

A Very Merry
Christmas...

THE SLASHER
Forestry Commission News

...And A Happy New
Year To You All

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BATTLE OF THE SANDS
IS ALMOST WON

PLANTING PROGRESS AT
CULBIN

How many readers know the colourful story which lies behind the formation of the State Forest of Culbin, on the southern shore of the Moray Firth? It is familiar to many Scotsmen, of course, and it may also appeal to those who live south of the Border and hear it for the first time.

The story of Culbin begins as long ago as 1694. In that year the flourishing Barony of Culbin, with its sixteen farms, farmhouses, crofts and cottages were (according to tradition) overwhelmed in a single night by sand, blown inland from the sea during a great storm. For years the resulting sand-dunes lay barren and deserted, moving in the wind and constituting a threat to the rich arable land behind them.

RETIREMENT OF SIR WILLIAM TAYLOR

As reported elsewhere in this issue of The Slasher, Sir William Taylor, C.B.E., has retired, his term of office as a Commissioner having expired. He has sent the following letter to the Director General.

My dear Gosling,

In all I have devoted 40 years to the public service, of which 3 years of the 1914-18 War were spent with Timber Supply and a further 30 years with the Commission, starting as a Divisional Officer and journeying through the various intermediate grades to that of Director General, also with just over 11 years as a Member of the Commission.

My interests have always been with the land and very early in my career forestry became a compelling force. I am grateful to think that I have been privileged to pass the best years of my working life in the service of British Forestry.

Now that the time has come for me to retire from the Commission, I want, through you as Director General, to express my warmest thanks for the help and kindness I have throughout received from all sections of our Staff. Particularly I wish to be remembered to, and to thank, those of my brother officers of the 'Older Brigade', both technical and clerical, with whom I shared our early trials, and with whom I have been so closely and happily associated for so many years.

The foundations of a great work have been laid. The future task will be onerous, perhaps at times difficult, but I am confident that the tradition we have established will endure and grow in strength - God speed you all in the great effort.

It is my earnest wish to keep in touch with my comrades in arms and with the programme yet to be completed. Also I shall like to think that the struggles of the first three decades, and those who took part in them, will not be forgotten by the generations who follow in our Forest Service. Age, I am thankful to say, touches me lightly. I cannot remain idle and hope still to be able to help the cause we all have at heart.

Yours ever,

W.L. TAYLOR.

the rich arable land behind them. Then, in about the middle of the last century, the first efforts to stabilise the sands by the planting of trees were made by some enterprising landowners who, it must be said, were surprisingly successful. But their planting covered only a small portion of the dunes and the timber was felled in the first world war. And so it was left to the Forestry Commission to commence, in 1922, the task of forming a forest over the whole area. Now the end is in sight, for more than two thirds of the 6,000 acres of dunes have been placed under plantations.

The forester's job at Culbin has not been an easy one. This is emphasised by a visit to the desolate unplanted area of the sands, where the scene is reminiscent of the Sahara. All around are great dunes which tend rapidly to move in the prevailing west wind; this tendency for the sands to shift has meant that before the plantations could be established the technique of thatching has had to be used, and thousands and thousands of tons of brushwood have been placed on the sands in

order to stabilise them. Those readers who are without technical knowledge will readily appreciate that if the sand were not fixed before planting, the tiny trees would either be overwhelmed or their root system would be exposed, with fatal results. For obvious reasons, planting takes place in roughly the same direction as the prevailing wind, so that the newly planted trees do not have to face the drifting sand.

Experience has shown that the species most suitable for planting at Culbin is the Corsican pine, but there are also to be seen good plantations of Scots pine; both Lodgepole and Maritime pine have been planted to a limited extent.

There is much of interest to be seen in the older plantations in the way of forest operations, for thinning is in full swing. In 1948 the timber marketed from Culbin was valued at £12,000. Forest road-making has received a great deal of attention and some of the shingle used for this purpose was doubtless once part of the bed of the River Findhorn which, during the great sand-storm, was forced to change its course to the sea. Also to be seen, deep in the planted area is a huge dam, which has been constructed for fire fire-fighting purposes. The fire risk at Culbin is very great, for rainfall is low and sunshine is generous. Smoking in or near the forest is prohibited, and at periods of excessive risk the Commission reserves the right to close the area to visitors.

