

SLASHER



Newspaper of the Forestry Commission

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An international flavour about Slasher this month, with Kenya, Germany and Finland all finding a mention in our columns . . .

Problems of pollution

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The White Hunter

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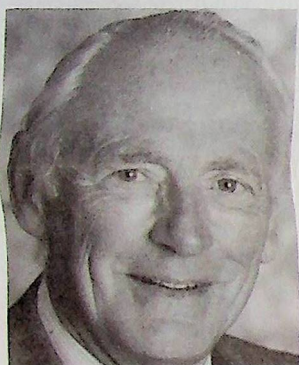
Flippin' heck!

Bewitched, bothered and bewildered goes the song . . . A-mused, b-draggled and C-c-c-cold, go these young lasses of M(S) Conservancy.

Despite the unfriendly weather, the staff of Mid Scotland went to great lengths to rally to the cause of children's charity, and one of them, as you see here, found that a change of footwear proved useful in the conditions.

There's more about their efforts in "Here and There" in Page THREE.

Important advances — chairman BETTER DAYS ARE AHEAD



QUOTES

— by Raymond Johnstone (above), FC Chairman, in a recent broadcast interview . . .

There's a very important EC meeting going on at the moment which will affect the future of farming in this country to a very considerable extent. I've no idea what is going to come out of that but it sounds likely that a number of farmers may decide to plant more trees as a result.

And later in the same interview . . .

There is certainly profit in forestry for farmers but it's probably quite a long-term profit.



by Robin Cutler, Director-General . . .

As I take over, we stand at the threshold of a new phase in British forestry . . . certainly there is a greater appreciation than ever by the public of the value of growing trees.

Private planting dropped by almost a third last year because of the removal of tax reliefs, but our chairman, Raymond Johnstone, says he is hopeful of an improvement, particularly when the general economic situation improves.

Despite the reduction, Mr Johnston described 1989-90 as "a year of increasing public recognition of the many benefits of forests and woodlands" in the environment. And Robin Cutler, Director-General, is also cautiously optimistic.

Presenting the FC's annual report to a press conference in Edinburgh, Mr Johnstone pointed to important advances . . .

- Last year about 5000 hectares (12,500 acres) of broadleaved trees were planted — compared with 500 hectares ten years ago.
- Development of the Community Forest idea, with the involvement of local people.
- Timber sales brought in nearly £88 million last year, "a major business by any standard."
- An enormous range of FC-provided leisure facilities, enjoyed by up to 50 million visitors each year (parks, reserves, walks, trails).

Mr Johnstone told pressmen: "There has been a continuous Government policy aimed at expanding Britain's forest estate since 1919 and woodland cover has doubled since then to more than two million hectares. Until very recently priority was given to food production from fertile land, effectively confining most new forestry to the uplands, especially in Scotland and Wales.

"These forests are now an important part of many landscapes. There is a growing public recognition of the many benefits of forests and woodlands in our environment, and we are giving increasing attention to the less-wooded areas of Britain, especially on farms and down the hill.

"Our duty to ensure an 'environmental balance' in what we do is already reflected in the new and higher environmental standards required when planting trees. We have been especially successful in creating more broadleaved woodlands.

"Another element of the changing emphasis in forestry expansion is the popular idea of a forest for every town. Community Forests will lead to an increase in wildlife and general improvement in the amenity, especially on derelict land; new recreation facilities will be provided and they will also give employment in forestry, agriculture, conservation and leisure. The most important thing will be the involvement

of local people who will help shape their community forests.

"Wood production from Britain's forests has nearly doubled since 1955. Timber sales from the Commission's forests brought in nearly £88 million last year, a major business by any standard, and a most important industrial feedstock which has helped to create thousands of new jobs in the wood processing industry in the 1980s.

"More than 40,000 people work in forestry and related jobs in Britain and we in the Commission provide an enormous range of high quality leisure facilities. They are enjoyed by something like fifty million day visitors each year to Forest Parks, Forest Nature Reserves and hundreds of local forest walks and trails."

Highlights from the annual report include:

FINANCE: Receipts from timber harvesting were £87.7 million, or £3.4 million up on the previous year. With further income of £17 million from other activities this gave total receipts of £104.7 million. Total payments by the Commission were £162.9 million leaving £58.2 million to be met from our Parliamentary Grant-in-Aid.

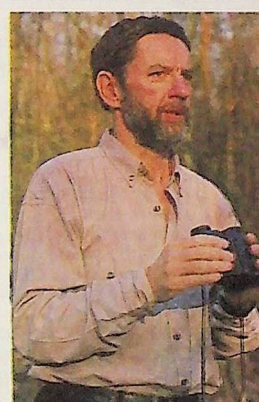
The operating account for Forestry Enterprise shows a £66 million surplus of income over expenditure on our productive forests in 1989/90.

STRATEGY: The first Indicative Forestry Strategy, prepared by Strathclyde Regional Council as part of its structure plan, was approved by the Secretary of State. Other Regional Councils in Scotland are preparing forestry strategies. Their value as a framework for future decision-making has been widely welcomed by forestry, conservation and countryside interests.

GRANTS: A total of 12,767 hectares of new planting was grant-aided under the Woodland Grant Scheme, a fall of about 49 per cent over the previous year. In addition, some 2639 hectares of new planting was grant-aided in association with the Farm Woodland Scheme. There

Continued on Page 4.

Double for Philip

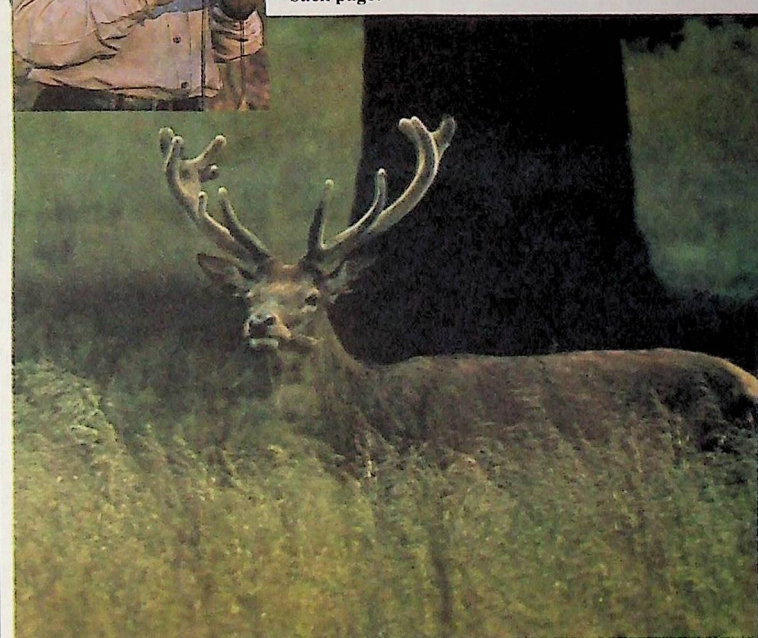


In the space of a 12 months, Dr Philip Ratcliffe (Wildlife and Conservation) has won two major awards for himself and FC.

Last year, Philip (inset) picked up the Balfour Browne Trophy to mark an outstanding contribution to deer management — then gained a £1500 prize in the Laurent Perrier Champagne Awards.

The judges pay tribute to "excellent" research work extending over a period of 13 years in the field of red deer management, which gives us the opportunity to publish this fine study of a majestic stag seen in the Highlands.

• Full reports of this and other awards are on the back page.



JOHN FLETCHER
Director's appeal

East's new chief named

Norman Dannatt retires as Conservator (East England) in May and will be succeeded by Richard Smith, Assistant Conservator (Ops) (North England).

David Paterson retires as Silviculturist(N) in June and will be succeeded by William Mason.

Branch out...let Tree Aid grow

A new plea for Forestry Commission staff and their associates to give more support to the international charity Tree Aid has been made by its director. In the five years since Tree Aid was set up almost £4000 has been raised within FC, but much more is the aim.

Leading the campaign is John Fletcher, former Conservator for West England, who at a meeting at headquarters in Edinburgh, painted a bleak picture of what deforestation and subsequent desertification mean in terms of drastically reduced agricultural food production in various regions of North Africa.

Even small-scale tree-planting schemes could mean the survival of a village community for 30 years or more and other communities within 30 to 40 miles would be encouraged to adopt similar afforestation plans.

"The re-greening of small areas means a lot in regions that have suffered from the shrinking forest," he said.

Mr Fletcher is helped in his Tree Aid work by many other FC personnel. He hopes that special support schemes could be introduced with the backing of ODA and VSO. Deeds of Covenant can be made and details are obtainable from Tree Aid, Mayfield, The Street, Farmborough, Bath, Avon BA3 1AL. Gifts, large and small, can be sent to the same address. So why not drop them a line today . . . or better still get cracking and form your own support group.

