

The ELASHER

FORESTRY
COMMISSION
News & Views

Issued by
INFORMATION
OFFICER

No. 217

January, 1966.

NEW YEAR HONOURS

WE were delighted to learn that in the New Year Honours MAJOR D.C. BOWSER, until recently one of our Commissioners, had been appointed a C.B.E. Major Bowser, who lives at Mill of Argaty, Doune, Perthshire, was, in fact, a Commissioner for nearly 11 years and Chairman of the Scottish National Committee from 1959-1965. While holding these offices he did much to further the cause of forestry and at the same time enhance the reputation of the Commission with many important bodies and the general public.

Our congratulations are offered, too, to Mr. R.H. SMITH, who retired last month from the post of Conservator, South East England, and to whose service we referred at greater length in our previous issue. Mr. Smith has become an O.B.E.; he lives at Field House, Midhurst Road, Fernhurst, Haslemere, Surrey.

A serving colleague also to receive our good wishes is Miss J. GEEKIE, ^{Senior} Higher Executive Officer in the Edinburgh Office, who has been made an M.B.E. Miss Geekie was with the Post Office in earlier days and, during the war, was attached to the Timber Production Department in various centres. She joined the Commission in 1946, serving in Bristol, London and Edinburgh.

Mr. E.J.D. (TOM) WILKINSON, Forester in charge of the Commission's travelling agricultural show unit, has been awarded the British Empire Medal. It is estimated that in carrying out his show duties he has travelled some 20,000 miles and, despite tight timetables, mechanical breakdowns, freaks of weather, flooded roads and showgrounds, he has never missed a show. In the "off-show" periods Mr. Wilkinson works for the Research Station. He lives at Elm Shadows, Forest Road, East Horsley, Surrey. To him, also, we send our congratulations.

**PRINCIPAL TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY

WE are pleased to record the promotion of Mr. JOHN SUMMERS to fill the new post at Headquarters of Assistant Secretary, with effect from the beginning of this year. Mr. Summers has been with the Commission since 1946 and became a Principal in 1960.

***"THE PERFECT COUNTRYMAN"

RETIREMENT OF MR. FRANK BEST, O.B.E.
Commission this month.

TO quote a close associate, in FRANK BEST, Conservator of Forests for North Wales, the perfect countryman is retiring from the

A Denbighshire man, Mr. Best obtained his forestry degree at Cambridge in 1927 and went on for a post-graduate course to the Imperial Forestry Institute, and became a probationary forest officer with the Commission in September, 1928. When first posted to the old Number 2 Division, which included North Wales, he served under Mr. O.J. SANGAR, who was then Divisional Officer at Shrewsbury, and his first charge was the mid-Wales district based on Cemmaes, near Machynlleth; while there he started many of the forests he has since seen reach the production stage. In 1936 he was moved to Betws-y-Coed, where he had charge of Gwydyr and other older forests. Came the outbreak of war and he went as Acting Divisional Officer to South East England, where he was associated with the late Mr. A.L. FELTON.

In 1946 Mr. Best was one of the first to be raised to the new rank of Conservator and a year later he departed for Shrewsbury as Conservator, North Wales. The subsequent development of forestry under his management can be judged by the statistics published in the Commissioners' Annual Report.

From one of the many Officers privileged to serve under him comes the following tribute: "Frank Best was, to all intents and purposes, forestry in North Wales, for his knowledge of both Commission and private woods, based on a lifetime's experience, was and still is unrivalled. As a silviculturist

is outstanding. Perhaps conservative by instinct, he was always ready to try new techniques if they could be demonstrated to be sound. Glib theories left him singularly unimpressed. To his subordinates, his reluctance wholeheartedly to embrace the latest notions could be exasperating, but his judgment was shrewd and his outlook essentially practical. He was tireless in walking the forests, and on summer evenings and at week-ends would look into just those areas which had somehow recently escaped the eye of the supervisor. He remains more at home in and aware of the countryside than any other person I have known. A fine shot, a very good botanist, an authority on lepidoptera, a most knowledgeable ornithologist, nothing in the rural scene escapes his attention. To have spent a day in the field with him was a great experience, whether in the forest, or shooting, or looking for alpine plants or harriers' nests. He would notice everything and be prepared to discuss everything. He would also walk most of his staff or companions to their knees.

