

SOME NOTES ON THE FESTIVE SEASON

From all accounts Christmas has been well and truly enjoyed, and most people seem to have benefitted by their brief respite from the cares of every-day life.

The weeks immediately preceding the holiday were more than usually busy for those who work in the forest, for the demand for Christmas trees was exceptionally heavy. Throughout the country many tens of thousands of trees were disposed of to the trade. The Commission's contribution towards meeting the demand attracted a great deal of attention from the Press. In South East England, for instance, our assistance to a number of Rotary Clubs was given credit. These clubs had hoped to receive trees as a goodwill gesture from Norway, the intention being to present them to various towns for public display and to have them loaded with gifts for distribution to poor children. The Order prohibiting the importation of such trees, however, complicated matters for the Rotarians, and at one time it seemed that their plans would come to naught. But the Commission was able to sell them trees of the required size, and in the end all turned out well.

NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The new year which lies ahead will demand much from us but, I believe, will give much in return.

Inevitably a great deal of hard work is in store, for in all our operations, whether carried out in the field or at an office desk, we must increase our tempo to match the requirements of our expanded programme.

I am sure that with goodwill on all sides and a continued spirit of co-operation we shall, at the close of 1949, be able to say that we have made good strides towards the common goal.

A Happy New Year to you all.

Robinson

One of the leading news-reels took shots of Christmas tree extraction in the New Forest, and Head Forester P. HARRISON and Forest Worker D. J. WILLIAMS took part in a B.B.C. feature which dealt with the supply of trees from Gwydyr (North Wales).

So far comparatively few reports of thefts have reached Headquarters, but no doubt the black market men were active. If any readers have any interesting experiences to relate we shall be glad to hear from them.

On The Social Side A number of Christmas parties were held. At SHREWSBURY the scene of revelry was a picturesque hostelry known as The Old Post Office. The organising committee comprised the Misses FAULCONBRIDGE, SMITH, TILLER and TAYLOR and Mr. G. B. FARQUHAR; between them they were responsible for an attractively decorated

hall, in which stood a noble example of Norway spruce from Coed-y-Brenin. Among those present were the Conservator, Mr. F. C. BEST, Divisional Officer W. A. CADMAN and Mrs. Cadman, together with District Officers of the Conservancy. Captain L. B. GLADWELL, a popular ex-member of the Conservancy staff and now Conservancy Engineer J. W. (E) managed to get along for the occasion. District Officer J. L. SHAW was in great form with his monologue "Blowing out a candle", while other highlights of the evening were some original competitions. Winners were J. REECE and A. E. BEEDLE. The duties of M. C. were efficiently carried out by H. HENRY, and Mrs. P. BEETON was an able pianist.

SIR WILLIAM LJUNG TAYLOR

We offer our warmest congratulations to Mr. W. L. Taylor, on whom, in conferring New Year Honours, His Majesty has bestowed a Knighthood.

Educated for the land agency profession, Mr. Taylor entered the public service in 1910 and has been engaged in timber supply and forestry work since 1916. He joined the staff of the Forestry Commission at its inception, serving in various capacities in the field, and as Assistant Commissioner for England and Wales. He was appointed a Forestry Commissioner in 1938 and has held office as Deputy Director General and Director General of the Forestry Commission. Mr. Taylor continues to serve as a Forestry Commissioner.

At ABERYSTWYTH celebrations commenced quite early in December with the holding of the second annual dinner. The Director (Mr. A. P. LONG) was unable to attend owing to illness, but he and Mrs. Long sent their good wishes. The dinner was followed by a mixed programme of games and dancing, V. H. WILLIAMS being the M. C. A day or two later the Social Club staged a Christmas party. The programme opened with an hilarious 40-minute pantomime presented by "The Twigs", the Club's amateur dramatic group. The cast consisted of the following, all members of the Directorate staff: the Misses E. C. AKISTER, J. HORSHAM, B. HUGHES-LLOYD, E. RICHARDS, Messrs. D. C. FISHER, H. J. POPE, G. P. WILLIAMS and V. H. WILLIAMS. Sound effects were by H. HUMPHREYS, make-up and costumes by Miss AKISTER and production by H. J. POPE. The show was a riot of fun, and later the cast joined the audience for refreshments and games, and dancing organised by Miss H. LEWIS.

