

The SLASHER

**FORESTRY
COMMISSION**
News & Views

Issued by
**INFORMATION
OFFICER**

No. 227

November, 1966.

"A METICULOUS FORESTER"

HEAD FORESTER "BERT" SPENCER, whose untimely death was briefly announced in our last issue joined the Commission as a forest worker in 1948, after service in the R.A.F. He was at the Dean School from 1948-50, and then became a Ganger in the SW(E) Conservancy. He was promoted Foreman in 1953 and within three years was a Forester. In 1960 he joined the Work Study Section, serving at Redesdale, Thetford and Lyndhurst before moving to Brecon when the Wales Work Study team was formed in 1964.

"If one had to choose one word to describe Bert," writes Mr. LESLIE TROUP, head of Work Study, "it would be 'meticulous'; meticulous in appearance, in manner, in work - in fact in all his life. It was for this reason that he was so valuable to the Work Study Section. Not only was his work thorough, consistent, and impeccably worked up in a distinctive script, but his courtesy, tact and consideration won many friends for the Section.

"A bachelor, Bert had wide interests outside work. He was splendidly fit and had walked and run over the local countryside wherever he worked. His interest in 'Hi Fi' was well known and many of us have happy memories of evenings of music shared with him. He was very knowledgeable about the history and present working of our railway system, and his reading in subjects such as mathematics was wide and deep. Many of us are the richer for having known Bert, and we extend our deepest sympathy to his parents and family."

From Mr. JOHN WAREHAM, Chief Clerk, Glasgow:

"Of the many foresters I knew and whose friendship I valued in my Work Study days Bert Spencer will always to me personify cheerfulness, good clean living and above all honesty. Work Study people were often looked upon with misgivings in the early days, but Bert was always quickly accepted as one who was patently honest and one who had everyone's interests closely at heart. A particular example was the industrial staff at Brandon depot who adopted Bert as their 'mentor'. The rather unholy combination of Bert Spencer, Jim Barraclough, myself and not least my wife Joan (Bert had a special place in her affections) split up some years ago but the memory lingers on."

And from Forester C. ALLISON, Work Study, Lyndhurst: "A few years ago I was sent to the New Forest to work along with Bert Spencer, who took me under his wing. Surely no one could have worked with a man who set a better example. His manner was charming and his work was scrupulously done; and yet he was the most humble of men. I consider myself fortunate to have known him."

A memorial service to Bert Spencer was held in Brecon Cathedral, at which his parents were joined by Brecon friends and Commission colleagues. The funeral was at Canford cemetery, Bristol, on the following day. Members of the Work Study Section attended from North and South Wales, Olney, Lyndhurst and Alice Holt; and the Bristol Office was represented by Mr. W. SULLIVAN who had been Bert's clerk at Bristol Forest. At the family's request some of Bert's former colleagues acted as pallbearers. Both services were recorded for sending to his brother, who is at present in Australia.

**DEATH OF MR. WILLIAM TRIBE

THE passing of Mr. WILLIAM (BILL) TRIBE, formerly Head Forester at Cannock and long retired, will be regretted by former colleagues throughout the Commission. He was

in his 81st year. Mr. R. J. JENNINGS, Chief Forester, who knew him for many years, writes: Known to his colleagues as Bill, William Tribe was the youngest son of a head gamekeeper and was born in Sussex. After working in the coppice and hardwood areas near his home he entered the Dean School in 1906. Completing his course under C. O. HANSON, he went into private service in Hampshire until 1914, when he was engaged as a timber buyer and valuer for the Office of Woods.

I first met him when he was engaged in afforesting the estuarine sands at Laughton Forest, in Lincolnshire, where he had gone from Haldon in Devon in 1926. When Laughton was planted up he was promoted to Head Forester and transferred to Rendlesham and, six years later, just before the outbreak of war, he left for Cannock to begin production operations.

Bill Tribe was interested in anything that took place in the open air. All through the first war he spent most of his time on horseback, riding through the valleys of Somerset and north Devon searching for timber. He was a good cricketer, a crack shot and a keen botanist and naturalist. One of his delights was to collect a specimen of a rare grass or rush and after "running it down" in Bentham and Hooker, confront one of his young foremen with it and find to their shame that they were unable to name it. At the same time he was remarkably progressive and carefully read up the latest information on Research. "If you don't encourage the youngsters," he used to say to me, "you'll very soon find you're looked upon as old fashioned."