To his colleagues and subordinates he was kindness and loyalty itself. To his superiors he was the most loyal of Conservators, though possessed of a certain detachment of outlook and refusing to be panicked into anything he did not think for the good of the forests. In retirement, his tall spare figure will assuredly still be seen walking the forests and hills of North Wales."

In the Valley section of Dovey Forest Mr. Best recently planted specimens of the main timber trees grown in Wales. The ceremony took place next to the area planted when Mr. Best started as District Officer in the locality. Among those present were Mr. J.H. JAMES, the new Conservator for North Wales; Mr. G.D. HOLMES, Assistant Conservator; other Forest Officers and Engineers; and a number of local Foresters. Head Forester R.W. WATERS, on behalf of colleagues and friends, presented Mr. Best with an inscribed Slasher.

****JACK MAUND RETIRES**

THE York Office has said farewell to Mr. JACK MAUND, Utilisation Officer, who has retired. Recently the Conservator, North East England, Mr. G.E. GODWIN, presented Mr. Maund with a cheque for £30, representing contributions received from widely separated parts of the country.

Jack Maund started his career with the Commission at the Dean Foresters' Training School and until the war he was in the Research Branch as Forester and District Officer, followed by service with the Census & Plans Branch. At the outbreak of hostilities he was moved to Thetford where, for more than seven years, he was in charge of timber production work and established what is now the Brandon Central Depot. In 1947 he returned to the Commission and took up the post of Utilisation Officer in York, where he remained until his retirement. During this period he built up a reputation and relationship with the timber trade and timber consumers which will have long reaching-benefit for the trade and the Commission.

A correspondent writes: "I first met Jack Maund at the end of 1937, when O.J. SANGAR, JACK CHARD and he were deputed to organise the 1938 census of woodlands. During the next two years he and Jack Chard were in daily charge of a dozen or more surveyors who were all, I think, forestry graduates waiting for more suitable employment, of which I was one. Others included such well known Commission figures as GEORGE MACKENZIE, DICK RICHARDS, MORLEY PENISTAN, J.T. FITZHERBERT, MIKE LONG, EWART DICKSON, DAVID GRANT and JOCK WHITE. We were a pretty "bolshie" sort of bunch in those days but we never felt any grievance where Jack Maund was concerned; as a promoted Forester he had a very difficult job to do and did it with great tact and kindness. The census people were, of course, dispersed soon after the outbreak of war and I lost sight of Jack until he went to the North East England Conservancy. I can think of no more loyal, hard working, or zealous employee of the Commission. We are all sorry to see him go".

****BOMBS ON THE FOREST**

A FORESTER with the additional experience of protecting his forest from enemy bombs has retired. He is Mr. A. BIRKITT, formerly of East England Conservancy, who during the war when at Hockham was highly commended for rescuing members of the crew of a crashed aircraft. In all Mr. Birkitt, as a sergeant in the Medical Corps of the Home Guard, was on the scene of no fewer than 27 crashes and only lost one and a half acres of his woods - this when a Liberator fell among the trees. With "D" Day pending he - and no doubt others - was taken into custody at Wretham Airfield by the Americans, such was considered the need for security; Mr. Birkitt, however, escaped at night, reached home, had an early breakfast and made his way back into custody without being detected.

Some of the first explosive incendiary bombs were dropped at Thetford during the night prior to their being used on London, causing

a fire on Thetford Warren which was confined to a reasonable size by back firing from the main rides: at this, and many other fires, Mr. Birkitt was in attendance.

Mr. Birkitt commenced as a worker with the Commission in 1926 and in the following year went to the Dean School for two years. He became a Ganger at Swaffham, which at that time extended as far as Hockham, until 1930, when he went to Bourne, Lincolnshire and while there was promoted to Forester. In 1938 he moved to Hockham and in 1950 to Santon Downham; seven years later he transferred to Aldewood and in 1961 to Holt, where he remained until his retirement. At a Foresters' meeting Mr. D. MACKAY, District Officer, presented him with a standard lamp on behalf of the staff in north Norfolk. Workers at Holt gave him a carved oak salad bowl and servers, made locally.

