

The ELASHER

FORESTRY
COMMISSION
News & Views

PHOTO
Issued by
INFORMATION
OFFICER

No. 271

January/February 1972

51ST ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS TO THE PRESS:

On the occasion of the publication of the Commission's Annual Report for the year ended 31st March, 1971, a Press Conference was held at Headquarters.

Speaking to a well-filled room the Chairman, Lord Taylor of Gryfe, drew attention to the Commission's increase in productivity brought about by training and improved techniques and to the fact that, despite inflation, the Commission has not only been able to contain its costs but also to increase its surplus on each cubic metre harvested and sold. Forestry is a long-term business, Lord Taylor said, 50 years being needed to obtain a full financial return on capital invested. As the majority of the Commission's planting has taken place since 1950 its plantations (i.e. its "factory") are only about 20% productive, but the Report showed that the previous steady and encouraging increase in the Commission's income continued, being at £9m some £1.5m, or 37½% more than in the previous year. In the period under review 1.46m tons of timber were felled, an increase of 50,000 tons. The ratio of trading surplus to total sales in the year was 26% compared with 21% and 14% in the two previous years. After deducting the cost of harvesting and that of growing the plantations thinned and felled, there was a balance of some £500,000 to put towards interest charges. Further, due to efficiency, the surplus per cubic metre harvested rose from £1.87 in 1969/70 to £2.29 in 1970/71. Lord Taylor also pointed out that an ever-increasing number of modern wood-using industries benefitting from technological advances have been, and continue to be, set up to take advantage of the rapidly increasing production of our forests. The long-term prospects of forestry and these industries, which already employ between them some 36,000 workers in development and rural areas, vitally depend upon a vigorous expansion and to this end the Commission planted nearly 58,000 acres in the year and re-stocked nearly 13,000.

When planting in upland areas opportunities to use hardwoods for amenity's sake are very restricted but in such areas use of larch, silver fir, western hemlock and red cedar had been made in order to bring a variety of green to the forests. In areas which will support a broadleaved crop, beech was the most commonly used species, 280,000 having been planted; a further 158,000 hardwood trees made up of oak, sycamore, elm, maple, chestnut and ash had also been planted.

Although no mention of the management of traditional hardwood areas was made in the Report, the Chairman took the opportunity of the presence of a considerable number of journalists to make a statement on this subject, the matter having received some ill-informed Press comment in the past weeks. Lord Taylor said:-

"Since its inception in 1919 the Forestry Commission has built up and maintained a large hardwood estate (three-quarters of it consists of beech and oak) which now extends to about 125,000 acres, most of it in the southern half of England. Hardwoods have also been used extensively to improve the amenity of the Commission's plantations not only by planting but by retaining single trees, clumps of trees and larger areas during felling operations.

- " In the 1960s the Commissioners laid increasing emphasis on the need for the best economic return from public funds entrusted to them by Parliament and to some extent this has necessarily been reflected in the management of their hardwood areas. This has not meant that amenity and conservation considerations have been ignored, because the Commissioners have long been conscious of the significant part their woodlands play in the landscape.
- " More recently the Commissioners have, however, recognised that greater emphasis should be given to maintaining the woodland character of the countryside, particularly in the South of England. They have recognised that to this end in certain of their woodlands the maintenance of hardwoods, where silviculturally this is possible, is an essential part of landscape. The form of management necessary may entail the lengthening of the life span of the hardwood crop, the more gradual replacement of that crop with hardwoods sometimes intermixed with conifers to provide a nurse for the hardwoods, or the retention of some scrub areas.
- " The objective of the Commissioners is to perpetuate by active management the living character of the woodland landscape for future generations to enjoy."

* * *

CONGRATULATIONS

NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST 1972

The list contained the following awards, to the recipients of which we offer our congratulations:

OBE, George Backhouse, who lately retired from being Conservator, East England;

CBE, Col.J.F. Williams-Wynne, DSO, a former Forestry Commissioner and at present Vice-Chairman of the Timber Growers' Organisation - for services to agriculture in Wales.

