

THE SLASHER

Forestry Commission News

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THE BLACK WEEKEND

GREAT WINDBLOW IN SCOTLAND

PRIVATE WOODLANDS IN NORTH EAST SCOTLAND suffered grievously during the recent weekend of gales and floods.

It is estimated that between 30 and 35 million cubic feet of timber, the bulk of it conifers, may have been blown down. The damage is especially bad on estates in parts of Moray and Nairn, Banff, Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire and has occurred principally in the middle-aged and older woodlands. The extent of the damage can best be realised when one takes into account that the total amount of timber of all categories licenced for felling in private woods in Scotland last year was 16 million cubic feet; another way of comprehending the extent of the windblow is to assume that 30 million cubic feet of timber is roughly equivalent to 10,000 acres, or say 16 square miles, of mature or semi-mature forest.

Statements on the windblow - which represents a serious setback to our efforts to build up a reserve of standing timber - have been made in Parliament, and at the time of writing the Commission is discussing with woodland owners and timber merchants the problems involved in clearing and marketing the timber.

The Great Floods

Readers will be interested to hear how our staff and woods in East Anglia fared as the result of the disastrous floods.

Fortunately, flooding of our plantations was not extensive. About 76 acres were invaded by the sea at Dunwich (where the Forester found fish among the trees), Rendlesham and Tunstall forests, and at the last named unit about 50 acres of agricultural land were under water.

On the human side, as soon as the gravity and extent of the floods was realised one question was on the tongues of our staff and employees in East England: "What can we do to help?" Here are some of the ways in which aid was provided, and it goes without saying that everyone concerned is deserving of congratulation.

The 1,700 gallon fire tanker was sent from Thetford Chase Forest, with Driver WHITTA, to maintain fresh water supplies for Heacham and Hunstanton, in Norfolk, and provided a service for five days. Lorries were sent by Forester J. W. PARKER, of Dunwich Forest, and by Forester R. B. HARDY, at Burwell, to assist refugees and salvage furniture. District Officer I. W. KIRTON and Asst. Engineer G. O. COOK did some fast work in getting away 300 blankets from Thetford to Norwich by lorry within 50 minutes of the requirements being known.

S.F.O. G. F. BALLANCE organised "flying squads" on a rota basis from employees of Thetford Chase Forest, the whole staff of 600 volunteering to help. At the time of writing a party of 50 workers is going out each day under a District Officer, Foremen and Gangers, and are helping to repair breaches in the sea wall on the Norfolk coast near Burnham Deepdale and Brancaster. This emergency work involves making "sandbag" pill-boxes around the breaches, and the substance used in filling the "sandbags" is believed to be a mixture of plasticine and glue. Work has proceeded apace despite the appalling weather conditions of snow, wind and rain, and bitter cold; the spectacle of ruined homes and devastated land is a great spur.

Space, obviously, does not allow us to mention the names of all those who have taken part in this battle against the floods but, says our correspondent, "if one took the staff lists for Thetford and Swaffham forests you wouldn't find a name missing". We hear that a Regular Army Sgt. Major, working near our men, said of them "They know what they are doing, and they are organised".

Workers from Rendlesham and Tunstall forests have assisted in the repair of sea walls on the Suffolk coast.

But to end on a lighter note, there is the case of Forest Clerk Miss B. SYKES, of Tunstall, who slept through the storm and woke to find the sea had been in and out of her home!

***MR. L. A. NEWTON'S RETIREMENT**

33 YEARS WITH THE COMMISSION

Commission.

MR. L. A. NEWTON, Conservator on the staff of Director, Scotland, who has been responsible for Acquisitions and Private Woodlands, has retired after 33 years with the Forestry

To mark the occasion Mr. Newton was recently presented with a cheque subscribed to by many colleagues. The presentation was made by the Director, Sir Henry Beresford-Peirse, who referred to Mr. Newton's great service to the Commission, particularly the part played by him in making the Dedication Scheme a success in Scotland.

Mr. Newton himself adds the following: "On retirement after so many years of service, during which I have seen the Forestry Commission rise from a tiny seedling to a stately and spreading tree, I would like to say how much I have enjoyed my varied experiences and how fortunate I have been in my contacts with a great many colleagues. In particular I would like to express my sincere thanks to the large number who contributed so generously to a parting gift. I do not know their names and I therefore hope that through the medium of The Slasher they will accept my warmest thanks".

****LATE REPORTS OF PARTIES**

MORE REPORTS are to hand of staff parties, held in various parts of the country.