UPTON-BY-CHESTER. The North West (England) party was also a great success and notable for the number who attended despite the fog. Estate Officer RAVEN set out by car but finished the journey on foot. Private Woodlands Officer C.A.J. BARRINGTON walked in front of his car, while Mrs. Barrington drove.

Decorations were effectively arranged by MURIEL HOYLE and IRENE BROWN. Assistant Engineer CROFT (Committee chairman) and Mrs. Croft provided a stirrup cup which (not surprisingly) proved extremely popular, and the programme included games and dancing;

OUR FIRST BIRTHDAY

THE SLASHER is one year old. Just twelve months ago this news letter was launched on a potential and unsuspecting readership; there had been nothing like it before (some may say there never will be again!) in the Commission's history. No attempt had ever been made to produce something which would serve as a link between Commission staff on, so to speak, a national basis.

It is not easy to measure the success which this venture may have had. But from what has been said in widely separated parts of the country it would seem that the purpose of The Slasher is being served, and that people really are interested in reading of the activities and movements of old friends and acquaintances, or of the fortunes of office staffs with whom they once served.

But perhaps the best yardstick is the balance between the bouquets and the brickbats which have been sent me, spontaneously, in writing. There have been many more of the former than the latter. I hope, if piously, that the description which reached me from one source -- "now the most widely read publication of the Forestry Commission" -- really sums up what most readers think of The Slasher.

Be that as it may, I extend my warmest thanks to contributors, and my greetings to readers. I hope that in this New Year I shall be hearing from those of you who have often meant to put pen to paper but have never quite got around to the job.

THE EDITOR

the prizes winners were E. HEWITT (HEO) and Miss K. DAVIES, PETER BIRKETT and Miss P. EVANS. Some unpleasant home-ward journeys had to be faced because of the persistent fog, and palms for travelling should go to Mr. and Mrs. GERRARD, who had come from Shropshire by motor-cycle, and KENNETH ELDERWICK, who did the return journey from Church Stretton.

Thanks are due to GEORGE CROFT and ARTHUR BUCK for their hard preparatory work in making the party such an outstanding success. The former was M.C. and the latter judged the competitions.

FOREST WORKERS IN MOUNTAIN RESCUE -

Twice in a year, it is reported, Forestry Commission employees have taken part in mountain rescues -- to save the same two men! In the first episode a Bradford business man and his son were trapped on Pillar Mountain, in Cumberland, during a gale. During a recent weekend the couple returned to Ennerdale for another spell of mountaineering, and on this occasion the father slipped and broke several ribs. His son and a friend were unable to get him down the mountain and went for assistance. A stretcher party climbed the mountain by torchlight, reaching the valley with the injured man as dawn was breaking. The rescuers included Ganger E. PARRY and C.D. FITZSIMONS, forest worker. The party, it is understood, was led by Mr. HUGHES, warden of the Gillerthwaite Youth Hostel and a former Forestry Commission employee.

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS - Some really good photographs are wanted for the purpose of illustrating certain guides and booklets now in preparation.

The areas concerned are : Culbin, Loch Ard, Glentool (including Carrick, Change,

Cairn Edward and Kirroughtree forests), the New Forest, Coed-y-Brenin, Rheola and Thetford. Keen photographers are invited to send in their best pictures of these areas -- on approval, of course, in the first instance. Payment for those accepted will be made at the rates quoted in the October issue of The Slasher. Photographs should be sent to The Publications Officer, Forestry Commission, 25 Savile Row, London, W.1.

MEET MR. MEALIN

M.E. MEALIN, Temporary Clerk who recently joined the Department, and who is working in the Finance Section at Headquarters, was born in Burma and lived in that country until June of last year. During the war he was a captain in the Burmese Forces and had many interesting experiences, notably during the period when he took part in the defence of Rangoon. On one occasion he and his company boasted a single revolver and only a few rounds of ammunition between them, and it is not surprising that orders for withdrawal had to be given. The position was complicated when some of the enemy forces were seen silhouetted against blazing buildings, and were wrongly hailed as friends. The reply was a hail of bullets, and Mr. Mealin and his men only just escaped capture. At one time Mr. Mealin was charged with the defence of one of the principal airfields on the outskirts of Rangoon, but was forced through sheer weight of numbers to retire. The Japanese literally swept across the airfield in waves.

