SLASHER

Newspaper of the Forestry Commission

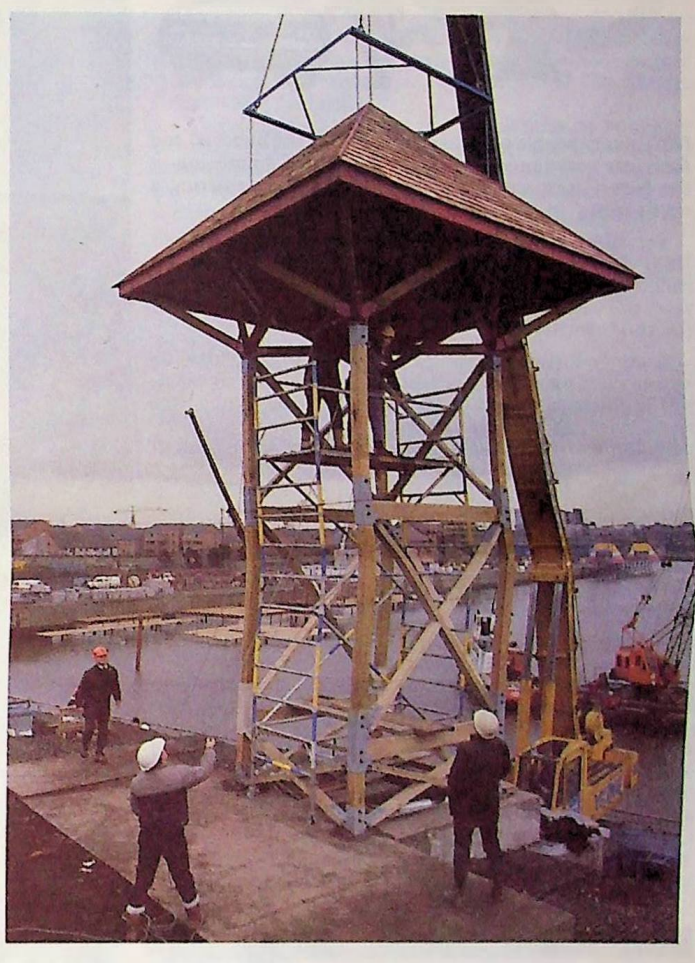
Issue 333 FEBRUARY 1988

YOUNG TREES WATERED FIVE TIMES A YEAR — PAGE 4

ARE YOU ANY GOOD AT TRACKING DOWN FROGS? — PAGE 3

CAMPAIGN CUTS THEFTS FROM FOREST CAR PARKS — PAGE 2

SIR DAVID HELPS TO RAISE THE ROOF



Chairman of the Forestry Commission, Sir David Montgomery, was on hand to help supervise the lifting of the roof for the observation tower which will be one of the features at the Glasgow Garden Festival.

Staff from Environment Branch, Engineering Division, and Mid Scotland Conservancy were there with some of the sponsors to see the roof being craned on to the top of the near-ten-metre tower.

The Magical Forest theme, allowing visitors to explore life in the forest, has already attracted a great deal of media attention and, when completed for the festival opening at the end of April, is expected to draw a high proportion of the four million visitors that the festival organisers predict will come through the turnstiles.

The next feature to be installed on the Commission's two-acre site will be the Ancient Forester, a 12-foot sculpture currently wintering in Grizedale Forest.

Opportunity

The initial sponsors for the Magical Forest are timber and timber product suppliers James Jones & Sons of Larbert, Thomas Smith of Kirkoswald and Highland Forest Products of Inverness.

They have been aided by Crown Decorative Products, Sadolin UK (stain and preservatives), Asset International of Gwent (steel tubing) and Scottish Galvanisers Ltd.

Duncan Campbell, head of Environment Branch, who had been overseeing the two year long project to create this special forest in the middle of Glasgow's dockland said: "The sponsors who have already committed their support are hoping that others will take the opportunity of sponsoring some of the exhibits or some of the series of weekly events on the site between April and September."

ENGINEERING DIVISION'S ODE TO THE GARDEN FESTIVAL — PAGE 8

CRIME WATCH IN THE NEW FOREST CAR PARKS

Dramatic fall in thefts from cars

NOT many people on driving into one of the hundred and forty car parks provided by the Forestry Commission in the New Forest would dream that they were entering a crime zone.

Yet these sylvan enclaves, landscaped and screened from view, became in 1986 a growth area for thefts from cars, when twice as many took place as in the previous year, the vast majority being of handbags left on seats or floors of vehicles.

A newly-formed Crime Prevention Working Party, on which the Commission is represented, decided to tackle this problem as one of its first tasks and the results were spectacular: within a month the police reported a dramatic fall in thefts from cars in the Forest and by the end of 1987 a mere 127 thefts had been recorded compared with 358 in 1986. Oddly enough local burglaries dwindled at the same time!

Constant reminder

How was it done? By hard-hitting "point of sale" publicity:

- Weather-durable Dayglo notices appeared in car parks and on gates as a constant reminder of the campaign.
- Two large garish signs were put at roadsides and moved around every few days so that most motorists saw them at least once.
- Leaflets and car stickers, based on the neighbourhood watch scheme but called Car Park Watch, were handed out in car parks at busy weekends by Commission staff and were also distributed from Tourist Information Centres and our camp sites.
- The leaflets included an Incident Report form which could be used to notify the police of suspicious incidents.

Ian Summers and a WPC chat to a motorist.

- Press and television gave the scheme wide coverage.

The Commission contributed staff on overtime and the large notices; the police paid for 10,000 leaflets; and the stickers (the most expensive item) were given by New Forest District Council.

Great success

Public reaction was generally favourable and criminals discouraged. There were some amusing incidents. One BMW owner said he never locked his car as he relied on his car alarm. As he was walking away the alarm went off spontaneously. He returned, collected his cameras and valuable possessions, then carefully locked up his vehicle before disappearing into the hinterland. Another driver locked all his doors and went off leaving the sun-roof open. Some people thought they were going to be charged for parking when approached.

