

THE SLASHER

Forestry Commission News

No. 102

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A ROYAL MESSAGE

APPRECIATION OF EGGESFORD  
VISIT

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN and H.R.H. the DUKE OF EDINBURGH have sent a message to LORD RADNOR, our Chairman, expressing their appreciation of the arrangements made for the recent ceremony at Eggesford Forest, South West England Conservancy,

during which the Royal couple planted trees. As reported last month, the planting by Her Majesty marked the Commission's achievement in completing the planting of one million acres. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh again expressed their thanks for the gifts of secateurs and slasher which were made at the ceremony and added that they hoped their visit to Eggesford would serve to indicate the deep personal interest both take in the work of the Forestry Commission.

NEW KNIGHT OF THE THISTLE

WE ARE very pleased to record that Her Majesty the Queen has appointed MAJOR JOHN STIRLING of

FAIRBURN, one of the Forestry Commissioners, to be a Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle.

Major Stirling has been a Forestry Commissioner since July, 1948, and is Chairman of the National Committee for Scotland. He is a former Chairman of the Agriculture and Forestry Group of the Advisory Panel for the Highlands and Islands, and among other public appointments, he has been Convenor of the County Council of Ross and Cromarty since 1935 and is a Freeman of the Borough of Dingwall. Major Stirling served in the Lovat Scouts in the first world war.

FOREST TREE SEED ASSOCIATION

THE FORMATION of a Forest Tree Seed Association is an event of importance and interest to foresters all over the country. The Scottish Association, which recently came into being, is

FIRST OF ITS KIND IN BRITAIN

the first of its kind in Britain and, obviously, its objects are to improve the quality of all species of forest trees by encouraging the use of seed and plants of the best known origins. Members of the Association will collaborate in collecting and processing seed from the selected trees, in rearing plants from the seed and in marketing seed or plants under a certificate of origin which will guarantee good parentage and purity to the purchaser. Though the Association will initially be concerned with the certification of seed collected in Scotland, it will in time be able to advise its members of the best overseas sources of seed and will be able to foster an exchange of valuable tree varieties.

The selection of forest tree seed sources is to be made so as to obtain vigorous progeny with straight stems free from spiral grain and fluting, and with fine branches so as to yield timber which is free from large knots. Other features such as freedom and immunity from serious disease are also to be sought. The adaptability of a variety or strain of forest tree, that is its ability to thrive under a wide range of conditions, will also be regarded as of prime importance. When it is remembered that about 30 years must usually elapse before the results of selection can be completely assessed and that numerous characteristics of tree growth are involved, it will be realised that the selection of good parent trees is both a skilled and long term process. The work of improvement does not stop at selection, for with numerous selected varieties at his disposal the tree breeder can start crossing and blending to produce new and improved types as well as crossing species to produce hybrids.

During the past four years the Commission's Geneticist, Mr. J. D. MATTHEWS, has surveyed all the woods in Scotland of the major forest tree species and has classified them according to their suitability as seed sources, and the information gained from this extensive survey will be available to the Association.

The Chairman of the Association is the EARL CAWDORE and the management committee includes Mr. J. R. THOM and Mr. D. T. SEAL of the Scottish Directorate; the Secretary is Mr. H. BROWN, of the Edinburgh Office.

ALLEGED DRAMA IN A FIRE  
TOWER

ONE of our employees, Mr. WILLIAM CARROLL, gave evidence recently in a case at Cannock, Staffordshire, in which a boy of 16 was accused

of murdering a man and his wife by shooting them. Mr. Carroll alleged that while he was on duty in a fire tower the youth, who was carrying a gun, climbed up the ladder; the youth fired the gun through the open window of the tower and then threw the weapon away. Later, it was stated, the police found a number of cartridges, and a haversack containing cartridges and a number of £1 notes, at the foot of the tower.

RE

## THE WOODCOCK AND ITS YOUNG

A READER at Headquarters who is an ornithologist of considerable experience comments on last month's note on the subject of woodcock carrying their young when in flight.

"I think," he writes, "that this is regarded as an established fact, but not a common occurrence. Most handbooks quote a number of cases which are taken as authentic, and I have myself met more than one person who is sure he has seen the happening. These have all been of adult birds, which, anxious about the safety of their young, have been trying to remove them from danger. Some people think, however, that the young are also carried to feeding grounds. There is no question of their being trained to become air-minded.

"So far as I know the occurrence has never been photographed. I imagine it would be very difficult to do this, not only because of its infrequency but because of difficulty in seeing what is actually taking place."

RE

## THE KILBURN WHITE HORSE

### AND ANOTHER STORY OF ITS ORIGIN

MANY of our forest areas are rich in history and tradition. Writing of his locality, Forester F. STEPHENSON mentions the Kilburn White Horse in the North Riding of Yorkshire, which was the subject of a note in The Slasher some time ago. Mr. Stephenson reminds us that the White Horse now lies on Commission land and he states that the horse "was cut out of turf and heather about 100 years ago by a local headmaster with the help of a few local men". This does not tally with what we were previously told about the origin of the horse - that a Thomas Taylor, who made a fortune in London, decided to have a counterpart of the Wiltshire White Horse cut near his native Kilburn; an alternative story was that the horse commemorates a legend of a horse trainer who was said to have fallen, with his steed, over Roulston Scar, a nearby cliff. It is strange that although only a century appears to have passed since the horse was cut, there should be conflicting stories as to its origin. Can any reader say categorically which story is correct?

