

The ELASHER

FORESTRY
COMMISSION
News & Views

Issued by
INFORMATION
OFFICER

No. 229

January, 1967

FAMILY'S ESCAPE AT ACHNASHELLACH

GEORGE ROBERTSON and his family were fortunate indeed to survive a landslide that engulfed their home at Achnashellach.

Within seconds of the family hearing what they thought was the rumbling of a passing train, the back door of their cottage was burst open and the rooms were covered with mud to a depth of four feet. The parents and their four children, reports Mr. D. M. LAIRD, Head Forester, escaped out of the front door but had great difficulty in reaching safety, due to the spoil rushing past both gables of the house. The source of the slide, caused by heavy rain for 36 hours and a rapid thaw of snow, was nearly half a mile from the house and started with the collapse of some 500 tons of soil on very steep ground. The family was probably saved by a forestry bridge 100 yards behind the house, which broke the speed of spoil travel, although the debris reached the eaves.

The slide blocked the public road and railway line for 48 hours.

Mr. Robertson and his family were evacuated to a neighbouring cottage some 50 yards away, where a County Council roadman was found lying severely injured, having been run over by a bulldozer dealing with a previous nearby landslide. No medical attention could be brought to him by way of a doctor for three hours, due to the cottage being cut off by landslides. It was in fact, goes on Mr. Laird, some 18 hours before the injured man reached hospital by helicopter.

At the time of the slide on Mr. Robertson's home, a train was due to leave Strathcarron station, the last before that part of the line that was blocked. The prompt action of a forest worker, who warned the station by 'phone, may well have prevented a serious accident.

Incidentally, the River Nevis, at Nevis Forest, rose rapidly and made the Glen road impassable. When the flood waters receded, 15 years old JOHN YOUNG, son of the tenant of one of our Forest Workers Holdings there, found in his garden, under a hedge, a 16 lb. salmon.

**DIRECTOR GENERAL HONOURED

OUR Director General, SIR HENRY BERESFORD-PEIRSE, has been elected an Honorary Member of the Society of American Foresters in recognition of his distinguished services to forestry. There are only 30 Honorary Members of this body throughout the whole world.

The Society's constitution provides that such members may include professional foresters "of outstanding achievement whose field of work lies outside of, and who are not citizens of, the United States, its possessions, or Canada".

And a Gold Medal for Alan Mitchell

A Veitch Memorial Gold Medal has been awarded to Mr. ALAN MITCHELL by the Royal Horticultural Society. Awards of this kind are made in the case of persons who have helped "in the advancement and practice of horticulture" and in our colleague's case the distinction marks his work in connection with the collection and recording of

data on conifers. It is well known that Mr. Mitchell's hobby has for a long while been the assembly of measurements of the biggest trees throughout the country, and much of his off-duty time has been devoted to this.

****MR. M. V. EDWARDS AN O.B.E.**

HIS many friends will learn with great pleasure of the appointment of Mr.

M. V. EDWARDS as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.). This follows his recent deeply regretted retirement through ill-health, after 14 years as Silviculturalist (North), which was reported in an earlier issue of The Slasher.

Mr. Edwards joined the Commission in 1948, after service in the Burma Forest Service, the Indian Army and in the Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun.

****DEATH OF MR. M. E. W. MACKENZIE**

WE deeply regret having to record the death, in Australia, of Mr. E. W. MACKENZIE who

retired from the Commission in 1963 after 43 years' service. Before leaving us, he was Senior Executive Officer in the then office of Director, Scotland; prior to going to Edinburgh in 1951 he was Chief Clerk in the Welsh Directorate.

****SUDDEN DEATH OF HEAD FORESTER**

WE were sorry indeed to learn of the sudden death on Christmas Eve of Head Forester

A. C. BEARD, of Dymock Forest, South West England Conservancy, where he had served for more than 30 years. He was 59.

Mr. Beard is survived by his widow and two sons, to whom we offer our very sincere sympathy.

****SPATE OF RETIREMENTS**

SAD it is to have to place on record the retirement of colleagues we have known and

worked with for many years. We can but wish them health, happiness and longevity, so that their departure from the Commission, though the end of a chapter, is far from the end of the book.

