

The ELASHER

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TRAGIC DEATH OF HEAD FORESTER

IT is with deep regret that we learn of the death in a road accident of Head Forester

F. H. DRAKE, of Alton Forest, South East England. Mr. Drake's wife and two sons were seriously injured in the crash and are in hospital. It is understood that other vehicles were involved in the accident, which occurred near Shrewsbury while the family, on holiday, were en route for Oswestry.

Mr. Drake joined the Commission in 1946 at Bodmin and after leaving the Dean Forester Training School in 1948 he worked at Coed-y-Goror until he was transferred to Bedgebury Forest in South East England in July, 1954. In November of the same year he was transferred to Alice Holt and in 1957 he became Forester in charge at Alton, becoming Head Forester in the recent reorganisation.

Although by nature a rather shy and retiring man, he was unfailingly helpful to his colleagues and to his staff. He was completely absorbed in his work, making his forest a model of good order. He built up a fund of local goodwill for the Commission and his loss will be felt by a large circle of acquaintances in the Alton area, as well as by his Commission friends.

** FLOODS CARRY AWAY BAILEY BRIDGE

MANY readers will have read in the Press of flood damage caused to the village of Wray in

Lancashire last month but few will know the extent to which the Commission was involved at Bowland Forest. During the storm, which lasted for three quarters of an hour only, 4.5 inches of rain were recorded by the Fylde Water Board and most of this fell on some 8,000 acres of the River Dunsop catchment area.

Rivers feeding the Dunsop - Brennand and Whitendale - rose 20 feet above normal in a matter of minutes and were funnelled down the valley of the Dunsop causing a wave of water and silt to rush down, taking everything in its path. Damage to Forestry Commission property was comparatively light, apart from a 40 feet Bailey bridge which was picked up and deposited nearly a third of a mile away! But damage to the Fylde Water Board Works was considerable, amounting to many thousands of pounds, and the Commission is giving all possible assistance with temporary bridging. Many houses in the area were flooded to ceiling height and our workers have been helping to clear up and dry out some of these, as well as clearing trees and debris which were causing many obstructions.

Fortunately there was no loss of life but if many of the houses, including our own, had been on the lower slopes then there would have been a very serious disaster.

** DIVINER FOR 35 YEARS

AFTER, as he puts it, divining water for 35 years, Mr. W. L. McCAVISH, Game Warden in the

Border District, sends us some interesting reminiscences. These follow notes on water divining given in our May issue.

One of my experiences, says Mr. McCavish, stands out in particular. When the builders started laying foundations of the new village houses at Booterlyhaugh in Kielder Forest, work was held up because of flooding. I was called in to assist in locating the cause of the trouble and with the aid of a divining rod traced an underground culvert to its source. The water was piped away into the river, the site dried out and work proceeded.

Other cases have included the location of burst pipelines and drains and assistance to local farmers in finding springs.

Some years ago I read of a diviner following the route taken by a small girl who was missing from home; he worked with the aid of a length of copper wire about 30 inches long (stranded wire as used for wireless aërials is preferred) plus an article of the child's clothing: holding this in one hand, the rod in the other, he traced the child's movements to the banks of a canal, from which her body was recovered. I tried this method of detection on my own children and found I could follow their tracks. Two or three examples of this power are known to one District Officer who while upon the Redesdale Moors, photographing bird life, lost his camera tripod. He left his cap with me and I traced his earlier movements for two miles, picking up the tripod out of the heather.

Another incident occurred when a wet-weather shelter was damaged by vandals, the windows being broken. I picked up some of the stones, obviously thrown by the culprits, held them in one hand. I was accompanied by a policeman and the divining rod then led me to two separate houses in one of the Kielder villages; as a follow up to this the policeman visited the nearby school and saw certain boys, who confessed to the vandalism.

It is also possible with my copper rod to divine metal and I have found silver coins and watches that had been lost. The art of divining is now proving useful in locating injured deer and so far I have traced three shot deer which were lying dead in cover; by holding bloodstained grass I followed their movements from the point where they were shot to where they lay dead, although they left no bloodstained trails.

For the benefit of would-be diviners I would say that stranded copper wire and blackcurrant, hazel and willow forked twigs are the best conductors, in that order. It may be worth mentioning, incidentally, that I cannot get a wristlet watch to keep time on me, or for that matter to keep going for very long.

