

THE SLASHER

Forestry Commission News

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FUND FOR MR. JOHN MacINTOSH

DONATED TO BEREAVED FOREST WORKER

near Nairn. Subscribers included staff and Forest Workers throughout the Conservancy. A sum was sent from Headquarters for a wreath.

THE ANNUAL REPORT

HIGHEST EVER PLANTING

inasmuch as it permits easy reference to the most important figures concerning our operations in the Forest Year 1954.

READERS who require copies of the roneoed summary of the latest Annual Report are asked to make early application to the Information Officer at Headquarters. The document serves a useful purpose,

It is a matter for regret (though not despondency) that the Report records that the year under review would be remembered as marking the peak - for the time being - of the Commission's planting. A total of 70,437 acres was achieved, which was 2,827 acres more than the previous year. The area planted annually since 1947 had increased on average by 6,300 acres each year.

To quote the Report: "The yearly increase has been maintained only by materially reducing the reserves of land awaiting planting proportionate to the area actually planted. In 1947 the reserve stood at 13.6 times the annual planting programme; the figure for 1955 is only 4.6 times, and the reserve is not all evenly distributed. So the point has been reached at which the Commissioners have been forced to accept the unpalatable fact that after 1954 the annual planting will not only stop increasing but will in fact fall.

"The reason for the future downward trend of planting programmes is a shortage of land The Commissioners have not been led by this temporary setback to consider any revision of their long term plans and are determined to do everything possible to return to the upward trend in planting There are large tracts of country, running into many hundreds of thousands of acres, the best use of which is undoubtedly forestry - including land densely infested with bracken and semi-derelict woodland. It is hoped this type of land will be more readily offered to the Commissioners by those owners who are unable to plant it themselves."

FAREWELL TO MR. B. R. DAVIES

BEFORE a large gathering of colleagues, representative of Headquarters and the Office of Director, England, Mr. B. R. DAVIES recently took his leave of the Commission, having retired after 31 years' service. In all he had spent 46 years in the Civil Service, commencing in 1909 (as previously reported in The Slasher) as a Boy Clerk with the Office of Woods.

On behalf of wellwishers the Director General, SIR ARTHUR GOSLING, presented Mr. Davies with a cheque, which he intends to put towards the purchase of a radio set. Sir Arthur, in handing over the gift, paid tribute to Mr. Davies' long service and spoke of the importance of the latter's work in ensuring for the Commission supplies of stores and mechanical equipment. Mr. Davies, in reply, traced his career and related some amusing anecdotes.

HONOUR FOR HEAD FORESTER

HEAD FORESTER W. G. GRAY, who has been in charge of Kennington Nursery, Oxford, since 1925, has been appointed a Justice of the Peace for the Abingdon Division of Berkshire. He has for some time now been a member of the Abingdon Rural District Council. It will be recalled that in 1951 Mr. Gray was awarded the British Empire Medal in recognition of his outstanding work for the Commission.

CRICKET

THE ANNUAL FIXTURES between the Research Station and New Forest were resumed this year and both games were played last month. At Alice Holt the home team won convincingly by 8 wickets, the scores being New Forest 103, Alice Holt 109 for 2 (L. CRUMPLIN 65 not out). At Bank, near Lyndhurst, New Forest avenged their defeat and won by 7 wickets, the final scores being Alice Holt 69 (A. HOLLOWAY 8 wickets for 27); New Forest 210 (L. ADAMS 107).

VISITS TO FORESTS

THE ANNUAL educational outing of the Scottish Directorate Office was to Edensmuir and Tentsmuir forests in Fifeshire. It was unfortunate that after a long dry spell the weather changed and a heavy drizzle persisted throughout most of the day. Nevertheless, the party were able to see quite a deal of each forest, being shown round by District Officers D. A. WOODBURN and W. G. JEFFREY and the respective Foresters J. ALLEN and J. REID. At Edensmuir attention was drawn especially to the cultivated fire traces between the plantations and the railway lines, while at Tentsmuir the visitors saw something of the fire fighting arrangements and also a demonstration of the marking of trees for thinning.

Staff of the office of Director, Wales, paid an educational visit to Gwydyr Forest, in the North Wales Conservancy. There they saw some high level plantations, with Moel Siabod dominant across the valley. The subsequent route passed over the Roman Bridge, with Dolwyddelan Castle to the left, and there were seen some plantations started by the Conservator, Mr. F. C. BEST, in 1938, with the object of combining utilisation of every suitable site with amenity - it was clear that his aim has been well achieved.

At Beaver Pool (a famous salmon pool) the party transferred to a Commission lorry and proceeded to Waterloo Wood, planted in 1922, and in due course traversed the newly made road behind Bettws-y-Coed church through some acquired hardwoods. Lunch followed on a high plateau offering a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside.

There followed visits via Miners Bridge to a former scrub hardwood area now stocked with Western American species of conifers to a plantation off the road to Llyn Sarnau, where Japanese larch have been experimentally under-planted with Tsuga; to the produce dump; and to a large lead mine in the Nant Valley which has recently been re-opened. High tea was at Swallow Falls.

