

THE AGRICULTURAL SHOW PROGRAMME

For the benefit of those who may be called upon to help locally with the staging of the Commission's agricultural show exhibit, a list is given herewith of the shows in which it is expected that we shall participate.

Anglesey County Exhibition, Llangefni (April 20-23) (exhibit being prepared by Gwydyr School); Devon County, Newton Abbot (May 10-12); Oxfordshire Agricultural Society, Oxford (May 19-21); Warwickshire, Stratford-on-Avon (25-26 May); Bath and West, Bristol (June 1-4); Cheshire, Chester (June 8-9); Three Counties, Worcester (June 14-16); Royal Counties, Reading (June 22-25); Royal Norfolk (June 29-30); Royal English, Shrewsbury (July 5-8); Sussex County, Hassocks (July 13-14); Tunbridge Wells and South Eastern Counties, Tunbridge Wells (July 19-20); Yorkshire, Wakefield (July 26-28); Royal Welsh, Swansea (Aug. 10-13); Royal Lancs., Blackpool (Aug. 16-19).

In addition, it is hoped that it will be possible to exhibit at one or two one-day shows in Wales after the close of the main programme. It is also proposed that we shall provide an exhibit at the meeting in Newcastle in September of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

S. J. BETTERTON, Foreman at Hamsterley, NE (E) will this year be in charge of the exhibit and last season's "travelling circus" experiment, which proved successful, will be repeated. This means that "props" and personnel will move from show to show by lorry and van. Foreman Betterton, by the way, is a Rugby footballer of no mean ability. He has been a reserve for England, and of late has been playing for Darlington. When at the Dean School he played for Gloucester.

Exhibits were staged at 15 shows in 1948. The numbers of visitors varied, of course, according to the size of the shows, but at the larger events such as the Bath and West, as many as 800 to 1,000 people passed through the forestry pavilion each hour.

PRESENTATION TO SIR WILLIAM TAYLOR

At Headquarters on Wednesday, March 23rd., LORD ROBINSON presented SIR WILLIAM TAYLOR with a desk, the gift of the staff of the Commission. The presentation was to mark Sir William's retirement from the office of Director General, which actually took place at the end of June last year.

"Sir William saw the Commission through the difficult days which followed the first world war," said Lord Robinson, "and he has played a full part in the Commission's work ever since. If you look at the map you will see very few of the older forests in respect of which he did not acquire the land, and, in England and Wales, many in which he had a hand in the afforestation. He must, in fact, have as good a knowledge of the wasteland of Britain as anyone else in the country".

Sir William, in expressing thanks, referred to his early days with the Commission. "Our greatest asset," he said, "was our enthusiasm". After an interesting review of the progress made by the Commission, Sir William added: "We are doing a great work and belong to a great forest service. With faith, loyalty and commonsense as our virtues we shall go from strength to strength".

The ceremony took place before a representative gathering of the staff, including members of the Whitley Council.

MORE ABOUT UNUSUAL HOBBIES

Well, well. We even have a glider enthusiast in our midst. Mr. M. V. LAURIE, Chief Research Officer, has for a long while been an exponent of this sport and most free weekends will find him soaring from such strongholds of gliding as Dunstable. It is understood that he has made a number of flights of several hours duration. But let him tell in his own words of the virtues of sky-riding.

"Those who sigh for the wings of a dove," says Mr. Laurie, "have obviously never tasted the delights of gliding. From the early stages of learning to the more advanced phases of sustained soaring flight in sailplanes, gliding provides all the thrills and interest that could be desired. There is no roaring engine to shatter the air, just smooth silent flight spiced with the continuous excitement of searching for invisible up-currents sufficiently powerful to overcome the normal rate of 'sink' of the machine. These up-currents can be found over the windward faces of hills and as rising columns of warmer air on hot days, or when meteorological conditions are suitable; they can be found under cumulus clouds when the latter are forming, or in the front of squalls. Then, in the most exhilarating fashion of all, they may be found in the dark interior of thunder clouds and may then have a lift of 50 feet per second, or more. Such clouds have to be approached with great respect, and only entered if one is certain that one's parachute is ready for use, for they have been known to break up sailplanes. But there is no more glorious sensation, after having been thrown around in the inside of such clouds, suddenly to burst out at the top some thousands of feet above the earth into brilliant sunshine and calm smooth air.

