

SLASHER



Newspaper of the Forestry Commission

Issue 335

June 1988

COMMISSION private woodland officers are expecting a wave of applications for the new Woodland Grant Scheme.

First announced in March, following the Budget, the Woodland Grant Scheme has now been given the necessary clearance from the EEC. It is designed to encourage private forestry through enhanced grants for new planting and restocking, including natural regeneration.

The payment of grants of up to £1575 per hectare will depend on applicants meeting environmental aims as well as the growing of timber. These will include:

- Creation of wildlife habitat.
- Enhancement of the landscape.
- Sensitive treatment of water courses.
- Protection of archaeological remains.
- Wildlife habitats.

A novel feature of the scheme is the provision of £200 per hectare for planting on land which was arable or improved grassland.

Of special interest in the Scottish Highlands is the extension of the rate of grants for broadleaves to the regeneration of Caledonian pinewoods.

Objectives

Director General Gwyn Francis said: "The new scheme will encourage multi-purpose woodland and attract the land managers who need not see timber production as the primary objective but while improving the landscape and the conservation value of the countryside in the long term will aid the nation's wood production programme."

Alistair Scott, Director, Private Forestry, added: "The new scheme means more money for more people and that includes everybody from those who want a quarter of a hectare of pleasure woods close to their home to these with large scale forestry interests and a commitment to the future of the burgeoning timber utilising industries of Britain."

"Assistance will be given to those who feel they can make better use of their land through woodland management and in particular we will expect more land to become released from marginal agricultural use."

Assistance for applicants in achieving environmental objectives will be provided by a new series of Forestry Commission guidelines dealing with water, upland archaeology, landscaping and nature conservation.

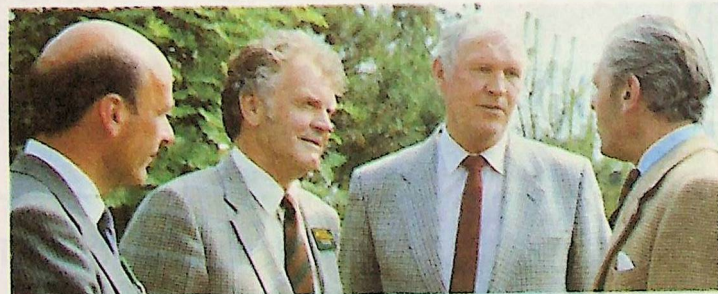
Also announced by the Government are details of the Farm Woodland Scheme which is due to begin in October.

Under the scheme farmers will receive up to £190 per hectare for taking land out of agricultural production and planting it with trees.

The Scheme is experimental and will be limited to 36,000 hectares in the United Kingdom over the first three years.

Grants flood likely in new scheme

PRINCESS ALEX DROPS IN



Obviously the Royal Highland Show demands a ROYAL visit... and Princess Alexandra obliged along with husband, Rt. Hon. Angus Ogilvie.

The Princess met members of staff outside, and insisted on hearing more details of our work inside from Kathleen Wood, Margaret Hodge, Rena Stewart and Nan Dickson. Meanwhile, Mr Ogilvie took time to have a chat with (from left), Don Lindsay, Robbie Adam and John Williams, all of Mid-Scotland Conservancy.

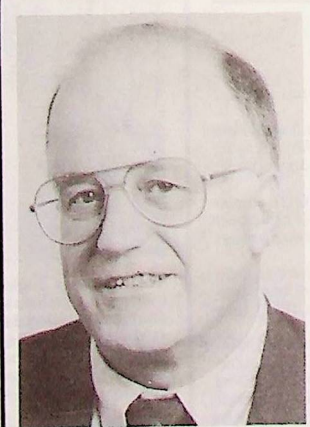
The couple were visiting the show on the day of the announcement of the woodland grants, in which they showed interest.

New consultant

Professor Peter Fowler (left) has been appointed the FC's first archaeological consultant. Highly respected as academic, author, broadcaster and practical field archaeologist, he will assist the Commission to identify and protect sites of archaeological interest in forests.

He will visit sites to give practical advice, and help in the further training of the Commission's own foresters. Liaison with archaeological bodies also forms part of his job.

Professor Fowler's work will complement that of the Commission's two other specialist consultants on landscape design and wildlife conservation. His appointment comes at a time when foresters are forging stronger, more formal links with archaeologists. "I am very encouraged by how keen the Commission is to draw on expertise from my own profession," said Professor Fowler. "All the Commission's local offices now seek advice from regional or county archaeologists when considering new planting proposals."



Forest of Dean Competition

The Association of Professional Foresters will stage a thinning and felling competition at Forest of Dean on July 30.

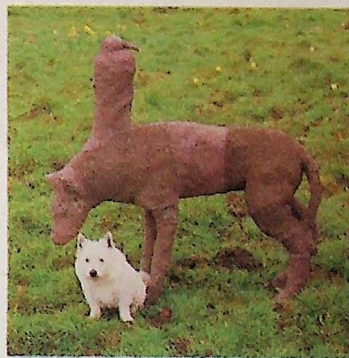
Covering South Wales and Western England it is open to members and non-members. Particulars and entry forms from APF secretary, Tony Phillips, Brokerswood House, near Westbury, Wilts, BA13 4EH.

BELLAMY ON THE TRAIL...

That superb champion of wildlife and the environment went down Alice Holt way recently. David Bellamy introduced the first visitors to the new Visitors' Centre there, and inspected the moss and liverworts trail which has also just been opened and is already attracting many visitors... visitors like these youngsters with David.

For more about Alice Holt, and for more about the work that is going on after the Great Gale of October... turn to our centre pages. More pictures in colour there, too.

THE CREATURE



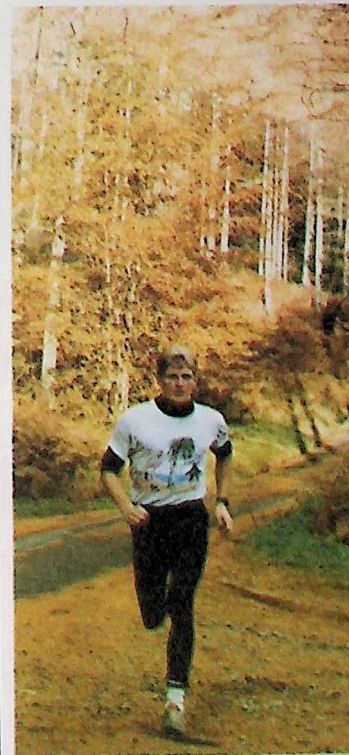
What's this mysterious beast a-standing in Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, and attracting the attention of a more familiar beast? Page Five has the answer.

