

THE SLASHER

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AMERICAN JOURNEY

CONSERVATOR'S ABSORBING COMMENTARY

FOR THREE HOURS the other evening at Northerwood House Mr. C.A. CONNELL, Conservator, North East England, enthralled a large audience with his "American Commentary", a talk in which he described some of the highlights of his recent visit to the United States as delegate to the International Mission on Forest Fire Protection. While in America he and fellow delegates travelled more than 6,000 miles by train, airplane and coach.

Reference to American sociology, architecture, forestry, forest industries, and some keen insights into the current way of life of a surprisingly war-conscious country -- these were the ingredients Mr. Connell had to offer in an illustrated symposium skilfully presented to senior officers taking the fire protection course at Northerwood.

Mr. Connell described the luxury of the voyage in the Queen Mary, and American menus that were so comprehensive that they had to be seen to be believed. Enviously indeed were they seen by the audience, by means of an epidiascope. "American eating", said Mr. Connell, "is three times what it is in this country and accounts for the abounding energy of the workers. Even in a bunkhouse in which we stayed while seeing forests in the North West Rocky Mountain area a normal breakfast was grapefruit and cereal, four or five fried eggs, griddle-cakes and syrup, and coffee. Wherever we went in this area, a truck would turn up at midday with hot meals of several courses". At one hotel in Alabama, Ed. T. Hyde, Prop., made good his boast that his table was always laden with 30 different dishes.

Washington - The Loveliest of Cities

On his arrival in America Mr. Connell found New York "grey and cavernous and quite depressing", so that what little time he had for sight-seeing was devoted to the attractions of Washington -- "the loveliest city I have ever seen". His memories of Washington are of immaculate city planning, of broad thoroughfares and quite remarkable vistas; of the Washington Memorial which, with typical American flair for detail and showmanship, is described by all and sundry as being five hundred and fifty five feet, five and one eighth inches high; of Washington Cathedral and its promise of an even greater majesty in the years to come -- already the cathedral has been 56 years in the building and is only one third completed.

Fire-fighting by Parachute

Mr. Connell saw a great deal of American forest fire-fighting techniques in the forests of the North West Rocky Mountain area, quite early in the tour. It was there that he witnessed an exciting demonstration of how fire-fighters are parachuted into the danger zone and are supplied with equipment and food from the air. The parachutists often include university students of fine physique who are content to spend their vacations in helping protect the forests. On landing they are frequently engaged in fire-fighting for several days on end, and then make their own way over difficult country to the nearest motor road. So high is the standard of jumping in the State Forest Service that the forest authorities were called upon to teach the arts of parachuting to the American Army. Incidentally, this parachuting of men and equipment is undertaken with incredible accuracy, and during the demonstration hot lunches for Mr. Connell and his party were dropped at their very feet in special containers.

Many of the forest fires in the Rocky Mountain area are caused by lightning and, as in the State forests in this country, a constant vigil is maintained from look-out towers. But there is a difference, for in that part of America there is living accommodation at the top of the 80 ft. towers, very often occupied by a man and his wife who may be on vacation or honeymooning many miles from a township of any size. The accommodation is 16 ft. square and is surrounded by a "cat-walk", and inside there is a double bed and other furniture, including stools with glass legs as a precaution against lightning.

In the forests in the South, notably in Mississippi and Alabama, fire towers are of a different design and, because of the character of the country, are usually not so high. They are without living quarters, the fire-watcher and his family living in a nearby wooden house which is well furnished and equipped with electric light and all modern conveniences, despite the remoteness of its location. Nearly all the fires in the southern forests are

"man-raised" as the result of reluctance to accept forestry as a permanent industry, there being a widespread feeling that it is prejudicial to agriculture.

A Paucity of Planting

Very little evidence was seen anywhere in the North-western and Southern States of afforestation as we know it in this country. "The attitude", said Mr. Connell, "is that the good Lord will provide, and so long as there is protection against fire and pigs the foresters are assured of all the natural regeneration they want".