"Both launching and landing never lose their thrill, even for the most experienced sailplane pilot. There are several methods by which one gets into the air. One may be catapulted off the top of a hill with an elastic rope, or towed behind an aeroplane to the desired height. The commonest method, however, is to be pulled up on the end of a long cable by a high-speed winch; a good winch with 3,000 feet of cable can "kite" a glider up to 1,000 feet or more, according to the strength of the wind. As for coming down again, every landing is a forced landing and has to be carefully planned and the approach accurately judged.

"I am frequently asked," adds Mr. Laurie, "if gliding is dangerous. It is not more so than, say, ski-ing or sailing or even hunting, and I think one gets more for one's money. Is it difficult? No. Anyone who can ride a bicycle and has normally quick reaction can learn to fly a glider safely -- although to fly one really well, and to remain in the air in difficult conditions, requires much practice and skill. There is a great deal of hard work to be done on the ground in getting others air-borne and there are frequent disappointments when the weather is not "soarable", but once the delights of soaring flight have been tasted gliding becomes an absorbingly fascinating sport. And, incidentally, it is the cheapest form of flying".

MR. LEWIN REMINISCES

Mr. WALTER LEWIN, who recently retired (The Slasher, February) has written a long and interesting letter in which he recalls earlier days with the Commission. Unfortunately, space is too limited to permit reproduction in full. "I would like to express my thanks," writes Mr. Lewin, "to all kind friends who contributed to the presentation to me. The list contained 97 names, including those of many people I knew years ago. Some were with me in the room in Finance Branch to which I was allocated on August 8th., 1920."

Mr. Lewin refers to a number of amusing incidents which occurred when he was concerned with the distribution of seed to the various Divisions. "On one occasion", he says, "the late Mr. S.J. HONYWILL asked me to count 1,500 Sitka spruce seeds, and to make up lots of 50 seeds on strips of blotting paper; I had then to place them in an incubator, and keep a record of how many seeds germinated in 7, 14, 21 and 28 days. Sounds simple, doesn't it? But just try counting them. I know I was relieved when Mr. GUILLERMAN loaned me his magnifying glass".

In conclusion, Mr. Lewin says how greatly he appreciated the response to his invitation to old friends to meet him at Savile Row in December last.

FOREST CAMEO

An area of 5,993 acres of heathland, bare except for a few plantations of conifer and hardwood, and situated near Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, was acquired in the year of King George V's Silver Jubilee and named The King's Forest. To commemorate the occasion (writes District Officer D. MACKAY) a small monument was erected and the planting of Queen Mary's Avenue (an avenue of beech) was commenced, this following the course of the Icknield Way, a Roman road running through the forest for about four miles. Near the centre of the forest the monogram G R was laid out in beech, covering an area of some thirteen acres.

The soil is sand overlying chalk, which made an ideal rabbit warren, but this was cleared and planted by 1941. And then, in June of that year, the area (except for one compartment which included the beginning of Queen Mary's Avenue) was used by the War Department for training purposes. On the removal of the fences an army of tanks, etc., invaded the area, together with a second army of rabbits which were almost equally destructive in wiping out most of the younger plantations and severely damaging the remainder.

The War Department left the forest in 1947, but the rabbits had no intention of doing likewise and there has been a continuous war ever since, with Forester J.J. SMITH in charge of operations. All known methods of warrening have been tried, and from April, 1947, warrening and planting have been receiving priority; the result has been that to last December 2,000 acres had been cleared by a catch of 43,000 rabbits, and 1,032 acres had been replanted. Forester Smith hopes to be rid of the pests within five years of the date the Army departed.

TRANSPLANTS

The following transfers were reported to Headquarters by March 21st.