All in all the campaign was a great success and could usefully be adopted in other areas where there are isolated car parks.

Venture Scout Keith off to Everest

Off to Everest at the end of March is 17 year old Keith Paterson, of Dunblane, a forestry student at Aberfoyle.

Along with other Venture Scouts he will be taking part in the Sherpa '88 expedition which will involve a two-week period of trecking in Himalayas to get acclimatised followed by two weeks building and renovating vital schools and hospitals.

Keith, who is doing his two-year practical before going to Newton Rigg College, said: "Along with others we have been undergoing extensive weekend training for this expedition as well as raising the £1200 each needed to take part in the expedition."

Also taking part in the Sherpa '88 expedition will be Martin Reynard, from Cardrona, Peebles, son of Bryce Reynard, Silviculture (North), Assistant District Commissioner for Scouts in Tweeddale.

Anyone interested in helping Sherpa '88 should contact Bryce or the Overseas Department, The Scout Association, Baden-Powell House, Queen's Gate, London SW7 5JS.

Forest violence

IN the last issue of Slasher, news was given of the appointment of Colin Spillane as finance controller.

And to show that he knows what he's letting himself in for, he sent this cartoon from the calendar in his office at HE Welsh Office.

Welcome aboard, Colin!

HQ team raise cash on charity walk

THERE seems to be no stopping a tough team of worthies at HQ who, it seems will do anything for a laugh if it raises money for charity. Their most recent venture was last September when they took part in the Edinburgh Evening News Charity Walk raising £180.

Team "leader" John Henderson says: "Despite our intensive training for this 13-mile walk we still managed to finish in 2768th place."

John, left, is seen with Pam Leitch, Lesley Smallman (being squashed by Ian Glassey), Mary Irvine and Garry Duncan.

The next adventure for them and others who are being roped in by Ian Glassie is Bo'ness Round Table Mass Breakout at the end of May to raise money for the Anthony Nolan Appeal for Bone Marrow.

Knowing how quickly some of the team can break out from HQ and yet fail to break out of hostelries it's hard to say how they will manage to get any great distance in 12 hours. But Ian would welcome any donations / sponsorships.

NATIONAL AMPHIBIAN SURVEY NEEDS RECORDERS

Are you any good at tracking down frogs?

HERE'S looking at you kid . . . but would YOU know where to look for a frog?

By DR MARY SWAN

WHAT has become of the pond which you used to plunder for frogspawn? Why have the numbers of toads seen marching purposefully towards their breeding sites dwindled each spring? When did you last encounter newts on the garden path?

Anecdotal evidence suggests that frogs, toads and newts are declining in most of Britain, so a nationwide project has been initiated to investigate the problem.

In order to discover the true abundance of the amphibians, and to locate and conserve the best breeding sites remaining, a national survey is being co-ordinated from Leicester Polytechnic, on behalf of the Nature Conservancy Council.

This campaign requires the recruitment of volunteer recorders in every county, and so far, the response has been encouraging. However, there are still several regions from which we have scant information, notably south western and eastern England, Wales and, **particularly, Scotland.**

The animal survey which takes place during the spring breeding season, is organised such as to accommodate different levels of recorder commitment. The pond survey involves simply the location, in the field, of waterbodies marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

The Forestry Commission can help us. We are aware that there are coniferous plantations in Britain which amphibians must be inhabiting, or passing through en route to breeding sites, but lack positive records of them.

We should be interested in any such reports from foresters. Are FC staff aware of extensive landscape changes having any obvious effects on populations in particular instances? Does the planting of a conifer stand increase or decrease the isolation of an upland pond? Such questions need answering now.

If you are interested, and require more detailed information, please contact:

Dr M. Swan, Amphibian Survey, School of Life Sciences, Leicester Polytechnic, Scraptoft Campus, Leicester, LE7 9SU.
or telephone Leicester (0533) 431011, Ext. 329.

Haldon Forest cannibal was a sparrowhawk

By Robin Khan, Head Ranger (Conservation)
West of England Conservancy

EARLY one morning in June I was sitting with my back to a tree in Haldon forest watching a fallow buck nibbling the tops off a sallow bush.

The alarm notes of wren, robin and coal-tits made me glance down the slope to my right and, through the trees, flying close to the ground I spotted a sparrowhawk coming towards me carrying a heavy-kill.

As I was partially screened by one or two conifers the sparrowhawk — a second-year female — landed on a low bank not twenty metres in front of me and after a few seconds she proceeded to pluck and eat her prey which I took at first to be a cuckoo.

Hardly daring to blink I watched as she stood with both feet on her prey, tearing at the feathers and flicking them off her beak. She suddenly became aware of my presence and stared hard at me for fully five seconds before leaping into the air and flying off down the slope trailing the kill in one foot.

Wandering over to the bank I examined the pile of feathers and droplets of blood scattered over the vegetation. Imagine my surprise on discovering that her kill was a second-year male sparrowhawk!

This is not the first time I have observed this type of sparrowhawk behaviour.

When living in Cornwall I discovered a sparrowhawk nest on the edge of a mature stand of larch. By climbing into a large beech tree higher up the hillside I was able to view into the nest which contained five young almost old enough to leave the site. During a watch lasting an hour or so the adult female suddenly appeared on the edge of the nest, deposited a partially plucked kill and left as quietly as she had appeared.

The three largest youngsters set about their meal, tugging at the feathers and tearing off lumps of meat.

Focusing my binoculars on the kill in order to identify the prey that was being brought to the nest I was more than surprised to see that it was an adult male sparrowhawk.

I wondered at the time if these young birds were devouring their father; it so happened that after more hours of watching the adult male was not seen again.

It is worth noting that in both these examples of cannibalism there was never a shortage of the birds normal food.

Dr Ian Newton, an authority on the sparrowhawk, makes reference to this behaviour in some length in his publications, but as someone who has a deep interest in birds of prey and their behaviour I would be most interested in any unusual observations of this kind made by our own ranger service.