EUROPEAN POST: Mr. R.B. Verney, a Forestry Commissioner, has been appointed a Counsellor of the Confederation of European Agriculture;

SERVICES TO HORTICULTURE: Head Forester A.W. Westall, Bedgebury Pinetum, has received the Royal Horticultural Society's Veitch Memorial Silver Medal and a £50 prize for his services to horticulture, particularly his work at Bedgebury. A letter of congratulations went from the Director General on behalf of the Commissioners.

* * *

TRAINING COUNCIL

The Forestry Training Council has been appointed with effect from November 22nd last for three years, as follows:-

The Chairman will be Professor J. Matthews, Department of Forestry, Aberdeen University. Members (shown with their nominating official body):

T.J. Healy, H. Crawford and I. Edwards of TGWU;

J.H. Hose, F.H. Peachey and R. Pierson of NUAAW;

Dr. C.J. Taylor of the Society of Foresters of Great Britain;

J.R.S. Bulford of the Agricultural, Horticultural and Forestry Industry Training Board;

J.B. Hendry of RSFS;

R. Rowland of RFSEW;

A.G. Phillips of the Association of Professional Foresters;

Captain D.S. Bowser and R.G. Sangster of SWOA;
Lord Norton and R.M. Harley of TGO;
A.G. Pyman, W. Steel, N.W. Tulloch and R. Macdonald of DES and Scottish
Education Department.

* * *

APOLOGY AND CORRECTION

MR. ALEX M. MACKENZIE

In the last issue of the Slasher we included, in a brief biography of Philip Gough, the words " the late Alec Mackenzie". We have since heard from Mr. Mackenzie that he is, on the contrary, alive and well.

We offer our sincere apologies to Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie for the embarrassment and distress this error caused them.

* * *

COMMISSION ON SHOW

MAJOR CITY SHOWS

The Commission exhibited in London at both the International Caravan & Camping Show at Earls Court (in November '71), and the Camping & Outdoor Life Exhibition at Olympia (in Jan/Feb '72). At both the Commission camping and recreational facilities for the public were featured, and considerable public interest was taken in these and also in the demonstrations of chair bodging, stool tentpeg and chestnut paling making by Forester Blackwood and Mr. Whitehead from Mayswood Forest Centre, Arden Forest, NW(E), about which Head Forester Jack Wilson writes later in this Slasher.

The Show unit also makes appearances this winter at the Birmingham Boat & Leisure Life Exhibition (12-26 Feb) and the Manchester Boat Show (3-12 March).

1972 TOUR PROGRAMMES

This year the Commission hopes to have two show units on tour. Show unit 'A' will feature the objectives of the Research Establishment - formation, protection and improvement of forests. Show unit 'B' will provide the answer to the question "Why grow trees?" with the exhibit on tour last year.

The provisional Show programme is:-

Show Unit 'A':

May 17-18:	Shropshire & West Midlands, Shrewsbury;
May 24-25:	Staffordshire County, Stafford;
May 31 -	
June 3:	Bath & West, Shepton Mallet;
June 6 -7:	Royal Cornwall, Wadebridge;
June 16-17:	Essex, Chelmsford;
June 21-22:	The Lincolnshire, Lincoln;
June 28-29:	Royal Norfolk, Norwich;
July 3- 6:	Royal, Stoneleigh;
July 11-13:	Great Yorkshire, Harrogate;
July 18-20:	East of England, Peterborough;
July 25-27:	Royal Welsh, Builth Wells.

Show Unit 'B':

May	18-20:	Devon County, Exeter;
May	23-26:	Chelsea Flower (with special exhibit);
May	31 -	
June	1:	Suffolk County, Ipswich;
June	8-10:	South of England, Ardingly;
June	13-15:	Three Counties, Malvern;
June	20-23:	Royal Highland, Edinburgh;
July	13-15:	The Liverpool;
July	23:	Essex Country Fair, Chelmsford;
July	28-29:	The Game Fair, Raby Park, Darlington (special exhibit);
August	1- 3:	Royal Lancashire, Blackpool.

