

THE PASSING OF OUR CHAIRMAN

ASHES SCATTERED AT KIELDER

Ottawa while he was leading the United Kingdom delegation to the Sixth British Empire Forestry Conference, came as a profound shock.

THE ASHES of LORD ROBINSON, our late Chairman, have been scattered at Wickhope Nick, in the Kielder Forest he loved so well. News of the death of Lord Robinson, which took place in

Many of us have had the privilege of knowing Lord Robinson. Those whom he met in the field will remember him for his almost boyish enthusiasm and interest in all he saw, for his sage counsels of patience where backward plantations were concerned ("an ounce of patience is worth a ton of slag" was one of his favourite sayings) and perhaps above all for his intensely alert and enquiring mind. Those who knew him more intimately in the office felt the full force of his dynamic personality. Himself an amazingly quick worker, he was intolerant of delay and as each problem as it arose tended to acquire "Priority No. 1" in his mind, the position was not always easy.

Lord Robinson's grasp of essentials was masterly and there can be few men of whom it could be said more truly that he never failed to see the wood for the trees. We of the Forestry Commission assuredly owe him a lasting debt of gratitude for his untiring but outstandingly successful efforts to put forestry "on the map" in this country.

Lord Robinson entered the public service in 1909 as an assistant inspector in the forestry branch of the former Board of Agriculture and was largely responsible for the report which led to the setting up in 1919 of the Forestry Commission. He was our Chairman for 20 years and there is no doubt that in the eyes of the outside world as well as those of his staff his name and that of the Department were synonymous. Starting with the remnant of old Crown woodlands, he developed the State forests of Britain to their present extent of more than 1,000 square miles, and brought into being the new schemes for the improvement and dedication to permanent timber production of our private woodlands, largely devastated by the two world wars.

Lord Robinson was knighted in 1932 and made a Peer in 1947, choosing to be known as Lord Robinson of Kielder Forest and of Adelaide. He was closely associated from the start with the formation of Kielder Forest, in Northumberland, which is, of course, our biggest unit. He saw the first trees planted, cut the first thinnings and then, as recently as May this year, he opened the new forest village of Kielder, one of several communities that are to be built in the area.

His interest in overseas forestry was great and he was elected Chairman of the Fourth Commonwealth Forestry Conference held in South Africa in 1935 and of the Sixth Conference in Great Britain in 1947.

A Memorial Service took place at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, on October 21st.

** ROYAL VISIT TO FORESTS

H.R.H. THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH IN
EAST SCOTLAND

WHAT WE BELIEVE was the first Royal visit to take place to any of our forests was made last month, when H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh went to Monagharty and Culbin forests, in the East Scotland Conservancy. The Duke, who drove

his own car over from Balmoral, was escorted on his forest tour by LORD RALPH, our Deputy Chairman; SIR HENRY BERESFORD PEIRCE, the Director for Scotland; Mr. F. W. A. OLIVER, Conservator, East Scotland; and District Officer J. A. M. KENNEDY. He proved himself extremely knowledgeable in forestry matters, and at Monagharty, which is in the charge of Head Forester D. M. WATT, and is a unit of more than 4,000 acres, he witnessed a variety of forest operations.

The tour of Culbin, which has, perhaps, a more colourful history than any other of our forests, formed the afternoon part of the programme. It is at Culbin that the Commission has thatched and planted the biggest part of the 6,000 acres or more of sand dunes which, before being fixed by the use of brushwood and other material, threatened to encroach still further on arable land. Beneath the sands lies the Barony of Culbin, which, according to tradition, was in 1694 buried by sand which blew inland during a violent storm.

His Royal Highness was transported by Land Rover, and made frequent stops to walk through parts of the forest and to see certain features. He asked numerous questions of Head Forester W. G. MILNE, and was especially interested by the odd sight of some of the pines near Binsness which, planted in pre-Commission days, have for long been exposed to the wind, with the result that sand has piled high against the leading trees, and it is thus possible to walk among the tree tops. It is remarkable that these trees continue to make fair growth, despite the fact that so much of their stems is buried in sand.

Elsewhere His Royal Highness saw the last stages of the task of thatching the remaining unplanted dunes. It was a proud occasion for certain of our employees, for they were introduced to the Duke and spent some while chatting to him about their work. All of them have been employed at Culbin since the Commission commenced operations there in 1929.

There followed a visit to the observation tower on Hill 99, the highest dune in the forest, and so named because it rises to 99 feet above sea level. From the tower His Royal Highness obtained a magnificent view of the plantations and countryside, and of the Moray Firth. Before leaving the forest a visit was paid to the biggest of the fire dams, which have been constructed by scooping out the sand to below water level.

Then, for the tiny community of Kintessack, in which is situated the headquarters of the forest, there came the great moment. His Royal Highness was driven to the home of Head Forester Milne, where Mrs. Milne and Miss Milne were gracious hostesses at tea.