It's farewell to Fort Augustus

After 66 productive years the research base at Inchnacardoch closed on 30 November 1987.

Highland forestry owes much of its success to the world-famous devoted research work carried out on the Lon Mor (the Big Bog) and the associated experimental areas of Glen Righ, Achnashellach and many smaller moorland sites, which followed Sir John Stirling Maxwell's pioneering at Corrour. The remaining experiments will be managed from Newton (Moray) and the new research office at Cairnbaan (Argyll). Lairg is now the main northern peatland research base.

Virtually every upland forester will have been led through the unfolding complexities of species and provenance choice, ground preparation and nutrition, by Angus MacDonald the Chief Research Forester and patient mentor of novices.

It was indeed fortunate that he and his staff, particularly the two David Coutts, who, father and son, between them spanned more than half a century and could thus explain the developing picture. David Coutts junior, had to retire on medical grounds last year.

The Lon Mor provoked much impassioned debate. Illustrious foresters (Professor Stevens, Professor Mark Anderson, J. A. B. Macdonald, as well as FC Chairmen, DGs and Research Directors and a succession of earnest silviculturists interpreted its results and speculated about its implications. Two infamous quotes from an FC Chairman and a local District Officer were that "An ounce of patience is worth a ton of phosphate" and that "I shall carry out on my back all the timber ever to be produced on the Lon Mor" — not the only words to be eaten.

An intended composite demonstration of accumulated afforestation wisdom in 1947 developed after much argument with a competitive trial between the Chairman, the Directors of Scotland and England, the Director of Research and the Scottish Research Officer. The acrimonious debate continued as participants variously and secretly arranged for their plots to be topdressed! Throughout Angus MacDonald, with twinkling eye, kept the records and the peace impeccably.

The whole achievement of peatland research which was to change the face of Scotland (and which was largely written up by John Zehetmayr in his masterly Bulletin "Experiments in Tree Planting on Peat") was of course built on the hard physical work of the local research workers. Records show that £3:7:6d covered the cost of planting one experiment in 1930 — draining, turfing, hauling 500 plants to site by horse, planting and applying phosphate.

In the picture FOIII David Tracy locks the front door for the last time. Looking on are John Keenleyside (FOII Newton) and FOIII Allan Green (formerly of Fort Augustus, now at Newton) and Les Webster, last of the local research workers.

Mike lands a beauty

NO WONDER forester Mike Sanderson is smiling as he and his daughter Rebecca display a 20 lb. salmon hooked on a fly 100 yards downstream of Kielder dam using a trout rod with 10 lb. breaking strain cast.

In his 1¼ battle with the fish he had many anxious moments before it was eventually tailed by namesake ranger, Mike Sanderson.

A micro tag showed that the fish had been released into the North Tyne four years previously where it spent two years before heading for sea then returning to the same water system.

Mike also earned a small reward from the Water Authority for producing the micro tag.

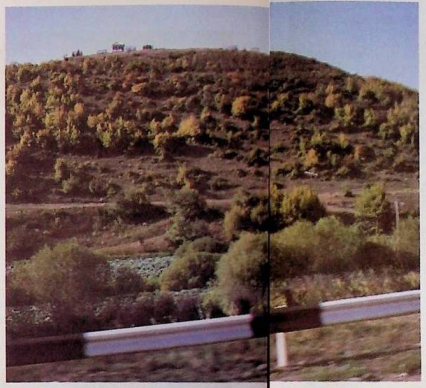
Where each young tree is watered five times a year

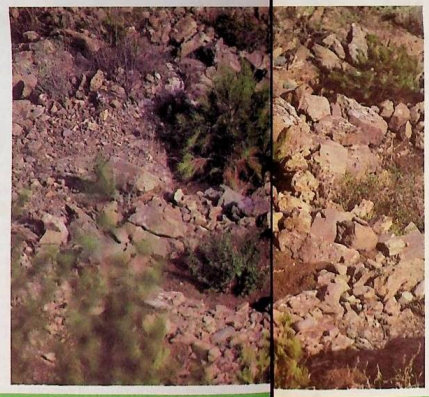
IN September last year, 38 people set off from London for the Institute of Chartered Foresters visit to Russia. Six of the ten days were spent in Georgia, a separate republic between the Black and Caspian Seas, in the Caucasus mountains where temperatures approached 30°C.

This contrasted with the autumn conditions of Moscow and Leningrad at the beginning and end of the tour when temperatures were just above freezing.

Some of the party were supported by their employers but for others it was an expensive educational holiday.

Georgia varies from rain forest in the west to almost desert in the east. The central part which was visited consists of steep mountain slopes covered in protection forest and flat areas covered by vines. It imports more than half its timber requirements from Russia and the tour was organised to see growing trees. Timber was considered to be a minor bi-product from protection forests.





Eroded slopes

Outside Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, the steep slopes used to carry oak forest but many invaders over the centuries have destroyed the forest. Now foresters are planting these eroded slopes and initial establishment operations are to build a lorry road and then create pockets (metre across and half a metre deep) with pneumatic drills or explosives. The loose rock is removed and replaced by imported soil and then a network of iron water pipes at 30m intervals are laid before the trees are planted. Each tree is watered 5 times in the first year, 4 in the second and so on until the fifth year — what devotion!

The main streets of Tbilisi are lined with plane trees and so it looks like London. The traffic jams are similar, although London drivers are more organised. There are cable cars and a funicular railway from the city to the top of the nearby mountain. The plantations of *Pinus eldarica*, a local species, fooled most of the taxonomists in the party but calling Scots pine *P. hammata* was no problem. The birch expert was disappointed as the party was always more than 400 metres below any birch forest.