Now let Forester Stephenson continue. "Overlooking the Vale of Mowbray from 900 feet," he writes, "the White Horse of Kilburn can be seen from the south from 20 miles away; with the twin attraction of a notable woodcarving business at Kilburn, it becomes a great picnic centre for motorists. Another attraction which brings potential fire risks for Ampleforth Forest is the Benedictine Byland Abbey; this was the seat of a flourishing community until Cromwell appeared on the scene - his head is said to be buried on the nearby Coxwold Newburgh estate of the Wombwells. It was in the village of Coxwold that the Vicar Laurance Sterne wrote 'Tristram Shandy' and, it is to be hoped, prayed for the repose of Cromwell's soul".

RE

## YOUNGER THAN WE THOUGHT

IT APPEARS we erred in stating in our April issue that the tractor credited with running for 21,500 hours was purchased in 1922. Forester W. MACKAY, of Culloden, North Scotland Conservancy, says it came to him, new, at Millbuie in July, 1937. "I think I am right in saying it was the first tracked tractor to be allocated to the North Scotland Conservancy", he writes. "It did a lot of good work in my time at Millbuie, ploughing, I would say, from 3,000 to 4,000 acres with little or no trouble. Tractor break-downs were few in those days, but we had a lot of trouble through the breaking of plough shares. I have certainly seen some advancements in plough-types since I first saw one nearly 20 years ago".

RE

## ANSWER TO "THIRSTY SCOTSMAN"

While we cannot comply with "Thirsty Scotsman's" request for a recipe for whisky, we can pass on details for preparing a substitute, namely wheat wine, which, says Forester M. P. SALMOND, of Doncaster Forest, "can be mistaken for rye whisky, though not by a connoisseur!" Ingredients, says Forester Salmond, are 1 lb. of potatoes washed with the skin on and thinly sliced, 1 lb. wheat, 2 lbs. raisins, 4 lbs. yellow Demerara sugar, and 1 oz. of yeast. Put everything except the yeast into a large bowl and add one gallon of hot water. When the "brew" is nearly cold, add the yeast and stir every day for three weeks; then strain and bottle. Keep for at least six months before sampling - this is important. A pinch of isinglass added to the mixture helps to clear it.

RE

## AN APPEARANCE ON TV

VIEWERS saw Miss MARGARET CHALLONER, Personal Assistant to Director, England, in a recent TV "quiz" feature. After successfully answering questions she was handed a key to a cabinet and then, before opening the container, received bids from the compere for the (to her) unknown contents. Miss Challoner refused a bid of £12 10s. before the cabinet was opened and she found that her prize was - a bottle of ink!

THE (ALMOST) UNLUCKY ONE

MR. WAITER MATTHEWS, Chief Clerk at Bristol, South West England Conservancy, put in a great deal of work in connection with the Queen's visit to Eggesford Forest. During the afternoon of the day before the event he was walking over the site for the Royal planting ceremony when he slipped and badly hurt an ankle. First aid workers, who were preparing their "headquarters" for possible use during Her Majesty's visit, thus had their first, and quite unexpected, case. Mr. Matthews was taken to hospital and detained and faced the prospect of missing all the excitement attendant on the Royal visit. But, doggedly persevering, he appeared on the site with his foot and ankle heavily strapped, in good time to witness the proceedings.

DORMICE IN WINTER

HERE is another nature query. This comes from Forester B. R. HAMMOND, Moccas Forest, South West England Conservancy, who asks whether the hibernation of dormice in severe weather in winter is as general as supposed.

"During the spell of bitter weather earlier in the year," he says, "I was walking on a very exposed north-facing slope covered with snow to a depth of four inches when I was surprised to see a dormouse. The little animal came quite near to me and I was able to pick it up - it was as plump and glossy as it would be in summer, but where it had come from and 'wither bound' was a mystery. I took it to a nearby hollow stump in the bracken, and there it disappeared.

"This was the first time during my 20 years of winters in the forest that I had ever seen a dormouse in February and I should be interested to know whether anyone else has seen one when snow has been on the ground".

NEST ON A HOE

IT IS an appropriate time to seek information about odd nesting places used by birds this spring. What is the oddest place so far encountered by any of our readers? The following case, reported by District Officer B. C. SELBY, North East England Conservancy, is unusual. He tells us that a robin sat with complete unconcern in a nest perched precariously on the blade of a hoe, which was leaning against the wall of his garden shed. The balance was so delicate that no attempt could be made to "anchor" the hoe.

