

THE FLASHER

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ONCE it was customary for us to give each year a list of dates of the bigger agricultural shows at which the Commission would be exhibiting. Several readers have asked whether the practice can be resumed and we are pleased to do this:

England:- Shropshire and West Midland, Shrewsbury, 18-19 May; Devon County, Exeter, 19-21 May; Staffordshire, Stafford, 25-26 May; Bath and West, Shepton Mallet, 1-4 June; Great Cheshire, Chester, 8-9 June; Three Counties, Malvern, 14-16 June; Royal Counties, Kingsclere, Hants., 23-25 June; Royal Norfolk, Norwich, 29-30 June; Royal, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, 5-8 July; Great Yorkshire, Harrogate, 12-14 July; Kent County, Maidstone, 13-14 July; Durham County, Chester-le-Street, 29-30 July.

Scotland:- Royal Highland, Ingliston, Edinburgh, 21-24 June.

Wales:- Royal Welsh, Builth Wells, 19-21 July.

We shall also be showing the flag at a number of other shows in various parts of the country, not all of them small. No doubt information will be available locally about these. We have certain other commitments, however, at which we must be represented in some strength, not least important being the Wild Life exhibition at Alexandra Palace, from 21st April to 1st May, to commemorate National Nature Week; and the Game Fair, organised by the Country Landowners' Association, which this year is to be held on the Chatsworth Estate in Derbyshire on 29th and 30th July.

**ON FOREST FIRES

THE season of high fire danger is with us again -- the period when the previous year's vegetation remains and that which is sap-filled and more fire-resistant has not yet appeared. The public, generally, seems not always to appreciate that even after rain the old vegetation can dry out and become timber dry in a matter of hours. Not so the Forester! At this time of the year he is ever-vigilant and, reminiscing, one recalls that on 29th March of last year in a part of South Wales there were not only many woodland fires, but the mountainside burned all day.

It is, however, of interest that to the beginning of March this year only 12 fires on Commission land had been reported, compared with just on 200 in the comparable period last year. Unfortunately, one of the dozen fires caused a considerable amount of damage, for about 30 acres of young trees were destroyed and the loss was estimated at more than £3,000. As to the cause, it seems that a member of the public was probably to blame.

The total financial loss in the Forest Year 1965 from fires amounted to nearly £77,000. Perhaps 1966 will provide circumstances in which that figure will be very much reduced. But whatever the trend may be, a good start to this year will certainly not induce complacency on the part of those whose job it is to protect the woodlands.

Footnote: A fire last September in non-Commission woods in Wales must surely have been due to one of the strangest of causes. A forest worker was cleaning the plantation and using a sickle; with this he struck and ignited a box of matches in his pocket, setting alight his clothing; this in turn fired some bracken and a breeze swiftly fanned the flames into a blaze.

Do Not Feed the Birds!

ONE would hardly think that robins could be associated with fire danger. But you never know, as the following incident will show.

During a recent cold spell a robin became so friendly with some of our workers that it followed the men throughout the day. During the lunch break it was fed on various scraps and eventually it became so tame that it would take crumbs from the men's hands. One lunch-time, however, the bird removed a lighted cigarette from the hand of one worker and, even after a chase, refused to drop it, having apparently acquired a taste for tobacco. There was a sigh of relief when the robin did eventually release the stub, which was promptly extinguished.

The moral seems to be -- don't feed the robins!

There is probably more to this incident that is apparent at first reading (writes the Editor). Perhaps it would be better not to feed any birds when there is fire risk, if one takes into account the amazing habit of "anting" which some birds display. Usually the bird picks up an ant in its beak and, holding it between the tips of the mandibles, goes into a peculiar posture and appears to rub the ant up and down the bases of the primary feathers. But even more odd is that some birds have been known to use lighted cigarette ends or small embers from fires as substitutes for ants. Certainly there is a record of seagulls deliberately flying off with burning rubbish from a refuse dump near one of our Scottish forests, and a strong suspicion that these birds were responsible for starting several fires in the vicinity.

****AWARDS FOR INVENTIONS**

TWO of our Head Foresters -- Mr. A. ROSE, of Ledmore, East Scotland, and Mr. G.A.

SHARP, of North East England, have each been awarded £300 by a Committee on Awards to Inventors for the development of their respective lining out ploughs, the Ledmore and the York. Although called "ploughs" they are, of course -- as our more technically-minded readers will already know -- tractor-mounted machines used for transplanting purposes. Their value is obvious when one considers the numbers of plants that have to be lined out each year to meet, eventually, the Commission's planting programmes of over 100 million trees a year.

Mr. Rose had previously received an award of £25 in respect of his machine under the Commission's suggestions scheme.

