

THE SLASHER

FORESTRY
COMMISSION
News & Views

Issued by
INFORMATION
OFFICER

No. 223

July, 1966

VISIT OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FORESTRY, ICELAND

MR. HAKON BJARNASON, Director-General of Forestry in Iceland, was a recent visitor to our shores and during his tour of North Scotland and North East England Conservancies was shown forestry and forest research work likely to prove of interest and of possible assistance to the work of his own forest service.

Iceland may, on the face of it, seem an unlikely country to have a forest service. The only indigenous woods are the scrub remnants of former birch woods which were fairly extensive at the time the country was settled, mainly by Norwegians, in the ninth and 10th centuries. Most of these woods disappeared as the result of exploitation and grazing. Interest in forestry in Iceland revived during the latter part of the nineteenth century and some enthusiasm was started in the early years of this century which has since been maintained. There is now a small but active state forest service which is engaged both in the enclosure and replanting of areas of former birch wood and in the afforestation of bare land. The range of species possible is very limited comprising mainly Alaskan Lodgepole pine and Sitka spruce together with very small amounts of some other North Western American conifers together with Siberian and one or two other larches. In addition to state forestry there is such local enthusiasm for small scale planting for shelter and amenity carried out by local forestry associations who are advised and guided by the state forest staff.

The forests visited by Mr. Bjarnason in the "Northern Territories" of North Scotland included Rumster, Dornoch nursery, Borgie, Naver and Shin forests, while in North East England Allerston and Kielder were the main venues and, at Kielder Village School and Community Centre Mr. Bjarnason talked to the children about Iceland and planted a cherry tree in the school grounds. The host Conservators, Mr. HAMISH MAXWELL and Mr. GUNNAR GODWIN have both made visits to Iceland in recent years.

Mr. Bjarnason also met the DIRECTOR-GENERAL, SIR HENRY BERESFORD-PEIRSE and visited the Research Station at Alice Holt Lodge.

OPENING OF QUANTOCK FOREST TRAIL

LORD WALDEGRAVE, lately Chairman of the Forestry Commission, performed the opening ceremony of the Trail through Quantock Forest on Saturday, 18th June. The occasion started on an informal note with a sandwich lunch in the Picnic Place. Was it a point of pride or of indifference to the weather that the only people to brava a heavy rain-storm right in the centre of the field were the families of Foresters GEORGE JENKINSON, ERIC HIBBERD and MICHAEL STARK? Lesser mortals sought the protection of their cars and of the forest.

The opening was attended by a large gathering and included not only the more obvious interests of forestry, natural history, local government, planning, water authorities, army, landowners and staghounds, but also the less obvious, namely, the many societies which, in their time, have been the most vociferous in their criticism of forestry on the Quantock Hills. On this day not only were their voices stilled, but they relented so far as to be appreciative and to ask for further conducted tours. Is this the wind of change? The B.B.C. televised an excellent preview of the Trail and showed this on the night before the opening, in the programme "Points West". The local Press were also very active.

The sun was shining when Lord Waldegrave referred to the convincing growth in employment in the forty years that have passed since the forest was acquired and planted. The contrast between the then 20 sheep per square mile and now 30 human beings per square mile dependent on the forest needs no elaboration.

A standing volume of three million cubic feet of conifers with an annual increment of 9% is a good answer to those who argue in favour of so called native hardwoods with an increment closer to 1%. Multiple land use of the forest was the major theme in Lord Waldegrave's speech - the Productive Forest - the Water Catchment - the Adventure Training - the Recreation - the Education - the Natural History and Wild Life, and, with a direct statement to the Press, emphasised the need for unselfishness. The Forestry Commission has been unselfish in opening the forest, let the public be unselfish in its treatment of the forest and countryside. Lord Waldegrave led the company around the trail, and at each halt marked by the sign of the Red Deer and Scots pine, an explanation by the District Officer was followed by a discussion in which the acknowledged experts made most informative contributions on such subjects as 'precipitation and evapo-transpiration', 'stag hunting', 'bird calls', 'ants and neomyzaphis', 'badgers', 'road-making', and by no means least, 'economic versus decorative forestry'.

The Trail includes a permanent exhibition shed, portraying in miniature the natural history of the timbers and their end products, the wild life and the management of the forest. The centre piece is an illustrated 25" map of the forest, five feet square, mounted as a table and covered with perspex. Another large feature is a man size diagram of the ideal seed trees surmounted by a head of a Royal Stag. Although the Trail was opened formally on Jun 18th, some 2,900 guides had already been sold prior to the opening, mostly via the 'Honesty Box'. The "honesty rating" is just over 60%.

****STEADY EMPLOYMENT**

ON their recent visit to Scotland the FORESTRY COMMISSIONERS were introduced to Head Forester BOBBY JOHNSTON of EREDINE and GLENORCHY Forests. These two forests, at the present time hold a greater reserve of plantable land than many Conservancies. Owing to simultaneous acquisitions at both forests and the resumption of a large farm at Eredine the combined reserve is now in excess of 15,000 acres. When reorganisation takes place both forests will expect to plant around 700 acres per annum for the next decade.

