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RETIREMENT OF SIR RICHARD COTTERELL

retired at the end of July on completion of his term of office.

AFTER serving as a Forestry Commissioner since 1945, LT. COL. SIR RICHARD COTTERELL

Sir Richard was appointed a Commissioner at a time when the Commission were planning their early post-war programmes. Since then the overall estate has expanded to two and a half million acres and the area under woodland -- about one and a half million acres -- has more than trebled. Sir Richard played an outstanding part in this achievement and, as a woodland owner himself with some 750 acres of woods on his home estate at Garnons, Hereford, he was always particularly active in the sphere of Commission relations with private forestry. For example, he took a special interest in the introduction and development of our dedication and other schemes.

Sir Richard is an acknowledged expert on the growing of ash and his plantations of this species have been seen and admired by many foresters from overseas. His chestnut coppice won for him the Royal Agricultural Society's premier award in the competitions associated with the Royal Show -- the Gold Medal Certificate. Indeed, Garnons won major awards in several classes.

Not only the Commissioners but many members of the staff will miss Sir Richard, for he was always intensely interested in what was going on in the "field" and in the people immediately concerned. The writer, for example, was closely associated with him for a long while in the promotion of the early campaign against the grey squirrel and always had his personal support and encouragement.

After attending his last Commission meeting Sir Richard was the guest of our Chairman, LORD WALDEGRAVE, and other Commissioners at dinner at Brown's hotel. Others attending included the EARL of RADNOR, formerly Chairman of the Commissioners; SIR HENRY BERESFORD-PEIRSE, our Director General; Mr. J. R. THOM, Director, England; Mr. J. Q. WILLIAMSON, Director, Wales; and the Secretary, Mr. H. A. TURNER.

**FORESTER RETIRES

KNOWN virtually throughout the Commission, Forester "BERTIE" GALE has retired after 44 years' service to forestry. Mr. Gale, resident Forester at Northerwood House, endeared himself to colleagues and to many hundreds of others associated in one way or another with forestry by virtue of his never-failing courtesy and helpfulness during the educational courses held at Northerwood. Private woodland owners, estate agents, representatives of local authorities, schoolteachers, all had reason to be grateful to him and, over the years, many were the tributes which he received.

Mr. Gale started as a forest worker in 1920 and the following year went to the then Forest Apprentices School in the Dean. On leaving the school he was first a ganger and then a Forester in South West England and the New Forest. In 1935 he was seconded for service in the Isle of Man for an agreed period of five years, but in fact remained there until 1947, when he was appointed an Instructor at the Dean School. From there he went to Northerwood in 1952.

Before a large gathering of wellwishers, at Headquarters, Mr. Gale received several gifts -- clock, electric drill and an axe -- purchased with subscriptions from friends in widely separated parts of the country. The presentation was made by Mr. J. H. JAMES, Chief Education Officer, and Mr. Gale delighted his audience with an exceptionally witty reply. Mrs. Gale was presented with a bouquet.

Mr. and Mrs. Gale intend to spend their retirement in the New Forest and it is sincerely hoped that the former will soon be fully recovered from his recent bout of ill health.

****HOLMSLEY CAMP SITE OPENED**

The Holmsley Camp Site, intended to meet a long-felt need in the New Forest, was formally opened in time to accommodate campers over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

The camp is situated in the north west corner of the former airfield and comprises some 23 acres, of which nine acres are hard standing and the remainder heathland. It is fenced and a cattle grid has been installed at the entrance to keep away commoners' animals. It provides accommodation for about 200 caravans and 100 tents and has been constructed at a cost of £16,000.

The opening ceremony was performed by SIR RICHARD COTTERELL and was by way of being his "swan song", in that it was his last official task as a Commissioner before his retirement. He used a slasher to cut a tape at the entrance and this tool, it is understood, is being mounted and presented to him as a souvenir of the occasion.

The camp is well equipped with toilets, wash basins and showers, water supplies and concrete hearths on which campers, at the discretion of the resident warden, will be allowed to light fires for cooking. Charges are the same as those made for camping on the open forest and it is hoped, therefore, that this will encourage campers to avail themselves of the new facilities.

****PASSING OF A FOREMAN**

HIS many friends will be sorry to hear of the recent death of MR. JIM ATKINSON who was, until his retirement on medical grounds in December, 1960, a Foreman in Allerston Forest, Yorkshire. A local man from farming stock, he started with the Commission in 1929 when the first planting in Newton Dale was undertaken. He was seconded to the Home Timber Production Department during the last war.

