

THE SLASHER
Forestry Commission News

No.45

September, 1951

- 3 -

THE "DENIZEN" OF THE WELSH LAKE

"AS LARGE AGAIN AS A HORSE"

more fearsome? The question is posed by a North Wales correspondent, who adds that local people regard the creature with such awe that few will mention its existence - certainly not to "foreigners".

SCOTTISH FORESTERS may have their Loch Ness monster, but is it known there is said to exist in the dark waters of at least one large lake in Central Wales a creature far

"However," writes our correspondent, "I have been able to collect the following details. The lake where this creature is said to reside is isolated and is called, locally, Llyn Draig Ddu Mawr: Lake of the Great Black Dragon. It is situated near Trawsfynydd and covers some 20 acres or more, and lies high in the hills and is surrounded by black rocks. It is believed to be almost bottomless and to have originated in some long since extinguished volcano.

"The Draig Ddu, as the monster is called, may be the descendant of some prehistoric reptile and is credited with being as large again as a horse and having jet black shiny skin, and a body which tapers somewhat like that of a crocodile. It is normally seen only in the depth of winter and its appearance is said to foretell a prolonged spell of hard weather. It has never been seen on land, although the 'locals' are quite certain that on dark nights it wanders over the adjoining moor. A local shepherd has told me that every year he loses sheep in an unaccountable way and he has found the remains of sheep - skin, wool and bones - along the shore of the lake. Indeed he tries to keep his flock well away from the neighbourhood.

"The lake contains many small perch, but it is said not to hold trout. Indeed, few fish there for fear of the Draig Ddu. Wild duck and water fowl very rarely visit the lake and when they do they quickly disappear; either they become food for the Draig Ddu or make for safer waters.

"I shall be glad to know whether any readers of The Slasher have come across legends of the Draig Ddu in other Welsh waters. Maybe some of the naturalists among us will have something to say."

Footnote. Professor Davies, of the Welsh "Hanes hynafol Society" (Prehistoric Society) comments that the legend of the Draig Ddu is well known and is connected with other lakes besides Lyn Draig Ddu. Evidence of the existence of this creature is only circumstantial. No scientist has been privileged to view it and although one spent some weeks near Lyn Draig Ddu during the winter of 1928-29, he was unable to collect any conclusive facts. However, that winter was not favourable, as the hard weather came very late in February, after the scientist had left the area.

** TREE PLANTING TO COMMEMORATE FESTIVAL

SOME INTERESTING CEREMONIES.

TREES HAVE BEEN PLANTED in a number of State forests to commemorate the Festival of Britain. In most cases the ceremonies have been performed by leaders of local authorities; they have taken place at such widely separated forests as New Forest; Thornthwaite (N.W. England); Micheldever (S.E.England); Knapdale (W.Scotland); Fernworthy (S.W.England) and the Forest of Ae (S.Scotland). Reports of similar ceremonies in other forests are expected, and it is thought that in the aggregate they will have resulted in the importance of forestry being brought to the notice of quite a large number of people.

There was something of a departure in South Scotland, for to commemorate Festival Week in Dumfries three cherry trees were planted near the new Village of Ae. One was planted by Councillor William Wallace, of Dumfries; another by Mr. James Ross, 81-years old retired small-holder and the oldest inhabitant of the Ae valley; and the third by Rita Rae, the eight-years old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Rae, No.9 Holding, Ae Village, and a pupil of Gubhill School. Mr. J.R.THOM, Conservator, who presided, pointed out that last winter 15 million trees had been planted in South Scotland. Mr. Wallace said a tree was like a human being, in that it grew taller, stronger and more useful as time went by. A vote of thanks to Mr.Wallace, Mr.Ross and Rita Rae was proposed by District Officer W.N.GIBSON.

****WHAT'S COOKING?**

AFTER THE SQUIRREL, THE HEDGEHOG

creature in clay and bake it, after which the prickles peel off and reveal the soft succulent flesh.

