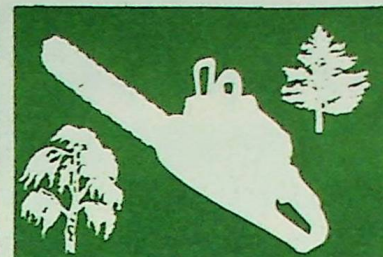




# SLASHER

NEWSPAPER OF THE FORESTRY COMMISSION



No. 298 AUTUMN 1978

## HARVESTING AND MARKETING — THE FUTURE CHALLENGE

A "major challenge" in the harvesting and marketing of timber will confront both the public and private sectors of the industry in the next two decades, a senior Government minister has warned.

Lord Peart, the Lord Privy Seal, and a former Minister of Agriculture, was speaking at the opening of the second National Forest Machinery Demonstration which was held at the Lowther Estate, Penrith, Cumbria.

Several thousand people from throughout the country attended during the two-day demonstration which was organised by the Association of Professional Foresters.

Lord Peart said: "Over the next two decades we can expect a significant increase in the production of softwood timber from Britain's forests as large areas of plantation come into the production phase."

"The forecast is that in this period softwood production will be more than double."

"Although hardwood production will continue to make a useful contribution the expansion in softwood supply will be so rapid as to confront both the public and private sectors with a major challenge in the harvesting and marketing of the timber."

Lord Peart said that although by world standards our forestry was relatively modest — our forest area was one of the lowest in Europe — our consumption of wood and wood products was, by contrast, one of the highest in the world.

### STARK

"This takes on added significance when seen against the stark facts that our own forests at present contribute less than 10 per cent of our timber needs and that our current import bill for wood and wood products runs at over £2000 million per year," said the minister.

"These figures highlight the importance of our using our own timber resources to the maximum advantage."

"To achieve this it is of course essential that we have a buoyant and efficient forestry industry."

"We have seen a steady expansion in the establishment of forestry since the last war and, although there have been the normal peaks and troughs, British forestry is now firmly established."

"I believe it can look forward with some optimism to a secure and prosperous future, despite the marketing difficulties experienced over the past year or two as a result of the world economic recession. Forestry is a long-term investment and I am confident that such difficulties are no more than temporary setbacks to the progress already achieved."

Lord Peart added that the rate of expansion of the forest estate would at the end of the day be dependent upon the flow of land available for planting. There were many competing claims for land resources in the upland areas where the future planting would largely take place.

"The starting point of the debate must obviously be the report produced recently by a Forestry Commission working party on the wood production outlook in Britain to the middle of the next century, which suggested various possible planting options for consideration."

"It is a challenging and important report which the Commission have wisely circulated as a consultative document."

"It is as significant as the White Paper produced by the Commissioners in 1943 which suggested a forest estate of 5 million acres by the turn of the century. That may have sounded an ambitious aim at the time but we are likely to meet it with a few years to spare," he said.

### PLOUGHS

More than 80 firms and organisations took the opportunity to arrange displays during the demonstration which was held at Lord Lonsdale's estate.

The Forestry Commission showed several items of equipment including a display of trailed and mounted forestry ploughs developed and modified by Commission engineers.

The most spectacular of these was the prototype trailed rotary mouldboard plough — an experimental plough in its early stages of development and on show to the public for the first time.

The Commission gave several operating demonstrations including extraction by Sky-line cable crane system and hydrostatic skidder with radio-controlled winches. Basic hydraulic loading techniques associated with a wheeled timber forwarder were also demonstrated.

## End of an era?



Willie MacLennan and his horse Paddy at work at Torrachilty.

Photo: Richard Westlake

BY RICHARD WESTLAKE

WHEN Willie MacLennan of Torrachilty Forest, North Scotland, retired in September, a whole era of the Forestry Commission came to a close. For Willie was the last Forestry Commission employee to have the designation of 'horseman'.

Willie was born and brought up in the area of the Scottish Highlands to the south of Ullapool, known as the Lael section of Torrachilty Forest. Here he joined the Forestry Commission as a trapper in 1939, and has worked in the area ever since, changing to horseman in 1954.

Today, horses are no longer part of the British forestry scene, having been superseded by machines. Noisy tractors and winches now throb in the heart of the woodland where formerly horses went quietly about their work, with only the clanking of chains to be heard, plus the occasional word of encouragement from the horse's handler.

Old fashioned methods have given way to modern technology, but in difficult, mountainous areas was the horse really inferior? They are agile creatures, able to negotiate steep slopes and rocky gullies, even in the thickest of plantations, at a very spritely trot. They are certainly not slow. In fact, when I photographed Willie shortly before his retirement I had great difficulty in operating the camera as the horse moved so fast!

### DECLINE

The reason for the horses' decline lies, perhaps not with the failure of the horse, but with the failure of man. Who would want to look after a horse seven days of the week, when a tractor can be parked in a shed on Friday night and

forgotten until Monday morning!

Two horses have survived at Torrachilty to this day, although they are not owned by the Forestry Commission, but by Willie himself, and hired to the Forestry Commission on a daily basis.

'Princey' is a chestnut stallion of 15 years, and 'Paddy' is a younger Piebald stallion of nine years. They have been used for such varied work as dragging out timber, carrying fencing materials and fertilizer to the tops of local mountains, and bringing dead stags off the hill. Horses are Willie's great love.

"They are friends," he says, "you can talk to them and they understand you."

Paddy was bought in Ireland and brought over to Lael by Willie about five years ago. He was in a very poor con-

dition when he arrived. Through Willie's care and attention, Paddy is now a beautiful sight; broad, and packed with muscle.

### RETIRED

Now Willie has retired, Paddy will work on under the guidance of Murdo Mackenzie, forest craftsman, who has been helping Willie over the past few years.

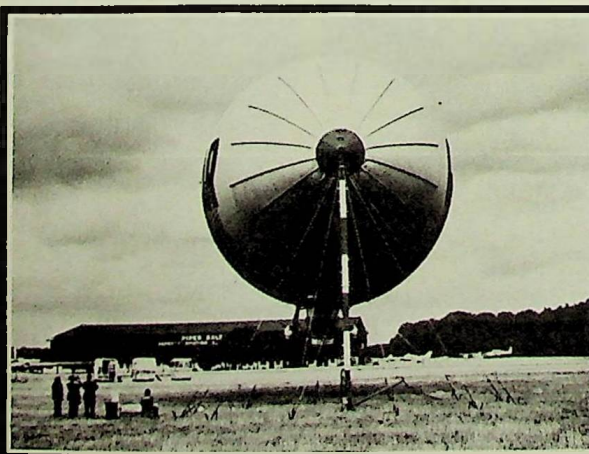
Unfortunately, Princey is surplus, for there are no other handlers available. Therefore, despite having a few more years of work ahead of him, he has now retired with Willie and is to be sold in the near future.

With Willie MacLennan and Princey, an age of forest development passes on. The sight of a horse at work will only remain with Paddy. How long that be for no one knows. Maybe the impending oil shortage, forecast for the 1990s, will bring them all back. I for one hope so!

## What on earth is this?

Is it on earth at all? And will it replace Land-Rovers for forest supervision?

For the answer to the mystery read the story about John Inglis' adventure 4000ft above Mendip Forest (Page 3).



## MISPLACED THANKS

THE new stone-built honesty box at Newgate Bank Car Park and Picnic Place, Hambleton Forest, has had to be demolished.

When the tube inside the cairn became blocked Head Forester Brian Maughan thought that vandals had been at work. No amount of jiggling bits of wire through the top and bottom would remove the blockage. So down came the cairn and out came the metal tube which when wrenched apart, was found to contain £10s worth of silver crammed behind the following letter wrapped around a 50p piece.

"Dear Sir,  
Thank you for having such a lovely place to stay, and clean toilets. My family enjoyed it very much. Thanks to all the workers for keeping it so nice and clean for us to enjoy."

It was both addressed and signed. The Conservancy have not the heart to send this generous family the bill to build a new cairn which this time will be both vandal- and generosity-proof!

# Axeman's Log

## JOHN BECOMES UNION CHIEF

MR John Hose of Sherwood Forest, is the first forestry worker to be elected president of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers.