A colleague writes: "Jim was a big man physically who would rather take off his coat and use his strength on a job than watch other people struggle to do it. In the words of local people he 'lived for the forestry' He shared the hardships of early days but his greatest blow was in becoming partially paralysed and being confined to bed."

Our sympathy is offered to his widow and family in this sad bereavement.

****HOW OLD IS THAT STAG?**

MANY foresters claim to be able to tell the age of a red deer stag from the size and form of its antlers, but of course it casts them once a year and in the hornless condition there is no ready guide.

Recently we spotted in the "Hungarian Agricultural Review" the following simple method:

"Szaboles, J.: Red deer at Hogyesz. (Hogyeszi szarvasok.) Az Erdo. Budapest, 1963. 12. 9. pp. 396-402.

The article, which is otherwise of local interest, discusses an age identifying method that deserves attention, by which the age of stags standing quietly can be determined with an accuracy acceptable for practice. If the contour line of the back of the stag viewed from the side is elongated onwards, this imaginary line departs from the body picture at a height characteristic for the age of life. The elongated line of the back of a two-year-old stag departs from the body in the middle of the throat, that of a five-year-old stag near the tip of the muzzle, and that of a nine-year-old stag directly under the eye. The black line of an eleven-year-old stag (with ten antlers) at a critical age of antler development depasses through the eye. The back line of a thirteen-year-old stag is between the eye and beam of the antler."

****SOME MORE NATURE NOTES**

BLACK labradors are a popular breed of dog with Foresters and, for obvious reasons, many of our Warreners. It was largely through observing the intelligence of these dogs in the woods (writes the Editor) that I decided to acquire one -- perhaps a little misguidedly, since I live in a town with a not over-large garden. One of the family prides and joys, however, was (until the elephantine creature joined us) a fair-sized lawn in reasonable condition. The grass, however, has long lost its lido-like appearance and the smooth surface has given way to arid undulations reminiscent of the latest moon pictures. One reason for this is that this year we have been plagued by hedgehogs which, conversely, have delighted the labrador. On many occasions, late at night, I have gone into the garden with a torch, to find the dog happily loping around the lawn with a hedgehog in his mouth. (Once we found one of these insectivorous quadrupeds, bristling with fleas, proudly dumped outside the dining room door). I have speculated on two counts -- one, how did the dog get the hedgehogs into his mouth without harm, and secondly, why always after a visitation the same pattern of damage to the lawn was apparent. This latter never varied -- a circular and foot-wide or so "moat" of torn-up grass, in the centre of which was left a small undamaged "island" a few inches in diameter.

It was a reader's letter to a Sunday newspaper that gave me the clue. Writing from Scotland, a lady said her labrador had just brought home its 102nd hedgehog; she added that the dog got the hedgehog into its mouth by the simple expediency of tearing up grass and rolling the hedgehog in it until its spines were well covered and virtually harmless.

I would be pleased to hear from readers who are labrador-owners as to whether they have noticed similar behaviour on the part of their dogs and, in particular, whether it is customary for them to dig out a moat before picking up the hedgehog.

Badgers at Selby

And now from labradors and hedgehogs to badgers.

Forester K. MILLS, of Selby Forest, North East England, writes: "Following up a note in the Commission Journal we decided to 'train' badgers on one section of the forest (a seed orchard site), using the usual weighted swinging gates inserted in the boundary fence. Starting with three and building up to 13 now all in use, we considered the results successful. The area is cleared of rabbits and in 1963 to test our faith in the rabbit "proofness" of the fence and gates we planted eight acres of "ordinary" trees on an area not destined for "seed" trees. This has led to our discovering another peculiarity of badgers, in that (here, at least) they scratch out some of the newly planted trees in order to perform their ablutions in the loosened soil. Have any readers had like experiences or, more important, have they managed to train badgers or other animals to a degree where they do no damage at all?

Trophy for Deer Conservation

A trophy to be awarded annually to the person who has done most to promote the proper conservation and control of deer has been presented to the Commission in South Scotland. This is the gift of Miss E. M. C. BALFOUR-BROWNE, made in memory of her late artist brother. The trophy, entitled "The Challenge", takes the form of a red deer stag, mounted and inscribed, and cast in silver from an original in bronze by the late Mr. VINCENT BALFOUR-BROWNE, whose studies in oils and water colour of deer are famous.

At a ceremony in Dumfries, attended by the Conservator, South Scotland, Mr. J. A. B. MACDONALD, and Mr. W. N. GIBSON, Divisional Forest Officer, the trophy was handed by its donor to its first holder -- Mr. KENNETH MACARTHUR, in recognition of his studies of deer and advice and assistance to the Commission and private woodland owners over a long period.