**FORESTRY AND AERODYNAMICS

THOSE of us who serve not in the field are frequently amazed at the diversity of work of our colleagues the Forest Officers, in particular those in Research. The aerodynamic investigation, for example, which for some time now has occupied the attention in particular of Mr. A.I. FRASER, of Alice Holt Lodge.

Wind, of course, is a major climatic factor where the growing of trees is concerned for it will influence the temperature and humidity within a forest and also subject the trees to considerable mechanical stress - it may not be generally known, for example, that a 60 ft. tall tree on the forest edge may experience a turning force at its base of about 13 tons in a normal 30-knot gale. To find out more about the effect of airflow through and over the forests the Research Branch have started a special experiment at Redesdale, in Northumberland. In all, five 80-ft. masts are to be erected, each with a wind direction vane and five wind speed measuring anemometers upon it. The signals from these instruments will be transmitted by cable to a central point, where they will be recorded. This recording will take place on punched paper tape so that the results can be fed directly into the computer at Alice Holt Lodge for analysis.

From all this work it should be possible to suggest how tree crops can in future be grown to keep windthrow to a minimum and, moreover, how thinning techniques can best be employed to the same end.

**THE SALMON RUN AGAIN

THE year 1965, writes a correspondent, may well be remembered at Kielder Forest as that in which the salmon returned to the North Tyne. Once well known as a salmon river, pollution of the lower reaches for a long while prevented this sporting fish reaching the higher waters. But closure of a chemical works and the help of summer and autumn rains has at last given the fish their river run, with consequent excitement among the fishermen of Kielder. Indeed, some 15 lb. fish were caught before the season closed. Since then, large fish spawning on the gravel beds have been watched with much interest.

**A RECORD OF PUBLIC SERVICE

HIS record of voluntary service in National Savings work is something about which FRANK EVANS - Paperkeeper in North Wales Conservancy Office - can be justly proud. No fewer than 40 years ago - on 23rd October, 1925 to be precise - he commenced his "marathon" by opening a Savings Cycle Scheme for the Shrewsbury Borough Police Force, of which he was then a member. On retiring from the Force in 1946 he was elected a member of the Shrewsbury Industrial National Savings Committee. In 1951 - by which time he had joined the Commission - he continued his good work by starting a Savings Scheme for Conservancy Office staff, and over the years Frank has done his rounds of the office regularly each Friday, urging the staff to save and collecting their contributions. Even nowadays, with the office in process of reorganisation, Frank goes about his voluntary work undeterred. He has a collection of seven medals to show - one for each five-year period of service - awarded by the National Savings Committee; he is now awaiting the award of his eighth medal, to recognise his fortieth year, and a special award of a certificate of merit. Undoubtedly a "Long Player" to be admired! Well done Frank!

**THE "HUMMEL"

FOR two years, Head Forester R.J. JENNINGS, of the Dean, tells us there have been local reports of a "Hummel", or fallow buck without antlers, having been seen by workers on the Speech House Beat. A hummel being comparatively rare, reports were received with some scepticism. However, Forester JOHN BRAIN came face to face with the animal quite recently and was positively able to identify it. Afterwards he learned that a young stag from the forest became tame enough to associate with a herd of cows on a farm in the same district and during hard weather regularly followed them into the farmyard.

The farmer encouraged the stag and was quite happy to see it around, until it became aggressive just before the rut and a nuisance

by poking the cows in the stomach with its antlers. Anxious to protect his cows but not wishing harm to the stag, the farmer called in a veterinary surgeon, who dehorned the deer. Shortly afterwards the animal left for the woods and it is now thought that the so-called hummel may be the dehorned stag, returned to the wild after his operation.