To sum up, what was once a desert waste some six miles long by two miles deep has been largely transformed into flourishing woodlands, and once again it has been demonstrated that prosperity follows in forestry's train -- sometimes in the most unusual places.

****RECENT CHANGES IN THE COMMISSION** IT WAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED that LORD ROBINSON has been re-appointed as Chairman of the Forestry Commission, and LORD RADNOR and MR. J.M. BANNERMAN have been re-appointed as members. PROFESSOR JOHN WALTON has been appointed a Commissioner in succession to SIR SAMUEL STRANG STEEL, whose term of office has expired. SIR WILLIAM TAYLOR'S term of office has also expired, and a letter from Sir William to the Director General is reproduced elsewhere in this issue.

Sir Samuel Strang Steel had been associated with forestry in this country for many years, and before his appointment as a Commissioner he served as a member of the Forestry Consultative Committee for England. Since 1945 he had been Chairman of the Commission's National Committee for Scotland, and during the war he was in charge of home grown timber supply in that country.

Professor Walton has since 1930 been Regius Professor of Botany at the University of Glasgow, and is a member of the Scottish Committee of the Nature Conservancy. He has for long taken a keen interest in the work of the Forestry Commission, and has shown this in a practical way by editing the guides to the National Forest Parks of Argyll and Glenmore.

****THE DEAN:NEW DEPUTY SURVEYOR** AFTER SERVING AS CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER since the post was created five years ago, MR. J.Q. WILLIAMSON has been appointed Deputy Surveyor of the Forest of Dean and succeeds MR. N.A. WYLIE, who is leaving the Commission and going to Canada.

Mr. Williamson served with H.T.P.D. during the war and was formerly a District Officer in East England. He received an MBE for his outstanding work in connection with the Empire Forestry Conference held in London in 1947. In leaving, Mr. Williamson takes with him the good wishes of many friends. He is succeeded by MR. G.D. ROUSE, Divisional Officer, New Forest, who was also a District Officer in East England.

****FURTHERING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT** THE TASK OF INSPECTING, on its arrival in this country, the huge Christmas tree to be erected in Trafalgar Square has this year fallen to District Officer H.L. EDLIN, of Headquarters. It will be recalled that this is the third occasion on which a tree has been sent as a gift from Oslo to the people of London; in Trafalgar Square the tree is illuminated and seen by many thousands of people. The importation of Christmas trees is, of course, prohibited because of the risk of introducing new diseases and pests into the woodlands of this country, but hitherto an exception has been made in the case of the tree from Oslo on condition that, after display, it is burnt. The "drill" also includes inspection at dockside, and so it was that D.O. Edlin set forth on a recent Monday morning for Deptford: there, armed with a slasher and magnifying glass, he thoroughly inspected the tree and gave it a clean bill of health.

This year, for the first time, the ban on the importation of Christmas trees has been lifted in respect of gifts of single trees to major industrial ports.

(Editor's note: With our usual mischievous turn of mind we told District Officer Edlin that if he wanted to achieve real fame he should refuse to admit the tree. However, he failed to take this obviously short cut

and our advice, never lightly given, will not be proffered again).

****WHO'S WHO IN THE COMMISSION (No.5)** HEAD FORESTER J.M. CALDER, of Carron Valley Forest, West Conservancy, Scotland, like Forester Beaumont whose "profile" appeared in the September issue of The Slasher, is an enthusiastic woodworker. He has turned and fashioned cruet sets, standard lamps, powder bowls, candlesticks, ash trays and egg cups and so on. Not having his grandmother's sewing machine to turn into a lathe Mr. Calder, with his usual initiative and a heap of scrap found in a village smithy, made himself a serviceable machine. It may interest some readers to know what materials were used. The driving wheel was once an agricultural implement, weight and balance being added by filling certain spaces with concrete; the crank for treadling was improvised from the tank and connecting rod of a small engine; the bed was formed by two pieces of channel iron and distance pieces bolted together; the headstock was part of a reduction gear from a searchlight; the tail stock was converted from a car jack; and the remainder was made from scrap bolts, etc. The cost of the whole "outfit" was ten shillings.

