

AURORA SURVEY

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

THOSE OF YOU who have watched the long white or green or red streamers of the Aurora Borealis darting out from the north like searchlight beams, or have seen the silently waving curtains that stretch at times right across the dark vault of the sky, cannot have failed to be interested. Many will have speculated as to the nature and cause of these mysterious forms and colours.

Here, then, is news of a scientific investigation that will intrigue some of our readers, particularly those who live in the Scottish Highlands and who may thus be able to give especially valuable help to the project.

But first, a word or two about the Northern Lights, which bear an expressive Latin name which means "Northern Dawn". Measurements have shown that the auroral light is produced in the very rarefied air of the atmosphere at heights of between 60 and 100 miles - exceptional heights of as low as 40 and as high as 600 miles have been reported. Though the details of the processes are as yet by no means fully understood, there is ample evidence that the effects are produced by interaction with the atmospheric gases of streams of fast-moving particles ejected from the sun.

Now it is believed that a closer study of this phenomenon, particularly on the comparatively rare occasions when it moves southwards from its usual location, will yield much of scientific value and general interest. The most satisfactory method of collecting the required information about the occurrence of aurora is by straightforward visual observation, which for some years has been made by research workers at Edinburgh University and also by members of the British Astronomical Association. But expansion of the work was obviously desirable and last year simple forms for the recording of observations were distributed throughout Britain, so that there are now about 100 land observers, including at least one Forester (Research Forester B. G. HOWLAND), and more are wanted.

For the benefit of readers who may wish to volunteer as observers we would point out that no experience is needed and very little work is involved in making and recording the night sky observations that are required. Nor is there any expense, because postage paid reply labels are supplied for the monthly return of completed forms to Edinburgh. To quote from the instructions given on the form, "All reliable information, even if only for very brief periods on a few nights of the month, is useful and should be sent in." Anyone who is interested, therefore, particularly if stationed in a part of Scotland where they are away from the glare of town lighting, is invited to write for sample forms and reply labels to the Aurora Survey, University Natural Philosophy Department, Drummond Street, Edinburgh 8.

**AFTER THE GREAT FLOODS

LASTING DAMAGE TO TREES

ONE OF OUR Headquarters staff, who spent his holidays at an East Coast resort, tells us he was surprised to see the lasting effects on the soil of the great sea floods that swept inland on the night of 31st January.

At this particular point the tide destroyed a stretch of promenade and inundated a public park. The grass, in consequence, was parched and withered, and the cricket pitch ruined; tough shrubs like gorse and brambles were killed outright; the level to which the floods came was clearly marked by dead foliage. Already, in one season, plants that delight in salty soils, such as the Annual Sea Blite, Suaeda fruticosa, had sprung up.

Most remarkable, however, was the damage to tall trees; not only Lombardy poplars, but elms and sycamores - trees very resistant to sea winds - had suffered sadly through having salt water at their roots; their crowns had died back and they were having a struggle to maintain any foliage at all. We should like to hear from any of our readers who have observed similar damage to forest trees in the flood areas.

**THEY "DIALLED 999"

WHEN IN TROUBLE IN THE FOREST

FOR TWO YEARS Mobile Mechanist NICHOL, of North West England, used a van with the number FC 999. As was only to be expected, "Dial 999" became the catchphrase of those in trouble with their vehicles in the forest, and the Mechanist was often to be seen

with his head under a bonnet and with the quaintly numbered van, containing repair equipment, standing alongside.

A numerical coincidence arose in North West England through the allocation to the Conservancy engineers of an old motor bus bearing the type number E5 - this, of course, being the head of account under which the Engineer Branch operates. Incidentally, the bus in question is one of a number of vintage vehicles obtained from Crossville Motor Services, of Chester, and passed over to the North West Conservancy for use as mobile offices by the people engaged on road construction, for the transport of workers and, suitably converted, as living quarters. One of these buses was used to convey a total of 100 visitors to Thornthwaite, when that forest was thrown open to the public to commemorate the Festival of Britain.

These references to transport prompt us to ask whether readers have noticed any unusual or amusing sequences of letters on number-plates. In Wales, for example, it seems oddly appropriate that LYN (a frequently encountered Christian name) is often to be seen.

**NOW - 3-D FOREST PHOTOGRAPHY!

AS PHOTOGRAPHERS capable at best of operating a simple box camera on the "press the button and hope for the best" principle, we confess that the following is a little over our heads. But we know that our readers include some photographers of no mean ability and they may well be interested in the following note from District Officer M. LONG, of North Scotland. He writes:

"I should like to pass on a 3-D tip to those who take photographs as technical illustrations or even as holiday snaps. The principle is to take a photograph and then move to the right and take another of the same subject; the prints should then be viewed under a stereoscope which, of course, is a holder for two short focal length lenses.

