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Agricultural Centre report —'yes' to forestry

THE cost to Britain of importing timber products is already approaching £3000m per annum. World timber consumption is predicted to increase by 80 per cent by the year 2000. Against this background the Centre for Agricultural Strategy's long awaited publication 'Strategy for the UK forest industry' makes a powerful economic case for a doubling of the UK forest estate and points to how this can be accommodated with other land use interests.

The CAS research team is led by Professor John Bowman who was interviewed by Tree Scribe soon after work began on the forestry strategy paper early in 1978. Since then another related work — The future of upland Britain — has been published.

Emerging strongly from the forestry report is the fact that Britain is at risk in terms of availability of wood products and the price that will be required to pay for them.

Already this little country accounts for 10 to 11 per cent of the wood products entering the entire world market. No help can be looked for from sister members of the EEC because the Community as a whole, while having an average of 21 per cent of its land under forest compared with the UK's 8 per cent, still has to import 60 per cent of its timber needs.

World production can be increased by doubling the yield from existing forests and by stopping the destruction of natural forests but even with that achieved the forecast is for an 8 per cent world under supply against demand in the year 2000 at fixed prices and 32 per cent world undersupply by 2025.

Meanwhile exporting countries are taking every opportunity to further process and add value to their timber products. More processed wood goods entering the UK reduces jobs here in manufacturing timber products and of course adds further to the cost of imports.

Taking all these factors into account the report estimates that between 1980 and 2000 timber products will increase in price by 30 per cent in real terms, and between 1980 and 2025 the increase will be 150 per cent in real terms.

The report urges early action to increase the rate of new planting in order to alleviate the problem for the country. While helping to solve the future import cost and supply

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Purpose-built mechanical grab at work in East Anglia
—see Better Land Use on pages four and five.

Hopes dashed at Fort William

BAT subsidiary Wiggins Teape and Canadian group Consolidated-Bathurst have abandoned their plans for a joint £100 million mechanical newsprint mill at Fort William on the site of Wiggins Teape's existing small chemical pulp mill, itself already destined for closure (see Tree Scribe 5).

The new proposals had envisaged a single machine producing 156,000 tonnes per annum—considerably larger than existing UK newsprint machines—and designed to meet the market for web-offset and lightweight paper

in the UK. Last year the UK produced only about a quarter of its 1.4 million tonnes total consumption of newsprint.

The proposals for the new project, now scrapped, were unveiled in February after nearly a year of investigative work by the prospective partners. At that time Consolidated-Bathurst president Bill Burner was reported as saying that 'his company was convinced that a newsprint venture at Fort William would be internationally competitive.' Factors which remained to be settled were given as the costs of energy and

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£5m new construction

CABERBOARD, who manufacture chipboard at the former Scottish Timber Products plant at Stirling have announced expansion plans. They are constructing an additional new plant on the same site at a cost of £5m to manufacture medium density fibreboard.

All medium density fibreboard presently used in this country is imported. It is a product which has had a rapid market acceptance in the USA and its important quality, that of being able to be machined and moulded just like natural joinery timber, is likely to commend itself equally to furniture manufacturers in this country.

The new installation is being pushed ahead rapidly in order to achieve completion by August 1, and thereby qualify for a £1m investment grant before this scheme lapses under the Government's restructured regional development incentives.

The new plant will use the same raw material as the existing chipboard line, i.e. small roundwood from thinnings and tops and sawmill residues, but the economics of the new product will permit the payment of enhanced prices for the raw material. This is of considerable mutual importance to both Caberboard and growers and suppliers, because the expanded enterprise will need to attract an additional 35,000 tonnes of wood rising to 100,000 tonnes extra when in full production. With increased costs in harvesting and haulage the

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SANDY Macpherson saw the Tree Scribe profile prospect approaching him earlier this year and responded a little reluctantly, as one who does not seek the limelight. But at least the need to co-operate liberated him from the chair of office — as director of Tilhill's Scottish division based at Old Sauchie — and he shared a great day in the hills with Central branch manager Tom McLellan, general manager Peter Sloan and of course a Tree Scribe reporter.

Sandy's background is that of a dedicated big-company forester — a good slice of overseas experience including a transatlantic MSc built around a good BSc from Edinburgh University. That, and his rapid promotion within Tilhill, makes him seem a rather daunting figure perhaps, who has always planned ahead in a careful way.

But in fact he preferred to take part in a rifle competition during his National Service rather than attend an interview for a job in the Forestry Commission. And flipped a coin whether he would take a job in Eastern Nigeria, or Newfoundland.

Newfoundland won. But after two years he decided to go back to school and did his master's degree at New Brunswick University.

Soon he was working for the British Columbian Forest Service in their surveys department — a fascinating, if arduous, job in which he was dropped by helicopter into the survey area and left to find his way with samples to the squad van at a prearranged spot several days later. It was very much a seasonal kind of job; winters in the office in Victoria mainly spent in preparing for an intensive burst of surveying during the summer months, but also carrying out photogrammetry projects and short surveys.