As a native of Rangoon, Mr. Mealin gives an interesting verbal description of this mystic and beautiful city, especially as it was before the war. One of its chief showpieces, of course, is the pagoda shrine to Buddha which is entirely encased in real gold.

leaf, the latter being renewed at least twice a year at fantastic cost.

Mr. Mealin's impressions of this country are such that he intends to remain here. "People," he says, "are friendly, and there is an absence of class distinction." He came to England in order that he might retain his British nationality, and, he maintains, many Burmese would have preferred to remain within the Commonwealth.

Prior to the outbreak of war Mr. Mealin studied at the Rangoon University, intending to obtain a degree in engineering. His call-up for military service, however, prevented him from achieving his ambition.

STAFF MOVEMENTS

The following transfers had been reported to Headquarters by

19th December:

Conservancy Engineer L.B. GLADWELL from Shrewsbury, N(W) to Bristol, SW(E); Asst. Engineer J.S. PERKINS from York, NE(E) to Thornton-le-dale, NE (E); Head Forester J.M. REID from Ardgartan, W(S) to Ae, S(S); Forester P. BROWN from Ae to private woodland duties, S(S); Forester J.M. FERGUSON from Loch Ard, W(S) to Glenfinart, W(S); Forester J.M. CALDER from Garadhban, W(S) to Carron Valley, W(S); Forester E.D. FRASER from Carron Valley to private woodland duties, W(S); Forester A.J. STANNARD from Bramshill, SE(E) to Bruton, SW(E); Forester J. HAMILTON from Carron Valley to Saddell, W(S); Forester E. GRIGOR from Drumtochty, E(S) to Glenisla, E(S); Forester A.J. McMASTER from Durris, E(S) to Auchernach, E(S); Foreman D. GIBBONS from Newton (R and E) to Drummond Hill (R and E); Clerk of Works D.L. BAYNE from Carron Valley to Loch Ard; Clerk of Works A.A. WARD from Dornoch and Balblair, N(S) to Glengarry, N(S); HCO J.T. BISSETT from York to Edinburgh (Director, Scotland).

HONOUR FOR MR. HARRY WATSON

Congratulations to Mr. HARRY WATSON, Education Officer, Benmore Forester Training School, who was mentioned in the New Year Honours List and received an M.B.E. for his outstanding work on behalf of the Commission's educational services.

Mr. Watson has been at Benmore for many years. At one time he was Instructor at the Birnam School of Forestry under the Board of Agriculture (Scotland), and in 1926 took charge of the Beaufort School. He is the author of several works on forestry.

WHAT DO YOU DO? -- SOME UNUSUAL HOBBIES -- In the last issue of The Slasher we mentioned that some members of the Commission's staff have unusual hobbies. G.H. CLARK, of the Eastern Conservancy Office (England) makes a point of seeing the unusual whenever possible. But let him tell his own story.

"While on a recent leave I spent nearly a week at various depots of the London Transport electric traction system. Although the main object was my technical edification, I saw much which may be of general interest. For example, at the Acton Railway Works (where the Tube cars are given a major overhaul every 100,000 miles), I saw an impressive

array of Bedford cord and uncut moquette -- calculated to make the average householder, who is forced dismally to contemplate his shabby suites, green with envy.

"The boiler furnaces at Lots Road Generating Station, I found, each day swallow about 1,000 tons of coal. Since Lots Road is only a third of the size of the main grid station (Battersea), Londoners may cease to wonder why their domestic ration has sometimes seemed in jeopardy.

"Perhaps the pièce de résistance was the all night session I spent (armed with a contraption like a miner's lamp) with the track and signals maintenance people. While respectable persons were snug in bed, I was 100 feet or so underground, stumbling over sleepers and hacked up concrete in the incredible gloom of the warren of London's Tube network. A startling moment occurred when, walking with the Superintendent Engineer towards a work site, we rounded a bend to be confronted with (to me) the terrifying sight of a train rumbling towards us. It looked enormous and seemed to fit the tunnel as a hand in a glove. However, it proved to be only the battery operated track repair train, and its speed -- four miles an hour! The speed and clockwork precision with which the gangs renewed track sections impressed me greatly, as did their supreme indifference to the 600 volt conductor in the "overlap" periods when the current was not switched off.