* * *

DYING FORESTRY SKILLS

HELP ME PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE

Head Forester W.J. Wilson, Arden NW(E) appeals:

"As foresters we have created a sanctuary for disappearing wild life and provided the nation with a source of raw material.

"In order that what has been achieved passes into our heritage and is not lost, a centre has been created at Mayswood, Arden Forest, Warwickshire, with displays of tools, old and new, and woodland crafts.

"I am acquiring many titbits about woodland life but want many more. I need your stories and 'know-how' before you forget. Already I experience great difficulty in tracing woodland industry and craftsmen.

"Do you realise that chair bodgers, who worked in our woodlands making chair legs and plied the skill of turning long before the Saxon invasion, have completely disappeared? And in 18 months' time the last of the two Swale basket makers retires and with him will go a trade that has been part of the woodland scene since the Norse invasion.

"All of you can help before it is too late. Keep your eyes open for old tools, old craftsmen and woodlanders who can still describe the cunning of their craft. Send me your interesting titbits; if you are shy, let me know and I'll visit you. What you think trivial is probably important so put pen to paper while you remember.

"A gentleman of 88 wrote in recently and described how his friend, a woodland worker, fixed a wooden peg on the weather side of a tree, from which he hung his kettle. Rain and dew travelling down the tree provided the water for his 'brew-up'. This little gem is as important to our saga as the most erudite outburst on the practical aspects of thinning."

* * *

PRODUCE SALES

CHRISTMAS IN SUMMER

Head Forester J.S. Law of Bramfield E(E), claiming the earliest Christmas tree sale of 1971, reveals how his Hertfordshire trees become 'telly' and film stars.

He says: "One of my customers is a large London firm which supplies 'props' for film and TV companies. TV Christmas advertisements were in full production in mid-summer and my sales of Christmas trees, foliage and holly were brisk."

Mr. Law tells how he met a demand for two 12-foot Californian pines for a desert ranch house scene with rough, distorted Scots pines with short yellow-tinged needles. Then he had to find grass tussocks for 'Dr Who' and a birch tree to fall on Marty Feldman's head. Not to mention trees without leaves in summer and trees with leaves in winter for seasonal advertising films.

Supplying small LC and RC trees to set off jumps at horse shows and for scenery at other shows and displays around London gives a steady source of income. "I have only supplied material for one stage production so far," he says. "This could have meant a steady order because the props had to be renewed twice a week - but the show only had a short run!"

He concludes: "With a customer like this it is amazing how often small corners of 'rubbish' are saleable and how much cleaning, brashing and pruning can be done profitably."

* * *

SAFETY

FARM DEATHS

Farm deaths in England and Wales last year numbered 118, compared with 105 in 1970, the Ministry of Agriculture announces. Twenty-three of the dead were children under 15.

Overturning tractors killed 28 people and remained the largest single cause of fatalities. None of the tractors involved had an approved safety cab. However, no one died in the 28 reported incidents of overturning tractors fitted with the safety cab.

Since 1956, 1,823 people have died in farm accidents in England and Wales.

* * *

ARBORICULTURALISTS' NEW PRESIDENT

Earl Jellicoe has been elected new president of the Arboricultural Association. He succeeds the first president, Mr. Arthur Skeffington, who died last year. Lord Jellicoe - Lord Privy Seal, Head of the Civil Service and Leader of the House of Lords - has been vice-president for the last four years.

Other appointments announced are: Lord Kennett, Mr. Duncan Sandys, MP, and Mr. John Parker, MP, vice-presidents; Mr. Peter J.D. Wilson, chairman; and Mr. W.R. Lewington, vice-chairman.

The Association continues to recruit members at a healthy rate and branches have been formed in the South-East, West Country and Midlands. Following a recent meeting in Leeds attended by 250 people the inaugural gathering of the Northern branch was being held in February; and a Scottish branch inaugural meeting was being held around the same time.

* * *

ACHIEVEMENT

BARX AND BARK

First, a bark not usually associated with the Forestry Commission - the sound of a very important dog. Champion Kaytop Marshall, to be exact, who won for Mrs. Leila Moore, Hampshire District Office clerk, the award for best male Pembroke Corgi at Crufts.

