

THE SIRENS WAIL AGAIN Sirens wailed over the valleys of South Wales the other day, their sound being reminiscent of the war years. But there was no cause for alarm, since what was happening was nothing more sinister than a large-scale fire-warning exercise. The widespread use of sirens for sounding the fire alarm is, we believe, exclusive to South Wales, and on this particular occasion some 25 sirens, between them covering nearly all the forest units in the conservancy, were operated. They are ex-N.F.S. equipment, by the way.

Purpose behind the exercise was to establish just how effective is the range of these sirens, for in South Wales the Commission looks to nearby villagers as well as staff to turn out as fire-fighters if required. In the first place, then, the co-operation of the Press and the BBC was enlisted to notify villagers that the exercise was pending and they, in turn, were asked to send a postcard to the Conservator, stating their location when they heard a siren and describing its audibility. The exercise has clearly shown that the closest attention must be paid to the siting of sirens, for where range is concerned land configuration in South Wales is obviously a most important factor. Re-siting of a number of sirens is taking place.

DEATH OF FOREMAN W.E. RIDGE

It is with great regret that we have to announce the death of Foreman WILFRED EWART RIDGE, of Wyre Forest, South West England.

Foreman Ridge died last month after an operation which followed an accident in the forest in which he was struck by a pole. Aged 33, he joined the Commission in 1945 after some 12 years service in the Navy and, after attending the Dean School, he became a foreman last year. He leaves a widow.

IMPORTANT STAFF CHANGES. The following transfers and promotions are to take place on various dates between 15th June and 21st August:-

Mr. E. WYNNE JONES, Conservator at the office of Director, England, is to be Deputy Surveyor, New Forest, in succession to Mr. D.W. YOUNG, who is to devote himself to the preparation of a new register of New Forest Commoners. Mr. R. H. SMITH, now on Acquisition duties at the office of Director, England, is to be promoted Conservator and will succeed Mr. R. H. Felton in South East England, who is retiring. Mr. G.W. BACKHOUSE, already at Cambridge and engaged on State Forest duties, is also being promoted and will succeed Mr.

A.D. HOPKINSON, Conservator, East England,

who retires in August next. Mr. W.D. RUSSELL, now at Cardiff as State Forest Officer, will succeed Mr. G. B. RYLE as Conservator, South Wales. Mr. RYLE transfers to the office of Director, England, to take over Mr. WYNNE JONES' duties.

VIRTUES OF A SPUD. This strikes at the very root of a tradition which the forester holds dear. Sacrilege, heresy, call it what you will; the fact remains that here we have a reader who virtually disputes that the slasher is a fit and proper insignia of office. "After years of experience", says Forester Instructor W. F. STODDART, Glen-tress School, "I beg to state that in my opinion the 'spud' is by far the more useful 'weapon'. By comparison, the uses of the slasher are very limited indeed.

"On acquiring a 'spud', the first thing to do is to file an edge on the near side of the blade. The over-all length of the spud and the width and depth of the blade should then be measured, after which one can say it is ready for use. First and foremost, it is a stout walking stick; it can also be used for the following operations -- soil testing, planting, checking planting distances, bracken cutting, clearing choked drains, brashing, marking thinnings, checking length and diameter of logs, peeling and girdling. Believe it or not, with my spud (plus a modicum of patience and exertion) I once killed four trout in a hill stream.

"Need I say more to you Spudless Ones?"

EASING THE TRAVELLER'S PROBLEM This month's Slasher Salute is in honour of the Eastern Conservancy, England. Finding its way to the Editor's desk, and emanating from Cambridge, is a simple document which, although unpretentious, is likely to prove of great value to all wayfarers. To put the matter in a nut-shell, someone has shown considerable initiative and has issued a list of leading hotels in the Conservancy and, moreover, has given some clear-cut hints as to the merits or demerits of the hostleries concerned. For example, X hotel in one town is "first class but expensive", Y hotel is "moderately good" and Z, elsewhere, is "strongly recommended and inexpensive". How often do we who travel on Commission business speculate, before starting a journey, as to what will await us in the way of accommodation the other end? Where the Eastern Conservancy is concerned the problem is solved. And if we are being unfair to other Conservancies, who may have adopted a similar procedure but left the Editor off the mailing list, we apologise in advance and say that anything that may have already been done in this connection is worthy of high commendation.

