

## A GREAT DAY IN OUR HISTORY

ROYAL TREE PLANTING TO MARK  
THE MILLIONTH ACRE

STAFF all over the country will share in the sense of achievement that springs from the planting by the Commission of one million acres, an event aptly marked by the planting by Her Majesty the Queen of an oak tree at

Eggesford Forest, Devon, on 8th May. It was, of course, at Eggesford that the Commission's first planting took place in 1919, and a stone in the forest records the token planting in that year by LORD CLINTON, then a Forestry Commissioner (and Chairman of the Forestry Commission from 1927-30); Mr. H. MURRAY (the late SIR HUGH MURRAY) then Assistant Commissioner; Divisional Officer C.O. HANSON; and the late Mr. TOM BROWN, whose death was reported in the previous issue of The Slasher.

It was certainly a great day for Eggesford when The Queen paid her visit, accompanied by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. To the resounding cheers of hundreds of schoolchildren who had gathered in a special enclosure, Her Majesty and the Royal party were received by our Chairman, LORD RADNOR, and LADY RADNOR; SIR ARTHUR GOSLING, Director General; Mr. HEATHCOAT AMORY, Minister of Agriculture; and Mr. JAMES STUART, Secretary of State for Scotland. The Queen then unveiled a stone monument, on which there is a plaque commemorating the planting achievement; subsequently Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh planted trees and were assisted by Head Forester J.D. ROBBIE of Blackhall Forest, in the East Scotland Conservancy, and Head Forester J.E. EVANS, of Coed-y-Brenin, in the North Wales Conservancy. Commemorative gifts took the form of a pair of secateurs to Her Majesty and a slasher to His Royal Highness. Other oak trees were planted by Lord Radnor and the two Ministers.

The part played by each country in reaching the millionth acre planted was further emphasised by the attendance of the following: England - Mr. A.P.F. HAMILTON and Mr. STANLEY J. LONGHURST, Forestry Commissioners; Mr. O.J. SINGAR, Director; Mr. C.M. CONNELL, Conservator, South West England, on whom rested responsibility for making the local arrangements for the ceremony; and Forester E.C. KIBBLE, of Eggesford. Scotland - Major JOHN STIRLING of FAIRBURN, Mr. J.M. BANNERMAN and Major D.C. BOWSER, Commissioners; Mr. A.H.H. ROSS, Director; Mr. J. MCKIE WHITE, Conservator, Edinburgh. Wales - Mr. LLOYD O. OWEN and Mr. W.H. VAUGHAN, Commissioners; Mr. G.B. RYLE, Director; and Mr. J.L. SHAW, District Forest Officer, North Wales Conservancy. Others representing the Commission included the Deputy Director General, SIR HENRY BERESFORD PEIRSE; Mr. JAMES MCDONALD, Director, Research and Education; and Mr. H.A. TURNER, Secretary.

There were a number of presentations to Her Majesty who, with the Duke of Edinburgh, also spoke to Forest Workers and their wives.

Eggesford Forest lies on each side of the main Barnstaple-Exeter road and dominates the steep-sided valley through which flows the River Tawe, and considerably enhances the scenic attractions of the locality. The forest has contributed about 900 acres to the million acres, which, as a point of interest, represent an area larger than Kent; it would occupy almost two-thirds of Perthshire, and is nearly twice the extent of Glamorgan.

## SERIOUS LOSSES FROM FIRE

MORE THAN 3,000 ACRES BURNT  
IN FOUR MONTHS

THIS YEAR, to date, has brought anxious days for our colleagues in the field, for the fire risk has been high and prolonged. It has, in fact, been a black year so far, with very much more damage and financial loss than

occurred in the whole of the Forest Year 1955. By the end of April the planted area burnt was 3,229 acres, almost 12 times that which was lost last year; and the financial loss to the same date, at £133,358, was well over six times that of last year and equal to the loss of the seven previous years put together. The cause? It is well enough known to Foresters, but newcomers to the Commission, with jobs in the various offices, may not realise that continuous frosts and drying winds have been largely to blame.

Some of this year's fires almost warrant the label disastrous. Most serious fire of all, to date, was that at Leanachan, in North Scotland, where 740 acres were burnt in a fire originating, it is understood, from the railway, and the financial loss was more than £30,000; as if that were not enough, a second fire occurred shortly afterwards, involving another 44 acres and causing a further loss of nearly £1,400 - this, it is thought, started through carelessness by a member of

the public. Changue Forest, in the same Conservancy, also suffered grievously, for there nearly 500 acres went up in flames and smoke, costing us almost £20,000. East Scotland lost more than 200 acres at Pitfichie (financial loss about £12,300) and here again the railway is blamed; West Scotland lost 180 acres, valued at more than £8,000, at Achaglachgach, in a fire which spread from adjoining land. Losses have been serious, too, in South Wales; a fire at Michaelston entered the plantations from adjoining land, destroyed nearly 450 acres and cost us almost £23,000 and, in a further blaze at Rheola, 175 acres were burnt, resulting in over £5,000 going on to the debit side of the books. Here again, the cause was a fire lit on adjoining land.

