

THE SLASHER

Forestry Commission News

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PASSING OF LORD COURTHOPE A FORESTRY COMMISSIONER FOR 21 YEARS

IT IS with great regret that we have to record the death of LORD COURTHOPE, a former Commissioner and one of our most eminent foresters. As long ago as 1916 Lord Courthope became President of the English

Forestry Association and in the following year, during the difficult times of the first world war, he was appointed Assistant Controller of Timber Supplies. He was Chairman of the Empire Forestry Association in 1923-24 and from 1919, the year the Forestry Commission came into being, to 1927 he was Chairman of the Consultative Committee under the Forestry Acts, and spokesman for the Commission in the House of Commons. He was appointed a Forestry Commissioner in October, 1927, and retired in May, 1948.

Lord Courthope's family has been associated with Sussex for hundreds of years and in the 14th. century Whiligh, the family estate, produced oak for the original roof of Westminster Hall; it is of note that Whiligh also provided oak used to repair damage caused in the Palace of Westminster during the war.

Our Chairman, LORD RADNOR, and the Director General, SIR ARTHUR GOSLING, attended the memorial service to Lord Courthope at Ticehurst, Sussex.

*** SUDDEN DEATH OF DIVISIONAL OFFICER PATERSON

NEWS of the sudden death of Divisional Officer "ALEC" PATERSON came as a tremendous shock to his numerous friends throughout the Commission.

COLLAPSED WHILE PLAYING CRICKET

Mr. Paterson, who was State Forest Officer in the South West England Conservancy, was playing cricket for the Bristol Office side against a forest team at Dunster, Somerset, last month and, soon after the game commenced, he collapsed on the field. Players went to his assistance and a doctor was called, but he died within a few minutes.

Mr. Paterson was 45 and was born in Everest, Iowa, U.S.A. He obtained a degree in botany at Leeds University in 1937 and soon afterwards gained a diploma in forestry at Oxford. From March, 1938 to October of the following year he was employed by the Commission as a temporary surveyor on census work. He was then appointed a District Officer and, until March, 1947, was stationed at Chopwell Wood. There followed some three years as Nurseries Officer on the staff of Director, England, at Bristol and London and in September, 1950, he moved to Cambridge, East England Conservancy. He was transferred to Bristol in April last year.

"The passing of Mr. Paterson is a sad blow to us all," writes our correspondent from Bristol. "Although he had not been in the South West Conservancy for very long his quiet, friendly disposition made it seem as though he had been with us for years. He was always ready to help with anybody's problem; he will be greatly missed."

Readers of The Slasher elsewhere in the country will join with colleagues in the South West Conservancy in extending heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Paterson's wife and four children.

*** ELEPHANTS IN THE FOREST

EXTRACTION BY TRUNK AT SALCEY

DO YOU KNOW that not so very long ago elephants were used for timber extraction in a Commission forest?

It happened in 1941, when there was a large fall of oak in Salcey Forest, East England Conservancy. But let Divisional Officer J.S.R. CHARD, now in North West England, take up the tale. A story, he tells us, appeared in the local Press in the spring of 1941 of a travelling show being disbanded at Northampton and two elephants having to be destroyed for lack of fodder. We went to investigate and found them in a very weak and sorry condition, but offered their owner a job and soon had them picketed out on one of the forest rides. There they fed and rested for a week or so while the local blacksmith fitted together dragging harness from chains and old machinery belting. They were then gradually broken in to regular employment.

The older elephant, Molly, had done some timber work in India and soon became quite useful. She could pull a two-ton log with ease and pushed her way through the undergrowth and stepped over ditches without

difficulty. If the butt caught on a stump she just turned and lifted it clear with her trunk, and when she got the logs to the ride she went down on her knees and pushed and rolled them into a neat pile. Barbar, then only a youngster, was at first rather wayward and mischievous, but gradually became reconciled to trailing along with a smaller log behind, and obviously learned a great deal from Molly by imitation.

On the whole the pair worked hard, but they couldn't be hurried and time-keeping just didn't interest them. They were quite prepared to start at crack of dawn, but if the day turned hot they would pull their harness off by eleven, and set off for a bathe in one of the old local marl pits. There they probably played for a couple of hours, and after time for browsing and feeding it would often be three o'clock before they were back on the job. But usually they would continue willingly until quite late in the evening. Feeding presented no difficulties during the summer months and they got all their food from the forest, pulling the long grass from the rides and plucking sprays of foliage from the bushes. They were very selective in this, favouring some species such as hazel and willow, and rejecting others such as dogwood.

The problem of what to do with them when winter came eventually solved itself. One morning, despite the shortage of newsprint and all the grim business of war, Molly and Barbar leapt to fame on the feature page of a national newspaper, and through the resultant publicity they were offered a new and permanent home.

One of my first engagements on transfer to North West England was to call and see them at Chester Zoo. They say an elephant never forgets and I shall always maintain that Molly's wink was quite deliberate.