THE GERMAN CONNECTION

Air pollution at high levels



Group get-together . . . Herr Fischer and his FC visitors discuss nursery management at Schaumburger Wald during the four-day visit.

A DISTURBING amount of pollution at 800 metres above sea level (2600 feet) and a fungus that is difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate were just two main problems that Senior Ranger Andy Patmore of Northants FD came across when he visited West Germany last September.

Andy was one of ten FC employees elected to join a four-day forestry tour and experiment in international living in Germany and he summed it all up by saying it was "a worthwhile, relevant and enjoyable course in continental forestry."

So impressed was Andy, who is based in Salcey Forest, East England, that he submitted an article for *Slasher*, excerpts from which are given here.

He wrote: The tour and experiment were sponsored by the Ernest Cook Trust and the Forestry Commission.

We were hosted by the Europäische Staatsbürgerakademie (ESTA) which specialises in seminars for all professions. Our seminar — organised by Dr Kallendorf, director of ESTA Bad Oeynhausen — consisted of several forest visits, as well as a trip to one of Germany's 14 forestry schools and a guided tour of the Aue river valley which was being re-landscaped.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the seminar for me were the trips to the Harz Mountains and to Schaumburger Wald. We spent a day in one of 15 districts in the Harz Mountains with the beat forester, Herr Schumann. The forest area totals 80,000ha, giving each district an average of about 5300ha. to manage. Each district has a head forester with five or six beat foresters and about 20 forest workers.

About 80 per cent of the forest is Norway spruce, the remainder being beech and oak in the lower elevations. The area of the Harz Mountains can boast detailed forest management records covering the past 250 years.

A worrying problem is the increase in atmospheric pollution at higher elevations. In an area 2600 feet up it was estimated that 60 per cent of the varying ages of Norway spruce were sick or dying, pollution symptoms being easily recognisable — yellowing needles, thin crowns and dead tops (although lichens grew in profusion on lower branches!) Even 15-year-old trees showed signs of pollution.

Hand-pruning

We were glad to leave the cold heights to the buzzard and red kite and return to the valleys to inspect a clearfelling of 120-year-old Norway spruce. Every stem (bottom three metres) had fomes; every tree has it and no preventative action is taken to curb the fungus as it is considered a waste of time.

Best quality spruce sawlogs fetch 250Dm/m³ (£83/m³). Extraction on the steep slopes is achieved by using a timberjack skidder. The areas on the lower elevations are being restocked with oak and beech. When planting hardwoods the site has to be fenced against red and roe deer and Mouflon (wild sheep) and the planting site for each tree is prepared by a hand-held auger mixing fertiliser with the soil.

Elsewhere the forest is restocked with Norway spruce relying on natural regeneration or by planting at 2m x 1m. The area is not fenced: when they reach thicket stage they are respaced and around 400 per ha. of the remaining trees are selected as final crop trees; these are pruned to a height of 2 metres and then the bark is carefully scored with a strong sharp "comb" all round the stem and on to the developing root spurs. The resulting weeping resin reduces the risk of bark stripping by red deer and is proving successful. But it costs at present 6Dm (£2) per tree! (£800/ha!).

After reaching pole stage, in the best stands of Norway spruce the selected final crop trees are high-pruned by hand to a height of 6-8 metres at a cost of 5Dm (£1.65) a tree.

Deer control is carried out by beat foresters and private stalkers who rent a minimum area of 80 ha. During 1989/1990 season 2000 red deer were culled in two districts.

By ANDY PATMORE

When asked about landscaping the shapes of clearfells / restock sites on the steep valley sides, Herr Schumann smiled and replied: "Why worry about that when the whole mountain is covered with forest. We never consider this as a problem!" Looking around the view we had before us he was right.

The following day we visited Schaumburger Wald which belongs to the Graf of Buchberg (count or earl). Our guide was head forester Herr Fischer who started by showing us a 14-pointer red stag weighing 165kg that the owner had shot that morning. Schaumburger Wald was a good contrast to the Harz tour, this forest of 2325ha. was 47 per cent oak grown on a 200 year rotation, 11 per cent beech, 28 conifer (NS SP EL), and 14 other hardwoods. The staff consisted of a head forester, two beat foresters, 10 forest workers, one forestry mechanic and two part-time nursery workers. Elevation of the forest was between 40 and 50 metres (130ft — 160ft) above sea level and the entire area was on heavy, wet, cold clays (just like home in Northants).

The biggest management problem is protection. As a private estate, hunting is an important management objective. Population estimates of game animals are 250 wild boar, 200 red, 100 fallow and 200-plus roe, all on an area of 2325 ha., plus surrounding farmland. Compensation is paid to agricultural neighbours if unreasonable damage occurs in their fields. Much of the culling is done by the three foresters, but mature / trophy stags, bucks and boars are culled by the Graf and permit stalkers.

All restock sites have to be fenced against deer, but boar are another matter. Nothing stops them except a very strong fence surrounding the estate nursery. Much of the beat forester's time is spent checking his fence lines.

All trees for restocking are grown in the nursery from seed collected from their own registered seed stands and are tended for three years before planting out. Oaks are planted as whips at a spacing of 1½m x 1m (every fifth tree in each row is hornbeam or lime) 6600 trees / ha.

Premature deaths

Some beautiful stands of oak between 150-200 years old had an understory of hornbeam / lime / beech, and 30 per cent of the oak were of veneer quality. Again, a combination of biotic and abiotic factors are causing sickness and premature deaths of oak over 40 years old, caused by pollution carried in western winds and extremely cold winters (-17°C.) in the early Eighties, followed by hot dry summers in the late Eighties, plus severe attacks by tortrix caterpillars (oak leaf roller moth). The cycle of felling and thinning is dictated by the damage / death of trees, so the one third of 5000m³ of oak felled annually is sick or dying! Total timber production on the estate at the moment is about 15,000m³ / annum, higher than usual as three is much windblow to be cleared.

The oak is sold by auction on the estate and we visited the stacking area where the auction is held. In February when the logs are sold, it is possible to have 500,000Dm of oak timber on the roadside (£170,000). Prices range from 70Dm/m³ (£23/m³) for fencing oak, 120Dm/m³ (£40/m³) planking oak to over 600Dm/m³ (£200+) for veneer oak. The average price for the oak harvested by the estate is around 400Dm/m³ (£133/m³).



Joint attack . . . air pollution and the dendroctonus show their effect with the premature deaths of Norway spruce in West Germany's Harz Mountains. And (below), Herr Fischer shows the other side of the coin — a fine example of a 7m oak veneer log at Schaumburger Wald.



THE FINNISH CONNECTION

Surprise gifts to the men o' Wales

DOLGELLAU were host to a party from the Society of Finnish Foresters in Coed-y-Brenin in the autumn.

The visitors — were on a short tour of England and Wales — included forest managers from both state and private forests, research institutes and a variety of forest industries.

They were welcomed by Mark Yorke, manager at Dolgellau, on behalf of the Conservator before spending the day on a tour which illustrated the multi-purpose role of the Forestry Commission's responsibilities.

With 66-per-cent of Finland being forest land, and the forest industry the second largest contributor to its gross national product, the party was shown a cross-section of current forest practice in the uplands of Wales.

The tour began with recent afforestation at 1700 ft. above sea level, which contrasted with Finnish forests at a maximum of 150 ft; then continued down at the bottom of the valley; and ended with a discussion in a stand of YC24 Douglas fir aged 63 years.

En route the party stopped at a variety of sites to see Scandinavian machinery working in British conditions — including the Osa Eva Harvester of thinnings; the Valmet forwarder; and the result of Delta scarifying.



Finnish friends take in the scenery

The Forestry Safety Council are to conduct a survey this year to assess how aware those engaged in forest operations are to all safety measures, particularly working practices.

The results will be used to monitor the performance of the Safety Council and of forest management, both public and private.

Talks covered a wide field, bearing in mind that many of our upland forestry problems and practices are mirrored to a large extent in Finland's flat and rocky terrain, with a short growing season.

On a fine, warm autumnal day the forest was looking at its most colourful in the dramatic mountain scenery, and the Finns soon had their cameras and video in operation. After a picnic lunch, the party saw examples of conservation work and recreation facilities.

In the Coed-y-Brenin Visitor Centre, Gerry Philpot presented the party with a wooden plaque inscribed with the Coed-y-Brenin Forest Park's logo of a blackcock — a bird of both Finnish and British forests.

Members of the Commission and the Institute of Chartered Foresters formed the party in Bala for dinner, where mementoes and gifts were exchanged.

Including a pair of braces for Terry O'Keefe whose trousers were falling down; a silk tie for Peter Lodge and Gerry Philpot whose shirts are always open; a pair of boot socks for Bob Farmer and Paul Sherrington to keep their toes warm; and a hunter's knife for John Voysey (the ICF's tour organiser) and Mark Yorke.