"I had many novel sensations during my four hours underground, a notable one being to experience the odd contrast between the deathly stillness of dark and deserted tunnels and the din and frenzied activity of the platelayers working in the white glare of pressure oil lamps. It was reminiscent of something out of Dante."

The Commission's Chief Education Officer, J.Q. WILLIAMSON, has an unusual hobby, and one which is well recommended for its instructional qualities. Asked to discourse on the subject, Mr. Williamson preferred to do so through the medium of a verse. Here it is:

"PINS AND NEEDLES"

The proverb says that work for idle hands--
And idle brains no doubt is meant as well--
Provides the devil. And as he understands
Each sinner's needs he tempts him to his peril.
So prompted by my wife when "listening-in"
To use my hands as these initials state
Recurr's the thought as ply I wool and pin
Yon wife'd the devil -- or does she him frustrate?

Now, readers. Messrs. Clark and Williamson are not alone in having unusual pastimes. Or are they?

FOREST FIRE PUBLICITY The Information Section at Headquarters is in close touch with the public relations departments of both the Automobile Association and the Royal Automobile Club. In one way Foresters in particular may, from time to time, be of assistance. If there comes to your notice any outstanding example of help given by an AA or RAC patrol in fighting, or preventing, a forest fire it will be appreciated if you will inform (through the normal channels) the Information Officer at Headquarters. It would be helpful if some indication could be given of the extent of the fire (if, indeed, an actual fire is involved). We will not trouble you here with the whys and wherefores; we feel sure it will be appreciated that good use will be made of the information asked for.

WILD LIFE IN THE FOREST Many of our forest staff have unique opportunities to study at first hand the rarer wild animals and birds which inhabit our moors and mountains. We would like to hear from foresters and others who happen to see any really rare species, such as the crested tit of north east Scotland; or species rare in a reader's own district.

On a recent visit to the Glentworth National Forest Park an officer from Headquarters came across what he believes to be the rarest bird on the British list. Shaped like a pheasant, but the colour of a Rhode Island Red hen, it had its head concealed from view by a hood of golden brown feathers. Its ancestry remains unsolved, but a mixed marriage between common and golden pheasants may explain the mystery. What do readers think?

ANOTHER TABLE TENNIS TABLE WANTED With tennis rackets stored away until the light evenings, several members of the South West (England) Social Club would like to turn to table tennis. This, of course, would be simple if the club had a table. The following appeal is therefore made (to quote our correspondent): "If any kind person knows where a second-hand table may be obtained at a reasonable price, would they be good enough to inform Mr. L.W. CARTER, Forestry Commission, 9, Downfield Road, Bristol?"

TWO ENGAGEMENTS AND A WEDDING Miss N. SMITH, a Clerical Officer in the Shrewsbury Office (North Conservancy, Wales) has become engaged to Mr. F.G. MORLEY, of the Customs and Excise Department, Birmingham. This is in the nature of a Service romance, for the couple first met when, as C.Os, they served together in the Post Office Engineering Department at Nottingham in July, 1938. Miss UNA CLARK, also of the Shrewsbury Office, has become engaged to Mr. JOHN HUBBARD, of the Post Office Engineers, Shrewsbury.

Early last month FRANK HALSEY of the Records Section, Headquarters, was married to Miss MARJORIE STEVENS, of Beddington. On the eve of his wedding Mr. Halsey was presented with a drawing room clock, the gift of members of the staff. The presentation was made by Establishment Officer A.D. PALMER.

SATISFIED CUSTOMER Extract from a letter received at Headquarters from a camper living in Wiltshire: "On my return from a most enjoyable camping holiday, a fortnight of which was spent in the Snowdonia National Forest Park, I should like to express my very best thanks for the beautiful site placed at the disposal of campers, for the excellent facilities provided, and for the courtesy and efficiency of the warden. In making arrangements for such sites you are doing a great service to the nation".

DEATH OF DR. M.C. RAYNER The death has occurred of Dr. M.C. RAYNER who for many years had been associated with the Forestry Commission in the field of research. Much of her work was undertaken at Wareham Forest (South West, England) and was concerned with the study of mycorrhiza -- the inter-relation between tree roots and fungi. Her researches had, in fact, gained for her an international reputation. Dr. Rayner was also a pioneer in experimental work in relation to wasteland nurseries.