

The ELASHER

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WELCOME, ANITA!

A BIRTH in the Commission family, so to speak, is certainly something to go on the record.

An official announcement of the happy event might read something like this:

April, 1966. To Boris and Doris, Zoological Gardens, London, a daughter, Anita.

To be even more formal, it should be explained that the real names of Boris and Doris are Puchacz and Purosa and the happy couple are, in fact, the pair of rare European bison generously presented to the Commission by the Polish Ministry of Forestry some two years ago to carry out the work which their predecessors, Pustasek and Pulanda, so lamentably failed to do. Some readers may recall that these two animals were given to the Commission by the Polish authority in the devout hope that, having taken up residence in the London Zoo, they would raise a family. Alas, it was not to be: Pulanda the cow matured rather more early than Pustasek the bull, who resented her advances so much that without warning he savaged and killed her and so lived up to his name, translatable as "Creature of the Wild". "Pustasek", we were told by the Zoo the other day, "was definitely not a good husband and we thought it inadvisable to provide him with another wife".

But we are entitled to pass from pathos to joy in considering the new arrival - "a lovely little thing", said our Zoo contact. As for the little lady's name, Anita was chosen because it employs initially the first letter of the alphabet and the intention is that as and when brothers and sisters arrive their names will start with successive letters. Avuncularly we hope that not a few such letters will be used up for although there has of late been a relatively small increase in the European bison population generally, there are still all too few of these animals left in the world.

****DEATH OF FORESTER TOM BEWICK**

WE deeply regret having to record the death of Mr. TOM BEWICK, Forester in N.E. England

Conservancy, who died in hospital recently, at the relatively early age of 58. He was the son of Mr. THOMAS BEWICK, Head Forester to Lord Barnard on the large Raby and Teesdale estates, where good forest management has been traditional for many generations.

After completing his course at the Dean Forester Training School in 1928, Tom entered Commission's service at Thornthwaite forest in Cumberland. Subsequently he moved to Hamsterley in County Durham and then to Allerston in Yorkshire and was promoted to Forester in 1940. In 1948 he returned to Hamsterley as Forester-in-charge and remained there until 1951. By this time the Dedication and other schemes were gaining momentum and Tom was transferred to Hexham as private woodlands Forester for Northumberland and Durham. With such a sound private woodlands background this was a fitting appointment, in which he excelled.

"For 15 years I worked in close collaboration with Tom," writes Mr. WALTER SMITH, Assistant Conservator, "and always found him to be most loyal and conscientious and a good friend and colleague. He was a man of congenial disposition but could be firm and resolute when necessity arose; he was essentially trustworthy and his punctuality was an outstanding characteristic. Unfortunately, in latter years his health intermittently gave him cause for concern and necessitated periods of sick leave. Tom was proud of the fact that he was a direct descendant of a brother of the distinguished wood engraver and naturalist, Thomas Bewick of Newcastle-on-Tyne (1755-1828), from whom his own Christian name derived. The head of a very united household, and our deep sympathy goes out to Tom's widow and family."

****SAME POST, SAME HOUSE FOR
30 YEARS**

same house. During this time he saw his charge develop from young plantations into a magnificent 2,400 acres of productive forest yielding more than 150,000 hoppus feet of timber a year.

MR. A. M. STUART, hitherto Head Forester at Loch Eck, West Scotland, has retired with the remarkable record of 30 years in the same post and the

After a total of 40 years in the high rainfall spruce areas of the west he and Mrs. Stuart are leaving for the former's native heath in Speymouth Forest, near Fochabers, where he can look out upon Scots pine growing in a locality with an annual rainfall of only 23 inches. He does not intend to be idle, however, for with him goes his collection of Gloster canaries, which have won for him awards in Edinburgh and London. He was, in fact, the first Scotsman to act as a judge for this breed at Edinburgh shows. His second hobby, which will also occupy some time, is the raising of fuschias, of which he has more than 70 varieties - and, of course, there are always the bees!.

In departing from Loch Eck, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart have unfortunately to leave most of their four children and fifteen grandchildren in the west, but we wish the couple a long and happy retirement.

Retirement of Forester Frank Close

40 years' service. A presentation was made to him at his Lake District forest by the Conservator, Mr. J. S. R. CHARD, the gift from wellwishers being a pair of binoculars to help him in his hobby of watching the local sport of hound trailing. Among those present was Mr. JOHN DICKSON, Commissioner for Harvesting and Marketing.