The latter avoided the traditional Finnish practice of being 'nicked' by it in order to draw blood, but . . . made use of it the following day to gallow a fallow deer caught in a forest fence!

GRAHAM HAS WORDS OF ADVICE

IN what has been described as a significant step forward in promoting the future of Scotland's native woodlands, Graham Tuley has been appointed to the new post of Highlands Woodland advisor.

He will advise on the management of mainly Scots pine and birch and provide information on the potential for more native woodland planting in the Highland and Grampian Regions.

Mr Tuley will liaise with landowners who seek information on different species; grants to help planting and management; and markets for products.

Mr Tuley said, "As time passes many more people are likely to become owners and managers of trees."

"I shall be encouraging greater diversity in species choice and general forest structure when owners either



GRAHAM TULEY

New post

replant existing woodlands or create new ones. The forests of northern Scotland are a substantial renewable resource which at present produce timber worth £20 million a year."

For the past few years, Graham has been Kincardine FD Manager in Grampian Region and has been involved with the pinewoods of Royal Deeside.

His interest in birch and pine started at Aberdeen University when he studied the taxonomy of the birches in Glen Cairn, near Ballater.

During a period of research in the South of England he was involved with both native and introduced species. In 1979 he initiated an experiment on the growth of Sessile Oak in polythene tubing.

This initial experiment with 300 trees became a major project which resulted in the development of the tree-shelter that is in widespread use throughout Britain and many other countries.

SURPRISE SAFETY CHECKS

The Commons Agriculture Committee recommended last January that "the Government investigate urgently the effectiveness of its present health and safety measures in forestry."

Qualified forestry training officers will make unannounced checks of working methods,

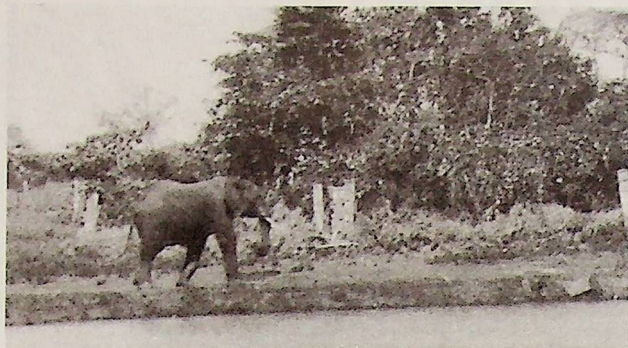
machinery, tools, clothing, and equipment, using the Forestry Safety Council Guides as the standard. The survey will also cover workers' experience, training, awareness of safety, and inquire after past accidents.

Workers' views will be sought to pinpoint positive and negative factors.

THE KENYA CONNECTION

White Hunter with a mission

A young bull elephant trundles past a new fig tree planted on the site where the tree stood in which the then Princess Elizabeth spent the night her father died in 1952. The elephant, 10 ft. 6 in. at the shoulder, shows the trees are now well over 30 ft. in height. Three acres lying behind the tree were planted two years later.



A former Commission man who has spent the past 35 years of his life in Kenya has sent us a fascinating insight into the problems of conservation there, and how his close links with the Royal family are helping to keep his campaign in the spotlight.

It was back in 1952 that the then Princess Elizabeth was at Treetops in Kenya, a world-famous hotel, when she learned of the death of her father, King George VI, and that she was now Queen.

She hurriedly flew back to Britain, and it was not until 31 years later that she was able to return to Treetops.

And there her guide was Richard Prickett, who became known on television and in the national Press as the "white hunter" who escorted the Royal visitor.

It was a meeting, he recalls, "that changed my life completely... a wonderful experience."

For as a result, he wrote a book, the story of the famous hotel, and from the royalties he began his long campaign to save the rain forests.

But let Richard, who is now 73, tell the story himself...

"Not many foresters who served in the Forestry Commission during the years following the Second World War will remember me at Lynford Hall, Kershope, Grizedale, Hardknott, or Mortimer.

"Many, however, will remember seeing on television the 'White Hunter' who escorted the Queen back to Treetops in 1983. I was that lucky man, and the wonderful experience changed my life completely.

Queen's 'distress'

"I was seconded from the FC to Kenya in 1956, and was in charge of seven forest stations. During the 'Troubles' I was in the Police Reserve, and was also Honorary Game Warden for ten years. In 1968 I was Africanised and did a year professional hunting before moving into tourism. I retired in 1988 and today give wildlife lectures.

"Her Majesty was indeed distressed to see the retreat of what, in 1952, had been a vast montane rain forest, and when the Press were well and truly out of hearing it was discussed at considerable length. I told her it would be returned, and from that moment all of my time, my money, and my energies were devoted to that end.

"I wrote 'Treetops,' the story of a world-famous hotel, published by David & Charles of Devon, and advanced royalties went a long way in helping to get down to the extremely difficult task of growing trees where over a hundred elephants can invade the area in a single night.

Nice profit

"I started sending a three-page annual report, together with photographs, to Her Majesty through the British High Commission in Nairobi, and have not missed in seven years. They are always answered. That she does indeed read them was proved during the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and they specifically asked to see the trees.

"Royalties, however, good as they were, were not enough. I launched the 'Save Our Rainforest Trust.' It took six years to register: in Third World countries, they have to be very very careful. It was, however, registered on June 6 last year and when its books are audited at the end of the year it will show a nice profit, with 3½ acres of 30-foot high trees, a fully-equipped office, and a full-time secretary."

In chapter eight of his Treetops book, Richard explains that the biggest single factor causing the retreat of the forest is the blocking of the ancient elephant migration trails linking Mount Kenya and the Aberdares.



Richard Prickett as he was seven years ago when the Queen returned to Kenya. The Royal "white hunter" is now 73 years old.

"Only a link-up can bring about a permanent cure," he told Slasher.

"The distance is less than 40 miles and the corridor would be narrow, but only when a million pounds is in the kitty (as against the few thousand at present) can the project be even contemplated. America has spent much, much more keeping the caribou of Alaska moving.

"Elefriends of UK and the East African Wildlife Society are talking about helping in undertaking first a feasibility study. If we succeed, we can then think about worldwide loss of forests, how an area as big as Wales is being lost every three months."

You can help

If you would like to help, please send donations (cash or cheque) to Secretary, Save OUR Rainforest Trust, PO Box 792, Nyeri, Kenya, East Africa. Small amounts up to £10 can be sent in notes... and all donations will be acknowledged.

Ever active in the cause, Richard is considering launching a magazine and to recruit supporters from all areas of forestry. Meantime, he hopes to keep readers fully informed of progress through future editions of Slasher.

His eventual aim... that a member of the Royal family agrees to become a patron of the trust of which he is chairman.

NOW THE BOOT'S ON THE OTHER FOOT... (SO TO SPEAK)

Following an issue of boots from the Superintendent of Works to the Site Foreman at Llandoverly Roads, Wales Conservancy, these verses were addressed to "Mr Wilson..."

*My present boots have served me well,
But now they start to falter;
Their tread have gone, so slick
and smooth,
No way they'll hold out water.*

*To have wet feet, day in day out,
I did not think was fair;
So I came to you with a request,
To have a brand new pair.*

*The boots arrived, in a cardboard box,
So I took a look inside;
To my surprise, they're really smart,
I'll wear this pair with pride.*

*I put them on, and walked about,
I felt a proper toff;
With their orange tops, and low-slung backs,
No way I'd take them off!*

*To break them in, I took a walk,
Around the town one night;
When I got back to my front door,
My God! I had a fright.*

*One boot had gained on the other one,
A steady yard or two!
You may think I'm pulling your leg,
But I really swear — it's true.*

*I got inside, and took them off,
But everything looked fine;
Till I turned them over, and had a look,
Right's 8, but left one's 9!!*

WINSTON DAVIES.

A FEW TIPS...

Our columns are always open to readers to contribute their bit, and here Mrs Doreen Holland, of Talbot Green, Mid Glamorgan, has given some hints for around the home and garden...

- Make soap powder go twice as far by using half the normal amount and adding two tablespoons of ordinary borax.
- If you feel unsteady on a small pair of steps, nail a broom handle securely to the side for something to hold on to.
- For everyday furniture care, use a mixture made from two tablespoons of vinegar in a half-pint of warm water.
- Don't buy ties at Garden Centres to hold plants etc., in place. Wide strips cut from discarded tights make strong yet soft garden "string."
- Keep a pail of thick rubber or gardening gloves in your car tool kit. If you should break down, you'll at least be able to keep your hands free from grease and dirt.
- Any more tips? Other readers are invited to share their ideas. Write to Editor, Slasher, FC, Corstorphine, Edinburgh.