Incidentally, talking of deer, by the time you read this J. Arthur Rank's latest contribution to the highly popular "Look at Life" series - "New Deal for Deer" - may well be showing at your local cinema. In making this film the company were given some help by the Commission and, as a result, this should very much to our advantage. Briefly, the film deals with the good management of deer, in particular as practised by the Commission; it includes shots of two of our colleagues closely concerned with deer control at work - FRED COURTIER, warden in the New Forest, and RICHARD PRIOR, who holds a similar post at Cranbourne Chase in the South West England Conservancy. Both these gentlemen worked hard to meet the exacting requirements of the cameramen and thus played an important part in the production of a film which is technically first-class.

**INFORESTA TABLE TENNIS AND DARTS

AFTER gaining promotion last year in the London Civil Service League, the team has continued its successful run throughout the present season. At the time of writing, the team is in second position in the league, having lost only two of the nine matches played. Much of the success must be attributed to the fine form of R. CHAPPELL, who has beaten 22 of his 24 opponents, though credit must also be given to the other members of the team, A. POULTER, D. PERKINS, D. MITCHELL and T. HALL, who have done well.

Further success is hoped for in the Middlesex Knock-out Competition after an overwhelming first round victory of 9-0 against the National Union of Railwaymen.

For the third time in eight tournaments the Inforesta Darts Shield was again won by the Secretariat Division in Headquarters. After a tie at the end of the tournament with Finance, the Secretariat side (R. SIMPSON, E. CUERDEN, A. MEYER and H. SANUSIE) managed to gain the championship by an exciting two games to one.

**PERSONAL

AT Headquarters Mr. M. COMPTON, Commissioner in charge of Administration and Finance, presented Mr. JOHN JAMES, formerly Chief Education Officer, with a golf club trailer, on behalf of many wellwishers. This was a parting gift to Mr. James, on the occasion of his departure to North Wales as Conservator.

At York Mr. ROY FISHER, H.E.O., was presented with a pen and pencil set and gramophone records. The ceremony by the Conservator, Mr. G. GODWIN, on behalf of colleagues, marked the departure of Mr. Fisher for North Wales and his native country after six years of "exile" in Yorkshire.

A dinner held recently in Dorchester provided the opportunity for a presentation to Mr. O.N. BLATCHFORD before he left for South East England. The gift, to which all grades in the District and Conservancy subscribed, took the form of a bureau which was presented by Mr. C.A. CONNELL, Conservator, South West England, who paid tribute to Mr. Blatchford's energy and work, including that of fire protection. The numerous guests included SIR ARTHUR GOSLING, formerly our Director General, and LADY GOSLING.

Recent Weddings: Congratulations to Mr. J.R. WARD, Clerical Officer at Headquarters, on his marriage to Miss J. BISHOP; and to Mr. R.T. COLLINS, also a C.O. at Headquarters, on his marriage to Miss J. FASHAM. New Arrivals: Good wishes to Mr. J.E. EVERARD, District Officer, Fochabers, East Scotland, and Mrs. EVERARD, on the birth of a son; Mr. BOB AFFLECK, S.E.O. Headquarters, and Mrs. AFFLECK, (son); Mr. PAUL BROOK, H.E.O., Headquarters and Mrs. BROOK (daughter - Caroline Frances); to Assistant Forester B. SENISCAL, West Scotland, and Mrs. SENSICAL, (son); and to Mr. FELIX OLU OGUNYEMI, a typist at Headquarters, and Mrs. OGUNYEMI (son).

**DEATH OF FORMER FOREMAN MECHANIC

WE regret to learn of the death of Mr. NORMAN KNIGHT, former Foreman Mechanic, New Forest, who was killed in a road accident early this month while driving his car at Hounslow, on the border of the Forest. Mr. Knight joined the Timber Production Department at Lyndhurst in 1941 and was responsible for maintenance of the Department's mechanical transport and equipment. After a short period with the North German Timber Control, he joined the Forestry Commission in 1946 and took charge of mechanical equipment. He retired from the Commission in 1963 and emigrated to British Columbia, returning to this country in due course and residing in Southampton. Our sympathy goes to Mrs. Knight.