

THE BIRTHDAY HONOURS

AWARDS FOR CHIEF CLERK AND
HEAD FORESTER

IT WAS WITH much pleasure that we heard that two of our colleagues had received well-deserved mention in the recent Birthday Honours List. But for the fact that an effort (albeit unsuccessful) was made last month to produce The Slasher rather earlier than usual the news would, of course, have been recorded before this.

The colleagues concerned are Mr. E. J. S. HINDS, Chief Clerk in the Office of Director, England, and Head Forester A. E. WALKER, of The Dean, who received an O.B.E. and B.E.M. respectively. Mr. Hinds started his Civil Service career in 1913, when he became a Boy Clerk with the Office of Woods. He was on military service from 1916 to 1919, when, "on loan" from the Office of Woods, he joined the Forestry Commission. He officially transferred to the Department in 1924, and the whole of his service has been divided between the offices of the Assistant Commissioner for England and Wales and the Director for England.

Head Forester Walker has been in The Dean throughout his forestry career, which began with the Office of Woods as long ago as 1906.

Incidentally, some of our junior staff may wonder what is done by the Department to mark the birthday of the reigning Sovereign. The observance is, in fact, very simple, for it merely involves the display on the notice board at Headquarters of a copy of the message sent to the Sovereign by SIR EDWARD BRIDGES, Head of the Civil Service. Be that as it may, we know that our staff throughout the Commission is at one in endorsing the good wishes and loyal greetings that are sent each year to Buckingham Palace.

ANOTHER FOREST PARK OPENED

CEREMONY IN THE RAIN

THE QUEEN ELIZABETH National Forest Park, which covers more than 41,000 acres, of which about half will eventually be planted, was officially named last month. The Forest Park, which is the fourth to be formed in Scotland, centres on Aberfoyle, and extends from Loch Venachar and the headwaters of the Forth over the summit of Ben Lomond to the shores of romantic Loch Lomond. Camping facilities are to be established as soon as possible.

The opening ceremony was performed by Mr. JAMES STUART, Secretary of State for Scotland, before about 100 people who scorned the elements to gather on the rain-drenched hillside above Aberfoyle. Mr. Stuart said he had no doubt that "this great Forest Park" would be widely used, for it provided an unequalled opportunity in the townsman's rediscovery of the countryside.

In introducing Mr. Stuart, our Chairman, LORD RADNOR, said it was the settled policy of the Commissioners to establish National Forest Parks and appealed to the public, in using the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park, to take all precautions against the starting of fires and to avoid leaving litter. MAJOR JOHN STIRLING of FAIREURN, one of the Scottish Commissioners, proposed a vote of thanks to the Secretary of State and Lord Radnor. Among those representing the Commission were the Director General, Mr. A. H. GOSLING; Director, Scotland, Mr. A. H. H. ROSS; the Conservator for West Scotland, Mr. J. E. JAMES; Mr. J. R. THOM; and Divisional Officer H. A. MAXWELL. And last, but by no means least, there was Mr. ALEC MARSHALL, of the Engineer Stores Section of the Glasgow Office, a former Pipe Major of the Highland Light Infantry, who enchanted the company with the skirl of pipes and played (appropriately enough, among other tunes) "Land Under Trees" and "Mist Over the Mountains"; and Head Forester D. ROSS, of Aohray, who put in a lot of hard work in the way of local organisation.

A short distance from the site of the ceremony was to be seen the simple cairn on which a plaque records the naming of the Forest Park to commemorate the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

THE PEEBLES MARCH RIDING

AN OLD SCOTTISH CUSTOM

WE WERE INTRIGUED, a week or two ago, to read on a poster in an Edinburgh hotel of the advent of the Peebles March Riding and Biltane Queen Festival.

This was something new to us as Southerners, so we made further enquiry about this strangely named event, and were still more intrigued to learn that a local Forestry Commission employee, DAVID B. WRIGHT, had been chosen as this year's Peebles Cornet, one of the leading roles.

The history of the event, we are told by the Secretary of the Festival, dates back to the time when Peebles inspired King James, the Poet King of Scotland, to write "Peblis to the Play". In those days the powerful Lairds of Upper Tweed frequently descended on Peebles on pilfering expeditions, so that it became the custom for the townsfolk each year to elect a Cornet, whose duty, with his followers, was to ride the Peebles boundaries and drive out any who had wrongly acquired land belonging to the Burgh. In the Middle Ages the rural sports on Beltane Day at Peebles were famous and large crowds of people flocked into the town each year; this was noted by the clergy, who started a religious revival to coincide with the Beltane Festival, so that soon people came to Peebles for a double purpose - as a religious pilgrimage and to witness the games.

The revival of the ancient custom of Riding the Marches took place in 1897 and the ceremony of crowning the Beltane Queen followed two years later. Nowadays the Festival opens with an open-air service in the grounds of the Old Cross Kirk and is attended by the Provost, magistrates, councillors and the Cornet and his Right and Left Hand Supporters, the Cornet-Elect and other principals, all of whom are counselled to carry out their duties in a worthy and proper manner. Early in the week there are children's races, and in mid-week comes the ceremonial part of the celebrations, for on the steps of the Old Parish Church the Cornet is installed, receiving his sash of office and the Burgh Standard, to be returned after 12 months "unstained, untarnished and unsullied". The Cornet's Lass also receives a sash and "busses the Cornet's colours" by pinning a ribbon on the standard. Then follows the Riding of the Marches, with all its ceremony, to be followed by the dancing in the High Street of the Cornet's Reel, to the music of a full pipe band.

