

GENEROUS GIFT FROM POLAND

PAIR OF BREEDING BISON

POLAND, through the Forestry Commission, is to present the United Kingdom with a breeding pair of European bison. This gift was foreshadowed at the recent Congress of the International Union of

Forest Research Organisations, and the other day our Chairman, LORD RADNOR, with the Deputy Director General, SIR HENRY BERESFORD-PEIRSE, and the Director of Research and Education, Mr. JAMES MACDONALD, formally accepted the generous offer during a meeting with the Polish Minister in London.

These rare forest animals, of which the Zoological Society has none at present in its care, will on arrival be sent to Whipsnade. Poland, it is understood, has between 80 - 90 European bison (representing about half the number in the world) and it is good to know that stocks are slowly building up. A few roam a national park and the remainder are in enclosures in various parts of the country.

XIX TRIBUTE TO WALTER MATTHEWS

AN ABLE AND CONSCIENTIOUS EXECUTIVE

A CORRESPONDENT writes of our late colleague, WALTER MATTHEWS, Chief Clerk at Bristol, whose tragic death was reported last month. "In the passing of Walter Matthews," he says, "the

Commission has lost one of its ablest and most conscientious senior officers on the executive side. He came to the Commission from an entirely different Government sphere, one in which trees, rural land use, and those individualists called Forest Officers were unheard and undreamed of. Yet he quickly captured the underlying and strong atmosphere of enthusiasm, zeal and constant hard work for which the Commission is outstanding, and added to it his own mature experience brought from another world. He was always keen to learn more about his new environment, including our history back to 1919 and as the result he rapidly became a most valuable asset to the executive ranks, and the ideal 'shadow' to the Conservators for whom he worked and to whom he gave unstinted energy and devotion.

"Coupled to Walter Matthews' competence was a delightful sense of humour, amounting almost to roguishness, which often did much to relieve the gloom cast by the morning's post. The troubles and sorrows of his colleagues were always of importance to 'Wally' and he did a great deal of work, quietly and unobtrusively, with the benevolent and orphans' organisation. With all this was a zest for living and a happy disposition that makes it almost unbelievable that he should have been cut off at the early age of 58. The sorrow of his wife and daughter will be shared by all who enjoyed his friendship."

XX THE FIRST FOREST QUEEN

CROWNED IN WALES

SO THE FIRST Forest Queen has been crowned -- in a Welsh valley. She is 15-years old BLODVEN ROWLANDS, a Machynlleth county schoolgirl of Ceinws, in the Dovey Valley, in which locality the Commission has

formed one of the loveliest forests in all Wales. The ceremony took place in the local village hall, and was performed by Mrs. BEAUMONT, wife of Col. the Hon. R. E. BEAUMONT, who is President of the Village Hall Management Committee. The Rev. E. M. EVANS, Vicar of Corris, said the occasion reflected the contribution that afforestation was making to the life of the area. Greetings on behalf of the Commission were offered by District Officer E.J. DAVIES.

XXI HOW TO GET RID OF THE HORRIBLE
HOODIE
OPEN THE WINDOW BEFORE SHOOTING

LITTLE did we think that our paragraph last month about District Officer ROBERTSON'S window-tapping "horrible hoodie" would arouse so much interest. Mr. K. E. PRUCE writes from Aberystwyth about

unusual bird behaviour mentioned in David Dodge's book "High Life in the Andes". The author records that he and his family, while living in the Andes, were bothered by a woodpecker which persistently pecked at the windows in the early hours of the morning. This "glass-pecker" produced a noise like a rivetting machine and destroyed all hope of sleep. It defied every effort to shoot or catch it. It brought matters to a head by pecking so hard that it broke the bathroom window. Glass being hard to obtain, the pane was replaced with a sheet of brown paper; the next morning the bird arrived on time, poised itself on the sill, took its usual crack at the window and burst through the paper on to the bathroom floor. It escaped and some time later renewed its activities by attacking a bedroom window. This time the family was prepared for it and placed a mirror inside the glass. Taking its first swipe at the glass, it was so surprised to see another bird apparently in the act of returning the blow that it fell off the sill into the yard, where it lay on its back squawking. Finally it flew away, never to be seen again.

