

#### THE IMPLACABLE ENEMY

The incidence of forest fires is giving rise to much anxiety. The number reported in the last six months as having caused, or threatened to cause, damage to Commission plantations has greatly exceeded that of any previous corresponding period. There were, in fact, no fewer than 625 reported outbreaks, the area burnt being 770 acres, which is equivalent in terms of growth to 8,200 acre-years. The financial loss, including the cost of extinguishing the fires, was £18,500.

#### QUEEN OF THE FOREST

If its pretty girls you like, the Forestry Commission has them. A recent newspaper article was illustrated with photographs which showed, among a bevy of attractive young ladies, 19-years old Sheila Davies at work in the Aberfoyle district. Sheila is beauty queen of Perthshire and, it is understood, competitor for the title of "Miss Scotland". Before taking up forestry work she was employed in an insurance office in Glasgow; now (and we take it that in a way she's paying a compliment to the Commission) she says: "We all think this open-air life is wonderful." Having looked long at the photographs we think you're wonderful, too, Sheila, so that makes us even.

On average, of course, 25 per cent of the total outbreaks in a forest year occur during the first six months, and it is a disturbing thought that if this percentage were repeated in 1948 it means there would be about 1,800 fires between April and September - some 2,400 in all in the year.

Details of fires in the six months (to 31st March) are as follows: England, 178 fires, 675 acres burnt, loss £15,800; Scotland, 300 fires, 60 acres burnt, loss £1,600; Wales, 147 fires, 35 acres burnt, loss £1,100.

Of the total fires, 20 caused damage in excess of £100 and four resulted in loss exceeding £1,000. The worst was that at Ringwood at Easter, during which 329 acres were destroyed, the loss being £8,000. Next biggest blaze was at Kielder, where 114 acres were burnt and the loss was £2,085; this fire occurred just before the Easter period. Both at Ring-

wood and Kielder fire spread from adjoining land, the original causes being unknown.

Of the 625 fires reported, 176 were on adjoining land or spread therefrom while, 32 were known to have been caused by members of the public. It is incumbent on us all, in our respective spheres, to do everything possible to awaken the public conscience and indeed, in this connection much can be done by word of mouth. When one discourses on the loss incurred through a single fire one's audience is not likely to be especially impressed, but it is a different matter when one states - as is the case - that in a recent five-year period the financial loss amounted to £100,000. This is to say nothing of the vast amount which has to be spent on fire protection - the sum of £130,000 being budgeted for in the current forest year.

#### THE NORTHERWOOD COURSES

Instructional courses at Northerwood House, in the New Forest, are now commencing in earnest and should prove of considerable value to those taking part. The following programme must be regarded as provisional, but it may be worth recording some of the dates in your diary, in case you are to be concerned. In a number of instances, of course, selection of participants is yet to take place.

May 3-8 (inclusive), British Silviculture, ex-India and Burma recruits; May 31 - June 5, Aerial Photographs and the Census, District Officers; June 7-12, Management, District Officers, Grade 1; June 14-19, Care of Mechanical Equipment, Senior Foresters; June 29 - July 1, Forestry Education, Education Officers; Sept. 15-22, Utilisation, State Forest Officers, etc.; Oct. 4-16, Estate Forestry, Landowners and Estate Agents; Oct. 18-23, Nursery Practice, District Officers; Nov. 1-6, Nursery Practice, Nursery Foresters and Foremen; Nov. 15-20, Management, Junior District Officers, etc.; Nov. 29 - Dec. 4, Care of Mechanical Equipment, Senior Foresters; Dec. 6-11, Nursery Practice, Nursery Foresters and Foremen.

From April 27 to May 1 Directorate and Conservancy Chief Clerks were assembled for a course on Management, the lecturers being Deputy Secretary E. SHANKS and Controller of Finance V. BATES.

#### LETTER FROM A FOREST WORKER

A letter from "BOB" ROBERTS, a Forest Worker at Buriton, is printed in full, except for the deletion of one or two less relevant paragraphs.

To the Editor of The Slasher.

"I venture to submit a few words from the most humble of the Commission's employees - yes (and I trust my temerity will be forgiven) a contribution from a Forest Worker! None of us can deny that the gulf between the F.W. and all other Commission employees is a great one. Is it beyond spanning? I suggest that even greater rifts have been bridged in other industries.



"The average F.W., even today, does not openly show a desire for recognition by his superiors. In the main he is a good and faithful worker. He is not against his employers, by any means. On the other hand, one cannot truthfully say he is for them. Would it not be a better thing if gradually but surely, and very tactfully, he were persuaded to develop an interest in and an enthusiasm for the Forestry Commission?

