

EXTRACTING TIMBER BY AIR HELICOPTER TRIAL IN SCOTLAND

FOR THE FIRST TIME in any of our forests, timber has been extracted by helicopter. This occurred recently at Glenduror, near Fort William, in the West Scotland Conservancy, in a trial arranged by the Machinery Research Officer, Col. R. G. SHAW, and the opportunity also arose to consider the possibilities of using a helicopter for fire fighting operations, carriage of stores for fencing, and spraying.

The aircraft was an Agusta-Bell 47G, a machine of American design which is made under licence in Italy and has a payload of 600 lbs. and a flying speed of 60 m.p.h. A ratchet winch was used to pull the load tight against fitted brackets; in all eleven flights were made with loads of thinnings of 400-600 lbs., from a clearing 600 feet above and 1,500 yards away from the road point where the timber was deposited. On more than one occasion the machine flew away, delivered the load and was back again before the next consignment could be prepared. During the day the time taken for the complete sequence of operations of loading, flying, delivering and flying back was reduced to 5 minutes, 37 seconds. The thinnings were made up into bundles of up to four poles of various lengths, the longest individual pole being 27 feet.

In a report, Col. Shaw says the trial provided some practical knowledge on the application of small helicopters to certain forest operations. But, he adds, "it is quite certain that while helicopters are extremely convenient for extraction and other purposes they will not be an economic proposition until their operating costs are reduced far below the present figure." Col. Shaw points out that flights over the forest showed how much can be seen in great detail from a helicopter. Spraying and direction of forest fire fighting by wireless, he says, could be done with great accuracy from such a machine. The whole forest drainage plan can be seen, including every point where the flow of water is interrupted.

THE 1955 ANNUAL REPORT

LESS PLANTING THAN IN PREVIOUS YEAR

THE COMMISSIONERS' Annual Report for the Forest Year 1955 was published this month, and deplores the fact that the shortage of land resulted in a reduction in the area planted. With the acquired woodlands, our forests exceeded a million acres in extent during the year under review. "It is interesting to record the passing of this milestone," says the Report, "but it must be recorded, too, that for the first time since the war the area planted was less than in the previous year." In the Forest Year 1954 the area planted was 70,400 acres, a record; in 1955 it was 67,900 acres, a drop of 2,500 acres. The net area acquired for planting amounted to 61,100 acres only which was 6,800 acres less than the area planted "and so the already inadequate reserve of plantable land was still further depleted."

Despite the difficulties in obtaining land there was a great deal of progress in other directions during the year. More than 20 new forests were started, bringing the total to 500. Thinnings were made in nearly 40,000 acres of young plantations, almost 3,000 acres more than in the previous year. The volume of timber disposed of standing in the woods amounted to 3.92 million cubic feet compared with 1.99 million cubic feet in the previous year. Sales of round timber and sawlogs increased from 3.39 to 3.60 million cubic feet and the quantity of telegraph and transmission poles disposed of was more than double the 1954 volume. With the exception of pulpwood and boardmill material, all other items of classified produce sold recorded increased quantities, mining timber showing an increase from 3.41 million cubic feet to 3.56 million cubic feet.

As in previous years, we shall be pleased to supply copies of the Press summary of the Report to anyone who cares to make early application to the Information Officer at Headquarters.

EARLIER FOREST QUEENS

INCLUDING RITA RAE OF AE

IN September we said the first Forest Queen had been crowned, and named her as Miss BLODWEN ROWLANDS of Ceinws, in the Dovey Valley. Apparently we were wrong -- the honour of being the first Forest Queen is claimed on behalf of Miss AGNES HORTON, of the new forest village of Ae, Dumfriesshire, in the South Scotland Conservancy. She was crowned on 2nd July last year, the ceremony being performed by Mrs. R. TURNBULL, wife of the Rev. R. TURNBULL, of Kirkmichael Manse, near Ae.

In July of this year Miss RITA RAE became Forest Queen of Ae, being attended by last year's Queen; she was crowned by Mrs. HELEN BURTON, of Gledenholm. Both the Ae Queens are daughters of Forest Workers living in the village.

~~MR.~~ AU REVOIR TO MISS BURNET

RETIREMENT AFTER 37 YEARS' SERVICE

in Conservancy, other Directorate and Headquarters offices, where Miss Burnet has many friends.

AFTER 37 years' service with the Forestry Commission, Miss R. K. BURNET, draughtswoman in the office of Director, Scotland, has retired. To mark the occasion she was presented with an armchair, the gift of staff not only in the Director's office but

In making the presentation Mr. MACKIE WHYTE (Land Agent) described Miss Burnet as a kindly and cheerful person to whom no one appealed in vain for help -- and many and varied were the calls on her services. Miss Burnet, who obtained her D.A. from the Edinburgh College of Art, was draughtswoman in the Dock Commander's office at Rosyth at the end of the first world war and afterwards served with the Timber Supply Department, before joining the Commission in 1919, the year of its establishment.

Our best wishes go to Miss Burnet for a long and happy retirement.

