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PENDING RETIREMENT OF DIRECTOR GENERAL

THE announcement of the pending retirement of our Director General, SIR HENRY BERESFORD-PEIRSE, was received with widespread regret since he has served the Commission and forestry in general for nearly 40 years, and few if any other senior officers have been better known throughout our organisation or held in higher esteem. Sir Henry is to leave us on 31st January next and, as he goes, we shall be unanimously extending a welcoming hand to his successor, Mr. JOHN DICKSON, currently Commissioner for Harvesting and Marketing. Like Sir Henry, Mr. Dickson will also be Deputy Chairman of the Commission.

Educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford, Sir Henry joined the Forestry Commission in 1929 and served in the Lovat Scouts from 1939-40. After serving with the Commission in several parts of Scotland, including East Scotland, where he was Conservator of Forests at Aberdeen, he was appointed Director of Forestry for Scotland in 1947. He became Deputy Director General of the Commission in 1953 and in 1960, on secondment, became Deputy Director of the Forestry and Forest Products Division of F.A.O., in Rome. He returned to the Forestry Commission in 1962 as Director General.

Sir Henry's first introduction to well managed forests probably took place more than 60 years ago (he retires at the age of 62) at his mother's home at Cawdor Castle, near Nairn. Since then he has gone on to acquire an international reputation as a forester. During his period with F.A.O. he was presented by the Mexican Government with a medal for meritorious service to forestry. He was recently elected an Honorary Member of the Society of American Foresters, there being only 30 Honorary Members of this body in the world. In 1964 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Forestry Society of England, Wales and Northern Ireland for his distinguished services to forestry at home and abroad.

Mr. Dickson, who is 51, is a native of Scotland, having been born at Udney, near Aberdeen. He was educated at Cultercullen and Stoneywood Schools, Aberdeenshire and Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen, and Aberdeen University. There he took an M.A. and a B.Sc. in Forestry, being awarded the Sutherland Gold Medal for this subject. He joined the Forestry Commission as a forest worker at Fleet Forest, South Scotland, in 1938 and subsequently became a District Officer at Aberdeen. During the war years he served with the Timber Production Department in Aberdeen and Grantown-on-Spey, and was later District Officer for Eastern Ross-shire. He was appointed Divisional Officer, Inverness, in 1951 and Conservator, North Scotland in 1956. He became Director, Scotland in 1963 and took up his present post at Savile Row in 1965.

**DEPARTURE OF MISS J. GEEKIE

AFTER more than 20 years with the Commission, Miss J. Geekie, Senior

Executive Officer in the Acquisition Branch at Edinburgh, has retired. Her career in the public service has been of outstanding merit and in 1966 she was made an M.B.E. She was with the Post Office in earlier days and during the war with the Timber Production Department in various centres. Since joining the Commission she has served in Bristol, London and Edinburgh.

Our Edinburgh correspondent writes:

"The incredible, indeed the impossible, seems to have happened. Those of us who have worked with Miss Geekie will find it hard to believe that the Commission will ever be quite the same without her. Throughout her long service her work was marked by the classical qualities of accuracy, integrity and loyalty. We all wish her a long and happy retirement."

Mr. G. FORREST, Senior Officer, Scotland, presented Miss Geekie with a record player, on behalf of her many friends. She writes: "I would like through the medium of The Slasher to say 'thank you' to all who contributed so generously to my retirement gift. I chose a Hacker record player which will, I know, provide me with many hours of enjoyment. I have already acquired a few records and look forward to building up a collection of my favourite music."

****ALLERSTON LOSES HEAD FORESTERS**

THE recent retirement of Head Foresters WILLIE GOUGH and LEN SNOWDON breaks two

important links with early days of Allerston Forest, and a large party gathered at the Green Man in Malton to wish them and their wives many happy days to come. Unfortunately Len Snowdon's health prevented his attendance, but presentations of a clock to Willie Gough, and a cheque to Mrs. Snowdon were made by the Conservator, MR. G. E. GODWIN. A small party had assembled earlier at Low Dalby to wish Mr. Snowdon farewell and, to mark the occasion, Mr. and Mrs. Snowdon planted trees at the foot of Housedale; MR. E. M. CONDER, Assistant Conservator, gave an appreciation of Len Snowdon's long years of service with the Commission. Starting as a forest worker at Ampleforth in 1929 near his home town of Helmsley, he later moved to Bolthby and then as a Foreman to Dalby in 1939. During the last 30 years Len Snowdon has seen much of the 25,000 acres of Allerston Forest grow from the thicket stage to the present extensive forest.