30 Million Paper Bags a Day

A visit was paid to a mill in Mobile, Alabama, which uses each year, for the manufacture of packing paper and 30 million paper bags a day, ten times the current annual cut permitted in Britain. "We asked what happened to the bags after they were used," said Mr. Connell, "and were told they were burnt, for the Americans do not go in for salvage as we do here. When we asked why salvage was not encouraged we were told that if this were done all the employees of the mill would soon be out of work."

In the Deep South

Mr. Connell interested and instructed his audience with a wealth of other reminiscences, among them being his impressions of conditions in the deep South; of the segregation of blacks from whites in the doctors' waiting rooms and in the street cars; of the deep feeling which still exists against the Yankees. "Atlanta City and the South", said Mr. Connell, "are only now recovering from the effects of the Civil War 100 years ago. The scorched earth policy of the Russians in the last war was nothing compared with that seen when General Grant marched southwards."

"Blood and Thunder" in Chicago

Other recollections of a memorable tour were of the Trans-Continental Express from Missoula (Montana) to Chicago, the last word in luxury but, largely because of the single track, taking three times as long to do the journey as British Railways would have done over a similar length of line in this country; of "blood and thunder" immediately on arrival in Chicago, where a suicide was seen on the overhead railway, and the scene of the previous night's murder of a young couple was pointed out by a taxi-driver; of air raid advisory notices prominently displayed in all hotels in the north, and of tramcars equipped with loudspeakers for special use in the event of raids -- "the memory of Pearl Harbour is vivid", said Mr. Connell, "and the casualty lists from Korea are a constant reminder of the danger of a greater war".

A vote of thanks was proposed to Mr. Connell by Mr. E. WYNE JONES, Deputy Surveyor, New Forest.

An article by Mr. Connell dealing with the more technical aspects of his tour is to appear in the next issue of the Forestry Commission Journal.

**** MORE REPORTS OF PARTIES**

CONSERVANCY STAFFS MAKE MERRY

A NEW YEAR PARTY for members of the North West England Conservancy Office and field staff and their wives and friends was held at Bristol. About 75 persons, including the Conservator, MR. A.H. POPERT, and Mrs. Popert, spent an enjoyable evening, the programme including games and dancing. The event was arranged by District Officer R. CARNELL, who acted as M.C., and a committee, and it is hoped that the party will prove the forerunner of many more gatherings of a similar happy nature.

There was a large attendance, too, at the party held in the North West England Conservancy Office at Chester. There were dancing and games and the Conservator, MR. A.H.H. ROSS, who was accompanied by Mrs. Ross, moved a vote of thanks for those members of the staff who had worked hard to make the evening a success. Well done, Messrs. PRITCHARD, WILSON AND DAVIES, and congratulations especially to Mrs. Dorothy SWYNNERTON and Miss Audrey EDWARDS, who organised the refreshments.

The Christmas party and dance in the New Forest was held in Lyndhurst and 120 members of the Office and field staffs and friends attended. The hall was delightfully decorated, and there was, of course, a Christmas tree, to say nothing of the mistletoe! Much of the credit for the success of the evening was due to the untiring efforts of the lady members of the Committee (Miss BOND and Mrs. TRUCKELL), who worked hard behind the scenes, and to Mr. W.G. WATSON, who carried out the duties of M.C.

FOOTNOTE:- A minor tragedy was the accidental breakage of 12 new laid eggs, a raffle prize kindly donated by Head Forester H.C. YOUNG. However, Mr. Young came generously to the rescue, and provided more eggs, the lucky winner being Land Agent Mr. S.A. SIMMONDS.

A Conservancy dinner and dance was held recently in the East Scotland Conservancy, the venue being the Marncliffe Hotel in Aberdeen. Nearly 100 attended, the function being the first of its kind to be held in the city. Some of the guests came from as far away as Perthshire, Morayshire and Fifeshire, and a "repeat" next year seems a certainty.