We shall be interested to hear if any other Head Forester has a larger reserve of prospective planting land under his charge.

****STAFF EDUCATIONAL VISITS**

FROM time to time we are pleased to record the pleasant memories of the association of office and field staff on these annual outings. In an organisation as widely dispersed as the Commission this contact can bring a new insight into the work of the "other chap". More in hope than anger (sub-editor's comment) it is hoped that the 'annual' visit becomes a reality for one particular office in a very big city!

North Scotland

Inverness Office's annual educational outing included a visit to Newton Nursery in the East Conservancy, where the party was shown around by the District Officer, Mr. J. E. EVERARD, and Mr. W. J. NICOLSON, Head Forester. In the afternoon the party went on to Pluscarden Abbey and then to Culbin Forest. There Mr. W. G. MILNE, Head Forester, explained some of the problems arising in and from the afforestation of the sand dunes. High tea at the Altonbury Hotel, Nairn, was followed by a convivial evening.

South Wales

The staff of the South Wales Conservancy office recently visited the Forest of Dean and Tintern. Mr. SANZEN-BAKER, Deputy Surveyor, welcomed the party and said that he felt confident they would find much of interest to see. The walk through the seed orchard certainly proved him right - for the staff were given an absorbing hour or so by the Research staff with lucid explanations of grafting techniques, pollenisation, etc. Equally informative and interesting was the afternoon visit to Tintern Forest. Conducted by Mr. S. J. C. WEST, D.F.O. the tour took in a number of beauty spots and stands of magnificent conifers.

Proof that it doesn't always rain in South Wales and adjacent areas may be found in the fact that yet again the outing was blessed with magnificent weather. Can any other Conservancy claim 14 consecutive educational outings unspoiled by rain?

West Scotland

The outing to Glenrickard Forest on the Isle of Arran took place at a time when a previously good spell of weather had deteriorated to severe rain squalls just before steamer departure time.

The good ship "Glen Sannox" was about fifty yards from the pier when two puffing figures were seen to be waving frantically from the shore. These transpired to be the Conservator and Assistant Conservator, seriously delayed by train failure. Unfortunately their guestures were met by similar, but rudimentary salutes, from the ship's officer! The next incident befell one of the popular females of the party when she slid several yards on the slippery deck and, fortunately, only dignity was hurt. The crossing, which took just over an hour, was described by one seafaring type as "a pleasant little heave" and although pale faces abounded there were no physical manifestations of "mal de mer".

A full programme had been arranged for the party's four hours on the island and hired mini-buses were boarded to accomplish this. Leaving Brodick, and passing through the pleasant resort of Lamlash, the party wended by forest road to view the first item on the itinerary, an excellent bridging example - the stonework of which was a monument to the skill of a former Area Civil Engineer. Demonstrations of deep draining, ploughing and late planting were next scheduled, but, the Scottish elements chose this moment to show their teeth and the demonstrations were curtailed in the scurry for shelter. The chapter of incidents continued when one mini-bus punctured on a lonely hillside, with no jack or wheelbrace within miles. In the resulting confusion, the Accountant and Establishment Officer were "lost" but hopes of two E.O. vacancies in the Conservancy were dashed when it was remembered that they were waiting for transport at an isolated holding!

The latter part of the programme, which was to have included a visit to Brodick Castle (now under the Scottish National Trust), was abandoned and, after some makeshift transport arrangements everyone managed to arrive back in Brodick before steamer time. In fairer weather the party set sail for the mainland - with general forestry education little enhanced but with a healthy understanding of the difficulties under which island forestry is practised in West Scotland!

**TAILPIECE

A fire in Drybrook, The Dean, was reported and first to arrive on the scene was the land rover fire party from the Parkend School, which included some of the overseas students. A "local" went up to the first man out of the land rover and asked "Where are you from?" "Nigeria", replied the student. "Well, blow me down", said the local, "you've beaten the Coleford Fire Brigade".

**END OF AN ERA IN THE RADIO UNIT

CHIEF FORESTER R. LINDER was the original recruit to the Radio Unit on its formation in the summer of 1958. From that time onwards he was to be found instructing and preaching the value of radio as a tool of forest management throughout the length and breadth of the U.K. From a modest 3 installations when he joined, Bob saw the communications system grow until now more than half the Commission's acreage under plantations is served by radio. This expansion would not have been possible on the technical side without his devotion to duty and his flair for keeping the equipment in tip-top order.

Bob Linder is leaving to take up commercial employment. At a gathering in the Bristol Headquarters of the Radio Unit a presentation, in the form of a fine pair of 10 x 50 binoculars, was made to Chief Forester Linder by the Radio Officer, Conservator C. A. CONNELL on behalf of Commission staff in all three countries.