THE BELLS RING OUT. In the February issue of The Slasher, Head Forester G.W. HOLLIS, (Arundel, South East, England) asked if he stood alone among Foresters as a devotee of church bell-ringing. Is he? By no means. Forester E.C. KIBBLE, (Eggesford, South West, England) points out that there are in his forest a number of church bell-ringers, as well as three hand-bell ringers. Two of the latter have been "on the air" in the following broadcasts: "Star for a Night" (twice), "All Finals of the Carroll Levis Show" and "Eight Weeks Before Christmas". Forest Worker W. HULLAND, by the way, is captain of this hand-bell ringing team, the others being C. SLY and C. PERKINS.

Where church bell-ringing is concerned the following Eggesford men are exponents (we believe they have not rung as a team, but could do): P. WESTACOTT (treble), C. BOLT (2nd), J. HARRIS (3rd), W. FRIEND (4th), L. BIRD (5th) and T. SMITH (tenor). They are used to ringing a light peal of six bells and to call change ringing.

The local team of church bell-ringers at Chawleigh, of whom T. SMITH is a member (continues Forester Kibble) last year won the North Devon Ringers Association's shield; as the result, the "ringing festival" is being held at Chawleigh this month.

Clerk of Works E. GLASS (South West, England) also has a word or two to say about campanology. "I have been a member of the Exeter Cathedral band of ringers for 23 years", he writes, "and my father is the present ringing master. To Exeter Cathedral falls the distinction of having the heaviest ringing peal in England, a tenor bell of 72 cwt. This does not mean to say that this is the heaviest bell in England, but it is the heaviest bell rung in terms of a peal as scientific ringers know it. We at Exeter will be pleased to welcome Head Forester Hollis and arrange for him to 'have a ring' on the Cathedral bells should he at any time visit the city.

"To ring a peal of 5,040 changes of cathedral bells means continuous ringing for four and a half hours, and is a feat of endurance and concentration."

WHITHER AWAY The following transfers had been reported to Headquarters by 18th April: District Officer S. FORRESTER from Otterburn, N E(E), to Hexham, NE(E); District Officer R.M.G. SEMPLE from Lyndhurst, New Forest, to Wimborne, New; District Officer I.R.B. MARSHALL from Wimborne to Hexham; Head Forester J. KENNEDY from Asknish and Minard, W(S), to Minard; Head Forester C. V. SQUIRES from Brecon, S(W), to Cwmnogwr, S(W); Forester E.D. FRASER from Private Woodland duties, W(S), to Loch Ard, W(S); Forester L. SINCLAIR from Loch Ard to Glenduror, W(S); Forester L. H. COLES from Holidays Hill, New, to Blandford Forest, New; Forester A. C. SIMPSON from Glendaruel, W(S), to Strathyre, W(S); Forester H. C. STOUT from Strathyre to Glendaruel; Forester D. J. MACKAY from Knapdale, W(S), to Asknish; Forester D. H. FARRENCE from Hay, S(W), to Brechfa, S(W); Forester W. G. WILLIAMS from Coed Sarnau, N(W), to Dovey, N(W); Forester B. HUGHES from Brechfa to Derry Ormond, S(W); Forester I. O. EVANS from Derry Ormond to Tintern, S(W); Forester J. CUMMING from Chopwell, NE(E), to Ampleforth, NE(E); Forester W. P. SMITH from King's, E(E), to Shouldham, E(E); Forester J. A. GRUBB from Newton Nursery, E(S), to Dunragit, S(S); Foreman P. J. WHEEL from Crynant, S(W), to Brechfa; Foreman J. A. WOOD from Dovey Corris, N(W), to Myherin, N(W); Foreman J. D. CARLINGTON, temporarily transferred from Broxa, N E(E) to Harwood Dale, NE(E); Assistant Engineer J. S. PERKINS from Thornton-le-dale, NE(E), to Bellingham, NE(E).

ANOTHER NATURE NOTE District Officer J. L. F. Fergusson, writing from Martin's Close, Whitchurch, near Aylesbury, Bucks, tells us that last winter he had a male kestrel roosting in the eaves of his house. It disappeared round about March 15th, having, no doubt, found a mate. The roosting place was only about three feet above District Officer Fergusson's bedroom window; the castings which accumulated on the ground below consisted almost entirely of the fur and bones of voles and mice, with occasional wing-cases of beetles. Only twice were feathers of small birds, which might have been killed by the kestrel, found near the house. "I think a roosting of this kind is quite an uncommon occurrence," says District Officer Fergusson, "and it will be interesting to see whether our kestrel comes back to this house next winter".