****HEAD FORESTER RETIRES**

HEAD FORESTER C.R. WELLINGTON, of the East England Conservancy, has retired

after nearly 50 years in forestry. He started his career with the Office of Woods in the Dean and, as a boy of 12, his wages were 9s. a week. After passing through the Dean School he served at Thetford, in South and North Wales, the Lake District, South East England and, finally, at Aldewood Forest in Suffolk. He will continue to live in the Aldewood district.

****AN OFF-BEAT QUIZ**

HERE is a quiz of an off-beat character. What is it that is set out below?

A Polynesian love song? Utterance of an aborigine struck in the throat by his own boomerang? A Maori telling his wife what he thinks of her cooking? Readers are invited to write to the Editor saying what they think it is.

Tiouou, tiouou, tiouou, tiouou
Shpe tiou tokoua;
Tio, tio, tio, tio,
Kououtio, kououtiou, kioutiou, koutioutio;
Tokuo tskouo, tskouo, tskouo
Tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu, tsu
Kouorror, tiou, tksoua, pipetk souis
Tso, tso, tso, tso, tso, tso, tso, tso, tso, tso, tso
Tsirrhadng,
Tsi, tsi, si, tosi, si, si, si, si, si, si, si,

Tsorre, tsorre, tsorre, tsorreki,
Tsatu, tsatu, tsatu, tsatu, tsatu, tsatu, tsi,
Blo, blo, blo, dlo, dlo, dlo, dlo,
Kouiou, trrrrrrrretgt,
Su, su, su, ly, ly, ly, li, li, li, li.

****DEATH OF ELAM WARD**

MR. ELAM WARD, former wood-cutter who worked in the Dean from the age of nine to 72, and to whom we referred in an earlier issue as one of the oldest forest "characters", has died. He was 96.

We had speculated that Mr. Ward was surely the most elderly of any of the Commission's pensioners, present or past. His recipe for good health, which he always enjoyed until recently, was "bread and cheese and hard work, and plenty of cider".

****THE NORTHERWOOD CLUB**

IN the ballot for election of two members to the Northerwood House Club committee the following were successful: Mr. W.A. CADMAN, Deputy Surveyor, New Forest, and Mr. P.J. LANGLEY, District Officer, Education and Training Branch.

****ANOTHER ANTIQUARIAN FIND**

MR. S. RUSHTON, who is employed at Haslingden Forest, North West England, found a fine flint arrow-head at the very shallow depth of a foot. This was passed to the Rawtenstall Museum and was identified as a neolithic flint, thus placing its age at approximately 2300 B.C., or some 4,000 years. Haslingden lies very close to Blackburn, amid the highly industrialised area of north Lancashire. Apparently many "finds" have been made in this locality and it is remarkable that they have been undisturbed for so many years. Local historians believe that the early neolithic man was probably driven to the area now known as Lancashire from Yorkshire, by invaders.

****HIDEOUS SUFFERING AND SHOCKING CRUELTY**

A REPORT from the New Forest refers to "many cases of hideous suffering and shocking cruelty" among, and to, deer. Recently in the Forest a pricket was found dragging a snare and a white buck lost a leg in a snare. It was found that the white doe of Milkham had been in a snare which chafed the flesh on her neck. "Fearful" shotgun injuries have come to light - a buck blinded by small shot and another with wounds in the back had to be destroyed, as did a roe kid with shotgun wounds which was found by the keepers, still alive, near Holmsley. A fallow buck was found with a leg mangled by No.6 shot and had to be despatched.

****SHOOTING FROM METASEQUOIAS**

LAST month's claim credited to Mr. FRANK BEST, formerly Conservator, North Wales, to the effect that he was the first man in history to shoot a pheasant from the cover of a group of Metasequoias has produced some comment.

First of all we should say that our speculation that he had shot from the cover of sequoias on the Leighton Hall was not the "boob" it might have appeared on first reading. All we were suggesting, or intending to suggest, was that there might have been some misunderstanding and sequoias were involved and not Metasequoias. We are well aware of the fact that the latter species was discovered in China in comparatively recent years and that, hitherto, they were known to exist only in fossil form. The Leighton Hall sequoias to which we referred are, of course, Sequoia Sempervirens; but it does so happen that, according to a correspondent, there is a stand of Metasequoias at Leighton, believed to have been planted nearly 20 years ago and, we understand, the oldest stand of this species in Britain. Our correspondent suspects, however, that Mr. Best shot his pheasant in the Forestry Commission plot of Metasequoias at Vivod, Llangollen.