District Officer A.W.L. GUILF from Cardiff to Pembrey, S(W); District Officer W.C. WILKINS from Cardiff to Tintern, S(W); District Officer F. WESTON, temporarily transferred from Rushden, E(E) to Tealby, E(E); Forester G. SMALL from Glendaruel, W(S), to Morangie, N(S); Forester W. DEAL, temporarily transferred from Holmsley, New, to Kinver, N W(E); Forester J.A. HENDRIE from Lynford, E (E), to Watlington, E(E); Forester A. MACKAY from Morangie, N(S), to Kilcoy, N(S); Forester W.B. HARBIN from Coedy Brenin, N(W), to Chopwell, NE(E); Foreman R. MOFFATT from Research, Glenrigh, to Research, Fort William; Foreman E.J. ACOTT from Apethorpe, E(E), to Yardley, E(E); Foreman D.J. HUGHES from Kershope, N W (E) to Gisburn NE(E); Foreman R.E. YOUNG from Glasfynydd, S (W), to Crychan, S (W); Foreman H. MACRAE from North Strome, N (S), to Isle of Raasay, N(S); Foreman D.B. LLOYD

from Tintern, S(W), to Hay, S(W); Clerk of Works C.J. COTTRELL from Blengdale, NW(E), to Mortimer, N W(E); Clerk of Works G. HOOPER from Mortimer to Walcot, NW(E); CO Miss J.E. TUCKER from Office of Director, England, to Bristol.

PREPARING FOR NORTHERWOOD COURSES (BEHIND THE SCENES) It happened that it was necessary for the Chief Education Officer and one of the lecturers-to-be to meet to discuss arrangements for a certain course. They met at a small private hotel in a large city, and later celebrated the occasion by adjourning to a tavern.

On their return to the hotel the lecturer retired early to bed, but sleep was not forthcoming. He lay awake until all other occupants had stumped upstairs, and then decided he must seek a glass of water from the bathroom. Since all outside was in darkness he left his door ajar, with the light shining out across the landing. But as he retraced his steps from the bathroom a faint bang reached his ears..... a few seconds later this sleepy lecturer, clad only in pyjamas, was clawing more in sorrow than in anger at a bedroom door which had closed and locked itself!

Nothing daunted, our friend the lecturer went in search of a bell to summon assistance and a spare key, but a detailed examination of the bathroom, dining room and lounge, all now dark and deserted, revealed the dismal fact that there were no bells. "There must be a bell in the bedroom," thought the disconsolate lecturer -- but whose bedroom should he enter? His eye fell upon a latch key still inserted in a bedroom door. Ah! The Chief Education Officer was obviously more experienced in these matters and had wisely left his key on the outside.

"Sorry to wake you, old man," said the lecturer. "But have you got a bell? I've got shut out of my room." The Chief Education Officer muttered drowsily something about having a spare bed but this, as far as he could remember, was devoid of any belle. There was, of course, no bell, either.

So there remained one last course of action. Wearily descending once more to the ground floor the lecturer sought out the front door and hammered loudly. An old wizened female, with an eagle eye which scarcely batted, popped up from the depths below. But alas, the lecturer's troubles were not yet over, for the aged W.F. was firmly convinced that here, at last, was the lodger for whom she was supposed to be waiting up -- but why he should arrive in pyjamas was obviously causing her no little alarm and derpondency!

Just how the wretched man explained the situation is nobody's business, but it all goes to show what a lot has to be gone through before these Northerwood courses can take place.

(Editor's note: The only clue to the lecturer's identity are the initials W.A.C.)

THE WORK THEY DO (No.10) If one admits the fairly obvious validity of the statement that if you don't acquire land you can't very well plant trees or establish forest holdings, the basic importance to the Commission of the Acquisiton branches is at once established. All of which is a somewhat "high-falutin" way of introducing a few lines about the Acquisitions and Disposals Branch of the English Directorate.

The branch is in the charge of Conservator E. WYNNE JONES who, of course, is also responsible for the control of affairs relating to dedication and private woodlands. His technical "lieutenant" is Divisional Officer R.H. SMITH, who works from the Directorate office in Cadogan Square, S.W.1. Located with the branch and in the same building are District Officers J.A. BAMFORD and J.F. WILSON, while the tireless pursuit of afforestable land is also carried on in the provinces by the Acquisitions Officers attached to Conservancies.