At the union's Biennial Conference at Southport Mr Hose won 59 votes in the presidential election giving him a handsome victory over Miss Joan Maynard who polled 29 votes and Edgar Pill who polled four votes.

Afterwards Mr Hose said he had set himself four priorities. Firstly he wants to change the image of the union so that it stops looking like a friendly society and more like a union.

He also wants a massive recruitment drive, redeployment of officers in the field and a concentration of the real activities of the union instead of "outside activities such as chairmanship of boards".

Mr Hose spent two years in the army before joining the Forestry Commission. He is a skilled forest worker at Sherwood.

He has been secretary of the Nottinghamshire County

## Chairman's Christmas Draw

LUCKY members of staff who will participate in the Chairman's Christmas Draw this year will be East (England), North (Wales) and West (Scotland) Conservancies.

The Chairman, Mr John Mackie, himself drew the three winning locations and the names of all staff employed by the three conservancies will be entered for the draw. Last year headquarters won the ballot and so were withheld from participating this year.

Committee for the NUAAW for 28 years, and a member of the Executive Committee for the last 16 years representing the North West No. 2 District which covers all of North West England Conservancy and parts of Scotland.

He will remain on the Forestry Training Council, the Forestry Safety Council, and the negotiating body for forestry workers.

## CAN YOU HELP?

We have received this letter from Mrs K. E. Cahill, c/o Manor Farm, Sparkford, near Yeovil, Somerset:

"I have to admit that this is a rather unusual letter. Having tried various sources without being successful I thought at least I could try you.

"I'm trying to find a friend of mine. We worked together during the Second World War at a convalescent home called Bruarfield which belonged then to the Manchester and Salford Hospital Saturday Fund (which is now extinct). This person's name was Violet Goodier and she came from the district of Gorton, Manchester.

"Unfortunately we lost touch but I do know that she eventually married a Scotsman who worked for the Forestry Commission, and that they had four sons.

"The convalescent home was

situated in Arnside, Westmorland, but she did leave to take up nursing. She would know me as Kathleen Binns.

"Although I have only these flimsiest of clues to go on, I thought it was worth a try."

## EXCHANGE?

And another request to Slasher for help has come from Christopher John, Nihelmugenstr 24, 8 Munich 14.

He spent several years under German Aid in Indonesia and Afganistan and is now moving from the headquarters of the Bavarian Forest Service to take over a district in Northern Bavaria.

He would like to invite guests from Britain for vacations and possibly arrange an exchange visit for his two teenage children aged 14 and 16.

## Special offer to readers

GRAND Metropolitan Hotels have offered Slasher readers a 10% discount on their Stardust Mini Holidays to London, Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels, and on their Camelot CountryMini Holidays to some of the most picturesque regions of this country.

The operating dates when the discount will be valid are: Camelot Country Mini Holidays: October 16, 1978 to May 2, 1979.

Stardust Country Mini Holidays: September 29, 1978 to May 2, 1979.

Stardust London Mini Holidays: November 9, 1978 to April 10, 1979.

Stardust Overseas Mini Holidays: November 10, 1978 to April 9, 1979.

The special reduction will

mean for instance: A Camelot Country Mini-Holiday of a minimum of two days at the old world Rose and Crown Hotel, Salisbury, would cost just over £21 for two nights' accommodation plus breakfast, lunch or dinner for two days including service charge and VAT. Additional days with similar meals included would cost little more than £10.50 per night.

The Stardust Holidays include the cost of rail or ferry

travel to your destination. Naturally those living furthest from the final destination have to pay more but there are still some tempting reductions. If you live in the Greater London Area your weekend in Paris could cost as little as £33 for rail travel, Channel crossing and two nights' bed and breakfast. If you are travelling from Scotland there is an additional travel supplement of £10.35 or from Wales of £6.30. A two-night holiday in Amsterdam could cost from around £47; or two nights in Brussels from around £38.

The Stardust Mini Holidays to London give a choice of 24 centrally situated hotels, return rail and travel and two nights bed and breakfast at prices varying between less than £20 and over £50 depending on distance travelled and type of accommodation required.

For further details of Stardust and Camelot Mini Holidays please cut out this form and send it to the address shown.

140 FORESTRY COMMISSION  
Please send me details of the special offer for Stardust & Camelot Mini Holidays.

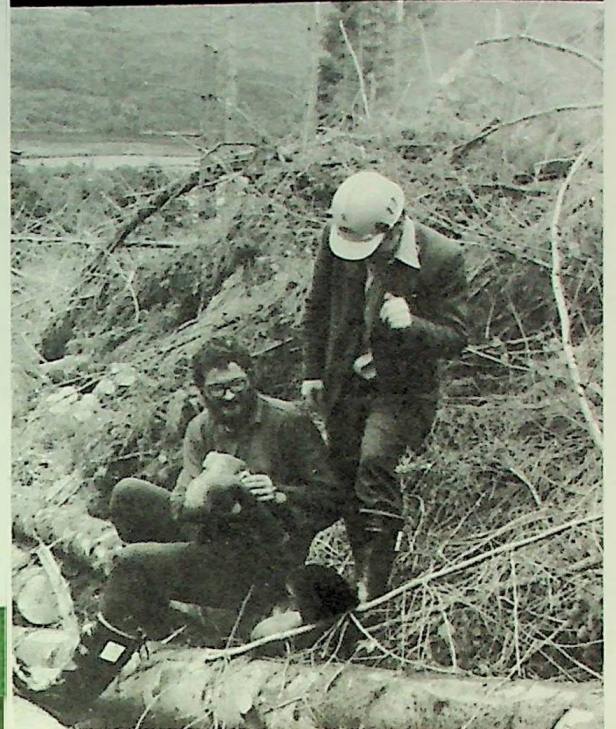
NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TELEPHONE No. ....

Please return this form to: John Buckingham, Stardust & Camelot Mini Holidays, PO Box 863, London W2 2DU.

## Boot saves foot



Michael Thompson shows Forester David Gregory the cut in the boot which saved his leg from serious injury while working in Ardgartan Forest, near Arrochar.

MR Michael Thompson, of Ardgartan Forest, near Arrochar, counts himself a lucky man.

He is an experienced chain saw operator and well aware of the dangerous nature of his work. However, without warning, his chainsaw "kicked" back off the branch he was snedding and the fast-moving chain struck his left leg hard, but just above the ankle.

Fortunately for Mr Thompson, he was wearing a pair of Metsuri Safety Boots supplied to the Forestry Commission by Chieftain Forge Ltd, manufacturers and distributors of machines and equipment for forestry.

This Safety Boot for forest work has a multi-layer construction to defend the leg and foot against injury and to give comfortable support. There are actually nine different layers of rubber, fabric and nylon. The nylon itself is of 8-layer construction. It is the key to Mr Thompson's escape with nothing more than a bruised leg. The nylon slows and

blunts and arrests the saw chain.

In Mr Thompson's case, the inner leg lining of the boot was only very slightly damaged. He of course, released his finger from the throttle when the accident happened, and the saw braked, but in this split-second threat to his leg, Mr Thompson is in no doubt at all that, without the protection of his boot, he would have had very serious injuries.

Chieftain Forge Sales Director Billy Wolfe delivered a new pair of Metsuri boots to Mr Thompson the day after the accident and took the accompanying photograph of him.

● See "Spot Checks in Forests" story on opposite page.

## CANADIANS TRAIN IN SCOTLAND

COURSES in cable logging may be introduced in Newfoundland after four Canadian operators attended a successful training session in Scotland.

The four operators from the Newfoundland Forest Service took part in a course run by Forestry Commission training instructors Hugh Thom, Mike Shuttleworth and Piers Simon, of Inverness.

After they returned home to Newfoundland, one of the

four, Warren Strong, forest engineer, wrote to E & T Branch saying that any success achieved in cable logging over there could be "directly attributed to the professional, intense and comprehensive course received from your training course."

The letter continued: "I would like to especially compliment Mr Hugh Thom and his two assistants, Mike Shuttleworth and Piers Simon for their patience and help in teaching us the basics of cable logging."

Mr Strong said that Newfoundland had a logging training school which trained men in all aspects of logging and now a course in cable logging could well be initiated.

