

THE GREAT FORESTS OF S. WALES

VALLEYS ARE GREEN AGAIN

NO MATTER how often we may visit a particular forest, there is always some new feature to be seen, some additional new facet or development to be beheld. For example, while on a recent return visit to Llantrisant, in South Wales, we saw how a capricious wind can play havoc in the plantations. The prevailing wind is south-westerly, but unexpectedly it had veered to the east and then, blowing in great strength, had blown down many of the Norway spruce that flanked a new road. Quite a lot of these sizable trees were snapped off at about breast height.

We noticed, for the first time, a single Corsican pine standing sentinel on a great mound on top of Mynydd Maelog hill, 881 feet above sea level. What, we asked, was the origin of the mound? "It is where they used to light their beacons, years ago," we were told, and that was as far as we got. Presumably "they" were the Welshmen who had need to warn their countrymen of the invading English, but some of our readers may be more precise as to the origin of this particular feature of Llantrisant; there may be other and similar mounds in the vicinity.

We would not say that Llantrisant is the most beautiful of the Commission's forests in South Wales, but it holds great promise and a few more years' growth should add greatly to its attractions. While pondering on this and walking north through the plantations it was all the more startling suddenly to view, in the distance, the monstrous black pile on which is discharged the waste from Coed Ely colliery. And to further mar the scene there lay behind this sinister coal-tip the unimaginative rows of the houses of Coed Ely itself, with the dwellings as alike as peas in a pod. It was all very incongruous, and a reminder that those who criticise the forester for his coniferous plantings might well occupy their minds in other directions.

It was in the area from which we first set eyes on Coed Ely that we saw the vigorous growth of *Abies grandis*, planted in 1942 and flourishing, the records said, on a site burnt by an incendiary bomb. We went through the blitz and knew an incendiary bomb when we saw it and knew, too, its effect. May we suggest, then, that the records may be a little out, and that a landmine caused the crater in which the trees are planted? Perhaps someone who knew the forest in the early war years may be able to confirm or deny.

A Future Heritage

The extent of our new forests in the mining valleys of South Wales is truly impressive and the staff who have created them and now maintain them are deserving of the highest praise. Although it may not yet be appreciated in all quarters, they are providing a future population of Wales with a great heritage. Margam, Michaelston, Pelena, Rheola and Crynant alone form a wide half circle starting from the rear of Port Talbot and sweeping round to the outskirts of Neath. It is possible to travel perhaps 20 miles on this arc without leaving Commission property, except for very short distances between the forests. The newly made roads and the bull-dozer tracks over the mountains (which certainly offer adventure to the traveller by Land Rover!) have opened up the area, and employment in the forests has soared. Rheola Forest alone covers about 14,000 acres, of which some 9,000 acres have been planted since 1922, when operations first commenced. A feature of this forest is the advent of a number of licensed collieries, which have come into being as the direct result of the road-making, and enter the very bowels of the plantation-covered hillsides. Our surface tenancy arrangements with the licensees include a tonnage royalty for wear and tear of the roads.

Rheola gives an outstanding example of how forestry provides increased local employment. Before the Commission commenced the formation of this forest only 13 persons were employed on the area; today 169 persons obtain their livelihood by working in the forest, and a similar steep rise in labour figures has occurred in the other forests which today give a not inconsiderable grace and charm to the Welsh valleys and compensate for the inevitable disfigurement caused by the bigger collieries.

Footnote: Where Rheola is concerned our only complaint arose from the sight of metal telegraph poles in the forest.

****FOREST'S 1,200 TONS OF TIMBER A WEEK
THETFORD CHASE DESCRIBED IN NEW BOOKLET**

YET ANOTHER new booklet in the "Britain's Forests" series has now been published. This describes the State forest of Thetford Chase, which is situated in the Breckland district of East Anglia, and has the largest

area of plantations of any of our forests.

The booklet says that "this great new forest", extending (with agricultural and other land) over 48,000 acres - more than 70 square miles - around the towns of Thetford and Brandon, on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, "has been built up in 30 years on soils which have generally been regarded as too poor for agriculture". The planting of Thetford Chase was begun in 1922, and there are now 33,000 acres of thriving plantations, mainly of pines, but including a fair proportion of beech, oak, larch and Douglas fir.

Nearly 600 people are employed in tending the growing forest and harvesting the timber crops, though, says the booklet, "the peak of production still lies ahead". Many miles of new roads have been driven through the young woods and, to house the growing number of workers, what amounts to practically a new village has been built round the old church of Santon Downham.

The loose surface sand is the underlying reason for the remarkable character of much of the Breckland; it forms, in many places, a poor soil, apt to drift with the wind, which is very difficult to maintain under arable cultivation. Sometimes, in the past, the sand dunes have been on the move. But today, the booklet points out, the sands are no longer shifting, the better ground is under agriculture with sheltering belts of Scots pine, and the poorer ground carries the new forest plantations.