More social events were held at the Research Station at Alice Holt, where 50 children were entertained and an enjoyable film show was provided by Mr. I.A. ANDERSON, the Official Photographer. There followed, a few days later, an enjoyable social for adults.

****CAN YOU BEAT THIS ONE?**

RECENTLY WE SOUGHT DETAILS of any tree actually planted by the Commission which is bigger than a 23-years old hybrid poplar in Tidenham Chase, in the Dean; this is 19½ inches quarter girth at breast height.

Now we want to know which is the biggest tree both planted and felled by the Department. To make it as easy as possible, we will accept the diameter at the butt as the criterion. This means that you have only to measure the width across the biggest stump you can find of a tree that is definitely known to have been planted by the Commission since 1919. We will rely on your good faith to leave out "spurs" or other abnormal growth outside the true circular form of the stem.

Just to show what we hope to find, we append an extract from a recent issue of the Vancouver Sun. Perhaps the Douglas fir is growing even faster in Great Britain than in its homeland of British Columbia.

DOUGLAS FIR FAST-GROWER

KASLO, - Capt. G.A. West cut down a Douglas fir near his home here which was 30 years old and measured 32 inches through at the butt. Norman Hoey and Heck McAnnon did the felling and dressing. Alex Riley, another experienced logger, also inspected the log, and they all agreed that the tree was of extraordinary growth. The 30 rings average over an inch thick. Ordinary rings average about one-quarter of an inch.

This seems a suitable opportunity to refer to another aspect of tree growth. Forester M. MURRAY, of Hardknott, North West England, says it would be interesting to know the record height growth of any Sitka spruce in a single year. We agree. "I have a recollection", says Forester Murray, "that there was a Sitka in the Canobie area of the Duke of Buccleuch's estate which, in 1930, had a growth of 9 feet. We have at Hardknott a tree of this species, planted in 1940, with a shoot 4 feet 10 inches long, the next best being 4 feet".

****THE FOREST MINSTRELS**

ENTER THE REDESDALE TROUPE

THERE SEEMS NO LIMIT to the capacity of some of our employees for providing their own entertainment and bringing pleasure to others. In the past few weeks there has been much hard work behind the scenes at Redesdale, North East England, by Foresters J.L. McCAVISH and M.P. SALMOND, with the result that Redesdale now has its own Nigger Minstrel Troupe. The first show has been given and was a great success and now a request has been received for the troupe to give a performance at Otterburn. Proceeds from the troupe's activities are to go towards the upkeep of the local hall (a nissen hut) and the children's party fund.

The troupe is comprised of: Forester McCAVISH (ventriloquist, vocalist and banjo player); Forester SALMOND (comedian, tambourine); Ganger BAINBRIDGE (comedian); Forest Worker L.M. BAINBRIDGE (vocalist, tambourine); Under Keeper I.A. MILLS (elocutionist); J. McDONALD, a local grocer (accordionist); B. CLARKE, a local farm worker (vocalist, harmonica); and Mr. R. FENWICK, the master of the troupe.

Finally, credit must go to those Forest Workers who helped at the initial show in erecting the stage and performing the many other tasks associated with productions of this kind.

****RETIREMENT OF AN EXECUTIVE OFFICER**
THE "IRON MAN" OF EDINBURGH

MR. DUNCAN L. FERGUSON, an Executive Officer in the Office of Director, Scotland, has retired on reaching the age of 65. At a well attended ceremony in the Edinburgh Office Mr. J.P. MCKIE WHITE, Land Agent, presented Mr. Ferguson with a wrist watch as a token of the high esteem in which he is

held by his colleagues in Scotland (and by others over the Border.) In making the presentation, Mr. Mackie Whyte said that "Fergie" was one of the "old brigade", having entered the Commission's service as accountant in the Inverness Office on 1st June, 1920. He had done excellent work for the Commission, not only when he devised the first office system and procedure in the Inverness office, but also during the recent war when he imperturbably and efficiently dealt with a variety of duties. In the 1914/18 war "Fergie" served in the Lovat Scouts. He started his service on horseback and finished on a motor cycle as a despatch rider, and while in the army he "collected" a decoration.