So he often found himself in the company of two or three other foresters in for example precipitous country near Hell's Gate in the Fraser Canyon with several days' food supply and an axe battling through ferocious undergrowth — vine maple, salal and regenerating hemlock — on a 45 deg slope.

Some of the woodlands were 'second growth' — a mere 80 years or so old after a fire or the earliest logging — or native forest with mouth-watering stands of Douglas fir, western hemlock, balsam, abies amabilis, and red cedar, and further into the interior, in the east, lodgepole pine and Engelmann spruce.

He would have to stratify each sample area into type, accurately building a picture of the survey area, filling in height, species, stocking, composition and volume data. Winter photograph work would be supplemented by the summer on-site surveys and further helicopter inspection passes made — a job he moved on to do — talking about the area into a tape recorder.

He got in some hill-walking and climbing during this period. But he



Profile: Sandy Macpherson

discovered at this time that forest products group MacMillan Bloedel were embarking on what they called an 'intensive forestry programme' — accelerated replanting, and respacing natural young regeneration to allow the company to increase its government tree farm licensed felling programme.

He took up a post firstly as assistant and then as divisional forestry supervisor at the north end of Vancouver Island, later getting moved to working plans co-ordinator based in Nanaimo, staying six years in total.

He questions suggestions that Canada's overall forest resource has been overlogged — even in most of the east where exploitation has been very heavy, natural regeneration is very prolific. Accessible areas have been overcut, but against that the increment in the remoter areas has been undercut.

Certainly BC led the way in enlightened forest policies, says

Sandy, and by the time he arrived tree farm licence holders, in return for long-term tenure, had to ensure restocking in a specified period, and conform to government-approved logging levels. Major replanting programmes were underway.

MacMillan Bloedel at that time were replanting around 12,000 acres a year and a further 10,000 were restocking naturally to match precisely their annual logging programme.

Sandy was responsible for 2,500 acres of that per annum. Fifty per cent of his early job as assistant was the 'sharp end experience' of training and running planting squads — a mixed bag of Canadians, Indians and immigrants, with a big turnover until the planting squads were put on the same footing as the logging squads with several grades of worker.

But at this time British forestry

was starting to pick up momentum, particularly in the private sector. Sandy's reading of "Scottish Forestry" led him to turn his sights east again. Family ties and a wish for a change from desk duties as working plans co-ordinator were contributing factors in the decision to up roots and move back.

He had some doubts as to the wisdom of the move, and was mentally prepared to go back in a year or two if the experiment failed — he had no objection to his children growing up as Canadians — until Tilhill's Borders branch fell vacant and David Brierton offered the job to Sandy.

After three years as Borders branch manager he went to Stirling as general manager and was soon promoted further to the managing directorship of Tilhill Forestry (Scotland) as it then was — effectively the position he holds now.

But if his career momentum keeps him here, supplemented by what he perceives as a richer social life (and a liking for well-kept draught Guinness) the balance is somewhat fine. 'I'd rather be here, but it's not a desperately strong "rather" he told me.

Many Scots, disappointed in the continuing absence of a national forum for political debate and decision-making, must have turned to compare Scotland with other places they may have known. Sandy was very impressed with federalism in North America as achieving political accountability and being incompatible with the sort of feudal attitudes found in Scotland where he feels people 'bend the knee' to the powers that be far too readily.

But on the professional front, what did Canada give him? An in-depth knowledge of our exotic species' performance in ideal conditions is one side of it. And also an awareness that our softwood species selection is perhaps too narrowly-based.

Sitka spruce was such a success over here, and to a lesser extent Douglas and Grand fir and Lodgepole pine, that possibilities such as Amabilis fir have been almost completely neglected. He would like to see extensive operational trials of this species here, and wider use of Douglas fir and hemlock where they grow well. If we were to use these other productive species more widely, enriching our species range, our forest stock would be less vulnerable.

Part of Sandy's social life centres round his enthusiasm — one might say passion — for curling, a game he learned in Canada and polished in Scotland. No season passes without his sideboard displaying silver trophies as a reflection of his prowess as his rink's skip. Stirling itself has long lacked an icerink and winter journeys have been required to Perth, Kinross, Kirkcaldy and Glasgow. But now a new rink is under construction in Stirling and amongst the list of shareholders is one Alexander Fraser Macpherson.



On location in Griffin forest: (left to right) Peter Sloan, Tom McLellan, Sandy Macpherson and Fenning Welstead.

Yes to forestry People and places

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problems, increased planting will bring immediate benefits in terms of employment in the rural areas. How many people know that 50 per cent of the land surface of the country is occupied by less than 5 per cent of the population?

The opportunity for devoting more land to forestry certainly exists. The area technically plantable in Great Britain is assessed as just short of three million hectares. The report poses a programme of planting just over one million ha by the year 2000, comprising 911,000 ha of afforestation and 100,000 ha of replanting existing unproductive woodland. This programme bears a close relationship with the higher option suggested in the "Wood Production Outlook" previously published by the Forestry Commission.