HORSE RIDE RAISES £1210

A 15-mile sponsored horse ride took place in Clwyd FD in mid-September to raise funds for the Arthritis Research Council.

Mrs Menna Jones and Mrs Carol Jones took part and helped to raise a grand total of £1210.

Thanks to Mr Gordon Griffiths and Mr Steven Burrows for organising the route, and to Mr Ken Jones for his help on the day.

Here and there

You're all wet!



TAKE a handful of Civil Servants, add a few wet sponges, a pinch (?) of water and some stocks and you've got a recipe for fun and success.

The BBC Children in Need appeal prompted foolhardy fundraisers from M(S) Conservancy Office to brave harsh November elements (and wet sponges) in their "Soak a Bloke" appeal.

Over £400 was collected from passers-by and staff, including the Conservator who couldn't resist a throw at Howard Davies (Drawing Office).

Nearly all staff participated in the effort including Angus Murray, Syd House and Kevin Wilkinson, FDMs Cowal, Abertay and Aberfoyle respectively, who joined in when stakes were doubled by staff in the district office for their FDM.

Pupil power

Despite bitter cold and thick mist, children from three primary schools in the Lochaweside area (Dalavich, Ardconnell and Kilchrenan) launched wholeheartedly into Loch Awe FD's contribution to National Tree Week when they planted oak trees and acorns in the Dalavich Oakwood. After a picnic lunch the children were taken for a guided walk round the Oakwood trail.

Lessons of storms

A symposium supported by the Arboricultural Association is to be held at Wolverhampton Polytechnic on Saturday, March 16. The lessons of the storms, multi-purpose forests and their value as an educational resource in New National Forest, and urban treescapes are among topics to be discussed at the third WWRG symposium. Details from Wolverhampton Woodland Research Group, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, WV1 1SB. (Tel. (0902) 322135, 322140 or 322158).

Week of Pride

Following the huge success of the 1990 New Forest Pride Week litter clear-up, plans are well underway for this year's campaign between Saturday, 13th and Sunday, 21st April. The organisers aim to get many more than last year's 6000 volunteers into the Forest and its environs for the '91 clear up.

The event is organised by New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission who will also provide bags, gloves and a bag collection service. Volunteers should contact Linda Cox (Tel. Lyndhurst 283141).

TGUK's NEW CHIEF

New chief executive of Timber Growers UK is Sandy Murray, previously director of finance and development.

He took over from Ronnie Williams who has become executive director of the Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain.

Peter Wilson, currently land use and environmental officer, becomes technical director of TGUK.



SANDY MURRAY

Log Mob's good deed

Four employees from Lochgilhead District Office M(S) boldly went where only very fit people had gone before — an Army assault course at Fort William in aid of the British Leprosy Relief Association (LEPRA).

Once the Army set the 13 obstacles, there was no turning back for the 33 teams and definitely not for the FC's "Log Mob" consisting of Trainee Forester Alan Campbell and admin. officers Corinne Cheetham, Michelle Davidson and Jane MacPhail.

The obstacles included a 6 ft. wall, scramble net and rope swing, and two wet and soggy medicine balls which the teams had to carry over the entire course. Each time a ball touched the ground (which it seemed hell-bent on doing), five seconds were added on to the final time.

It would be kind to say the Log Mob didn't win. But if the truth be told — they were last! However, all teams completed the course and raised more than £3000 for LEPRA. Well done!

French tarts and not a few mince pies!



The winning Nativty scene

Quite a contrast in pictures . . . French tarts in one; a traditional Nativty scene in the other. And true to the spirit of Christmas, it was the Nativty scene that won the day at the W(E) Conservancy seasonal competition. The Social Club Committee organised a full programme of events during the run-up to Christmas, and it certainly had its own moments.

The best decorated room award had the PW Estates section reconstructing the scene of René's café from TV's "Allo, Allo" (an idea not so far removed from forestry as one might think as the series is partly filmed in Hertford Forest). A young decorator arrived the same day to plaster the office wall and was overnight telling his boss he couldn't possibly work as the place was full of "French tarts" — we assume he meant the gâteau.

However, the prize went to the Ornamental / Finance with a beautiful candlelit Nativty scene complete with real hay and "Spanish" donkeys. Other winners decorated with a Marión Allen with her creation of a chimney pot complete with Santa gait — the Likely Labs, consisting of Arthur Barlow, Alan Ray, Martin Davies and Brian Jones. Close behind were Sherwood Foresters (Pat Sherwood, Nigel Strether, Dave Clark and Jo Harvey).

HERE'S A LABOUR OF LOVE to trace a historic road



Wrack your memories, please . . . particularly in Wales. Details are sought of the history of "living vans" which were used in the forests of perhaps 50 (even more) years ago. One of them has come into the hands of Alwyn Rogers, of Colne, Lancashire, and he is now lovingly restoring it as near as possible to its original condition, to operate alongside his steam-ploughing engine.

To help him, he would like to know more of the history of these caravan-type vehicles . . . and here any retired forester from the old Cynwdd Forest in Wales might help their memories jogged, for it is known it spent some time there.

Old papers found during the reconstruction of the van hold some clues . . . veterans of the forests might be able to enlarge on them.

Alwyn bought the van in 1989 from a man who had himself owned it for four or five years after buying it from a source in Hertfordshire. Previously it had been in Wales, and is believed to have been used for 25 years or so as a forest workman's mess hut.

It is also known that the van was built by John Fowler of Leeds, famous for all types of steam engines, and its design dates between 1870 and 1906.

Paperwork clues

Alwyn believes it was a four-man "Contractors' unit and from the old paperwork found (including log sheets for a lorry with the registration of 948 ELM) he knows it spent some time in Cynwdd Forest.

The paperwork also shows that an E. T. Jones received a regular dog allowance of five shillings and there were cattle allowances to O. J. Hollington and R. H. Roberts, plus regular "remittances" to Conservator. These papers and others, including Form A100 (circa 1920), are in the hands of the Editor of Slasher, and will be sent to Wales Conservancy.

But now let Alwyn tell his story and of what he has gleaned of the history of the van . . .

Living vans were built of oak in a variety of sizes — sleeping two, four or six people — and accompanied steam traction engines and steam rollers when they were working away from base or home and the engine crews needed somewhere to stay. The two-man size would most likely go with the steam rollers; in many cases, the driver's wife would be with him and the living van would be their home for many weeks, even months, while the roller was away working.

Cook boy's life

The four-man size, sometimes called "The Contractors", was also used by steam rollers or haulage contractors when covering long distances and crews needed overnight accommodation.

The six-man size was almost always used by steam-ploughing crews when possibly five men and a boy would be needed to work a set steam-ploughing tackle. The teenager's job would involve cooking and running errands. He would then progress on to learning how to drive the steam engines. Ploughing crews always worked from base at first light and then Saturday 4.30 to 1 pm and Sunday was a day off.

I bought the living-van in 1989 after it had lain in storage about four or five years. The interior was peeling and patches of dry rot were found in the front and right walls, and the roof and left side showed signs of heavy waterlogging; one side had suffered impact damage. This had been with a tin plate screwed on and an original small window had been replaced with large cast-iron framed window. After stripping

ECHOES OF '41 AND THE 50's

Miss C. I. Derrick of Engineering and Operations, Wales Conservancy, told Slasher that their records did not go back far enough to help research of the history of the living van.

However, Assistant Conservancy Mechanical Engineer says there were several such vans scattered throughout Wales, and he still comes across the odd wheel lying about.

It is believed the vans were bought direct from Fowler's, and were used either as rest places, wet-weather shelters, and occasionally as out-station office accommodation.

The paperwork found in Mr. Rodgers' van included an instruction for replacement of trees — memo, Mr. R. H. Davies, "A" Div., Oxford, dated 1941; hospital contribution scheme booklet, 1948; record of payments sheets, 1950 or 51; accounts of cash payments, 1951; goods receipt book and stock ledger sheets, 1953; lorry log book registration 948 ELM, 1964; and a Villiers engine spares book, 1965.

If you can help Alwyn, write to him at 3 Kirkstall Drive, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs BB8 6ZZ.

the boards, evidence of fire damage was also apparent in one corner.

The front and right side were stripped to bare wood, and several boards replaced and repaired. The roof was sagging badly so new support arches were cut and a complete new roof put on. Inside an Aga cooker was far too big and heavy, causing the floor to sag, so it was removed and a small coal-fired pipe's gallery stove was acquired and will be fitted shortly.

