

SPOTLIGHTING THE HOLLY

SOME FACTS ABOUT A WELL LOVED
TREE

DECEMBER AGAIN, and time for a seasonal note or two. Soon we shall all be gladdened (we hope!) by the bright scarlet berries of the holly, set off by the lustrous dark green foliage - but how many of us have ever paused to wonder what the holly's flowers look like? They are, in fact, small and inconspicuous, and pass unnoticed amid the wealth of other blossom when it opens in May. On some trees the flowers are purely male, or purely female. "Male" trees, of course, bear no berries, nor do hollies that are always kept closely clipped. Only the lower branches of the common holly bear spiny leaves; higher up, where there is no danger from browsing animals, the leaves are spineless!

Nurserymen's varieties of holly are quite numerous. They are increased by grafting, because holly does not grow readily from cuttings. You can grow holly with yellow, orange, white, or even black berries. You may have your leaves variegated with white, yellow or red. If you are fond of prickles, you can cultivate the remarkable hedgehog holly, which has spikes all over its leaves, and is just the right sort for an "apple-pie" bed.

Holly wood is dead white, hard, heavy and close grained. It is used for the white squares in draught boards; and also, when dyed black, for the black ones! It can be used in the manufacture of mathematical instruments, and fine engraving blocks, and it is the best timber known for fishermen's net-making needles. Birdlime, a sticky substance once widely used in catching small birds, was made by scraping off holly bark and boiling a decoction; its use is now illegal. Holly is a first-rate firewood; you can even burn it green, just after the tree has been felled.

You can grow holly from seed, but it won't come up next spring if you sow the berries this Christmas. A little patience is needed; store the berries in moist sand until the spring of 1956, and they ought to do nicely! Holly is a truly native tree and very plentiful in New Forest, where the annual harvest normally brings in a return of about £100 to the Commission. Occasionally holly reaches a height of fifty feet. Its old English name was holm and there are quite a few places - such as the Holmwood of Surrey - still called after it.

The "scientific" Latin name for holly is Ilex, but it isn't really the tree that the Romans called by that name, after all. That was an oak, the wellknown evergreen or holm oak - which goes to show how misleading science can be! And by the way, if anyone tells you that they have a holly tree that bears acorns, don't believe them. Many people mistake the holm oak for holly; it has the same sort of dark green, and evergreen, leaf. The Romans actually called their real holly aquifolium, which means "the tree with the sharp leaves".

**PINE LOOPER TAKES THE COUNT!

SUCCESS OF AERIAL SPRAYING

FROM our Entomologist, Dr. MYLES CROOKE, comes a note on the effect of the spraying against the Pine looper at Cannock Chase and Culbin forests. (The Slasher, September.)

"At both forests", he writes, "the treatment consisted of the application of 1 lb. of DDT in three gallons of spray per acre and appears to have been remarkably effective and to have resulted in an almost complete kill of the Pine looper caterpillars. Although we have been examining crown samples and making general inspections of the treated areas we have so far failed to find a single living larva left there.

"The effects of the poisoning were very rapid, and gave a quick 'knock-down'. The larvae were affected within ten minutes of being sprayed and commenced to spin down from the trees on silken threads; most were killed within 24 hours and the remainder died within about seven days after treatment. The actual 'kill' at the time of spraying was estimated by counting the dead caterpillars which fell on to trays on the ground. In the most heavily infested compartment at Cannock Chase the average kill per square yard worked out at 391 caterpillars - or, differently expressed, at just under two million per acre! One particular tray gave

a kill of 1,284 per square yard. When it is remembered that the acreage kill is an estimate, since a proportion of the dead caterpillars became caught up among the silk they spin and thus did not fall from the trees to the ground, the severity of the attack and the need for chemical control are more readily appreciated.

"The mortality in other areas was lower, being proportionate to the various densities of infestation. A final assessment of the effect of the treatment will be made this winter by pupal counting, and when this is done it should be possible to give a percentage mortality by comparing the 1954 counts with those of 1955."

***FORMER COLLEAGUE IN AMERICA

GIFTS FOR TV APPEARANCE

THERE is interesting news of the experiences of Mrs. MAIR JONES, who was formerly a member of the staff of the Cardiff office and is now, with her husband, in America. As missionaries, Mrs. Jones and her husband have travelled widely in the United States, holding evangelist meetings. When in Chicago they appeared in a TV programme and told of their adventures; in return they received numerous gifts for their two daughters, including two scholarships, suit-cases, pen and pencil sets, nylons, shoes and dresses. For herself, Mrs. Jones received a gold watch and portable typewriter.

Writing home, Mrs. Jones provides a shock for Welsh egotism (assuming, of course, such a shortcoming exists!). "So many people in America", she says, "ask us where Wales is and think it is adjacent to Lithuania." But the Welsh have a true champion in Mrs. Jones, who hastens to explain the importance and beauty of the Principality.