The strategy examines the effects of such a programme on the other land uses, including hill farming, shooting, water catchment, recreation and nature conservation and concludes that the programme can be accommodated.

Progressive but relatively modest improvements in hill farming will mean that that sector is capable of maintaining present production levels on a reduced area, as has been demonstrated in certain localities where forestry has already made in impact.

Estimates show that against an average annual gross income from forestry of £99 per ha with employment of one man per 70 ha, hill sheep farming returns £17.50 per ha excluding subsidies and employs one man per 655 ha. Comparative figures for grouse moors and red deer are £8.64 and 1750 ha, and £1.40 and 4000 ha respectively.

New approaches for the state sector are proposed including a revision of the target rate of return of 3 per cent and an allowance in the calculations of expected returns to take account of forecast future timber price rises.

For the private sector proposals include streamlining the Basis III clearance procedures, increasing planting grants and improving fiscal options.

The report does well to bring out that capital prevented from investing in forestry and the processing industries will not necessarily be available for other productive investment in the UK, given the relaxation of currency controls and the international nature of trade in the forest industry.

Bearing in mind that Government may shortly divulge its plans for British forestry, one of the report's main conclusions is timely: 'A more positive attitude to forestry is needed and the Government must show confidence in the industry. There should be a wider recognition of the importance of forestry and timber production in the national economy.'



Bryn Middelton graduated from Aberdeen University in 1956 and went straight off to do his National Service with the Royal Engineers. In 1959, after being "demobbed" from the army, he took up a post with Unilever and for 11 years managed oil palm estates in West Africa and Borneo.

In 1970 he returned to the UK joined Tilhill Scottish division and became assistant branch manager in the Borders branch based on Jedburgh. In 1972 he transferred to the Harvesting and Marketing division and was for 2 years regional manager covering south Scotland and north England.

In 1974 he returned to Scottish division as Borders branch manager and was promoted South East area manager on January 1, 1980.

Bryon continues meantime to act as Borders branch manager, as he himself laughingly says, 'in his spare time.' Bryon's promotion is well earned and his unquestionable competence and pawky Buchan humour make him held in high regard by his colleagues.

Edwin Barclay joined East Yorkshire branch at the end of January. Edwin, a 1979 Aberdeen forestry graduate had a short spell working on "the ground" at the Cowdray Estate, Sussex, doing planting, weeding, fencing, timber felling and marketing.

Following the retirement of Elsa Cowan at the end of March, Solway branch has taken on two new clerical staff — Mrs James Bond and Mrs Noble.

Finlay Mitchell moved to Solway in January after three months leave of absence. Finlay formerly worked in the Stirling and Inverness offices.

Lynn Brisbane was recently promoted from typist at Head Office, Scottish division to clerkess/typist at Central branch, Stirling. It's a double celebration for Lynn, as she also announced recently her engagement to Peter Telfer who works in partnership with Tom and Willie Telfer on Landscaping Contracts at Stirling.

Sheena McDowall, formerly typist with Central branch has been promoted to secretary with Central Landscape branch, based at Old Sauchie.



Tom McLellan was promoted to Central (Forestry) branch manager in September. Tom's career in forestry began in 1971 when he worked for a year with the Forestry Commission and for a private estate before going to Aberdeen University to study forestry.

After graduating in 1975, Tom joined Tilhill as one of the continuing line of Aberdeen graduates to be placed at Northern branch. There followed two years in Carlisle working on large scale afforestation schemes in SW Scotland before moving back north to Stirling in 1978.



Colin Blyth was promoted to Cowal and Bute branch manager in August. A graduate of Aberdeen University, Colin has been with Tilhill since 1974 employed at Lhanbryde and Oban offices before being transferred to Dunoon at the inception of the Cowal and Bute branch. Before moving to Oban, Colin gained useful sharp-end experience as a harvesting contractor in Morayshire for 9 months. A keen mountaineer, he is at home in the mountains of the west coast.

Mrs Helen Cully joined Head Office in February as clerkess/typist and Mrs Yvonne Russell joined Head Office in April as directors' secretary.



Arnold Beaton, branch manager, promoted to area manager, Southern area, took over from Ian Stephen on March 7.

Ian E. Stephen, area manager, resigned after ten years with Tilhill to become head of forestry to the Isle of Man Government. At a farewell gathering he was presented with gifts from his colleagues and directors.

David Russell, assistant branch manager, promoted to branch manager, Central branch, took over from Arnold Beaton on February 1, 1980.



C. J. Radford appointed assistant branch manager, South West branch on December 17, 1979 on transfer from Harvesting and Marketing division.

M. D. Hawkes, graduate of University College North Wales, appointed assistant branch manager, Central branch on January 21.

N. J. Austin, graduate of Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand, with previous service with New Zealand Forest Service, appointed assistant branch manager, South West branch on April 1, 1980.