From the point at which an Acquisition or Disposal receives the Director's signature of recommendation, the office staff take over and set in motion machinery for seeing the Report through the National Committee and, later, the Commissioners. When final approval has been secured the Reporting Officer (having recovered from his astonishment) proceeds to obtain (in acquisition cases) completion of what is familiarly known as Form 42, a convenient summary of the terms negotiated for the purchase or lease, as the case may be, and which forms the basis on which the Official Solicitor is instructed to proceed with legal formalities.

It has been said, by those who know no better, that from the point at which one instructs the Solicitor, one sits back and relaxes until, as from a automatic machine into which has been inserted a coin, the completed deed is delivered into one's lap. F.C.BALDWIN, who is in charge of the section, and his colleagues A.F. CARVOSSO and W.J. HENRY, can only regret the inaccuracy of this statement. They have every reason for the belief that, as a general rule, the smaller and more innocent-seeming the acquisition, the more likely they are to find themselves buried beneath an avalanche of queries arising on the draft documents or accompanying plans.

The section maintains harmonious relations with R.A. AXTELL, of the Directorate Drawing Office, who is responsible for the maps which illustrate acquisition reports, for the preparation of draft plans and area schedules -- often voluminous and intricate -- and, later still, for the plans for the engrossments, i.e. the actual deeds which are "signed, sealed and delivered." The foregoing, of course, are only some of Mr. Axtell's functions.

Normally, the completion of an acquisition or disposal represents the culmination of work, but from time to time the section's old friend the "adverse claim" crops up and has either to be demolished amid rousing cheers or admitted as gracefully as circumstances permit, according to the advice of the Official Solicitor.

The keeping of statistics and the redemption of annuities payable in respect of current acquisitions by purchase are among other tasks which claim the attention of the section.

SUCH IS FAME

We note with interest that Mr. SAM COSTA, of "Much Binding in the Marsh" radio fame, had occasion to announce in a recent broadcast that certain operations of a rather exacting silvicultural nature had been performed on the mycorrhizal appendage normally adorning his upper lip. It seems that this was in urgent need of trimming and brashing and, as he announced, it appeared desirable to solicit the assistance of the Department.

It is a matter for speculation as to which Conservancy or Division had the honour of performing this highly sensitive operation. There is also the problem of deciding to which Head of Accounts it should be charged. For the guidance of Conservancy Accountants, any future operation of this kind should be charged to E 14(c).

Seriously, we welcome any good-humoured tilts made at the Commission by radio comedians. It is gratifying that the Commission is now well-enough known to justify script writers using the Department's name in the certainty that there will be recognition on the part of the audience of our functions.

AN EDUCATION OFFICER'S PLEA

Education Officer R.J. STREETS, of Lynford Hall, asks us to state that it was not he who nearly won the School's table tennis tournament (The Slasher, last month) but Forester Instructor T.L. JENKINS. Our apologies for the slip, Mr. Streets.

TURNTABLE TOPICS

Last month the Social Club of the English Directorate spent an enjoyable evening listening to a programme of recorded music presented by Conservator C.A. CONNELL. The amplifying equipment, which has been designed and constructed by Mr. Connell, was under going its "trial run" and all went well. The Club hopes to arrange regular programmes of this nature; some will probably include a major work such as a symphony or concerto, with an interval for refreshment and discussion. Notice of future fixtures will be given in good time, and it is hoped that support will be considerable. ERIC LEWIS will be delighted to hear from anyone who is willing to present a programme of his or her own collection of records.

FLASH FROM FRISTON

For what is probably the first time, there is news from Friston Forest, SE(E). ROBERT STEWART, a Forest Worker, reports that although Friston has only a small number of workers, they are very enthusiastic members of a Savings Group organised by Forester G. HOLTER. There can now be observed the "fruits" of this enthusiasm, and in a very short period of time small savings have amounted to a considerable sum.

A memory relative to Friston concerns an event we should have reported long before this. A huge bonfire was made in the nearby village of West Dean, and all children, together with parents and friends, were entertained by the Forester, who also provided refreshments and fireworks; thus Friston workers and West Dean followed the example of the adjacent and ancient town of Lewes in celebrating "Bonfire Night". Lewes, incidentally, each year stages one of the finest "Guy Fawkes" shows in the whole country.