"Hedgehog is delicious," we were told when visiting a forest the other day, but unfortunately time permitted but a superficial enquiry. Have any of our readers eaten hedgehog? If so, is our recipe correct?

And while on the subject of unusual food we would like to hear of any other out-of-the-ordinary dishes. Sparrow pie, of course, is fairly well known, and we have heard it said that even foxes have been consumed by humans.

****NOTE ON BRAMSHILL FOREST**

VISIT BY DIRECTORATE STAFF

BRAMSHILL FOREST, in the South East England Conservancy, was established in 1922 and covers, in several good-sized blocks, more than 4,000 acres, the bulk of the area being planted. The forest was visited recently by members of the staff of the office of Director, England, who saw much of interest. Immediately inside the boundary was seen the site for a new garage and machinery depot, while in the plantations were witnessed some of the nesting boxes which have been erected to encourage greater bird life in the forest, especially of those species which consume large quantities of insects which are harmful to trees. The process of thinning, and many other operations, were explained to the party by MR. R.H. SMITH, the Conservator, who also described the various tree species. Great interest was evinced in the forest nursery, which covers 23 acres and was "created" on the virgin heath in 1948, in response to an urgent call for a general increase in nursery ground. It was intended that the party should see the conversion depot to witness the preparation of produce for the pitwood, boxwood, pulpwood and boardmill markets, but owing to the fact that the day's work in the depot had ceased the visit was deleted from the programme. The party returned to London much the wiser for the tour, which was admirably planned by the Conservancy officers. Those accompanying the Conservator included State Forest Officer J.M. ROSS, District Officer L.C. TROUPE, Forester N.J. LINGWOOD and Mr. H.W. GULLIVER, Chief Clerk.

**** INCREASED AID FOR WOODLAND OWNERS**

HIGHER PLANTING GRANTS: NEW THINNING GRANT

IT IS ANNOUNCED that as from 1st October the planting and maintenance grants payable to woodland owners under the Dedication Scheme will be increased from £12 to £14 per acre and from 4s. to 4s.6d. per acre respectively. The new planting grant will be payable in respect of planting in small woods which are not included in the Dedication Scheme.

Under the new Thinning Grant Scheme an owner may apply for a grant of £3 15s. per acre in respect of the thinning of young conifer, broadleaved or mixed woodlands, provided the area to be thinned on any one estate is not less than two acres in one block. Not more than two grants will be paid in respect of the same stand, and if a thinning grant has already been made under the scheme which ends on 30th September, a grant may be claimed under the new scheme for one further thinning only. A stand, to be eligible for a grant, must contain trees within certain limits of average height (conifers 35 ft., broadleaved 40 ft.) or, alternatively, limits of girth (conifers 4 inches and broadleaved 6 inches, quarter girth at breast height). In mixed stands the predominant species, as between conifers and broadleaved, will determine the limits of height and girth. Incidentally, a recently issued pamphlet entitled State Aid for Woodland Owners has been in great demand; reprinting is in progress and copies of the new issue will soon be available.

**** CLWYD FOREST AND THE BRONZE AGE**

DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT BURIAL PLACES

NO FEWER than eight cairns, ancient burial places of the Bronze Age, have been discovered in the Denbighshire section of Coed Clwyd, the main block of which is situated south and east of Moel Fawr, on the Clwydian Range. These cairns consist of a circle of stones some three feet wide and set like paving blocks around a pile of rocks. When discovered they have been overgrown with vegetation. Beneath the central rocks, and below ground level, have been found stone-lined graves and from one of these some charcoal and bones were retrieved. These were sent to the National Museum of Wales, following which a report was received stating that the only wood which could be identified from the charcoal was hazel, while it was thought that the bones are those of a young child who died in about 1800 to 1400 B.C.

It is interesting to contemplate, writes Forester C.P. CARR, who has told us about the

...of our newer forests should have such a link with the distant past.

** A READER SLES A BULL-FIGHT

SUNDAY EVENING IN MADRID

spacious bull-ring built on the lines of a Roman amphitheatre, and the 70,000 people who were present cheered or booed after the manner of a football crowd.