AND STILL ANOTHER C. J. COTTRELL is Clerk of Works at Mortimer (North West, England), and takes a keen interest in wild life. He says that recently, in one month, he saw a fox at 30 yards range, roe-deer at little more, and a profusion of pheasants, partridges, rabbits, and also some red and grey squirrels. Then there was the saucy robin which cats out of one's hand and will sit on a workman's haversack awaiting his share of lunch. Mr. Cottrell also saw the seemingly lazy wheeling buzzard, the woodcock, curlew, magpie, nuthatch, barn owl, little owl, the Peregrine Falcon with its dive-bombing tactics, the sparrowhawk and "Gawky Gertie", the common heron, called locally the crane. "I will conclude with a story which may be of interest to readers", states our correspondent. "One of the workmen here breeds canaries; the hen hatched a nest of five and then died. Taking the tragedy in his stride, the workman put both nest and young in his overcoat pocket and brought them to work with him every day, feeding them as and when he could. He reared the lot".

THE WORK THEY DO (No. 11). In the office of Director, England, Chief Utilisation Officer F.G.O. PEARSON and Directorate Engineer Brigadier S.A.H. BATTEN have

M. O. BEAUTEMENT as their "aide". (The latter, incidentally, is a secretary of the Directorate Mechanical Development Committee). Assisting him on the Utilisation side is D. J. CRABB who, together with K. ASHTON, is responsible for the issue of demand notes to Conservators and Deputy Surveyors for the many kinds of timber which the Commission now markets.

The Commission is indeed playing an important part where the supply of pitwood to the coalmines is concerned, and some idea of the magnitude of this business will be gathered from the fact that about 400 wagon loads of props are despatched to the mines each week from our forests in England and Wales. Taking into consideration, too, the growing trade in telegraph poles (12,000 were produced last year), fencing stakes, poles, wood for pulp, Christmas trees and so on, it will be realised that there can be few idle moments in the Utilisation Section. Lost wagons have to be found, complaints of shortages have to be investigated, and customers "chased" for payment of accounts. An additional responsibility for Mr. Crabb is the compilation of production statistics for control purposes and the progressing of orders, while the whole section has to be as familiar with Timber Control Statutory Orders, and licensing regulations, as with the palm of one's hand.

Supporting Mr. BeauteMENT on the Engineering side are MISS D. FROST, who is assisted by C. GREENMAN. Keeping track of more than 150 tractors, some 300 lorries and vans, not to mention motor cycles, jeeps, cars and all the infinite variety of cultivating and road-making equipment held by the Commission in England, is no mean task. Additionally, Miss Frost is responsible for the maintenance of records of road-making projects, as well as for a great deal of paper work connected with the acquisition and repair of equipment. Miss Frost and her colleagues also deal with the ordering and purchasing of stores, varying from rabbit snares to guns, and nails to telescopes.

Then, to add variety, there are always traffic accident reports with which to deal; sometimes these provide a little light relief, as in the recent case where a dear old lady drove her car bang into a Commission van proceeding peacefully along a main thoroughfare, and the driver reported that "he had not the heart to ask the lady her name."

CRIES OF LONDON.

Time, it seemed, had stood still in the vicinity of Savile Row. Momentarily all was quiet, and then out of the hush came the cry "Sweep! Sweep!!" and the sound of a trundling barrow. Down in the lane which divides Headquarters and the West End Central Police Station one could see him, this face-blackened itinerant; humble, yet in a way picturesque, plying an ancient trade in an ancient manner.

It might have happened about three hundred years ago, when Nell Gwynne tunelessly sold her oranges and buxom, pretty girls called "Cherry-ripe, Cherry-ripe!", or, to draw a parallel more fitting to our vocation, you would have heard the cry "Logs to burn, logs to burn!" Then the traffic rolled again and the sweep and his barrow passed around the corner, out of sight, his cries becoming fainter and fainter.

Thus we saw and heard something some of us had never seen or heard before. Yet there is always something unusual to be seen from the windows of our offices in Savile Row if one has the time to look closely enough -- be it only Sydney Stanley, registering daily until recently at the police station across the way.

SYMPOSIUM. **SILENCE**-- Our sympathy to Miss IRENE BROWN, Clerical Officer in the North West England Conservancy Office, who for some days recently was unable to make herself heard. She sustained a fractured jaw while playing hockey for Chester Ladies and had to have her face strapped as the result.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER Our congratulations to Mr. A. BUCK, of the same office, whose wife presented him with a daughter (Angela Susan) some weeks ago.

