

THE PLOUGHING RECORD

CLAIMS GO HIGHER AND
HIGHER

NORTH SCOTLAND Conservancy started it all by asking, in November, whether the ploughing of 63½ acres in 16 days at Shin Forest was a record.

Then, last month, the South Wales Conservancy came into the picture, with the statement that at Irton Forest an average of 96 acres had been ploughed in the same period and this, we thought, must surely have been the ploughing to beat all ploughing. Not so, however. Listen to Forester J. F. SCOTT, of Leithope Forest, South Scotland Conservancy. Here, he writes, tractor driver G. RODKIN, with a D2 tractor and a single furrow Begg-type plough, working both ways with 5-feet spacing, ploughed 148 acres in 21 days - a remarkable feat, in my opinion, for this works out at about 112 acres in 16 days. It may interest readers to know that the "continuous" method was used, which means that a number of compartments (the number depending upon topography) were regarded as one unit, so as to permit the longest continuous ploughing in a direction that would prevent the danger of scour and give good lines of drainage.

CLAIMS TO ANOTHER RECORD

ANOTHER RECORD in doubt for the time being concerns the greatest variety of tree species and shrubs in any one forest.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Forester J. F. CLARK, Salcey Forest, East England Conservancy, has already listed 22 trees and 12 shrubs, and now there are several more claims. But before giving any further details we would say that as the question "when is a shrub not a shrub" may possibly arise, we have left individual correspondents to give their own interpretations.

Forester H. JOHNSON, Wendover Forest, East England, gives us this list. Ash, beech, copper beech, silver birch, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut, cedar, elm, hornbeam, lime, Norway maple, oak (holm), oak (pedunculata), red oak, plane, poplar, sycamore, tulip tree, walnut, Lawson cypress, Douglas fir, European larch, Japanese larch, Austrian pine, Corsican pine, ursuline pine, Scots pine, sequoia, Norway spruce, Sitka spruce, yew, Irish yew - total 32. Shrubs and small trees - crab apple, box, blackthorn, cherry (bird), dogwood, elder, hawthorn, hazel, holly, juniper, laurel, lonicera, mountain ash, privet, spindle tree, whitebeam, willow (goat) - total 17.

Forester F. A. WOODCOCK tells us of the species to be found in Kidland Forest, North East England. These are: The silver fir (*Abies procera*), white fir (*Abies concolia*), grand fir, European silver fir, lovely fir (*Abies amabilis*), Spanish fir (*Abies pinsapo*), lodgepole pine, Weymouth pine, Scots pine, Corsican pine, mountain pine, hybrid larch, European larch, Japanese larch, cedar, Japanese cedar, Douglas fir, Western hemlock, mountain hemlock, Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), Western red cedar, monkey puzzle tree, Norway spruce, sitka spruce, Serbian spruce, oak (two species), ash, beech, sycamore, lime, elm, birch, alder, false acacia, mountain ash, poplar, willow, Norway maple - total 39. Shrubs - hazel, blackthorn, holly, sallow, elder, wild privet, laurel, rhododendron, hawthorn, juniper - total 10.

At Glenbranter, West Scotland Conservancy, Forester R. G. MURRAY started to compile a list of different trees in his forest; he says he reached 80 and then gave up. To complete a list of shrubs, he adds, would be wellnigh impossible, for it would have to include a large number of rhododendrons from Forrest and Farrer collections which would be hard to identify. In trees, the latest newcomer to Glenbranter is *Acacia melanoxydon* (Tasmania), sown in June and transplanted into a cold frame in November. So far, says Forester Murray, these have withstood temperatures down to 15 degrees and "I am keeping my fingers crossed - who knows, I may be able to plant them out aged ½ plus ½. The climate here is generally fairly mild with a very heavy rainfall (over 100 inches). Unfortunately, in January the temperature drops to near zero and stays there just too long."

Forester Murray says it would be interesting to know whether anyone has succeeded in growing *Widdringtonia whytei* out of doors. This tree is known as the Mellange cedar and comes from Mount Melange in Nyasaland.

