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OPENING OF WILD LIFE CENTRE

LAST month saw the opening of the Commission's Wild Life Centre at Grizedale Forest by Mr. JAMES FISHER, the well known ornithologist and naturalist, who is vice-chairman of the National Parks Commission and familiar to many through his frequent appearances in T.V. programmes, including "Look". He was supported by the Conservator, North West England, Mr. J. S. R. CHARD, and others to whom the establishment of the centre has meant attainment of a long-cherished objective, including Mr. JOHN FLETCHER, District Officer, and Mr. WILLIAM GRANT, Head Forester. The Centre forms an extension to the deer museum and is a logical development from it, for its aim is to introduce the visitor to the whole wild life community of the forest, of which deer are obviously only a part. Undoubtedly, too, it will serve as an aid to identification of wild life and a stimulus to interest in the woods themselves. The various species of wild life, of which there are more than 50 mounted specimens, are grouped and shown against backgrounds photographed in the forest; a taped commentary includes many of their calls and the souvenir booklet (to which we referred in a recent issue) explains the nature of the community, relationships to each other, and the forest in which they live.

While the main object at Grizedale, as in all our forests, is the production of timber for industry, it has been the location of a pilot scheme in the promotion of multiple land use, with particular attention being given to reconciling public access and recreation with wild life conservation and nature study. The project has attracted great interest from individuals and organisations associated with such activities in widely separated parts of the country.

Footnote: Incidentally, Head Forester BILL GRANT, who was recently awarded a Churchill Travelling Fellowship, will by now be on the move. His itinerary is: New York; Washington; Patuxent Wildlife Research Centre, Baltimore; Shenandoah National Park, Virginia; Wildlife Research Centre, Denver, Colorado; Yellowstone, Olympic, Mount Rainier and Banff and Jasper National Parks; Hinton Forest Technology School, Alberta; Waterton and Glacier National Parks; and Delta Waterfowl Research Station. Our colleague will be away from mid-July until October. We envy you, Bill!

** TO BECOME CONSERVATOR

OUR congratulations to Mr. BRIAN HOLTAM, who is to become Conservator in charge of the new Northern Research Station at Edinburgh. His promotion and transfer from the Marketing Division at Savile Row, in which he has been serving as Assistant Conservator, are likely to take place in the autumn of this year. His present duties include that of joint secretaryship of the statutory Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee; he has responsibilities in marketing matters and for the Commission's research programme on home grown wood.

Brian Holtam set out to be an architect but read forestry at Edinburgh University. Previously, during the war, he had served in the 2nd (Independent) Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers, in North Africa, Italy, the south of France and Greece. He joined the Commission in 1950 in North Wales and was for a time in the then Welsh Directorate as Land Acquisition Officer. Among publications and papers from his pen came the well known and valuable Forest Record No.52, which deals with estimated industrial requirements of home grown roundwood, in relation to potential production. His many friends throughout the Commission will wish him well in his important and challenging new job.

** TORREY CANYON AFTERMATH

THE part played by the Commission in helping fight the oil menace after the Torrey Canyon disaster justifies our mentioning an aftermath. Peter Conder, writing in a recent

issue of the journal of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, says: "Nearly 8,000 oiled birds were rescued from the sea. Despite the utmost care by the various bodies concerned, only 100 to 150 recovered sufficiently to be released to the sea. Of these 60 were ringed before release and within a month 16 were found dead. There is no evidence whether the others are alive or dead."

Mr. Conder goes on: "Everything was done that could have been done to our mind there is no justification in attempting these old cleaning procedures again ... cleansing treatment should be reserved for those birds which in the light of existing knowledge can be quickly returned to the sea with a good chance of survival."

From oil slick to foot and mouth disease may seem an odd transition but after their work in the battle to clear certain west country beaches of the tarry mess, members of our staff were warmly thanked by the authorities; now, following a long period of co-operating to the full with the Ministry of Agriculture in the latter's fight to eliminate "foot and mouth", our colleagues in the field are applauded on the Ministry's behalf by its Director of Establishments and Organisation. He writes: "I could not let the occasion pass without placing on record our appreciation of the co-operation we have received in administering the various restrictions and controls necessary to contain the epidemic. Both my Minister and the Department generally are most grateful to you for the helpful response you have made to our various appeals."

** CARRS AND CLOGS

NUMEROUS and varied are the enquiries received at Commission headquarters at Savile Row.

One of particular interest arrived recently from a local historian in East Anglia who sought information about "carrs", a name, we imagine, unfamiliar to most of our readers. In his part of the country, said our correspondent, there were many carrs (not, we would point out, because this is the day and age of the automobile) but due to the fact that once upon a time alders were grown in considerable quantities on wet ground. "My problem," said the correspondent, "is what was alder wood used for, apart from charcoal for gunpowder and possibly clogs, though I do not know that in these parts we have footwear with wooden soles"?

Our reply, as becomes us, was informative.