Bob Lucas is making good progress and is now home after two months in hospital and hopes to return to duty in May.

Harvesting and marketing division

Church Stretton office: John Cooper retired in February after 14 years with the company. He was presented with a pair of binoculars by the Church Stretton staff, and with a silver salver, two gold sovereigns and a cheque by the Board.

Mrs Wilson the invoice typist, left in January 1980 when the division's invoicing was transferred from Church Stretton to Greenhills.

Mrs Valerie Gwilt became clerkess/typist at Church Stretton in January, replacing Miss "Trish" Morris.

Longlyf Plant: Ian Lucas joined the company in February as plant operator. He is the son of Bob and Connie Lucas, both of whom work at Greenhills.

David Mason, who was assistant to John Barnes, transferred to Scottish division in October last year.

West Midland Timber Treatment Co.: Mrs Williams took up part-time duties in the office during January 1980 to replace Mrs Turner, and Mrs Adams became full-time clerkess/typist there in March 1980 as a replacement for Miss Hall.

Better land use

UNLESS and until space exploration yields new harvests the earth's surface is the source of all wealth, whether it be minerals mined, fish netted or crops from the land. Despite the intense pressure of population in Britain there are still many examples of land that is under-utilised and where real improvements in productivity can be achieved. It is not the know-how that is lacking; first there must be the opportunity for improvement and secondly the availability of capital.

One possible source of the latter are the pension funds. Their prime duty is to their pensioners, present and future, and therefore a place exists in their strategy for investments with a longish maturation period. If the investment can also make a contribution to the country's wellbeing and therefore meets the need for the pension fund to act with social responsibility, then it is more likely to receive favourable consideration from the fund's trustees and investment managers.

The bringing together of all these factors now sees the Midland Bank Pension Trust involved in one of the most imaginative and exciting land use improvement schemes undertaken in this country in the second half of the twentieth century. The scheme is in two parts: one involves the reclamation of prime agricultural land in England presently under trees, and the other the afforestation of a neglected sheep pasture and grouse moor in Scotland. The scale is big: the restoration to agriculture involves 3000 acres and the creation of the forest 4700 acres, a total of 7700 acres.

How did the opportunity arise? Over the past twenty years Bryant and May acquired specially selected sites in England to grow poplars and established extensive plantations with the object of producing logs suitable for making matches. To suit the growth requirements of poplar the sites had to be fertile and climatically favoured and the land planted was of good agricultural quality. In 1974 however, British Match merged with Wilkinson Sword to become Wilkinson Match and in the re-organisation and rationalisation that followed the decision was eventually taken to rely on imported match splints principally from their Canadian subsidiary, and to dispose of the UK poplar estates.

Jones Lang Wootton and Tilhill as advisors to the Midland Bank Pension Trust evaluated the property and its potential and the purchase was concluded in the spring of 1979.

Coincidentally, the private estate of Grantully near Aberfeldy in Perthshire was offered for sale in parcels, the largest being the hill section used till then for sheep grazing and grouse shooting, and this too was purchased by the Trust following its appraisal by Tilhill.

The poplar estates are in three groupings — Western (Herefordshire and Worcestershire), Bedfordshire, and Eastern (Norfolk and Suffolk). The reclamation plan has involved detailed discussions with the Forestry Commission, Ministry of Agriculture and the local authority planning departments, to take account of all considerations, both technical and environmental. With the poplar plantations being of all ages up to 20-years-old, the plan is to complete the phased restoration over a period of 10 years; initially the most immature plantations are cleared together with those that are already fully mature, and thereafter the remaining plantations will be felled as they reach maturity.

Tilhill is responsible for the harvesting and marketing of the timber and for the removal of the tree stumps and roots, so that the land may then be cultivated for agriculture. A carefully and sympathetically designed landscape plan provides for the retention of hedgerows and copses together with shelter strips.

Andrew Mackay, previously the managing director of Bryant and May Forestry and based in Bedfordshire, has joined Tilhill as area manager in charge of Southern division's Marches and Anglia branches and with special responsibility for the poplar reclamation work. He is ably supported by Phil Hymers of the Marches branch and Martin Wilkinson in East Anglia and is able to call on the marketing expertise of the Harvesting and Marketing division.

Bryant and May made some agricultural use of the land under the wide-spaced poplars and this will be continued during the 10 years transitional phase. When the enlarging tree crowns excluded too much light for vigorous growth and ripening of cereals, grass leys were introduced and sheep and cattle run throughout the summer period.

Phil Hymers showed me progress at Great Marston, the largest of the western plantations, 5 miles south-east of Leominster. Felling had just been completed in one of the older sections where at age 19 the mean tree volume was $0.96m^3$. The breakout averaged 65 per cent millwood of 8 inch top diameter, 25 per cent millwood of 6 inch to diameter and 10 per cent pulpwood. At the opposite end of the scale younger

plantations aged 8 years on 190 acres at Fulhams estate were reported cleared by Phil in the autumn, the produce going as pulpwood. A 'traxcavator' working in conjunction with 'powerforks' had dealt most efficiently with these small stumps where the trees averaged 6½ inches diameter. Heavier equipment was needed for the older timber with stumps up to 15 inches diameter. Nevertheless, as Phil said 'felling, de-stumping and harrowing created very little ground disturbance.'