The Canadians are seeking the advice of the Commission in setting up the courses.

## Forester's Farewell

*The forest creatures stop for a while,  
And watch you walk away.  
You seem lost in your thoughts  
as you reach the stile,  
Then you pause, and look back  
up the way.*

*Was there something you  
wanted to say?  
Is there something you've left  
undone?  
Did you say goodbye to your  
friends today  
To mark the end of your run?*

*The rabbits and foxes, the  
heathers and reeds,  
The trees you tended with care  
And common of Sparrows  
who've seen your kind deeds,  
They'll all miss you, now you're  
not there.*

Iain D. Metcalfe  
(To Dad on his retirement,

## The Benevolent Fund — Why not help?

BY JOE RUSSELL, WELFARE OFFICER

The purpose of the Forestry Commission Benevolent Fund is to provide relief to deserving and needy persons who are, or who have been in Forestry Commission employment or, in the case of death of persons who were so employed those who were dependent on them.

### Voluntary

The Fund, which is maintained and supported by voluntary contributions / donations provides financial assistance where help is not available from other sources. Assistance is given by making loans in deserving cases, although grants are not excluded in cases of extreme hardship.

It will be seen from the

details given below of the Fund's balance as at March 31, 1977 that the Fund is not a large one, and members of the staff are invited to contribute a few pence by deductions through pay, or make a once and for all donation. This could take the form of a single donation or a Deed of Covenant to make a donation to the Fund over a period of seven years. Forms authorising either of the above methods for making donations are obtainable from local Welfare Officers or direct from the Welfare Officer at Headquarters.

Summary of Balance Sheet as at March 31, 1977

|                                                                                                    |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Opening balance as at April 1, 1976                                                                | £2,540.89 |
| Receipts during the year, including repayment of loans (£359), gifts, contributions, donations etc | £895.29   |
|                                                                                                    | £3,436.18 |
| Expenditure during the year                                                                        | £924.51   |
| Closing balance as at March 31, 1977                                                               | £2,511.67 |

### Example

To quote but one example of the help that we can provide in deserving cases; a Forest Worker's house was recently destroyed by fire and all the family's belongings were destroyed, fortunately no one was injured. The Trustees were informed of the unfortunate family's distress and immediately made available the sum of £100 for the purchase of clothing and other immediate necessities.

## NAMES AGAIN

Our story in the last edition about aptly named staff at Grizedale (Head Forester Dean and Foresters Birch and Wood) was bound to bring a response from other parts.

From Glentworth, we hear of Forest Craftsmen Sandy Fell and Dave Forrest and Tractor Driver Jim HEWITson. District office clerkess is Mrs Cheyne (pronounced chain)!

# SPOT CHECKS AT FORESTS

## More accidents reported

STEPS are being taken to introduce spot checks at forests to make sure that safety procedures are being carried out.

This follows a "disappointing" increase in the number of industrial accidents last year.

The number of accidents rose from 437 in 1976 to 464 — and with the size of the industrial workforce remaining much the same this meant a rise in the accident rate from 7.6 to 8 per 100 employees.

"This is disappointing by comparison with the preceding year and the much hoped for downward trend has not been sustained," said Mr Don Bardy, Safety Officer in his report for the year.

### Vigilance

"The 1977 accident rate is in fact slightly higher than the average for the last decade and it is clear that employees at every level should increase their vigilance in order that an improved safety performance can be confidently predicted."

Mr Bardy said that a scrutiny of accident reports indicated that many injuries were caused by failure to adopt correct working techniques and failure to observe official safety policy.

"The harvesting activity continues to cause most concern and the felling and snedding phases of the operation are responsible for the most numerous and most serious injuries.

"It was during the felling phase that the fatal injury in the report occurred and several very serious accidents happened in similar circumstances."

### Causes

The Safety Officer said that the most common causes of accidents in harvesting were failure to observe the "two tree lengths" rule between adjacent operators, failure to use the necessary items of personal protection, and the use of poorly maintained chainsaws particularly when the chain brake was missing or ineffective.

"It would seem that these causes are entirely avoidable and steps are being taken at headquarters to introduce a system of safety audits in selected Conservancies whereby the Harvesting Officer and the Safety Officer will carry out joint inspections and subsequently prepare factual reports for Conservators.

"It is hoped to introduce this system during the current year," said Mr Bardy.

A "significant and welcome reduction" in the accidents to juvenile employees is

recorded with the rate falling from 14.5 to 10 per 100. The policy of not permitting employees under eighteen to operate chainsaws may have had some effect on this improvement although it is too early to draw firm conclusions.

### Unskilled

The rate of accidents for unskilled workers increased from 10.6 to 15 per 100 nullifying the improvement in the case of juveniles.

Mr Bardy said that upland and mountainous regions tended to have an accident rate higher than the average.

The average length of incapacity as a result of an accident was 21 days, a figure which has been consistent for several years.

However, the increase in the accident rate meant that the number of days lost rose by about 1,000 to 9,790.

Mr Bardy comments on the sharp reduction in the accident rate of employees aged 46 and over and says there was a high correlation between this group and the forest craftsmen group which tended to have less accidents.

## FOREST CLASSROOM FOR YOUNGSTERS

AN open air "classroom in the forest" has been designated at the Forest of Ae in South Scotland in a bid to increase children's understanding of woodlands and forests.

Special teachers' packs containing information about forests, wildlife and geology have been prepared by teachers, Dumfries and Galloway Education Authority and the Forestry

Commission working together in a co-operative effort.

The "classroom in the forest" has been started in an area which has felt a huge change of landscape and land use in the past 30 years with the area under trees going up from 4 per cent after the war to 21 per cent now.

"This is making a great impact on the life of the

younger generation in the area," said South Scotland Conservator John Davies.

"A new landscape, possibilities for recreation and more job opportunities have all come and we want the young to understand these things as they are living in this environment."

Mr Davies said there had been a tremendous demand from school children to go into the forest and in the last year something like 200 parties were organised to go into the forests of South Scotland.

"The forest opens many windows to knowledge and enjoyment," he said.

# Up, up and away . . .



Photo: West Air Photography

## Will this replace Land Rovers?

AFTER all the ballyhoo about crossing the Atlantic by balloon, John Inglis, conservancy mechanical engineer at Bristol, decided to get in on the act . . . and take to the air.

But his trip was not quite so hazardous — instead of crossing the wide expanses of the ocean John went for a quick flip across the Mendip Forest in the Goodyear airship "Europa".

And from heights of up to 4,000 ft John was able to observe parts of the forest in considerable detail and came back with a bright idea. Why not replace Land Rovers with airships?

"The view from the gondola coupled with the airship's ability to hover indefinitely suggests 'Europa' would be an ideal vehicle for forest supervision," said John.

However, when he sat down to do a rough calculation of costs he really came back to earth with a bump!

"In case the Commission wishes to consider airship adoption perhaps as Land Rover replacements a PDC rate of some £96.80 per hour

could be anticipated," he announced when he put down his pencil!

He gave this idea of costs: Replacement cost of airship — £600,000 (approx); life of airship — seven years. Annual usage — 1,600 hours. Fuel consumption — 8/16 galls an hour. Repair and maintenance — £6,000 per annum. Pilots (5) — say £10,000 per annum each.

As well as all this there would be the costs of a 23 man ground-crew with seven vehicles and general overheads!

John declared: "I will not attempt a cost/benefit exercise!"

However, John greatly enjoyed his flight which lasted half an hour.

"The airship was in the West Country and Wales giving flights to a large number of people," said John. "My trip was a most enjoyable and fascinating experience taking off from Bristol Airport and

cruising over areas in the vicinity of Bristol and the Mendips.

"The weather was almost ideal providing maximum visibility with enough wind force to require the considerable expertise of the pilot in flying the ship by constant manipulation of the elevator, rudder and propeller controls.

"The ride was surprisingly stable and comfortable for the six passengers carried in the gondola. They could converse without difficulty despite the close proximity of two air-cooled engines with large 'pusher' propellers."

The "Europa" has a cruising speed of 35 mph.

The picture shows the airship "Europa" setting off for an unscheduled bit of forest inspection. Below is the Clifton Suspension Bridge over the Avon Gorge on the outskirts of Bristol — and in the background is the start of Mendip Forest.