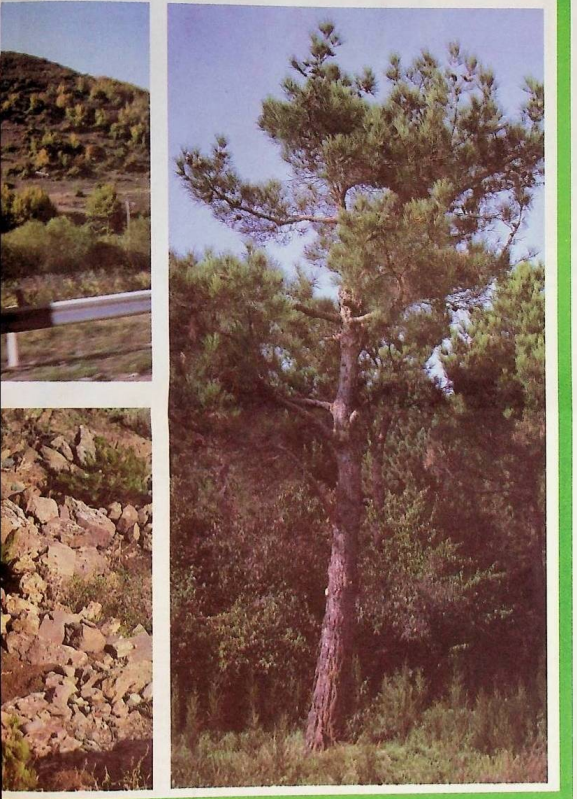
***Dendroctonus micans* had been a problem on the local spruce for 20 years and we heard about biological control and a man called Evans from Alice Holt who had been there in 1986. The display material was overwhelming and we were shown examples in the forest.**

Poorly drained

The variety of the mixed natural forests was surprising for monoculture foresters. Many of the genera were well known but the species were new although the horse chestnut was the same species but the conkers were much bigger.

The Leningrad area has 25 million hectares of poorly drained land. Research experiments have shown the benefits of draining and now six million have been treated but they have found that the field results have not lived up to experience. Now they are developing mechanical methods of drain maintenance — our drain maintenance problem is miniscule in comparison.

Lasting non-forestry impressions of Russia are the problems with the Russian and Georgian alphabets, getting a tea-bag then a cup of hot water at 10,000 metres (in-flight catering) and the wonders of the treasurers at the Hermitage in Leningrad. I must save up for another and longer trip.



FORMER CHIEF AUDITOR STILL KEEPS HIS HAND IN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

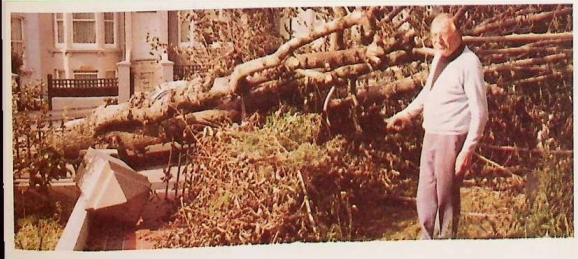
I am writing to let you know that it is always a pleasure to receive The Slasher and bring oneself up-to-date with the tide of events in the Commission. My copy has just reached me after being redirected from my former address in Whitchurch, Hampshire.

On reading the names of erstwhile colleagues who are taking their retirement or who have died, I am tempted to ask if news ever gets sent to you of the activities of those who are enjoying their retirement?

I, for my part, am always cheered when I get a card or a letter from an old colleague; and it occurred to me that an occasional snippet of gossip might be regarded as worth reproducing in The Slasher.

For example, with the topicality of the havoc caused by the October gales (which reached 108 miles per hour here in Brighton), the enclosed snapshot might be of interest. No prizes for a snappy caption like "John Parker, Chief Auditor for 10 years, retired in 1974 but still keeps his hand in!"

JOHN PARKER,
54 Beaconsfield Villas,
Brighton, BN1 6HD.



Forest trio help to save a life

Three Llanwynno Forest district craftsmen have been commended by South Wales Constabulary for helping prevent a possible suicide.

On 11 January Peter Bowden, Roy Davies and John Nicholas were working in the Rhydcar area of Merthyr Tydfil and noticed a person walking away from a parked vehicle

But when they returned to work the next day the car was still in the same position and they found it unlocked with the keys in the ignition and a woman's handbag was on the passenger seat.

After pulling the car free and making a check of the area they took the vehicle to Merthyr Tydfil Police Station where it was found that the car had been reported missing from Neath by a man who said his wife was distressed and he was concerned for her safety.

The three foresters returned to the scene with a constable and after a dedicated search the missing woman was found unconscious and suffering from exposure.

She was made comfortable in clothing of the search team and carried some distance over rough ground to a summoned ambulance.

South Wales Constabulary said: "We commend the action of Messrs Bowden, Davies and Nicholas, in their observation, public spirited assistance, and regard for human life, for the event as portrayed was undoubtedly the action of a disturbed person intent on suicide.

Had it not been for the action of your staff an unnecessary death would have no doubt ensued."

NEW HEAD RANGER

FORMER goalkeeper Derek Stocker has been appointed Head Ranger (South) and will be based at the Somerset and South Devon Forest District office at Exeter.

He will be advising mainly on management of deer and protection from pests such as grey squirrels and rabbits.

Mr Stocker (31) replaces Jock Cockburn (who retired in November after working as a ranger with the Commission since 1968), and moved from Sherwood Forest District. He joined the Commission in 1985.

NEWS BRIEFS

Together again at Faskally

MEMBERS of the 1965-67 course of foresters at Faskally Forester Training School held a re-union in October to mark 20 years since the end of the course as Philochty.

The 15 in the party included wives and former staff Norman Tulloch and James Cramb. They visited Queen's View visitor centre, Craigower Hill, Faskally House and a distillery before the evening events which included a display of old photos and memorabilia.

Plans are afoot to hold the next one to mark 25 years since leaving Faskally.

On target

THIRTY-ONE local teams (8 from the Forestry Commission) entered the 1987 Malton Rifle and Pistol Club Business House Cup Knockout Competition. The final was held at Malton on Tuesday, 15 December 1987 and the results are as follows';

WINNERS		RUNNERS UP	
ATC MALTON		FORESTRY COMMISSION YORK	
Joanne Harrison	87	Debbie Clough	83
Darren Ward	91	Frank Clough	92
John Reynolds	88	Brian Mahony	80
	266		255

Highest scorer of competition — Mr A. Sedman 97. Highest lady scorer of competition — Miss J. Harrison 93.