THE MACHINE



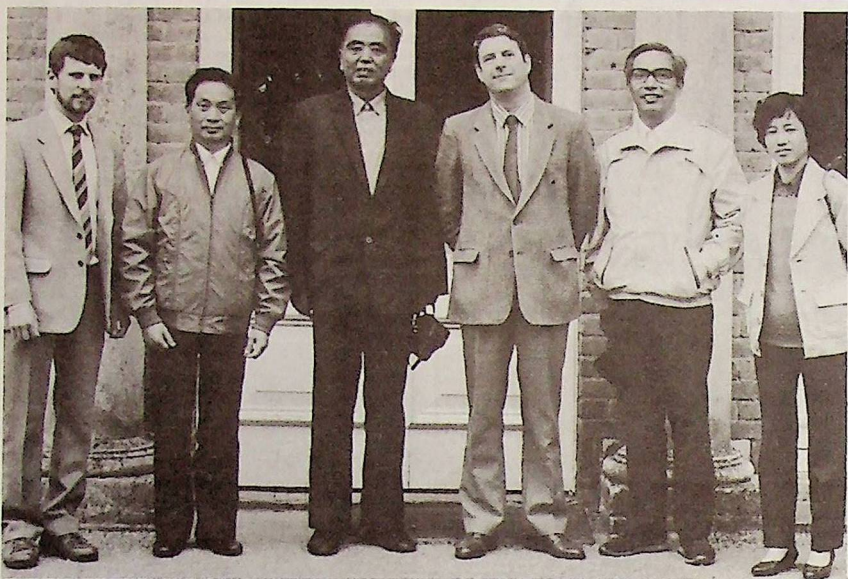
What's this strange creation doing at Bedgebury? Again, your centre pages have the full answer.

THE RUNNER



And who is this a-running in the hills and forests of Wales? None other than Patrick Winterton, captain of the British Nordic ski team, who did much of his training there in preparation for the Winter Olympics in Canada. There's more about him and the Coed y Brenin developments in Page Three.

The octogenarians and the old days



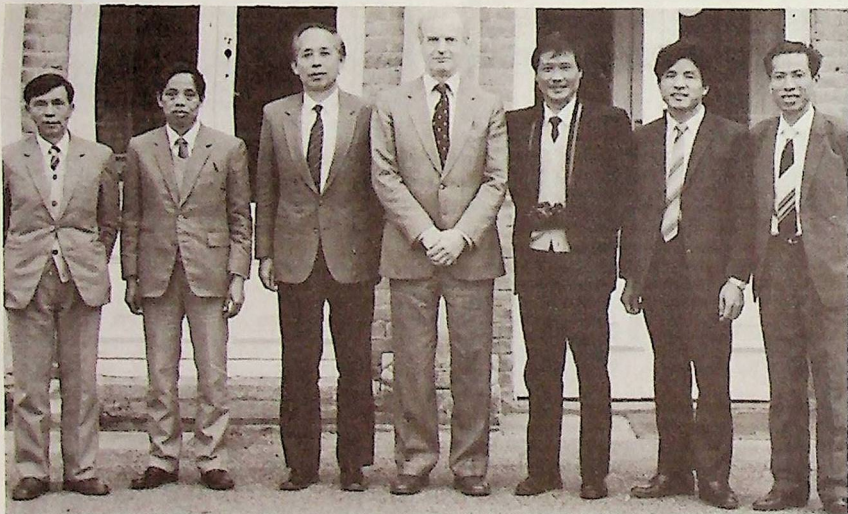
Chinese visitors

Groups of officials from the People's Republic of China have been seeing for themselves around Britain's forests.

ABOVE: a party of our guests at Alice Holt — Liu Zhaoguang, director of Botanical Laboratory; Chen Wei-lie, vice-director of Institute of Botany; Xiang Yinghai, vice-president of Academy of Science; and Mrs Fu Yenfeng, senior admin., Institute of Botany.

They visited Alice Holt as part of a continuing exchange programme between RGB Kew and the Botanical Institutes of China.

BELOW: Six senior foresters from China who were in Britain in March / April. Their tour of almost three weeks, gave a good cross-section of British forestry. The route from the Dean to Alice Holt via North England, South Scotland, and North Scotland Conservancies, HQ and NRS included visits to Shotton and Highland Forest Products. The party, headed by Mr Qiu Ning-Zhong, director of Xijiang Forestry Bureau, is seen here with Mr A. J. Grayson, director research at Alice Holt.



Kitchen tip from Joan

You will recall that we invited readers last issue to let us have their recipes. Joan Pascoe was quick to respond. And Joan, of 7 Grenage Bungalow, North Litchfield, Whitchurch, Hampshire, told us: "So pleased to read that we 'gals' have been allocated a space!" And she sent this "tried and tested recipe of long standing which has proved popular."

CHUTNEY IN THE RAW

1 lb. Apples (peeled and cored weight)
1 lb. Onions
1 lb. stoned Dates
1 lb. Demerara sugar
¼ to 1 pint Vinegar — Apple Cider preferred
1 teaspoon dry Mustard
½ teaspoon Salt
A little Ground Pepper

Finely chop or mince apples, onions, dates. Mix in mustard, salt and pepper, and sugar. Add vinegar — do not make mixture too sloshy!

NO COOKING REQUIRED

Leave mixture for a day or two stirring occasionally. Put in jars and label. Leave for six weeks to improve flavour before eating.

Thank you Joan ... now readers (men, too!) let's have more ideas for the kitchen. You know our address ... over to you!

TWO octogenarians with long memories of their links with forestry have been inspired by our appeal in the last issue of "Slasher" to write to us recalling their good old days.

From Morayshire has come a letter from Mr W. F. Stoddart, who is 84 and has been retired now for 21 years, but remains very active. He tells us he served in all four conservancies in Scotland and in North-east England, including 16 with the education branch.

From the other end of the country, in Devon, come nostalgic reminiscences from Mrs D. Cooke, whose husband worked on the old FC site at Kennington in Bagley Wood.

First to Mr Stoddart, who lives at 89 Forbeshill, Forres, and recalls that he joined the FC in March 1924 and in the following July enrolled as a student at Beaufort Forest School under the direction of the late Mr James Fraser.

Mr Stoddart goes on ...

Since completing my training in 1926 I have served in all four Conservancies in Scotland and in NE England, a total of 43 years, including 16 years with the education branch.

In 1967 I took early retirement, my wife and I having decided to spend a few years in Australia, which proved to be a most interesting experience. My activities "down under" included golf, swimming, fishing and as a member of a local Flora and Fauna Society I had the opportunity to study a wide range and variety of insects, birds, reptiles and animals in our frequent treks in the bushland.

My wife and I took a keen interest in gardening and the climate was such that we were able to grow tomatoes, grapefruit, oranges, lemons, rock melons and sweetcorn as well as the other common garden vegetables.

NZ cruise

Our travels took us as far north as Queensland and south to Canberra and Melbourne. In addition we enjoyed a cruise around New Zealand in a Russian cruise ship.