Mr. McCavish sends us diagrams of the divining rods he uses but these, unfortunately, will not reproduce well in this newsletter. Suffice, perhaps, to say that the forks of the twigs are 15 inches long, ending in a prong of two or three inches. His copper wire rod is 30 inches long and terminates with a "splaying" of the strands.

** NEW AA VIEWPOINT

ONE of the best known viewpoints in the West - Symonds Yat, in the Lower Wye Valley - is the latest site to be chosen by the Automobile Association for an engraved panoramic plaque which indicates the most prominent and interesting landmarks.

This new AA viewpoint is the seventeenth to be designated in various parts of the country and is probably in the most historic setting, for Symonds Yat Rock is part of an ancient British camp and the adjacent defensive works were part of Offa's Dyke, which was constructed by the Mercian King Offa in about 785 from north to south Wales. From just over 500 feet above sea level visitors can, from the car parks, obtain splendid views of 27 separate landmarks, including the Black Mountains, over 20 miles away, Buton Hill (23 miles) and Marche Hill (12 miles).

The AA plaque, set on a plinth, was unveiled recently by the Deputy Surveyor, Mr. R. G. SANZEN-BAKER, before a gathering which included representatives of the AA, local authorities and other guests.

** DEPUTY SURVEYOR BECOMES JP

MR. R.G. SANZEN-BAKER, Deputy Surveyor, Forest of Dean since 1954 has been appointed a Justice of the Peace.

Mr. Sanzen-Baker's association with the Dean dates back to 1927, when he became a student at the Forester Training School. Later he paid frequent visits to the Forest in the course of his research work for the Commission in England and Wales. He has always been extremely interested in Scouting and after taking up his appointment as Deputy Surveyor he became Chairman of the local Group Scouts Committee; he was appointed District Scout Commissioner for the Dean in 1960.

vice-chairman of the Governors of Lydney Grammar School and a Governor of the West Gloucestershire College of Further Education. Other interests include membership of the management committee of Dean Hall School, and of the County Education Committee. Until recently he was vice-chairman of Parkend Parochial Church Council; he continues to serve on the Diocesan Youth Committee and is a member of the Lay Chapter for the Deanery.

** THE PRIVATE WOODLANDS CENSUS

MOST foresters will be aware of the purpose and layout of the National Grid which is superimposed on all 1" to 1 mile O.S. maps and on a large proportion of the 6" to 1 mile coverage of Great Britain. It is only in recent years, however, that extensive use has been made of it as a means of sampling the land area of the country for national characteristics such as plant and tree species distribution.

The census of private woodlands which was started in 1965 and completed in the spring of this year has used the kilometre squares marked on the 1" and 6" maps as the sampling units and about 30,000 of these squares were selected for detailed investigation. One of the benefits of using such a system is that each kilometre square can be designated, using a 6 figure grid reference, and each reference is unique since no two squares can have the same co-ordinates. Each square is 247 acres in land area and is thus a convenient unit for sampling woodland which is variable both in character and distribution. The fact that most 6" maps already have the squares plotted on them was another reason for adopting the square for sampling.

Selection of the squares was done on the computer, to provide an approximate 15 per cent sample of the land area of the mainland of Britain, and the grid references so chosen were plotted on both 1" and 6" to 1 mile maps. These squares were then visited by the surveyors, who demarcated all private woodlands and assessed each part according to forest type, age and species, and, where applicable, also measured heights and volume. The resulting data were collected on special forms which were then passed through an optical scanner which transferred the markings on the forms into punched paper tape. The tapes, after modification, could be run on the Sirius computer at Alice Holt.

Data is now being processed and it is hoped to have the area results completed within about six months and the volume results some time thereafter. This is the first time that a major survey of woodlands has been done by this system, although one smaller woodland survey was undertaken using the same basis of sampling. The system does, however, offer considerable advantages for any form of sampling which involves a widespread selection of the units and a number of surveys are now being undertaken by such bodies as the National Parks Commission and Naturalists Trusts, which will use the same system. Much of the procedural knowledge gained on the present private woodland census can therefore be passed on to other organisations working on similar sampling problems.

** THE SECRET PLANT

AN area of the New Forest has been made into a nature reserve by arrangement with the Hampshire Naturalists Trust and this, it is reported, contains a very rare plant - so rare that the Trust is not revealing its name or the location of the reserve. It is, however, known to occur elsewhere in various parts of England, and on the Welsh Border. It is not to be found anywhere in Scotland.