MR. FRANK CLOSE, formerly Forester at Grizedale, North West England, has retired after more than

Frank started work with the Commission at Thornthwaite in 1925 and took part in the first planting on Wythop and Dodd beats, where today some of the Douglas firs are 100 feet in height. He earned 30s. a week on piece work, though when the going was rough at the very top of the Wythop he received up to 35s. At that time 1s. 9d. a chain was paid for the erection of temporary fencing and the insurance stamp cost 5d. In 1931 he moved to Blengdale Forest and, in the following year when he married, his best man was Mr. JOE LIDDELL, who was to become Head Forester in the New Forest. It was while at Blengdale that Frank rose through the ranks of ganger and foreman to Forester. He went to Grizedale in 1954, where he has been second in command and much concerned with silvicultural work and the hardwood working circle in particular.

There was a large gathering at a farewell party to wish Frank and his wife a happy retirement, which they will spend in their old home of Gosforth.

Mr. A. H. Spooner

The Chester office staff has said farewell to Mr. A. H. SPOONER on his retirement from the post of Messenger. Before joining the Commission 14 years ago Mr. Spooner had served for 25 years in the City police force at Chester, retiring with the rank of sergeant. A skilful bowls player, he has won numerous competitions and in three successive years secured the C.J.F. Owen championship cup, together with the Northgate bowl. In earlier days he umpired at some of the office cricket matches.

Mr. Spooner received a cheque from his colleagues, presented by the Conservator. "We, and the many visitors to our office," writes our correspondent, "will greatly miss his cheery greeting. All of us wish him well in the future".

Timber Was Towed Across Loch

West Scotland. Originally employed by the Office of Woods, he has seen Inverliever grow from 850 acres of "pioneer" plantations to a fully established forest of some 4,500 acres yielding 250,000 h.ft. a year from thinnings. Put another way this is seven square miles of forest with an output of 30 tons of timber each working day. And this is only part of the story, for as a result of the pioneering work at Inverliever two other forests have risen on the shores of Loch Awe, adding another 10,000 acres.

Mr. DONALD MACCALLUM has at last retired after 49 years as a forest worker at Inverliever,

At a farewell gathering the staff paid tribute to the solid work put in by Donald MacCallum in nursery and plantation and ANGUS CLERK, a "youngster" with only 44 years' service, reminisced on the past of the forest. Days were recalled when travelling up the loch was by boat, with long walks up the hill; ponies took out the plants in panniers and, only 20 years ago, timber was towed in rafts across the loch - so different from to-day, when great logs are loaded by machine straight on to lorries.

A wallet with notes was presented to Donald MacCallum as a parting gift.

**GONE - THE PYROMANIAC'S HEAVEN

READING the item "On Forest Fires" in your March issue set me reflecting on the position 20 years ago, the first year after the war, writes Mr. C. A. CONNELL, Conservator, South West England. Gone was the risk from phosphorus bottles (dropped by both sides on our woods!) and other incendiary bombs and from troops under training. There was the new sense of freedom and, though petrol rationing still had quite an effect, many people were on the move and the woods once again suffered from the great British public. We had a great acreage at that time in the "maximum hazard" state, about 20 feet high, unbrushed and dense - a pyromaniac's Heaven!

The fire fighting equipment available in 1946 was primitive and inadequate - a few ex-A.R.P. pumps guaranteed to swallow the contents of a small water-hole in 5 minutes flat; transportable water tanks which were really water butts borrowed from some ramshackle cottage or other and which so affected the centre of gravity of the solitary lorry that the risk of overturning kept the vehicle strictly to the best rides; and a communications system based on the top strand of a fence line, euphemistically called a field telephone. But of course brain and brawn were abundant and right well were both used.

What a difference two decades later! Really portable high-pressure, low consumption pumps feeding light-alloy variable nozzles through almost frictionless light weight non-absorbent hose are universal. Most Foresters have an in-built first-aid water system on at least one Land Rover on their forest and if this is a major forest the vehicle will be radio-equipped as well. Chemical additives to water make it both wetter and clinging, so that controlled burning as a presuppression measure and actual suppression of a wild-fire are much more reliable procedures than hitherto.

There has also been a great improvement since 1946 in the matter of responsibilities laid on Foresters as to when and to what degree the provisions of the Fire Plan should be implemented. Gone are the "wet-thumb" and weather-sniffing techniques, with their inevitable "play-safe" reaction; nowadays the Forester has proper meteorological instruments and the backing of a sophisticated technique of forecasting the degrees of hazard, together with an assurance that if he uses the techniques and obeys the instructions linked thereto he will not be left to "carry the can" should fate pull a fast one on him and permit a fire against all the rules!

So, while fighting a 1966 forest fire still calls for courage, guts and sweat just as in 1946, the chances of the fire reaching three figures in acreage are very much less. This is much for which to be thankful.

**THE MUZZLE-LOADER

THE memory of ELAM WARD, former wood-cutter in the Dean, whose death at 96 we reported recently, remains with a number of our readers. One of these is Mr. FRED COURTIER, the Commission's Game Warden whose headquarters is the New Forest.