"There is another factor to be considered. Gradually, a new type of man is being recruited into the ranks of the Forest Worker. The old craftsmen are being replaced by young men with fresh enthusiasms. These young men have begun to realise that Life is something to be lived, or in other words that greater content lies in doing what one likes doing in spite of a scanty wage packet. They find that forest work can provide healthy, varied and interesting employment. We cannot all become Foresters and District Officers; thus it is that some of us are happy - for the time being at least - to be Forest Workers. And we, the New Brigade, most of whom have had experience outside Forestry employment, and having active and inquisitive minds, are eager to learn more about our Employer and whom else he employs, and for what purposes.

"That is why I, a Forest Worker, welcome "The Slasher". Would it be too much to ask that an extra copy be allocated to each Forester for circulation amongst his employees? And that occasionally one of us may be granted a little space in this new and promising link between us all? The very nature of our work, without which the Forestry Commission would not exist, should provide some contributions of interest to our administrative superiors.

"After all, we wield the tool which has been chosen for your new organ's symbol!"

"BOB" ROBERTS.

Thank you, Mr. ROBERTS, not only for your letter and your interest in The Slasher, but for the obvious concern you feel for the wellbeing of the Department you serve. It must here be re-affirmed that the very principle underlying the decision to produce The Slasher is the encouragement of common effort in the common cause. It is certainly not desired that Forest Workers should be outside either the circulation limits of The Slasher or its influence, or be excluded from contributing. But unhappily the plain fact of the matter is that the paper shortage, and to some extent restricted facilities in producing this news letter, at present make a wider distribution impossible. If an opportunity arises to improve the position it will certainly be taken. Meanwhile, we appeal to Foresters and Foremen to make their individual copies as widely available as possible.

PASTURES NEW The following are transfers, effective since March 1, which had been reported to H.Q. up to April 4. Similar information will be given in future issues of The Slasher, in the belief readers will wish to be informed of such changes.

District Officer W.P. THOMSON moves over in Edinburgh from Census work to employment on behalf of Director, Scotland; District Officer C.A.H. GASCOIGNE goes from Glasgow to Inverness; in the North Wales Conservancy, District Officer C.L. OWEN moves from Machynlleth to Dovey; District Officer G.E. GODWIN is posted from Aberystwyth to Llandrindod Wells (on acquisition duties); District Officer T.A. HUGHSON takes up new duties at Inverness, being posted from Dumfries; District Officer T.F. WILSON joins the staff of Director, England, in London, after being located at Woking, in the S.E. (E) Conservancy; Forester G.J. PIERCE, North Wales Conservancy, transfers from Beddgelert to Hafren; Forester G.T.S. GWILLIAM, stationed at Beeston, takes up new work in the N.W. (E) Conservancy; Forester G. ALLISON is transferred from Slaley, N.E. (E) to The Dean; Forester W.J. HUMPHRIES leaves the New Forest for Quantocks, S.W. (E); Forester G. ROBERTS leaves High Lodge, Thetford, for nearby Mildenhall.

Foreman G. PRINGLE, formerly stationed at Changue, South(S), leaves for Research Branch work in N.Wales. In the N.E. (E) Conservancy, Clerk of Works T. BASSEY goes to Kielder from Mansverley, while Clerk of Works T.H. NOAKE removes from Chingford, S.E. (E) to the New Forest; Clerk of Works P.H. THOMAS goes from The Dean to Wyre S.W. (E) and Clerk of Works E.G. BRADBEER transfers from the New Forest to Brendon and Quantocks, S.W. (E). Clerical Officer G. NIMMO is posted from the office of Director, England, to Glasgow.

#### EDINBURGH SOCIAL CLUB

The Social Club recently formed by the staff of the Edinburgh Office is going strong. One of the latest ventures has been the organisation of a "hike" (due to take place on May 1) with a theatre visit to end the day's enjoyment. For Sunday, May 23, a day's outing to the Forest of Ae, in Dumfriesshire, has been arranged and if this proves a success it will be followed by visits to other forests. Previous events have included (last month) a whist drive, which was followed by modern and Scottish dancing. Songs were sung by Miss A. STOUT and Mrs. H. FOX. Although the event was confined to members of the office staff, there was an attendance of about 50. The first Club function, by the way, was a dance held in the Balmoral Rooms, Princes Street, which was attended by about 140 people, including 20 from Glasgow and Dumfries offices.

Among those present were Mr. H.C. BERESFORD-PEIRSE (Director, Scotland) and Mrs. PEIRSE, Mr. A. WATT (Conservator, West) and Mrs. WATT; unfortunately Mr. J.R. THOM (Conservator, South) and Mrs. THOM were unavoidably prevented from attending.