"The distance between camera positions varies according to the distance of the subject from the camera. As a very rough guide:

Distance to subject: Up to 10' 10'-25' 25'-300'

Camera positions: 3" - 6" 6" - 1' 1' - 3'

Views of half a mile require up to 15' between camera positions.

It should be noted that the print obtained from the photograph taken in the left position must be placed under the left eye when viewing under the stereoscope.

(Laymen though we are in matters photographic, on reflection the foregoing seems to have possibilities. We hope, however, it will not lead to our having to make a free issue of stereoscopes with future technical publications! - Editor).

THE LATE EX-FORESTER HENDRIE

A PICTURESQUE CHARACTER"

Mr. J. G. WILLIAMSON, Deputy Surveyor, The Dean.

WE RECENTLY announced the death of ex-Forester T. F. HENDRIE, formerly of Thetford and Swaffham forests, East England. The following appreciation comes from

"It is a sad thought," he writes, "that never again will this redoubtable Forester be seen wheeling his 'bike' (he never seemed to ride it) along the lanes of Thetford Chase. I first met him when he was in his prime and I was a raw and inquisitive District Officer: after a week or two of wary fencing I soon realised that here was a man from whom I could learn and he, I think, gradually came to consider me as not quite as intolerable as newly hatched District Officers can be. At least, I like to think that, because over the years I came to love and respect this grand old character. Success in the worldly sense perhaps did not come his way but to me character, not success, is the mark of greatness and "Old Hendrie" was known for his picturesque character far and wide in the Norfolk countryside.

"Not only could he train District Officers but he had a wonderful reputation for training dogs, especially of the lurcher breed, and Forest Lodge, Swaffham, saw a succession of tykes of every description.

"Paradoxically, he combined a gift for philosophy with a fairly forceful nature, and many a cup of tea have I enjoyed after a

day in the woods, with the old man laying down the law and Mrs. Hendrie, without who's strength he would have been lost, keeping a watchful eye on him to see that he did not become too obstreperous. A happier family circle would have been hard to find; Forester and Mrs. Hendrie raised seven children, all of whom are doing well in their respective spheres, four sons having followed in their father's footsteps.

"I have not dwelt on the various phases of Forester Hendrie's career, but as one of the older generations of foresters he was instrumental in pioneering some of our earlier forests. He lived a full life, enjoying every minute of it, and nothing would have pleased him more than to know he was to become almost 'legendary', one whose name and exploits will come to mind wherever foresters yarn together."

** TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

Divisional Officer H.A. MAXWELL from Aberdeen to Glasgow. District Officer R.A. PULLINGER from Woking to Lyndhurst. Foresters J.H. THOMAS from Tintern, S(W), to Giedd, S(W); N.L. FOWLER from Kielder, NE(E), to Ray, NE(E); R. MONTATT from Research, Bin Forest, to Research, Auchenblae.

Foremen E.R. IRONS from Dunwich, E(E), to Swaffham, E(E); J.S. WATSON from Dalbeattie, S(S), to Ae, S(S); E.T. JONES from Brechfa, S(W), to Penllergaer, S(W); G.J. PARKER from Morangie, N(S), to Oyckell, N(S); F.G. THURLOW from Sedgemoor, SW(E), to Dunster, SE(E).

Executive Officer Miss E.A. TODD from H.Q., to Cambridge. Clerical Officers J. FIFE from H.Q., to Glasgow; Miss C.A. CHAPMAN from Dean to Cardiff; D.E. HINDE from Shrewsbury to Chester.

Newcomers are: Executive Officer H.O. WAGG to H.Q. Clerical Officers B.W. OLIVER to NW(E); Miss J.F. JENNINGS to SE(E); J.A. HOWELL to S(W); W.P. THOMAS and L.H. LLOYD to SW(E).

** MERITS (?) OF A FOREMAN

"WHAT A MAN. SO HELP HIM"

THE FOLLOWING reaches us from Head Forester R. FRISER, of North Wales. We apologise for the fact that owing to lack of space we have to present it to you in two parts, so to speak.

THE FOREMAN

If he is pleasant, he is too familiar,
If he is sober-faced, he is a sour puss.
If he is young, he doesn't know anything,
If he's aged, he's an old stiff.
If he goes to church he is a hypocrite,
If he doesn't, he's a heathen.
If he drinks, he is an old souse,
If he doesn't, he's a tight wad.
If he talks to everybody, he is a gossip,
If he doesn't, he's stuck up.
If he insists that rules be kept, he
is too particular,
If he doesn't, he's careless.

If he looks around, he is snooping,
If he doesn't, he's unobservant.
If he tries to settle all complaints,
he needs the wisdom of Solomon,
If he worries about them, he'll soon
be crazy.
He should have the patience of Job,
The skin of a rhinoceros, the cunning
Of a fox, the courage of a lion,
Be as blind as a bat, and as silent
as the sphinx.
What a man. So help him.