PASSING OF A FORESTER

WE DEEPLY REGRET to have to record the death of Forester W. H. REESE, who had been in charge of Mathrafal Forest, North Wales, since 1928. Mr. Reese, who was only 59 years of age, joined the Commission as a Forest Worker at Kerry Forest, Montgomeryshire, in 1923. He

rose through the rank of Ganger to Foreman on his appointment to take charge of the small and newly acquired forest of Mathrafal; he thus had the opportunity to see his own forest grow substantially in size and production over a period of 28 years.

Mr. F. C. BEST, Conservator, North Wales, writes:

"Reese was one of the very few remaining Foresters who were with me from my first days with the Commission and I shall miss him as an old friend. Indeed, he is mourned by us all and we shall always link his name with Mathrafal, which became his life's work and which remains as a living memorial to him. Our sympathy goes out to his widow and to his son and daughter, who grew up in the forest."

== "A TRUE FORESTER'S WINE"

A BREW FROM BIRCH SAP

WHERE are your braces and bits? In the light of the following we forecast that a number of readers will be searching their toolboxes in the next few weeks! "I have made and enjoyed beer from the recipe you gave some time ago," writes

a correspondent. "But the best brew was of birch wine made from the sap of the silver birches here in Argyll. A true forester's wine, it has the appearance and flavour of a dry white Burgundy and won Royal favour in the days of Victoria, at Balmoral.

"There are many variations of the recipe, but here is a simple version. In March, when the sap is rising fast, bore a hole about a quarter of an inch in diameter for an inch or one and a half inches into the sapwood of a birch tree, about a foot from the ground, and drive into it a tube of elder wood, cane or metal. Place a jug or bottle to collect the sap (which I found to vary in flow up to a quart a day) until sufficient has been collected; the daily quota must be boiled to prevent fermentation, and set aside.

"Boil each gallon of sap for an hour with three pounds of sugar and the thinly pared rinds of a lemon and an orange. Skim and pour on to half-a-pound of chopped raisins in an open container of earthenware or wood. When the temperature reaches 60-70 degrees float on top a piece of toast spread with half-an-ounce of yeast. Cover the vessel and let it stand for five or six days. Strain the liquid and put into a cask or jar - I use a gallon glass pickle jar - and cover lightly and leave for two months. During the second month the cask should be bunged, and throughout the period the vessel should be kept quite full by topping up with water. Pour the wine off the lees, bottle and resist tasting for at least three months, and preferably twelve. My wine is excellent now, ten months after collecting the sap."

"Note. When you finish collecting the sap the tree should be protected from infection by driving in a wooden plug and sealing the end with grafting wax or paint. 'Scrub' trees only should be used, and their sap will in no way be inferior."

== A DOG'S LIFE

WEEKEND UNDERGROUND

THE DEVOTION to duty of a trapper's dog - we believe its name is Lassie - at Haldon Forest, South West England, makes interesting reading.

A crossbred terrier, she turned up a fox and gave chase; the fox went to earth with Lassie in hot pursuit and entered what is perhaps best described as a cul-de-sac from the main run. Lassie remained across the entrance and, when she did not appear above ground, Trapper DUKE concluded she must have come out of the earth at some other point. All this happened at about 10 a.m. on a Saturday and the trapper continued his search for the dog until late in the afternoon; there was still no trace of her on the Sunday and on the following day at about 9 a.m. Trapper Duke and some helpers dug her out of the earth. She was found still guarding the entrance to the cul-de-sac and was none the worse for her long spell underground.

The fox was shot when trying to escape.

== A MESSENGER WITH A BIAS

BOWLING ACHIEVEMENTS AT CHESTER

MAYBE we're a little premature, but to us spring and the bowls season are just around the corner. Quite a number of Commission employees will soon be on the green again and it may inspire some of

us to read of the successes, last season, of Mr. A. H. SPOONER, Messenger in the Chester Office. He set up a record for the Bache Bowling Club at Upton, Chester, by winning two trophies on two successive days, namely the J. H. Jones Cup and the Lidbury Bowl, and earlier in the season he won the Alderman A. S. Dutton Cup and reached the semi-final of the C. J. P. Jones Cup, being beaten by a very narrow margin.