Mr B. Harrison, President of the Club, thanked all those who participated in the competition.

Pipped at the post

IN the N(E) office staff quiz North York Moors were again pipped at the post by Conservancy Office who won by eight points.

Team members were: Conservancy Office, Ms D. Clough, Messrs S. Church, L. Hunter and M. Lawrence. North York Moors, Messrs A. D. Cameron, G. N. Barry. Forest Diaries, R. J. Hodge and D. J. Cross.

There was a good turnout of supporters for both sides although the late arrival of one of the supporters from Conservancy Office — wearing a black mini outfit and black fishnet tights AND sitting on the front row — really distracted the NYM team! Good one York!!!

A new theme for the Christmas Lunch held at Elliotts Hotel, York, was fancy dress. Six people took up the challenge whilst the other 40 cheered them on. Robin Hood well known as staunch supporter of forestry joined the fun and captured the first prize seen here supported by Maid Marion.

Robin and Marion usually evade the sheriff by working in disguise as Gillian Watson and Hazel Moncur in York Conservancy Office.

Orienteering

A small contingent of FC staff attended the inaugural Civil Service Championships for Orienteering held at Sutton Park, Birmingham.

Top honours for the day went to David Anderson FO IV of Corris FD with Ian Collier FO I V Midlands FD and Peter Brett FO III E&T Branch 4th and 9th respectively, who are pictured above.

In the team event the Forestry Commission were beaten into second place by the Atomic Energy Authority with the narrowest of margins. As one of the FC team was heard to comment "What chance does forestry stand against atomic energy?"

Hopefully the Forestry Commission will e better represented at future Civil Service Championships for orienteering. Anyone wishing further details should contact Peter Brett E&T Branch, W(E).

What's in a name?

WE at HQ are accustomed to telephone calls asking to be put in touch with people called Alice Holt and Blair Adam. The latest addition to the list came from a Forest District Office (not to be named). The caller asked specifically to talk to IAN TEEBRANCH. Eventually Ken Murray was able to persuade her that Education and Training did indeed answer to the title IAN TEEBRANCH.

OBITUARIES

His knowledge was unrivalled

THOSE who served in the old North Wales Conservancy during the two decades of forest expansion after the war will be saddened to learn of the death of Frank Best OBE, *writes Tony Spencer.*

His family home was at Nirod, near Langollen, and apart from six years in SE(E) during the war all his 37½ years' service in the Forestry Commission was spent in North Wales, first as a District Officer in the 30s and then as Conservator for 20 years after the war.

Active all his life as forester, sportsman and naturalist (particularly butterflies and moths) his knowledge of the North Wales countryside and its forestry was unrivalled.

His enthusiasm was almost equally divided by shooting, forestry and conservation, and in consequence he knew every part of the Commission's forests as well as any member of his staff and better than most.

A quiet man — modest yet authoritative — he was seen to be energetic and hardy, but also shrewd and wise.

The quiet man from Skye

ALL who had the honour to serve with Charlie MacDonald were saddened by his sudden death in November, aged 87, *writes Finlay MacRae.*

Joining in the twenties and rapidly rising through the ranks and serving in many varied Highland locations, he eventually ended his Forestry Commission service as Forester in Charge in his native Skye. He was well versed in handling crofting / forestry skirmishes — gentle persuasion, an appeal to common sense, kindness and deep human understanding eased the way to happy solutions.

Possessed of a quiet sense of humour and highly approachable, his workforce were always ready to give something extra for the man rather than for the organisation. I recall a Saturday forenoon in Glenbrittle when just before pay parade the safe keys could not be found, how he resolved the situation by paying from his own pocket, such was the measure of his concern. Charlie set high standards of loyalty, discipline and good behaviour.

Our sympathy goes out to his good lady, Isobel.

He created a forest

TREVOR STUDLEY, who died on 13 December, aged 69, created the forest of Llanddowror. Appointed Foreman-in-charge to start planting in 1953 he served as Assistant Forester, Forester and Head Forester until his retirement in 1979. His original unit had reached 800 ha in a multitude of valleys by 1971, when it was amalgamated to form Coed Deufor — the wood of the two seas — stretching from Carmarthen Bay to Cardigan Bay. Probably no-one will again have such opportunities in these islands.

Tintern forester

JOHN HOWSON, formerly Chief Forester in charge of Tintern Forest died suddenly, aged 64. He had a long association with the old South Wales Conservancy, serving in Brechfa with the late L. T. Edwards before being posted to the Wye Valley in 1966 where he remained in charge until the restructuring of 1984, when he retired and moved to Hereford. He leaves a widow and two daughters and a son to whom we offer our deepest sympathy.

John Pope

JOHN POPE died in December aged 79. After working for the War Office he came to the FC in Bristol in 1946 and then to Aberystwyth in 1947 where he worked as EO then HEO for nine years before reverting to CO until his retirement in 1973. Our condolences are extended to his widow, Pat, who also worked in the Aberystwyth office typing pool until their retirement.

Dai Lloyd

D. J. (Dai) LLOYD died in December aged 78. He worked in the Aberystwyth Directorate then Conservancy Office for over 21 years and as Clerical Assistant in the Estates Registry where he is remembered as a very jovial, well-liked personality — and never a file was mislaid! He retired in 1974.

RETIREMENTS

Breaker breaker — JR has left

JOHN ASHLEY ROBERTS joined the Commission's Civil Engineering team based at Llanrwst in 1952 where he worked as a rockman working most of the northern forests in the old North Wales Conservancy.

In 1973 he became a Ranger working the Machno and Lledr beats of the former Gwydyr Forest and five years ago joined Forest Management squad.

His particular hobby is CB radio where he glories within the fraternity with the 'handle' of JR!

John was presented with his Long Service Certificate by Chris Griffiths, District Forester at Llanrwst Forest District.

