



The SLASHER

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END OF THE CHAPTER

IN penning this note (writes the Editor) I am contributing to the words of my own swan song, since at the end of this month I shall be formally retiring from the Commission after more than 21 years' service as Principal Information Officer. Time has caught up with me in that I am already past the normal retiring age and a problem of health has regrettably led me to the decision to play for safety and raise my foot, somewhat, off the accelerator.

Sorry indeed am I to be so near to the end of the chapter (I sincerely hope not the end of the book!) after holding office for such a long period - an era in which I have been privileged to see our estate grow to the best part of three million acres with, I feel sure, an accompanying growth of the Commission's prestige in all fields of the forest industry and, I would hope, in the public mind.

As for The Slasher, this is the 244th issue that I have written or edited, involving I would say close on half a million words. The first edition appeared more than 20 years ago and declared The Slasher's intention to provide "a personal link between individuals no matter where they are stationed". While in my regime it has not proved possible (largely because of other commitments) to improve the format of this still unassuming newsletter, it is hoped that its overall purpose has been served. This being so, it is to the correspondents all over the country who have helped me to keep The Slasher in being that I must, first of all, feelingly say thank you. I would add that I am sure you will maintain the same measure of support for my successor, Lt. Col. D. B. ROOKE, who comes to the Commission from the Ministry of Defence, where he has been in charge of the Press Facilities branch. Without doubt he will soon be making contact with you, as will his assistant, Mr. J. M. D. DUNBAR, who has been appointed Senior Information Officer and thus increases the staff of the Information Branch. Mr. Dunbar is at present serving as Command Public Relations Officer, Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

My thanks go not only to correspondents of The Slasher but to all my other colleagues throughout the Commission, who have so often helped me in my work to an extent beyond the call of duty. And last, but by no means least, I express my deep appreciation of the unfailing encouragement and co-operation I have always received from the Commissioners and other senior officers to whom I have worked and been in close personal contact.

Good luck to you all.

**RETIREMENT OF MR. E. M. CONDER

IT may come as a surprise to many that Mr. E. M. CONDER retired from the Commission at the end of March. Yet this was in keeping with his attitude to life - having decided what was the right thing to do, he proceeded to do it. Some little time ago he concluded there were many other things he wanted to do in life and that the only way to do them was to retire at fifty; this he has now done.

Mr. Conder joined the Commission in September 1939 after graduating at Oxford but the following month went off to the wars, returning in June 1946, when he was posted to East England. He moved to North East England in 1949 to take charge of Allerston District, and from there to North West England as Private Woodlands Officer in 1935, being promoted to Divisional Officer the following year. In 1961 he moved to the office of the then Director, England, in London and in 1964 to North East England as Sales and Marketing Officer, in due course becoming Assistant Conservator (Harvesting and Marketing).

A colleague writes: "Mike Conder will be greatly missed. Not only was he a first-class officer, but he was a remarkable and engaging personality. He was first and foremost an English countryman, deeply interested and at home in all aspects of rural life, steeped in natural history and particularly in ornithology. But he kept his head well below cloud level, and was a shrewd observer of life in general. Of the greatest integrity himself, he had little patience with knaves or fools, and could express himself forcibly on people and situations not meeting with his approval. He was a master of the well-turned phrase, and the greatest of good company. Some of his colleagues entertained him to dinner in York, during which he was wished a happy and busy retirement.

****YET MORE DEPARTURES**

HEAD FORESTER D. MUNRO, of Carradale, West Scotland, has retired after 42 years with the Commission. He began as a Forester at

Achaglachgach and later moved to Achray for a spell. Many of his colleagues attended a dinner dance in Campbeltown, at which tributes were paid to him and he received a gift of an incriminated watch and a wallet of notes.

Mr. P. H. WALKER, Conservancy Engineer, South Scotland, leaves us at the end of this month and a gathering to wish him well included a number of Engineers, among them Mr. E. H. MACMILLEN, Chief Engineer; Mr. E. F. GLANFIELD; and Mr. Walker's successor, Mr. J. E. COLEMAN. The Chief Engineer presented Mr. Walker with a car radio as a gift from colleagues and thanked him for the high standard of his work in the Conservancy.

The retirement of Mr. A. J. SLADE of Halwill Forest at 72 prompts us to ask whether readers can recollect the departure of any of our "old stagers" at an even more advanced age. Mr. Slade served at Halwill as a Forest Worker for more than 31 years; all his working life has been spent on the land for he was in agriculture before coming to the Commission. We wish him, and Mrs. Slade, a happy retirement.

Mr. J. R. THOM, hitherto Director of Research, has resigned from the Commission to take up an appointment, FAO sponsored, in Guyana, where it is understood he will be working on a forest management and utilisation project. Mr. Thom was one of the early "stalwarts" of the Commission and, before going to Alice Holt Lodge, was Director, England and, before that, Director of Forestry for Wales. We wish him well in this important new venture.