The annual party arranged by the North West England Conservancy office was attended by about 60 people in, says our correspondent, "a gaily decorated room completely unrecognisable as the normal abode of the Accounts Branch". Dancing and games were enjoyed, and where the buffet was concerned thanks went to Mrs. DOROTHY SWYNNERTON and her helpers. Mr. JACK PRITCHARD was an efficient Master of Ceremonies. Unfortunately the Conservator, Mr. A. H. H. ROSS, was unable to attend, but in his absence Mr. W. J. RAVEN (Land Agent) moved a vote of thanks to the organisers.

The annual party of the South Wales Conservancy office was organised by the ladies of the Typing Pool and was generally acclaimed as a great success. The Conservator, Mr. W. D. RUSSELL, and Mrs. Russell, were present.

In York, the party for members of the North East England Conservancy office was admirably staged by a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. B. C. SELBY (Acquisition Officer). There was full programme of dancing and games, and buffet supper.

****"EVERLASTING" SNOW**

SOME SCOTTISH CLAIMS

locations where it is reckoned to remain all the year round. These, he says, are in one of the gullies on the north face of Ben Nevis; and Braeriach, in the Cairngorms, in a gully on the Larig Ghru side. It is of interest, adds Mr. Birrell, that Seton Gordon, in one of his books, says the Ben Nevis snow has been known to disappear about September in some years, but he had always seen the Braeriach snowfield at any season of the year.

District Officer G. F. SAVAGE, North Scotland, also has a piece to say. "It might be worth recording", he writes, "that Birrell and I had a 'glissade' of about 200 feet down a snow slope in a corrie on the north face of Creag Meagaidh (3,700 feet), during August Bank Holiday weekend, 1951.

"I don't know if this snow survived until the winter. The snow cornice in Coire Lochan, on Cairngorm, defeated the predictions of local people by completely disappearing by the end of September in the same year".

Mr. Birrell adds: "In June, 1951, Savage and I climbed a sheltered gully on Antalloch for several hundred feet; the snow was more than 8 ft. deep".

And now Mr. F. S. HENDERSON, Executive Officer, Inverness: "If you want to talk of depth, there is a Glencoe corrie which is said to hold snow 70 feet deep in winter".

In the same article in December we spoke of Scotland's "boast" of Arctic animals - the mountain hare and the stoat. Forester D. W. KEELNS, Dalton Forest, North West England, writes: "In 1951, at Cotgrave Forest,

in Nottinghamshire, the Warrener, Mr. T. BRUMPTON, trapped at least three white stoats. I have observed a white stoat as far south as Ampthill Forest, Bedfordshire, and this was no rare occurrence. Regarding the demand for the pelts, as far as I can observe, having studied a recent price list, the furriers are not paying any more for the ermine than for the brown pelt."

*FA FAVOURITE POEM

RECENTLY we invited readers to forward their favourite quotations on forestry, from the works of any poet. This, of course, was intended to cover poems on individual trees.

From Mr. H. E. H. DRAKE, formerly in the Finance Branch at Headquarters, we have received the following short extract from William Cowper's "Yardley Oak", written in 1791. Cowper once lived at Olney, in Buckinghamshire, which is quite near to our forest of Yardley Chase. No doubt, in his walks, he came upon one oak in particular which impressed him and inspired him to put pen to paper.

YARDLEY OAK

Of treeship, first a seedling, hid in grass;
Then twig; then sapling; and, as century rolled
Slow after century, a giant-bulk
Of girth enormous, with moss cushioned root
Up-heaved above the soil, and sides embossed
With prominent wens globose - till at the last
The rottenness, which time is charged to inflict
On other mighty ones, found also thee.

Forester R. J. JENNINGS, of St. Asaph Forest, North Wales, sends us the poem below. We believe it may be seen prominently displayed in a Continental forest. We ought to know which forest and we should know the poet. But we don't, and perhaps readers can enlighten us.

TO THE WAYFARER

Ye who pass by and would raise your hand against me, hearken ere
you harm me.
I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights, the
friendly shade screening
You from summer sun, and my fruits are refreshing draughts, quenching
your thirst as you journey on.
I am the beam that holds your house, the board of your table, the bed on
Which you lie, the timber that builds your boat.
I am the handle of your hoe, the door of your homestead, the wood of
Your cradle, and the shell of your coffin.
I am the bread of kindness and the flower of beauty.
Ye who pass by, listen to my prayer: harm me not.

*DOWN IN THE MINE

A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR OUR EDINBURGH STAFF

the 720 ft. shaft of the Woolmet Colliery, Portobello, Midlothian, to see for themselves how coal is raised.