To see what Thetford Forest produces it is necessary to follow the felled trees on their journey by lorry from the woodlands to the big central Produce Depot just north of Brandon Station. Here, on 24 acres of land, a staff of about 75 deals with the conversion of the stems of the trees. The thinnest poles, and the tops of the larger ones, are despatched to a wallboard factory; larger material, for pulping, is sent to a papermill in Kent. Much of the material is cut into pit props and sent to mines in the Midlands. Quantities of small, straight poles are sent to the pea-growing district of the Eastern Counties to make the tripods on which the crop is dried, and other poles are sold for scaffolding and other uses. A great deal of the smaller material is converted into fencing posts.

"It should be appreciated", says the booklet, "that most of the poles are being obtained by thinning young plantations only 20 to 30 years old. But already some of the logs brought in are large enough for sawing into box-boards. As time goes on the proportion of logs large enough for the sawmills will increase, until ultimately the main output of Thetford Chase will be softwood timber suitable for house building and similar constructional work, boxes of all kinds, railway sleepers, and all the many other uses for which timber is required in our modern civilisation." Now some 1,200 tons of timber of various sorts are leaving the Depot each week - a substantial contribution for one forest to make to the country's needs.

****BIRDS AND BIRD BOXES**

GOOD USE MADE OF "PRE-FABS"

EVERY YEAR since taking over at Ampthill Forest, in the East England Conservancy, Forester L.D. INGRAM has put out a few more nesting boxes of varied construction, in an effort to "cater" for any species of bird that he thought might take to our "pre-fabs". Forester Ingram tells us that last summer he put out a specially designed large box to see if he could get a pair of wood owls or barn owls to nest in it for, he says, "there had always been a pair of each about and I could never locate a nest".

"When passing the box during the fairly recent blizzard", adds Forester Ingram, "I saw that it contained two eggs and two newly hatched wood owls. I have never before heard of an owl using a nesting box, and if any other Forester can tell us through the Slasher of a similar or comparable experience I, for one, will be most interested. The birds I have had nesting in my boxes to date are: Blue, coal and great tits; house sparrow; wren; robins; spotted flycatcher; nuthatch; song thrush; blackbird - and now the wood owl."

****MEDALLION IN THE HEART OF A TREE**

STRANGE FIND IN WEST SCOTLAND

DURING THE FELLING at Barcaldine Forest, in the West Scotland Conservancy, of some old beech trees that had become dangerous a workman discovered a bronze medallion in the heart of a tree, a few feet from the butt. The Curator of the Archaeology Department of Glasgow Museum to whom the medallion was sent for

identification, has reported that it commemorates David La Touche, ~~a member of the~~ famous banking family of Northern Ireland, who, apparently, was the son of a refugee Huguenot who fought with William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne. One side of the medallion bears the image of David La Touche and the other a group of allegorical figures, one of whom is a blind goddess holding the scales of Justice. The inscription, so far as can be made out, is Qui Dene Panea Meleus Dispensavit, which has been translated as "What he amassed with credit, he gave with distinction."

How the medallion reached Barcaldine and became buried in the tree is a mystery, but perhaps readers can suggest a solution.

****MORE ABOUT CYCLING TO WORK**

THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MARATHON

OUR PARAGRAPH last month asking to whom goes the "privilege" of the longest daily journey to and from work has produced some interesting communications. We learn, for example, that Clerical Officer W.C. EVANS, of the South Wales Conservancy, cycles a total of 24 miles each day from Monday to Friday. In actual fact, he does the six-mile journey from Dinas Powis to the Cardiff office four times daily. He goes home to lunch!

Forester R.P. WOOLLARD, now in charge of Swanton Forest, in the East England Conservancy, once had a tedious daily "pilgrimage". At the time he was working in the nursery at Micheldever Forest, in South-East England, and this is how he got to and from his work: Bishopstoke to Eastleigh by bus (one mile); Eastleigh to Winchester by train (seven miles); Winchester to Micheldever by bicycle (nine miles); total daily return journey, 34 miles. Forester Woollard was compelled by the housing shortage to undergo this travail through travel.

And now we come to the "piece de resistance", as far as cycling is concerned. Executive Officer J.L. REID, of the Cardiff Office, wonders if anyone can beat his "marathon". In 1939 he cycled from Aberdeen to Gravesend, a distance of 580 miles, in five and a half days. He claims it was "easy going", but he lost 7 lbs. in weight.

****FOREST IN THREE COUNTIES**

IN OUR MARCH ISSUE we listed certain counties in which the Department has not so far established a forest. This has prompted the following observation from our correspondent in the Cardiff Office. "In the South Wales Conservancy", he states, "we have a forest - Hay - which is situated in three counties, Breconshire, Herefordshire and Radnorshire. Of these three counties, Brecon is the only one within the administrative boundary of this Conservancy, Radnorshire being covered by North Wales and Herefordshire by South West England."

Somehow we don't think this three-county location claim is unique. What about Clipstone Forest, in the North West England Conservancy, for instance?