Many different species of timber have been used by Mr. Calder, and the few pieces on hand include rosewood, Indian laurel, ebony, American walnut, jarrah, ivy, laburnum, holly, Spanish chestnut, sycamore, geam, yew, and bog oak from Flanders Moss which may have been buried for centuries.

Woodwork has been Mr. Calder's hobby for many years, and he has successfully competed in competitions. He won first prize at the Highland Show in 1926 and at later shows was placed second and third. His greatest achievement has been the making of a chess set from home timber; this occupied fully a year of his spare time. Having now acquired a better lathe, he hopes to make an article in parquetry, built up from various species of timber.

Congratulations, Mr. Calder.....long may your lathe turn.

****BIRDS DROWNED IN 400-GALLON TANK** SOME TIME AGO we referred to the fact that at Collingbourne, South West England, a Tawny Owl was found drowned in rainwater in a milk-churn -- obviously a victim of the prolonged drought, for it is assumed the bird lost its life while trying to obtain a drink. Now District Officer R.E. PALLETT tells us of bird-life tragedies at Itton Forest, in South Wales, where during the summer about 20 birds were drowned in a 400-gallon tank used for fire protection purposes.

The tank in question, says Mr. Pallett, was full to within about eight or nine inches, and it was obvious that the birds had fallen in while trying to reach the water. Mr. Pallett himself saw a Tawny Owl in the tank, and the other birds which were drowned included various tits. For the benefit of the uninitiated we should at this stage mention that owls and tits are the forester's friend, inasmuch as the former eat mice and voles, and the latter consume large quantities of harmful insects.

Mr. Pallett suggests that such tanks might be covered with old netting -- or, better still, a piece of wood (anchored by wire) might be placed on the water so that birds could settle on it and drink without danger.

For our part we feel something **might** be done by next summer, and favour the latter suggestion.

****THIRTY-ONE TRANSFERS** The following transfers had been reported to Headquarters by 19th. of last month:

District Officers J.A. DICKSON from Munloch, N(S), to Inverness, N(S); M.E.S. DICKENSON from Launceston, SW(E), to Worcester, SW(E); J.F. WILSON from London (Director, England) to Woking, SE(E); J.L.F. FERGUSON from Alice Holt to Perth, E(S); K.N.V. TOWNSEND from Glasgow, W(S), to Benmore, W(S); Foresters A. ROSE from Glasgow to Aberfoyle, W(S); D.J. DAVIES from Highmeadow, Dean, to East, Dean; H.C. DYER from Yardley, E(E), to West Woods, SW(E); A. POLWARI from Barcaldine, W(S), to Strathyre, W(S); D.R. BEAUMONT from Orlestone, SE(E), to Micheldever, SE(E); E.A. POLL from Stanway, SW(E), to Dartmoor, SW(E); R. WAITON from Brandon, E(E), to Fernyn, E(E); I.M. GARRIOCH from Fleet, S(S), to Kilgrammie, S(S); G. BARTLETT from Fort Augustus, Research, to Mid Ardross, Research; D. REID from West Woods to Kings, E(E); J.P. MORRY from Glenbranter, W(S), to Ardgarten, W(S).

Foremen H.H. LINK from Wyre, SW(E), to DYMOCK, SW(E); R.J. REID from Alice Holt to Bettws-y-Coed, N(W), Research; E.J. ACOTT from Yardley, E(E), to Apethorpe, E(E); E.F. BREWER from Crynant, S(W), to Wyre; J.A. OGILVIE from Mid Ardross to Mabie, S(S), (Research); E. WADDELOVE from Clocaenog, N(W), to Gwydyr School, N(W); S.J. BETTERTON from Northerwood House (Education

to Blakeney Hill, Dean; M.H. COLSON from Half ay, S(W) to Brecon, S(W); D.M. KIRK from Dalbeattie, S(S), to Lauriston, S(S); J. GRAY from Mabie to Tulliallan, W(S); C.F. RUSSELL from Dean School Beat to Highmeadow, Dean; E. LEYSHON from Wyre to Eggesford, SW(E); D.C.B. McDOWALL from Dalby, NE(E) to York; Clerk of Works E. MIDDLETON from Brendon, SW(E), to DYMOCK.