****THE "WALL OF WATER"**

A device which in effect produces a 'Wall of water' and should prove of great value in

fighting forest fires has been developed by Mr. WILLIAM MUIR, Chief Fire Officer of Northumberland. It consists of lengths of hose, each of 75 feet, fitted with jets at intervals of 15 ft. With good pressure it is possible to throw up a screen of water 30 ft. high, so isolating outbreaks of fire. Each jet can discharge up to three gallons of water a minute.

The invention has another great asset in that the hose can be laid in the path of an advancing fire and operated from a distance, giving the firemen a greater measure of safety. For his work Mr. Muir has been awarded a £400 grant from the Fire Services Research and Training Fund.

Mr. C. A. CONNELL, Conservator, South West England, who has done so much to develop fire-fighting techniques in the Commission, states: "This is a first class idea. It should be publicised by our own staff among the local fire services with whom we co-operate and with whom we work, since these services would do well to employ the device as and when appropriate. It would be of value not only in fighting forest fires but, say, in dealing with farm fires; it could contain flames from a burning hay rick and possibly save any nearby buildings."

****284 - HOUR BATTLE OF THE BEACHES**

AS I pen this report, writes Mr. G. H. BOWERS, A. and F. O., South West England, the sun is

streaming down from a cloudless blue sky on to thousands of holiday-makers enjoying themselves on the oil-free beaches of Cornwall. Yet only about three months ago the Conservancy Mechanical Engineer, Mr. E. J. INGLIS, reported on the battle against oil pollution of the coastline: "I visited the Sennen Cove area today to check on the employment of our machines and was informed they had given first class service, working all daylight hours possible, alongside similar tractors obtained from contractors and other sources. The method of working, developed by experience, involved intensive spraying of the oil-impregnated beaches with concentrated detergent; the treated sand was then turned and mixed by blade 'dozing' and ploughing. This work was completed at low tide, permitting the flood tide to wash out the contaminated sand. By personal measurement I ascertained that the crude oil had penetrated to depths of 10 to 14 inches. Bearing in mind that stretches of beach up to half a mile in length had been completely smothered by oil, the magnitude of the task can be appreciated."

The technique proved surprisingly successful and the fact that the Commission were able to play their part so promptly was very much appreciated by the local authority. The machines involved were a Bristol 'Taurus' bull-dozzer, another Bristol 'Taurus' with excavator equipment and a 12-ton low loader, followed a few days later by a B.T.D.8 bull-dozzer. Together, they worked for 284 hours.

Before this the Conservator, Mr. C. A. CONNELL, had attended a Ministerial conference in Bristol. The Conservancy office was opened on the Saturday afternoon and instructions were issued to various Foresters to despatch 45 hand pumps to fire stations in Somerset as a precautionary measure; owing to winds and tides, the surplus oil eventually reached the north coast of France and not, through the Bristol Channel, Somerset.

The "Torrey Canyon" is sunk on the Seven Stones. The hamlet of Sennen (A.A. handbook: SENNEN, C'wall, pop. 692, CP, nr. Land's End, London 290, Penzance 9) is once again the place for a holiday. The Army trucks, the London fire engines, the bulldozers, the pumps, etc., have returned up the A.30 trunk road (Land's End - London) and the battle is won.

**RECORD OF PUBLIC SERVICE

YET another member of the Commission staff with an outstanding record of public service is Mr. OWEN ALAN HUGHES, who was recently appointed chairman of the Abergele Urban Council.

Mr. Hughes joined the Commission as a Forest Worker at Elwy Forest, North Wales Conservancy, in 1952, having started work in 1917 at the age of 13 as a general farm worker and later becoming a farm bailiff. Among his appointments Mr. Hughes represents the National Union of Agricultural Workers on the Denbighshire Agricultural Executive Committee; the County Safety Committee; Denbighshire Foreign Workers Panel; Ministry of Labour Disablement Advisory Committee; Colwyn Bay and District Trades Council; Ministry of Social Security Supplementary Tribunal, Rhyl and Colwyn Bay areas. He is also Vice Chairman of Colwyn Bay and District Local Employment Committee and Vice Chairman of the National Forestry Workers Advisory Committee.

**WINS SAILING CHAMPIONSHIP

MR. R. VINES, Forester at Challock, Kent, won the Civil Service Sailing Association dinghy championship on Southampton Water last month. He was sailing his Albacore Class dinghy, which he built from a kit in 1964 and normally races at Herne Bay.

Although forced to retire on the Saturday afternoon after hitting the first marker in the course, he was able to win both races in his group the following day by a margin sufficient to enable him to win the overall trophy as well as his class. He also won the trophy presented by the Civil Service Sports Council to the first Civil Servant in the overall championship. A first class achievement, Mr. Vines!