## OUTING TO AE

ABOUT 150 members of staff at headquarters took the opportunity to "go down to the woods" on the annual staff outing which this year was to the Forest of Ae in Dumfriesshire.

Everyone enjoyed the opportunity of getting out to the forest and seeing for themselves some of the very important aspects of the Commission's work.

The visitors all passed on their thanks to Chief Forester Alan Young and all the members of staff at Ae who went out of their way to make the visits both instructional and enjoyable.

# World-wide interest in IUFRO conference

By David Seal,

Chief Research Officer, North

DIVISION 1 of IUFRO — the International Union of Forest Research Organisations — met in Edinburgh from 3rd to 9th September. Division 1 is concerned with research in silviculture and the theme of the Edinburgh meeting was "The Ecology of even-aged plantations". The world-wide interest in this subject was demonstrated by the attendance of 120 delegates from a wide range of countries with Europe, North America and Australasia being strongly represented.

The Forestry Commission took a major part in the meeting. Research officers from the Northern Research Station joined members from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Bush Estate near Edin-

burgh and staff of the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources of Edinburgh University to plan and organise a full programme.

The University provided accommodation and excellent

facilities for lectures, the detailed servicing of the meeting was very efficiently undertaken by ITE and the Commission arranged excursions to Dunkeld Forest, in East Scotland Conservancy, to NRS and research areas at Eddleston and to the Forest of Ae in South Scotland Conservancy all of which greatly impressed the international gathering and brought special praise from Professor Mlinsek from Yugoslavia, Head of Division 1.

### Britain

The stage was set for the meeting by the Director General, Mr George Holmes, who gave the opening lecture

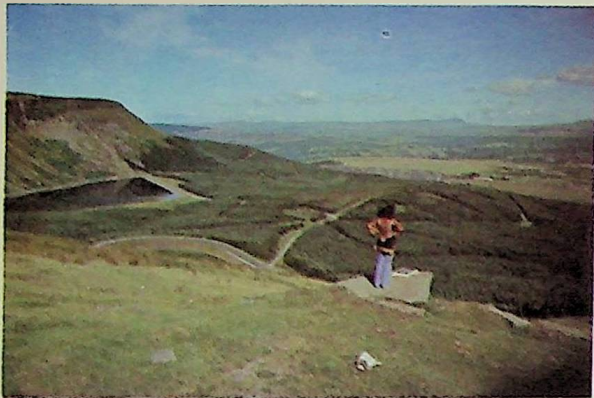
in which he outlined forestry development in Britain, reviewed the prospects for more afforestation, and identified ecological problems and areas for international co-operation in forest research.

Major technical papers were written and presented by Jim Atterson, Principal Silviculturist North, Roy Faulkner, Principal Geneticist, Graham Pyatt and Mairi Craven of Site Studies North and Calvin Booth and John Hunt of Silviculture North, all from NRS, and by John Davies, Conservator South Scotland and Richard Toleman, District Officer at Jedburgh and formerly Site Survey Officer in R&D Division.

The meeting brought together researchers from European countries with long traditions in forest management and researchers from Australia, New Zealand and Britain where extensive plantations of exotic species are providing new opportunities and new problems for research in silviculture and ecology.

Professor Mlinsek said he had been impressed by the forestry development he had seen and by the organisation and substance of the meeting. He warned against taking agricultural development as a pattern for foresters, emphasising that foresters have to manage long term ecosystems.

# RHONDDA — A UNIQUE PROJECT



Looking north from the Graig Llyn ridge walk which here is the highest point of Glamorgan.

## Turning eyesores into beauty spots

THE Rhondda Forest lies right on the very doorstep of industrial South Wales.

Land reclamation schemes involving the old coal tips have been undertaken with the tip at Ty Darw being landscaped and planted by The Forestry Commission as a contribution to Plant a Tree Year in 1973.

Landscaping work is at present being carried out by the Commission at another part of Rhondda Forest — at Lady Margaret Tip — and again trees will be planted on another area which was once an ugly blot on the landscape.

Both of these parts were visited by the Safari Land Rovers during the Rhondda Forest Project.

Rhondda with its mixture of forest and hillside is a vital "lung" of fresh air for a heavily populated area.



View visitors had of Lady Margaret Tip now being re-shaped by Commission. This will be eventually planted.

## AWARD

THE Rhondda Forest Project has received a Prince of Wales Award for its contribution to the interpretation of interesting features of the valleys of South Wales.

FORESTRY Commission staff have been giving wholehearted help and support to a unique scheme aimed at encouraging people from the industrial towns of South Wales to visit upland areas of the nearby Rhondda Valley — and to enjoy its spectacular scenery of hill and forest.

Land Rover safari trips, minibus services, and free guided walks are all part of the scheme which takes place on weekends, and certain weekdays, during the month of August.

It has become such a great success during its four years of operation that this year no less than 8,000 people visited Rhondda Forest on the days of the scheme.

The project on Forestry Commission land is unique in that it is organised by an outside body, the Mid-Glamorgan County Council, in co-operation with Rhondda Borough Council and the Forestry Commission.

A number of organisations are involved in the project and Forestry Commission staff have worked hard with help and information, and giving guided walks.

## Safari

For the 12 days of the scheme, a mobile visitor centre was located by Mid-Glamorgan County Council on the Rhigos Mountain on the road between Treherbert and Hirwaun — and this became the focal point for the project.

Safari Land Rovers left the centre at hourly intervals between 10 am and 7 pm on one or two hour long tours through the forest to Lluest Wen Reservoir and Fforch Orchi affording extensive views of Upper Rhondda; to Craig y

Llyn and Penpych passing the FC fire tower at the highest point in Glamorgan with views of the valleys above Glyncorwg and another down through the forest to Cwmsaerbren and the valley floor.

Guided walks led by Arthur Hazzard, Forest Clerk, Forester John Griffiths and Head Forester Bob Powell of Rhondda Forest, introduced visitors to the history and wildlife of the Rhondda.

## Walks

Bob Powell gave a guided walk called "Forestry in the Upper Rhondda" and John Griffiths described "Forestry in the Lower Rhondda".

Arthur Hazzard took as his theme "Bronze Age Man in the Rhondda" for his guided walks.

Other walks were led by members of the Glamorgan Naturalists' Trust, the Rhondda Society, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Welsh Water Authority and the National Museum of Wales.

The Forestry Commission also waymarked three walks starting from the visitor centre — Cefn Glas, about a mile long, Graig Llyn Ridge Walk, about two and a half miles, and Lluest Wen/Cefn Bryn Gelli, a long walk of four miles.

Bob Powell said: "The



The forest stretches right to the 'doorstep' of the towns. The view from one of the walks down towards Blaenycwm and Treorchy.

## PRAISE FOR STAFF

Praise for the role of the Forestry Commission and staff taking part in the project came from organiser Mr. Phil Jayne, of the Planning Department of Mid Glamorgan County Council.

"We are very pleased at the way in which the Forestry Commission has co-operated," he told Slasher.

"The project would not have been possible without the involvement of local staff usually at weekends. They have been invaluable with the practical aspects of the organisation.

"For instance, help with vehicles — changing burst tyres and things — and their radio facilities have been of great assistance in an area like the Rhondda.

"Mr Powell and Mr Griffiths have been very helpful with their interesting guided walks to different parts of the forest and Mr Hazzard has been first class in passing on his own knowledge of the history of the Rhondda Valley.

"This is an excellent example of successful co-operation between different organisations — to the benefit of the public."

public seemed to greatly enjoy their visits to the forest. I found that on the guided walks there was a complete mixture of people, young and old.

"There was a lot of questions — which showed they were really interested in what they were seeing.

"I think this project has been a very good link between ourselves and the local authorities and other organisations and has meant we

have met and worked with their staffs. This has been very good".

## Interest

Arthur Hazzard said he had also found great public interest in the guided walks.

"I spoke about pre-historic archaeology and industrial archaeology and we visited a Bronze Age camp within the protection of the forest and

then walked to a view point overlooking the farming and mining areas near Treherbert.

"There were all sorts of people including a number of students and they all showed great interest".