The name "carr", we said, is itself curious. It comes from the old Norse Kjarr and is applied to marshy woodlands in regions of Scandinavian settlement only. The "carr" place-names are quite widely dispersed, being found in East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, along the Mersey in Lancashire and in the Lake District. In Scotland they sometimes take the form "Ker", as at Kershope. Carrs, which include willows, alders, and shrubs like alder buckthorn, are natural in origin, being the climax vegetation on a fen-peat bog. In fact their foliage, by annual leaf-fall, helps to build up the peat. The process of renewal by coppice shoots can go on for several hundreds of years. The wood of alder can be used for hat blocks, clog soles (still favoured in Lancashire), turnery poles, charcoal for gunpowder; the bark was once used for tanning leather. General uses still include provision of firewood, manufacture of furniture, fencing posts and rails, posts for buildings and small hand-carved objects.

** RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE FOREST

ARCHAEOLOGY, as anyone knows, means the study of things that are ancient, and until

recently anything under 500 years old was "out". But now historians are finding that much later relics can be very valuable to them.

A recent reconnaissance in Rowardennan Forest, Stirlingshire, for instance, brought to light evidence of the little-known iron smelting industry that drew on native woods of birch, pine and oak for its charcoal wood. The Commission's investigators reasoned that the "bloomeries" where the iron was smelted would lie close to the mouths of the burns that run into Loch Lomond. Water-power was needed to drive the bellows for the furnaces where the ore was reduced to metal and also to work the tilt hammers used to force impurities out of the crude iron. It was known that the ore itself was brought by sea to Dumbarton, thence up the River Leven and finally up Loch Lomond. The ore, though heavy, was easier to carry than the bulky charcoal.

Inspection of low mounds near the mouths of a burn just north of Rowandennan Pier, and another one farther south, showed un-natural vegetation. Excavation revealed masses of black furnace slag, the residue of iron smelting. Farther north, beyond the Commission's boundary, the stone ruins of well-built bloomeries have now been discovered. It is not easy to imagine the "bonnie, bonnie banks" as a kind of Black Country for the West of Scotland, but it is clear that these ironworks were extensive and worked for long periods of time. They probably continued in use until

about 1800, when the discovery of iron smelting with coke caused the industry to migrate to the coalfields of the Clyde valley.

**** THE "SQUIBBIT"**

ONE of our Foresters engaged in deer control in South East England writes:

"Four-thirty in the morning is not the best time to be confronted by a young rabbit possessing a tail usually seen attached to a grey squirrel. The normal rabbits with which it was feeding having departed, however, I managed to catch the "squibbit" unharmed. On closer examination it proved to have a softer, thicker pelt and slightly smaller ears than a rabbit, while the tail was not so bushy as that of a squirrel. To my knowledge, this is the first record of such an animal being seen in a British woodland. What is it?"

Editors Note: We can hazard a guess but what comments from readers?

**** FOR THE MORE ERUDITE**

IF YOU are of a mind to win £50 and a silver medal, here is your chance. Education and

Training Branch have asked us to draw attention to the Haldane Essay competition, organised by the Royal Institute of Public Administration and held annually since 1924. It aims to secure "significant and original contributions to the study and practice and history of public administration." Suitable subjects include analyses and discussions of contemporary problems in the field of government and public administration; studies of present-day administration practices with a view to improvement or greater understanding of them; comparative studies of administrative methods and ideas of two or more countries, of which one should be a member of the British Commonwealth; and, of course, studies of the history and development of both government and public administration. Essays should be between 7,500 and 12,500 words, typed on foolscap paper, one side only, double spacing, wide margin, all pages securely fastened together. They must be submitted under a nom-de-plume, the full name and address of the competitor being written on a separate sheet and enclosed in a sealed envelope bearing the nom-de-plume on the outside. All essays to the Director of the Royal Institute of Public Administration, 24 Park Crescent, London, W.1., by 31st October next, envelope marked "Essay Competition." Additional money awards may be made if the judges consider contributions to be of high merit.

**** FAREWELL TO FIUNARY**

MANY of our readers will know this Scottish song with its haunting Gaelic refrain,

"Eirich agus tingainn, O" meaning "We must arise and go now." A few will actually have visited Fiunary Forest, which lies so remotely on the Morvern Peninsula of Argyll that it is usually reached by steamer from Oban, rather than by road from Fort William. The song was written in 1810 by the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod, son of the Minister of Morvern Parish, who had witnessed the emigrations resulting from the "Clearances". The whole sad story has just been published in book form as Morvern Transformed - A Highland Parish in the Nineteenth Century by Philip Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, 1968, 65s.

This is a work of the highest scholarship and though it deals with pre-Commission days, 1800-1900, it holds much of interest to modern foresters in the West Highlands generally.

During the '45, the Highlanders of Morvern supported Bonny Prince Charlie under their local chieftain, Cameron of Lochiel. They were so numerous and powerful that the Government sent a naval force to harass them, and on 10th March, 1746 the sloops Terror and Princess Anne landed a force of about 100 sailors and soldiers who destroyed every boat they could find and burnt 400 houses. Yet only one man was killed, and when the first census was taken in 1801 there were still 2,083 sturdy crofters wrestling a living from the hills and shores of Morvern.