In June 1971 we returned home to Scotland. Back to the old routine of gardening, golf and walking and becoming involved in various local activities. My main hobby is woodwork and marquetry, some of my work going towards raising money for my favourite charity, the Care and Protection of Crippled Children.

I am now in my 84th year and have been in retirement for 21 years so far. I feel that to enjoy one's retirement, one should continue to be active, both mentally and physically for as long as one is able. My best wishes to all retired Foresters. Yours sincerely, W. F. Stoddart.

And now to Mrs Cooke, who is 80 this month and lives at Sunrise, Higher Meadows, Beer, N. Seaton, in Devon (EY12 3HA).

She writes:

"A very sincere thank you for sending the "Slasher" every issue — I can't express the pleasure it gives me. Unfortunately, there are now few times when I recognise a face or name, but I am as interested as ever in the news, and I still hear regularly every year from Rothamstead. I was invited to their reunion dinner where they all signed a beautiful card, and sent it to me."

"Most of them remembered my husband from the old FC nursery site at Kennington. I still sometimes long for the oak trees, the nurseries, the badger setts, the spotted woodpecker, tree creeper and so many more that used to occupy the boxes my husband made and fixed for them."

Mrs Cooke goes on to recall that a colleague of her husband is also now turned 80 and lives in Pembrokeshire. A "wonderful photographer" he sends her pictures made from films he took in Bagley Wood.

And she concludes: "I shall be 80 in June but my interest in forestry is as keen as ever. Wishing 'Slasher', and all who are responsible for it the very best."

● Slasher thanks these writers for their interest, and hopes that they will encourage other retired workers and others with early memories of the FC to drop us a line. Keep in touch, is our motto ...

Your Slasher

What do YOU think? The idea has been put forward that "Slasher" could carry advertisements.

The proposal comes from a reader ... and we would like to find out your reaction. Write to Roy Gregor, editor, Slasher, Forestry Commission, Corstorphine, Edinburgh.

Remember ... the columns of this, YOUR newspaper, are open to YOU for news and views. Let's hear from you ... and remember that pictures are always acceptable.

Your regional correspondents are also there to help you. We gave their names in the last issue, but to refresh memories, here they are again (keep them filed, they could come in useful):

North Scotland: Sheila Ferguson; Mid Scotland: Jim Mulholland; South Scotland: Chris Smith; in England there are Sandra Wills (North), Brian Llewellyn (East) and Heather Austin (West); with Brina Evans in Wales; Brian Hibberd at Alice Holt; John McC. Smith at NRS; and Ken Murray with TUS.

Here and there



A new booklet "Interesting Trees in the Forest of Dean," was launched recently by Alan Mitchell. The booklet is to guide visitors around some of the more spectacular trees in the forest, particularly oak, yew, ash, lime and conifers.

Pictured here at the Weymouth Pine during the opening ceremony are some of the invited guests including the Conservator W(E), the deputy surveyor, Verderers of the Forest of Dean. Co-authors of the leaflet are Ian Standing and Fred Savage, a recently retired forest officer.

FOR EXHIBITION

Two FC publications, Handbook No. 1 "Forest Insects" and the guide "Explore the New Forest" have been selected for display at this year's British Book Design and Production Exhibition. They are two of the seven HMSO titles chosen and after display at Foyles bookshop in September, they will go on for display at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Forestry Commission staff involved with the origination of these books drafted and forwarded to HMSO ideas which contributed substantially to the final design. Congratulations to all concerned.

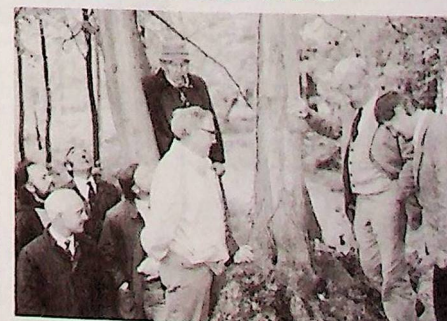
YOU LIVE AND LEARN

Quotation from a newly joined administrative assistant: "If it hasn't got a file reference on it it'll still be in my tray — if it has got a file reference on it, God knows where it will be!"

TROPICAL PARADISE

After a fire at Afan Forest District, a reporter from the South Wales Evening Post telephoned to ask, "Was there any serious damage to the citrus fruit trees?" He was told "It was 0.3 ha of Sitka Spruce trees that had been burned." What a lemon! Who is trying to destroy the fruits of our labour.

FIRST MEETING



The new West England Regional Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of Ian Mercer (director of Dartmoor National Park), met in May at Conservancy Office to visit all the sections at work. The next day they visited Leigh Woods (photographed here), close to Bristol to see conservation work there, studying lime coppice on stools dating back hundreds of years.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS ... FOCUS ON RUNNERS, JOGGERS AND THE MOUNTAIN BIKERS

Keep-fit brigade pant to success

ROAD running and jogging have rapidly grown in recent years, and our forests are a magnet to the keep-fit brigade all over the country.

Training on Britain's roads means injuries to tendons and leg joints are commonplace after pounding the hard tarmac, but for those lucky enough to live within running distance of a forest, there are opportunities to run in comparative shelter, both on hard and soft surface conditions and free from noise, fumes and traffic hazards. As a bonus of course the runner can pause to enjoy the Forest scenery and glimpses of its wildlife.

Coed y Brenin near Dolgellau, (North Wales) and our other forests have many miles of waymarked paths and forest roads available for walkers. These can also be entirely suitable for running enthusiasts of all ages. In Coed y Brenin the captain of the British Nordic ski team at the 1988 winter Olympics in Calgary, Canada can often be found on training runs.

Patrick Winterton, a lieutenant in the Royal Marines, spends many hours running in the Mid Wales forests and those of Scandinavia and Germany — often with the company of the eight-man ski team. In winter, they don cross-country skis and benefit from the more prolonged and stable snow conditions to be found in Scandinavia.

WEIGHTY TASK

Coed y Brenin is also the host of a unique event initiated by Dolgellau's Forest district manager and held for the last six years — the Coed y Brenin Yomp, a cross-country race over a wide variety of easy and difficult terrain.

Each competitor must carry a weight of 25 lb. for males or 15 lb. for females over a course of 12 to 15 miles that follows a different route on each event. The course is laid out to be as testing as possible and aims to cover as many different types of terrain and gradients as is possible to find.

The organisers have been surprised at the response and sustained enthusiasm and interest in the event, which to date has been kept on a local basis for both Forestry Commission and members of the public within Gwynedd, including the Armed Services.

Previous winners have included Patrick Winterton, and David Anderson, forester at Corris Forest District and one of the top six orienteers in Great Britain. Team winners have included Royal Marines and the Paratroopers on exercise in the locality.