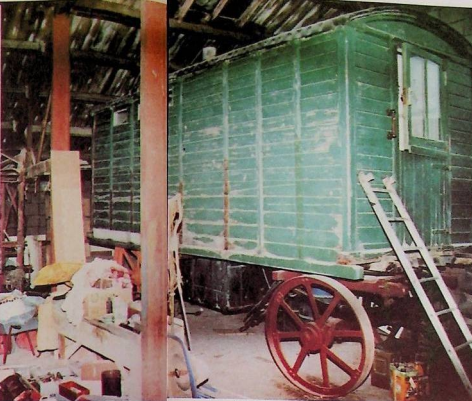
Sleeper's test

Two bunks were in the van, but I feel that it was too big for just two men, so I have taken them out and they will be replaced by two double bunks. Paint had been stripped; new paint applied; damaged cupboards repaired; and a sink installed.

As the van will be in regular use in summer months, we felt it would be better with a sink. The "bucket and chuck it" method — so to keep the inside looking as near original as possible — the sink will be fitted in one of the cupboards and a false floor will be put in when not in use.

The undercarriage and wheels need only cleaning and painting.

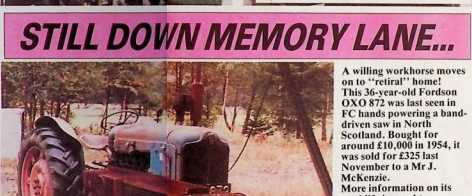
Hopefully next summer should see it nearly finished. I've already slept in it and found it very cosy and comfortable despite not being finished.



How a "living van" took on a new life . . . in four stages. This is how it looked when Alwyn Rogers first saw it in 1989 . . . but this view hides the real damage (below, left) on the other side, where rotting boards had to be removed.



Hey presto . . . the full new side in original styling, complete with refitted window to replace a cast-iron frame.



Still down memory lane . . .

BETTER DAYS AHEAD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

was a significant increase in the proportion of broadleaves planted.

MOTORWAYS: In addition to normal forestry activities the FC have, since the early 1960s, planted some 30 million trees and shrubs alongside motorways and trunk roads.

LAND SALES: A new policy to dispose of some 100,000 hectares of Commission land and properties by the end of the century was announced by the Government in June 1989. This represents about eleven per cent of our existing forest estate. During the year we sold 228 areas of woodland and plantable land, totalling 4085 hectares, most of them being sold to 25 tenants. They also sold 203

TIMBER TOPICS

● MARTIN GALE of Harvesting and Marketing Division assesses the prospects for the year ahead . . .

A SMALL SILVER LINING

Recently we have been reminded that a week is a long time in politics. Equally there have been significant changes in the timber market over a relatively short timescale.

Last spring and early summer there was vigorous activity with the sawmilling trade. Sawlogs at roadside were in strong demand, particularly for the fencing and construction timber markets.

Prices increased with each successive competitive sale. Although the general economy was in decline, highlighted by the drop in new house construction, the weak EC&R gave the domestic sawmilling industry a price advantage. Imports from the Canadians. Domestic sawn softwood production was able to maintain, and in some instances increase, its share within the overall declining market.

Problems

Unfortunately, at the same time the small roundwood processors were continuing to reduce woodyard stocks and rafting makes to match the reducing demand for paper and board and wood products. The drop in new house construction reduced demand for wood panels, a situation compounded by the knock-on effect from the furniture industry.

Increasing over-capacity in the international pulp and paper market, together with reduced domestic demand for paper and board, produced a glut of softwood.

The increased quantity of residues available from the sawmilling industry gave additional problems to supply of small roundwood. We were sheltered from these problems because of secure outlets available through our long term contracts.

In the early autumn, the decline in economic activity continued to bite, and demand from the construction and Northern England and Scotland. As the year progressed, however, rapidly, reversing the previous price advantage, reducing the price of Canadian sawn softwood by 15 per cent.

The domestic sawmilling industry immediately faced lower prices and a declining demand.

As we assess prospects for 1991, we do so with the knowledge that the overall consumption of sawn softwood in 1990 is estimated to have decreased by at least 10 per cent, and that last year saw Canadian sawn softwood average 10 to 15 per cent higher than normal.

Many sawmills are now working shorter weeks and there have been sawmill closures. The significant fall in demand for the two sawmills owned by BSW Timber plc at Kirkcaldy in Ayrshire and Bannock in Argyle.

More information on its worklife is sought.

Or do you have other memories of favourite old pieces of machinery.

Write to the Editor, Slasher, FC HQ at Corsierpherie, Edinburgh.

WITS CORNER CONTEST (CONTINUED) Pull, Tiger . . . Pull!



Here's a gem of a picture which missed our deadline for Wits' Corner last issue, but as we planned to continue the competition, the senders are in luck . . . and they win £20.

Staff at Kielder FD were asked to provide a suitable caption, and a long list resulted.

Jim Ogilvie tells us they were unable to decide the winner, so have left it to us at Slasher . . . and the money-earning line, "She'll do anything for a biscuit, Dennis," was the Editor's verdict.

For the record, the other offerings were:

● This year we decided to handicap the Kielder husky race.

● The Dogs of War . . . or is it a Desert Priest?

● Geoff Capes eat your heart out.

● Only Heineken can do this . . .

● £50,000 for a dog?

● "Slow down, Spot, slow down." ANCA, DM, Sparsholt College.

● It's impossible '89.

● A tension or just a tease?

So this month's award goes to Kielder as a start to the Forests' Commission.

Special bicycle routes provided in Queen Elizabeth Forest Park in Scotland; bike hire is available at Cardinham Woods, Cornwall; and mountain bike championships have been held at Thetford and Cannock Chase as well as Cynwdd.

Which reinforces the recently announced change of emphasis on public regarding cycles on FC property.

A review was carried out because of the rapid growth in cycling and increased demand for use of forests. Four individual cyclists will continue to have free access, but organised groups will have to pay a charge.

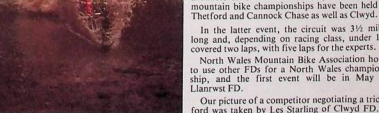
Richard Broadhurst, FC Recreation Officer, told Slasher the policy would vary from area to area, depending on local characteristics, but generally pedal cycling would be encouraged but conservation areas will not be available.

Special bicycle routes are provided in Queen Elizabeth Forest Park in Scotland; bike hire is available at Cardinham Woods, Cornwall; and mountain bike championships have been held at Thetford and Cannock Chase as well as Cynwdd.

In the latter event, the circuit was 315 miles long and, depending on racing class, under 150 covered two laps, with five laps for the experts.

Two Wales Mountain Bike Association hopes to use other FDs for a 1991 Wales championship, and the first event will be in May in the Forest of Dean.

Our picture of a competitor negotiating a tricky ford was taken by Les Stirling of Cynwdd FD.



And fun at Alice Holt



Guessing game . . . can YOU spot the Director of Research, Alice Holt, in this collection of (ahem) lovelies? Our glamorous group were caught waiting in the wings for their cabaret turn in the show organised this year by Traces Houston of Stats and Computing.

With a fun night supreme, with one of the highlights this parody of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" . . . day of Christmas, the Director sent me . . .

- 1 A Forester in a green sheep
- 2 Cakes-a-Cooking
- 3 Hybrid tickles of (ahem) lovelies
- 4 Greenhouse Growers
- 5 Incremental Backups
- 6 Students skirting (working-hard)
- 7 Chainsaws chopping
- 8 Types tapping (chattering)
- 9 Shady shelters
- 10 Seed-a-sprouting
- 11 Hybrid breeders
- 12 Pothetic Paydays

Questions on public access

In the last issue I wrote that a statement on the protection of public access to privatised FC land was imminent. The statement was duly made on 21 November by Malcolm Rifkind before he was on his bike to London to inherit the Transport portfolio.

The statement guaranteed nothing. The Commission will offer to enter into access agreements with local authorities "wherever feasible."

OBITUARIES

Colonel David Rooke

COLONEL David Rooke, head of information division between 1968 and 1979, died at Bath, aged 75.

Hazel Clowes, who was his assistant, writes: David Rooke came to the Commission as Head of Information after a distinguished military career in which he served on the staff of Field Marshal Montgomery.

I remember him for impeccable charm, his sensitivity, his humour and his power of gentle persuasion not only of the media but also of several Chairmen and DGs.

He launched the first tabloid Slasher — in the early 70s — and insisted it be made available to all employees and retired staff. The earlier duplicated Slasher went to management only. He spear-headed the 1989 FC Diamond Jubilee celebrations, and formed the legendary Agricultural Show Unit.

BRIAN FOGGO, Head Forester for the Black Isle, Easter Ross, died after a long illness. He was 51. Brian joined the Commission in 1955 as a 16-year-old at Glentress and his service was interrupted only by a tour of duty as a paratrooper in 1958.

Bob Dunsmore Easter Ross FD Manager writes: Brian battled continuously against his illness and we all saw a remarkable courage and strength in his struggle. Even after major treatment he returned to work in order to guide and advise junior colleagues and he did not give up his love of life and humour until the very end.