Among those who recently left us was Head Forester G. H. BUTTON, who served the Commission for 40 years. His retirement coincided with the annual dinner of Foresters in North Norfolk and during the evening he was presented by Mr. D. MACKAY, District Officer, with a cheque subscribed by many well-wishers.

Mr. Button's association with forestry began when, as a boy, he was employed on the Earl of Yarborough's Manby estate. He joined the Commission in 1926, working at Laughton under the late Bill Tribe, and from 1927-29 was at the Dean School. There followed service at Glandwili I (now Brechfa) and in 1930 he was promoted to Foreman and moved to Tunstall. He became a Forester in 1934, at Bardney and soon afterwards went to Thetford. During the war he served with the Timber Production Department and in 1946 was transferred to the North German Timber Control, where his staff numbered 1,000, three quarters of whom were displaced persons. Returning to the Commission a year or so later, a brief term in the New Forest was followed by a move to Thetford where, as Utilisation Officer, he spent much of his time dealing with the clearing of the 1947 windblow. As Head Forester he took over Brandon Depot until 1954, since which year he has mainly been concerned with private woodlands work.

Forester E. J. Tucker

Another stalwart to leave after 40 years is Forester E. J. TUCKER, of Long Forest,

North West England. Edgar Tucker entered the Dean School in 1926 and his first posting was to Mortimer. In 1932 he went to Walcot as Foreman and two years later was promoted Forester. In 1940 he transferred to T.P.D., with whom he remained for seven years before posting to Sherwood. Later he took charge of the old Corvedale Forest (now part of Long), at the same time continuing with some private woodlands work. In 1962 he took charge of Long. A farewell gift from colleagues, presented by Forester BOB THOMAS, of Walcot, took the form of a cheque.

He Leaves at 78!

work at Inglewood Forest in Cumberland. Willie, as he was affectionately known, started his forestry work on the Duke of Devonshire's Chatsworth Estate at the age of 14, at Cotehill. From 1925, when the Commission took over the area, until 1953 he held the post of foreman-in-charge of the 600 or so acres. Since then his duties have alternated between ganger, vermin operator, general forest tasks and handyman. Many north west forests, incidentally, are recipients of Willie's own manufactured 10 ft. by 6 ft. tool-cum-wet weather sheds, made from Scots pine which he had personally long cared for and nurtured.

To mark the occasion of his retirement, Willie was presented by his colleagues with a wine decanter and a bottle of sherry.

**AU REVOIR TO MR. "JOE" PRESTON

A Headquarters officer well known throughout the Commission by virtue of his long service and work for many years on superannuation matters, together with his natural friendliness, Mr. J. ("JOE") PRESTON takes his leave of Savile Row at the end of this month.

Joe Preston started his career in the public service 46 years ago, when he became a boy messenger with the G.P.O. In 1925 he became a sorter and five years later a Clerical Officer. In 1939 he went to the War Office and, promoted to Executive Officer in 1941, from 1944 to 1947 he served in North West Europe with the Army Audit staff. On his return to this country he joined the Commission and became a Higher Executive Officer in 1949. Recently he has been engaged in starting up a general statistics section. He hopes soon to move to the Hampshire coast and is confident that his leisure time will be well occupied by his various hobbies, which include photography, philately and the production of home made wine.

A Wallet of Notes

Mr. JACK CULBERTSON, Messenger-Caretaker at 25 Drumsheugh Gardens for a quarter of a century, has retired. As a parting gift from well-wishers he received a wallet of notes, the presentation being made by Mr. G. FORREST, Senior Officer, Scotland. Mr. Culbertson was in the railway service for 28 years before coming to the Commission. Although he and Mrs. Culbertson have now moved from our Edinburgh office to a new house a link with us remains, for his wife continues as the office cleaner, a post she has held for nearly 36 years.

**SHIVER OUR TIMBERS!

MR. "REG" EDE, Executive Officer at Savile Row, swims all the year round in the early morning at the open air baths on Tooting Common. Any other similar spartans in the Commission?

**CLOSE TO NATURE AT HQ

MANY of us, from the windows of 25 Savile Row, saw the mighty Post Office Tower rise steadily through the months to its present 600 or so feet. Opinions as to its architecture have varied though few, if any, would question its utilitarian place in the London scene. No one, however, is likely to have associated it as a haven for wildlife; yet, believe it or not, at the top of this edifice the other day a window cleaner caught a goldcrest, our smallest resident bird. He took it along to the Zoo.