Mr. H. G. SMITH, Shrewsbury, points out that District Officer Robertson will have to take a great deal of care if he shoots at the crow from inside the house. "I know a man," writes Mr. Smith, "who was troubled by pigeons and he let fly early one morning from his bedroom at a bird on his garden crops. Unfortunately he forgot to open the window first or to warn his wife, who was still asleep. Very funny, of course, when recounted, but not so funny at the time."

"It is not unusual for birds to start window tapping," says Divisional Officer W. A. CADMAN, Aberystwyth, "but this is mostly done by small birds, such as chaffinches, wagtails, great tits, etc. Many theories have been put forward. That they are seeking insects, pecking putty, and so on does not appear likely to me. It is more probable that the habit starts by an attack on their own reflection and then becomes an obsession. (In a similar way, when one is trapping birds for ringing, odd individuals develop a 'trap obsession', and return to the trap time after time).

"It is very unusual for such alert birds as crows to start window tapping. But, by a coincidence, I can quote a similar case. Some 18 years ago I occupied a new house. Almost immediately a pair of carrion crows started attacking the windows in the early morning. They behaved as though their lives depended on smashing the glass and their raucous alarm notes brought many other crows into the trees around and pandemonium reigned. Finally, I crept out of the back door in my pyjamas, early one morning, and shot the birds to a right and left as they flew away, thus restoring peace to the neighbourhood.

"It is curious that Jackdaws, which have a closer association with houses, do not develop this window-pecking habit; at least, I have never heard of a case."

And a previous inhabitant of Park House (presumably District Officer Robertson's abode) writes: "Mr. Robertson should not worry about this bird, it is merely a familiar spirit I was unable to bring away with me. He should, however, not let it into the house, as it is apt to be too familiar. No doubt Mr. Robertson is aware that a sprig of rowan over the door is very effective against such visitors. But if he desires to shoot the bird, he must put a silver sixpence in his gun. If successful, I should be glad to have the tail feathers as I wish to continue my experiments."

XX THAT LOCUST

WHEN, in our July issue, we related how a locust was found at Latimer Forest, East England Conservancy, and was subsequently identified as an "escapee" from the Anti-Locust Research Laboratories at Kensington, we did not know or appreciate a point of ironical interest. The anti-locust research people occupy most of the fourth floor of 1, Princes Gate, London, S.W.7 -- which building, of course, also houses the office of the Director of Forestry for England!

XX THEY DO, THEY DON'T

THE WOODCOCK CONTROVERSY (CONT.)

AFTER publishing a number of statements from various correspondents which, we would have thought, proved conclusively that woodcock do carry their young in flight we were somewhat devastated on reading a letter in The Scotsman.

This stated that the late Mr. Tom Speedy of Edinburgh, the wellknown naturalist, proved beyond doubt that young woodcock are not taken for a ride, as it were. On several occasions, according to the letter, Mr. Speedy went out with a gun and with naturalists who disagreed with him. When these gentlemen pointed out to Mr. Speedy what they believed to be instances of the young being carried, Mr. Speedy shot the birds and proved that no chicks were being airborne, and that the peculiar fashion of the adult woodcock's flight, with legs hanging and tail spread out and curled under like a lobster's, had accounted for the mistaken belief.

XX ADDERS AND THEIR YOUNG

ON the subject of the adder swallowing its young in time of danger, District Officer R. CARNELL, Bristol, writes: "The tale is indeed on old chestnut! I thought that The Field had killed this one for all time, for a few years ago a well known sportsman offered a considerable sum to anyone who could come along and prove that he had seen it happen. Such a statement would have to be substantiated by (a) a photograph or (b) the dead adder with young in its stomach. The correspondence went on for about a year and, needless to say, no-one claimed the money."