**** FLOODING IN OUR FORESTS**

CONWAY VALLEY DISASTER RECALLED

SEVERAL READERS have commented on the Lynmouth floods. "The disaster", says one correspondent, "recalls for us the not dissimilar tragedy which occurred in 1925 within a mile or so of Gwydyr, the biggest of our forests in North Wales. This happened when the dam at Llyn Eigiau, above Dolgarrog, in the Conway Valley, burst and a raging flood of water destroyed many cottages and other property. Some 17 people lost their lives".

It is understood that in the year of the Welsh Disaster more than 25 inches of rain fell in five days at Llyn Caw-Lwyd, in the adjoining valley. But then parts of Wales are noted for their heavy rainfall and, in his "The Lakes of Wales", Frank Ward says that "in 1912 the extraordinary total of 246 inches was registered during the 12 months in Cwm Dyli, on Snowdon, and a fall of six and a half inches in one day has been noted".

Our North Wales correspondent reminds us that in July, 1949, there was a fall of seven inches of rain in one day on Plynlimon, in the vicinity of which are our forests of Hafren, Bryn Mawr, Tarenig and Cwmeinion. This fall is said to have occurred within four hours; some 23 landslides occurred in Tarenig Forest as the result, and many young trees were destroyed. On another occasion - we think in 1950 - heavy rain caused exceptional floods in the Llugwy Valley, near the Gwydyr Forester Training School, and one unfortunate camper lost his caravan.

In The Slasher for September, 1950, we recorded how a cloud-burst at Margam Forest, in South Wales, had resulted in Sitka spruce over a large area being torn out of the ground and hurled downhill, cutting a "swathe" 10 yards wide and 200 yards long through other plantations. Many trees in a compartment of Japanese larch, averaging 30 feet in height, and with six-inch butts, were uprooted, broken and splintered and stripped of their bark and swept into a stream at the base of the hill.

District Officer D. MACKAY recalls a serious case of flooding in Dunwich Forest, in East Anglia. Apparently the sea barrier near Dunwich was broken down during the war to cause flooding of the marshes and so hamper the expected enemy invasion. During March, 1949, a very high tide completely submerged the marshes and flooded the village of Dunwich, and at the same time the sea encroached on the forest to a considerable distance and depth. No appreciable damage was noticed when the water receded, but about 18 months later poplar and Corsican pine commenced to die off, and large gaps were made in the plantations by the removal of the affected trees. Mr. Mackay says that up to the autumn of 1951, when he left the district, trees were still dying; it would be interesting to hear from our local people of the present position.

Note: An inch of rain on an acre is said to weigh 101 tons, which is equal to 4.7 gallons per square yard.

**** DEAN FOREMAN WITH MASTER'S
"TICKET"**

NEAR TRAGEDY IN A N.Z. PORT

QUITE A NUMBER of our readers, we know, had interesting and sometimes strange or unusual careers before taking up forestry. We would like to hear of Foresters and others who come into this category.

Meanwhile, the earlier career of Foreman D.

ROBINSON, of The Dean, makes interesting reading, because before joining the Department he spent many years at sea, and secured his Master's "ticket". "I often cast my mind back", Mr. Robinson tells us, "to a dull winter evening when I stood on the bridge, ready to act as messenger boy and all decked out in my new apprentice's uniform, while the tramp steamer I had joined the previous day slipped slowly down the Tyne and out into the North Sea. What a multitude of experiences followed, in 17 years 'tramping' round the world!

"I signed indentures in 1929 to serve the Nautilus Shipping Company, and promised to live a sober, hardworking life for four years, in consideration of receiving £40 a year and being taught the business of being a seaman. I obtained my Second Mate's certificate in 1934 and two years later I passed for Mate. In 1940 I obtained my Master's 'ticket', after which I got a berth in the Orient Line. The remainder of my sea career was spent with the same line and I must say I experienced many happy days, despite the fact that the ships were converted into 'troopers' and there were many anxious times throughout the war.

"I met my future wife on one of these ships, outward bound round the Cape to Suez, and we were married three years later".

We asked Mr. Robinson to tell us of his most graphic experience while at sea. "During the war, while serving in a large trooper", he replied, "we took a company of New Zealanders home to South Island. We arrived off port in the evening; the air was still and the sea like glass. The pilot boarded us outside the harbour and slowly we made our way inside. The outer pier stretched round like a protecting arm, leaving just enough space to get in. As we entered the harbour we could see a great crowd of people packed along a frail wooden pier which jutted out from the land, and at the sea end of this was the town band. The musicians struck up a rousing tune, and there was a roar of welcome from the crowd.

"Our headline was passed ashore and then, on glancing seaward, I noticed a curious phenomenon in the bay - a white line was moving over the water, and I saw that it passed over a sailing boat, which capsized. Within seconds the wind hit us, and the peaceful calm of the summer evening gave way to a howling gale. Our bow line became taught as a violin string, while our stern began to swing towards the pier. My heart was in my mouth as I looked at that frail little jetty whereon stood the cheering crowd, with the band still playing some patriotic tunes; if our stern caught it the whole lot would be swept away. There was little we could do except hope that by hauling in our headline we would clear and then, after agonising moments, we got our stern into the wind again. But on the crest of our swing, our headline, the only connection with shore, gave under the strain and we commenced to fall down, bodily, on the seemingly ill-fated pier and its occupants. It seemed that nothing could save them, this time.