Phil Hymers.

Some timber is sold standing by competitive tender and when Tree Scribe was on site sawmillers Ponttrilas were hard at work felling and burning the lop and top, and despatching the sawlogs to their mill at Woofferton and the pulpwood to Ashton at Monmouth.

Similar work is progressing under the plan on the other poplar estates and already within 12 months of the start of the project considerable progress has been made and valuable and highly productive land reclaimed for agriculture.

In East Anglia the rich fenland peat of the former Bryant and May plantations posed a problem when roots and felling waste had to be burned, for the growing medium itself was combustible. What can happen is that, if sufficient heat is applied to ignite the peat, it burns down into the ground and creates a large hole; such a fire is difficult to douse and the peat can smoulder for weeks in certain conditions. Material to be burned had therefore to be transported to sites where a cap of mineral soil provided insulation.

Local farmer Lionel Allsop specialises in agricultural contracting. He designed and built a mechanical grab to adapt a JCB for tree-root handling. He's a very enthusiastic natural engineer who gleefully complains about never having had toys as a child. Since being commissioned by Tilhill to assist in the ground clearance operations he has bought additional heavy duty machinery and has retrained his farm staff as plant operators.

Local carrot farmers H Palmer and

Sons have also been carrying out much stump extraction, and transporting them to their own land for burning.

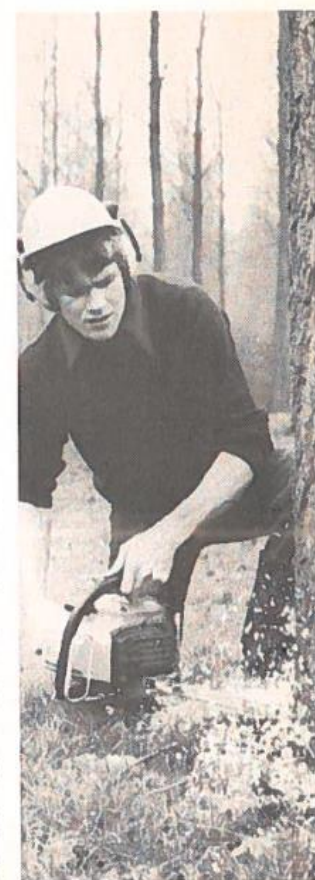
Larger stumps from older age classes are being extracted and burned by sub-contractors William Anderson and Sons using Drotts and Euclid automatic dump trucks. Anderson's International Drott is an unusual unit on the UK forestry scene. Its 4-in-1 bucket bites, pushes, scoops and loads.

The technique being used on bigger roots was to dig out roots on two sides, then bulldoze through to rip out the middle. I saw the Drotts working in an area where 22 years old poplar had previously been underplanted with alder, so 600 stumps remained to the acre compared with the Eastern area average of 85.

The Eastern estates total 1374 acres, comprised in 1980 of 250 acres of pulpwood size and the balance in the 17-23 years old class. On the main Bliss section over a hundred acres have already been cleared and harrowed by Tilhill, while at Grange near Bedford 30 acres of older crops have been felled of which 24 are cleared and thinned.

The overall plan incorporates the retention of woodland shelter strips and copses for amenity and discussion is taking place on the need to reserve a habitat for the Golden Oriole, a summer migrant from North Africa which has been sighted in the poplar plantations.

In Scotland the complementary plan of planting for timber production is well under way on



Felling for Ponttrilas in the Western plantations.



land whose previous hill-farming production was limited to grazing 400 sheep and a few cattle in summer. The change in land use here has the approval of the Department of Agriculture for Scotland and of the Forestry Commission and the local authority planners have been consulted on the landscape effect.

There has been no loss of agricultural employment and over the full timber crop rotation it is estimated that forestry employment directly created will average not less than 15 workers per annum.

Tree Scribe visited the property now re-named Griffin Forest in honour of the Midland Bank logo, and met some of the workers already in action. Rank heather, which would have prevented the plough from properly inverting the tree-planting furrow, had first to be burned off, a job greatly dependent on weather and wind conditions. Fortunately, the autumn and early winter were kinder than normal and ploughing had proceeded almost without interruption since October. Branch manager Tom McLellan is pleased with the area achieved in that time, over half the year's programme being completed in 16 weeks' actual ploughing time until the late winter snowed the area off for most of March. The remaining 1000 acres of this year's programme will require up to 6 ploughing units on site to have all ready in time for the completion of planting.

The planting season is now in full swing and assistant branch manager Fenning Welstead will be fully occupied organising and supervising the planting squads, whose numbers will peak at 25 men in the optimum conditions of May and June. Early summer planting is of course facilitated by the use of cold-storage planting stock from the Greenhills nursery.