**TRANSFERS

THE following transfers have recently taken place: District Officers D. SMALL from Hitchin, E.(E), to Princes Risborough, E.(E); J. LAURIE-MUIR from Olney, E.(E) to Alice Holt, (Work Study). Foresters F. CAMERON from Sunart, N.(S) to South Laggan, N.(S); J. DICKINSON, Alice Holt to Dean; A. A. GREEN from Clannaroc, N.(S) to Inchnacardoch, (D.R.); J. WADE from South-West England to North-East, England.

CIV. ENG (W.G. Main Grade) V. O. JAMESON from Shrewsbury, N.(W) to Newtown, N.(W). A.C.E. (Tech. B) D. BENNETT from Cowal, W.(S) to Moffatt, S.(S). Supt. of Works D. F. M. MURRAY from Fort William, N.(S) to Glen Murich, N.(S). C.E.A. B.F. MAXWELL from Llanrwst, N.(W) to Dolgellau, N.(W). P/C.E.A. M. W. LEWIS from Shrewsbury, N.(W) to Newtown, N.(W). Cart. Asst. B. G. A. LAMONT from H.Q. Edinburgh to H.Q. Basingstoke. H.E.O's F. M. FOLEY from Inverness, N.(S) to H.Q. London; H. LLOYD from Chester to Cambridge; J. F. NORTON from Cambridge, E.(E) to H.Q. Basingstoke. E.O's D. W. BRITAIN from Chester, N.W.(E) to Aberdeen, E.(S); G. W. FOULDS from Cambridge, E.(E) to H.Q.

Basingstoke; B. HOLLAND from H.Q. London to Chester, N.W.(E); K. W. PRATT from Cambridge, E.(E) to H.Q. London. C.O. J. A. BATES from Shrewsbury to Bristol, S.W.(E); Photoprinter A. E. J. RICHARDS from H.Q. Edinburgh to H.Q. Basingstoke.

****WEDDING BELLS AT THE DEAN**

THE marriage took place on 4th June last of Miss MARY BEVAN to Mr. DEREK HYETT. Both Mr. & Mrs. Hyett are Clerical Officers at the Dean Office, Whitemead Park, Parkend. A presentation was made of a canteen of cutlery by the Deputy Surveyor on behalf of many of the staff throughout the Forest and at Whitemead Park Office.

****DEER STALKER'S LAMENT**

WRITING from South Wales, Head Forester D. M. MORGAN reports:
"At 7 a.m. on Saturday 23rd April, in a quiet and remote part of Margam Forest I was stalking my last buck of the season. As I moved carefully between the trees my attention was drawn to the antics of a doe some 150 yards away.

She was very nervous, pricking her ears, sniffing the light Easterly breeze and taking some cautious steps towards a small hillock. There she stood for a few seconds, barked twice and bolted. My buck got the message and did likewise, that was the last I saw of him.

As I was thinking of my next move, wafting on the breeze came the sound of music! In this place? Campers? No - no tent to be seen. A couple snogging to music? Too early in the morning - unless they had been there all night.

Towards the music I went; it was unmistakably the sound of bagpipes and on a road in the distance I saw the piper, so I stalked him instead and moved out of the trees about six feet away from him as he was making a jaunty about-turn.

Upon being confronted with a masked, armed, bandit-looking type who had suddenly appeared from nowhere, the piper's eyes popped, his mouth gaped and out fell the mouthpiece, his music died with a groan and a wail as the bag deflated.

He was 'nae a Scot' but a local lad practising his "art" where he thought he could neither disturb nor be disturbed."

****FROM FOUNDRY TO FOREST**

UNTIL last year Glasgow poet CHARLES SENIOR had to find inspiration for his evocative poems at the week-ends, away from the noise and smoke of the great foundry near his Shettleston home.

He went north to live in Inverness for health reasons, and found his life transformed in more ways than one.

Mr. Senior, whose "Selected Poems" were published recently now spends his working day surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature, as well as by the atmosphere of hundreds of years of Scottish history. He is working for the Commission as the forest clerk at Culloden Forest.

Mr. Senior's poems have been published in Scottish newspapers and periodicals, and his work is also well known in the United States.

****RETIREMENT**

ON the occasion of his retirement from the Commission FRANK EDWARDS was presented with a handsome table lighter by Mr. JOHN Q. WILLIAMSON, Senior Officer for Wales, at a ceremony in the Cardiff Office and a tribute was paid to his faithful service and unfailing good humour.

First joining the Civil Service in 1935, Frank spent the first eight years with the Assistance Board and then moved to the Commission as an E.O. in 1946 - spending 6 months at the Cardiff Office before moving to the then Director's Office as an H.E.O. On disestablishment in 1959, he returned as a C.O. to the Cardiff Office, where for the past 6½ years he has carried out the duties as cashier.

****PERSONAL**

CONGRATULATIONS to Executive Officer, H.Q. London, G. G. SEAL and MRS. SEAL on the birth of a daughter.