***ENGINEERS IN FORCE

A CONCENTRATION OF VEHICLES

ENGINEERS in the North Scotland Conservancy are busily engaged in constructing seven miles of road to connect a new acquisition at Glencripesdale, Argyllshire, with the nearest county road. We understand that there have been concentrated on this work three bulldozers, one excavator, one loader, nine tipper lorries, eight dumpers and two compressors. Is this the largest collection of vehicles yet assembled on one road project?

***THE MAMMOTH

OR THE 97-TON TREE

FROM time to time we have referred to exceptionally big trees, but has there been anything, anywhere, to equal the mammoth described in "The Manner of Raising, Ordering, and Improving Forest Trees", a book published in 1724? In the words of the writer:

"A Witch-Elm in Sir Walter Baggott's Park in the County of Stafford. Two Men five Days felling it. It lay forty Yards in Length. The Stool five Yards two Feet over. Fourteen Loads of Wood brake in the fall. Forty Eight Load in the Top. Eighty pair of Naves were made out of it. Eight Thousand six hundred and sixty Feet of Boards and Planks. It cost ten Pounds seventeen Shillings sawing. The whole Substance was conceived to be ninety seven Tons. It was felled in the Year 1674."

***MR. SQUIRREL MARRIED MISS NUTT

OUR REFERENCE in the past to unusual and in some cases singularly appropriate names of members of the staff prompted us to read a little feature in a well-known "country" journal. In this were mentioned the authentic cases of the head groom called Gallop and the under-groom named Trott; the butcher named Chew and the book-seller Read; Miss Trim, a Rochester hairdresser; Mr. Bunn the Baker; Mr. Cowmeadow, the dairyman; the gardener Rose and the chauffeur Horn; the farmers William Mutton and William Lamb; the greengrocer Squirrel who married a Miss Nutt; the monumental mason Graves; the reputable West of Ireland firm of solicitors, Argue and Phibbs; and Mr. Tugwell, the Bournemouth dentist.

All these may savour of the game "Happy Families", but there is no reason to doubt that these people really exist, or existed. Perhaps readers can tell us of other instances of close alliance between name and calling; in so doing we would welcome a note stating the location of the persons concerned.

***EDUCATIONAL VISITS

SEEING THE STARS

THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY on Calton Hill, Edinburgh, was visited recently by members of the Social Club of the Director, Scotland's office. Certainly these Scottish colleagues get around in their search for knowledge in wide variety!

During the visit the Director of the Observatory, Mr. N. G. Matthew, gave an interesting talk and illustrated his remarks with slides. It was not possible for all the party to look through the telescope, for the sky was cloudy; but some remained long enough to secure an enlightening glimpse at the stars "and", says our correspondent, "went away feeling very small and insignificant after being confronted with heavenly bodies whose light takes millions of years to reach the earth."

Members of the Research Staff at Alice Holt paid an educational visit to the Forest Products Research Laboratory at Princes Risborough and considered the most "spectacular" exhibits to be the examples of wood bending and the specimens of wood rot.

***MORE FOREST ANAGRAMS

ANSWERS to the forest anagrams which appeared in our October issue are as follows. (An Executive Officer at Headquarters, Mr. G. C. BEARD, claims to have solved them all in 23 minutes. We'll take his word for it.)

1. DALBERTIE, S(S);
2. CLASHINDARROCH, E(S);
3. CLOCHENOG, N(W);
4. ALICE HOLT, SE(E);
5. ALLERSTON, NE(E);
6. INVERLIEVER, W(S);
7. WATLINGTON, E(E);
8. NORTH STROME, N(S);
9. MICHAELSTON, S(W);
10. SHERWOOD, NW(E);
11. GARDINER, SW(E);
12. SHALFLEET, New Forest.

Here are this month's anagrams, submitted by Mr. D. TYRE, Clerical Officer at Woking:

1. FETCH A PAN;
2. DRAG AN ART;
3. RIDE OR COO;
4. ARE KNAVES;
5. NICE DRY BONE;
6. THE SNOB RIG;
7. SUCH AGAIN;
8. A DEAD SPAM;
9. GLADLANE;
10. SEARCH YE LADY;
11. LEVERCHIMED;
12. FEED OF SORTER.

***FREAK DAMAGE BY LIGHTNING

FOREST WORKERS' ESCAPE

NEWS of some freak damage caused by lightning comes from the East England Conservancy. It appears that at Thetford Chase a Corsican pine was struck, with the result that the roots were exposed in a crater nine feet long and three feet wide, and earth was thrown 20 feet up into the crowns of adjacent trees. Nearby trees which border an open field were also damaged and it is thought that the discharge may have run along parts of an old rusty fence which, although no longer in use, had not been reclaimed. Another hole in the ground was found some 150 yards from the tree which bore the brunt of the electrical "blitz". At the time of the incident several of our Forest Workers were sheltering close by in a hut and were badly shaken.

***AMENITY ASSOCIATION'S INTEREST IN FORESTRY

East England Conservancy.