**FERTILISATION BY HELICOPTER

WE can foresee a time in the not too distant future when regular aerial application of fertiliser to standing crops becomes routine practice. This is the view of Mr. JOHN DAVIES, Assistant Conservator, Glasgow, expressed in an article in Scottish Forestry.

Several years ago, says Mr. Davies, small manuring plots were established in the mid-Argyll district in West Scotland Conservancy to study the effect of putting ground mineral phosphate on areas of slow-growing Sitka spruce, and the results were startling. Trees planted on Molinia, Calluna and Eriophorum sites in 1945 doubled their total height after four years. New leaders up to three feet have been recorded and on average leader lengths have trebled.

As the result of these experiments and surveys made by Mr. J. ATTERSON, of the Research Branch, and the District Officer, Mr. I. GILLESPIE, it became clear that several thousand acres of plantations in mid-Argyll would benefit greatly from the application of phosphate. Use of a helicopter for this purpose was examined and it was decided it would be cheaper overall to distribute 3 cwt of ground mineral phosphate in each "run"; a trial contract was therefore drawn up to fertilise a defined area of 1,000 acres at Kilmory Forest, towards the end of last year. Good progress was made and the area was covered in 40 hours flying, spread over nine days. On the best day 186 acres were treated.

Four cwt. were carried on each sortie and the final account was: 150 tons of phosphate, £1,688; spreading as per contract, £2,400; labour cost, including overtime, oncost and bonus, £475; radio and transport, £27 - total £4,590, equivalent to about £4 12s. Od. an acre.

**THE COULTER PINE

FIRST among readers to comment on our reference last month to the "so rare"

Coulter pine was Mr. JACK JENNINGS, Chief Forester, writing from Tirabad, Breconshire. "I remember," he says, "sowing several pounds of Coulter pine seed in Kennington Nursery when I was employed there as a lad, close on 40 years ago. I recall the species very well because the seeds were so large and tasted pleasantly enough to eat. (We dealt with Pinus lambertiana at the same time). My youthful appetite in those days may have accounted for a singularly low yield of seedlings compared with the expected stocktake but nevertheless we lined out a thousand or two. Most of the exotics grown in Kennington were sent to Bedgebury; surely some remain."

Mr. D. PARNALL, Forester at Orlestone, South East England, also has a few words

to say: "I would mention that there are two fine examples of Coulter pine in the Tilgate block of St. Leonard's Forest. They were part of a pinetum formed by the Nix family, who owned the estate until the last war. I do not know the exact age of these trees but they would date back to 1890 at least. Unfortunately the proposed Crawley by-pass, when finally constructed, may result in the destruction of these pine and other trees as well.

"The cones produced some 12 years ago were not quite beehives, but were 10 inches high and six inches wide. The common name of the Coulter is 'Big Cone pine' and, as you might expect with a name like that, it originated in California."

**NEW NATURE RESERVE

AMONG new nature reserves declared by the Nature Conservancy is Holkam, Norfolk.

This covers 9,700 acres and is second only in size to Moor House, in Westmorland, which extends to 10,000 acres. The new reserve is of special interest to foresters because it contains the wellknown pines planted on the sand dunes to prevent wind erosion and to protect the reclaimed marshland from blown sand. The dunes now display some good examples of how Corsican pine can spread through natural regeneration. The Commission, of course, are pioneers in this form of land reclamation, having thatched and planted the sand dunes of Culbin, on the Moray Firth, where Culbin Forest now covers well over 7,000 acres. Other examples of Commission planting on sand are to be seen at Pembrey, Carmarthen (more than 2,000 acres) and Newborough Warren (now known as Mon Forest) on Anglesey (3,000 acres).

Incidentally, in Holkham Bay there is an islet which has formed since 1942 around an abandoned Army vehicle and barbed wire. This islet has grown tremendously in 25 years and is now some 15 feet high and over 300 yards long.

**PERSONAL

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. A. GALLACHER, Executive Officer, Glasgow, and Mrs.

GALLACHER, on the birth of a son. Before her marriage Mrs. Gallacher (then Miss A. Traynor, was a Clerical Officer at Glasgow).

Also to Mr. JAMES PLUMMER, formerly in Establishments Branch at Savile Row and now with Forest and Estate Management at Basingstoke, on his marriage to Miss JANINA SMOLIKOWSKA, of Warsaw.

And to Mr. V. J. GAY, recently appointed Messenger at Woking and formerly with the Post Office, on being awarded the Imperial Service Medal. The presentation was made at Woking Post Office by the Head Postmaster. Mr. Gay also received the gift of an automatic electric clock from colleagues.

STOP PRESS: Congratulations Basingstoke colleagues whose entry won first prize Basingstoke Carnival procession. Further comment next issue.