Ospreys Safely Fledged

The Council for Nature report that by the end of July the three young ospreys had left their eyrie at Loch Garten, Inverness-shire -- although they were occasionally returning to be fed. Since 1959, twelve osprey have been reared from this nest, and the eyrie tree has survived the nesting season in spite of an attempt by vandals earlier this year to cut it down.

The nest has been guarded by the R.S.P.B. night and day since April, and over 21,000 people have been able to watch the ospreys this season. The R.S.P.B. has now closed the observation post and the peat road to it, and ask the public not to visit the nest area because of the fire danger.

The results of the analysis of an osprey egg taken by the R.S.P.B. by Nature Conservancy licence from the unsuccessful Speyside eyrie are not yet available from the Government Chemist. The R.S.P.B. wished to discover whether or not chemical insecticides had made the eggs infertile.

****PENSIONER AT 89**

FORESTER W. ARNOTT, of Andover Forest, South East England, writes:

"Many of our older Foresters will be glad to know that Mr. GEORGE TAYLOR, senior, who for many years was a Forester in the Dean, is still enjoying his retirement and is in his 89th year. The years have not dimmed his humour one little bit and his tales of the days gone by are now almost legendary. When I last met him we were discussing some of his old acquaintances. I mentioned that a Mr. HARPER, whose daughter had been a Clerical Officer at Whitmead Park, lived near me and that I saw him quite often. With a twinkle in his eye our old friend said: 'When you do see George Harper next, tell him that when I be jud (dead), him will have to consider, for I be a fortnight older'n 'ee.'".

****"HAMS" PLEASE NOTE**

FORESTER R. S. HODGSON, Ringwood North, in the New Forest Division, recently obtained

his amateur transmitting licence and would like to hear from any member of the staff with similar interests, with a view to contact on the air being arranged. His address for correspondence is Forest Lodge, Horton Road, Ashley Heath, Ringwood, Hants.

****ANY OLD IRON?**

SCATTERED around the countryside at various Commission units, more often than not in an

abandoned state (writes Head Forester R. J. JENNINGS, the Dean) are disused ammunition huts made of sheets of curved corrugated steel. If you are about to dismantle yours and sell it for scrap I suggest you don't send it all away but keep a couple of the best sections by you. They may come in very useful when you have to clear out your pond or emergency water supply.

Several years ago I had one of these to deal with; it had been used by cattle as a watering place before the advent of piped water and no-one locally could recall it having been cleaned out for more than 30 years.

With a surface area of some 200 square yards, slippery banks of boulder clay rising three feet above the water level and a layer of mud two feet in depth on the bottom, it presented me with a few problems.

Although the work was to be undertaken in July when the water was drying up, the removal of the ooze and muddy deposit that had accumulated over a long period was an objectionable job and at first sight it was difficult to know how to start. However, realising that if something was not done while the weather was fine and dry and knowing that one day's good rain might prevent the job being done for another year I gave instructions that four men were to be given a large shovel and a pair of waders apiece and that, working from the edge of the pond, they were to dig out the spoil as best they could and throw it as quickly as they were able on to the bank some two or three feet above them.

The result was as I had expected. The men said they were being ostracised at meal times, etc. and there was a plea for larger tools to work with and murmurs that it was about time that some more modern method of operating was devised. I did my best and the following morning saw them wheeling out the spoil from the bottom of the pond in a barrow with caterpillar tracks, along planks I had borrowed from a neighbouring farmer. But this also proved a failure for after several trips ashore the wood became wet and slippery and, to the strains of the "Eton Boating Song" rendered by the more fortunate employees who were weeding seedbeds, within sight of the pond, the wheelbarrow turned turtle and sank with all hands.

While the men were going home to change their clothes I wandered around the toolsheds and nursery buildings racking my brains for something else to try and when I had almost given up hope suddenly came upon the very thing we wanted. Two sheets of curved corrugated steel on the scrap heap which, when loaded with mud by the men standing in the pond were used alternatively as sledges and hauled up the slippery banks by the tractor with no difficulty whatsoever. The job was completed with no further complaints in a very short time. No doubt readers can recall an occasion when, having been made responsible for completing a job of work both quickly and cheaply and having neither proper equipment to work with nor experience to draw upon, they have derived much amusement and satisfaction from using their initiative in modifying the most primitive of tools; and the work has been done satisfactorily without money being spent on new equipment that, once used, might not be put into service again for a very long time.