Fred Courtier tells us he first met Elam 16 years ago. He had even then been retired for many years but was still very active. Let Fred Courtier take up the story: "Elam owned a really ancient muzzle-loading double-barrelled shotgun and with this fearful weapon he would sometimes join me when I was shooting near his house. This musket was loaded with black powder, an unspecified amount of miscellaneous mixed shot and wads made from strips of old newspaper he used to carry in his pockets.

"To be perfectly honest I often wished him and his gun in the next county. On sighting a quarry - usually some unfortunate grey

squirrel - he would beg to be allowed the first shot. For my part I would place as many large trees between us as I could when he was shooting for I was scared his gun would blow up and take me with it. In the excitement of the chase he would sometimes reload the same barrel twice, giving it a double charge of powder and shot, which he would ram down with great gusto. Elam was a firm believer in generous portions and this frightful combination would often put him on his back when he next fired. I still have the most vivid mental picture of his disappearing from sight behind a huge cloud of black smoke, fringed with a shower of descending bits and pieces of burning newspaper - the remains of his wads. In dry conditions in the spring I even ended up in the role of firefighter. I am sure Mr. J. Q. WILLIAMSON, who was then Deputy Surveyor, would have called in the gun permits of each of us had he witnessed one of these scenes.

****THOSE WERE THE DAYS**

THE following extracts from Bellister Castle records of 1776 may be of interest to Foresters (or, perhaps, to work study teams!). We are indebted to Mr. F. D. BARRETT, District Officer, East England, for sending it along.

To Thomas Blakelock for Planting 200 Seedling Scotch Firs, 430 Ash trees and 4 Pecks of Acorns - 4 Days at 1/- pr. Day 4-0; To George Dale for 300 Beach Trees 2.5.0; To Harry Hankin for Peeling Oak Trees cut on the Bank - 2½ days at 1/- pr. Day 2-6; To Mary Hankin and Daughter gathering the Bark together that was Peeled from the Oak Trees each 2½ Days at 6d. pr. Day 2-0; To John West for repairing a crofts Cut Saw 2d.; Do. for 2 wedges 3d.; To George Dale for 100 English Elm 5 and 6 Feet for planting 1.4.0; Do. for 50 Larch 7-6; Do. for 100 Scotch Firs 1½ and 2 Feet 7-6.

To Archibald Dixon and Sons for 6,000 Thorn Quicks for the New Fences at 6/8 pr. Thousand 2.0.0; Do. for 400 Two years transplanted Scotch Firs 4-0; Do. for 100 Larch Transplanted 4-0; Do. for 200 Seedling Oaks 1-6; To Thomas Blakelock for cutting a Large Drain 55 Roods at 1/4 3.13.4; Do. for cutting 405 Roods 2 yds. of small drain filling them with Stones taken from the old Stone Wall and levelling the soil upon them at 10d. pr. Rood 16.17.6; for Houghing up an old Willow Hedge 19 Roods 19-0.

****TABLE TENNIS**

IN recognition of an outstanding achievement in winning the H.Q. Annual Handicap Tournament for the third consecutive year a feat which will undoubtedly take a long time to equal - Mr. PAUL BROOK was presented with an inscribed plaque.

The Inforesta team made their exit in the quarter-finals of the Middlesex Knock-Out Cup, being defeated 2-7 at the Shell Building by Lensbury second team. Incidentally, the Lensbury first team has one England international playing, and were, on the night, practising with such famous players as Victor Barna, Ian Harrison and Brian Wright. This indicates the standard of opposition met by the Commission, whose Team members on that occasion were P. W. BROOK 1 - 2, R. E. CHAPPELL 1 - 2, D. S. MITCHELL 0 - 3. In the fourth division of the London Civil Service League the team finished in third place, a satisfactory position considering the difficulty experienced in fielding a side each week. The percentage of matches won by individual team members was:

R. CHAPPELL 83; N. T. HALL 64; D. MITCHELL 55; A. A. POULTER 50.

****DEATH OF MRS. DOREEN WAGSTAFF**

FORMER colleagues will regret to hear of the sudden death of Mrs. Doreen Wagstaff (nee Jackson), who served the Commission from 1942 as a tractor driver and also as part time clerk at Allerston Forest; from 1950, until her resignation on marriage in 1962, she was in charge of the Conservancy drawing office at York.

****THANK YOU FROM MR. BEATON**

MR. D. M. BEATON, formerly Directorate Engineer, Scotland, to whose departure to the Scottish Development Department we referred last month, writes to the Chief Engineer; "I would thank all who contributed to the generous gift made to me. With this I have bought a Dynatron record player and am hearing my records with a new clarity. I can assure you all that this will always be a most highly prized possession. I started work with the Scottish Development Department and received a friendly welcome. I have been allocated to Motorways Branch and my particular responsibility is A.74 in Dumfries-shire. A quick check shows that the new route does not pass through F.C. property, so there are no divided loyalty problems. Thank you once again and may the Commission prosper."