STRANGE TREE

A PHOTOGRAPH taken somewhere near Lewes, in Sussex (we don't know the exact location) shows a strange tree growing in a churchyard. It appears to be a conifer of substantial height; almost all the branches are stunted and devoid of foliage. Yet, out from the stem, halfway up the tree and opposite each other, are two branches from which appear to be growing two sizeable trees of good shape, each with a profusion of needles. Can any reader identify this unusual specimen and tell us more about it?

THE B.B.C. NEEDS US

EVEN the B.B.C. can't do without us, or at least without the raw material we help to produce. Their television studios, we learn, use half a million square feet of timber every year, presumably for sets and scenes. Come to think of it, there are a number of "odd spots" concerning the B.B.C., which enters the lives of all of us, in one way or another. For example, B.B.C. Television hold a stock of 200,000 different "props" and more than 4,000 costumes (though not, we think, a Forester's uniform); these props range from teaspoons to pianos and are issued to the studios at the rate of two or three thousand a week. And there is a feminine angle in the news that TV make-up girls use in a year (not on themselves, of course) three hundredweight of cold cream and more than 300 pairs of false eyelashes.

There are 230,000 records in the B.B.C.'s library and 7,500 recordings of different sounds; the reference library has 63,000 books, a quarter of a million illustrations, and a staff of 50; the Television film library has 15 million feet of film, catalogued into 100,000 different "shots"; and in the B.B.C. music library there are 500 tons of music in print and in manuscript.

AN INTERESTING CONIFER

ON THE WINDOWSILL in the room of a Forest Officer at Headquarters can be seen an interesting little seedling, growing in a pot. It is a broadleaved conifer - a Podocarpus, common in South America, East Africa and New Zealand. It is rare to see such a species in this country - it is frost tender - and this particular seedling came from a Ministry of Agriculture property in Devon. In appearance the timber of Podocarpus differs little from that of most conifers grown in Britain and we understand that in the days of restricted importation of softwood it could, in fact, be brought into this country without licence, under the name Podo or Maneo. The foliage of this species is rather like a blade of grass, though thicker.

## REF HONOURS FOR TWO OFFICERS

AS we go to Press we learn with great pleasure that two officers of the Forestry Commission have been honoured by Her Majesty the Queen. In the Birthday Honours list Mr. E. WYNNE JONES, Deputy Surveyor, New Forest, becomes an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and Mr. J. L. SHAW, District Officer, North Wales Conservancy, becomes a Member of the same Order.

It is pleasing to learn, also, that Professor H. G. Champion, Professor of Forestry at Oxford University, becomes a Knight Bachelor. We shall refer to these well deserved awards at greater length in the next issue of The Slasher.

## REF CEREMONY IN A FOREST CLEARING

HEAD FORESTER JONES RECEIVES HIS  
B.E.M.

IN a clearing outside the Forester's house at Delamere, North West England Conservancy, there took place a simple but most pleasing ceremony - that in which Head Forester H. W. JONES received from the VISCOUNT LEVERHULME, Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, the British Empire Medal awarded to him by Her Majesty the Queen for long and meritorious service.

Head Forester Jones is due to retire in September after completing 30 years at Delamere and 47 years in forestry. His career is indeed an interesting one; he was born in the Forest of Dean in 1891 and in 1904 he began work as a miner. But an accident to his leg in 1907 was to have a profound effect on his future life, for, unable to continue work in the mines, he started with the Office of Woods in the spring of 1909. After a spell as a forestry worker in the Dean he entered the old Forestry School where, in 1915, he obtained the Forestry Certificate.

On leaving the School Mr. Jones was employed by the Office of Woods in the Dean as an assistant forester and in April, 1924, when management of the Crown forests was taken over by the Forestry Commission, he was appointed a Grade II Forester. He was promoted Grade I Forester in 1928. He began his long association with Delamere in 1926 when the forest comprised 34 acres of nursery in addition to 1,200 acres of plantations. These plantations had been badly neglected and their present condition is largely due to his enthusiasm and skill. In those early days fire danger was acute. There were considerable areas of over-stocked plantations with much dead timber among the stems; the railway running through the forest necessitated constant vigilance over the greater part of the year and the fact that there was no serious damage to these plantations was a direct result of Mr. Jones' vigilance.

Mr. Jones was promoted to Head Forester in July, 1940.

Lord Leverhulme, who paid great tribute to Mr. Jones and to the work of the Commission as a whole, was introduced by Mr. J.S.R. Chard, Conservator, North West England, and in his reply Mr. Jones thanked his colleagues and forest staff and employees for their help and unfailing assistance through the years.

LORD LEVERHULME was thanked by LORD NEWPORT, Chairman of the North West Regional Advisory Committee, who also referred to the high degree of co-operation which exists between the Conservancy and private woodland owners. Following the ceremony the official party, which included local council officials and personalities, and police and fire brigade representatives, were taken on a tour of Delamere Forest.

Although he is immensely proud of Delamere, Mr. Jones has never broken his ties with the Forest of Dean; Mrs. Jones is also a native of the Dean, and the couple will spend their retirement in their home county.

## REF TRANSFERS

TRANSFERS will be included in next month's issue.

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