Later in the week are held the Beltane Concert, with the Cornet as Chairman, and the fancy dress parade, and then, on the Saturday, comes the big day for the Beltane Queen, who is crowned on the steps of the Old Parish Church and supported by several hundred schoolchildren. A parade follows and precedes the laying by the principals of wreaths on the local war memorial. In the afternoon there are professional sports (among which, this year, we noted from the poster in Edinburgh, was a footsprint with £60 in prize money).

"It may be of interest," writes the Secretary, "that during the years the Forester Training School was at Glentress the students never failed to enter a very fine tableau in our parade, and this will be missed now that the school has moved away." (The school recently removed to new premises at Faskally, Pitlochry.)

NEWS FROM ABERYSTWYTH

OVER TO WALES, to the Headquarters of the Welsh Directorate at Aberystwyth, where the office team is hopeful of a successful cricket season. After an initial and narrow defeat by the University College staff, five games in a row were won; recently the position was that K. ROSCOE, with an average of 71, had batted in all six games and been unbeaten four times. Bowling honours had been more evenly distributed, with J. S. THREADGILL'S devastating spell, in a league match against Y.M.C.A., being worthy of special mention. He bowled eight overs at a cost of 24 runs, but his figures for his last five overs were: maiden overs 3; runs 4; wickets 5. The season's officials are: Chairman F. L. G. EDWARDS; Secretary K. ROSCOE; and Treasurer D. FISHER.

The new Director for Wales, Mr. G. B. RYLE, was recently welcomed by the office staff at an afternoon tea, organised by the ladies' section of the office Entertainment Committee. Mr. Ryle was introduced by Mr. E. R. LEWIS, the Chief Clerk.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN JUNE

OUR STAFF in Carlisle were puzzled the other day when they received an urgent request for the supply of a Christmas tree. True, the weather was not all that might be desired, but it was far from wintry. However, the mystery was soon solved - the tree was wanted as a "prop" in the play "The Man Who Came to Dinner", which was being staged locally, and in which the second act takes place on Christmas Day. Incidentally, the distinction of supplying the tree went to Inglewood Forest.

GOLF IN SCOTLAND

AND SOMETHING ABOUT SEANÉED

THE ANNUAL outing of the Scottish Directorate Office Golf Club was held at Aberdour last month; a handicap competition took place, the best nett score being a 67 by J. W. CAIE. The following week a match was played against the East Conservancy Office staff at Alyth, Perthshire, and (writes our correspondent) although the result is shrouded in mystery an enjoyable day was spent by all.

The attention of our readers, by the way, is drawn to the fact that all Commission staff are eligible to compete in the Club's annual autumn competition for the Fotheringham Cup. The competition, this year, is being held at the Kilspindie course, Aberlady, East Lothian, on Monday, 27th September, and entries will be welcomed. Further details may be obtained from the honorary secretary, Mr. A. CAMPBELL, Forestry Commission, 28, Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh.

Fifteen members of the Directorate staff spent an interesting evening inspecting the laboratories and workshop of the Institute of Seaweed Research at Inveresk, near Edinburgh. They were shown the "barges" used in cutting and gathering the seaweed from the seabed (a process which is still largely experimental) and the processes the harvested "crop" go through in order that valuable products may be extracted. "Most of us," writes our correspondent, "realised that iodine came from seaweed and that the latter makes an excellent fertiliser, but it was an eyeopener to see seaweed sausage-skins and cocktail cherries made entirely from seaweed, and to encounter sweets, cattle foods, pudding mixtures and many other useful commodities in the manufacture of which seaweed plays a part".

***A LETTER FROM WENDY

OLD OAKS IN THE DEAN

A DELIGHTFUL letter was received by the Deputy Surveyor The Dean (Mr. R. G. SANZEN-BAKER). This, and his reply, are given herewith and tell their own interesting little story.

Plump Hill School,
Mitcheldean,
Glos.

Dear Sir,

Please could you tell us the ages of the oldest oak trees in the Forest of Dean? We had to write an essay on trees in our district, and one girl asked this question. We are very keen on Nature Study. We have a guinea pig, a tame wild rabbit, and two dormice brought by Graham Trigg.

I must close now because of dinner.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Barrington

Dear Wendy,

Thank you very much for your letter asking me about the ages of the oldest oak trees in the Forest of Dean. As far as we know these are about 275 years old and were planted about 1680 by order of King Charles II. At that time the King was very worried because he could not find enough oak timber to build his ships for the Royal Navy, so he decided to plant thousands of oak seedlings. Most of the big old oak trees about the Forest date from that time.