** CHEAPEST FORESTS IN THE COUNTRY

FARTHING WOOD: FOURPENNY PLANTATION

localities to be found in the East England Conservancy:

Sovereigns; New Delight; Stockings; Dumb Bob Spinney; Christmas Common; Ladies' Arbour.

Until hearing of the aforementioned Farthing Wood we thought the cheapest forest in the country was Fourpenny Plantation, which is in private ownership near Dornoch, Sutherland, in the North Scotland Conservancy.

Our correspondent in the North East England Conservancy says: "We have a Low Paradise, as well as the High Paradise

mentioned in The Slasher in June. And we have recently acquired two Hell Holes - one at Kilburn, near the White Horse, and the other at Beamish, in Co. Durham."

District Officer W.G. ROBERTS reminds us that Wern Gay, Hope's Wood and Hangman's Acre, mentioned in a previous issue as being "near Radnor Forest", are actually part of Mortimer Forest, in the North West England Conservancy. Hangman's Acre, adds Mr. Roberts, was planted in 1940 and, for its age, carries one of the best Japanese larch stands in the country; the Research Branch class it for quality as a "Super 1" thinning plot.

**** 25 EXHIBITS: 21 PRIZES**

FORESTER'S SUCCESS AT FLOWER SHOW

erable success at the annual flower show at Skye, for with 25 exhibits he won 17 first prizes and four second prizes; he also received the Amateur Medal and two diplomas and tied for a cup with the gardener at Dunvegan Castle, who is, of course, a professional.

Mr. G.J. MORLEY, an Executive Officer at Dumfries, recently followed up last year's successes at the Castle-Douglas Horticultural Show by gaining three first prizes with three entries of chrysanthemums, and also won the Coronation Souvenir Prize for the best vase of these flowers.

**** ON SHOOTING AND USING FIELD-GLASSES**

A. USEFUL NEW BOOKLET

Trust for Ornithology, who have sent us a copy for review.

SILVICULTURE OR HORTICULTURE. Some of our staff can give a good account of themselves at either. For example, Forester C. MACDONALD, of Glenbrittle, had consid-

erable success at the annual flower show at Skye, for with 25 exhibits he won 17 first prizes and four second prizes; he also received the Amateur Medal and two diplomas and tied for a cup with the gardener at Dunvegan Castle, who is, of course, a professional.

Mr. G.J. MORLEY, an Executive Officer at Dumfries, recently followed up last year's successes at the Castle-Douglas Horticultural Show by gaining three first prizes with three entries of chrysanthemums, and also won the Coronation Souvenir Prize for the best vase of these flowers.

SOME USEFUL HINTS on purchasing field-glasses and making the best use of them are contained in the revised edition of a little booklet published by the British

Much of the information will already be known to Forest Officers and field staff to whom binoculars are probably almost as indispensable as a slasher. But those of us who make use of field-glasses only at rare intervals, or are considering purchase, would do well to peruse this booklet, especially if the intention is to take up bird-watching. It might be thought, states the booklet, that the higher the magnification the better; but, for bird-watching in particular, this is not so. As a rule, when the magnification is increased the field of view and light value are decreased. It must be remembered also that the high powers not only magnify the size of the image but the natural shake of one's hands. It is easy to observe this shake by focussing on a star or a street lamp at night, and it is unwise to buy a glass stronger than one can hold steadily on the target.

For general purposes, says the booklet, magnifications of 6x, 7x, 8x or 9x are all reasonable; 6x is a little low, but a first rate 6x is much better than a more powerful glass of lower quality, and if money must be saved then the former should be bought.

The booklet debates a problem of concern to most of us - whether we should purchase new or second-hand glasses. There are obviously many advantages in purchasing new, but if money is the difficulty, then second-hand glasses may usually be bought with confidence provided they are by reputable makers. "For those of limited means," says the booklet, "it is possible to buy really good second-hand, over-hauled, 6x 30 eye-piece focussing glasses for about £8".

In addition to detailed guidance on what to buy in the way of field glasses and how to get the maximum enjoyment from them, the booklet also gives some valuable tips on their care and protection - even to advising the reader as to the best means of thwarting the would-be thief at crowded railway stations. All in all, an excellent shilling's worth, obtainable from the Trust, at 2, King Edward Street, Oxford. The title is "How to Choose and Use Field Glasses".

**** MORE PROUD PARENTS**

birth of a son; and to District Officer G.G. STEWART, South Scotland, and Mrs. Stewart on the birth of a daughter.

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. P. MERKER, Clerical Officer, Dumfries, and Mrs. Merker, on the

**** TAILPIECE**

EXTRACT from a National daily newspaper: "The shilling being given for every grey squirrel tail is having its effect on rural economy. A farm-worker came into a Surrey pub this week, planted six tails down, and said to the barmaid: 'Pint of old and mild, 20 cigarettes, and keep the change for yourself!'"