This year's event was held in bright sunshine in May and attracted 105 entries, including representatives from Aberystwyth and Bristol offices, together with Dolgellau, Llanrwst and Corris Districts. Perhaps next year we may see FC entrants from further afield, challenging for the inter-Forestry Commission challenge cup. Details from the Forest District Manager, Dolgellau.

This year it was won by Gwydyr Forest with a fine performance by Raymond Williams — a harvesting craftsman.

NASTY FALL

Unfortunately, Dave Anderson (Corris) was unable to defend his 1987 winner's title, as a result of a nasty tumble among hard granite on the Isle of Arran the previous week.

Compared with this year's individual winner's time of 1 hr. 59 min., Forestry Commission entries performed with credit:

Raymond Williams, harvesting craftsman, Gwydyr, 2.13.

Martin Parry, harvesting contractor, Gwydyr, 2.29 (winner of his age category).

Hefin Lloyd and Dai Thompson, harvesting craftsmen, Coed y Brenin, 3.07.

Ken Jones, harvesting craftsman, Coed y Brenin, 3.41.

Kate Hanley, accounts, Wales, 4.07.

Gareth Rowlands, Wales' messenger, 4.17.

Pat Sherwood, West England, 4.25. Susan Fuge and Mary Richards, accounts, Wales, 5.29.

Gillian Thomas and Lynne Williams, Corris, also took part with gallantry while unlucky Jonathan Walker, our OND student, Coed y Brenin, lost his way through going too fast!

Indeed, such is the enthusiasm and friendly rivalry for forest runs in the locality that the neighbouring District of Corris are organising their second event in early September. This is also a hill and forest race but without the burden of any weight, except the previous night's beer!

Details from District Manager, Corris.

Report by D. M. B. YORKE,
Forest district manager.



WINNERS ALL ... with the Mayoress of Dolgellau at the Coed y Brenin Yomp.



The FC's fastest man ... Raymond Williams of Gwydyr setting a fast pace through the Douglas fir.



The hardy brigade ... crossing the River Mawddach in the 1988 Yomp. Hardy lot, indeed!

TWO-WHEELED BRIGADE

From the two-legged brigade ... and on to the two-wheeler whirlwinds!

Yes ... biking is becoming increasingly popular in mid-Wales, too.

And it has fostered an idea that could well be taken up by other forestry areas.

Mountain bikes, purpose-built sources of pedal power, have up to 16 gears and with their specialised off-road tyres are a means of long-distance recreation for enthusiasts of all ages.

With many miles of hill tracks, 'green lanes' and bridleways in the Welsh hills, there is ample opportunity to explore new countryside in a fraction of the time it would take on foot.

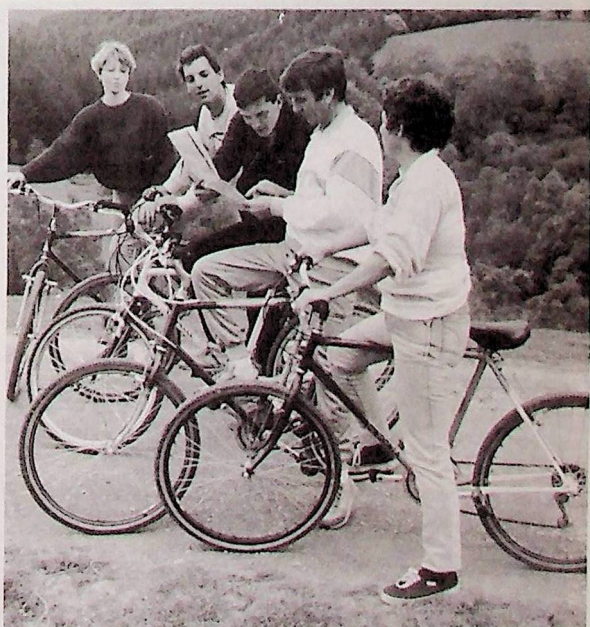
For the experienced rider with skilful use of the gears and the agreement of the relevant landowner, there is also opportunity to ride cross-country on all but the rockiest or boggiest terrain. Today, the sight of cyclists on the 2500 foot range of Cader Idris mountain above Dolgellau is not unusual.

A recent approach to the Commission's office in Dolgellau, from an outdoor pursuits entrepreneur in the small town of Bala in the Snowdonia National Park, has concluded with an agreement for conducted cycling parties to use Aberhirnant Forest (part of Dolgellau Forest District) in the foothills of the Berwyn Mountains to the south of Bala.

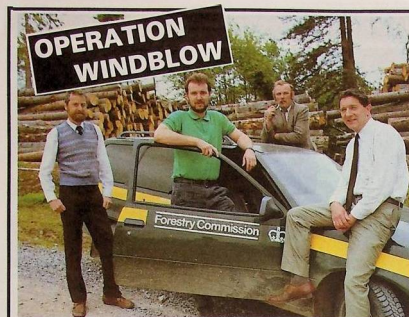
With encouragement and help from the Forest district manager and district forester, Paul Sherrington, the "leader" of the cycle groups has been fully briefed on the Commission's work and objectives together with the local history and natural history of the Forest and surrounding locality.

Members of the public, including many thousands of sailing and windsurfing enthusiasts who sail on the nearby Bala Lake have the opportunity to hire a bike and enjoy a conducted scenic Forest tour.

Sailors and windsurfers in particular have an alternative outlet for their energy if they arrive in Bala to find a complete lack of wind to fill their sails.



A group of cyclists stop for a breather and to take in the beautiful scenery of Wales. Another picture in colour on back page.



Grappling with the problem... the Weald team of Pat Dineen (right) with Norman Day, Paul Vickers and Dick Preston.

In the last issue of "Slasher," STEVE SCOTT wrote about the devastation caused to Suffolk Forest District by the gales that swept Southern England on the night of October 15. In the months since, foresters — both state and private — have been striving to assess the total damage. They have also been laying down plans for long-term reinstatement of woodlands and how flattened areas can be redesigned to meet the needs

A great chance to rectify old mistakes

IN Weald Forest District the gale brought down 1500 hectares of trees — equivalent to 350,000 cubic metres or ten years of normal harvesting. Suffolk District was able to call on harvesting teams from nearby Thetford, but Weald, where no FC harvesting had been done since 1983, had to call on field staff with no real harvesting experience to shift with the massive clear-up operation through a number of blocks.

"After spending two days cutting our way into the forest office and receiving initial reports on the scale and severity of the windblow we realised that none of us had experienced an operation of this immensity," said FDM Pat Dineen, who had started work at the age of 15, at Bedgebury.

A Londoner with a feel for forestry, on the day after the gale he had seen compartments he had planted, uprooted, snapped off, flattened (even today from his office window he looks out on the remains of the once proud stands of research plots). So it was that the day after the Great Gale, it was decided to create a special emergency unit for the Weald. Under the directorship of Norman Dannatt, assistant conservator, Operations, East England, assisted by Brian Redbeck, harvesting officer, HQ, Richard Cable, work study, the Weald staff of Norman Day, Dick Preston and Paul Vickers started to sort out the logistics.