****HONOUR FOR HOCKEY PLAYER**

MAY TAKE PART IN OLYMPIC GAMES

WE HEAR that District Officer W.A. LINDSAY-SMITH, who is stationed at Bettws-y-Coed, in the North Wales Conservancy, has been invited as one of 22 hockey players to go to Lilleshall to take part in the final selection of 16 players to represent Great Britain in this year's Olympic Games at Helsinki. Mr. Lindsay-Smith plays hockey for Wales.

At the time of writing we do not know if the invitation will be accepted. If it is, we wish our colleague well. Incidentally, our congratulations are due in another connection to this officer, for he was recently married to Miss EIRWIN LLOYD JONES, of Ruthin.

****DEATH OF A GANGER**

IT IS WITH GREAT REGRET that we have to record the death of Ganger G.H. LLEWELLYN, of Llanover Forest, South Wales, who passed away suddenly. He was 52 years of age, and had been employed by the Department since 1938.

**** TRANSFERS**

FORESTER BROOMFIELD LEAVES NEW FOREST

presented him with an oak bookcase.

AFTER 14 YEARS with the Department in the New Forest, Forester GEORGE BROOMFIELD has been transferred to the North East England Conservancy, where he is to take charge of a hardwood area. Colleagues recently gathered to bid him farewell, and on their behalf the Deputy Surveyor, Mr. E. WYNNE JONES, a keen member of the forest cricket club, George

Broomfield will be greatly missed, as will Mrs. Broomfield, who has done much good work where the club's catering is concerned. In appreciation of Mrs. Broomfield's support the club has presented her with an umbrella and a vase.

Other transfers notified to Headquarters are:

District Officers F.W. LINDSAY from Farnham, S.E.(E), to Woking, S.E.(E); G.A. DEY from Auchencloach, E(S), to Laurencekirk, E(S); A.W.L. GUILLE from Isle of Wight, NEW, to Bristol, SW.(E). Forester T.G. SAUNDERS from Tintern, S(W), to Monmouth, S(W).

Foremen H.G. MUGGLETON from Kings, E.(E), to Thetford Chase, E(E); J. SOPPIT from Blackcraig, E(S), to Strathord, E(S); H. MACBETH from Millbuie, N(S), to Strathnairn, N(S). Clerks of Works A.A. WARD from South Strone, N(S), to Queens, N(S); D.L. BAYNE from Loch Ard, W(S), to Kershope NW(E).

Executive Officer Miss D.M. FROST from D(E) to H.Q.
Clerical Officer G. MORGAN from H.Q. to Cardiff, S.(W).

Newcomers are Clerical Officers Miss M.D.E. WILLIAMS to DEAN; Miss F.E. CATTO to E.(S); Miss G.M. ROGERS to Research; Miss V.E. WILLIAMS to D(E); Miss D.J. COX to NW(E); Mrs. I. CLELLAND to W(S); A.D. MCKENZIE to D(S); D.A. CONNELL to H.Q.

As the result of staff economies, Mr. F.D. LAWSON, Cost Accountant at Headquarters since May, 1948, has left the Department. Although only with us for a comparatively short while, he made many friends.

**SOME QUAIN WORDS

WE RECENTLY NOTICED some quaint words on a list of stores (A64). They may be unfamiliar to many readers. Here they are:

SLIPE (A sledge, with iron runners. Used on land unsuitable for wheeled vehicles).
DWANG (Chain or cable, especially useful for securing a load of timber on a lorry).
GRAIP (a fork, e.g., a potato graip). WHIPPLETREE (Sometimes known as SWINGLETREE; that part of a horse harness which prevents the traces from twisting).

**BUZZARDS

LAST MONTH we reported that Foreman A.G. JOHN, of Chepstow, had seen a flock of nine buzzards. SIR WILLIAM TAYLOR writes to say that on one occasion, when walking near Llandoverly, he saw eleven buzzards in the air together. "It was a memorable sight", says Sir William.

**WHENCE THE WHITE STAG?

UNUSUAL VISITOR TO WYRE

FROM TIME TO TIME a white stag has been seen in the vicinity of Wyre Forest, in the South West England Conservancy, and instructions have been given that should it be encountered during any deer shoots, it must be spared. There has been much speculation as to the origin of this stag, and it was once thought that it may have come from a herd of white deer at Brockhampton Park, in the Cotswolds. District Officer I.F. MacIVER informs us, however, that during a visit to Spetchley Park, near Worcester, he learned that there are two herds of deer on that estate - one white and the other red; it is probable, therefore, that our white stag may be a "sport".

**GOODWILL DEPARTMENT

HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS to Forester W.G. WILLIAMS, Cwmneinion Forest, North Wales, and Miss G.M. EVANS, of Eglwysfach, Cardigan, who have wed. To Land Agent S.A. SIMMONDS, New Forest, and Miss MOLLY MILLER, who have also married.

Finally, our congratulations to Forester G.E. WAYGOOD, of Chepstow Park, and Mrs. Waygood, on the birth of a daughter (Jane).

READERS, PLEASE NOTE. THERE HAS OF LATE BEEN A FALLING-OFF IN THE
NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED. PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR SLASHER
CORRESPONDENT AND SEE THAT THE POSITION IS REMEDIED.