It's the fourth successive year he's done it - and he went on to be Best of Breed and Best of the Working Group.

Well done Kaytop - and Mrs. Moore.

Second bark: Brandon pulverised variety from Thetford Forest, which was made extensive use of in Courtaulds Christmas display in London's West End, near our Savile Row HQ. The exhibition contractors claim bark is cheaper and easier to tidy up than peat.

* * *

BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF HIS LIFE

WILLIAM STOTT IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

Mr. William Stott, retired Head Forester from SW(E) under the voluntary severance plan, has found a vigorous new life in the Midlands. Let Roger Vincent, writing in the West Bromwich Evening Mail of December 30th, last year, tell the story:-

"Mr. William Stott has taken on the job as first warden of West Bromich's potential paradise, the Sandwell Valley.

"As overlord of more than 900 acres of Green Belt land he has a huge responsibility. Mr. Stott's task is to change the vast expanse of derelict greenery into flawless parkland with numerous amenities.

"If he is lucky he may see the results of his work in his life-time. But even if he does not he will be happy to pass on a valuable heritage for future generations.

"For the last 25 years trees and conservation have been his life. For the last 12 years he has been Head Forester in charge of all the woodlands in East Devon. What then brought him from this idyllic part of the country to the grit and grime of industrial West Bromwich? 'It was the challenge,' Mr. Stott said. 'I just could not resist it. Conservation has become such a live issue in recent times, there is all this talk of pollution, and here was a real chance to do something about it.'

"This is a mansize job in a difficult environment. I have tackled planting of derelict woodland before, but this is the most interesting complex I have come up against. My task is to transform rather derelict looking agricultural land into natural woodland with farmland in between.'

"Swan Pool is to be enlarged so that there will be nearly 15 extra acres for fishing and sailing. Bridle paths will be laid for horse riders from nearby riding schools. Smaller pools will be cleared and stocked with fish.

"Colliery tips, at present stark and ugly, will be landscaped so that they become eye-catchers instead of eyesores. Many other small tidying-up and repair jobs will be undertaken.

"On the more material side there will be car parks, children's playgrounds, toilets, cafes and a display building for exhibitions and lectures.

"Mr. Stott will use the experience he gained working on the hill areas of Devon to set the ups and downs of the Valley off to their best advantage. Full use will be made of contours, and trees with different colourings will be used to make the final effect as attractive as possible.

"Even the harsh outline of the motorway, which now sears through the area like a concrete sore, will eventually be broken by trees and other landscaping schemes.

"Mr. Stott accepts that it will be 15 to 20 years before the town begins to reap the benefits of the plan. But he gains satisfaction from knowing that in years to come people will flock to the Valley for recreation."

Mr. Stott told The Slasher: "I would be delighted to see any of my ex-colleagues if they should be passing through West Bromwich. I am still interested in the affairs of the Forestry Commission."

* * *

OVERSEAS NEWS

FORESTRY IN NEPAL

A letter from Malcolm Shirley, a former District Officer, Dorchester, now working in Nepal, reveals the ups and downs of forestry employment in the East.

Describing his dealings with "slippery Indian contractors," Mr. Shirley says that payment to a well-digger had to include 11 rupees for a sacrificial cockrel which was "apparently essential to the success of the enterprise."

He tells of the "day of triumph" when a water system was completed. Unfortunately the Indian pump failed to produce a drop of water and it was back to one man and a bucket until a replacement arrived.

A change of government and with it a complete reorganisation of the forestry department just about did him out of a job and he had to define a whole new role for himself.

But, he adds, "grappling with continually changing circumstances gives a certain zest to life and the country and people are splendid."

* * *

BOOKS

'FOREST SERVICE'

Former Deputy Director General George Ryle's story of the first 45 years of the Commission, 'Forest Service', published by David and Charles in 1969 at three guineas, will be available shortly in a paperback edition at £1.50. Bill Edlin, Publications Office HQ(L), says: "We gather, too, that his pen is still active and that something else may appear on the bookstalls before long."