During the project a minibus service was operated between Treherbert Station and the visitor centre for visitors from further afield.

● All photographs by courtesy of Mid-Glamorgan County Council.



A group of young people visit the Blaenrhondda Waterfall on one of the walks.



Visitors at the Rhigos Mountain visitor centre get ready for another Land Rover safari with forest craftsman Warren John (right) giving a helping hand.



Head Forester Bob Powell (centre) sets out on one of his guided walks with the Rhondda Valley in the background.



# Nature News

## BATMAN EXTRAORDINARY

The Forestry Commission agreed in 1975 to co-operate with the World Wildlife Fund in a project to research into the conservation of bats in woodland. An appeal in March of that year on the BBC "Nationwide" programme produced a flood of donations from the general public, who wished to sponsor the project, and the Forestry Commission "bat box survey" was born.

Three years on, the survey organised by Dr R. E. (Bob) Stebbings, is going well, as RICHARD WESTLAKE reports.

Bob Stebbings is a kind of batman extraordinaire. He works for the Natural Environmental Research Council, being exclusively engaged in bat research, making him probably the most knowledgeable person on bats in the United Kingdom.

He visits the bat boxes twice a year, in the late spring and early autumn. The boxes, which number just over 3,000 are situated in six locations around the United Kingdom, in the forests of Ardross, Kielder, Cannock, Thetford, Bramshill and Wareham, and Bob visits them all during the course of a single week in a kind of whistle stop tour!

The bat boxes are very similar to a bird box, with the one exception that instead of having a round hole in the side as the entrance, they have a narrow slit on their underside. The wood is also rough sawn to produce a surface upon which the bat can get a grip. Each box is sponsored by a member of the public who donated money towards the scheme, and the boxes were made in a factory in Scotland employing disabled persons.

The boxes are hung eight to a tree. Problems to date have originated from high winds blowing the trees over, and wasps which sometimes nest inside the boxes, giving Bob a nasty surprise when he opens them. Grey squirrels with their peculiar appetites have taken to eating some, woodpeckers have discovered them to be excellent percussion instruments, and smaller birds, particularly tits, wrens and tree creepers have nested in them. In one instance, a box at Bramshill was found to contain ten young blue tits!

### Forest staff help

At each site, Bob is assisted by forest staff, who help with the ladders while Bob is up the tree. When a bat is found to be in residence, Bob lifts them out and hooks them onto his pullover with their own claws. The bats, being nocturnal, are usually sleeping when they are found and like some of us take about 15 minutes to wake up, due to the need to increase body temperature. This is long enough for Bob to climb down the ladder, identify the species and sex, and place a ring on its wing before returning the bat to the box and its continued slumber. Each ring has a number on it and if found again will show the movement the bat has made. It is not always this easy, however. At one time Bob found 41 long eared bats in one single box in Thetford, such was their appreciation of Forestry Commission hospitality! By the time 24 of the bats had been sexed and ringed, the rest had escaped!

### Not unpleasant

The species most frequently found are Common long eared and Pipistrelle bats although Whiskered, Brandt's, Natterer's, Leisler's and Noctule bats have also been recorded. Bats are pretty, furry animals and not at all unpleasant to handle. Despite their main sense of echo location, they still have eyes. A female is not mature until after two years of age, after which she is able to rear one young each year. The life span of a bat varies between sexes, being up to about 16 years for a female and only 7 years for a male. This difference may be partly due to the promiscuous sex life of the male bats as there is no pairing up of partners! While the German name for bat translated means "the flying mouse", a bat has no resemblance to a rodent. In fact, it has the same bone structure as man.



A Pipistrelle bat, a natural resident of woodland but now sometimes living in the roof spaces of modern, centrally heated houses!  
Photo Richard Westlake



Dr Bob Stebbings scales a ladder to see if any bats are "at home" in the boxes at Ardross Forest.  
Photo Richard Westlake

### Woodland habitat

Both the long eared and pipistrelle bats originate from woodland habitat, naturally roosting in hollow trees. With the disappearance of old woodlands in the cause of modern land use, the pipistrelles have mostly moved home and now live alongside man, preferring the roof spaces of modern, centrally heated houses to cold, draughty church towers, where they are normally associated!

It is rewarding to think that in this enlightened age, when we no longer associate bats with the superstitions of the past, that active steps are now being taken to conserve these fascinating animals to ensure that in years to come they will still be a part of Britain's woodland wildlife.

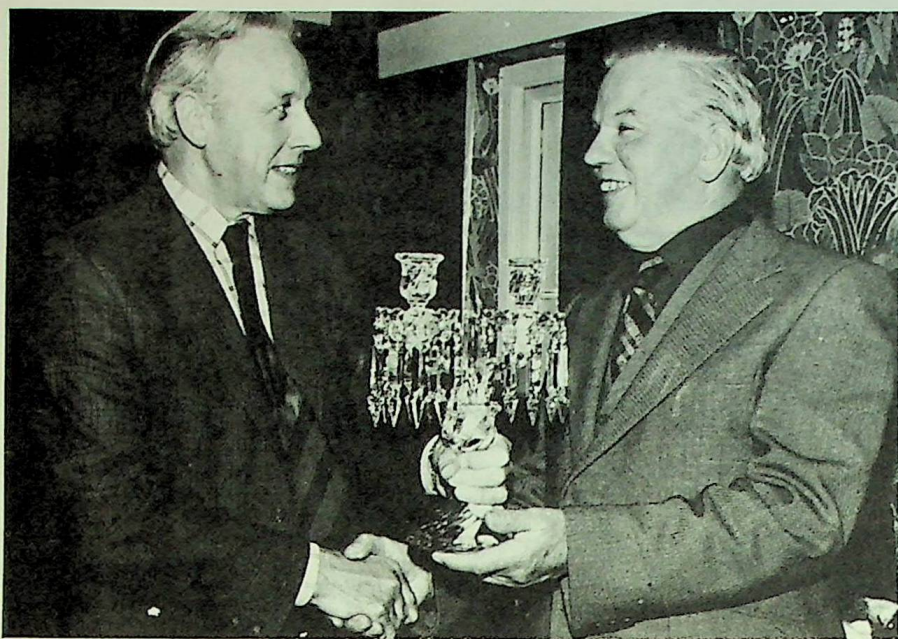
## BATS IN YOUR BELFRY?

DO you know of a bat roost near you, perhaps in your roof? If so, Bob Stebbings would be grateful to hear from you at the Natural Environmental Research Council, Monkswood Experimental Station, Near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

A pamphlet called "Focus on Bats" is available free of charge from the research council at the address above.

## SOUTH WALES

## RON'S COLOURFUL SERVICE



Ron Bromley, Conservancy Engineer, makes the presentation to Ron Vest.

Mr Ron Vest, Superintendent of Works for Brecon and Gwent Districts, retired after nearly 50 years of colourful government service — 28 with the Army (Royal Engineers) and 22 with the Forestry Commission in South Wales.

His retirement was marked by a well attended farewell party at the Llandovery Rugby Club at which Ron Bromley, the Conservancy Engineer, presented Ron with a cut glass candelabra on behalf of colleagues. In thanking Ron for his long service in South Wales the Conservancy Engineer paid tribute to his organisational ability, drive and standard of work.

## Jim's good record

Jim Thomas has retired after 42 years' service with the Forestry Commission at Brechfa, and then Coed Deufor where he was a lorry driver and forest craftsman.

At a party held at Alltwalis, Mr Frank Webb, DFO, in presenting Jim with the Long Service Certificate paid tribute to his excellent attendance record having had only a few weeks' sickness during the whole of his 42 years' service. He also referred to the fact that Jim had seen his first plantings harvested and the areas replanted — a pleasure not afforded many forest workers.

Chief Forester Dick Denman also presented Jim with a farewell gift on behalf of colleagues.

## MAY'S TEA WAS LEGEND

Mrs May Owen, forest clerk at Tair Onen — whose cups of tea for visitors were legend — has retired after 30 years' service.

She started work at Tair Onen as a forest worker in the nursery and became forest clerk there in 1954. She received the Jubilee Medal for trade union services and was well known and liked throughout the Conservancy for her good humour and helpfulness.