WEDDING BELLS The wedding took place in March of Miss SYBIL SIMMS, Clerical Officer in the Stores Section, Headquarters, and Mr. JAMES SUMMERS, Statistician, Finance Branch. Bride has been with the Department since 1946 and was formerly at the War Office; groom joined the Commission in the same year after service with H.T.P.D. The couple worked together for some time in the Finance Branch. Mr. B.R. DAVIES, head of Stores Section, presented the newly-weds with a cheque on behalf of the staff, and with this Mr. and Mrs. Summers have purchased a wireless set and a vacuum cleaner. Honeymoon, by the way, was spent in the New Forest.

HOWLERS, etc.-- From official files: "Please consign one ton of nitrogen"; "The road will require a little evening out"; "The weight of this vehicle is centred

at the rear"; "This tenant claimed and exercised the right to cut hay on a quarter of an acre of adjoining farm. This right apparently arose many years ago as the result of a wager in a cock fight"; "It is suggested that the Owner be allowed six months to clear pop and top"; "My Council feel the land should be planted with conifers" (Presumably neurotic species!).

NATIONAL SERVICE M.A.E. GUBBY, Establishment branch, Headquarters, and R. G. BROWN, Office of Director, Scotland, both passed in the Open Executive Competition in October last. Now both lads have been called up for National Service. The former has reported for duty in the Navy, and the latter for Army service.

NEW ZEALAND BRIDEGROOM: Miss ROSEMARY HODDER resigned from the Department last month after serving for more than six years in the Finance Branch in Bristol and London. She has returned to her home town, Bristol, and was married there on Easter Saturday, the honeymoon being spent in Ireland. The bridegroom is serving in the New Zealand Navy, and Rosemary will eventually join him in the Dominion.

IN VERSE SAMPLE.

Too near the sky	Tough fibres tax	A moment's hush
For human eye	The swinging axe	Then swishing rush
To judge the height.	Piercing the heart.	To thud to earth.
The branches lop	In lengths of ten	With girth and height
From butt to top	The stalwart men	The forest's might
All clean and trim.	Mark off the pole.	Now volume gives.

----- Margaret Kinloch,
Southern Assessment Party.

FOREST CAMCO. The Scene -- Thrunton Forest, North East, England; The Time, a frosty morning; The Occasion, Rede District Foresters' Meeting.

The distant baying of hounds is heard and, gradually growing nearer, the clamour is punctuated by the sound of a horn. A flash of pink shows through the trees, and then the field goes by in full view. A quick climb brings one to a knoll from which some of the less energetic huntsmen are watching, and from there one can see the riders and hounds pass over the sky-line in full cry of the fox. The nearby horsemen disperse, and we (writes District Officer STANLEY FORRESTER) resume our discussion, while two deer, disturbed by the hounds, return to their grazing in the nearby woodland glades.

The knoll on which we stand is part of the 60 acres or so of acquired plantation which were felled during the war. Round us are patches of Douglas, Sitka and Norway planted in 1927 and 1928, and several stands of 80 year old Scots pine show up over the younger trees. Eventually, leaving our point of vantage, we lose a little height before tackling the steeper 500 ft climb to the crest of the ridge which divides the 1,500 acre forest into two parts. It was along both sides of this ridge that a stiff westerly wind in 1942 drove a fire which burnt 340 acres of 20-year old plantation. The area is now being planted up over a seven year period.

Looking eastward from the crest of Thrunton Crag we have a distant glimpse of the sea, while to the south are the rich plains of the Northumberland coastal belt, spreading away to a dingy cloud which marks the industrial area of Tyneside. In the north and west the Cheviot Hills climb into the clear sky, with Cheviot itself distinctive by its very formlessness. Later we descend the south side of the ridge, and wonder how we are to find labour to deal with 500 acres of first thinnings in P.24, 25 and 26. At one period during the war Forester STANLEY had only one worker! (Incidentally, confusion is frequent at Thrunton, with Forester Stanley working to Stanley Forrester, the District Officer).

A steady tramp down a forest road, construction of which is in full swing, leads us to the old coaching road and our way home. It was on this very stretch of road that a highwayman used regularly to hold up the stage, robbing passengers and strong box, and then taking refuge in a cave which is to be seen in the rock of Thrunton Crag. The day has progressed and waned, and so to the delightful village of Whittingham and to tea, with cakes and scones and buns, baked as only a forester's wife knows how.

POSTSCRIPT Contributions have eased off again. Will readers please help by sending along more material? As you know, there is a Slasher correspondent in each Directorate and Conservancy Office. Just send your correspondent the facts and he and we will do the rest.