~~THE~~ FORESTS WITH NO 'P' YEAR

AND MILLIONS OF YEARS OLD

only a little piece and it isn't exactly a young tree either - about a couple of hundred million years old, it appears. I found it in the Cromer Forest Bed, which is a fossilized forest located on the foreshore of that popular seaside resort. I have discovered other fossils there, but this one puzzles me.

As far as I have been able to ascertain it is a *Lepidodendron* (no known connection with the *rhododendron*), a carboniferous tree of the Palaeozoic Period. Authorities on the subject, however, state that no carboniferous trees exist in the Cromer Forest Bed. Now is it just possible that they are wrong, I wonder, or do I need to brush up on my identification?

Incidentally, fossil hunting is an extremely absorbing and intriguing pastime. With us - my wife, son and self - it can be described as a family hobby. We have spent many an exciting hour together, prodding a cliff face or prising away in an old pit or quarry. It is not easy to describe the exultation - and awe - one experiences upon carefully parting the layers of a chunk of stratified rock sand to reveal the little wavelets made by some pre-recorded ocean; or to crack open a limestone boulder and know, then, that one possesses a beautifully fashioned ammonite. Our collection grows and becomes more comprehensive year by year. We have corals and sponges, sea urchins, univalves, bivalves, lampshells, ammonites, belemnites (the last two are fore-runners of the modern cuttle fish or octopus), a shark's tooth; and, later, the tools of prehistoric man - axes, arrow heads, scrapers and knives. But for those who prefer to stick to silviculture - of a type - there are excellent Fossil Forests in different parts of the British Isles. For the Scot there is one at Victoria Park, Whiteinch, Glasgow, and another at Stornaway, Isle of Lewis; for the Welshman there is Swansea Bay, and for the Englishman - in addition to that at Cromer - there are beds at Barnstaple Bay, Devon; St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall; and a very ancient one on the cliff edge at Lulworth Cove, Dorset.

But in the wider field of palaeontological research each stratum of rock in an outcropping or pit, every layer comprising a cliff is a page of history waiting to be read - and the book itself spans several hundred million years. It is one of the most interesting I have endeavoured to read! I strongly recommend it.

~~THE~~ THE WOODCOCK CONTROVERSY

THE PRESENCE of a naturalist and bird photographer on the Smales beat of Kielder Forest, North East England Conservancy, prompts Forester C.M. SIMPSON to revive an old controversy by asking - "Does the woodcock carry its young in flight?"

"A number of people claim to have seen this done," writes Forester Simpson, "but most bird watchers prefer to keep an open mind on the subject. If the woodcock does train its young to be air-minded at an early age, then I am hopeful that it will be permanently recorded in the near future by way of photography at Smales; meanwhile, are there any enthusiastic bird watchers among readers of The Slasher who have seen this (presumably) rare sight? If so, their comments would be of great interest to the staff here".

~~THE~~ FROM A SCOT TO A SCOT

THE following extract from Entopath News, published at Alice Holt, is worthy of reproduction, if only as an example of the erudition of the Research Staff.

Letter to the Editor: "I was interested to read in the January issue of Entopath News that the Braemar temperature and other instances of unusual weather in Scotland during 1955 were exemplar of the 'vagaries of

the English climate'. I therefore assume that 'the average Englishman' of your first paragraph, who no doubt includes all the Alice Holt staff from North of the Border, in his discussions on the weather links Bentley (nearest railway station to Alice Holt) with Bennachie. The following seems very appropriate:

"Behold the Tiber, the proud Roman cried  
When standing by the Tay at Balgray's side.  
But where's the Scot who would that vaunt repay  
And hail the Tiber as the Tay?"

And the reply in Entopath News, by "Exiled Gaul":

"What's in a word? When Pict and Scot,  
And Angle, Jute and polygot,  
Saxon, Roman, Norman trace  
The entwicklung of this island race,  
While German, Dane and Wandering Jew  
Still more enrich the English stew.  
Thus, Scot, though pure in word and deed  
There's nothing pure about your bluid."

#### CHAMPION SHINTY PLAYERS

FOUR Forest Workers from Tighnabruaich Forest, Argyllshire, West Scotland Conservancy, played for the shinty team Kyles Athletic which beat the Kilmallie, Inverness-shire side 4-1 in the final of the Camanachd Association Challenge Cup. They were NEIL BLACK (captain), NEIL GILBERT, ALASTAIR CHAMBERS and JOHN TURNER. The cup, which Kyles Athletic have now won 10 times, holds six bottles of whisky.

(Editor's note. Numerous Sassenachs have only the vaguest knowledge of shinty. Some facetiously refer to it as being a pastime in which the ball counts least of all! A dictionary definition is: "Shinty, a club and ball game like hockey, popular in the Highlands. Perhaps Gael. sinteag; a bound").

#### EVER ADDER BIGGER ONE?

ASSISTANT FORESTER J.J. MUNRO, of Redesdale Forest, North East England Conservancy, reports that the adder he killed recently was the largest he had ever seen. So that there shall be no doubt about it, we quote the length as given by the Curator of the Hancock Museum, Newcastle, to whom the snake was sent -  $27\frac{7}{8}$  inches; the largest adder known to the Curator was one which measured  $28\frac{1}{2}$  inches and was found near Hereford.