Describing the bull-fight Sir William says the first "round" is fought by the Peones who carry bright silk capes, gaudily lined. The big, black Andalusian bull trots aggressively into the arena, pauses, and promptly charges the first man who moves. The Peones hang their capes over the extended left arm and the bull charges repeatedly, always with the pink cape as his objective and not the man, who adroitly avoids danger by stepping aside and allowing the bull to pass under his arm. The bulls are as active as cats and but for their fixed obsession that the cape is the enemy, could toss their man every time. Throughout the fighting the Peones stand alert to draw off the bull in moments of special danger.

The Picadores now enter the ring mounted on horses that, nowadays, are protected all round the body by thick quilting. The Picadores' lances have very short points, and the particular round that I saw did not seem especially exciting, although I saw a bull toss horse and rider, neither being hurt beyond bruising.

Then come the Bandilleros, each with two gaily ribboned darts. Theirs is a plucky and gracefully performed round for, watching their opportunities, they trip like ballet dancers diagonally before the bull and in passing plant their darts one on either side of his shoulders. The thoroughly infuriated bull now begins to tire and the Matador enters with his red cloth armed with a sword, to face his adversary alone. He taunts the bull into charging him a number of times and then endeavours to give the coup de grace by a thrust between the shoulders, and if successful is loudly acclaimed by the crowd.

The agility and nonchalance of the bull-fighters is admirable, their traditional dress is striking, and now that the horses are padded the degree of brutality is certainly no more than that of a present day prize fight in England or elsewhere. There is, however, the fact that the bull has no sporting chance - he is there to be killed. The quota for the evening is six bulls.

Any views on bull-fights, readers?

** TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

District Officers D.A. MITHEN from Gravetye, S.E.(E), to Woodchurch, S.E.(E); P.H. MANNING from Cambridge to Santon Downham, E.(E) Foresters T.E. LITTLE from Slebech, S.(W), to Derry Ormond, S.(W); J.W. TELFORD from Kielder, N.E.(E), to Rothbury, N.E.(E); G. STEWART from Durris, E.(S), to Montreathment, E.(S); D. REID from Kings, E.(E), to High Lodge, Thetford, E.(E); D.A.R. RAYNER from Allerston, N.E.(E), to Ray, N.E.(E); B.A. OLNEY from Emmerdale, N.W.(E), to Kershope, N.W.(E); B. HUGHES from Derry Ormond to Teifi, S.(W).

Foremen W. BEATTIE from Inchnacardoch, N.(S), to Batten, N.(S); T. JOHNSTONE from Rothbury to Allerston; I.D. ATKINSON from Thornthwaite, N.W.(E), to Emmerdale; R.B. HART from Changue, S.(S), to Kilgramme S.(S); M.J. WILSON from Quantocks, S.W.(E), to Dunster, S.W.(E).

Clerical Officer A.W. BUNCH from Inverness to Aberdeen.

Newcomers are: Foremen J.V. DUNN to N.W.(E); D.J. MOULDEN and T.J. SPANTON to E.(E); M. BECKLES to N.E.(E); P.R. CANT and E.T. SNELL to S.E.(E). Assistant Engineer H.G. BENGOUGH to S.(W). Clerical Officers W. GILLIES to Director, Scotland; F. WAGGON to H.Q. Miss I. MACKAY to N.(S); Miss G.A. GARDINER to S.(S).

Three Clerical Officers have left the Department to emigrate to New Zealand. They are Miss E.F. TALLON, formerly of New Forest; and Mr. G.A. STUBBINGS and Mr. C.M. NIVEN, both late of Headquarters who, it is understood, are taking up appointments in the New Zealand Civil Service.

** SERVICE WITHOUT SICK LEAVE

LAST MONTH we mentioned that Mr. R. CARNELL, of the South West Conservancy, England, had completed 25 years unbroken service with the Department without sick leave. Now, from New Forest, comes news of another impressive record, for Keeper TOM CUTLER has served the Crown and the Department since 1905 (with a break for military service from 1915-18) without absence through sickness - a total of 46 years! Well done.