It was on January 7 that the decision was taken to form the Club, the elected officers being: President, Mr. J.M. MASSIE; Vice-President, Mr. R.J. WALKER; secretary, Mr. H. HENRY; treasurer, Mrs. J.C. CRICH. Members of the Committee include Mr. T. MacBEATH, Mrs. FOX and Miss C. DEA.



"Lying rather off the beaten track and only half in the Breckland country, the 3,000 acres of Hockham Forest give us a welcome source of variety from the endless Pine plantations of Thetford. Taken as a rib from the side of Swaffham, Stow Heath was already two years old when it was transferred to form part of the newly acquired land at Hockham, where planting seriously started in 1932 under Forester J.J. SMITH. Fortunately there was a considerable area of older hardwood scattered over Hockham to provide interest, and not even the energy of H.G.T.P.D. and its mills during the war was able entirely to clear up the area - though what remains of the old hardwoods now admittedly forms little more than sanctuaries for firewood merchants, wild birds and warblers.

"Fortunately the young crops of hardwoods, mostly Oak with some Beech and Ash, initiated under the direction of Dr. STEVEN and subsequently nursed by Larch and Pine, promise to establish Hockham in the good opinion of Foresters and the interest of the public; moreover the Pine plantations will contribute substantially to the nation's reserve of pitwood and timber. Streams, meres, pits and derelict water meadows are scattered throughout the area, and much of the Scots Pine has been established in almost marsh conditions. Draining - quite strange to Thetford - has figured as a considerable item, and many Forest Worker Trainees will entertain memories of happy(!) autumn days spent up to thighs in mud and marsh.

"Roadmen have become expert in the setting of sharp flints to tear up Forester BIRKITT'S bicycle tyres; wrongly, of course, its sometimes thought the fireman of the Watton train carefully rakes his firebox on the most inflammable section of the line; and malignant fate has placed the Forester's house in exposed isolation. But who would not endure such trivia for 10 years spent in the lovely woods and autumn fields of Heathly, known so well to readers of Michael Home, some ageing few of whose characters are still numbered amongst our Forest Workers."

#### Tentsmuir Forest - Fife

From District Officer I.O. ROBERTSON came the following few words on Tentsmuir:

"Tentsmuir Forest was established in 1922 from an area of sand dunes and heather lying between the estuaries of the Tay and the Eden, in north-east Fifeshire. The forest is now 4,000 acres of Scots Pine and Corsican Pine and produces over 3,000 tons per annum of pitprops from thinnings which are the main operations in progress.

"Forester W. MASON has a squad of 35 workers. His main worry is fire, for the area is a dry one, with spring and autumn as the danger periods. Unfortunately the east margin opening to the heather is popular with summer visitors, and the attendant risks add to Forester MASON'S worries.

"There is an unplanted area on the North boundary on the Tay estuary which is preserved as a Bird Sanctuary and Terns, Eider duck, and Shelduck rest in their hundreds. This gives the Forester yet another job - the lifting of the young birds over the rabbit fence. Sand blow is another worry and ditches and drains suffer from this, while one boundary fence has already been raised almost as many times as wages."

#### Social Life at Grizedale

Contributors to the Forest Cameos series are not confined to Technical Officers, for here is Miss MARY KENDALL, a clerk in the office at Ambleside, saying a piece which is mainly about the social side of life at Grizedale. The Commission, she points out, acquired Grizedale Estate in 1937 from Mr. Brocklebank, a shipowner. Included are the villages of Satterthwaite and Grizedale wherein, she says, times have greatly changed. The Parish Council, adds Miss KENDALL, is now comprised of Forestry Commission employees and tenants, while representation by Commission staff is equally strong on the Church Council. The personnel of Satterthwaite Sports Club is almost exclusively Forestry Commission; football and cricket teams are run, as well as hound trails and annual sports. Moreover, Forester L.A. KING is a member of the Rural District Council.

Work in the forest itself, originally undertaken by "locals", has expanded to such an extent as to require the importation of labour from the nearby towns of Ulverston and Barrow. All look eagerly forward to the annual staff party, which has been successfully staged in January for three years. "Between parties", goes on Miss KENDALL "interest among the various working gangs is maintained by the issue of News Sheets, these taking the form of local forest gossip. All is taken in good part by those concerned and thus a contribution is made towards maintaining amicable and good relations between the staff in general. We are fortunate in having a Forester with a strong sense of humour; he takes part in everything which goes on locally and has even this year started playing hockey - as if he didn't get enough exercise marking thinnings and carrying out his numerous other tasks in the forest."

#### THE WORK THEY DO (NO. 4)

Our Aberystwyth contributor who writes of the Machinery and Stores Branch (Wales) asserts the Section is not afflicted with "Specialists". Everyone is inter-changeable and remains this way by virtue of Section Standing Instructions being issued to, and apparently understood, by all. These instructions are fully detailed and cover all work processes handled in the Section. Where there is any link-up, they also relate to the work of other sections.