**** OUR GAELIC AGAIN** WRITING WITH REFERENCE to the paragraph in the October issue of The Slasher, wherein it was stated that "sheugh" is probably derived from
ANOTHER VIEWPOINT the Gaelic shail or shallach, meaning a heel, District Officer W.A. JOHNSON, West, Scotland, says: "The accepted word for heel is 'sail' (sal) and I don't think there is any connection with 'sheugh', which is an old Scots word of probable Anglo-Saxon origin. It is found in Burns -- 'A cottar howking in a sheugh; or the dog that 'lap o'er sheugh or dyke'. A sheugh being simply a ditch or furrow, to 'sheugh-in' is to 'lump' plants in a furrow.

On the subject of uncommon words we have a letter from Foreman R.A. REX, of Dalby, North East England, who seeks the origin of the word "snedding." Anyone care to tell him?

**** DATE FOR THE DIARY** The annual party arranged by the South East England Conservancy (Woking) is to be held on Friday, 3rd. February, and offers
YOUR CHANCE TO DANCE prospects of a really good evening. Venue is the Atalanta Ballroom, Woking (within three minutes walk of the station) and the time 7 p.m. Tickets are 6s.6d. single or 12s. double, and there will be buffet refreshments and a licenced bar.

All friends at Headquarters and in the Office of Director, England, are especially welcome. Tickets can be obtained from Miss J.E. CHEALE, the hon. secretary. Just drop her a line to the Woking office; she would like all applications to reach her by 20th January.

**** TRAINING COURSE AT GLASGOW** MEMBERS OF THE OFFICE STAFF of the West Conservancy, Scotland are undergoing an interesting training course. Meetings
LECTURES FOR CONSERVANCY STAFF are being held at regular intervals on Friday evenings and the first lecture was given by Mr. T. FARMER, the Chief Clerk, whose subject was "Outline theory of Organisation". Other lectures have been "Forestry in the United Kingdom: History, organisation and objects of the Forestry Commission" by the Conservator, Mr. J.E. JAMES, and "Organisation and functions of the Estate Branch", by Divisional Officer J. WEBSTER.

Further lectures will cover finance, office organisation, Engineering Branch functions, establishment work and silvicultural operations. There is no doubt that the staff is benefitting to a considerable extent.

**** RUGBY AT GWYDYR SCHOOL** STUDENTS OF GWYDYR FORESTER TRAINING SCHOOL recently met a Rydal (Colwyn Bay) XV in the first "rugger"
FIRST MATCH EVER AT BETTWS-Y-COED match to be played on the sports field at Bettws-y-Coed. After leading 12-0 at half-time, Gwydyr were hand pressed and a grim struggle ensued. The final score was 17-12 in favour of Gwydyr, who were playing their introductory game and hope next term to tackle the leading R.U.F. clubs in North Wales. Captain G. LERWAY, Gwydyr's pack leader, played a fine game, and J. ENGLAND and D. BROWN were prominent.

Members of the Gwydyr Club are very proud of their ball. It was used in the Wales v. Scotland R.U. match at Edinburgh in January last, and has been presented to the club by student P. DENSHAM.

**** PASSING OF FOREMAN R. BARTLETT** IT IS WITH GREAT REGRET that we have to announce the death recently, at the comparatively early age of 50, of Mr. ROBERT BARTLETT, Foreman of Mailscot, in Highmeadow Woods, the Dean. Mr. Bartlett had been a foreman since 1940 and had been with the Department for 27 years. He was held in high esteem by senior officers and by the men under him. Our sympathy is extended to his widow and son.

THERE IS A SLASHER CORRESPONDENT IN EACH DIRECTORATE AND CONSERVANCY OFFICE

PLEASE KEEP HIM WELL SUPPLIED WITH CONTRIBUTIONS