'Trees by the Million' is emblazoned on the Tilhill nursery transport and Fenning says having 325,000 plants arrive from Farnham in one load feels like a million!

The species selection allows for 75 per cent sitka spruce, together with the more peat-tolerant lodgepole pine on the peat basins, and Douglas and grand firs on the more sheltered rich brown earth sites. Larch will be used on the drier knolls and will provide a further colour variation on the slopes overlooking Strathtay.

The remaining half of the property is scheduled for planting next season to create the new forest on the previously under-utilised hill. Total timber production will average 23,000m³ per annum.

While the country enjoys the benefits of North Sea oil the two largest items on the import bill are food and timber products. The Midland Bank Pension Trust's involvement in these major land use plans will result in a not insignificant contribution to home production of both food and timber.

Top: looking north towards the Gramplains Sandy Macpherson, Peter Sloan and Tom McLellan inspect some of the double-throw ploughing which extends to the first skyline.

Above: One of the planting squads working above Strathtay on single-throw ploughing with the smoke of heather burning in the distance.

Martin Wilkinson discusses progress in East Anglia with Andrew Mackay.



Handover: first stage of the farming process on the Eastern estates.

They shoot climbers . . . don't they?

Scottish division central branch manager Tom McLellan has been climbing in the USA and Canada

I reached George on the third stance just as the rain started. Up until then it had been overcast but dry, better than most weekends that summer.

Within half an hour the crux pitch was a veritable waterfall. Cairngorm granite and in particular the crux of the Needle climb on Shelterstone Crag are nowhere to be during a downpour, so we rigged up our ropes to abseil the 300ft to the deck.

The abseil and the walk back over the mist-shrouded plateau of the Cairngorms was tricky, cold, horribly wet and downright miserable — and this is July!

At least next weekend would be different.

WE flew into Vancouver airport on July 30 to be hit by temperatures in the eighties. Reilly, our American contact, told us that it had been the same for the previous four weeks. I had flown out with Alan Petit, a dentist from Stirling, for a climbing trip to north west America and Canada, our objective being to climb in several of the major mountain regions.

Setting out from Seattle we headed into the coastal mountain strip of Washington State called the Cascade Range. Here we walked and climbed for two weeks, first in the eastern margins of the range where the mountains merge with the desert and then at the north end of the range just inside Canada.

As the Cascades lie on the wet coastal fringe of western America, the vegetation is extremely lush which makes walking up the valley by the well established trails very interesting. However, between the trails and the high alpine meadows bushwhacking is called for, which combined with the blackfly and higher up the mosquito makes life a little less pleasant.

Generally, the climber who attempts the higher peaks will discover that the rock is rather loose and often covered with vegetation, including tall trees. However, there are some impressive cirques, ridges and rock walls with evocative names such as The Enchantments and Snow Creek Wall.

Here one can climb on sound rock at the highest standard, both in an alpine setting and also on 'crag'. Snow Creek Wall, a typical 'crag' in this area, is over 1000ft high.

With the taste for solid granite we headed east into the Rockies to a mountain range called the Wind-rivers in the state of Wyoming. The nearest town is Jackson and in this true heart of the traditional American West taking potshots at the visiting climbers is a local pastime.

Nearby the Yellowstone National Park offers incredible sights and sounds: Old Faithful the geyser, erupting on a four-hour cycle,



Bolt ladder pitch on the north buttress climb on Cathedral Spire in the Yosemite section of the Sierra Nevadas featuring Alan Petit — Tom's friend and dentist from Stirling. Route total is 1100ft-500ft to go.

bubbling sulphurous mud and acid pools, powerful enough to burn your clothes — and boiling hot. The most spectacular sight for us though was a flight of a half dozen ospreys gliding up the Yellowstone Canyon, especially after sitting for an hour waiting for Old Faithful.

We were going to climb the Cirque of the Towers area. To reach it we had to walk along an old Indian trail for some 12 miles past Big Sandy Lake, Arrowhead Lake and over Jackass Pass into the Cirque itself with the mountains Warbonnet, Warrior and Pengora towering above.

In order to escape the unpleasant consequences of picking up a nasty bug called Giardiasis which is present in the water, we decided to camp at about 9,000ft on the Jackass Pass just below the old snow line and from where we had a superb view over the Cirque.

From here we picked out one of the best lines in the area, a 1,500ft crack system going straight up the south west face of Pengora, which gave superb climbing with two reasonably hard pitches to add some excitement to the route. Unfortunately the area is very prone to thunderstorms.

Due to the very sharp nature of the peaks they attract lightning and are therefore particularly dangerous to be caught on during a storm and we had to retreat off several routes while we were in the area.

We had planned to spend ten days in the range but after four days inside the tent sheltering from thunderstorms, rain and snow we decided to head west back to the guaranteed sunshine of California.