To quote our correspondent: "It will be noted that the Section, by counting of heads, is 75 per cent Welch. Accommodation is in a pleasant room with a Convenient Balcony, a Magnificent Sea View, and a Striking Draught when the Wind is in the West."



After this it is best that we hasten on and that readers should meet the "troops".

Section Leader is H.C.O. F.C.B. LATHAM, who feels he is already too wellknown to too many. It should, however, be recorded that Army "Q" experience in both wars enables him now to distribute nine rabbits between 20 would-be purchasers each Thursday.

Others are:

C.O. JOHN MORRIS. Genial ex-gunner of World War I; had many years experience in several Departments before arriving at the Aberystwyth Haven. Particularly apt, when worthy Welsh workman wanders in wailing "Ble dd -- I gai rhoi y pun' dynell o goke?" to reply "Yn y twll - y Twp!"\* Otherwise copes vigorously with H.M.S.O., M.O.W., and other sources of trouble. Deals with stationery, tyres, etc.

Miss EIRA RICHARDS, Clerical Officer. Ex-G.P.O., young, efficient and (unusual combination) attractive. Keeps a small but firm hand over the petrol coupons; joyfully deals with Traffic Accident Reports, bills, "rockets" and other Bad News reaching the Section. Issues F.C. machinery identification placques, designed in the Section for general use; controls local battery service depot, which provides almost any type of battery on demand.

GWYN WILLIAMS, T.C. II. Ex-R.A.F. character, with both feet now firmly on the ground. Patiently straightens out the manifold stupidities which so prolifically develop in tractors and such-like which cannot think or act for themselves. Obtains at higher levels everything pronounced "not available".

\* Question is: "I have brought the coke, where do I put it?" The answer: "In the cellar" - is followed by a designation which can hardly be described as an endearment. Readers may be able to interpret for themselves.

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TABLE TENNIS Recently the table tennis enthusiasts at H.Q. emerged from the gloom of Basement B, their lunch-time rendezvous, to entertain a team from Alice Holt. Play took place in the room normally used by the Typing Pool, involving re-arrangement of lights and furnishings. The H.Q. players achieved a flattering victory which did not reflect the close margins which decided most of the games. The Alice Holt pair - J.E. JEFFERS and Miss J.M.A. SHARPE - triumphed in an exciting final in the doubles competition, left undecided at the Alice Holt Social.

Teams were: Alice Holt - Messrs. JEFFERS (Captain), HARPER, WOOD and IRVINE, the Misses McMAHON, SHARPE, HOPKIN and TURNER. H.Q. - Messrs. BROOK (Captain), SMITH, HERMON, GUBBY and BALDWIN, the Misses PRIEST, MOSS, ALLAN, HODDER and FROST.

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FLASH FROM ALICE HOLT Where the staff is concerned Mrs SEAMAN has departed, while District Officer G.D. HOLMES and Miss E. DONALDSON (clerical) have arrived. True story - A Diary entry reads: "November 3rd. Office work. Child arrived 7.30 p.m. train." The stork is not outmoded; the Child in question is a robust Census surveyor.

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NATURE NOTES Forester B.R. HAMMOND, Collingbourne, S.W. (E), refers to an unusual habit acquired by his dog. The animal, a black Labrador, accompanies the Forester in the woods almost every day and until lately had behaved in a normal manner. Now he has developed a mole-catching propensity which has to be seen to be believed, for sometimes he has caught as many as five in a day. "I have watched with some interest how he goes about this business," writes Forester HAMMOND. "He appears to hear the moles working, although I have stood by him and heard not the slightest sound. Sometimes he will stand as long as five minutes, his head moving from side to side; then he will spring and bring out a mole. I should be interested to hear of anyone with a dog similarly gifted. I would mention that, as I have no nursery, I would consider hiring him out to any Forester who has, and who happens to be plagued with moles therein. But, needless to say, the fee will necessarily be high!"

From Alice Holt comes a report that it is known that Herons are nesting in the Forest; the Greater Grey-back Shrike was recently seen in the vicinity, and the Cuckoo was heard on April 11, a week earlier than last year. On April 12 an Orange-tip butterfly was seen.

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THE FORESTRY COMMISSION JOURNAL Owing to unforeseen circumstances the Forestry Commission Journal has gone to press rather later than usual. Publication, however, is expected by about the end of June. Where future issues are concerned it is hoped that April will be the month of publication and the Editor (R.G. BROADWOOD) would therefore welcome early contributions for the next Journal. As in the volume now in the press, articles (which should be sent through Conservators) are asked for from all Conservancies. The latest date for receiving these is provisionally November 30th, but it is hoped the main bulk of the contributions will be with the Editor before that date.