Marches FD mourned the sudden death of NICK STYLES.

Nick first saw FC service in Wales before joining Education and Training Branch as an instructor. Based in the Forest of Dean, he trained staff throughout SW and SE England. Unfailingly courteous, patient and helpful, his courses were highly regarded by everyone.

In 1986 he moved to Marches FD as District Forester H&M, and quickly became well known throughout the area and was held in high regard by the Trade.

EVAN TOM THOMAS, who retired on medical grounds in June 1988, died on December 22, aged 57 years, after only 2½ years of retirement. Tom's funeral, held near his home in Pontrhydfendigaid, was well attended by friends and FC colleagues.

JOHN EDWIN WARD, who had 47 years' service until his retirement from Wykeham Forest (North Yorkshire). He was a plant operator working in Northumberland, Durham and all over North Yorkshire. Mr Ward assisted the firefighting team during the serious moorland fire in 1976, by operating the bulldozer.

He leaves a widow, Emily, who also worked for the FC at Wykeham for many years as Forest Clerk.

CHRIS AUSTIN, former EO, who medically retired in 1984. Chris, who started with FC in Basingstoke in 1970, and moved to Edinburgh in 1975, served in West England from 1982. His wife Heather was Slasher correspondent for West England.

We hear belatedly of the death last Easter of retired Head Forester TONY MORRIS who was 73. He was with the FC from 1934 to 1971 in various areas, including a spell with the Ministry of Agriculture. He retired to Alligin, Ross-shire, where his widow, Gladys, still lives.

BOB GRIFFITHS (Newborough) died last May, aged 72. Former Head Forester, he was awarded the MBE in 1977.

Who determines when a certain proposal is feasible? Who determines what is meant by public access — does it mean an area used by 10 or 10,000 people?

Why were local authorities not consulted? Where are they going to find the money for such undertakings?

The statement by the previous Scottish Secretary was a perfect example of washing his hands of a problem without solving it. The issue of public access has been a thorn in the Government's side since 1981 and the only way for them to solve the problem is through legislation which they obviously have no time for and would prove very difficult.

There is one answer, however, which they refuse to accept — STOP SELLING THE PUBLIC'S LAND.

IT'S NOW build-up time to AGM's and conferences for Non-Industrial Unions in the Commission and I hope that every member takes the opportunity to participate.

We've all had plenty to moan and groan about during the past year so why not use the opportunity to place motions before meetings?

Subjects such as staff inspections, disposals, career development, delegation of manpower control, bad publicity, increased use of casual,



TUS DIARY

—by Kenny Murray

contract or retired staff, child-care provision, computerisation, the F&A Group Report or even whether or not your Union is providing the service you want and need... all are issues which could be the subject of a motion or motions. Use your voice. Don't moan — organise!

EVERYTHING pales into insignificance with this country as part of a UN force currently at war with Iraq. I'll never forget the sickly feeling I had when the first bombing raids were announced. There really is a war. But there is a difference with this war. Everything that is allowed to be broadcast is served up to us 24 hours a day. In effect it is war by television for many people.

Sophisticated communications allow broadcasting organisations to provide our radios and televisions with news only minutes old. Is it a good or a bad thing? That, I suppose, depends on your overall viewpoint. I am sure that we all think of our servicemen and women overseas and their families wherever they are and hope that this war is over quickly.

LETTER TO EDITOR

Disappointing

Sir,

The Government's decision not to protect public access to woodlands sold by the FC is a disappointment worsened by its attempt to pass responsibility to local authorities.

Nobody expected that the task of drafting legislation would be an easy one, but not to make the attempt betokens at best lack of will — at worse, cowardice. The Government does not say whether it has consulted local authorities over its proposals but it has made it quite clear that no additional funds will be made available.

Surely there can be no-one who is not aware that council spending is severely restricted by "capping" and the failure of "poll-tax" to materialise — it follows that there is little prospect of new spending initiatives, however good the cause.

Does the Government — or the FC — believe a statement of intent will achieve what legislation allegedly will not achieve? The public deserve better action — not words, not pious hopes, but guaranteed continuing access. — John H. Hose, Chairman, Forestry Unions Action Group.

FORESTRY PEOPLE...FORESTRY PEOPLE...FORESTRY

Welsh quintet retire



"Fence" Davies receives his certificate from FMO Bob Farmer.



Dai Williams proudly displays his service certificate.



Beat steward W. G. Morris (right) with Charles Wilde.

FIVE long-servers of Llandovery FD in Wales Conservancy enter 1991 with well-earned retirement.

Between them they have rung up 167 years of service.

And three more retirements from Morgannwg FD showed a total of 104 years with the Commission.

Longest service was claimed by DAI J. C. WILLIAMS (Dai Shemmi) (38 years), all spent in the Conwyl Elfed and Brechfa areas. He spent the last three years working with the Brechfa fencing gang.

Dai was presented with his service certificate and a gift from friends and colleagues by Robert B. Donaldson, Llandovery FDM.

With just one year's less service ELWYN (FENCE) DAVIES called it a day after 37 years, again mainly in the Brechfa area. He was involved with the original site preparation work there before working on the initial roading of the forest, and he was involved in the building of the Forestry Pavilion at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells, where his craftsmanship was valued. In latter years, he worked mainly with the Brechfa fencing gang.

Forest Management Officer R. A. Farmer presented Fence with his service certificate at an informal gathering in the forest, and at a later party District Forester (FM) Roger Gatiss presented him with a gift from friends and colleagues.

Forester JASON GRIFFITHS (35 years) had his first posting in Slebech, West Wales, before transfer to Brechfa on Forest Management duties. In 1964 he was posted, first to Coed y Rhaidr (9 years) and then to Rheola (7 years) when he was involved in Harvesting and Marketing. In 1980, he moved to Pembrey where he was responsible for Forest Management and Agency work in conjunction with the Welsh Office.

At a gathering of friends and colleagues, Jason was presented with a cheque by Colin Bancroft, Private Forestry and Environment Officer.

W. D. EDWARDS retired after 29 years in West Wales, mostly in the old Coed Deufor (formerly Llanddowror Forest). From 1983, he was employed mainly on agency work on motorways and trunk roads, establishing and maintaining landscape schemes.

At an informal gathering at Haverfordwest, Roger Nock presented him with a commemorative mug from friends and colleagues.



From left, John Clatworthy, Roy Davies and John Nicholas with their service certificates.

John Scott — 49 years

This large gathering at Rothbury FD in Northumberland bid their farewells to John Scott who has retired after 49 years' service.

John is seen being presented with his long service certificate by FDM Clive Large.

Based at Swarland, he spent much of his recent years in the tariffing squad and on landscaping the A1 between Newcastle and Berwick.



RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION PARTY TIME!

MEMBERS of Retirement Association groups up and down the country joined in festive party fun during December.

Alice Holt members had a splendid party and buffet with equally splendid entertainment by the Harmony Mark IV Singers from Four Marks. Mrs Joyce Smith ran a successful raffle.

The 1991 programme began with a visit on 26 January to the theatre, followed by a social meeting at Alice Holt on 4 February.

Across the country, the Mid-Wales Group's Christmas Dinner was on 20 December when 24 members and wives enjoyed an opportunity to chew over old times.

Membership of the association is open to all retired FC employees of whatever grade. Anyone wishing to join Mid-Wales Group should contact Denis Fisher on Aberystwyth 624848 or Dai Morris on Tregaron 298318.

Edinburgh HQ branch had 20 members and friends at a Christmas lunch; the same number had a theatre night out.

An outing is planned for 13th February to the Gallery of Modern Art; the annual general meeting and coffee morning is at HQ on 12th April at 10.30 am.



Mid Wales members on an outing.



Chairman Ron Brown and some of the Alice Holt members listen to the seasonally-clad singers of Four Marks (below).



FORESTRY PEOPLE... FORESTRY PEOPLE... FORESTRY PEOPLE... FORESTRY PEOPLE... FORES

Training chief



A man to whom hundreds of Forestry Commission workers owe a good start to their career has just retired after many years on the training side.

He is Derek Davies, who served the Commission for 38 years, and was given a rousing send-off by RTO (South) after five years there as Regional Training Officer.

Reviewing Derek's service, Chief Education and Training Officer Don Barty recalled that his interest in training could be traced right back to his student days at Gwydwr FTS in 1953 when he first applied to join E & T Branch; his dream was fulfilled 13 years later when he was transferred from Wales to the Dean School in Parkend.

He later became Management Training Officer at Dean MTC when it opened in 1972 and five years later was appointed Regional Training Officer, a post he occupied until retirement!

In these various roles, Derek spent nearly 25 years pursuing the training cause.