With regret we report that Mrs Owen's husband died only a few days after she retired. Our sympathy goes to Mrs Owen and her family.

## Six clock up 200 years

SIX men have retired after clocking up a total of almost 200 years' service in forests in South Wales.

Alfred Williams, forest craftsman at Tywi, retired after 29 years' service. DFO Ian Watt made a presentation at a party at Tregaran.

E. C. H. Jones, ganger at Brycheiniog, was presented with his Long Service Certificate and a radio to mark his 41 years' service.

Dai Ludlow, forest craftsman at Rheola, retired after 32 years' service.

Tom Humphreys, forest craftsman at Tair Onen, had 29 years' service.

Dewi Innes, ganger at Crynant, retired after 32 years; and

David Phillips, tractor driver at Brechfa, retired after nearly 30 years' service.

We wish them all a long and happy retirement.

## Photographs

INFORMATION Branch are seeking good quality colour slides for the Headquarters Slide Collection, and for possible publication in Slasher.

Theme should be forest or other woodland, harvesting (please ensure full safety gear), recreation, or wildlife — and we are always looking for good scenic views of forests.

Please submit slides to: Douglas Green, Senior Photographer, Headquarters, 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh EH12 7AT, for consideration. We pay £5 for those accepted.

## Ray's away

SEO Ray Palmer, manager of headquarters computer centre, has retired after 32 years' service with the Forestry Commission.

Ray began his career at Chopwell Forest Office and spent the major part of his career in the former Scottish headquarters at Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh, York Conservancy office, Basingstoke, and finally, headquarters in Edinburgh.

He is a keen golfer and has figured prominently in the activities of the headquarters' golf section.

His colleagues marked his retirement with a gift of a pair of binoculars (for those long drives?) and a cheque. They all wished Ray and his family a happy retirement.

## EAST SCOTLAND

## RANGER JAN'S FOREST SLEEPS

SENIOR Ranger II Jan Gawzial has retired.

Jan Gawzial joined the Commission in 1947 as a ranger in the then Craigvinean Forest after his war service in various parts of Europe with the Polish Army. Throughout, his service has been exemplary and his knowledge of roe deer control extensive.

In recent years with increasing numbers of European clients on day permits his knowledge of French and German proved invaluable. It is well-known in this area that Jan's day never consisted of a number of hours, in fact it has been known for him to sleep out in the forest to gain maximum benefit of daylight particularly in the roebuck season.

Mr Ian Grant, Conservator East Scotland, presented Jan with his long service certificate for over thirty years' service and traced his career with its many highlights.

A week later Jan and Mrs Gawzial were met by his colleagues in Dukeld Forest and Mr Neil Drummond presented Jan with a camera and Mrs Gawzial with a needlework book. Jan is to continue to reside in the area.

## WEST SCOTLAND

## Johnny goes home

Johnny MacAlpine retired after serving more than 24 years at Achaglachcagh Forest. Starting work "officially" at 14 years Johnny worked for 30 years on farms and private estates.

Joining the F.C. as a tractor driver he then became the forest lorry driver until, in 1965, the lorry was pensioned

off. Reverting to S.F.W. he served in this capacity until he retired.

### Expertise

His expertise with engines or anything mechanical will be sorely missed. Well respected by all, Johnny was a Forest

Craftsman in the truest sense. With his wife Mary, he will be staying on in the Tarbert area.

To mark the occasion a presentation to Johnny was made at the forest office where his workmates took the opportunity of saying an official cheerio, and to wish them both a long and happy retirement.

## NORTH WEST ENGLAND

## BRANCHING OUT

TWO men who together have given more than 65 years' service to the Forestry Commission, will be branching out now that they have retired.

Mr Henry Hinds (64), of 6 Deerdale, Bilsthorpe, who has worked for the Commission for 37 years, plans to write a book of children's stories now that he has hung up his saw.

Mr Roland Berridge, who lives with his wife at the Old Fields, Ravenshead, who retired on his 65th birthday, will be kept busy looking after the family pets — three dogs, a cow, a pony, a lamb and some wildfowl.

Mr Hinds, known to his friends as Harry, started work at the age of 14 on a farm and was then a woodsman to the Duke of Devonshire.

He then started felling trees with an axe for the Forestry Commission, but later technology took over and the chain saw was introduced.

"I have really enjoyed my years with the Commission. If everyone enjoyed work as much as I did there would not be so many people walking around with long faces," he said.

He is married with a daughter and a son, who is a teacher at Manor Comprehensive School, Mansfield Woodhouse.

Mr Hinds also has three grandchildren and it is the stories that he tells to them that he hopes to write down and turn into a book.

He said: "I shall miss my work but I will not be totally cut off from it because my wife and I love the forest and go for



Mr Harry Hinds (left) and Mr Roland Berridge

Photo courtesy Chronicle Advertiser, Mansfield

a stroll through it every night."

Mr Berridge was a tractor ploughman. Mr Berridge said that he had enjoyed his 28 years working for the Forestry Commission.

At a retirement presentation Conservator Mr J. H. James, presented Mr Hinds with a wristwatch and a long-service certificate, and Mr Berridge was presented with a barometer.

## EAST ENGLAND

## BILL RETIRES TO HIS COTTAGE IN THE WOODS

Bill Abbott, Forest Craftsman at Bardney, has retired on his 65th birthday after serving for 18 years at Bardney, Lincs.

He was presented with a wrist watch subscribed to by his fellow workers, supervi-

sory staff and friends.

He was thanked for the good work he had done and his Forester wished him and his wife well in retirement which is, appropriately, to their "cottage" in the woods.

## Walter leaves Hazelborough

Walter Hamp, Forest Craftsman at Hazelborough, has retired on medical grounds. He was one of the longest serving industrial workers in E(E) commencing

in 1933, and except for war service he served the whole of his time at Hazelborough. He performed a wide variety of forest tasks including latterly agency work for the DOE.

## AROUND & ABOUT

### SOUTH SCOTLAND

#### HAROLD'S VALUED WORK

**HAROLD** Pickhall has retired as Forester at Clatteringshaws. In a career which opened with his work as a boy at nearby Fleet Forest, he has seen Clatteringshaws grow to a Forest of 7,700 hectares — an achievement of which Harold is justifiably proud.

At an informal party Mr John Davies, Conservator, spoke of Harold's valued work both in the Forest and local community. Staff and neighbours subscribed to a carriage clock and a combined alarm clock and automatic tea maker which Mr Davies presented to Harold with our wishes for a long and happy retirement.

Harold will continue to live in New Galloway and we look forward to his more leisured visits to the Forest he did so much to create.

### NORTH EAST ENGLAND

#### Long service

**THREE** men have retired in North East England after qualifying for long service certificates.

They are Mr J. E. Ward, a tractor driver at Wykeham, who joined the Commission in 1931; Mr J. E. Stones, a civil engineering labourer at Dalby, who started in 1948; and Mr J. R. Taylor, a handyman at Hamsterley, who commenced work with the Commission in 1943.

### NORTH WALES

#### Trefor's passion for fishing

**THE** Breidden section of Mathrafal Forest was the setting for a quiet farewell walk-out and presentation to Mr Trefor Jones.

For the last 10 years Trefor had been on Private Woodlands duties in the Ruthin and Oswestry Districts, but had previously been in charge of Breidden Forest. On his return on his last day of service with the Forestry Commission he was accompanied by his daughter Ethel, the Conservator and Assistant Conservator, the two District Officers and their clerks, colleagues and

### SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

#### Dick's farewell



MR Kipling, District Officer, South Hants, presented Dick Woods with farewell gifts at an informal gathering of colleagues on 25 August at the Queen Elizabeth Forest Office. Gifts included a gas lighter and a beautifully wrapped felling axe (to act as a permanent memento of appreciation for the hard work Dick has given to the Commission).

Dick retired as a Forest Craftsman having commenced duty at Queen Elizabeth Forest on 25 May 1959.

#### JIGSAW

**HEAD** Forester Bob Edwards retired after a career lasting 43 years with the Commission.

He commenced in 1935 as a Forest Worker in Coed y Brenin and was promoted through the years. In recent years he has been Head Forester at Llambod (now part of Aeron), Dyfi Twymyn (now part of Rheidol), and finally in Dyfi, since 1971.