****A CHANCE TO KNOW YOUR CONIFERS**

LET credit go where credit is due. To our way of thinking our publications rank among the best that are produced by any Government body. The Forest Guides, for example, have set such a high standard for this sort of handbook that their format and content have been emulated by other publishers.

Now, from the Publications Branch, comes "Know Your Conifers", an effort that will be widely acclaimed and meet a need that has existed for many years, for often indeed have educationalists and the public sought from us in vain a simple, concise dissertation on our softwoods. Edited by HERBERT EDLIN, our Publications Officer, "Know Your Conifers" is imaginatively, one might almost say ornately, produced yet will sell at the modest price of five shillings. The front cover, in colour, is a delight and the contents, which are the more important, are fully informative and supported by numerous photographs and line drawings of foliage and the seed-bearing cones. In his introduction Mr. Edlin makes some points familiar to us, of course, which should be more widely appreciated by the general public -- conifers form a distinct group of trees which has become very important in the world's economy because they grow fast on poor soils even under harsh climates and yet yield good timbers. We would go a little further and stress that, without the timber-producing conifers, almost all of which are "aliens", we would be bankrupt in home grown softwoods. Mr. Edlin adds that about nine-tenths of all the timber used in Britain, whether in its original state or made up into paper or manufactured board, comes from coniferous trees.

It is not a criticism to say that "Know Your Conifers" would be even more impressive if the illustrations were in colour; but then, if that were the case, the price would put it beyond the man in the street.

TRANSFERS

THE following transfers have recently taken place:

Assistant Conservators H.V. DIER from Aberdeen to Dumfries; J.M. GWYNN from Hexham to London. District Officers D. MacLEOD from Inverness to Dingwall; C. BANCROFT from Cambridge to Ipswich; W. NORRIE, returned from Zambia, to Kintyre, W.(S). Foresters W.J. GORDON from Blackhall, E.(S) to Culbin, E.(S); P.F. DAVIES from Delamere, Work Study, to Dolgellau, Work Study; J.B. COLLING from Thornthwaite, N.W.(E) to Ennerdale, N.W.(E); P. ARMSTRONG from Clashirdaroch, E.(S) to Glenbranter, W.(S).

Assistant Foresters W.G. PATERSON from Ae, S.(S) to Tulliallan, Research; W.M. McDONALD from Inverness to Inverinan, W.(S); P.J. HUMPHRIES from Bodmin, S.W.(E) to Alice Holt, P. and E.; B. SENTISCAL from St. Fillans, W.(S) to Fearnoch, W.(S); G.N. KEARNS from Alice Holt, P. and E. to Edinburgh, P. and E.; J.S. INNES to Edinburgh, P. and E.; R.J.A. McDUFF from Inverinan to Cairnbaan, W.(S); I.L. REID from Knapdale, W.(S) to St. Fillans; B.D. SYMES from Thornthwaite to Langholme, Work Study; A.G. LITTLE from Birkley, N.E.(E) to Alice Holt, P. and E.; P.A. THOMAS from Dolgellau to Cairnbaan; J.T.H. MURREY from Glenbranter to Knapdale; J.G. WHYATT from Alice Holt, P. and E. to Upper Nithsdale, S.(S); J.D. McNEILL from Tulliallan to Research, Mabie, S.(S); P. HUTCHINSON from Ennerdale to Thornthwaite.

Conservancy Engineer C.S. ALLAN from Cardiff to Chester; Assistant Conservancy Engineer W.H. CLARKSON from Dumfries, S.(S) to Huntley, E.(S). A/CE's A.R. BROMLEY from York to Llanrwst, N.(W); H.N. HOYLE from Barcaldine, W.(S) to Kendal, N.W.(E). Mechanical Engineer W.S. MacKENZIE from Inverness to Kielder, Work Study.

H.E.O.'s G.B. McALLISTER from Glasgow to Chapelhall, W.(S); K.H.C. TAYLOR from Work Study, Dumfries to Glasgow. E.O.'s MRS. V. THOMPSON from Shrewsbury to London; A. OSWALD from Chapelhall to Glasgow.

**THE WILD WEST END

POLICE car sirens wailing; this really was too much to resist (writes Miss J. PASCOR, shorthand typist at Headquarters). So, dashing to the window there it was, a "Z Cars" programme before our very eyes. There in the West End street was a police car, doors wide open, behind a van whose passage was blocked by another, larger van parked at angle across the road; policemen rushing along, chasing the occupants of the smaller van. Rumour has it that one of the pursued was tripped by a passer-by - he apparently remembering the request to "have a go". A few minutes later one of the would-be escapees was being frog-marched to the West End Central police station, next door to Headquarters. Another few minutes and the second man was on his way inside. Well, well! We must make the most of the exciting West End before we move to the quiet of the Hampshire countryside.