There are probably some older oak trees in the Highmeadow Woods, around about 300 years old. But the oldest oak tree of all in the neighbourhood is the "Newland Oak". This tree is completely hollow and only just alive. It is said to be the same tree as one mentioned in the Domesday Book, but I do not think it can be so old as that. Since we cannot count the annual rings, we shall never know the answer, but I should say it is 700 to 800 years old. It is 45 feet in circumference.

I am glad that you are keen on nature study and have lots of pets, it is great fun.

Yours sincerely,

R. G. Sanzen-Baker

***TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

District Officer C. D. BEGLEY from Carlisle, NW(E), to D(R.& E.), London. Foresters E. J. TUCKER from Sherwood, NW(E), to Kinver, NW(E); J. H. ROYLE from Gwydyr, N(W), to Cynwyd, N(W); R. H. ROBERTS from Cynwyd to Gwydyr; P. BUTTERWORTH from Hafren, N(W), to Radnor, N(W). Foremen A. A. SMITH-JONES from Dovey, N(W), to Commins Coch, N(W); D. J. MORRIS from Hafren to Brynmawr, N(W); H. MACKAY from Glengarry, N(S), to Dunnet, N(S); E. C. C. GARDNER from Dovey, to Coed-y-Brenin, N(W).

Accountant K. J. HARTON from Bristol to Headquarters. Shorthand Typist Miss V. A. D. ARCHIBALD from Aberdeen to H.Q. Clerk of Works J. A. COMIE from Glenurquhart, N(S), to South Strone, N(S). Newcomers are: Higher Executive Officer A. G. BURNETT to D(S). Clerical Officers Miss A. A. TAYLOR and A. MACLEOD to N(S); Miss C. M. DAVIES to NW(E); B. HOPKINS to Research. Paperkeeper A. S. BAYLEY to S(W).

**KEEPING OF TROPICAL FISH

SOME MORE HINTS FOR BEGINNERS

LAST MONTH, writes our correspondent, I undertook to devote some future notes to the method of heating the tank, and to the establishment of suitable water plants. There are several methods of heating the water of a miniature aquarium, but by far the most trouble-free is the use of electricity, and a thermostatically controlled, 75 watt immersion heater can be obtained at a cost of between 15s. and £1. This, it will be found, will maintain the water in a 24 ins. x 12 ins. x 12 ins. tank at the right temperature (75-77 degrees) all the year round. (It is assumed, of course, that the reader would normally wish to keep the tank in a reasonably warm room, otherwise a heater of higher wattage would be necessary.) The weekly cost of heating a tank of the aforementioned size would be sixpence or so, according to local electricity charges. To keep a check on the temperature of the water it is absolutely essential to acquire a floating thermometer, which can be obtained for 5s. - 7s. 6d.

A further tip of a general character is that the top of the aquarium should be covered with stout, clear glass; this will obviously lessen evaporation and check any dissipation of heat and has the further virtue that it will prevent any fish from committing suicide by leaping out of the water on to the floor. This covering glass should not be too close fitting, of course, or air will be prevented from entering the tank.

As soon as the position of the aquarium has been decided upon and the heating is ready for operation the bottom of the tank should be prepared for plant life. It will be found that the plants thrive best in coarse, washed sand and fine washed gravel; the former should be placed in the tank to a depth of about 2½ to 3 inches at the rear, sloping down to half an inch at the front; the whole should then be lightly covered with gravel. Pieces of rock, natural or coloured (which can be bought quite cheaply) should then be distributed on the "floor"; the tank is then ready for planting.

In the choice of plants, first consideration should be given to those that produce the most oxygen, and the following are recommended:

Vallisneria spiralis, commonly known as Italian water weed, or tape grass. This has narrow, ribbon-like leaves, coloured bright green. The crown of the plant should not be pushed below the surface of the sand. The plant multiplies quickly by throwing out strawberry-like runners, each of which in turn produces a small plant. These may be detached and planted elsewhere.

Sagittaria natans, another grass-like plant, from North America. It tends to grow "fountain-style", that is with the long leaves falling outwards and downwards in a graceful curve.

Elodea densa, a fast-growing plant with a much-branching stem thickly clothed with whorls of narrow, grass-like foliage. Pieces of the stem, pushed into the sand, will quickly take root. A native of the Argentine.

Three or four shillings-worth of these plants will be ample to stock a tank of the aforementioned size.

**PERSONAL

CONGRATULATIONS to District Officer M. R. W. WILLIAMS, Edinburgh, on his recent marriage. He received a tea trolley from his colleagues, the presentation being made by the Director for Scotland, Mr. A. H. H. ROSS. To Miss PAMELA DUNN, C.O. at Shrewsbury, now engaged to Mr. JOHN TARRANT, E.O. at Cardiff; to Mr. M. GUBBY, E.O., H.Q. Audit Section, on his engagement to Miss R. JONES, Shorthand Typist, Aberystwyth office; to Miss M. P. JONES, C.O., Aberystwyth, on her engagement to Mr. A. H. JONES, of Llanbedrog; to District Officer B. GRABASKEY, Aberystwyth, and Mrs. Grabaskey, on the birth of a son; and to Messenger J. RAFTREE, Aberystwyth, and Mrs. Raftree, also on the birth of a son.

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