* * *

SPRING LILACS IN NEW YORK

First conference of the newly-formed International Lilac Society will be held from May 19th to May 21st in Rochester, New York. The society's purpose is to sponsor lilac research, exhibits and flower shows and supply useful information on cultivation. Details from Dennis Brown, Director of Horticulture, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York 10458.

* * *

OBITUARY

MR. STANLEY LONGHURST

The death is reported of Mr. Stanley Longhurst, CBE, who was the first home-grown timber merchant to serve as a Forestry Commissioner (1951-56). For many years prior

to his retirement in 1960 Mr. Longhurst was a prominent member of the home-grown trade and its associations, and a generous supporter of the Timber Trades Benevolent Society of which he was a past president and former trustee. He was chairman of the English Timber Merchants' Association from 1943-47 and president of the Federated Home Timber Merchants' Association from 1946-48.

JOHN Q. WILLIAMSON

Mr. Tim Healey, formerly our Principal Information Officer, writes:-

"Your report in the last issue of the death of John Q. Williamson made the saddest reading for many a long day.

"J.Q.' as he was most known and I were close associates throughout the whole of my 21 years with the Commission. 'J.Q.' was to me, as to your correspondent who wrote of his passing, guide, philosopher, counsellor and friend. In my earlier days I frequently sought his help, which was not really surprising since I joined the Commission after serving as press officer at the Ministry of Health, and had little knowledge of trees and still less of the forest industry and the national forest authority. But not once did I go in vain for assistance which was always generously given.

"J.Q.' was not only a fine forester but a remarkably good organiser with a deep-seated belief in the value to the Commission of good public relations. It could in fact be said that he was a master of the gimmick for few, if any, of the important ventures for which he was responsible were without some facet or other of originality.

"One of the first of our mutual interests was the organisation of the Empire Forestry Conference of 1947, with sessions held in London and forest tours in abundance. 'J.Q.', with some outstanding 'lieutenants' (not least Ted Harper) had overall responsibility for carrying out all the manifold conference arrangements, and I for publicising the event at home and throughout the then Empire.

"I well remember one of 'J.Q.'s' exclusive touches. It was not enough that, for the forest tours, he 'hired' for a fortnight a special first class train so delegates could be transported in maximum comfort to focal points for various excursions. When, late at night, the huge party joined the train at Kings Cross each delegate was presented with an illustrated brochure describing the merits of the famous engine 'Mallard' which, not so very long before, had broken the world speed record with a remarkable 126 miles per hour. 'Mallard', of course, hauled the special conference train at least, if I remember correctly, as far as Newcastle. And at what speed! It went so fast that the axle boxes of one coach seized up and this carriage had to be replaced at York.

"For his outstanding work in connection with the conference 'J.Q.' was appointed MBE.

"No one should forget the part he played in the establishment and development of Northerwood House as the Commission's educational centre and I believe it was his talent for the exceptional that resulted in Northerwood House being graced with the tallest flagpole in Britain, outside Kew Gardens. I remember having to answer a number of Press enquiries about this magnificent Douglas fir and the cost of erecting it, which evoked at least one question in the House of Commons.

"J.Q., on being posted to Wales, did a splendid job during some of the worst days of the 'trees versus sheep' controversy and pleased me greatly by seeking my help, as a publicist, at every opportunity. One of his first tasks on going to the Principality was to learn Welsh and he made a good job of it - no mean achievement for a Scotsman.

"He it was who bought a mountainside (actually a very large coal tip in South Wales) for £1 from the Coal Board and, as an incentive to my campaign for more school

forestry, brought in local children to start the planting up of this erstwhile derelict area.

"J.Q." acted as our leader when a special organising committee was set up to stage the Commission's first-ever large-scale public forestry exhibition. The venue was Bramshill and the event, run on a shoestring financially, at least where expenditure on publicity was concerned, attracted an attendance over the two days of nearly 18,000 people.