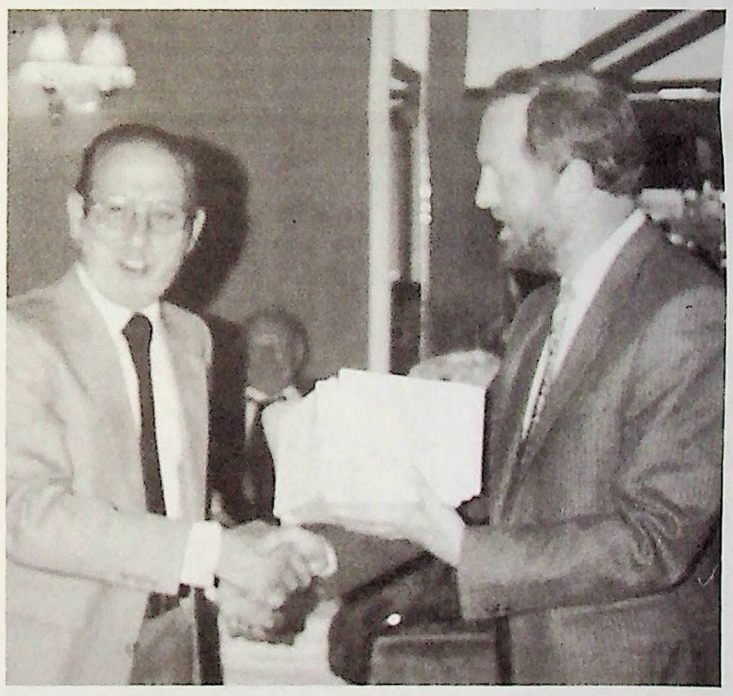
Wally calls it a day

TWO celebrations were held on the retirement of Wally Hammond. At a Bonfire night informal get together a dozen members of Forest Survey Branch had a buffet and pool evening. Wally was presented with a large cheque by Mr Peter Hutchinson and a letter of appreciation from Jim Dewar who was unable to attend due to the breeze down south.

The second presentation was incorporated into the North York Moors Annual Dinner at Helmsley where 70 guests from all over the country saw Wally presented with a set of carving chisels and mallet.

Wally has worked for the Commission for more than 39 years starting at Kennington Nursery weeding seed beds with Mr George Holmes. Most of his service was in NE(E) as Forester and Fire Warden and his final 17 years on Forest Surveys. We wish Wally and Masie a prolonged and happy retirement.

Alistair's friends bid him farewell



MORE than 60 friends and colleagues, including a coach load from the Dean gathered at the Walnut Tree Inn, North Petherton, near Bridgwater to mark the retirement of Alistair Fraser (left). He attended Benmore Forester Training School and was on exchange at the Dean School for 3/4 months. Service followed in Tummel, Drummond Hill, the Dean and latterly Quantock, in the now Somerset & South Devon forest district, which amounted in total to over 35 years. Assistant Conservator Roger Busby paid tribute to his long, loyal and dedicated service, which always seemed to be tempered with good humour. Alistair was presented with a camera and a cheque.

Alan Rix bows out

ALAN RIX retired at the beginning of February after a career spanning 34 years, the majority of the time being spent in Northern England, the last two as Conservator.

A dinner was held on 4th February at The Fairfield Manor Hotel, York when more than 80 friends and colleagues from England, Scotland and Wales gathered to wish him well in his retirement.

The Director General, Mr Gwyn Francis, presented Alan with a Midi Hi-fi stacking system with compact disc on behalf of his many friends in the forestry industry.

Mr Francis also thanked Alan for his valuable work for the Forestry Commission which covered many difficult times. Alan's wife, Win, was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Alan thanked everyone for their generous contributions to his gift which would act as a reminder of the years with the Commission. Alan and Win were wished a long and happy retirement.

From six to six million

APART from Army service and a short spell with the local county council, John Byron Howells served in the old forests known as Myherin, Crosswood and Hafod (now forming part of the Aberystwyth Forest District) throughout his working life.

At his farewell gathering John recalled that when his parents and family took the tenancy of the first forest worker's holding in Myherin there were only six trees on the whole area, these being hardwoods around the home. John became instrumental in planting a large proportion of the six million plus trees now covering the steep hillsides of Myherin.

During the late fifties John was promoted to Ganger. For the past 23 years John was employed as a ranger and with such an intimate knowledge of the area, he was able to play a vital part in keeping the fox population under control in the upland areas. He also maintained a good relationship between the farming community and forestry.

His knowledge of adjoining farmers' marking of sheep flocks often enabled him to remove stray sheep from the plantations and return them to their owners.

Now in his retirement he will confine his activities to tending his own small flock of sheep.

On behalf of his colleagues and staff in the Forest District, at a quiet and very informal gathering, he was presented with a wrist watch by Forester David Legge to mark his retirement.

RETIREMENTS

Sid bows out after 39 years

SID DAVIES retired from the Forestry Commission after 39 years' service. He joined the Commission in 1948 and worked as mobile plant operator for 12 years. Since 1960 he has worked firstly as a dozer operator and latterly as a Roads Foreman in the Aberystwyth / Newtown Area.

Sid is a keen fisherman, gardener and photographer.

A large number of colleagues were present at Llanidloes to mark his retiral. Sid was presented with his Long Service Certificate by Mr T. P. Summers (Conservancy Civil Engineer) and various items of photographic equipment by Mr W. S. Davies (Area Engineer) and Mr D. Atkinson (Superintendent of Works).

● Our picture shows, from left, Denis Atkinson, Tony Summers, Sid Davies, Spencer Davies and Mike Hough (ex Supt of Works now Area Engineer Dalby).

IT'S FAREWELL TO ...

Jock Cockburn

JOCK COCKBURN W(E) Head Ranger, retired at the end of November after nearly twenty years with the Commission. Friends and colleagues gathered for a farewell buffet where Martin Orrom (PF & EO) presented Jock with gifts from W(E) staff and also from Thetford Forest District (with whom Jock has been involved annually in the roe deer catch-ups).