We stopped briefly en route to climb in the Grand Tetons as well as at Salt Lake City where we had our first taste of climbing in 80 degree temperatures. Then across the deserts of Utah and Nevada, taking turns to lie out in the back of the Volvo, in shorts with feet aired out the windows and the 'tunes' blasting out Blondie.

Many climbers' lifelong ambition is to climb in Yosemite Valley. Throughout the climbing world it is

thought of as the ultimate rock climbing playground, with something for everyone's taste: 3,000ft vertical granite faces, hundreds of acres of smooth slabs, and 100ft test pieces of the highest standard. Or for those of a more relaxed nature, superb weather, swimming and personable young ladies!

The Valley itself lies in the Sierra Nevada Mountains at about 4,000ft above sea level, hemmed in by precipices several thousand ft high, the most prominent being El Capitan and Half Dome.

To the reticent Scottish climber the Valley, during the height of summer, epitomises the 'American Way of Life,' being somewhat of an outdoor Disneyland. However, for a week's climbing of the quality found here even the most ingrained of feelings can be subdued.

As a result of the extensive travelling and variety of climbing we had done (much of it "non-serious") we were not attuned mentally or physically to tackle the longer routes requiring several days for ascent — one has to have a Valley package deal for that. So we concentrated on one day classics such as the North Buttress of Cathedral Peak and the Nutcracker climb.

Some 50 miles from the Valley and 4,500ft higher, but still part of Yosemite National Park, is the Tuolumne Meadows area. More restrained, somewhat cooler and altogether more conducive to the British rock climbers' approach to the game, this is a must for anyone visiting the area.

The scenery is impressive without being overpowering, the quality of the rock absolutely perfect and there isn't the carnival-like atmosphere of the Valley where most of the tourists can be found and thankfully stay.

The climbing at Tuolumne is mainly on granite domes and therefore it's very non-serious because one can very easily walk off the back after completing a climb up the steeper front of the dome.

The longest route on the domes is the 1,000ft North Face of Fairview

Dome, a classic in the area. It gives some 500ft of jamming up a perfect crack system followed by superb wall climbing and easier cracks. One of the most outstanding mountains in the area is Cathedral Peak — almost 11,000ft. We climbed this by its classic south ridge — where else could one climb at 11,000ft in just a pair of shorts?

I daresay it was inevitable that I would make an effort to go and see the Giant Sequoias in California and even to a forester they were quite an awe-inspiring sight. Not only was their size impressive but it was also interesting to see how prolific they were.

The groves cover a sizeable area with many giant trees and good natural regeneration, helped and improved by cutting out unwanted species and controlled burning to assist seedling establishment. These are not the tallest trees but they are certainly the ones with the greatest girth.

Unfortunately the tree that had the tunnel cut in it and through which cars were driven was blown down in a winter gale, or I would have illustrated their scale more effectively. My modest 5' 10" is the next best thing.

What remained of our trip was two more days in the Volvo on the long haul back up through California, Oregon and Washington to Seattle, with some time to savour a few more of the gastronomic delights and slow down the pace somewhat by taking the ferry from Seattle via Victoria back to Vancouver.

From there we flew back to Scotland, where — you guessed it — it was raining.



Giant redwood in Yosemite National Park shows T McLellan's mighty 5ft 10ins.



Right: At work on the concrete floor in mid-January, are, left to right, Tony Trotman, Nigel Gardner, Richard Martin, Roger Mathews and John Simmons.

Above: John Ely, the ground clearance contractor is seen here discussing progress with Nurseries director John White (left). Work began at the end of November 1979 on the clear felling — by the Harvesting and Marketing Division — and root clearance of the Scots pine was ready on schedule by the end of February.

Below: The new cold store completed and operational in early March incorporates two cold chambers and an enclosed loading bay.



TREE SCRIBE No 7

New cold store aids planting

NURSERIES division has completed a new humidity-controlled cold store, more than trebling the capacity for seedling and transplant storage at Greenhills. At the same time 40 additional acres of woodland have been cleared and prepared for nursery use as part of a move to anticipate increases in planting rates countrywide. A second 5,000,000 gallon reservoir is also scheduled for the increased requirement in irrigation and frost protection.

The new cold store — erected by

contractors on foundations prepared by Nurseries division staff — provides 67,200ft³ of usable storage space. An integrated and insulated loading bay greatly facilitates the loading of the purpose-built road transport. The whole design ensures that plants reach the planting sites in optimal condition, long after the normal growing season is well advanced, thus allowing planting to be undertaken in the more clement conditions and longer daylight hours of spring and early summer.

Fort William

Continued from page 1

timber, and the scale of Government assistance.

When the decision not to proceed was announced at the end of April the reasons given by the chairman of Wiggins Teape were the level of Government aid, the weakness of the dollar (affecting pulp prices traded internationally in dollars), and the cost of pulpwood in Scotland as compared with Canada. It would appear that the latter two of those three factors would have been well appreciated in February and before. Wiggins Teape themselves have been buying Scottish pulpwood for 14 years. The differential with Canadian wood prices is not

peculiar to Scotland but applies throughout Europe.