Then came the sheep, and during the next hundred years many hundreds of people left the district. By 1901, the population had fallen to 730; today it is only 422. The sheep farmers, who included the notorious Patrick Sellars who had previously cleared Strathnaver - now the scene of our Naver Forest in distant Sutherland - simply evicted the crofters to gain the better ground they had tilled. But perhaps the people, always on the border line of poverty, were not unready to go. For example, Hugh Cameron, the "wood-forester" of the Ardtornish Estate in 1850, cannot have found it easy to raise a family of eight children on a wage of £7 a year, even though he had his cottage rent-free! Having no Trade Union, he turned the job in, and who can blame him?

Sheep farming, at the rate of one ewe to every three acres, ceased to pay around 1880 and most of the hill ground was given over to deer. By then the Highlands had become fashionable, and a wealthy English distiller, Valentine Smith, needed a staff of 100 to maintain Ardtornish Estate for deer stalking and country life in his accustomed style! This was too good to last, but fortunately the Forestry Commission appeared on the scene in 1930, and is now the leading employer.

The ruins of scores of crofters settlements lie hidden beneath the trees, and this remarkable book quotes their names, areas, populations, and dates of abandonment, giving their situations by National Grid references.

** DRINKA PINTA

THE following correspondence passed between a Commission office and a member of the local field staff.

From office. Mr. X (dairyman) has telephoned to complain of thistles on neighbouring Commission land. He says he asked last year that they should be cut but nothing was done and he would like them dealt with before they seed over his ground.

From field officer. Mr. X (dairyman) ought to be able to put the following to good use: Sonchys asper, Spiny Milk Thistle; Carduus silybum marian, Milk Thistle; Sonchus oleraceus, Milk Sow Thistle; Sonchus arvensis, Field Milk Thistle. Perhaps he is unaware of them. "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen".

From office. Your suggestion is noted. Mr. X might like to investigate uses for the following as well. Polygala vulgaris, Milkwort; Primula veris, Cowslip; Ranunculus repens, Buttercup; Epilocium hirsutum, Codlins and Cream; Tussilago petasites, Butter-burr; Habenaria bifolia, Butterfly Orchid; Pinguicula vulgaris, Butterwort. How can he go wrong with all these free and a guaranteed price for milk?

From field officer. It is more likely that Mr. X would wish to concentrate his interests on Nymphaea alba, Water Lily; and as a good stockman he may concentrate also on Scirpus lacustris, Bulrush; if interested in the comfort of his herd he will take heed of Lapsana communis, Nipplewort; as a good employer he will pay attention to Anthyllis vulneraria, Ladies' Fingers; and after a hard day's work he may relax with Nuphar luteum, the Brandy Bottle. But what has all this to do with thistles?

** RUNNER-UP FOR CHAMPIONSHIP

AT the Great Yorkshire show at Harrogate this month a chain saw competition, with 26 stalwarts taking part, was held for the first time. First prize was £100; the second prize of £50 and a tankard went to Mr. R. COX, Forest Worker in the New Forest. Third and fourth places went to Messrs D.A. and G.R. SHARP, respectively; neither is employed by the Commission but they are sons of our Head Forester G.A. SHARP, of North East England Conservancy.

** WELCOME TO FOREST WALKS

THE dozen or so forest walks established to date in South East England were featured in the Conservancy exhibit at the South of England show at Ardingly, in Sussex. Large maps showed their location and carefully prepared notes on each walk were distributed to the public; these in themselves represented a useful exercise in public relations, for each commenced with the word: "Welcome".

We were particularly interested to read details of the forest walk at Joydens Wood, which is the nearest Commission area to London, being only 14 miles from Charing Cross. The note about this said: "Keep to the paths and if you are quiet and observant a good deal of wild life can be seen because in this wood are foxes, stoats, weasels, badgers and many varieties of birds". Informative are the descriptions of what can be seen at the various stops in the way of trees, both conifers and hardwoods, and one cannot help feeling that the Joydens Wood walk and all the others in the South East and other parts of the country will eventually pay handsome dividends in the way of public goodwill for our cause.

** THE STORK IN EAST SCOTLAND

THE stork has had a busy time in the locality of Rannoch Forest, East Scotland. As a result, we offer congratulations to the following: Forester and Mrs. J.D. MENZIES on the birth of a son, Niall; Forester and Mrs. D. FRAZER (son, Douglas); Forester and Mrs. D. COTTON (daughter, Jacqueline); Trainee Forester and Mrs. D. YEATS (son, Nicholas).

** STOP PRESS

THE Commission's exhibit at the Royal Show at Stoneleigh this month won the Moxon Medal for the best educational display in the forestry section. Theme was "Forest Going", covering forests and recreation and conservation of wild life. Congratulations to Mr. MORLEY PENISTAN, who designed the exhibit and to the following and their respective teams, who produced it - Mr. STANLEY ROGERS, Mr. JOCK WHITE and Mr. JIM KING. More about this show next month.

IF YOU DO SOMETHING, SEE SOMETHING, OR HEAR SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY,
TELL YOUR SLASHER CORRESPONDENT. THERE IS A CORRESPONDENT IN EACH OFFICE.