Presenting Derek with an inscribed tankard from past and present E & T staff in Southern Region, together with a handsome cheque, Don wished him a long and happy retirement, together with his wife Myfanwy, who was presented with a bouquet by Derek's typist, Carol Simonds.

In a reply spiced with characteristic humour, Derek thanked all those who had generously contributed to his presentation and said he would be buying a new set of golf clubs which he assured everyone would be put to good and frequent use.

He paid tribute to all staff who had served him loyally over the years and without whose support he could not have succeeded.

He concluded by saying that he knew it was time to go when he had read a minute a few weeks previously from HQ pointing out that those male members of staff who expected female staff to make tea and coffee were in breach of FC equal opportunities policies!

● Pictured above are Don Barty, Carol Simonds, Jim Santer, Derek and Myfanwy.

The last fling



A double retirement marked the last days of Strontian FD, which has now been split between Lochaber and Mull (North Scotland).

Staff of Strontian FD had their final fling when Bill Hunter FDM and Phemie MacKinnon AO were guests of honour at the Ben Wyvis Hotel. The Conservator, Mr Atterson, made presentations to both Bill and Phemie.

Though administratively the FD is closing down, the trees grow on and the area will always maintain its identity as being across the ferry, reports Bryce Reynard, Slasher correspondent in N(S).

Bill Hunter and his wife are pictured right above along with Phemie and husband, with Conservator ATTERSON at extreme right.

Still in Scotland... and another farewell. This time to Alastair Chambers, who joined the Commission on a temporary basis in 1954, the early years

of Tighnabruach Forest. Fortunately for the FC, his wife, Christine, persuaded him to stay in Tighnabruach rather than join Renfrew Police.

Thirty-six years on, Alastair retired from "temporary service" and he is seen below with "Totie" Chambers and colleagues after being presented with his long-term service certificate and a gift of gardening tools by Cowal Forest District Manager Angus Murray.

Alastair's quiet resolve, skills and common sense were appreciated by all who worked with him and he helped to make the Tighnabruach squad one of the most efficient and independent squads in the District, writes P. Voysey, District Forester FM (Cowal FD).

He will be missed by the FC, but leaves well equipped for providing "Totie" with the garden of her dreams and he has already been harnessed into repairs on Tighnabruach Church.



Alastair Chambers, with Christine and Cowal FDM Angus Murray, backed by many of his colleagues.

A special tree for Charlie

A research worker and a research station caretaker have both retired after a total of more than 50 years' service between them.

And for the caretaker, Charlie Stewart, it was a special day, for he and his wife May were invited to plant a tree, a signal honour normally reserved only for Chief Research Officers and visiting VIPs.

At Alice Holt, it was farewell to Dick Underwood after 30 years with Research Division there.

He was given two farewells. First, Dick's close colleagues presented him with an electric garden strimmer.

Later, presenting his long service certificate and cheque, Forest Officer David Elgy had to give up a prepared speech — Dick in fine form, and in inimitable style, took over to expound in great detail with facts and figures way beyond even the wildest dreams of PERMIS.

Dick spent his early years with the old Genetics Branch and more latterly with Silviculture South, and had some hilarious tales to tell. A lot of people went home with sore ribs and wet handkerchiefs.

At Northern Research Station, Roslin, outside Edinburgh, it was the end of an era when Charlie Stewart retired. For Northern Research Station lost more than its caretaker. Charlie and his family have lived on the station for over 20 years, more or less since it opened.

Leaving his job also meant leaving his home and it was clear that he and his family were as

sad to go as staff were to see them leave.

A large number of tributes were received from present and former senior staff throughout the Commission, and at a buffet dance, Charlie was presented with selected power tools and a large cheque.

Other retirements: Perthshire FD lost one of their most skilled cross-cutters when DAVIE JONES retired after serving 17 years in three periods since 1947, working mainly as a chainsaw-operating forest craftsman. Apart from his FC service he also worked as a contractor for a total of 26 years.

Charlie Taylor, FDM Perthshire, presented Dave with gardening tokens on behalf of colleagues and friends at Drummond Hill and Dunkeld.

Just four days before Christmas, colleagues past and present met at Marches FD Office to say farewell to CLIFF SMOUT, retiring on health grounds, after 31 years' service.

Cliff, who joined the Commission originally on a temporary basis in 1959, saw the amalgamation of his beat on five separate occasions. He is recognised for his work in organising Dendroctonus survey teams, and for his involvement with birds-of-prey surveys on behalf of Wildlife and Conservation Branch.

FDM Tim Sawyer presented Cliff with his service certificate and a gift from colleagues and friends.

Two other retirements (about which we hope to give more in our next issue)...

BRIAN DEAN (Chief Forester, South Lakes) after 32 years which ended with a second term at Grizedale.

NORMAN HOWGATE (Ganger, Grizedale), after 37 years. He manages the bar at the Theatre in the Forest in South Lakes.



Charlie and May plant their tree.

Honorary Warden

Two men o' Yorkshire have left their respective districts.

Ganger **FRANK HARVEY** (Mr Wharnciffe Woods) decided to call it a day at 60 after working in and from Wharnciffe Woods near Sheffield in the old Don Forest, South Yorkshire, now part of York FD.

Starting as a forest worker in March 1958, he played a large part in the establishment of Wharnciffe Woods and many other Commission woods in the Southern Pennines.

Frank was presented with an inscribed tankard plus a camera and photographic equipment and was made an Honorary Warden of York Forest District, a vital role protecting the forest in the urban environment.

In demand locally for his stone-walling expertise he has plans for an active retirement, practising with his new camera, bird watching — particularly 'The Owls' (or Sheffield Wednesday) — and maintaining his interest in Wharnciffe Woods.

After 18 years with the FC, **KEITH SWIERS** (North York Moors FD) has ventured into private contracting.

Keith joined the FC at Dalby in 1972 having previously worked with

FDM John Mackenzie and friends say farewell to Keith Swiers.

his brothers in a direct contract harvesting team based at Wykeham Forest. He is well known for his skills as a machine operator and for his work as beat steward at Dalby.

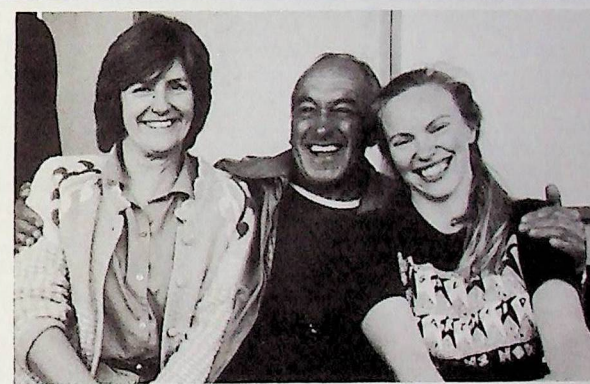
He helped to instal the new Kockums 85-35 Forwarder in 1981 After 36 years with the FC, **BARRY TEASDALE** retired in December as Health and Safety Officer.

A graduate of Bangor, he joined as a DFO with research branch in Scotland, moving soon afterwards to Wales until transferring to HQ London in 1965.

He moved back to South Wales in 1968 then to South Scotland in 1976 to take over Lothian and Tweed District which was undergoing amalgamation at a time when private woodland interests were rapidly expanding.

In 1979 Barry moved to HQ with Forest Management Division and in 1985 took over as Health and Safety Officer.

After the Windblow of 1987 he



Dick with Tracy Houston and Eneys Sayce.



FRANK HARVEY
"Mr Wharnciffe Woods."

was selected to be part of the FC team of Harvester operators who helped clear up and he worked in the South of England until 1990.

Down in West England, **"CHARLIE" MARSH**, Paperkeeper, retired at the end of November.

At a buffet lunch provided by Charlie and his wife Jean, colleagues at Conservancy Office presented him with a cheque and the good wishes of all his many friends he has made both at Conservancy office and in the Forest Districts during his nine years with the FC.



CHARLIE MARSH
"Office Manager."

In fact Charlie was held in such high esteem by associates that correspondence was received addressed to "Charles Marsh, Office Manager."

He is a keen competitive "bowler" — David Bryant look out!

Finally, **NORMAN STEEL**, mechanic at Creebridge Workshop, South Scotland, has retired after 11 years' service. Conservancy Mechanical Engineer, Craig Heaney presented Norman with a wallet of money

Three big cheers for new awards!

Our winning ways are never ending! It seems that just as one *Slasher* issue comes out to boast success in various areas of the FC, more awards pour in.

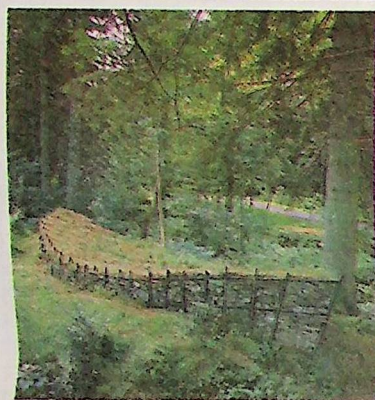
November's columns told of two notable awards, one for the Cartographic section and another for New Forest Pride Week. This month, there are THREE major awards to shout about.