The abandonment of the newsprint pulpmill proposal—for whatever reason—nevertheless presents a serious situation: the jobs to be lost in the Fort William mill itself are compounded with the risk to employment in timber harvesting and haulage.

Until a permanent solution is found, urgent action is required to mitigate against the worst effects. Tilhill has already made proposals to the Forestry Commission, drawing a parallel with the oversupply situation brought about overnight in the 1968 windblow and successfully dealt with by co-ordinated action, for an industry-wide initiative aimed at the bulk export of pulp chips.

Glenmorangie prizewinners

THE winners of the Glenmorangie prizes this year were:

Southern division — Philip Hymers, Marches branch

Scottish division — Graham Russell, Central Landscaping branch

H & M division — Graham Drinnan-Smith, Region IV

Each prize, as the name implies, takes the form of a case of this nectar and is awarded in the three divisions to the branch or region returning the highest profitability.

Congratulations to all the staff concerned.

IFGB: charitable trusts

THE Institute of Foresters has established two important new charitable trusts, one educational and scientific and the other benevolent.

The purpose of the former is the promotion of education and scientific knowledge in forestry, the assurance of continuity of the Institute's journal, and support for research and study projects. The second is for aid in distressed circumstances to members or their dependants.

Tilhill supports the aims of the trusts and has made a contribution to the educational and scientific trusts.

The support of readers of Tree Scribe for these worthy causes is invited. Contributions can be structured in a tax-efficient way. Further details may be obtained from the secretary, IFGB, 22 Walker Street, Edinburgh.

St Andrews: northern gathering



Dept of Forestry which has been the launching pad for many of Tilhill's professional staff.

Tilhill's northern dinner dance was held this year in the Old Course Hotel at St Andrews — a most popular venue for golfing foresters.

Guest of honour was Professor John Matthews (inset), head of Aberdeen University's

Traditional dancing was, as always, a popular ingredient and the central figure in the Dashing White Sergeant (above) is Mrs Yvonne Russell, the directors' secretary at Stirling, partnered by her husband (right) and MD David Brierton.

Caberboard

Continued from page 1

present price structure for chip-board alone has meant that it has been marginal to get a return on early thinnings.

The new development is therefore of importance to growers within the supply radius of Caberboard to assist them in maintaining economic thinning programmes

and equally of consequence to saw-millers in having a sustained outlet for their residues.

The expansion plan also reflects Caberboard's confidence in its management and labour at Stirling who have turned round the former STP enterprise into profitability in a short space of time. It is a further justification for increasing British timber production with all its related benefits in good land use, employment and import substitution.

Institute of Foresters appointments

THIS year's Council elections in the Institute of Foresters resulted in the following new appointments:—

President: J W Dodds
Vice-president: Dr W E S Mutch
Fellows: D A Mithen, D Brierton (second term) and E H M Harris (second term)

Members: Dr A J Low and A Grayson

From Tilhill R T Gray also serves on Council but being in the middle of his first term of office was not up for re-election this year.

Contracts

Scottish division

Northern branch — awarded £67,000 landscaping contract as nominated subcontractors to Wimpey on Thornhill housing estate, Forres.

Borders branch — awarded £17,500 landscape tree planting contract at Benton-Buckworth near Metro suburban line for Tyne and Wear District council.

Awarded £16,000 landscaping contract by Tyne and Wear CC.

Lothians branch — awarded £24,500 landscape contract for tree and shrub planting and grass-seeding at East Fortune compressor station, by British Gas.

Central Landscape branch — awarded £54,000 landscaping contract by SDA at Gartsherrie Industrial Estate, Coatbridge.

Awarded £22,500 landscaping contract by SDA at Balbardie Park, West Lothian.

Solway branch — awarded £36,300 planting contract by British Gas, at Moffat, Dumfriesshire.

East Yorkshire branch — awarded £5,900 contract for grass seeding and tree planting by ICI Agricultural division, Nitram plant. £3,500 tree surgery contract awarded by PSA/DOE at Pickering Castle.

Southern division

Central branch — awarded £6,500 contract for tree planting at Manor Farm, Upton Grey.

Awarded £6,000 contract for tree planting by Wokingham District council.

Landscaping section — awarded £18,500 contract for reconstruction of three village ponds in Basingstoke area for Hampshire County council.

Awarded £9,000 contract for amenity tree planting near Winchester.

South East branch — awarded £8,000 contract by Mid Kent Water Co. for landscaping at Bewl Bridge Reservoir treatment works.

Awarded £6,000 contract by East Sussex County council for tree planting in 'Sussex Farms' scheme.

South West branch — awarded £11,000 contract by Blue Circle Cement, for fencing and tree planting.

Awarded £7,000 by Somerset County council for roadside tree planting.

Anglia branch — awarded £21,000 contract by Stevenage Development Corporation for soft landscaping.

Awarded £12,000 by Essex County council for tree planting on reclaimed industrial workings.