~~MR.~~ STARTED WORK AT 6s. A WEEK

HEAD FORESTER RETIRES

With the retirement of Head Forester W. J. HALE of Hazelborough Forest, East England Conservancy, ends the service of one of the early students of the Dean School.

Mr. Hale started work in the Dean Crown Woods in 1904 at a weekly rate of six shillings -- paid monthly! He was in the 1912-14 class at the old Forestry School and, when the first world war started, he joined the Gloucestershire Regiment. He attained the rank of Captain in 1917, won the Military Cross in Italy in February, 1918, and added a bar to it during an action on the Somme in October of the same year.

On the conclusion of his military service in January, 1919, Mr. Hale approached the late LORD ROBINSON (then Mr. R. L. ROBINSON) and the late LORD LOVAT, with a view to obtaining an appointment with the Forestry Commission, which was then to be formed. At this interview he was asked to go to Devon to start forestry operations for the Prince of Wales at Dartmoor. The appointment was taken and Mr. Hale remained with the Duchy of Cornwall from March, 1919, until September, 1930, when the Commission took over the area. He stayed on at Dartmoor until 1934 and was then transferred in turn to Ringwood and Fritham (New Forest); King's Forest, East England (on H.G.T.P.D. duties); Parkend School as Instructor and, finally in 1950, to Hazelborough.

In his young days Mr. Hale was a catch-as-catch-can wrestler (good enough to take part in exhibition matches with a world champion), and was interested in weight lifting, football (both codes) and cricket.

Despite their wanderings, Mr. and Mrs. Hale have always wanted to return to The Dean and now they go back to their own house near Lydney. All who know them regard them as a devoted and hospitable couple and will wish them good health and happiness.

~~MR.~~ PASSING OF RETIRED DISTRICT OFFICER

MR. ROBERT BUTTER DIES IN HOSPITAL

Forester and then, in August, 1940, he became District Officer in charge of the Mid-Wales District.

THE PASSING of ROBERT BUTLER in Llanidloes Hospital last month (writes a correspondent) was a sad loss. A District Officer until his retirement in May, 1953, he started his career with the Commission in December, 1923, at Haldon Forest, South West England. In October, 10 years later, he was promoted Head

Robert Butter was a man who would not suffer fools gladly and he deplored anything which savoured of unnecessary frills. But, for the job of the moment, or to help a keen young forester, nothing was too much trouble. He loved his forests deeply; to spend a day with him in the forest was a privilege and left behind many happy memories. Those who worked closely with him gained much from his great practical knowledge -- a knowledge which he always sought to add to by experiment and observation. He had a dry, almost impish sense of humour.

In the post war years, when we were faced with thinning programmes and less experience than we have now, it was Robert Butter who helped put us on the right lines. He was never afraid to thin hard and he spent much of his time training others in the art of thinning. Most of Coed-y-Brenin Forest and many other vigorous plantations in Mid-Wales are a living, lasting memorial to Robert Butter, who gave so much of himself to them. Fittingly, his grave lies beneath a Douglas fir.

THE EUROPEAN BISON

CEREMONY AT THE ZOO

THE official "handing over" of the pair of European bison, the gift of the Polish Government, took place at the London Zoo this month. It will be recalled that the offer of a pair of these rare forest animals was first made during the Congress of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, held at Oxford in the summer.

The ceremony at the Zoo was performed in a novel way. Standing by a table at one end of the paddock, the Polish Ambassador pressed a button, a buzzer sounded in the covered sheds, the doors opened and the bison ran forward to eat their fodder, which was placed just in front of the Ambassador and the assembled officials and guests. Strange though it may seem, the animals had been taught, in a short time at the Zoo, to associate the buzzer with the provision of food.

The gift was accepted on behalf of the Forestry Commission by our Chairman, LORD RADNOR, who was accompanied by SIR ARTHUR GOSLING, the Director General, and LADY GOSLING; and Mr. O. J. SANGAR, Director of Forestry for England.

A plate by the paddock will soon record details of the gift, while an extract from the descriptive label is:

"THE EUROPEAN BISON OR WISENT was once widely represented in Europe, and fossil remains have been found in England. Over a number of years the species has suffered a serious decrease in numbers, and was at one time brought to the verge of extinction. Strict preservation and careful control of breeding in special reserves in northern Europe have averted this disaster, but it still remains an extremely rare animal."

VISITOR TO A FOREST

JAMAICANA SUBGUTTATA

WALKER

Walker. This insect, which measures 48 m.m. in length, is light brown in colour, with a slender ovipositor 18 m.m. long; the thin narrow antennae extend the length of the body, when at rest.

FOLLOWING the note in a recent issue about the capture of a locust at Latimer Forest, East England Conservancy, it will be of interest to record the finding at Achray Forest, West Scotland, of an adult female long-horned grasshopper, Jamaicana subguttata

In the course of preparing the specimen for mounting, nine glossy red-brown eggpods each 6 m.m. long were removed from the body. The insect was probably introduced into this country from the West Indies, in a consignment of bananas or other fruit.