Before joining the army at the age of 17, Jock worked for a time at the Tulliallan Nursery during school holidays and also spent a year at Horticultural College. He left the army in 1968 as a Lieutenant-Colonel and joined SW(E) as a ranger. He was involved in many projects including the setting up of local grey-squirrel control groups.

John Waite

JOHN WAITE, Chief Forester, PW, was praised for his work in establishing close co-operation with the private sector when he retired in October after 40 years with the Commission.

He joined in 1948 working mainly in North Wales and North-West England and moved to Mortimer Forest where he became chief forester before taking on the responsibility for private woodlands. He was presented with a sextant and a cheque on behalf of his colleagues.

Dennis Pringle

DENNIS PRINGLE has retired after almost 30 years' service in the North-East of England. Most of his years in the district were spent as Mechanic Inspector and in the latter three years he was based at Dalby Mechanical Engineering workshop.

His colleagues paid tribute by organising a dinner, when workshop Manager Tony Withycombe presented him with a metric socket set and the balance of a very large collection.

Bill Trotter

BILL TROTTER retired in October after 33 years' service with the Forestry Commission.

He was employed as a Forest Worker in April 1955 at Glenisla E(S) and moved on to SW(E) in 1958 as a Forester. After spending a few years in W(S) he moved to North Yorkshire in 1973.

Mr Mackenzie, Forest District Manager, presented Bill with a set of bowls from friends and colleagues.

Tim and Aneurin

BRECHFA Forest District said reluctant farewells to two long-serving Forest Craftsmen who retired on medical advice after a combined period of 58 years' service.

Tim Jones came to Teifi Forest in 1957 and retired as a Ganger in July 1987, while Aneurin John joined Llanddowror Forest staff in 1959 and retired in August 1987. Both men were involved in the early acquisition and formation stages of their respective forests and saw them progress through amalgamations to become Coed Deufor and then Brechfa Forest District. We wish them long and happy retirements.

Ian's a pizza history!

FRIENDS of Ian Barrack gathered at Huntly to wish him well on his retirement from the Commission.

Ian spent most of his time in the old East Scotland Conservancy in Aberdeen and more recently in the newly-formed Buchan Forest District. He has taken early retirement.

There was a strong party present from Conservancy Office in Inverness and a surprisingly strong party from Edinburgh. The highlight of the occasion was the contribution of the three girls — Jackie Sim, Chrystal Morrison and Sheena Thomson. The fourth "girl" holding the mock pizza (an allusion to Ian's predilection to Pizzaland food) is CO Jim Chalmers.

Ian was presented with a handsome carriage clock by Ron Marnie on behalf of friends and colleagues.

Tec retires with a proud record

HEAD Forester Tecwyn Roberts retired in October, after more than 38 years in Wales with the Forestry Commission. Brechfa, Llanbed, Mathrafal, Dyfnant, Dyfi, Clocaenog and Cynwyd forests all benefited from Tec's presence during that time. Latterly he had the post of District Forester, PW, in Ruthin Forest District and was heavily involved in the interactions between private growers, farmers, councils, other statutory bodies and, of course, the conservation movement.

On the day of his retirement, friends, Gwydyr Forest Training School contemporaries and a cross section of private foresters and consultees joined Tecwyn, at a buffet reception when Conservator, J. Morgan, congratulated him on his lifelong devotion to the forests of Wales and commented on the remarkable achievement of having not one day's sickness during his entire 38 years' service.

He was presented with a cheque towards a reproduction yew desk.

In recent years Tecwyn had been in charge of Cynwyd Forest and to commemorate his retirement Forester Cecil Mutch presented him with a "symbolic" Western hemlock. This represented a two-hectare stand of P30 Western hemlock which would form part of the long-term retentions in the Forest District and would, henceforth, be known as "Tec's Sacred Grove!"

Additionally, Head Forester Alan Harper and Forester Jon Westlake presented Tecwyn with a kiln-dried "round" of P30 Douglas fir felled at Cynwyd in the preceeding year. Finally, Tecwyn received a plaque to be mounted on his soon-to-be delivered yew desk and a word of thanks from local union rep Andy Phillips.

Without a doubt Tecwyn will be sorely missed, but his presence at Forest Lodge, Bonwm, will ensure that he is never far from the Forestry Commission.

Changes to your pension rights

If, at 5 April 1988, you have between two and five years' service you should be aware of the following change to your pension rights and the implications of that change.

From 6 April 1988 all staff in pensionable employment with the Forestry Commission (this excludes Casuals and those working less than 15 hours a week) will qualify for a pension after two years' service. This differs from the present rules which remain in force until 5 April 1988. Briefly the differences are as follows:—

Until 5 April 1988

If you leave with more than two but less than five years' service you will not have qualified for a pension but will (if you do not transfer your rights to another Pension Scheme) instead receive a Short Service Payment in the form of a lump sum. This is calculated as Reckonable Service x Penionable Pay x 3/80.

E.g. two years' 231 days service, £6500 pensionable pay = 2.6329 x 6500 x 3/80 = £641.77 Short Service Payment.

You will also receive, plus interest, a refund of all contributions to WCPS that you have made if you have been unmarried throughout your service. A payment of the Short Service Payment or a transfer to another Pension Scheme means you have no further claim at any time on the Forestry Commission Pension Scheme.

From 6 April 1988

As soon as you have completed two years' service (even if this was done before 6 April 1988) you qualify for a pension. This means that if you leave after 6 April 1988 you will not receive a Short Service Payment but will instead receive either "preserved" pension, or a transfer of your rights to another Pension Scheme. Short Service Payments are abolished completely from 6 April 1988.