Mr. Spooner had previously won many other bowls competitions, including the Jephcott and McKay cups in the 1920's, the A. S. Dutton Cup in 1946, and the Lidbury Cup in 1950. He is captain of the Club, which last season won the Chester and District League Championship and the Jubilee Cup.

ILL-MATCHED COMPANIONS

WILD CAT AND BUZZARD IN THE SAME TRAP

THE CATCHING of a wild cat and a buzzard in the same trap is described by Forester J. FRATER, of Glenrigh Forest, North Scotland. He writes: "The construction of hoodie crow traps was commenced on my taking over at Glenrigh; these traps are of wire netting and measure about six feet long, wide and high. A funnel of netting is let into the roof, about 24 inches in diameter at ceiling level to 12 inches at the bottom, and having a length of some 24 inches. A bait of red flesh is placed on the ground directly below the funnel.

"The morning after the baiting of one of these traps in the Sallachail Section of Glenrigh the catch was a wild cat and a buzzard, and a melee would be an apt description of the scene, on my approach. The cat was imitating a monkey in a zoo by swinging itself over the netting walls, every hair erect and with a volume of spits and noise resembling a waterfall. The buzzard, hopping about with its wings half spread and emitting a noise similar to a swan guarding its nest, divided its attention between cat and humans."

SAVING THE CHRISTMAS TREES

CHRISTMAS, now almost a memory, is recalled by a note from Assistant Forester M. D. WHITLOCK, of Stanway Forest, South West England. He refers to the disbudding and pruning of the young Christmas trees as a means of reducing thefts, mentioned by District Officer GRAYSON in the December issue of The Slasher. Another method of treating trees likely to be stolen, says our correspondent, is to spray them with white emulsion paint; this could be done a few weeks before Christmas without damaging or retarding the growth of the trees. The advantage of this method, says Mr. Whitlock, is that it is quickly carried out, whereas disbudding would appear to be tedious. Furthermore, the loss of amenity is mitigated.

Further items about Christmas trees are to hand. In the East England Conservancy 20,193 trees were sold this past season, realising £3,765. Included is the sum of £2,240 for 12,292 un-rooted trees, representing in the main tops which, of course, at other times of the year would have little or no value. One large tree, sold to a local organisation for £7, was erected in Cambridge and used as a centre from which £220 was collected for charity.

The "problem" sale of the season was of 100 5' - 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' tops to a firm of maintenance engineers at a nearby airfield.

Christmas trees sold by Forester J. H. ROYLE, of Cynwyd Forest, North Wales Conservancy, were bought by United States Air Force personnel and displayed at the RAF Station at Cranage - "they were enjoyed and admired by the Americans and everyone else who saw them," states an RAF letter of thanks to the Forester.

MORE ABOUT DEAD PIGEONS

FOREMAN R. A. REX, Dalby Forest, North East England Conservancy, sends along some more information about the dead pigeons at Allerston, the subject of discussion in earlier issues, and tells us it was at corn sowing time that the pigeons were found over an area of approximately one square mile, in compartments of larch, Scots pine, Corsican pine and Sitka spruce. The crops of the young birds (some almost full) were very dark, while those of the older birds were not discoloured but partly full of a watery matter. When the birds were first found they gave off quite an offensive smell and, although some were to be seen in the open on the rides, none was picked up by any wild life.

Foreman Rex goes on to say that some 30 years ago a gamekeeper told him that he would never see the mating of hares. "Since that time," he says, "I have asked dozens of gamekeepers and others if they have seen such an occurrence and in each case the answer has been no. Yet, very strange to say, a few months ago I did see it happen."

