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FORESTRY AND THE WEATHER

MR. J. M. B. BROWN, Alice Holt Lodge, sends in the following note and makes a generous offer: Although FOREST METEOROLOGY has been fairly well ventilated in recent issues of The Slasher, I would trespass on your space to assure Mr. P. WOOD, who writes from Aylsham, East England, in the October number, that research workers at Alice Holt with an interest in forest meteorology and climatology are determined to make the best use of published information in this field. One of the principal aims of a small working group just formed at the Research Station is to disseminate information among our members and all others who appreciate the significance of weather in forestry practice, about results obtained elsewhere and the proven methods of investigation in this rather specialised work.

Although there has for many years been an active Agroclimatology Department of the Meteorological Office, it has scarcely impinged on the forest environment; consequently we must usually look overseas for information about techniques and results which we might use in Britain. As Mr. Wood points out, R. Geiger's "Climate near the ground" is the standard text book. I shall be happy to lend my copy of the last edition (bought some time ago before a translation was in sight) to anyone who reads German; and, if assured of a demand, to back a request for purchase of the English version by our library.

It is worth mentioning that the next Congress of "I.U.F.R.O." (International Union of Forest Research Organizations) will be held in 1967 in Munich, where Geiger is (or until lately was) Professor of Meteorology. Much pioneering work in forest and mountain meteorological science has been done by him and his younger colleagues, and we trust that some among the Forestry Commission delegates to the Congress will return from their high pressure tour eager to irradiate the mists of our ignorance and generally raise the temperature of our activity in "Project Dobratsch".

**COMMITTEE VISIT BEDDGELERT

MAGNIFICENT views of Snowdon and surrounding peaks greeted our Chairman, Mr. LESLIE JENKINS, and the Welsh National Committee on their visit to Beddgelert.

The main event was the opening of the new bridge which provides greatly improved access to the Commission's camping ground. The Committee met representatives of the Regional Advisory Committee, and the County, Rural District and Parish Councils. Engineering staff and forest workers who had built the bridge were presented to Mr. Jenkins and to the Chairman of the National Committee, Mr. GWYNFRYN DAVIES.

The green and brown tape (Commission colours) across the bridge was lined by children from Beddgelert primary school and local people, campers and others were present. Mr. Gwynfryn Davies suggested to the children that they should remember the ancient Welsh quotation "Bid ben bid bont", locally translated as "He who would be a leader should be a bridge". Finally he suggested that an appropriate name for the bridge might be Pont Siencyn (Jenkin's Bridge).

Mr. Jenkins said that he could not lay claim to Welsh connections but he was particularly pleased to open such a splendid bridge built entirely by Commission staff. A stroke of the slasher, and it was formally opened.

****CALL OF THE CARIBBEAN**

THE thought of bright sunshine, warm seas and a plentiful supply of cheap rum may have been too much for three Commission Officers.

Earlier this year Mr. J. D. LEEFE, District Officer stationed in Grantham, was requested by F.A.O. to accept a short-term appointment as a Forest Education Consultant. This was in connection with a request to the United Nations Special Fund by the Trinidad and Tobago Government for financial assistance towards the establishment of a Forester Training School.

After briefing in Rome Mr. Leefe flew to Trinidad, stopping off in Bermuda en route for two days, where he was able to visit the island's famous botanical garden and see some of the remaining Bermudan cedar (Juniperus bermudiana). This species at one time covered most of the island's hillsides and provided timber for ship building, particularly during the American War of Independence; but in 1948 a scale infestation became apparent and extensive deaths have resulted. Only resistant trees now remain, scattered throughout the island, but it is hoped that by propagation of these strains renewal of some cedar stands may become possible.

On reaching Trinidad and Tobago, a strenuous programme of visits to Government Departments and forests ensued. Proposals were made for the establishment of a school which would be linked with the existing Eastern Caribbean Farm Institute. A scheme was also put forward for regrading the foresters, which would ensure reasonable career prospects for trained staff.

Memorable occasions were a cricket match between foresters, with rum between showers, and a Whitley meeting which enjoyed similar facilities, at least in the closing stages.

After reporting to the appropriate U.N. headquarters in New York, Mr. Leefe flew back to Rome to have discussions with F.A.O. staff and conclude his reports.

Subsequent to this visit Mr.