Man management was probably one of his strongest points and he could take off his jacket and show any of his workmen how to do a job as well and as quickly as the most skilled man on the unit. Having been brought up with axe, bill and reap hook in his hand he could lay a hedge, cleave a stake or twist a bond better than most woodmen. He was a first class nurseryman.

Firefighting, too, was an operation in which Bill Tribe excelled and he had charge of the vast areas of thicket-stage pine at Rendlesham and Cannock when pedal cycles (and, if you were fortunate enough, a solo motor cycle) were the forester's only mode of transport.

On retirement in 1954 he lived near his old charge in Staffordshire until his health began to fail, and he moved nearer to his family in Essex. Three of Bill Tribe's five sons (Percy, Norman and Roy) passed through the Dean School; he is survived by a widow, three sons and six daughters.

****AU REVOIR TO MR. M. V. EDWARDS**

AT his home in Edinburgh recently a presentation was made to Mr. M.V. EDWARDS, who held the post of Silviculturist (North) for 14 years. This took the form of a cheque handed to Mr. Edwards by Mr. J. R. THOM, Director, Research, which will go towards the purchase of a television. Also present were Mr. G. FORREST, Senior Officer, Scotland; Mr. G. G. STEWART, Conservator West Scotland; Mr. R. F. WOOD, Conservator, Research; and colleagues from the Research Branch.

It is greatly regretted that Mr. Edwards has had to retire through ill-health. Mr. Thom said this had prevented Mr. Edwards from continuing in an appointment which had given him an opportunity to play a decisive part in the Commission's afforestation programme in the immediate post-war years. His work in connection with provenance and the planting of heathlands of Scotland and northern England had been outstanding. His many friends would wish him well for the future.

****INSTANT TREES**

BASINGSTOKE was the venue last month for demonstrations by the Civic Trust of the transplanting of semi-mature trees. These were witnessed by local authority representatives from a wide area of southern England and a conference reflected the growing enthusiasm for use of trees in landscaping.

Our Chairman, Mr. LESLIE JENKINS, was one of the principal speakers and mentioned a number of interesting factors concerning the supply of trees for this purpose. Some 36,000 acres of semi-mature tree "orchards" would be needed to meet eventual demand. The Commission, he thought, might be able to help since much of the research already done and being done to learn how to establish trees successfully in the forest would be applicable in the context of transplanting older trees; the tolerance of different species of trees to the various soil and atmospheric conditions, their rooting habits and other characteristics were common to silviculture and arboriculture.

The reference in our September issue to "instant trees" ("It Happened in the 1890's") resulted in some interesting references to earlier transplanting.

Mr. M. S. ALLCOCK, Head Forester at Dunnerdale, North West England, writes: John Evelyn in his second edition of SYLVA, printed in 1670 says: "Count Maurice (the late Governor of Brazil to the Hollanders) planted a grove near his delicious paradise of Fribruge containing six hundred coco trees of eighty years growth and fifty foot high to the nearest bough. These he wafted upon floats and engines four long miles, and planted them so luckily they bore abundantly the very first year.

Also a great person in Devon planted oaks as big as twelve oxen could draw to supply some defect in an avenue to one of his houses, as the Right Hon. The Lord Fitzharding late treasurer of His Majesty's Household assured me."

Evelyn goes on - "Pliny (100 B.C. CIRCA) notes it as a common thing to re-establish huge trees which have blown down, parts of their roots torn up, and the body prostrate and particular of a "FIRR" that when it was to be transplanted had a top root which went no less than eight cubits.

"To facilitate the removal of such monstrous trees for the adornment of some particular place or the rarity of the plant, there is this expedient.

"A little before the hardest frosts surprise you make a square trench about your tree at such distance from the stem as you judge sufficient for the root. Dig this of competent depth so as almost quite to undermine it, by placing blocks and quarters of wood to sustain the earth. This done, cast in as much water as may fill the trench or at least sufficiently wet it unless the ground were very moist before. Thus let it stand till some very hard frost do bind it firmly to the roots, and then convey it to the pit prepared for its new station; but in case this mound about it be so ponderous as not to be removed by an ordinary force you may then raise it with a crane or 'pulley' hanging between a triangle which is made of three strong and tall limbs united at the top where a 'pulley' is fastened as the cables are to be under the quarters which bear the earth about the roots. For by this means you may weigh up and place the whole weighty clod upon a trundle to be conveyed, and replanted where you please, being let down perpendicularly into the place by the help of the aforesaid engine."