TWENTY-FIVE MEMBERS of the staff of the Scottish Directorate Office, Edinburgh, including eight ladies, were recently guests of the National Coal Board. Suitably attired and equipped with helmets and lamps, they descended

They toured the workings in two parties. A walk of a mile and a quarter, down varying gradients, and during which they were at times bent almost double, brought them to a coal seam which will eventually be worked some 1,000 feet below ground level. Then followed a "Commando Course" crawl along the three-foot coal face for a distance of about 100 yards. After two hours the parties returned to the pit shaft, wet kneed, dirty and much more appreciative of the hitherto despised "nutty slack".

The pithead baths and canteen facilities were welcomed after the somewhat strenuous evening.

Staff of the same office have obtained a "new angle" on newspapers by visiting the offices of the Scottish Daily Mail.

One imagines a newspaper office as nothing but hustle and bustle (writes our correspondent). But that must be the Hollywood version,

for we found everything most orderly and peaceful in the precincts of the Mail offices. In fact, looking in on the Night Editor and his staff one encountered calm and cups of tea. But behind the facade a great deal was moving, as we discovered during the two-hour tour of all sections from the wire room, in which news is received, to the actual printing machines. On leaving, each of us was presented with a free copy of the next morning's Daily Mail.

**NATURE NOTES

BATS IN MID WINTER

HEAD FORESTER G. F. BEASLEY, of Kielder, North East England, records an interesting little experience.

"At about two o'clock the other afternoon", he says, "I saw, near Kielder Castle, what appeared to be a queer bird. On closer inspection I found it to be a bat. The weather was very mild, rather dull and damp, with an air temperature of about 52 degrees, and many gnats were flying about. Later the same afternoon, near Ravenshill, about a mile from the Castle, I saw another bat fluttering around, apparently catching gnats.

"Although it may not be a rare occurrence in the South and South West of England, it was decidedly uncommon for bats to be seen at Kielder in daylight and in mid winter. I wonder if anyone noticed a similar happening elsewhere?"

Now for another piece of news. A white squirrel, with pink eyes, has been shot at Gravetye Forest, South East England, the second in 16 years. In which other forests has such an oddity been encountered?

Finally, the story of the good Samaritans. Returning to the office of the Welsh Directorate, Aberystwyth, the other day, Clerical Officer A. R. BURGESS noticed a sea-bird floundering on the beach. He caught it and discovered that its wings and tail were badly coated with oil. Subsequently Executive officer H. J. POPE identified it as a razorbill, and handed it over to the local R.S.P.C.A. inspector.

**TRANSFERS

A STAFF MOVEMENT not previously recorded was the secondment of Head Forester J. LOMAS, formerly of Coed-y-Brenin, North Wales, for duty with the Liverpool Corporation at the Lake Vyrnwy joint afforestation scheme.

"As a point of interest", says Head Forester Lomas, "I have now been with the Forestry Commission for more than 32 years, 30 years being spent as a supervisor in the one Conservancy. This may represent a record".

The following transfers have been notified to Headquarters: District Officers P. J. LANGLEY from Bellingham, NE(E), to York, NE(E); B. WALBANK from Aberystwyth to Gwydyr, N(W); J. H. JAMES from Monmouth, S(W), to Tintern, S(W). Foresters G. A. SHARP from Kershope, NW(E), to York; J. R. A. PRATER from Kilcoy, N(S), to Clack Liath, N(S); T. A. JANE from Lydford, SW(E), to Bruton, SW(E); A. A. C. SIMPSON from Strathyre, W(S), to Saddell, W(S); D. M. ROSS from Kessock, N(S), to Kilcoy; D. F. D. BLACK from North Strome, N(S), to Kessock; R. S. BROWN from Longart, N(S), to North Strome; A. MACKENZIE from Slatterdale, N(S), to Longart; D. H. WALSH from Shifnal, NW(E), to Grizedale, NW(E); P. P. AWBERY from Bedgebury, SE(E), to Maresfield, SE(E).

Foremen R. M. EDWARD from Wauchope, S(S), to Brownmoor, S(S); D. K. FRASER from Research, Tulliallan, to Research, Bush Nursery; J. T. STUDLEY from St. Gwynno, S(W), to Llanddowror, S(W); J. COOPER from Mildmay, SE(E), to Southwater, SE(E). Executive Officer H. P. WILBRAHAM from D(E) to Headquarters. Newcomers are: District Officers R. M. HEWITT to Dean; D. R. JOHNSTON and D. J. COOPER to SE(E); J. N. KENNEDY to E(E); R. LINES to Research; J. R. FLETCHER to NW(E).

Executive Officer Miss M. R. ARMSTRONG to Headquarters. Clerical Officers D. E. HINDE to N(W); Mrs. M. A. LEWIS to SW(E).

The following have returned from H.M. Forces: Executive Officers K. W. CARTER to D(E); E. G. PARKER to NE(E). Clerical Officers C. W. SIMMONDS to Headquarters; E. J. CARTER to E(E).

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