The party was escorted by the Conservator, Divisional Officer W. A. CADMAN, District Officer W. A. LINDSAY SMITH and Head Forester P. HARRISON.

OUR OLD FRIEND BROCK

TOLERATED AND EVEN WELCOMED

A new publication by the Commission is likely to be in considerable demand. This is Leaflet No. 34 - "Badgers in Woodlands". Many schoolteachers and children visiting the various agricultural shows have purchased copies, already proving that efforts of this kind, which are a little out of the ordinary run of Commission publications, are well worth while.

The Leaflet is well illustrated and contains much information for forester and layman alike - information, incidentally, of considerable value to those who follow the increasingly popular pastime of badger-watching. The badger, we are told, has shown a decided increase in population over the last 50 years. He is a somewhat fastidious creature, who will not tolerate filth in his set, which he cleans out at regular intervals. He will clean his fur by licking and a sow will groom the cubs until they are old enough to do the job for themselves. He is reluctant to move, except in darkness, and his eyesight is poor; if a powerful lamp covered with red paper is focussed on him at night he will take no notice - but his sense of smell is extremely well developed, so that in watching him it is essential for the human to be down wind.

Young badgers are extraordinarily playful, two popular games being "King of the Castle" and "Tag".

On balance, says the Leaflet, the good done by the badger where forestry is concerned usually outweighs the harm. He has a slight effect on the natural regeneration of hardwood trees by eating acorns and beech nuts; he will on occasion bite the bark from beech or sycamore to lick up the sweet sap, but this only occurs to a few trees in the vicinity of a set and is of little, if any, economic importance. His chief fault from the forester's point of view is his habit of breaking through or digging under rabbit-proof fences, so that rabbits make use of the gaps to enter the plantations. It has been suggested that it might be a good plan to put in at these points a swinging trap door too heavy to be moved by rabbits.

On the other side of the balance sheet the badger is very useful in destroying certain woodland pests, notably young rabbits taken from the nest, and voles. Unlike the fox, he does little damage to game birds or their eggs. All in all our old friend Brock, in the analysis, shows up pretty well. To quote the Leaflet, he "can be tolerated and even welcomed in our woods."

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YOUR MOST EMBARRASSING
MOMENTS?
WE'D LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT IT

IT HAS BEEN suggested that short contributions be invited under the following headings: "My Most Embarrassing Moments" and "My Narrowest Escape". Contributors may, if they wish, remain anonymous

in The Slasher, provided they inform the Editor of their names and stations.

In an endeavour to start the ball rolling, we would mention the case of the senior officer of the Commission who, during the war, asked for a single room at a hotel, but was allotted a double room. He deposited his bags therein, had a meal, and went out to the cinema. He returned to the hotel rather late and retired with little delay, his bed being situated in a recess of the very large room, which had obviously been reconstructed at some time or other. For the purposes of the blackout, the lights were dim and well screened.

Early the next morning he awakened, to see an attractive young lady performing her ablutions at the wash basin with rather more exposure than is usually the case. Shocked (so he says) he lay quietly; the girl finished washing and dressed, got her bag from beside the second single bed, in which she had slept, and which was situated in a recess similar to that occupied by our colleague, and departed.

The hotel manager, on being consulted, was apologetic for having made a double booking of the room, but the incident provided for our colleague his most embarrassing moments.

XX
OLD OAK BECAME A BOOKING
OFFICE

WE HAVE always stressed the fact that the uses of the tree are legion, but until recently we had never heard of a tree serving as a railway station

building. According to a newspaper article a great oak tree was utilised 100 years or so ago as a booking office at Moreton-on-Lugg, near Hereford. The stem of the tree was said to be 25 feet in circumference and, being hollow, was provided with a roof of wood or thatch, through which protruded a chimney. Later, when permanent station buildings were erected, the tree was used as a stable for a donkey and once it accommodated about 20 sheep. Another story associated with this tree is that 13 people held a tea party in it (presumably not in company of the donkey or sheep!).

XX
CANADIAN LOOKS AT BRITISH
TREE FELLERS

WE HEARD the other day from Mr. ROBERT PONTIFEX, of Vancouver, British Columbia, a veteran Canadian logger. He once visited this country and readers

may like to read of his impressions of our woodmanship - they lose nothing in interest by being formed quite a number of years ago.

"I saw some felling in the lower Wye Valley", he writes. "At cutting gnarled hardwood trees close to the ground the workers were wonderful. Cutting the gash around the tree was absolutely right, the root ridges were deprived of their timber bond. When sawing down, the proper procedure is to saw in back, then at an angle one side, then the other, then saw straight across the triangular piece as far as necessary, always sawing on a narrow surface. To follow that procedure if the roots protruded would involve the saw getting out of true and produce double cuts in the heart. The heavy 'Hudson's Bay' poll axes, blacksmith made, that they used in the Wye Valley were splendid not only for cutting but for lopping the huge limbs.