~~THE~~ POLECATS IN NORTH SCOTLAND

THE CORRESPONDENT who recently made such a strong claim for the North Scotland Conservancy as the habitat of the greatest variety of animal and bird life replies to SIR WILLIAM TAYLOR. "Seeing is believing," he writes. "I saw a polecat in this Conservancy only last week but it did not give me much chance to examine it. It crossed my path about 25 yards ahead. I have also seen a pine martin several times in the last few months (it might have been the same one, each time). I cannot at the moment recall any bird that is common only to the north of Scotland, but I never saw the black-throated diver or the great northern diver anywhere in the south.

"Some people say that eagles do not kill lambs, yet I have seen lambs carried away; and despite what others may hold, I know that the merlin kills grouse, for I saw it happen to an adult. As I got Mr. Merlin soon afterwards I had the proof in my hand. I can go heavier still with salmon, sea trout and brown trout but do not deny that heavy fish are got on the Wye and elsewhere. I would like to know if there is anywhere in any other Conservancy where one can catch char on a dry fly."

From another source we hear that a gamekeeper in Strath Halladale, Caithness (in the Dounreay area), recently told several members of the staff of the Inverness office that he had seen two polecats, one several years ago and the other within the last two or three years.

~~THE~~ ANOTHER HOLE IN ONE

IT'S BEEN DONE AGAIN. Playing in a competition at Braids No.1 Course, Edinburgh, Executive Officer J. HOGARTH holed out in one at the second hole (146 yards).

Another golfing reader writes: "I have played much golf in different parts of the world and although I have never holed out in one I once had a very narrow escape. It was a short hole of 120 yards or so; the day was dull with fine rain, and the flags hung limp. My tee shot hit the flag, which twisted round and round, holding the ball; it then unwound and dropped my ball on the lip of the hole. My partner intended pulling the flag out roughly, so that the ball would drop in, but I shouldered him out of the way, took the pin out with great care and tapped the ball in for two. Why, when summoning to the bar became a custom whisky was three shillings a bottle, but in my time it was 10s.6d.!"

~~THE~~ DRIFT BESIDE 12 lbs. OF EXPLOSIVE

A NARROW ESCAPE

experience.

FOLLOWING our invitation last month to readers to tell us of their most embarrassing moments or their narrowest escape, a Clerical Officer at Headquarters describes a breath-taking

"In 1945", he writes, "I was in Germany with the Royal Engineers. My unit's job was to help clear canals in the Ruhr area of demolished bridges, many of which were made of weighty steel girders. The only method

of getting them out of the way was to cut them up with explosives and haul the pieces to the bank by steel wire rope and bulldozers.

"On one occasion an officer, I and another N.C.O. and some sappers rigged up a circuit to explode about 12 lbs. of gun-cotton on a girder protruding from the main structure of the bridge. All was set and we were well out of the way and under cover. Down went the handle of the exploder, but there was no explosion. What happened was that the circuit was cut by the detonating fuse before its flash could reach the main charge. Not relishing a long job in setting up another circuit the officer suggested that we fix up the charge with a slow burning fuse.

"It was arranged that I and the other N.C.O. should paddle out on a pontoon raft, taking a piece of made-up fuse and detonator and fixing them to the charge. The signal would then be given for the sappers quickly to pull us to the bank by means of a rope attached to the pontoon. Alas! At the given signal the sappers heaved on the rope but the knot came undone, and there we were both of us left adrift beside 12 lbs. of explosive timed to detonate in one and a half minutes.

"My comrade was first to realise our predicament and dived into the canal. It didn't take me half a second to follow. Needless to say, the swim to the bank was the fastest we had ever done and we reached safety only just in time. Back in billets I laughed with the rest. But it was a narrow escape."

"P.S. The officer tied the knot."

LOOKING AT DYMOCK

THE SOUTH WEST England Conservancy staff paid an educational visit to Dymock Forest and learned much about the development of this area since its acquisition by the Commission. During the walk a portable saw was seen in action and extraction by tractor and Oliver logger was also witnessed. A demonstration of the method of measuring logs and estimating their volume was noted with great interest, and several of the visitors tested their skill at this work. The field staff made the visit most instructive and enjoyable; in addition, the day was fine and warm.

The party was escorted by the Conservator, Mr. A.H. POBERT; the late Mr. PATERSON; District Officer P.L. WINCHESTER and Forester A.C. BEARD.

FOUND IN THE FOREST

WAITING while in a justifiable "mood of fierce indignation", Forester W. DEAL, Lynford School Beat, Thetford Chase, tells us of some of the junk he has found in and around the plantations. "Just what," he asks, "do the general public think the forests are for? Within a week or two of taking charge of my present beat I strode through a broom thicket and there discovered a certain domestic utensil. Some time later members of my felling gang came across a crate of - apparently - empty beer bottles in the woods. Then they found that some were not empty, and production figures temporarily soared.