Skidder arrives

The first help to arrive was a skidder. That was followed by other essential equipment, and now operational in Weald are a Valmet harvester, an Oshkosh, three Lokomo forwarders, a Brunetti processor and forwarder, backed up by two mobile workshops, eight "personnel" vans and a crew of mechanics. In all, something approaching 50.

"More than just the machinery, we needed a committed team and that is what has been achieved. We knew this was going to be an arduous task, at

times almost round the clock, with essential back-up to keep machines working," said Mr Dineen. A typical working day for harvest operators starts at 5 am. At 8.30 am there's a half-hour break for the maintenance, then the other operator takes over until 12.30 pm. In turn, he is relieved from 1 pm to 5 pm, with the final shift lasting until 9 pm. This shift rotation continues for three weeks followed by leave.

"I knew that with the right team there would be any doubts about as coping with the organised harvesting by FC staff," said Mr Dineen. Since the operation got under way in January, the FC team have cleared more than 30,000 cubic metres and another 38,700 cubic metres have been reserved for standing sales.

Chestnut problems

In some compartments the operators have come across severe problems with well-grown sweet chestnuts, an inheritance of the former coppice management.

"I think we are coping fairly well under the pressures and we are finding markets for most of our output, even although the market price may not be what might have been achieved in a time of stable supplies."

"What worries me in some way is how some of the private woodland owners in the region will fare. Some of them, without a background of land and forest management, will be trying to clear and market the wrong type of products to raise the funds needed for proper replanting. Some people will never be cleared or replanted and will be left to long-term regeneration."

While the clear-up operation continues over the next two years at least, detailed plans are being drawn up for a restocking programme which could extend for ten years.

of timber production allied to the growing demands for greater recreation of some of our forest districts, and in the regions of A.D. and WEST DOWNS are looking ahead . . .

"the problems we are going to encounter include the varying level of stump height, the amount of brush that has been compacted to heavy soil, the maintenance, then the other operator takes over until 12.30 pm. In turn, he is relieved from 1 pm to 5 pm, with the final shift lasting until 9 pm. This shift rotation continues for three weeks followed by leave."

Back to drawing board

We are going to have to look at the whole range of possible treatments — scarifying, chipping, winnowing and burning — as well as keeping a close eye on possible drainage problems following the extensive operation of heavy machinery. "Then we will have to take a fresh look at the species to be planted, the landscape and conservation and public access considerations, including education and interpretation."

"Before the windblow we were looking at the need for greater public admission into Weald, not only for picnic sites and forest walks but for such things as caravans sites. Now it's back to the drawing board to see how these can be incorporated into the various stages of the large-scale replanting we will now have to undertake."

"Foresters say that the next decade in general output, even although the market price may not be what might have been achieved in a time of stable supplies."

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MEETING THE PROBLEM OF GROWING RECREATIONAL DEMANDS

Planning for public

THE problems facing West Downs FDM Ron Melville are typical: the growing demands for a wider range of public facilities but restricted resources for meeting and maintaining those requirements.

Despite those pressures he has just announced an ambitious conservation plan for the West Downs which includes more than 100 projects.

The first stage was marked recently when David Bellamy officially opened the Alice Holt Visitor Centre and introduced the public to a moor and liverworts trail which incorporates many of the 130 species that can be found in the surrounding forest. The interest that Mr Melville has generated in his conservation plan is evident in the organisations that have joined in the refurbished visitor centre — the Surrey Wildlife Trust, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists Trust, the East Hampshire Rangers Project, and the British Butterfly Conservation Trust. Alice Holt Forest itself is expected to become a much more popular centre in the years ahead. It already contains six forest walks, together with the forest roads, public footpaths and bridleways, draw vast numbers of people throughout the year.

In conjunction with British Rail, a scheme exists to draw people from London and stations in between to Bexley Station and into the forest. In the centre of the forest is the highly successful commercial enterprise Birdworld and it is hoped to link up with

this and other planned commercial and FC ventures via an access on the main A325 which runs through the forest.

"We can expect to see more than half a million visitors in the coming year," said Mr Melville. "And in the long term we must plan for even more people and suffered varying degrees of damage it can, or will become, available."

Within its 6080 hectares, West Downs has a harvesting programme of 42,000 cubic metres. Following last October's gale some 46,000 cubic metres were on the ground and this poses problems on and around a number of public access routes, some of which had to be closed while clearance operations were undertaken.

The area is also under pressure from existing and

HELP US!

Forestry Commission staff at the Chelsea Flower Show were inundated with requests for advice from gardeners, farmers and estate owners who had suffered varying degrees of damage in October.

The show attracted 160,000 visitors and many of those who visited the FC stand wanted guidance on clearance and restocking. Staff from Alice Holt and East England Conservancy dealt with the flood of enquiries.

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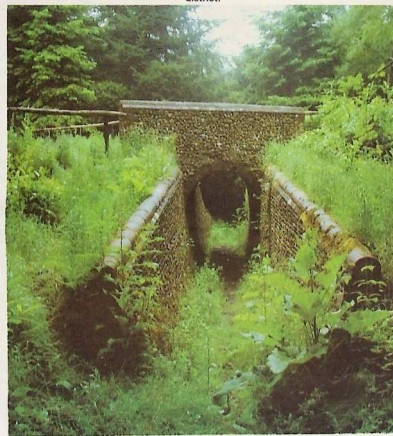
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Shape of the future... the moss and liverworts trail at Alice Holt in West Downs district.



Shape of the past... one of the old flint bridges which have been incorporated into the shape of the future at East Horsely and which are the responsibility of the district manager.



Shape of the destruction... a small corner of window that affected Alice Holt (in black). West Downs reported 46,000 cubic metres were on the ground after that terrible October 15 night.

Odd beast of Suffolk

Throughout the years, strange and assorted creatures have reputedly stalked the forests of Britain. Surely the strangest of modern discoveries was made recently in Rendisham Forest (Suffolk), the site of an earlier (and much disputed) UFO encounter.

The creature in question was discovered by Ranger Keith Paterson and Conservancy wildlife officer, Fred Curry, while on their rounds.

The beast (could it be a cross between a hyena and a penguin?) was carried off and set outside the Forest District

STILL IN SUFFOLK . . .

Pair of Shrikes are rare visitors

The only known pair of Red-backed Shrikes in Britain are nesting in a busy Forestry Commission car park at Thetford Forest, Suffolk.

Although young were successfully hatched last year at the site, there was no guarantee they would return this summer.

The present pair of these rare birds are sitting on four eggs inside a specially fenced area of scrub in the St Helens, Santon Downham.

They are being protected round the clock by Forestry Commission and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds staff.

Once quite common on scrubby heaths throughout England, their numbers have declined dramatically over the last 100 years, possibly due to cooler, wetter summers.