Mr. Thom is succeeded as Director, Research, by Mr. GEORGE HOLMES and the Conservator post in Research (North) which the latter was to have occupied will remain unfilled for the time being.

****COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**

FROM the Ministry of Defence eventually to take up the post of Communications Officer comes Mr. D.E.W. BLANDFORD. He will, however, assume the title of Assistant Radio Officer until the retirement of Mr. C. A. CONNELL, Conservator, South West England, later this year and will meanwhile work to Mr. Connell.

****SIGN OF GOOD FAITH**

THE Commission's continuing concern for amenity matters is reflected in the re-appointment for a further two years of Miss SYLVIA CROWE as our Landscape Consultant.

Miss Crowe was first appointed early in 1964 and has since visited many Commission forests so that she might guide us on landscaping problems and the provision of public access to and recreation facilities in the woods. She is a Past President of the Institute of Landscape Architects and Vice President of the International Federation of Landscape Architects. Her publication "Forestry in the Landscape" has been widely acclaimed.

****"NONSUCH" - MAINMAST FOUND?**

SOME months ago we reported that the Hudson Bay Company were building at Appledore, in Devon, a replica of their 17th century sailing ship "Nonsuch" and that a search was in progress for timber of the same species as were used in the original. Specially required was a Scots pine for use as the mainmast and it was thought that although the specifications were exacting, a suitable tree could be found in Commission woods, somewhere or other.

Later we stated it seemed that the search for a stem of the right dimensions had proved abortive. Not so! Mr. I. F. MacIVER, District Officer, writing from Barnstaple, says it is hoped a mainmast will be provided from one of several Scots pine selected at Halwill Forest in the South West England

Conservancy; these have already been felled and processed at Winkleigh Sawmill. The difficulty in obtaining suitable timber, says Mr. MacIver, resulted from the insistence of the Canadian Government on use of the "original" in the replica. Nevertheless, work on the boat is well up to schedule and it is expected that this will be completed by September this year.

****INSTANT TREES AT BOWATERS**

TEN "instant trees" up to 20 ft. tall have been planted by the Commission at Messrs Bowaters' pulp and paper mill at Ellesmere Port. These, comprising two specimens each of Sitka spruce, Norway spruce, Grand fir, Noble fir and Western hemlock and representing the main mechanical pulping species, were supplied by Dovey Forest in the North Wales Conservancy. The planting was supervised by Chief Forester T. L. JENKINS, assisted by Forester R. J. WILLIAMS. There was a formal planting ceremony in which the Conservator, Mr. J. H. JAMES, and the manager of the Mersey mill, Mr. T.H. WILDING, took part.

****A HOLIDAY FOR YOUR SON?**

IF your son is making things a little difficult in these devaluated days by insisting on a Continental holiday, maybe here is your chance to satisfy him. Oberforstmeister KURT VYPLEL, whose home is in the Austrian Alps, 100 miles south of Vienna, would like to know of anyone in the Commission who would be willing to have his 16-years old son, Kurt, for a few weeks' stay in the summer holidays. The idea is an exchange, so that an English boy would travel back with Kurt to spend an equal time in Austria with him and his family. Anyone wishing to know more about this offer should get into touch with Mr. A. J. GRAYSON at Alice Holt Lodge as soon as possible, please.

****DEATH OF FORMER FORESTER**

WE regret to have to record the death in hospital recently of Mr. JAMES FOWLER, formerly Forester at Neroche, South West England. His retirement seven years ago marked the end of a career in forestry which covered 40 years, some 30 of these in the service of the Commission. Born in Aberdeen, the son of a solicitor, he graduated from Aberdeen University and took up private forestry work in Scotland and, on joining the Commission, went to Mendip Forest where he was in charge for about 20 years.

****WILL THE BALLOON GO UP?**

A recent Parliamentary Question revived the subject of logging by balloon, for the Secretary of State for Scotland was asked whether he would direct the Forestry Commission to carry out experiments in order to cut down costs in the building of forest roads. The Minister replied that the Commission is fully in touch with developments in this form of extraction but would need much more evidence that it would be suitable in British conditions before starting experiments.

The Commission is, in fact, in contact with those who are trying out this form of logging in Sweden, Canada and America. In an article in The Times a month or two ago Mr. E. W. Dowsett, former Managing Director of Airborne Industries, said the history of balloon logging started in Sweden about 12 years ago, trials being made with an old British barrage balloon. Later experiments in Canada indicated "tremendous possibilities". With a balloon, loads could be brought in from up to two miles from areas inaccessible to existing equipment. By 1964 a leading Canadian logging company made an evaluation, using two 75,000 cubic feet balloons in tandem with complete success. As a result, a new balloon with a capacity of 150,000 cubic feet was made with a static lift of about three tons. After describing the deisel engine power source and the winching techniques, Mr. Dowsett went on to say that there is no doubt the system works efficiently and with a minimum of labour, particular as logging crews could now be transported (presumably by the balloon) up steep mountainsides in a few minutes. Working on a commercial basis, logs had been moved from a mountain ridge down to the winch through a slope distance of 5,150 ft. and through a verticle drop of 2,650 ft., the average time cycle for loads being ten minutes.