Mr. Mackie Whyte very aptly described "Fergie" as "a man who never did anybody a bad turn and never missed the opportunity to do somebody a good turn", and instanced the occasion when, following the death of a Messenger, he took over and straightened out the deceased man's affairs and saw to the welfare of the two orphans until they were of age to look after themselves.

In the matter of health "Fergie" was the original "Iron Man". He took a cold bath every morning and during his entire service with the Commission he was "off sick" on only two occasions -- once to have his "appendix" removed and once when he grudgingly condescended to take a half day off to have a couple of broken ribs strapped, following a fall from his famous "bike".

Princes Street will miss "Fergie" and his "bike" on their hitherto daily journeys, and his colleagues in the Edinburgh Office will miss his cheery smile. It is hoped that he and Mrs. Ferguson will enjoy a long and happy retirement.

****TRANSFERS**

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters.

Divisional Officer W.A. CADMAN from Shrewsbury, N(W), to Aberystwyth.

District Officers J.R. HAMPSON from Bettws-y-Coed, N(W), to Shrewsbury; J. WHITE from Gravetye, SE(E), to Neath, S(W); A.W.L. GUILLE from Bristol, SW(E), to Isle of Wight, New; P.W. MORGAN from Dovey, N(W), to Oswestry, N(W); J.D. MacNAB from Dornoch, N(S), to Auchencastle, S(S).

Foresters J.H. COOPER from Charlton, SE(E), to Bedgebury, SE(E); S. CHAPMAN from Brendon, SW(E), to Dunster, SW(F); L.H. COLES from Poorstock, SW(E), to Collingbourne, SW(E); R.G. FIFE from Hartland, SW(E), to Fernworthy, SW(E); S. LLOYD from Newcastleton, S(S), to Laurieston, S(S); J. MELVILLE from Clauchrie, S(S), to Newcastleton; J. MOSELEY from Southwater, SE(E), to Hemsted, SE(E); J.R.B. RAYNER from Culmhead, SW(E), to Honiton, SW(E); R.M. BURNETT from Cilgwyn, S(W), to Brechfa, S(W).

Foremen P.R. CANT from Hursley, SE(E), to Southwater; D. MOULDEN from West Tofts, E(E), to Walden, E(E); R.O.L. THOMAS from Kerry, N(W), to Dyfnant, N(W); E.O. EVANS from Glasfynydd, S(W), to Cilgwyn.

Assistant Engineer J.B. PRIESTLEY from Thornthwaite, N(E), to Carlisle, N(E).

Clerical Officer K.G. HARRATT from Education, London, to Cambridge, E(E).

****TRAGIC DEATH OF ASSISTANT ENGINEER** MR. J.R. GRIEVE, Assistant Engineer in the West Conservancy, Scotland, was one of the four men who perished on Ben Alder in a recent blizzard. He had worked for a short while as Surveyor in the North Conservancy and took up his duties in the West Conservancy in April of last year. His untimely death has cut short a promising career and the sympathy of his colleagues goes out to his parents in their sad bereavement.

From North West England comes the sad news of the death of Mr. J.R. MURRAY, Clerk of Works at Kershope, who joined the Department in November, 1949.

****PRESENTATION TO LORD ROBINSON** A COMMITTEE HAS BEEN FORMED to organise a presentation to LORD ROBINSON, to mark his retirement towards the end of the year. It is proposed that the presentation will take the form of a portrait, and it is hoped to employ a wellknown artist.

The Committee invites subscriptions from field staff from the rank of Foremen upwards and from office staffs, although certain of the older Forest Workers who have known our Chairman for many years may also wish to subscribe. Subscriptions may be sent to Conservancy offices, from which they will be forwarded to Mr. H.G. HYEM, at Headquarters, who has agreed to act as treasurer. Collections from Directors' offices will be dealt with similarly.

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.