A. D. S. MILLER, District Officer, left for Trinidad after accepting an appointment, on secondment, as Research Officer. John Leefe reports that it was rumoured that he would arrive complete with his famous Rolls-Royce but apparently he took with him a Hillman, much to the disappointment of the Trinidadian foresters. Unfortunately, he was ill for a while on arrival with fever. He will possibly find some scope for his interest in portable winches and extraction machinery, but will have to contend with water buffaloes as rival motive power!

Mr. Miller has recently been joined by Mr. T. I. W. (Tinker) BELL, District Officer, who also accepted an appointment on secondment as Working Plans Officer. It is interesting that both District Officers should have chosen Trinidad, as they have recently been working together in South Wales; Alan Miller at Llandovery and Iain Bell at Carmarthen. Furthermore, in 1963 John Leefe was also working with them, being stationed at Brecon. Their new jobs should be very interesting and provide great scope.

As regards research work, the introduction of new species will be important. Only two main species have been introduced into Trinidad so far, teak (Tectona grandis) in 1913 and Caribbean pine (Pinus caribaea) in 1952. There are now 17,000 acres of teak and 3,000 acres of Caribbean pine, but consideration is being given to other species, including Pinus khasya and some of the Eucalypts. The total area of forest reserves amounts to 380,000 acres, which is approximately 28% of the total land surface of Trinidad and Tobago.

Comprehensive Working Plans have been written in the past by expatriates but due to staff changes revision is now due. Stock maps also need preparation and the exploitation of established plantations will call for some careful planning. Progress, however, is likely to be very

restricted until trained foresters become available. Although it is hoped that the proposed Forester Training School will open late in 1967, the effects of training will not be apparent for some years.

**ENTER THE SPRINGTAIL

A feature of "Forestry and Home Grown Timber", the supplement published at intervals by Timber Trades Journal, is the inclusion of articles or notes on "off-beat" subjects. In the last issue Mr. D. BEVAN, the Commission's Entomologist, comes up with an interesting dissertation on the Springtail.

Springtails (insect order - Collembola), says Mr. Bevan, are a group of tiny, wingless, primitive insects which not only look like fleas, under magnification, but jump like them. In fact, without this jumping habit few people would notice their existence at all, so small are they.

Most species in the order are subterranean in habit and their job in life seems to be to take part in the complicated business of breaking-down organic matter. One can find them, therefore, in forest litter, humic soil and compost heaps. A few of them, however, are quite well known as agricultural and green house pests. In particular one, Bourletiella hortensis (the garden springtail) is recorded as damaging various cruciferous crops. We can now add conifer seedlings to the list, and it is interesting to note that this is probably the first time that such damage has been recorded anywhere in the world.

Infestation of seedlings by the garden springtail coincides with germination and emergence of the seed, and both the seed leaves, or cotyledons, of the seedlings and the stalk are attacked. The earliest garden springtail may be taken in late April and the nursery beds may be literally alive by mid-May and well on into June. Thereafter there is general decrease in numbers, until by July few specimens will be found. Activity is at its height in the early morning. A man weeding may, as he puts his hand out, see the dust-like little beasts jumping in all directions. They are sensitive to dry air and by mid-day only a few may still be seen, the rest having searched out more suitable, damper, conditions under stones in soil crevices.

Damaged seedlings tend to remain longer in the so-called "drum-stick" stage, that is when the fully emerged seedling has the seed coat still adhering to it and retaining the tips of the cotyledon. The cotyledons have, too, a curved or bent, twisted, and untidy appearance. Under magnification the persistent drum-stick is seen to be associated with wilting of the seed-leaf tips, resulting in these tips sticking to the seed coat. Similarly the bending and distortion of the cotyledons themselves can be seen to originate at feeding points, which show themselves as tiny lesions, or scars, where the insects have scraped away the outside tissue. At the end of the first year an attacked seedling presents a bushy appearance; little or no extension of the shoot will have been made, but merely a proliferation of fattened, distorted needles at cotyledon level. It may be of interest to record that, before the reason for this bushy appearance had been discovered, the subject was referred to as "the case of the distorted contorta" - Pinus contorta, the Lodgepole pine, being particularly prone to attack. In the second year plants become multi-leadered, although otherwise green and healthy, and in this condition would easily be recognised by foresters as characteristic of a quite common type of cull or reject tree.