Footnote: If we were to take up balloon logging in this country it would cost £420 to fill the balloon with helium; furthermore there is probably not sufficient helium available here for subsequent re-fillings.

****FIRE - FORESTER'S WORST ENEMY**

SOME 200 acres of young trees have been destroyed by fire already this year, mostly in South Wales, where in the industrial areas foresters have a heavy cross to bear almost all the year round. We can, perhaps, take some consolation (but certainly no cause for complacency) in considering the extent of the fire problem in some other countries. Take Australia, for example. Formerly Head Forester and Instructor at Faskally and now retired in New South Wales, Mr. W. F. STODDART writes:

"Fire risk is very great at times and there have been some alarming outbreaks here recently. One was 170 miles north-east of Melbourne and the Forestry Commission used incendiary bombs for the first time to burn a huge break to block a 35,000 acre bushfire. A Commission helicopter dropped 700 incendiaries in high rugged country to burn part of a firebreak which finally covered 3,000 acres. These incendiaries are a type just invented by the Commission. They consist of a match compound with a 15-second fuse and each can burn about one acre. At one stage the fire itself had a perimeter of 100 miles and on its first day it travelled 18 miles. A team of 14 bulldozers helped to make firebreaks, about a thousand fire-fighters fought and watched the fire in shifts, and more than 50 water-tankers were in the area. Spotter planes conducted continual reconnaissance."

On a personal note Mr. Stoddard ends: "I am enjoying my retirement in Australia, life for me is now quite uncomplicated. The climate is very much to my liking and although I found the heat oppressive to begin with I have now got used to it. Nevertheless, I would give a lot to walk through a plantation of mixed conifers occasionally".

Incidentally, there has been a rapid rise in softwood planting in Australia in recent years, with the aid of Government long-term loans. In early 1966 the planting rate was just over 33,000 acres a year and in the eight months from March to November last 45,000 acres were planted, bringing Australia's total softwood plantations to some 800,000 acres, of which about three quarters are Government owned or managed.

**IN MEMORIUM

IN November last we extolled the virtues of FFANI LLOYD, who at the advanced age of 35 (for a horse) was still working in Dovey Forest, North Wales. If ever horses disappeared altogether from the forest, we said, it would be a sad, sad day. Ffani, at least, has now departed and leaves many to join her owner in mourning her going the way of all flesh. Forester C. M. DAVIES provides the obituary:

"At various times, during much of the history of forestry in North Wales, a beer and milk-coloured mare has been in the news. With excellent timing she would appear with her owner, Mr. Idwal Lewis of Llwydiarth Farm, dragging logs behind her to the roadside bank, just when visitors to the forest appeared on the scene. This she had to do quite often in her latter years for at the age of nearly 36 and still in harness, she was often talked to and admired. It is hard to think of Dovey without her for she would not be passed by.

"With her death one can only say of Ffani Lloyd that she was a hell of a horse and look around at the now fine grown trees, thick on the hills, that as young plants she carried on her back to the planting points so many years ago. During her last few years she had been hauling many of the same trees down the hill to be converted. That could be called a job well done by any horse. In her younger days Ffani's energy was remarkable and one's only hope of keeping up with her when she went uphill was to get on her back and get one's head well down as she tore through brash and everything else to get ready to start the next tush. She was a completely kind horse and, perhaps, one of the last of those strong and silent ones who have carried us through to these days of machinery. She will be remembered and respected and is likely to become a legend so long as timber is brought down the hillside in this part of Wales."

**ANOTHER FLASHBACK TO CHRISTMAS

REPORTING in the February Slasher that East England had supplied three Christmas trees to Malta, the Head Forester at Wendover asked if anyone could make a better claim. South Wales certainly can: last December the Conservancy despatched not three but 75 Christmas trees, varying from 10 feet to 30 feet high (a dozen of them being 30 footers), to the Leeward and Windward Islands in the West Indies. Collected by Messrs. Geests from local forests, the trees were transported to Barry for shipment by refrigerated banana boats. Another occasion, says our correspondent, when South Wales led the field!

**MPs VISIT ALICE HOLT LODGE

A party of MPs visited Alice Holt Lodge recently. They were met by Mr. ANDREW WATT, Commissioner for Forest and Estate Management, and during a tour of the station were shown research work on silviculture, soils, genetics, forest pathology and entomology. The visitors were: Mr. John Parker and Mr. Peter Jackson, Labour Members for Dagenham and High Peak, Derbyshire, respectively; the Earl of Dalkeith, Sir John Gilmour and the Marquess of Hamilton, respectively Conservative Members for Edinburgh North, East Fife, and Farmanagh and South Tyrone.