XX LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE following letter concerns the Tall Tree of Belmullet, County Mayo, to the possible existence of which we referred last month.

Dear Sir,

Sure, and isn't Belmullet a great place for Tall Trees and Tall Stories? Sor, is it a tree of 200 ft. you'd be wanting? Wouldn't you be asking Mrs. Fanny O'Adams about it? Begorra, sor, hasn't she the tallest hawthorns in County Mayo?

I happen to know Belmullet and its inhabitants. It is a great place for anything about which you ask and which is always "just round the next corner". In fact, there are virtually no trees there and I suggest that the true height of your tree trunk might just possibly be 19.2 ft. -- and that would be a good one for those parts.

Not wishing to offend the Belmulletonians I use a pseudonym.

Yours, etc.,

Namdac

Editor's note. The source of our little story about the Belmullet tree, said to have been dug up by workmen and to be 192 ft. long with a quarter girth of $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft., was the Gliksten Journal, which quoted one Sir Terence Langrishe, who in turn quoted the Forestry Division of the Department of Lands, Irish Republic, who were "making enquiries". Readers will recall we stated we had the story at third hand.

~~WORKING~~ ON A FOREST SITE
WHERE ELK & BOAR ROAMED
UNDER PRIMEVAL OAKS

OUR colleagues in the office of Director, Scotland are working, appropriately enough, on the site of a former forest -- the ancient Forest of Drumsheugh. An article on Edinburgh by Rosaline Masson says that when the city was only a castle rising out of woods and morasses, with a cluster of wooden, thatched huts below it, all the land lying between the Castle and Arthur's Seat was part of the unhewn forest of Drumsheugh. "There, where the red elk and the Caledonian boar roamed under primeval oaks, the pious Celtic kings of Scotland were wont to take their pleasure in the chase. David, the last of Malcolm's five sons who reigned, rode out from the Castle one day, followed by his courtiers, to go a-hunting -- this in spite of the protests of his confessor, for it was the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and a day rather for vigil than for sport. Good fortune could not attend the King in such a rebellious mood. He became separated from the 'noys and dyn of Bugillis' of the royal hunt, and suddenly found himself alone and confronted by a huge white stag, which, furious and at bay, attacked him. King David defended himself with his short hunting sword, and would have fared but ill had not a miracle happened -- a hand from the clouds placed a cross in his hand, before which sacred emblem the white stag fled. And that night, as the awed and wearied monarch slept in the Castle, St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, appeared to him and told him to found yet another monastery on the scene of the miracle. So Holyrood Abbey was founded, and the canons lived in the Castle till their Abbey was ready for them, in all its beauty, in the valley close at the foot of Arthur's Seat."

The forest is mentioned in other excerpts -
"..... Outside the city, on the Boroughmuir (part of the old hunting ground of the Forest of Drumsheugh, now a built-over suburb, but whose every inch is historic ground) lay the whole encamped host of the Scottish Army".

"..... The Church of St. Giles, like the prophet, had had other experiences -- which is perhaps not wonderful when one recollects that it was in all probability the parish church of 'Edwinstown' in the ninth century. It was certainly there in the days of David I, when Edinburgh was a cluster of huts, built of the wood and thatched with the boughs of the Forest of Drumsheugh, with its dominating fortress up on the rock, its great Abbey down on the plain, and half-way on the slope between them the beautiful little early Norman church."

~~FOR~~ BADGER BAITING:

RELIC OF A FORMER "PASTIME"

MOST of us have an affectionate regard for the badger -- our old friend brock, as we've described him in the past. Indeed, one of our recent leaflets made it clear that he does little or no damage in the forest, apart from breaking through a fence if it has been erected on his usual run; to quote the leaflet, he "can be tolerated and even welcomed in the woods."