GOOD RELATIONSHIP with the public is of paramount importance where our work is concerned and an exceptional example of this occurs in the North

For many years the Don Valley Rural Amenities Association has concerned itself with the maintenance of country custom and scenery in an area near Sheffield, and of late this body has been encouraged to take an increasing interest in the development of Wharfedale Forest. The Association has, in fact, allied itself closely to the Forestry Commission, for it sees in forestry an opportunity for real achievement in planned rural economy. Several members have been made Honorary Wardens of the forest and undertake fire patrol, while each summer a party visits a forest and is provided with tea. Then, to return the compliment, the Association annually entertains the Conservator and his staff at dinner.

***THE PRIVATE WAR

WATCH OUT, GREY SQUIRREL!

A PRIVATE WAR against the grey squirrel is being waged by Mr. H. G. SMITH, an Executive Officer in the Shrewsbury Office. "One afternoon," he writes, "I was surprised to see a grey squirrel in my orchard, for this particular pest is not as yet widespread in my part of the world. He lived only a short while and within an hour I had shot three more. The villagers thought a war had started - it had! Since that afternoon I have killed nearly 20 grey squirrels on my half acre and there are still one or two about. Seven, by the way, were shot through the open bedroom window. Nearly all the nuts went from my eight trees, but I had some good sport - and so did my dog, who was bitten through the nose but got free by dipping the squirrel in a nearby stream.

"My experience indicates a surprising new incidence of the grey squirrel, for two years ago none had been seen in my district of mid-Salop. I think my neighbours are now becoming aware of the menace, for I have had a number of enquiries as to how the shilling bonus may be claimed; I intend displaying some of the campaign posters in the district."

***INEQUALITIES IN ANIMAL AGES

WE HARDLY thought our recent paragraph on inequalities in animal ages would pass without comment. It will be recalled that the sparrow was credited with having an age span of 40 years, but - "nonsense," writes a reader, "the maximum age of a sparrow is only about four years." Then the life of a blackbird, which was given in our note as 18 years, is questioned; six years, it is stated, would be nearer the mark. We said, originally, that the whale lives for 500 years - not so, says another reader, it is more likely only a 100 years. Another point at issue is the life of a cat, which we gave as 20-30 years; this is disputed, a reader saying that very few cats survive beyond 15 years.

Will someone or other give us an authoritative statement?

***STRANGELY NAMED INN

YET another strangely named inn - "The Runt in Tun", to be seen in a Sussex village. Unfortunately, we don't know the precise situation, for this particular "pub" was spotted by a reader as he was driven by in a car.

The inference in the name, if any, may be that the "runt" (or weakling of the litter of pigs) was bought when in a "tun" (or barrel) and when, obviously, its imperfections were not visible - another version, in fact, of "buying a pig in a poke".

***CRICKET, OUT OF SEASON

THE TEST matches alone would provide an excuse for an out of season note on cricket but there is an additional reason for these few lines. A cricket enthusiast at Headquarters writes as follows: "I know that some Conservancy offices run their own cricket teams; it would, however, be of interest to many readers of The Slasher to know just what Conservancy or forest teams exist and how they fared last season. You may consider it a little late in the year to print such information, but news of a summer sport would serve to brighten these dismal winter days."

We shall be pleased to hear from the secretaries of any Commission cricket teams or clubs and will welcome a brief note stating how long these have existed and giving last season's achievements - that is, number of games played, won and lost, and details of any trophies won.

***PERSONAL and GENERAL

FORESTER H. JOHNSON, Wendover Woods, East England, played in the bowls competition run by the Tring Games Club and won the Sharman Freeman Cup.

Congratulations to District Officer S. MURRAY, Research, and Mrs. Murray, on the birth of a daughter.

Letter from the head teacher of a school in North East England: "We usually have a Christmas tree at our children's party in December. After the party the tree is wasted; I wondered, therefore, if it would be at all possible to hire one from you and have it replanted in the wood after the party".

***TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

Divisional Officer G. E. GODWIN from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury. District Officers R. E. PALLETT from Aberystwyth to Brecon, S(W); R. D. PINCHIN from Shrewsbury to Bala, N(W); T. I. W. BELL from Narberth, S(W), to Brecon, S(W); P. A. W. OVERELL from Aberystwyth to Llandrindod Wells. Foresters G. E. LAWSON from Swaffham, E(E), to Brandon Central Depot, E(E); R. PRITCHARD from Santon Downham, E(E), to Swaffham; J. J. HISLOP from Kielder, NE(E), to Harwood, NE(E); R. J. REID from Brechfa, S(W), to Gower, S(W); R. P. C. WOOLLARD from Swanton, E(E), to Thetford Chase, E(E). Foremen P. G. HARRISON from Beddgelert, N(W), to Penllyn, N(W); C. E. DANIEL from Clocaenog, N(W), to Coed-y-Coror, N(W); E. R. ROBSON from Research, Wykeham, to Research, Glentool; C. L. S. HARRISON from Radnor, N(W), to Aeron, N(W); F. H. DRAKE from Bedgebury, SE(E), to Alice Holt, SE(E); R. T. WHEELER from Harwood to Rothbury, NE(E); D. HOLDER from Rendlesham, E(E), to Swanton. Clerk of Works J. A. COWIE from South Strome, N(S), to Ardross, N(S).

Senior Professional Accountant K. J. WHARTON from Headquarters to Director, England.