It has been said that this plant is sought after by herb dealers for healing "long continued worry, or fear, depression or irritability - the primary causes of sickness and disease". If you wanted to try this remedy you would pick $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of the flowers, just below the calyx, float them on the water in a small glass bowl, leave them in the sunshine for three hours and then preserve the water, which had been impregnated with the life force of the flowers. The dosage is four drops.

Incidentally the well known St. John's Wort has promise if taken as a potion. According to a Gaelic proverb, this will: "Quell the wrath of wicked men and check the wiles of wanton women".

** HEAD FORESTER "JIM" BRUCE

of Exeter Forest.

WE regret to have to record the retirement through ill health of Head Forester "JIM" BRUCE

Originally destined for a business career, after taking a diploma in industrial administration at Manchester University, Mr. Bruce decided that forestry was really his vocation and following training at the Dean School he became a ganger at Clipstone Forest in 1937. Moves and promotions took him to Wigsley and Hope forests and then in 1946, he returned to the Dean School as an instructor. A switch, still in Education, to Lynford Hall School preceded stints in London and on Thetford Chase with the Cost Research team. The latter lasted three years and was followed by a further period in Education, this time at Gwydyr School.

In 1958 Mr. Bruce moved over to general field duties as Forester in charge of Eggesford (where commemorative stones recall the planting of the first trees by the Commission and also the first million acres). Promotion to Head Forester in 1960 coincided with a transfer to Exeter Forest.

Before a large assembly of colleagues, a pair of binoculars and a cheque were handed to Mr. Bruce by his Conservator, Mr. C. A. CONNELL, who referred to the widespread regret occasioned by Mr. Bruce's premature departure from the forestry scene.

Retirement of Forester T. C. Bowdler

Exeter Forest has also suffered another loss through the retirement of Forester T. C. ("Charlie") BOWDLER. Charlie started his career as a forest worker in 1927 and went through the Dean School a year or two later. He was then posted to Pembrey, Dartmoor and several South Wales forests. In 1946 he took charge of Brendon Forest from newly promoted District Officer FRED PURSER, who recounts that when he handed over the official van, the gear lever came away in Charlie's hand as he was driving through Exeter.

It was at Brendon that Charlie suffered the misfortune of eye trouble and was therefore given a smaller charge.

From the Conservator, Mr. Connell, Charlie received a number of gifts from wellwishers. "There is much that is left unsaid on these occasions", writes a correspondent, "but we who were in close touch with Charlie are going to miss his quiet efficient way of going about his business, and his rich knowledge of practical forest management. Charlie has asked me, through The Slasher, to thank all for their kindness, which quite overwhelms him".

20 Years in North Scotland

A Superintendent of Works who has given 20 years' service in the North of Scotland has just retired. He is Mr. A. A. WARD who, after 25 years' Army service with the Royal Engineers, with whom he held the rank of Sergeant Major, began work in 1947 at Monaughty Forest in the East Scotland Conservancy. After a year he moved to the North Conservancy, where he was engaged on road construction in many forests; principally he will be remembered for his work in Affric and Badenoch.

Impressive of stature, friendly and courteous by nature, he was a worthy and popular employee. He received a gift of money from Mr. P. MALCOLMSON, Conservancy Engineer, on behalf of colleagues and also gifts from his squad, by whom he was held in high esteem. Although Yorkshire born, Mr. Ward and his wife have found the Highlands congenial and we wish them many years of happy retirement at their Speyside home in Boat of Garten.

**** TO RECEIVE DEER TROPHY**

MR. FINLAY MacCRAE, District Officer in North Scotland, has been nominated to receive the Balfour-Browne Deer Trophy. It is to be

presented to him during a symposium on deer control to be held in Inverness in October. The "citation" says "there is no question that his work, both in deer control and conservation and also the training of staff in the Conservancy, has contributed outstandingly to the wellbeing of deer not only in Mr. Finlay MacCrae's own territory but throughout Scotland".

The Balfour-Browne Deer Trophy was presented to the Commission by Miss G. M. C. Balfour-Browne in memory of her brother, the famous deer artist. It is a beautiful silver replica of The Challenger, the bronze by Balfour-Browne. The Committee responsible for making this annual award comprises Mr. P. F. GARTHWAITE, our Wild Life Officer, and two members of the British Deer Society.

**** DEATH OF WALTER SMITH**

AS we go to press we learn of the death of Mr. WALTER SMITH, formerly Assistant Conservator in North East England, whose retirement we reported only last month. This is indeed sad news.