This makes all the more distasteful the recollection that once upon a time badger baiting was rife and was considered an excellent sport. In an article in Countryman, John Sankey described an old Chilterns badger pit in the grounds

of Braziers Park, near Ipsden. This is circular and nearly $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet across, with a side opening about 2 ft. wide in which there must have been a gate or door. The floor of the pit is lined with bricks and the surrounding brick wall is about $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and surmounted by a domed grid "whose purpose is difficult to imagine, for no badger could possibly have climbed the vertical wall". The onlookers stood on a brick platform, about 3 ft wide, which surrounds the pit on the outside.

Almost opposite the entrance is a small blind tunnel, leading into the base of wall and into this the badger backed to take up its defence against the dog. Wagers were laid on the number of times in a given period that the dog would draw the badger from its retreat. When this occurred the animals were separated by a piece of metal on a long handle or by some other means, often, it has been said, by attendants biting the animals' tails. The "pastime" of badger baiting was made illegal in the middle of the last century.

~~***~~CRICKET IN WALES

STAFF of the Shrewsbury office visited Aberystwyth to meet a Welsh Directorate team at cricket.

Batting first, the Aberystwyth side were all out for 34; Shrewsbury made 106 and put the home team in to bat again to make a further 52 for 8 before time was up.

~~***~~PERSONAL

CONGRATULATIONS to Miss DOROTHY BARSTOW, shorthand typist at the office of Director, England, and

formerly at Headquarters, and Mr. JOHN HENDRICK, of the Headquarters Audit Section, on their marriage. The couple received a joint gift of cutlery from the two offices. Congratulations, too, to Miss M. I. G. BAILEY, Machine Operator at Alice Holt, on her wedding. Best wishes, also, to Miss M. P. FYVIE, late CO at Edinburgh, on her marriage; and to CO J. P. HUGHES, Edinburgh, who also has married; to CO J. OUTERSON, Edinburgh, and Mrs. Outerson, and CO J. CAMERON, Edinburgh, and Mrs. Cameron, a son having been born to each couple.

EO J. HOGARTH, of the Edinburgh office, has gained the Timber Development Association's certificates in timber technology and timber trade practice. Well done!

~~***~~TRANSFERS

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

Head Forester A. MACKAY from Aberdeen, W(S), to Barcaldine; W(S). Foresters G. A. GOODLET from Kirroughtree, S(S), to Tinnisburn, S(S); J. B. STIRRAT from Lyndhurst, New, to Ringwood, New; W. J. ROBERTSON from Twiglees, S(S), to Clydesdale, S(S); A. M. MACMILLAN from Carradale, W(S), to Loch Ard, W(S); D. J. MACRAE from Inverliever, W(S), to Ardgartan; A. A. C. SIMPSON from Saddell, W(S), to Carradale; W. GILMOUR from Loch Ard to Inverliever.

Assistant Foresters W. R. EVANS from Research, Cambridge to Research, Alice Holt Lodge; I. R. CAMPBELL from Brighstone, New, to Shalfleet, New; A. F. THOMAS from Carrick, S(S), to Cairn Edward, S(S); R. M. CHADWICK from Penllyn, N(W), to Clocaenog, N(W); J. S. MACKENZIE from Carron Valley, W(S), to Saddell; J. L. HOGG from Wauchope, S(S), to Kirroughtree. Foremen S. FRASER from Reelig, N(S), to Craigphadrig, N(S); F. W. LANE from Bechan, N(W), to Dovey Valley, N(W). Clerk of Works R. E. VEST from Cynonville, S(W), to Wentwood, S(W).

~~***~~CARRYING THE BABY

NOT all enquiries at our stands at Agricultural shows are about forestry. At one show, a harrassed young mother, with a really bouncing baby in her arms, engaged the Forester-in-charge in a whispered conversation. Later on it was learned that she was asking if she might use the Commission caravan in order to change the baby's "nappies". As a special concession to a special case she was given the necessary facilities and provided with a supply of hot and cold water. She asked whether, should it be necessary, she might come again. It was and she did.

~~***~~THE RUSSIAN JOURNEY

LAST month we said we hoped to include a report in this issue of the recent visit to Russia by a Forestry Commission party. Owing to the time factor we have had to go to Press without the report, but all being well it will appear 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