. . . and here come harrier and osprey

North Scotland Conservancy is recording more successes with birds of prey rearing chicks in Commission woodlands.

In Easter Ross, the relatively rare hen harrier has appeared with a pair of hatching chicks in a nest close to a new car park site.

The opening of the car park for the public was delayed until staff were satisfied that the young were being successfully reared.

offices as a coup. Unfortunately, it was deliberately run over and smashed to pieces only two days later. The reason for this act is unknown.

So what was this sculpture of plaster of Paris covered in carpet underlay? An abstract created by an artist a couple of tons short of a load? A "scarer" built by a gamekeeper to deter foxes? A ritual symbol used in some macabre ceremony?

If anyone has any ideas please contact Steve Scott at Suffolk Forest District. Meantime, we will keep you posted if more odd creatures stray into the area!

its Scots and Corsican pine plantations. As part of our bird conservation policy, disturbance in areas where scarce species are known to breed is kept to a minimum by confining forest operations to outside the breeding season.

Red-backed Shrikes are summer visitors to Britain, migrating from Africa in the spring. They are also known as "Butcher Birds" because of their habit of impaling insects on thorns to form a "larder".

About the size of a blackbird, they have a rusty red back and grey head with a black stripe through the eye.

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Elsewhere in the Highlands, the provision of artificial reefs for ospreys are gaining favour with these magnificent fish-eating birds. Regional conservation officer, Tony Hinde told the "Slasher" that young were being reared in the artificial nest that was used successfully last year; another multi-made cove had been adopted with fruitful results and at another location a pair of ospreys are raising young in a natural nest.

FORESTRY PEOPLE ... FORESTRY PEOPLE ...

Roy Faulkner says farewell

WHAT better way to mark the service of a man o' the trees than to have him plant a tree to mark his retirement ...

And here Roy Faulkner wields the spade to mark the last day of his 38 years in the research division of the FC.

Roy, widely known both in Britain and abroad, retired at the end of May after service that included 25 years as head of genetics branch.

The fact that his fame has spread was reflected in his retirement party and dinner later in Bush House and in the number of tributes and letters of appreciation received.

Speeches ranged over many aspects of his experiences, many of which were amusing, but Roy touched on a number of more serious points.

He greatly regretted the move away from the use of career specialist foresters in research division, especially in those branches involved in long-term projects. He also stressed that in tree-breeding there were no short-cuts and that

proper field-testing of new material was essential.

Roy, during his 25 years as head of genetics, has built up the branch into a well-oiled machine and pushed forward the breeding programmes for the main coniferous species which he deemed to be economically justifiable in comparison to broadleaved species.

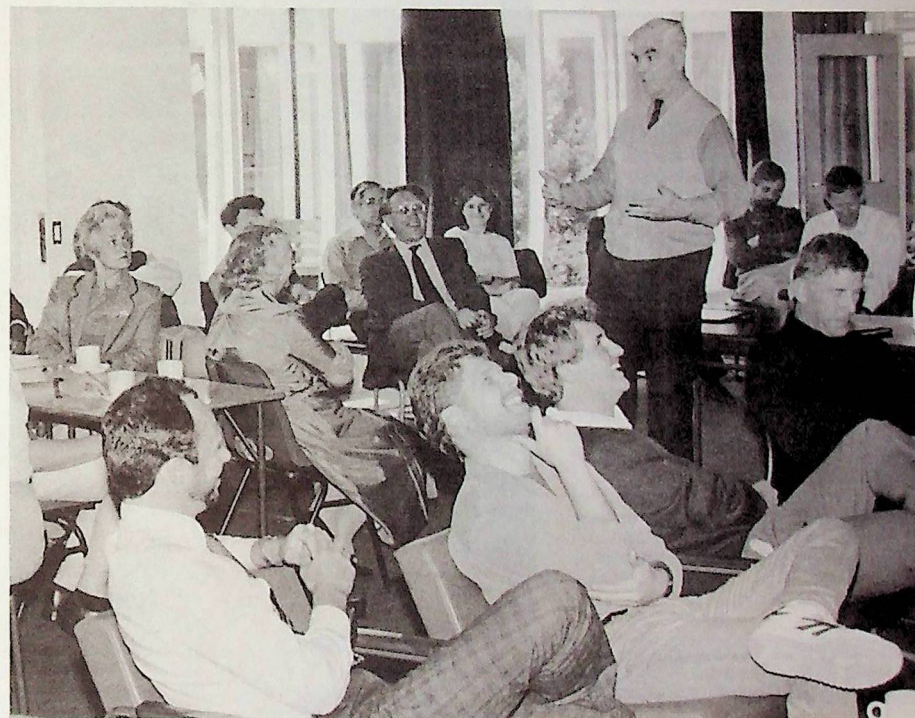
It was with some regret that he was leaving at a time when the fruits of many of these programmes were becoming available and there would be an increasing use of planting stock derived from improved seed.

He wished the new "Tree Improvement Branch" (an amalgamation of the old genetics branch and part of physiology branch) every success and hoped that the new skills and technologies would mean improved material could be multiplied at a greater rate.

Roy was presented with a range of DIY equipment by Calvin Booth, chief research officer. He will use them while making modifications to his new house. Roy is to devote any spare time to working for a charity.



Roy with his own tree ... and (below) giving his listeners cause for merriment.



Ray Braine ... a right proper chap



Natalie presents the bouquet to Audrey Braine, then all join the formal picture line-up (below).

Tributes from as far away as Scotland were paid to a "right proper chap" at a retirement presentation in Cornwall and North Devon Forest District.

The principal was Ray Braine, district manager, who started in Forestry School and, with the exception of Army service, was with the FC all his working life.

GREAT SEND-OFF

A crowd of about 150 people, some travelling even from Scotland, gave Ray a great send-off, with pretty Natalie Harrison (picture left) adding a nice touch as the youngest member of the district office staff.

West England Conservator, John Fletcher, gave a resume of Ray's years as a forester with oft-humorous anecdotes (he had somehow even got hold of an end-of-term report from Forestry School which suggested that Ray showed promise and that the spell in the army he was about to undergo might make a man of him).

This was followed by more tales out of school from long-time friend Colin McPhee from Scotland, who shared those Forestry School days with Ray.

NOSTALGIA

Ray's reply was full of nostalgia for the days when forestry was real forestry, snippets from over the years — amusing, nonconformist and always showing the characteristic enthusiasm for which Ray will be remembered.

As colleague Peter Wood said, "You don't have to be old and ugly to work in the FC" and to prove it the youngest member of office staff Natalie Harrison, presented Audrey with a bouquet of flowers and Ray with a reclining garden chair (will he sit still long enough to use it?), and a cheque.



Sandy in the picture



Head forester Sandy Davidson, Kincardine District, retired in April after 37 years' service — all in old E(S) Conservancy.