**** EAST ANGLIAN DIALECT**

HODMEDOD - SNAIL

dialect.

For example, Hodmedod or dodman means snail; meesen, mice; swidge (drink) of water; biggety, proud; to have the tang - to be lazy; mardle, to gossip; mawkin, a scarecrow; enow, enough; crankly, crooked; quackle, choke; putter, nag; duberous, a saundy (sandy) puss; stammed, astonished; brumping, gathering sticks.

Perhaps readers elsewhere than in East Anglia will send along examples of dialect common to their districts - or, if it exists, dialect peculiar to their forest and having reference to forestry matters.

**** WELCOME, LITTLE STRANGERS**

WE ARE GLAD to be able to announce the following births, and heartily congratulate the parents:

New Forest: To District Officer and Mrs. P.L. WINCHESTER, a son. To Foreman and Mrs. J.F.B. WOOD, a daughter, Margaret Jane. Bedgebury, S.E.(E): To Forester and Mrs. F.P. AWBERRY, a son.

**** THAT LOVE STORY OF THE TREES**

HERE IS THE SOLUTION

THE SOLUTION to the recent problem is: The young lady of whom I write was very spruce. She was a peach and a plum good one. Her tulips were the colour of a cherry. Her pawpaw was an old crabapple and her mother was far from poplar. The daughter would have had to pine for beaux if she had not been able to carry off the palm in deception, for she was guarded as the apple of their eye.

In love affairs, however, it was plain to see that she was a thorn in their sides. She did not care a fig for their advice. Whenever she caught chance she would arrange a date for meeting a favoured young man and leave the pear of elderly chestnuts alone.

Down at the beech she let Cypress her hand until yew could easily see which way things were tending. When he asked her father for her, the answer was "Walnut if I know it", and furthermore, the young man was advised to sycamore remote region. Nothing but a dogwood staid such treatment, so the young people eloped and protests were of no avail. That made her parents' balsam like the weeping willow.

**** DUMFRIES STAFF AT CRICKET**

A CRICKET MATCH between the staff of the Dumfries, S.Scotland, Conservancy Office and District Officers of the Conservancy was played at Gatehouse, in conjunction with the office outing. After a keen struggle the technical staff passed the office total with five wickets in hand. Scores were as follows: Office staff, 61 (E.G. ROBERTS 43, K.W. WILSON 7 for 28): District Officers, 63 for 5 wickets (P.H. LEGARD 36).

**** FORESTER WEDS**

THE MARRIAGE took place recently of Forester JOHN JEFFERS, of Alice Holt, South East England, and Miss EDNA PARRATT, shorthand-typist at the Forest Research Station. The couple received a gift from members of the staff of the Research Station, handed to them by Mr. F.C. HUMMEL.

**** FORESTER AND GARDENER**

DOES GOOD GARDENING go with good forestry? The people of Peebles, South Scotland, have reason to think so, since Mr. T.A. ROBBIE, Education Officer at Glentworth Forester Training School, is a regular exhibitor at Peebles Flower Show. This year he gained numerous awards and was runner-up for the amateur championship.

**** ELOISE PERSONIFIED ...**

OR AT LEAST HE'S A TRYER

HEREWITH COPY OF A LETTER from a job-seeker, addressed to the New Forest:

Dear Sir,

Fully and suitably staffed as your organisation may be at the moment, you never know when you will suddenly be faced with the need to find a reliable clerk able to carry responsibility, and to adapt himself quickly to your conditions. Or there may be that little piece of overdue re-organisation that has been waiting to be undertaken by the right type.

Either way, no harm can come of having me in for a few minutes' interview, and seeing a rather impressive testimonial that I'll show you.

When may I call, please?

THERE IS A SLASHER CORRESPONDENT IN EACH DIRECTORATE AND CONSERVANCY OFFICE. PLEASE KEEP HIM WELL SUPPLIED WITH CONTRIBUTIONS. DON'T LET YOUR TERRITORY BE OUT OF THE NEWS.