"But today's find beats everything. Cycling from Mundford to Lynford Cross I glanced into the hardwood belt and there stood a settee and a couple of deep armchairs in tapestry and leatherette. I glanced around for the fairies upon whose sylvan sanctuary I had seemingly intruded. But there were none - only a tyre mark denoting where a lorry had been.

"On the beat is a whacking great chalk pit that has been taken over by the local council as a rubbish dump. But do you think folk will use it? No, they prefer the woods. The times I have had to witness a blushing housewife go through the motions of surprise, as I inform her that a medicine bottle bearing her name and the injunction 'to be taken four times a day after meals' has been unearthed among tins, torch batteries, broken crocks and cardboard cartons, I wouldn't venture to count. But the heap has always vanished by the following morning.

"Can I sell anyone a nice three-piece suite? Or something in china, perhaps? Ah well, turn it into the Conservancy office on an A 34. Got to get the old place spruced up somehow!"

This matter of litter dumping is certainly beyond a joke. We saw a few of the items found in Savernake Forest two or three years ago - milk bottles, beer bottles, an old bicycle, an old perambulator, tins, old tyres, a bedstead and an old shotgun. The whole lot was on display at the Bath and West show; we hope a few consciences were touched.

CRICKET

League when, in the play off for the championship, they lost to the "Cambrian News" club.

ANSWERS TO "ODD QUESTIONS"

HERE are some answers to last month's odd questions.

The forest in whose immediate vicinity it is necessary to drive on the right hand side of the road is BRAMSHILL, near Farnborough, Hampshire. Some of the plantations flank roads on Blackbushe Aerodrome and, under international agreement, all traffic keeps to the right hand side.

What wild animals kill snakes? According to David Stephen, a well known contributor to the Daily Record and Mail, Glasgow, hedgehogs and moles will kill vipers, and so will goats. Do stoats hypnotise their victims? No, says the same writer. A "stoated" rabbit suddenly becomes paralysed, crouches and screams and gives itself up to its pursuer. Fear is another matter, stoat fear being born in rabbits at the sight of a stoat and being increased by its smell. Thus the rabbit becomes paralysed with terror. Nor is it hypnosis when a weasel or fox cuts capers to "fix" the attention of birds or rabbits. The hunters play on the curiosity of their victims, till they are off their guard.

Do weasels attack humans? A cornered weasel will attack a man, and angry weasels, single or in company, are also liable to do so if provoked. Do hares sleep with their eyes open? No. They sleep with their eyes closed, though lightly.

PERSONAL

MR. T.H. McGEORGE was recently presented with two bookcases, the gifts of field and office staffs in the South Scotland Conservancy, to mark his transfer on promotion to Chief Executive Officer to Aberystwyth. The Conservator, Mr. J.A.B. MACDONALD, in making the presentation, said Mr. McGeorge would be greatly missed.

Congratulations to District Officer J.C. VOYSEY, Aberystwyth, on his marriage at Cardiff to Miss Gwen Davies; District Officer D.Y.M. ROBERTSON was best man. Mr. Voysey received a cheque as a wedding gift from the Welsh Directorate staff.

Congratulations, also, on the arrival of a daughter to District Officer G.F. SAVAGE, North Scotland, and Mrs. Savage; and to District Officer J.R. SKINNER, North Wales, and Mrs. Skinner.

Then there is the following "flash" from Edinburgh: New Acquisition. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Forrest on the arrival of a son. Mr. Forrest is Acquisition Officer (Scotland) and it is appropriate that this new acquisition should arrive before the end of the Forest Year. We understand that no name has yet been chosen for the new unit.

TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

District Officers P.A. INNES from Bannmore, W(S), to Dumfries, S(S); R.H.G. SEMPLE from Devizes, SW(E), to Bristol; J.A. DRUMMOND from Devizes to Tavistock, SW(E); G.J.N. TAYLOR from Woodchurch, SE(E), to Ashford, SE(E); F.B.K. PURSER from Devizes to Salisbury, SW(E); S. FORRESTER from Hexham, NE(E), to Chopwell, NE(E). Foresters L. JONES from Coed-y-Brenin, N(W), to Aeron, N(W); P.H. ASHWORTH from Rharedborough, NE(E), to Holmfirth, NE(E). Foremen H.F. CLARKE from Quantock, SW(E), to Molton Woods, SW(E); K.F. SIMPSON from Inchnacardoch, N(S), to Inshriach, N(S).

Mr. ERIC LEWIS, Chief Executive Officer, has moved to Headquarters from Aberystwyth, to succeed Mr. B. R. DAVIES, who has retired; Mr. T. FARMER has gone to Dumfries on promotion to Senior Executive Officer, to succeed Mr. T. H. McGEORGE, whose transfer to Aberystwyth is mentioned elsewhere in this issue; and Mr. D.O.J. SALAMAN is transferred to Aberystwyth from Headquarters, on promotion to Higher Executive Officer.

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