Evelyn later mentions a "method of extirpation of large roots", this accompanied by an engraving of 'The German Devil' (a geared hand winch).

Mr. A. A. SCOTT, writing from Emery Down, New Forest: Many of the older writers on arboriculture mention the technique of transplanting large trees. The most exhaustive treatise on the subject is probably by Sir Henry Steuart of Allanton (near Edinburgh), written in 1828 and entitled "The Planters Guide or A Practical Essay on the Best Method of Giving Immediate Effect to Wood by the Removal of Large Trees and Underwood". But there are comments by at least Evelyn, Miller, Boutcher, and Marshall who wrote earlier. Amongst other examples quoted by Sir Henry are the experiences of a friend of the younger

Seneca, the planting of the Bois de Boulogne in about 1670 using "Die grosse Garten machine", and the removal of the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens in 1824" - "the citizens of Edinburgh were surprised and delighted with the master of an Art, which seemed more powerful and persuasive than the strains of Orpheus, in drawing after it, along their streets, both grove and underwood of such majestic size."

And Mr. E. J. INGLIS, Conservancy Mechanical Engineer, South West England: The following extract from a guide to the Villa Hügel (the home of the Krupp family) issued in 1945 by the North German Coal Control, refers to an impressive avenue of trees in the Villa Gardens at Essen. "Trees were transplanted to the gardens of the Hügel from all over Germany. Krupp did not buy single trees, he bought avenues and had special vehicles made for their transport. During the severe winter of 1870 he transplanted old trees with their roots enveloped in frozen earth - a procedure which attracted people from abroad who came to watch the system."

****CONVINCE OR CONFUSE
OR CYMRU UBER ALLES!**

ONE sometimes hears it said "Welsh is of no use outside Wales". Bunk! (writes a correspondent). A party of South Wales foresters recently returned from their holidays and, one of them relates, "We were on our way to Switzerland after spending a week in Austria. Boarding the train at St. Anton with a large crowd of other passengers, we entered the first compartment that would accommodate our party."

With a friendly nod to our one other fellow passenger we stowed our luggage and made ourselves comfortable, at the same time making favourable comments on the comfort of the Austrian trains. We soon discovered we were in a first class compartment. Since the train was rather crowded we decided to stick it out, regardless. Soon after the train crossed the Swiss border we could hear the ticket inspector working his way down the train calling out "Fahrkarte bitte! Billets! Tickets!" Nearer and nearer he came and eventually breezed in, an immaculately uniformed, bespectacled little man, just as we were discussing our predicament - in Welsh.

Mein Herr Inspektor dealt expeditiously with our fellow passenger. He then examined our tickets, cocking an ear as he did so at the strange lingo he was hearing, which he must have taken for some kind of German dialect for he addressed us, most politely, in German, saying that we were using a first class compartment with second class tickets. We answered him in Welsh and with some blank stares. Seeing London on our tickets he repeated his request in very good English; it was no use, we gave him more Welsh and more blank stares.

It could have been a very eloquent speech he then made in French, but it got him nowhere. Using several other European languages the inspector tried again and again to convince us of our mistake but all to no avail, we answered all his speeches with Welsh, a non-Welsh speaking member joining in with his bedroom Welsh to add to the man's confusion.

Composure gone, the inspector stormed out, muttering as he went "Ach! diese Leute sind zu Dumm, zu Dumm". We wished him away with "Gered i uffern boi bach".

A broad grin spread over the face of our travelling companion to whom at Zurich we wished "Auf wiedersehen und gute Reise". He in turn exclaimed "Sie sind nicht zu Dumm, Sind Sie? Auf wiedersehen". "So you see?"

Notes to Editor - (i) "Cered i uffern boi bach" - "Go to hell my boy".
(ii) Literal translation of German required.

****HATS OFF TO THE BULL**

DOFF your hat to that large bull you may see in the field next to the forest. If its big and blond it may be one of the 16 Charollais bulls imported from France in 1962 which between them (says the Milk Marketing Board) have accounted for an extra 29,000 tons of beef worth nearly £9½ million. Busy bulls.