"Those of us who were privileged to enjoy the private hospitality of 'J.Q.' and his charming wife will long remember the genuine and generous welcome with which one was received into their home. Just in passing I would mention that I for one recall the amazing card tricks that 'J.Q.' had taught his much-loved Boxer dog, Henry - the only dog I have encountered, incidentally, that could open a door and shut it after him.

"J.Q., old son, you will be long remembered and sorely missed."

MISS EILEEN NIVEN

Miss Eileen Niven, who served the Commission more than 40 years and retired in 1968 as an EO in Harvesting and Marketing HQ(L), died just before Christmas.

"M.A." writes: "News of the sudden death of Eileen Niven came as a great shock and sorrow to all who had known and worked with her. 'Niv' started in the old Assistant Commissioner's office in the days of the legendary Mr. Pritchard and had been one of the very hard-working but largely unsung pillars of the AC's and HQ offices for over 41 years.

"I am sure that all her many friends wish she could have had more than three years in which to enjoy (as she certainly did) her well-earned retirement and her new home by the sea (in Sussex).

"'Niv' had always been a perfectionist, demanding most exacting standards of work from herself and others. This was why she was always so dependable but it may well also have contributed to her early death, for she made no concessions to herself when she sometimes felt under par.

"In her younger days particularly, she was a great practical joker and a teller of tall stories with great solemnity so that one never knew when one's leg was being pulled. But her jokey exterior was only a cloak for the rather sensitive person behind and if you were eventually lucky enough (as I was, after many years) to be allowed behind the facade, you found you had the most loyal, staunch and true friend."

MR. G. L. LEECH

The death has occurred of G.L. Leech, foreman mechanic at Thornthwaite repair depot, NW(E).

Larry, as he was known, had spent 22 years at Thornthwaite and will be remembered for his efficiency and cheerfulness. Large numbers of colleagues attended the funeral at Carlisle. He leaves a widow and son.

* * *

FOOT-NOTE - A CRI DE COEUR

Army drill sergeants love to berate new recruits for having "two left feet." But this sarcasm would be a dream come true for Gordon Griffiths, Forester, Field Surveys Branch, Brechfa S(W).

"It would," he writes, "be of considerable advantage to the forester serving with the Field Surveys Branch to have identical feet.

"I walk up and down hills all day long, from the heather-covered mountains to the steamy damp locality of rivers and streams. Due to these extremes it is difficult to know what footwear to use - boots for the hills or wellingtons for the damp boggy surrounds of streams.

"Now I dislike wearing wellingtons; with all due respect to the Duke, they are hot and make the feet sticky and not as comfortable as a correctly-laced leather boot.

"The dilemma would be eased considerably if I could wear one of each and change them from one foot to another. I would use the 'wellington foot' to stride streams and boggy patches and change footwear when one became too hot or the leg sore from that other familiar complaint 'wellington boot rub.' But I can't because I don't have symmetrical feet.

"Maybe some experienced forester could help?"

* * *

FROM H.Q. AND THE CONSERVANCIES

Headquarters, London

65,000 HOURS OF WORK

Thirty-three years' service, P.A. to Lords Radnor, Robinson and Waldergrave and Sir Arthur Gosling, one of only two women in the Commission to receive the MBE - that's the proud record of MRS. M.E.A. (MARY) ALISON, who retired last November.

Forty-five people attended her farewell at which Mr. J.J.V. Summers, Secretary to the Commission, converted her service into hours - 65,000 of them, he said. And this was not just a figure of speech "as she has worked every minute".

Mr. Summers said that when he first came to the Commission he thought of Lord Robinson as the "founding father" who ran the organisation on his own but, of course, he had Mary to help him.

"When it was a question of Mary being too senior as an HEO to be a secretary, Lord Radnor said 'If necessary I will take it to the steps of the Throne to get her as my secretary'," said Mr. Summers.

Latterly Mary worked in the Secretariat and had recently spent many harrassing hours with Dutch elm disease. She gained her MBE in 1962.

Mr. Summers added: "Mary has been completely dedicated and loyal to the Commission and we are very sorry to lose her."

