, the virtues and benefits of forestry have been featured in the annual report of a Medical Officer of Health - that of Dr. F.T. Jones, of the above-mentioned local authority. Dr. Jones says that the afforestation schemes have

brought about a complete change in form, texture and colour in the locality and this will give great pleasure. The rainfall, he thought, would continue to be high but the air would be more relaxing. At the meeting at which the report was presented Councillors paid further tributes to the work of the Commission. Said one: The forests are "a further attraction to people who want to stay in these lovely hills and away from the congested towns and cities. It is simply wonderful to behold the scene, looking down from the Bwlch over the forestry."

****OLD FRIENDS MEET**

THE dinner which followed the conference at Headquarters of senior executive officers provided an opportunity for Commission serving officers to meet old friends and colleagues - some retired, others who have gone to pastures new. Among the former were Miss ANN BROOKS and Messrs. E.S.J. HINDS, A.D. PALMER, HALDANE CHARTERS, W.E. COGGINS, and ALBERT MINTER.

Miss Brooks, in a letter of appreciation addressed to Mr. M. COMPTON, Commissioner for Finance and Administration, probably sums up the sentiments of all the visitors who emerged from retirement for the occasion. "I enjoyed the evening immensely," she writes, "and it was heartwarming to feel that although I have retired I am not forgotten. I must record my thanks to everyone for such a splendid welcome."

Those formerly with the Commission and now with various other Departments were Miss JEAN HORSHAM and Messrs. A.B. WESTCOTT, L.G. BARTER, N.E.D. BURTON, E.T. CHANNON and M.A.E. GUBBY.

****PRESENTATIONS**

TO mark his departure to South East England after 16 years in the East England Conservancy, a presentation was made to Mr. G.F. BALLANCE, Assistant Conservator. Gifts were a brief case and an electric razor and they were handed to Mr. Ballance by Mr. K.R. SNOOK, Conservancy Land Agent, in the absence of the Conservator, Mr. G.W. BACKHOUSE. Mr. Snook paid tribute to Mr. Ballance's work in East England and referred to the high regard in which the latter was held.

After 10 years in charge of Thetford, the second biggest of the man-made forests in England, Mr. RICHARD CHARD, District Officer, recently left for duty in the New Forest. At a gathering of friends and colleagues Mr. C.W. REDFORD, Head Forester, said Mr. Chard would be greatly missed and recalled some of the things for which the latter would be remembered - the working plan, the start of large-scale clear felling, the Thetford fire plan, his great interest in the growing of Weymouth pine; and, more obvious to the public, the tidy and well kept appearance of the forest, due to his insistence on uniformity of fences, fire brooms and notices.

The Conservator, Mr. G.W. BACKHOUSE, also paid tribute to Mr. Chard, who, he said, had produced the first really viable working plan, and had always evinced great interest in the welfare of the local staff and their families. Mr. Backhouse presented Mr. Chard with a coffee table, made in Brandon from Weymouth pine grown at Thetford. Other gifts from well-wishers included a barometer presented by Mr. Redford. Mrs. Chard received a bouquet, handed to her by Mrs. MARSH, forest clerk and typist.

****200 VISITORS AT KIELDER**

FOR the last three years the "Bellingham Bell" has run from Newcastle to Bellingham, taking visitors to the North Tyne and Redesdale agricultural show, an event which takes place rather late in the season. This special "run" over a line normally closed has been arranged by the Gosforth Round Table and this year facilities were extended so that, in addition to visiting the show, visitors could, if they wished, enjoy a trip by coach to the Border Forest Park. This, obviously, is where the Commission came in through the enterprise of the Kielder Community Association, Mr. KEITH WILSON, District Officer, and the Round Table, who welcomed no fewer than 200 visitors to the Forest Park on the same day.

Their arrival at Kielder was heralded by the bursting of a fire maroon high over the local Kielder School and Community Centre and this also signalled the start of a fire-fighting competition for the Willie Forsyth Cup, and an intensive programme which included country dancing.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TO OUR READERS.