THE CHALET AT SYMONDS YAT

FIRST to be served from the new refreshment chalet constructed at Symonds Yat, the famous Dean beauty spot, were the Forestry Commissioners. They visited the chalet during their October meeting and tour. The chalet has been built by the Commission to cater for the numerous visitors to Symonds Yat and is of the Canadian log-cabin type. Our Chairman, LORD RADNOR turned the key which formally opened the chalet and himself received the first cup of coffee over the counter.

An ingenious idea is the erection nearby of two totem-type, eight foot poles, placed on platforms. These poles are for the benefit of those visitors who just can't resist the temptation to cut their initials somewhere or other and it is felt that by providing the poles for carving operations there will be no surreptitious defacement of the chalet itself.

The hut has been built by local labour under the supervision of Head Forester F. WATKINS and Mr. C. YEMM, Clerk of Works. It is understood it will be taken over by a tenant.

CONSERVANCY FOOTBALL LEAGUE.

CUP GOES TO KIRROUGHTREE

THE FINAL of the Mackay Cup, played for by forest football teams in the South Scotland Conservancy, resulted in a win for Kirroughtree over Glentworth, by 5 goals to 1. The winners were, in fact, three goals up in 20 minutes. The Conservator for South Scotland, Mr. J. A. B. MACDONALD, congratulated both teams on the quality of their play and stamina in trying conditions. He had a special word of praise for Forest Worker McCracken, the Glentworth goalkeeper, who covered himself in mud and glory despite being beaten on five occasions.

The cup, by the way, is the gift of Head Forester W. H. MACKAY, of Fleet Forest, who is the Conservancy League's first President. Mrs. Mackay presented the trophy to J. LINDSAY, captain of the Kirroughtree team. The Conservator is Hon. President of the League and Divisional Officer R. R. DONALD and Mr. T. FARMER, Chief Clerk at Dumfries, are Hon. Vice Presidents. The League secretary is Mr. J. BELL, clerk at the Conservancy Repair Depot at Dumfries.

Incidentally, as far as we can recall we have not before heard of any Conservancy running its own forest football league. Is South Scotland alone in such a venture?

THE BURROWING BEE

MR. BOUNDY'S Burrowing Bee, whose activities were described last month, is responsible for some interesting letters. Assistant Forester J. LAWSON, of Elibank Forest, South Scotland, writes:

"It would appear from Mr. Boundy's description that his "honey-bee" is *Megachile centuncularis* (I don't know its common name). The species is a little smaller than the ordinary honey-bee; it has a black back, with reddish hair on the thorax, and light down on its head and first three abdominal segments.

"The only difference between the habits of Mr. Boundy's hot-house bee and what I think it is, is that it appears to prefer geranium leaves to rose leaves. Perhaps it didn't have access to rose bushes? The female excavates a hole about five inches long, at first perpendicularly and then horizontally. She then selects a leaf and proceeds to cut out a circular piece with her mandibles. This she curls up and carries to the bottom of the 'tube', where it is spread out in saucer form to cover the end. Spindle shaped pieces are then cut from the sides of the leaf and are used to line the sides of the hole. These overlap in such fashion that the earth is entirely covered, while the serrations of one piece, worked alternately in front of and behind the cut edge of the next, hold the lot in position without need for cementing.

"After lining enough of the tube to form a cell for the rearing of a youngster, the bee then collects pollen and nectar which she kneads into a dough for brood food; this she packs into the leaf lining. Having laid an egg on top of the dough she cuts four or five more circular pieces of leaf and shapes them over the egg. Another cell length of the tube is covered at the sides and the same procedure gone through again until five or six chambers are completed. The mother literally works herself to death.

"The eggs hatch, and the larvae start consuming the brood food, the quantity stored in each cell having been carefully judged. When the food stock is finished and the fully grown larva occupies the whole cell space, it spins a cocoon, passes into the chrysalis condition and finally emerges as a perfect adult. The top one is the first to bite and push his way into the world, followed in turn by the others. Males occupy the top two cells, the remainder being occupied by females. (Everyone knows about the birds and the bees, so there is no need to go further into that particular aspect). Only the female of the species survives the winter."

FORESTER J. H. STYLES, of the Research Branch describes a similar process but calls the bee in question the *Adrena* species or Mining Bee, which is found on the wing early in the spring, when the sallow catkins and coltsfoot flowers are out. "Although a number of the Mining Bees resemble the honey bee," he writes, some may be distinguished by yellow or orange bands across the body." Forester Styles says the insects tunnel not only into the ground but into plant stems and decayed trees.

PERSONAL

CONGRATULATIONS to Miss MARGARET NAISMITH, CO at Dumfries and Mr. T. DALRYMPLE, on their marriage; to ELIZABETH, daughter of Forester and Mrs. W. E. JONES, whose marriage was the first in 14 years to take place at Tirabad Church, Crychan Forest, South Wales. Best wishes, also, to District Officer W. S. FERGUSSON, South Scotland, and Mrs. Fergusson on the birth of a daughter. Last but by no means least, our good wishes to Mr. M. V. LAURIE, the Chief Research Officer, on his marriage to Miss M. C. (KITTY) JACKSON.