The insect has proved quite easy to control, by chemical means, the only difficulty being to train people to spot infestation by these microscopic pests so that action may be taken in time to prevent damage.

**MAJOR OAK MIX-UP

UNDER the heading "Robin Hood's Oak Dwindles", a national newspaper recently proclaimed that "the Major Oak, the 1,400-year-old oak tree reputed to have been one of Robin Hood's hiding places, is in danger of being destroyed by souvenir hunters. The huge oak at Edwinstowe, in Sherwood forest, is gradually being hacked to pieces by visitors who want mementoes"

Writes Forester D. GARNER:

"There has definitely been some mistake. In the first place, the Major Oak is on the Thoresby Estate, Edwinstowe, and is under their care. Special precautions are taken to preserve it by stabilizing the branches with steel rods and bands, protected by special packing - this is checked over frequently by the estate forester and at holiday times a watch has been kept on the Oak by a warden who conducted the general public around and inside the hollow trunk. He also sold postcard photographs of the tree. It is still very much alive, despite its great age, of which no one seems certain. This year its massive branches stood out, dense with green foliage but there was no seed.

"The tree that was damaged was the old oak known as Robin Hood's Larder. This was recently destroyed by gales. It consisted of the outside hollow trunk of the tree, and a few live branches and stood in Birklands, Sherwood Forest. It has now been removed by the owners - Welbeck Estate Ltd. - and this must have been the tree referred to in the newspaper".

****RETIREMENT OF MR. GEORGE TAYLOR**

FORESTER GEORGE TAYLOR, of the Dean, has retired after 44 years' service to forestry. Born at Pingry Jump, Mitcheldean, he started work as a boy in 1915 on Nagshead Beat in the Dean, under the old Office of Woods. In 1917 he transferred to the estate workshop and in 1919, on the formation of the Forestry Commission, he went to Parkend sawmills to work in the wheelwright's shop. In 1923, when the sawmill reverted to private ownership he returned to the field. Then followed a period on Blakeney Hill, Centre Beat and later South Beat, where he served under Mr. TOMMY MORGAN until 1937. In that year he was posted as Ganger in Charge of Itton Forest in Monmouthshire.

In 1942, following a break in service, Mr. Taylor returned to the Commission and Centre Beat in the Dean where his father (also Mr. George Taylor), who was in charge of the beat, was about to retire after 45 years' service as a forest worker and Forester. Son succeeded his father and was made ganger and subsequently Foreman. He was promoted to Assistant Forester in 1954 and remained on the beat until 1958.

His next move was to Serridge, where he was promoted to Forester. He then moved to Highmeadow Beat and this year went back to the old Centre Beat - now Speech House Walk.

His many friends in the Forest of Dean and elsewhere, in and out of the Commission, will wish George Taylor and his wife many years of happy retirement.

****SPRECHEN SIE DEUTSCH**

TWO readers - Mr. J. M. B. BROWN, Research, and Mr. H. J. SMITH, Head Forester, Shipbourne, South East England - make appeals with a common end, accommodation. From the former: "The 19 year-old son of a German Forest Officer (Oberforst-meister H. W. Moll) would like to spend six months or more in England after (not necessarily immediately after) leaving school at Christmas. He aims at a commercial career, and wishes to perfect his English; to pay his way he would be glad, if possible, to undertake work here, but this is not a condition of his coming.

"Reciprocally, the German family would be very pleased to welcome as guest the son or daughter of an English family, keen to improve his or her German, and, it may be, to learn more about forestry. Herr Moll is in charge of about 4,500 hectares of forest in a scenically attractive locality some 55 km. north of Hannover. The family, which includes two daughters (21 and 16 years) and two sons (19 and 7), occupies a large house within the forest; there is a small-holding, and horses for riding.

"If you, or any of your friends, are interested in either, or both, of these propositions, would you please get in touch with me at The Clock House, Dockenfield, Farnham.

MR. H. J. Smith says: "I am hoping to have a holiday in the Highlands of Scotland next year and I would be interested to hear from a Forester who is contemplating coming south for a vacation. The hope is that he would be willing to swap houses with me for two weeks". Mr. Smith's full address: Forestry Commission, Shooting Lodge, Dene Park, Nr. Tonbridge, Kent.