The Conservator, Mr R T Bradley, presented Bob with an Integral Jigsaw and several woodworking accessories, together with a cheque.

#### Two retire

**FOREST** Craftsmen Evan Richard Jones and Thomas Davies recently retired on the grounds of ill health.

Long service certificates were presented to both men at an informal ceremony at Dyfi Forest Office. Chief Forester Haydn Nicholls made the presentation in the company of their workmates.

Evan Richard Jones had a total of 42 years service. He spent a lot of time ploughing and has seen many of his own plantings being thinned. His hobbies are gardening and carving walking sticks.

Thomas Davies has been with the Forestry Commission for 31 years, and was for many years a lorry driver. His main hobby, is gardening.

### NORTH SCOTLAND

#### REX PREFERS TO BE A SCOTTISH LAIRD!

**A** HOTEL in Inverness was the venue in August for a farewell party to wish H O (Rex) Wagg a happy retirement.

Rex joined the Forestry Commission in 1953 after 13 years in the Royal Navy. He worked in HQ (London) before moving in 1959 to N(S) Conservancy, where he became E.O. for the estate section in 1962. Best known perhaps for his signature on correspondence to tenants, his wide experience will be greatly missed by his department.

Rex insists that he relinquished his English nationality many years ago in preference for that of a Scottish laird, and plans to spend his retirement enjoying life with fishing and wildfowling as main preoccupations.

His family motto, "Na faigh am bas gus am faigh thu am superannuation," is perhaps a lesson for us all!

## MORE IDEAS MEAN BIGGER SAVINGS

**MORE** and more suggestions are being received by the Forestry Commission Staff Suggestion Scheme — and the value of suggestions has been greater.

In the year up to March 31, a total of 122 suggestions were received compared with 113 for the previous year. Twenty-three suggestions were adopted.

This was nine less than the previous year but Joe Russell, secretary of the scheme, reports that the value of the suggestions this time was much greater — an estimate of £11,450 compared with £6,710.

The number of awards has gone up — from 39 to 44 last year.

The following is a sample of the suggestions which have earned awards during the year:—

#### Quick Fit Frame for Forwarder Trailer

A new type of frame for quicker and easier loading. An extremely useful improvement which gave costs benefit. In addition to interim awards of £20 and £50 a further final award of £50 was made.

#### Development of Swing Saws

This was a development which met the requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act. There were substantial financial savings on local development and manufacture in comparison

with the purchase of a similar type of saw from manufacturers. The Central committee made an award of £100.

#### Husqvarna Chainsaw 162SG — Modification to Exhaust

A useful modification to the exhaust system to give operators greater freedom from exhaust fumes. In addition to a Local Committee award of £20, the Central Committee made an award of £30.

#### Cundy Peeler Blade Sharpening Device

A sound and practical device which gives a safe and accurate method of blade sharpening using local forest depot facilities and un-

skilled labour. An award of £30 was made by the Central Committee.

#### Safety and Climbing in Forest Operations

An effective method of securing aluminium ladders to trees, which earned a local award of £20 and a further award of £30 from the Central Committee.

#### Device for Obtaining "Slack Rope" on Cable Cranes

This was a suggestion which improved efficiency and saved time on operations. The Central Committee made an award of £25 each to the two people who made the suggestion.

## MINISTER'S ASSURANCE ON USE OF 2, 4, 5-T

**FURTHER** assurances on the use of the herbicide 2, 4, 5-T have been given in the House of Commons by a Government minister.

Mr Gavin Strang, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, was replying to a question by MP Miss Jo Richardson asking if the Advisory Committee on Pesticides had rendered its further report on 2, 4, 5-T.

Mr Strang said in a written reply:

"Yes, and the advice from this expert Committee is entirely reassuring.

"It has again reaffirmed that the products concerned can safely be used in the recommended way for the recommended purposes, nor has it discerned any grounds for modifying the conclusions it reached over a year ago that no new and unacceptable risks attend upon the burning of material treated with these products.

"I have noted with interest that the Australian Government's National Health and Medical Research Council, after considering allegations of the kind that have recently

been revived in this country, reported last month in much the same sense.

#### SAFEGUARDS

"Along with all other products cleared under our Pesticides Safety Precautions Scheme, 2, 4, 5-T is subject to review including recommended uses and prescribed safeguards. In the light of this latest and special review, I accept the Committee's advice that there is no justification for any changes.

"However, in view of public interest in the matter, I have invited the Committee to prepare a reference document on 2, 4, 5-T which could be placed in the library of the House and

made available to the media and to other interests concerned, so that there is an authoritative medical and scientific appreciation to set beside any assessments or opinions from other sources."

#### STUDY

A study of the herbicide 2, 4, 5-T, carried out by Dr D. J. Turner of the Agricultural Research Council Weed Research Organisation, concluded that it was a safe herbicide if used in the correct way.

The findings of Dr Turner's study are contained in Forestry Commission Bulletin 57 "The Safety of the Herbicides 2, 4-D and 2, 4, 5-T" published by HMSO price £1.20.

## Sale nets £150,000

**THE** first major sale of Forestry Commission vehicles, machinery and equipment to be held in Scotland was very successful with receipts totalling almost £150,000, reports Chief Purchasing Officer Jack Wood.

The sale, at Newmains in Lanarkshire, was attended by a large number of people from throughout the country including professional buyers, private buyers, private forestry firms and growers, and some Commission employees.

The sale even attracted BBC Television coverage — although the programme "Sale of the Century" is on the other channel!

Mr Wood said it was unfortunate that the date of the sale had to be changed as there was insufficient items by the time of the original date. "I trust that readers will accept my apologies for not circulating the change of date as widely as I might have done," he said.

## TO THE WOODS — BY BOAT!

**BAGOT** Forest, Staffordshire, now has waterborne visitors arriving from the Caldon Canal.

A landing stage has been constructed and a picnic area and waymarked walk have been laid out for visitors.

When the Caldon Canal Study was in preparation, the potential for a landing stage, picnic area and waymarked walk in Ruelow Wood was realised by the Forestry Commission and incorporated in the Forest Recreation Plan.

With the co-operation of our lessor, Thomas Bolton & Son Ltd, the British Waterways Board and Staffordshire County Council this project was constructed and opened in

1978.

Design and construction of the scheme was carried out by the Estates Clerk of Works, Ron White, the Head Forester, Ernie Jones, and the men at Bagot with assistance from Tom Barkley of British Waterways Board.

Two standard picnic table benches and a forest sign were installed and a short half-mile walk waymarked laid out in the adjoining broadleaved and coniferous woods for visitors from the canal which is now a cruising waterway.

This is a pleasant oasis in rural Staffordshire not far from the Potteries and the Copper Works at Froghall.

# focus



Photo by courtesy Yorkshire Evening Press

**LOW loader driver Ernie Smith and his wife Magda have been very busy in their spare time during the past four years building their very own luxury glass fibre cabin cruiser.**

And now they can look forward to enjoying the results of their labours — by spending many happy hours pleasure cruising.

Ernie, who is based at Helmsley, Yorkshire, is a familiar face at forests throughout the country. For he delivers mechanical plant conveyed on his low loader to all conservancies.

He has worked for the Commission for 20 years first as a bulldozer driver and then, for the last 17 years, as a low loader driver. He was based at Pry Rigg repair depot but when that depot closed he transferred to Helmsley.

The Smiths have named their new craft Scarborough Fair. She is 27ft long with a 9ft 3in beam and is powered by a 1.5 litre diesel engine adapted from a van engine.

Scarborough Fair has a top speed of 11 knots and will sleep four.

After finishing the mammoth job of building the craft Ernie said: "Now I can relax. It was a rather ambitious project and although there has been one or two problems I was determined to see it through."

"Other people, I think, were more afraid about the outcome than I was though I have had the help of tradesmen friends

with some of the more skilled work.

"We had a lot of pleasure building her and now we look forward to some pleasure sailing her."

Scarborough Fair had two launchings. Firstly there was a "dry Launch" at Mr Ernest Snowdon's farmyard in Bondgate, Helmsley, where the vessel was built. Many of their friends joined Ernie and his wife in the celebrations marking the completion of the cruiser.