In reply Mary said on the whole her work had been "great fun - even when most exasperating." Afterwards she gave a small party.

INFORMATION STAFF - MR. JOHN WRIGHT

Malcolm Dunbar having left us to take up the appointment of PRO for the Group Hospital Management Committee in Edinburgh, where his home is, we welcome his successor.

JOHN WRIGHT, now in his late twenties, was born and brought up in Yorkshire, the son of a policeman, and spent several youthful years in the Allerston Forest area. On leaving school he became a journalist working for the Yorkshire Evening Post and the Press Association amongst others. Since 1966 he has been in the Government Information Service at the Ministry of Defence where he has mainly be working on producing feature articles about the Army world-wide and Deputy-Editor of the Army's monthly illustrated magazine "Soldier". Used to visiting such places as South-East Asia and Ulster for stories, we hope that John Wright will find travelling within the Commission - well dispersed though we are throughout Great Britain - as fruitful with feature material though less tiring - and much less dangerous!

* * * *

Headquarters, Basingstoke

SERVED HIS COLLEAGUES

MR. BILL WILBRAHAM, who retired as Commission Welfare Officer on February 16, will be remembered by all staff for his long service on their behalf on the Staff Side of the Departmental Whitley Council.

He was secretary to the Departmental Staff Side from 1948 to 1966 and chairman from then until late last year. This represents 24 years during which he achieved the best possible outcome of numerous important issues concerning staff welfare and conditions of service.

Writes a colleague: "No matter if you are a forester (in its widest sense), a land agent, engineer, scientific officer, clerk of works, or any grade in the administration group from clerical assistant upwards, I know Bill has served you well "

After a long career as a regular soldier in the Royal Corps of Signals, Bill Wilbraham joined the Commission at Bristol in 1947 in the office of Assistant Commissioner, England and Wales, later moving to the Director, England, office in London and in 1953 to the Finance Division. In 1966 he moved to the newly-established Basingstoke office; he has been Welfare Officer since 1953.

Bill was appointed MBE in 1970, jubilee year of the National Whitley Council.

* * * *

North East England

JIM HALLIDAY RETIRES

After a long and distinguished career, first in the Colonial Service in Malaya and, since 1961, with the Forestry Commission, Mr. Jim Halliday, Area Civil Engineer, Border, has retired. A darts match at the Rose and Crown, Bellingham, Northumberland on November 12th, marked his departure.

Jim gained the OBE and a Malayan Order for his overseas service. He went to Bellingham in 1965 after working for the Commission in Scotland.

At his farewell Jim received a cheque from T.A. Murdock, Conservancy Civil Engineer, on behalf of colleagues and well-wishers in NE(E) and elsewhere. He will spend his retirement at Dalkeith, Edinburgh, where he lives.

* * * *

East England

RETIREMENT OF GEORGE BACKHOUSE, CONSERVATOR

MR. G.W. BACKHOUSE retired in November after 37 years with the Commission.

A Yorkshireman, Mr. Backhouse graduated from Bangor University in 1933 and began as a forest worker and ganger at Clipstone and Thetford until appointed a District Officer in 1935.

After serving in Dean and Llanelly he was District Officer at Brecon for several years. In 1943 he became DO Carlisle and from 1946-47 he was Acting Conservator NW(E). He was then posted to E(E) succeeding the late A.D. Hopkinson as Conservator in 1949.

A colleague writes: "During his tenure in E(E) it is estimated that near 13 million hoppus feet of props have been supplied to the NCB. If each prop were placed end to end they would encircle the globe at the equator!"

A farewell dinner in Cambridge on the eve of his retirement was attended by over 100 friends and colleagues. The Director General presented Mr. Backhouse with a cheque and Mr. Ken Snook, Conservancy Land Agent, gave him an illuminated address. Designed by Mr. Snook and prepared by Miss Winnie Chubb, Conservancy draughtswoman, on vellum, it traced Mr. Backhouse's life and interests.