His travels took him from Speyside to Drumtochty and most forests in between. A keen eye for detail, a helpful manner and a pawky sense of humour won him many friends in the FC and the private sector.

At a farewell lunch in Torphins where he lives, Sandy was presented with a painting of the bridge at Potarch

(the old bridge was destroyed during floods in the old timber-logging days early last century). Sandy also received binoculars, work-bench, and an inscribed wooden bowl turned by Jim Cordiner of Silverbank Sawmills at Banchory.

Our picture shows Sandy and wife Helen with painting presented by Graham Tuley, FDM, Kincardine. Friends and colleagues look on.

FORESTRY PEOPLE ...

Lena keys in to retiral



Lena Burchall retired at the end of April after 28 years' service at Alice Holt as a typist.

In the last three years her word-processing skills had been of great value in the preparation of publications.

Presenting Lena with farewell gifts from her many friends and

colleagues Mr Brian Hibberd, research communication officer, thanked her for her years of loyal service. Mr Noel Blatchford with whom Lena had worked for 18 years, joined in the presentation, recounting her key role in the preparation of open days at Alice Holt.

Tributes to Alan Rix

Recently retired Conservator North England, **ALAN RIX**, was honoured by the North Wales Softwoods Thinning Association, at a dinner-dance in Ludlow.

The president, Arthur Morris of Conwy Timber Co., presented Alan with an inscribed crystal bowl mounted on an ash stand to mark, in particular, his service in Wales firstly as assistant conservator (harvesting and marketing) in North Wales from 1976-1982 and then as Conservator South Wales from 1982-85.

He made special reference to the good customer relations Alan established and his friendly spirit in even the toughest of negotiations.

In thanking the association Alan reminisced over a "very happy part of his career."

He recalled many enjoyable incidents during a period which saw the build-up of harvesting in Wales in the 1970s, the collapse of the market at the end of the decade and the recovery in the 1980s — an eventful 10 years.

Among an excellent turn-out of Welsh sawmillers were the present Conservator Wales, John Morgan, and part conservator North Wales, John James, and their wives.

DAVID "JOCK" McALPINE retired after 30 years' service with the FC in the Loch Ard section of Aberfoyle FD.

Always smiling and cheery, his attendance record was referred to by FO II Ian Reid — "Jock, you were aye there!"

FOI David Henderson-Howat presented Jock with his long-service certificate and a set of crystal glasses from all colleagues and friends at Aberfoyle.

Other retirements ...

JACKIE MacKENZIE, lorry driver with 24 years service in N(S),

retired on medical grounds in April.

At an informal presentation he received a remote control, portable colour TV set donated by friends and colleagues at Fort Augustus.

MARGARET FOSTER retired from Alice Holt in May after 14 years with the FC.

Margaret's telephone manner of, 'Silviculture, can I help you?' tells you not only in which branch she served as AO for most of her last eight years but also her genuine wish to help whenever she could.

All within Silviculture (S) branch will miss her and her motherly touch.

Dr Julian Evans, head of the branch, presented Margaret with a gold locket and chain on behalf of her many friends and colleagues.

We hear that **BERT THOMSON**, who signed off from Speyside area N(S) earlier this year, is enjoying his retirement. Bert, who was chief forester, was featured in one previous issue.

Colleagues and friends gathered at HQ to bid farewell to **Bill Gordon**, SEO, who has retired after almost 40 years with the Commission. Bill began and ended his career in Edinburgh but between worked in London, Dumfries and Basingstoke. Much of his time was spent in estate management and he became a familiar face to both HQ and field estates staff. Bill and his wife are remaining in his native Edinburgh.

Peter Hermon retired on May 31 following 43 years' service mainly in the audit and finance functions and latterly as Controller of Finance.

Mr Derek Rutherford paid tribute to his hard work and dedication and in particular to his valuable contributions in advising Commissioners on accounting policy matters for such occasions as Public Accounts Committee hearings. Peter received a stereo tape deck as a retirement gift.

Wally Hammond

TWO celebrations were held on the retirement of Wally Hammond. At an 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.

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 FC 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.

OBITUARIES

Mike Little

Mike Little, Wales Conservancy's drawing office manager, died at the early age of 45 years.

He joined the FC from college in 1962 as a keen young cartographic draughtsman and was promoted in 1966 to take charge of the drawing office.

In 1980 he became a higher grade draughtsman and provided an efficient and friendly service throughout Wales, earning respect for his technical expertise and artistic talent.

In the course of nearly 26 years with FC he made many friends and his sparkling wit and repartee made him the mainstay of the Social Club.

He was a charismatic personality, motivating all who came near him; his skilful organising powers and warm humour will be missed by friends and colleagues throughout the country.

Eileen Empson

Eileen Empson, BEM, died on May 5, in Chichester after a short illness.

Eileen and Jim Empson came to Alice Holt in 1949 from a war ravaged London, Jim to be caretaker and Eileen as part-time cleaner.

Eileen moved over to become the telephonist in 1958 and remained in that post until retirement in 1981. Her dedicated, courteous and always helpful manner gained the admiration of everyone who came in contact with her, staff and visitors alike.

She was awarded the BEM in 1978 in recognition of her services to and on behalf of the Commission. She is sadly missed by all friends and colleagues. Our sympathy to her family.

Jimmy Patterson, retired ploughing manager, South Scotland, died on May 9, after a very short illness.

OTHER RETIREMENTS INCLUDE

KENNY CLARK, BEM, head ranger. Worked throughout South Scotland including Changue where his father was forester; Fleet; Dalbeattie; Ae; and Moffat. Won Balfour Deer Trophy in 1971 for contribution to wildlife research.

DAVID FORREST, craftsman, Lothian and Tweed Forest district, after 33 years' service.

VALERY (JOE) VASILIEFF, BEM, ganger, with 37 years at Clatteringshaws. Ukrainian by birth, he fled Russian and German regimes and settled in South-west Scotland. At presentations, seat unveiled in his honour, to be set at Deer Museum looking out over much of Joe's life.

● We hope to give more on these retirements in our next issue.

GAME FAIR AT KELSO

The 1988 Game Fair will be staged at Floors Castle, Kelso, Roxburghshire, on July 22-24. In this 30th anniversary year, it is hoped to attract more than the 135,000 visitors who went to Chatsworth Park last year.

Torn apart by stupid idiots



A senseless rampage of destruction hit a popular picnic site in Gwent Forest district just before the late May holiday.

It meant that staff had to undertake rushed repairs after the vandals tore apart the site, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage.

At the Cwmcarn scenic drive, ten stone barbecues were destroyed, a portable toilet was overturned, and a refuse shed damaged.

FDM David Parsons said: "We have had vandalism before but not on this scale. It appeared to be calculated rather than mindless and is one of the worst scenes I have come across. The Community Task Force had worked hard creating this site and erecting the barbecues and now they have to help us to start again."