DOWN COMES A GIANT A GREAT OAK FELLED

ONE of the largest oak trees in the Forest of Dean has been felled; it grew by the roadside and had been marked down as dangerous.

The rings on the butt showed it to be about 300

years old, which means it was an infant in the reign of Charles II, and another point of interest is that the rings also revealed that in two successive years there was a growth of three-quarters of an inch. The height of this oak was 65 feet and its volume 4 1/4 cubic feet, with a substantial amount of cordwood; and bearing in mind its age, its timber was mostly surprisingly good. Bigger oaks have, of course, been felled in the Dean; in 1911 several with an average volume of 460 cubic feet were felled.

This leads us to the subject of beams for the famous Speech House Hotel in the Dean, some of which were attacked by the Death Watch Beetle and had to be replaced. Three beams were needed for this purpose, each 18 by 13 inches and 27 feet long, and they were obtained by the felling of three oak trees, 164 years old, in Highmeadow Woods. They were sawed to size locally at Parkend Mills.

~~RE~~ SHALL WE TRY IT ON TREES?

A REPORT in a journal records that at the International Botanical Congress held recently in Paris two Indian students revealed the results of a curious experiment.

Certain shrubs of the Mimosa pudica type were subjected every evening to a 25-minute rendition of an Indian tune, played on the violin. Results showed that the musically treated plants produced more abundant foliage than their neighbours in a given time; the number of leaves and thorns increased with "a more rapid rhythm", and the increase in the length of the branches was greater by half.

"My love she is a red, red rose that's newly born in June,
No longer to the maids I sing beneath the shining moon
But rather with my violin I charm the growing bloom,
The tendrils still do higher climb, the petals daily grow;
A wondrous prize will yet be mine
At next year's flower show."

~~RE~~ FOREST FIRE FIGHTING -

OLD STYLE

READERS who know our Bramshill Forest, near Farnborough, Hampshire, and especially those who have fought fires in that area of high fire risk, may be interested in the following extract from an 1882 issue of the Gardeners' Chronicle. "There is a traditional belief here that the Scotch Fir was re-introduced at the building of Bramshill. But 'whatever may have been the date of their re-introduction,' says Kingsley, 'here they are, and no one can turn them out.' Some years since several devastating heath fires broke out in the neighbourhood, and sometimes encroached on the firs of Bramshill. One occurred during divine service when Kingsley, who had long since turned the empty church of Eversley into a full one, was in the pulpit. He was always active in putting out the fires, and now the news came that the firs he so very much admired were threatened. Men were needed. It was a case of emergency similar to that when Sabbath day exertion becomes a duty sanctioned by divine authority. The Rector did not hesitate a moment and when messengers arrived at the church in hot haste to call out the men, we are told that he left the curate to finish the service and rushed to the scene of action, taking a flying leap in surplice, hood and stole, over the churchyard palings. Armed with a billhook and divested of his ecclesiastical attire he took the command of the army of beaters, organised them well, and resisting the fire at points of vantage, he saved the fir woods."

(Charles Kingsley, of "Water Babies" fame, was Vicar of Eversley, the parish in which Bramshill Forest lies, for 33 years).

~~RE~~ FAREWELL TO MISS A. ROSS

NUMEROUS wellwishers said farewell to Miss A. ROSS, Superintendent of the typing pool at Headquarters, who has retired. A gift to Miss Ross took the form of a cheque, which was handed over by the Secretary, Mr. H. A. TURNER, who paid tribute to Miss Ross' work and traced her career; he pointed out that she first joined the Civil Service when she went to the Admiralty in 1917. She subsequently joined the Forestry Commission at Inverness. Miss Ross intends to use the cheque to purchase an electric cleaner.

Best wishes to District Officer G. K. MURRAY, West Scotland, and Mrs. Murray on the birth of a son; and to Foreman D. J. AMER, Culbin Forest, East Scotland, and Mrs. Amer, on the birth of twins, a boy and girl.

~~RE~~ TRANSFERS

THE TRANSFERS to date will be included with those recorded next month.

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