Mr. Munro says he has no doubt that adders larger than the one he killed have been encountered elsewhere, especially in his native Highlands; but, all the same, he would like to hear of them. For that matter, so would many of our readers, so that if you know of a bigger adder, please write to us about it.

#### STRANGE CAUSE OF A FOREST FIRE

CAN anyone beat this as an unusual cause of a forest fire? This particular fire occurred on Cockshoot Beat, in the Dean and, as the result, two acres of European larch were lost.

A kestrel carrying a lizard in its talons alighted on a power line; unfortunately it chose a spot close to a metal pole which must have had a faulty insulator, for the wings of the bird caused a short circuit between the one wire and the pole. The bird was electrocuted and, still holding the lizard, fell to the ground with its feathers burning and these set alight the ground vegetation.

For those who may doubt, the bird was recovered at the apex of the fire. Both bird and lizard (or what remains of them) may be inspected (by appointment) at Whitemead Park.

#### SATISFIED CUSTOMER

SUCH is human nature that the customer will often complain but rarely take the trouble to applaud; and so the following letter from the Secretary of the Birmingham District Association of the Camping Club makes pleasant reading.

"I would like to take this opportunity," he writes, "to express my personal appreciation, and that of the District Association, of the very efficient way the Forest Park Camp at Berry Hill, in the Forest of Dean, is

run, and of the facilities provided. All this, coupled with the delightful surroundings, make our annual visit very enjoyable. I observe each year how many more of our fellow campers have discovered this lovely site; this must be very encouraging to the Forestry Commissioners."

### THE TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

Forester E. LEYSHON from Research, Bedgebury, to Research, Westonbirt. Assistant Foresters P. F. LAWRENCE from Mortimer, NW(E), to Packington, NW(E); J. P. DAVIS from Alice Holt, SE(E), to Andover, SE(E); A. E. HARWOOD from Rosarie, E(S), to Tentsmuir, E(S). Foreman B. E. SUTTON from Bramshill, SE(E), to Hursley, SE(E).

Assistant Engineer C. S. ALLAN from York, NE(E), to Bellingham, NE(E). Clerks of Works J. A. COWIE from Lael, N(S), to Oyckell, N(S); A.M. MACLENNAN from Glencripesdale, N(S), to Glenhurich, N(S); A. NOBLE from Oyckell to South Laggan, N(S).

### "IN POSSON BUT SBJT AS THRMAR MENTD"

MANY readers (writes District Officer F. D. BARRETT, North East England Conservancy) have shared with me the experience of buying a house. When I bought one, recently, I was "forced" into the hands of a solicitor, who

### WRESTLING WITH AN ABSTRACT

made what I now know are called ENQUIRIES before CONTRACT and LOCAL searches. (I thought I had answered all enquiries when I first saw the solicitor, and as for a search, I knew where the house was and where the vendor lived). However, these mysterious things are apparently part of the secret rites. After a decent interval I was asked to sign a Contract and then, so that there was no undignified haste, a month was allowed to elapse before completion took place and I was allowed to move in.

Having moved into the new house I returned to my desk only to find that the official solicitor had taken over the matter of an acquisition in respect of which I had submitted a report. The minute I now received enclosed "Draft Contract, draft Plan, Local Searches, Preliminary Enquiries and six Abstracts of Title". Here at last, I thought, is my opportunity. I, who had been thought too incompetent to comment when buying my own house, was now being asked to do so. Applying a wet towel, I started on an Abstract; this should have been easy to deal with, for it referred to "fee simple in posson but sbjt as thrmar mentd". I stopped and my thoughts began to wander as I pondered on the minds of those who originally conjured such expressions; then my eyes focussed on the word "Trees". This, I thought, would be more interesting. Carefully I read "the said F..... was apptd to be a Tree in the place of the said L..... for the ppses of the said thrbefore recited Will". Dismissing thoughts of the embarrassing things that might happen to anyone "apptd a tree", I read on ..... "as to the heres and prems cold blue on the sd plan in pursuance of the sd agnt and in conson of the sum of £X then pd by the Coy by the diron of F..... to the Trees as such Trees as afsd."

The only interest I had then was in the whereabouts of the money and the trees which received it. There was comment in The Slasher recently about the practice of burying money under a walnut tree. Could there be any connection?

### PERSONAL

MR. ALBERT WALKER, blind shorthand-typist at Headquarters for more than four years, has gone to the Ministry of Transport. Colleagues at Savile Row presented him with a tape for a recorder.

Congratulations to Mr. W. A. ELWOOD, Clerical Officer at Chester, on his marriage. And to District Officer R. A. SUTTON, South East England Conservancy, and Mrs. Sutton, on the birth of a daughter - Carol Ann, who arrived on Mr. Sutton's birthday; to District Officer (Asst. Pathologist) S. MURRAY, Alice Holt, and Mrs. Murray, on the birth of a third child - Keith; and to Mr. RAY COOTE, Higher Executive Officer at Princes Gate, and Mrs. Coote, on the arrival of a daughter.

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