On behalf of the mechanical engineering staff, Mr. Graham Cook presented Mr. Backhouse with a remarkable trophy consisting of highly-burnished pieces of "genuine scrap" artistically mounted on a wooden shield. This, he said, was to remind Mr. Backhouse not only of his insistence on tidiness at the repair depot, but also of the genuine respect and affection they felt for him.

Mr. Backhouse plans to continue an active life - particularly in gardening and the cultivation of orchids - and will continue to live near Cambridge.

* * * *

East Scotland

'BLUFF AND CHEERY'

ARTHUR BIGGAR RETIRES

ARTHUR BIGGAR, Head Forester, Edensmuir, retired last October. At his farewell

Mr. E.G. Richards, Conservator E(S), presented him with a pair of binoculars. Earlier his forest workers had given him a radio.

A colleague writes: "In a sense Arthur's career went full circle as he was brought up on Raith Estate not far from his final charge. After a spell with the Commission in 1929-33 he went off to private forestry followed by war service with the Navy.

"He returned to the fold in 1947 as foreman at Pitfichie. Following promotion Arthur was posted to the newly-acquired Elchies Forest in 1954 where, during the next 12 years, he had the satisfaction of completing afforestation on some 4,000 acres.

"In 1968 he was given the very demanding job of clearing about 24,000 cubic metres of timber which had been blown at Edensmuir. It says much for his hard work and ability that the whole job was completed mostly by direct labour and without serious snag in two-and-a-half years.

"We will miss this bluff and cheery man"

* * * *

South Scotland

TOM FOX RETIRES

Private to RSM, forest worker to chief forester: the achievement of Tom Fox, who retired in February as Chief Forester, Kirroughtree.

He began his career as a forest worker in Kielder in 1936, moving to Wark the following year as a ganger.

As a TA member, he was called up before outbreak of war and served with the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and Royal Armoured Corps. He fought at Dunkirk and Normandy, was Mentioned in Despatches, and rose from private to regimental sergeant-major.

After serving in Kielder and Wark once more, he became Head Forester, Kielder, in 1956, moving to Kirroughtree as Chief Forester 10 years later.

UNIQUE DISTINCTION FOR TYPIST

MISS SHEILA HORSBURGH, a 20-year old typist in Peebles District Office, has become the first woman in Scotland to qualify as a judo referee.

She took up the sport six years ago and is now a Black Belt First Dan. Her British Judo Association's referee's certificate enables her to officiate at national competitions.

Every week she teaches at Edinburgh and Peebles. And last November she returned from the North-West Area Ladies' Championship in Chester with a gold medal.

On February 11th this year yet another award - the Head of Edinburgh's Civil Service College presented her with a £5 prize from the Civil Service Council for Further Education in recognition of her achievements.

* * * *

West Scotland

NO SICK LEAVE IN 45 YEARS

During 45 years with the Commission DONALD CAMPBELL, who has retired as Forester, Achray Forest, has not had one day off sick. He joined in 1926 aged 14 and, apart from five years' wartime Army service, has served the Commission continuously ever since.

A gathering at Altskeith Hotel, Kinlochard, on December 2nd marked his retirement. Roger Hurst, District Officer, Aberfoyle, presented him with a gold watch and Elizabeth Hutchinson, Achray Forest clerk, handed a bouquet to Mrs. Campbell. The party, organised by Head Forester Ben Thompson, compered by Keith Campbell and enlivened by music from Freddie Wilson, Loch Ard, preceded the Campbell's retirement to a new home in Callander.

Said a colleague: "Donald knows every inch of Achray Forest from Ben Venue to Flanders Moss and his faithful wee dog must know every tree!"

* * * *

South Wales

BEWARE: LOW FLYING SQUIRREL!

The behaviour of a young squirrel amazed two forest workers at Slebech recently.

Lem Thomas and Stephen Evans stood still as two young squirrels ran towards them in a plantation. One ran between Mr. Thomas's legs while the other climbed up Mr. Evans's leg and arm and on to his shoulder. At this point he grabbed it and dropped it to the ground.

Asks B.L. Jones, Forester at Slebech: "Have any other forest staff had a similar experience?"

E N D