And then a few days later it was down to the water for the actual launch on the River Ure at Boroughbridge.

## postbag

### RABBITS APLENTY!

Dear Editor,

A lot of write ups have appeared in the Slasher in the past two years about deer but we have never heard anything about our common enemy, the rabbit.

I would like to draw your attention to an incident. It happened in Mid-September, 1974. I was walking to work one morning between 7 and 7.30am when I spotted a rabbit on a hilltop. He was about 100 yards away from me. I started to squeak and he started to run

towards me. The next thing I saw rabbits coming from all sides. About nine or ten were watching me through a gate.

As I went on my way about 300 yards further on I saw a movement in amongst the gorse bushes. It was a fox cub and I think this was the reason for the rabbits being so interested in me. I would like to know if anyone else has ever seen anything of this kind.

H. Duncalf,  
Forest Craftsman,  
Ampleforth Forest.

Dear Editor,

We were most interested to read the comments by Mr A. H. Denny, Information Services Directorate, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd, in the summer issue of "Slasher".

It was reassuring to be informed of the monitoring done by BNFL of all their licensed sites as we know that sites on Forestry Commission land are being sought for the long term storage of nuclear waste. Recent events at the AWRE at Harwell have, however, cast doubts on monitoring programmes and therefore we feel we have the right to publicly express doubts on this and other aspects of the nuclear programme.

This was done by Mr King and we feel that the reply from BNFL, with the "nanny knows best" tone, was rather dismissive of the genuine fears held by the public at large.

Caroline Jones  
Barbara Maher  
Carol Weston  
Emlyn Lumley  
Jane Howells

Dear Editor,

This is a thank you to the Slasher and whoever is responsible for sending it to

me so regularly.

My husband was a Forestry Commission officer (research) for many years at Kennington Nurseries, having to retire because of ill-health and dying three years later. I lived in the middle of Bagley Woods from the age of three until I moved here 14 years ago.

I took an active interest in my husband's work and love to hear and read any news of the Forestry Commission. Unfortunately I cannot afford to run my car now so do not get around to my favourite woods anymore and how I miss them.

The Slasher keeps me informed and I feel I still belong to the Family of Foresters. My daughter, who is married and still lives near Oxford, has spent several holidays in Scotland and enjoyed the Commission's facilities, the walks, camps and sometimes the foresters' houses.

Thank you again for your paper and very good wishes for the future.

Dorothy Cooke,  
Sunrise,  
Higher Meadows,  
Beer, Nr Seaton,  
Devon.

## OBITUARY

**MR JOHN D. ANDERSON**

Mr John D. Anderson, former ganger at Fearnoch Forest, has died.

"Jacky" as he was known by everyone, retired from the forest squad in January this year after 12 years at Fearnoch, the last four of them as ganger.

His many skills acquired in his pre-FC work such as building, plumbing, joinery and fencing, made him a very useful man to have around. His colleagues knew that Jacky would fix whatever was wrong and his unfailing humour, indomitable spirit, and willingness to help or give it a try made him an unforgettable character.

He is survived by his wife and daughter.

**MR W. S. BAKER**

Mr W. S. (Sid) Baker, warren at Mendip Forest, died recently.

Sid commenced work with the Commission in 1950 and although he had received war disability pension he performed his duties so well that he was called upon to demonstrate squirrel control methods at agricultural shows. He made many friends around the country.

He is survived by his wife, a nurse in the local hospital.

**MR JOHN GARGETT**

Mr John Gargett, ganger at Hamsterley Forest, has died.

Mr Gargett joined the Commission in 1951 and died this summer after a long illness.

**MR HUGH STOUT**

Mr Hugh Stout, Head Forester at Inverliever, has died aged 56.

A Yorkshireman, nearly all his service had been in West Scotland following his training in Benmore in 1940-42. After military service in the army and navy he returned to the west to Suddell in 1946 and Strathyre in 1947.

At the age of 26 he was one of the youngest men to be in charge of a forest — Glendarvel. After ten years there he served at Knapdale, Loch Eck, Glenbranter, and finally Inverliever.

During his illness he retained a terrific interest in the forest and the community. The funeral at Bellanoch Kirk was largely attended.

Mr Stout leaves his wife Beth and son Billy.

## Slasher

EDITOR Hazel Pottinger.

ASST. EDITOR Nigel Hawkins

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Headquarters:

231 Corstorphine Road,

Edinburgh EH12 7AT

CORRESPONDENTS (Based in Conservancy offices)

ENGLAND

North West: Bill Wardrop

North East: Ken Milsom

East: Neville Pauley

South East: John Ward

South West: Bernard Cutcliffe

WALES

South: Gwyn Owen

North: Caroline Jones

SCOTLAND

North: Richard Westlake

East: Douglas Furneaux

West: Archie Cameron

South: Ben Struthers

RESEARCH

Alice Holt: Noel Blachford

NRS: Fred McLauchlan

## Milton Club at Coed y Brenin

TWENTY members of The Milton Mountaineering Club, whose members are all blind, visited Coed y Brenin.

Having climbed Cader Idris the previous day they took the more leisurely method of FC Mini Bus transport to places in the forest. They were introduced to tree recognition, timber production, harvesting, recreation and wild life by the forest staff.

The Club (leader David Scott Blackhall presenter of BBC programme "In Touch") was escorted by Reg Wheeler, Conservancy Recreation H/F assisted by Roy Jones, Tim Bentley and John Edwards, forest staff, Andrew Thompson DFO, Fred Currie Conservation Forester, Brian Hicks and Pat Jefferson, Work Study and Mrs Jefferson and George Parker, Roads Division and Mrs Parker. They were later met at Maesgwm by Jim Hamilton C/F for afternoon tea provided by Margaret Hamilton, Pat Jones and Betty Wheeler and a visit to the Visitor Centre.

# A BIG 'THANK YOU' FROM THE PUBLIC

It's nice when members of the public take the trouble to thank Forestry Commission staff for creating and running our many recreational facilities, and making our forests such lovely places to visit.

Many letters arrive expressing the public's gratitude and we thought everyone in the field and throughout the Commission should know just how much their work is appreciated.

Here we publish three letters, a sample of those received.

Dear Sir,

I have just returned from a fortnight's holiday in the Galloway area exploring forest and seaside. Before arriving in Wigtownshire I had been sent the "See Your Forests 1978" leaflet which was most helpful in planning walks and excursions.

During the fortnight I was able to do several of the walks in Fleet Forest, Dalbeattie Forest and the Galloway Forest Park. The literature available at each point was very reasonably priced and most informative.

My friend and I found all the walks well sign-posted. The facilities at picnic points were good, well-kept and maintained.

Everywhere we saw families and groups of people

enjoying walks in the forest areas. At no time did we see any vandalism or thoughtless behaviour.

I felt we must pass on our appreciation to the Commission for opening up the forests to the general public and giving so much pleasure as well as education to all who take advantage.

Miss W. D. Rostrom,  
Washingborough,  
Lincoln.

Dear Sir,

May I express appreciation and thanks to the persons responsible for your forest walks. We discovered these facilities two years ago whilst in Fort William and that year, and again this year, whilst staying at Lairg in Sutherland, we made full use of these facilities.

My husband and I are not mountain climbers, fell walkers, nor can we claim to be hikers — just gentle walkers — and I cannot thank you enough for giving us the opportunity to walk without fear of getting lost and without too much effort.

Being "townies" we really do appreciate the opportunity for walking through your forests and enjoying the perfect peace and quiet and learning about nature at the same time.

Please keep up the good work — we really appreciate your efforts.

Mrs B. Winterburn, Leeds.

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much indeed for the facilities for the disabled at the Glencoe campsite. For our son who

comes under disablement this was a real "oasis" and added immensely to the enjoyment of his holiday.

This has been a very kind and humane thought on the part of those responsible.

To the Foresters and staff who were responsible for this truly wonderful kind thought, our everlasting, deeply grateful thanks.

I'm sure I speak for every disabled person who can take advantage of your facilities. If you don't get many letters on this subject, please don't think their gratitude is overlooked. Their lives are so very much harder, and their time available so much less, doing just the everyday things that others can get done so quickly.

Mrs A.I.G., Kent.