The vandals, who had earlier been reported for rowdy behaviour at a camp site, continued their trail of destruction along the forest drive.

Forest manager, Mr Owen Roberts, said it looked as though "two hand grenades" had been fired at the picturesque site.

"It must have taken them two or three hours to do what they did. They must have used sledgehammers to smash them up. It is wanton damage."

The local burgh council, who own part of the site, also condemned the culprits ... "it has done little to enhance the image of the burgh to our visitors and tourists," said an official.

The seven-mile stretch of scenic drive attracts between 60,000 and 70,000 people each year.

Police are investigating the incident.

That's much, much better!

After the senseless rampage described above, here's the other side of the coin ... helping to improve an area rather than destroy it.

An MSC team have rebuilt a 250-metre dry-stane dyke which separates Cashel Campsite from the road to Rowardennan, on Loch Lomondside.

The dyke has suffered badly from the ravages of time and traffic — and West Highland Way walkers taking short cuts! and if nothing was done the wall would fall.

Luckily, Central Regional Council run a first-class Community Programme Agency and they agreed to set an MSC team to work. Fifteen men were employed for most of the winter under a supervisor who had learned

dyking on a similar project at Sheriffmuir. The entire project was carried out at no cost to the Forestry Commission. The same MSC agency have also been improving footpaths up four mountains in Aberfoyle Forest District — Ben Lomond, Ben A'an, Ben Venue and Ben Ledi. They also organised a short course for FC employees to learn how to maintain dry stone dykes and footpaths. This was attended by QEFP Warden John Brommage and Forest Craftsmen Jim Scott and Alistair Livingstone — Jim and Alistair have already put their skills to good use by dismantling a short section of dry-stone dyke in Aberfoyle and rebuilding it at the Glasgow Garden Festival.



The task force hard at work at repairs, and (below) the scene at one of the ten barbecue spots showing the senselessness of it all. Broken slabs everywhere.

Saving forest wildlife

Report by ROBIN KHAN, head ranger, West of England Conservancy.

During the last ten years or so there has been a noticeable increase in bracken in many of our west country forests and other habitats.

By mid-July, valuable woodland glades, verges and large areas of heath once rich in flora and insect life have become buried under bracken sometimes over a metre in height.

Short-stemmed flowering plants such as violets, primroses, ground ivy and trefoils — all so important for nectar or larval food — become totally suppressed and fail to flower and establish themselves.

Not only are flower and insects affected in this way. Very often sites of historical interest and SSSI's suffer from the same problem, making it almost impossible to visit them in high summer let alone see them.

The increase in bracken has coincided with a sharp decline in the fritillary butterfly populations — particularly the Highbrown. All require violet leaves as their larval food plant.

Several years ago four sample areas were selected on the Haldon Forest, near Exeter, and the bracken was swiped to try to regain some of the lost flora and insects. This was followed up by treating the areas as sensitively as possible with Asulox chemical.

Although a selective bracken killer, Asulox will temporarily defoliate plants such as hemp agrimony, common fleabane and the buckthorn species — all useful butterfly food plants.

Today, the Haldon sites are now virtually bracken free and once again covered in wild flowers — one of the sites now supporting many orchids and 32 breeding butterfly species.

The Highbrown, Pearl-bordered, Small pearl-bordered and the Silver-washed fritillaries have greatly improved in numbers despite poor summers.

Bracken does have some uses. It provides shelter and shade for many wild creatures and supports a number of night-flying moths which in turn provide food for the nightjar.

The clearing of bracken from flora rich habitat is not only a valuable conservation exercise but it could provide our Rangers with a most worthwhile monitoring and recording programme.



SAVING THE WILDLIFE ... like the small Pearl-Bordered.



SAVING THE WILDLIFE ... like the Silver-washed.

STILL ON CONSERVATION ... AND THE QUEEN HONOURS A COLLEAGUE

BEM goes to Eric

Enthusiasm for conservation has led to the award in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of the British Empire Medal for Senior Ranger Eric Masters.

Eric (61), joined the FC as a forest worker in 1950 at Wareham where he gained promotion to ganger, ranger and then to senior ranger in 1967.

His interest in bats led to the development of a nest design that has found favour with five main species of bats in the forest. He is also an expert on the management of Sika deer and his liaison with police forces have led to curtailment of poaching in Dorset and Hampshire. Through his enthusiasm for wildlife conservation he has encouraged hundreds of youngsters to extend their forest and countryside visits and studies.

Other awards include:—

BEM (Military Division): to Maureen O'Donnell (systems development, HQ) for her work with the Intelligence Corps, Territorial Army. Maureen, who has been with FC for 13 years, has served in the TA for seven years and is the first woman to gain such a recognition for work in intelligence.

OBE to Thomas Smith, managing director, Kirkoswald Sawmill, Ayrshire. The company also operate mills at Benmore and Kilmallie. In



Maureen O'Donnell

1987 they announced plans to merge with A. R. Brownlie, another Scottish-based company, and together will operate technically-advanced, high capacity mills in the UK.

Mr Smith has served the industry through the Home Timber Merchants' Association of Scotland and the Home-Grown Timber Advisory Committee.

MBE James Sutton, purchasing manager, Shotton Paper Co., who in 35 years in the private sector has been a respected purchaser and has served on a number of advisory bodies.

Welsh doctorate awarded

Dr Julian Evans, principal silviculturist at Alice Holt, has been awarded the degree of D.Sc. by the University of Wales.

Dr Evans was invited in 1987 to submit his published work for consideration. It includes a series of papers about the productivity of successive rotations of pine in

Swaziland and several on various aspect of broadleaved silviculture.

Two of his books, "Plantation Forestry in the Tropics," published by Oxford University Press, and Forestry Commission Bulletin No. 62 "Silviculture of Broadleaved Woodland" were also included as an integral part of the degree submission.

A CYCLING WE WILL GO



A lovely summer scene ... a party of cyclists take to the hills and woodlands of mid-Wales.

The sight of those groups of two-wheelers on the 2500-foot range of Cader Idris mountain above Dolgellau is not an unusual one nowadays, as we report more fully on Page Three.

Photo: Isobel Cameron

Record entry for APF

A 25 per cent increase in the number of exhibitors who have registered so far for the seventh national forestry machinery demonstration at Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, in September, is reported by the Association of Professional Foresters.

APF are the organisers of this major international exhibition, which is recognised by the forestry industry as the leading event in its calendar.

Staged bi-annually since 1976, each time in a different part of the country, the demonstration sets out

to show the latest equipment and techniques used in the UK.

Over the years, the number of manufacturers who have used the occasion to launch new products and to display and demonstrate their ranges of equipment, has increased considerably.

In addition, static stands are taken by the Forestry Commission, ADAS, forestry organisations, the universities, forestry training and safety councils, management, investment and contracting companies.