● Sculpture in Grizedale Forest Park, has won the country's top art award.

● Dr Philip Ratcliffe of Wildlife and Conservation branch has received second prize of £1500 in the Laurent Perrier Champagne Awards for wild game conservation.

● And Tony Hinde's man-made islands to aid breeding birds have been highly commended by the Ford Conservation Award judges.

Great Grizedale!



Sound of Running Water

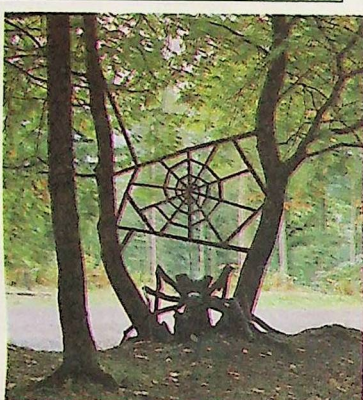
SCULPTURE in Grizedale Forest Park has just won the country's top art award.

The 2445 ha park attracts over 250,000 visitors every year, and integrates with timber production and conservation.

Recreation which started in the forest in 1961 with the Ridding Wood Nature Trail. There has been continuous development since.

1970 saw the formation of the Grizedale Society with the support of the FC and it now administers the theatre in the forest, gallery in the Forest and the Sculpture Project, which was established in 1977 and now has the largest collection of site-related sculptures in the country. This collection now numbers more than 60 pieces, mainly sited along the Silurian Way, a popular 9½-mile circular walk.

The Grizedale Society's director, Bill Grant MBE, picked up the £75,000



Waiting for lunch...

Prudential Award for the Arts after winning the category prize of £25,000 for the Visual Arts.

Presenting the prize, Sir Roy Strong paid tribute to a "leap in imagination that has enriched our perception and understanding of art and the landscape."

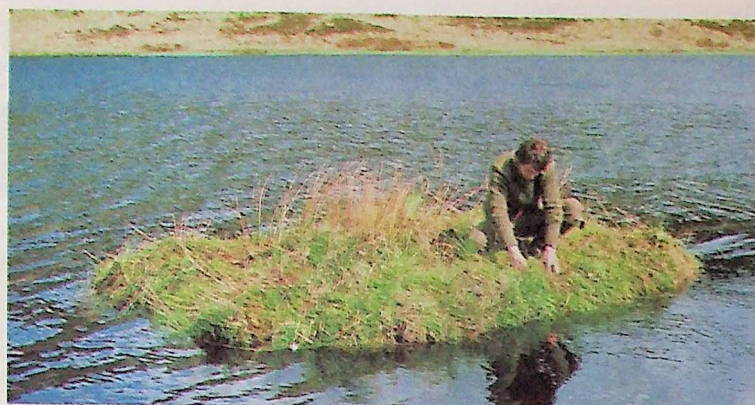
Other category winners were Palace Theatre (dance), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society (music), City of Birmingham Touring Opera (opera) and Theatre Royal Stratford East (theatre).

The £25,000 from the category prize has already been put to good use. A new trail suitable for the disabled has been developed in conjunction with the Commission and new works have been commissioned from international artists Sally Matthews, Andy Goldsworthy, Petra Nikoloski and Grigor Stefanov.

The two examples above are Sound of Running Water by Kees Bierman, and Waiting for Lunch by Michael Winstone.

NAVY TO RESCUE WITH GIFT OF A TREE

Before the Gulf crisis engulfed us, Government forces had a more peaceful role when they stepped in to deliver this 16 ft. tree by helicopter to the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow. Aberfoyle FD provided the Norway spruce; a crew from HMS Gannet made the delivery in a Sea King; Aberfoyle pupils filled a postbag with Christmas greetings for young patients... and of course Santa was there in person. Craigvinean Forest in Perthshire FD supplied trees for Glasgow George Square, Motherwell Civic Centre, and Stirling.



ISLANDS IDEA

Impressive man-made islands which have provided a home for rare breeding birds, courtesy of the Forestry Commission, have won a Ford Conservation Award.

And Tony Hinde, Chief Conservation Forester, North Scotland, who started the project, is delighted. The judges highly commended the idea, which was born four years ago.

The islands — like this one above — give shelter to such birds as the Black-throated and (to a lesser extent) Red-throated Divers, which are among the rarest of British breeding birds. A recent survey showed only 150 summering pairs.

Superb in water, they move poorly on land and consequently nest close to loch edges.

This makes their nest eggs very vulnerable to fluctuating water levels and to disturbance by fishermen and predators.

To help to overcome this problem, the Commission constructed 12 "ozone friendly," expanded polystyrene floating "islands" covered over with turves.

These are anchored well off-shore in sheltered bays on lochs next to FC woods, and North (Scotland) Conservancy were so encouraged by their use last season, that it was decided to submit the project for the Ford Awards in 1990.

Ten chicks

Last spring and summer, of the 12 available islands, three were in use by Black-throated Divers and a further four by Red-throats with a total of 10 chicks hatched.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were impressed by the design and undertook construction of similar islands themselves. These too have been used by nesting Black-throats.

Tony Hinde told *Slasher*: "To have nearly 60 per cent of our islands in use by Divers reinforces our contention that this project represents a significant breakthrough in conservation techniques for a very threatened species."

DEER DOUBLE



The Forestry Commission has been presented with another major conservation award for a new system for the management of red deer in upland forests.

Second prize of £1500 in the prestigious Laurent Perrier Champagne Award for wild game conservation has been awarded to Dr Philip Ratcliffe (Wildlife and Conserva-

tion Research Branch) whose "excellent" project, extending to 13 years of research, has provided a scientific basis for management of red deer in Scottish forests.

The judges said: "This is an excellent project. Management of red deer on the open hill is on the whole well understood; much less so in the upland forests of the UK."

The detailed work revealed some woodland deer populations could be up to 16 times that assessed by previous methods and showed the need for higher annual culling rates.

Philip said: "The project included the development of new techniques for the determination of deer densities in dense woodland habitats and the estimation of reproduction output and mortality as a basis for predicting changes in population size and the development of management plans."

"This new approach to red deer management in woodlands represents an important advance in providing a multi-objective approach to managing a wildlife species including the control of numbers, the reduction of tree damage, habitat conservation and the humane exploitation as a game species."

● Last year, Dr Ratcliffe was awarded the Balfour-Browne Trophy in recognition of outstanding contributions to deer management.

All Mod Cons in man-made des-res for the osprey

Always doing their bit for wildlife are Mick Canham, the FC's head conservation ranger, and his team in the Strathspey woodlands.

Mick is a master eyrie-builder, and already 50 man-made osprey nests have been constructed; at least five were in use last autumn.



MICK CANHAM
Master eyrie-builder

They are needed, because the young ospreys haven't had the experience of building their own nests, what with not enough older birds to go round to give instruction.

So enter Mick and his team; David Macdonald, senior forester; trainee Martin Mackenzie; and area manager Janet Scott.

They provide a selection of des-res ready for immediate occupation. It is not that ospreys are lazy, explains Mick, but the fact that there are so few with the know-how.

Instinct may guide the birds, but not in the mechanics of nest-building. Their technique is to keep flying over a tree and drop branches until they form a rough platform.

Some pairs are lucky; others never seem to get the hang of it.

After "bombing" a tree with branches and finding all fall to the ground, the birds go on to try again with another tree.

The trouble is that by the time some young pairs get their eyrie built the breeding season is long gone.

Mick is ever on the lookout for more sites in the 40,000 acres of forest in his area, which includes the vast Glenmore Forest Park at the foot of the Cairngorms.



JANET SCOTT
Area manager

Like most discerning home-seekers ospreys go for secluded sites, preferring those surrounded by mature woodland with easy access to river and loch fishings.

Having studied the construction methods used by the birds, Mick admits he cheats by using hammer and nails, wire and plastic-covered cord.

"Every eyrie comes with a prepared front-door lookout perch. We line the floor area with white grass to catch the eye of the birds on the lookout."

"Of course, when they move in, they like to add their own homely touches and take in leaves and twigs of their choice."

Just which of Mick's eyries are occupied is a secret which Mick and his team share only with RSPB officers in the area.

Doreen Ward, Information Division, HQ, says she has had a very good response from retired FC personnel who want to ensure they are on the mailing list for "Slasher," or who want to track down former colleagues.

Keep the requests coming. Doreen is at 231 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh, EH10 4NH. Tel. 031-334 0303 ext 2465. She will love to hear from you.