"It was a case of full speed astern, and there were seconds that seemed like ages during which we fell nearer and nearer to the pier, on which the crowd still cheered and the band added its melodies to the tumult of the wind. The suspense was agonising. Could we avoid a tragedy? Then our engines took hold and we began slowly to move astern; our bow swung past and clear by inches only and we eventually came alongside with a bump at the other end of the harbour".

"What", we asked Mr. Robinson, "makes a man leave the sea for the forest?"

"After I had been married a few years", he replied, "the desire to return to the countryside I had known as a boy rose in me stronger than ever, and I came to the woods not as a stranger but rather as a friend long absent".

**** TRANSFERS**

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters. District Officer F. W. LINDSAY from Woking, SE(E), to Horsham, SE(E). Head Foresters J. W. BROOK from Lake Vyrnwy, N(W), to Slindon, SE(E); J. E. EVANS from Beddgelert, N(W), to Coed-y-Brenin, N(W). Foresters J. MACKENZIE from Strathconon, N(S), to Moy, N(S); W. S. STOTT from Kings, E(E), to Gunton, E(E); L. D. INGRAM from Amptill, E(E), to Thetford Chase, E(E);

H. F. PARLETT from Thetford Chase to Fritton, E(E); E. J. D. WILKINSON from H.Q. Maresfield, SE(E). Foreman B. W. BEARD from Wigsley, E(E), to Amphill; A. G. PYMAN from Marden, SE(E), to Alton, SE(E); E. B. CORDERY from Lyminge, SE(E), to Marden.

** CRICKET SUCCESS AT ABERYSTWYTH

OFFICE TEAM WINS SILVER CUP

HOW MANY COMMISSION cricket teams can boast a silver cup? In 1949 the question would have evoked ironic comments from cricketers in the Welsh Directorate Office, for this was the first season of their club and the task of raising a team from a small office staff, and obtaining the necessary moral and financial support, was proving no easy one.

Difficulties continued in 1950 but, encouraged by their President, Mr. A. P. LONG, the Director for Wales, the club was well established by the following year, when the team reached the semi-final of the newly-formed Aberystwyth and District Cricket League. This was a most successful season; in all seventeen matches were played, of which ten were won, six lost and one drawn.

Of the nine matches played in 1952 four were won, four lost and one drawn. No more fixtures were possible because the playing field was ruined by the visit of a circus earlier in the year, and had it not been for the kindness of the University authorities, who granted the Aberystwyth Cricket League the use of their field, no competition could have been arranged at all.

Anyway, a knock-out competition was staged - and this is where we come to the Silver Cup. In a thrilling final, the Forestry Commission beat the "Cambrian News" by 9 runs and thus gained the trophy. Foundation of their triumph was some fine batting in the semi-final by J. Threadgill and E. J. M. Davies, and the consistently good bowling of G. Williams (this year's captain) and F. Bryan; but praise must also be accorded to each member of the team for some fine fielding. It was this good fielding which, in the final, was mainly responsible for the victory.

** SEQUEL TO A FIND

IN THE MAY ISSUE of The Slasher we recorded how a bronze medallion was discovered in the heart of an old beech tree felled at Barcaldine Forest, West Scotland. We said the medallion commemorated 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.

The Department has now heard from Mr. J. F. D. La Touche, of Newton Abbot, Devon, who states that the David La Touche in question was born in 1703 and died in 1785 and was his great-great-great-uncle. The medal was struck in memory of David La Touche in the year of his death; it has now been given to Mr. J. F. D. La Touche who is, however, unable to suggest how it came to be embedded in the tree.

** OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO -

Mr. L. A. CHAPLIN, Chief Clerk, York, and Mrs. Chaplin, on the birth of a son (the third); Mr. D. O. BAYLISS, Surveyor, and Mr. F. BRYAN, Draughtsman (Aberystwyth) and Mr. N. MACDONALD (Accounts Section, Glasgow) and their wives, on the birth to each couple of a daughter.

Congratulations, also, to District Officer J. H. JAMES, of South Wales, and Mrs. James, on the birth of a son. The baby weighed 8lb. 3oz. at birth and may yet challenge his father who (as recorded in The Slasher in May, 1951), weighs 18 stones and is 6 ft. 4½ ins. tall.

Mr. J. S. BURFITT and Miss R. M. COEP, C.O.s in the Cardiff Office, have wed and, appropriately enough, spent the honeymoon at Bettws-y-Coed, on the doorstep of Gwydyr Forest. They have received gifts from the Conservancy Office Staff.

** TRAGIC DEATH ON THE ROAD

WE REGRET to record the death of Mr. THOMAS OTHEN, 63, a forest worker who had been employed in the Research Branch at Alice Holt since 1950. Mr. Othen was cycling home after work when he came into collision with a car; he was seriously injured and died the same night.

IF YOU DO SOMETHING, SEE SOMETHING, OR HEAR SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY, TELL YOUR SLASHER CORRESPONDENT. THERE IS A CORRESPONDENT IN EACH DIRECTORATE AND CONSERVANCY OFFICE