"While in England I noticed that quite large apple trees were merely sawn up and sold for a few shillings a cord. In my part of the world similar material would have been worth 50 dollars a cord as stock to furnish handsaw handles. Also I saw large areas felled with huge yew trees left untouched; in my country yew is very scrubby and scarce, it is hard to find one a foot through. The timber is highly prized for rollers in the sawmill."

XX
THE POWER OF THE ROWAN
TREE

THE LOCAL parish magazine for a date in 1893, from which last month we culled a few details of a long since forgotten forest fire in Lakeland, also

provides an interesting note on superstitions associated with a well known tree. "It should be known," records the magazine, "that no tree in the district links us in Cumberland so close to the habits and superstitions of our Scandinavian forefathers as does the rowan, or mountain ash. The rowan or 'raynin' tree was the holy tree dedicated to Thor and was called Raynin Tree, from 'runa' a mystery, because of its supposed power and influence against witches. In Iceland there are places still called Raynin, or the Rowan Trees, and in Cumberland we have a place called Raynors. The rowan tree branch used to be placed above doorways to keep away evil influences throughout the north of England, and in our Lake District the stick used for stirring

the cream to counteract the bewitching of the charm is still frequently made of "lan".

XXX ODD QUESTIONS

road. Which forest, and why?

IN THE immediate vicinity of one of our forests it is necessary to drive a car on the wrong side of the

What wild animals kill snakes? Do stoats hypnotise their victims? Do weasels attack humans? Do hares sleep with their eyes open?

XXX PERSONAL

BEST WISHES to Miss M. I. NEWMAN, Clerical Officer, New Forest, on her marriage to Mr. Michael Lang.

Mr. F. MATTHEWS, Messenger at Headquarters, recently reached his 70th. birthday and received a gift from the staff and a host of good wishes. Mr. Matthews has always believed in seeing as much of life as possible at first hand. He witnessed the opening of Tower Bridge and the Blackwall Tunnel and was in Cape Town on the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899; he travelled three times round the world on the staff of an organisation which carried out cancer research, visiting every country with a coastline.

XXX TALL STORY?

IS THIS a tall story, or not so tall? As there is seldom smoke without fire, so there are few tales so fabulous that they have not at least a slight foundation on truth.

A Forester on a private estate who was known to one of our Forest Officers was noted for his benevolent attitude towards the fox, an animal which, in his opinion, was much maligned. The fox, said this forester, lived to a greater extent than was generally realised on rabbits, beetles and mice, and on other small vermin, and it was only the occasional renegade that raided the poultry run, at such intervals as to give the impression that this was a habit common to all foxes. Now this forester firmly maintained that on one occasion he dug out a fox's earth and there, in a somewhat peaty soil, he discovered the well preserved remains of about two dozen rabbits, skinned and pouched and seemingly stored as winter food.

XXX TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

District Officers R.M.G. STAMPLE from Launceston, SW(E), to Devizes, SW(E); J.R. GRAVESEND from Northampton, E(E), to Princes Risborough, E(E); M.G. HARKER from Dolgellay, N(W), to Cambridge, E(E); N.S. MUNRO from Carlisle, NW(E), to Cokermonth, NW(E); J.L. DAVIDSON from Sutton Lowham, E(E), to Princes Risborough; D.A. MITHEN from Woodchurch, SE(E), to Ashford, SE(E).

Foresters J. SCOTT from Glenferrochty, E(S), to Montreathmont, E(S); J.C. WEBSTER from Peterborough, E(S), to Drummond Hill, E(S); S.W.R. STEWART from Drummond Hill to Hailherry, E(S); R.B. THOMSON from Montreathmont to Craigvinean, E(S); G.I. ASHCROFT from Craigvinean to Glenferrochty.

Asst. Engineers J.B. PRIESTLEY from Carlisle to Kendal, NW(E); A.C. FARMAN from Carlisle to Chester, NW(E).

Higher Executive Officer M.P. SHAPCOTT from Headquarters to Woking. Clerical Officers Miss D.J. COX from Chester to D(E), London; J. G. BARNES from Lyndhurst to Strarshurst.

XXX THE FORESTER'S COMPANION

WE HAVE received for review a copy of "The Forester's Companion," written by Mr. N.D.G. JAMES, Land Agent for the Oxford University Chest Estates, and published for the Royal Forestry Society of England and Wales. Spontaneously we commend this modestly priced publication as likely to be not only a companion but a very constant one to all concerned with forestry. It is a veritable mine of information, presented in concise and simple fashion and, in its 31 chapters, it covers every conceivable aspect of silviculture and forest management.

A further important virtue is that "The Forester's Companion" is of such size that it slips easily into the pocket, obviating the need for odd notes to be made pending reference to books on the library shelf. Mr. C.M. FLOYD says in a foreword that the Royal Forestry Society, of which he is President, "has for some time been considering how best it could help British Forestry and it was found that one long-felt need was for a book which would give information in note form, especially designed for the ready use and help of the working forester as he goes about his daily task." "The Forester's Companion" is published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford, at 12s.6d.