If you want to receive a Short Service Payment

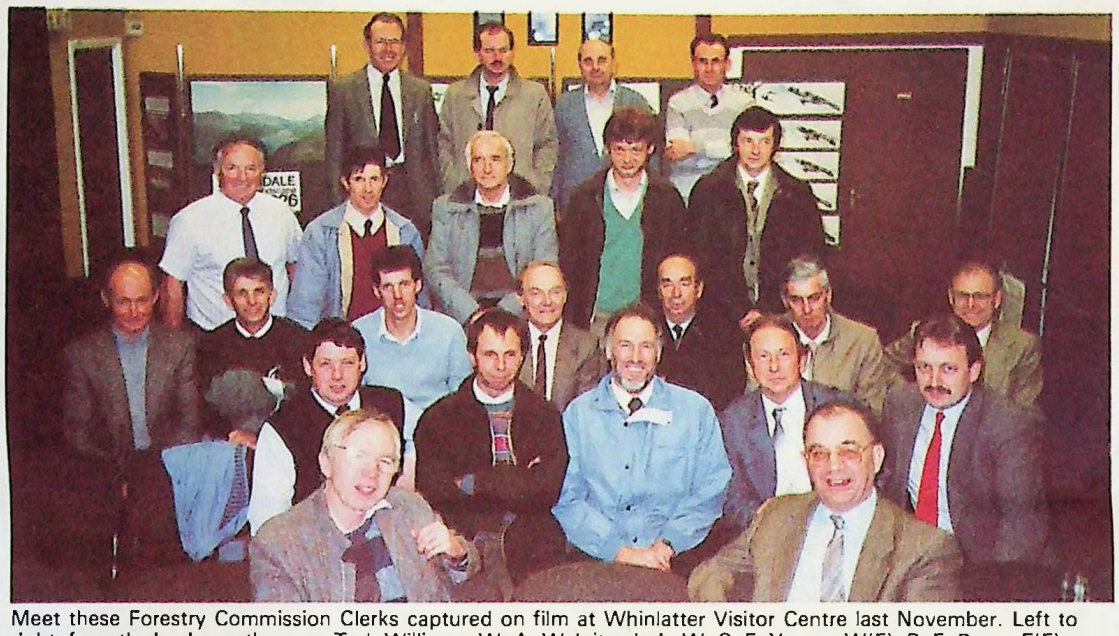
You will have to leave before April 1988 but if you do this you will be treated as a normal resignation and will have no right to re-employment in the Forestry Commission. In the event of resignation and subsequent reinstatement, as the rules stand, where the break in service is less than six months the Short Service Payment has to be refunded and both periods of service become aggregated for eventual pension.

Further information

Please apply to your own Personnel Section or to HQ Superannuation Section if you desire further information.

Sue Leather and John Mullett of the Conservancy office staff were married recently. Sue is an AO in Establishments Section and John is the Paperkeeper. When they met they were both working in Establishments.

The wedding of Carol Hughes, AO at Ruthin Forest District office, and Ken Jones, Forest Craftsman, took place at Ruthin Registry Office. Carol has been with the Forestry Commission for 15 years and Ken for 33 years.



Meet these Forestry Commission Clerks captured on film at Whinlatter Visitor Centre last November. Left to right, from the back row they are: T. J. Williams, W; A. Welnitwchuk, W; C. F. Yemm, W(E); P. E. Bugg, E(E). R. L. MacLennan, M(S); J. Fraser, N(S); G. Meacham, E(E): L. J. Hewlett, N(S); G. Rattray, N(S); G. A. Caygill, N(E); J. Burton, S(S); D. S. McDonald, M(S); W. Robertson, HQ, EMD; B. Cauwood, N(E); R. T. Batham, N(S); E. E. Coles, M(S); R. H. White, E(E); M. H. F. Bishop, E(E); J. W. Barrett, E(E); A Whitecross, S(S); W. D. Gordon, HQ, EMD; J. E. O'Hare, N(E); and A. L. Darbyshire, W.

IT'S A WINNER

THE first Forestry Commission / Slasher arts competition has been voted a success and plans are under way to stage a 1988 contest.

In last year's competition entries were restricted to five categories — oil painting, water colours, wood turnery and carving, jewellery and other arts.

There have been suggestions from Slasher readers that we should consider including other categories such as tapestry or needlework.

We would like your views on how you would like to see this competition develop.

As Director General Gwyn Francis said at the presentation of prizes: "I did not know we had so much hidden artistic talent."

Ode to Glasgow garden festival

The Glasgow Garden Festival has been a major project for the Civil Engineering design team in Headquarters Engineering Division.

We have been on the project team since 1986 and have been involved to a greater or lesser extent on all the major structures and exhibits.

As a brief glimpse into the work that has been going on, I have written a short poem about our involvement:

In '86, whilst working hard,
On some new bridge or workshop yard,
A voice behind said, " 'scuse me, please,
But could you help us plant some trees?"
"Of course," I said. "What can we do?"
The story now I'll tell to you.
The Glasgow Garden Festival, WOW!
A splendid, spectacular, colourful show.
To beat the rest was their intent,
Better than Liverpool or Stoke-on-Trent.
Four main projects came our way,
A gabion cliff we had to lay,
Five tall trees stuck in the ground,
To look as those in nature found.
A timber tower built tall and proud,
With views around to draw the crowd.
A walkway hung up in the air,
To fly you to the badgers' lair.

The gabions were designed three high,
Set at angles, all awry.
When treated up they look as if
They really are a rocky cliff.

The trees so tall as lift your eyes,
Could show no fixings, ropes, or guys.
And so they're set deep in the ground,
With concrete blocks to keep them sound.

The timber tower, Oh, one so grand!
An architect supplied the plans,
But all the members and connections,
The fancy roof and other sections,
The steel sub-frame you will not notice;
Were all designed within this office.

The walkway, well, we must admit,
We had to get some help with it,
So worked on with an outside team,
Who came up with a flash design,
With just a little bounce and flair,
. . . make sure you try it when you're there!

With all above and bits and bobs,
It really has been quite a job,
But now with only weeks to go
Before the opening of the show,
We must get down on bended knees.
"CAN WE HAVE SOME TICKETS, PLEASE!!!"

S. J. Penny, HQ Eng Div

Printed by DUNFERMLINE PRESS, Tel. 0383 728201.