Some goldcrests move south for the winter and it is thought that this particular specimen may have been migrating but was attracted by the lights of the tower. These inconspicuous little birds, measuring only about three and half inches long, live mainly in coniferous areas, so that the latest move has been to release it in a conifer plantation at Godstone, Surrey.

**ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

THE Inforesta Drama Group staged its ninth production at the Duthy Hall, Southwark, last month. Their performance of the Willis and Waterhouse bitter-sweet play was well up to the usual high standard and a refreshing change from the broad comedy and farce of recent shows. The production was highlighted by a marathon performance

from DOT LLOYD, who was well supported by a cast including GEOFF SEAL, MARION GROGAN, ALLAN EASTY, ALAN MEYER, ROGER CANNON, ALAN CHAPMAN and KEN WINTER, who also produced the play with considerable skill.

Scenery and lighting were most effective, probably the best the company has arranged to date. All in all a most enjoyable evening for the rather sparse audience, which included a brave contingent from Basingstoke. It might pay Inforesta, writes our correspondent, to consider performing their next play at Basingstoke, if this could be arranged, for it would be possible to attract an audience from the Basingstoke, Alice Holt and Woking offices.

****CALLING ALL HIGHLANDERS!**

WORKING in close association with the Conservancy staffs at Glasgow and Inverness, our Publications Officer, HERBERT EDLIN, has just started to collect material for a "Guide to Highland Forests", to appear in our Jubilee Year, 1969. It will cover all the Crofting Counties - Argyll, Inverness, Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, the Outer Hebrides and even the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

Many of our readers who live and work in this fascinating countryside - or merely visit it on holiday - will have their own ideas on what should go in this publication. It may be a reference to some particularly grand view, or a road or footpath that merits mention, or some little-known legend or history. If you have anything to contribute, please send a note of your thoughts, or your manuscripts, to Mr. Edlin at Savile Row. He will do his best to work in any hitherto hidden knowledge into the Guide itself, or publish it elsewhere, for example, in the next issue of the Commission Journal which, it is understood, is likely to be a "Highland Number".

****IMMORTALITY THROUGH SONG**

IT seems likely that the pioneering skill and hard work of those who over the years have formed the great Kielder Forest may be immortalised, for a resident of Rothbury, Mr. Tom Carruthers, has added a "Kielder Forest Song" to the collection of Northumbrian songs he has composed and hopes soon to publish. Mr. Carruthers was in touch with the Commission in the matter of dedication of the song in question and has informed us that this will, in fact, be made to "The Foresters of North East England".

****A MEDAL FOR ANN**

MISS ANN JACOB, clerk in the Brecon District Office, South Wales, recently received the Civil Defence long service medal, the presentation being made by Lieut.-General SIR RICHARD ANDERSON, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., Director of Civil Defence for Wales. Miss Jacob has served for 15 years in the HQ signals department. She is also a Serving Sister in the St. John Ambulance Brigade, to which she has belonged for 25 years.

****FOREST WORKER WINS NEW CAR**

A knock on the door of a Forest Worker's home high above Loch Ness brought good news for Mr. FRANK DAVIDSON and his wife and 7 years old daughter. The caller was a representative of the Aberdeen Press and Journal, who informed Mr. Davidson that he had won a new Cortina car and 500 gallons of petrol in that newspaper's competition, in which the virtues of this particular make of vehicle had to be listed in order of merit. It is reported that Mr. and Mrs. Davidson had been saving hard in order to buy a second-hand car to replace their 1957 van.

****LATE NEWS**

AS we close for press there is distressing news of two more deaths. Mr. VERNON COLLINS, H.E.O., in Estate Management at Basingstoke, died suddenly on 15th January. He had been with the Commission since 1949, having previously served in the Admiralty. He leaves a wife and two children, to whom we offer our sympathy.

Fewer people were better known in the Commission than Miss ANN ("NAN") BROOKS, who has died at Norwich, little more than three years after her retirement. Miss Brook's career in the public service was outstanding. She started as a typist at Rosyth Dockyard and later joined us in a similar capacity, rising in due course to become the first woman in the Commission to hold the rank of Senior Executive Officer and to be appointed an M.B.E. Following her retirement, and before going to live at Norwich, Miss Brooks visited relatives in Australia.