

Friday, the last day of the meetings was also the most memorable, for we had the privilege and pleasure of being invited to the Duchy Woodlands in Cornwall, near Lostwithiel, by the Duke of Cornwall himself, our President, H.R.H. Prince Charles, who was present for the greater part of the day.

We met at the Woodlands Depot at 10 a.m. and the Prince arrived shortly after to welcome us with a few words before we all toured the depot where much of the produce from the 933 ha (2000 ac.) of woodland is converted to gates, stakes, pallets, etc., as well as some sawlogs. During this half hour or so, the Prince met and talked with a number of members before we embussed and moved off to the forest nursery and nearby Polscoe Wood. Here the head forester, Mr. B. Wilson, told us that the great majority of the woods was 30 years old or less and thus was producing too much stake material—a through-put of 2000 m<sup>3</sup>

(66,600 cu.ft.)—and the policy was to reduce the necessity for thinning and start producing sawlogs as soon as possible. Hence the spacing experiments at the first stop. Here P82 Douglas fir planted at 3.5 m (12 ft.) had replaced P22/26 Douglas and Sitka. Further plots at 3 m (10 ft.) and 2.5 m (8 ft.) spacing were to be planted at 10-year intervals. Some surprise was expressed at the apparently needless prolonging of the experiment over 20 years. Three plots at three different spacings all planted at the same time seemed a better proposition, if indeed any experiment was necessary considering that the Forestry Commission had already produced comparable results. It seemed that local markets and conditions dictated this strange decision. The old crop, originally planted at 5 x 5 ft., looked good enough for a suggestion that seed should be collected when they were felled, and this seemed doubly sensible when we heard that recent Douglas seed supplies from an American source had come from an apparently poor provenance.

A question about sporting rights on the estate was answered by the Prince himself, who said that tenants shoots were encouraged for two main reasons; firstly to revive the community feeling on the estate, and secondly to encourage conservation of the woodlands and hedgerows beneficial to shooting. So, in return for the shooting, which was free to the tenants, the estate asked for and got ready co-operation in maintaining woodlands and shelterbelts which might otherwise be neglected, and thus conservation on the estate was enhanced. In addition to this policy, there was also a grant of £5 per tree planted in hedges and field corners.

Brian Howell, the forestry adviser, told us that most of the less publicly visible hardwood stands had been converted to conifers, and that the remaining rather public 93 ha (230 ac.) would be managed mainly for conservation. The shortage of millable conifer timber and the demand for it in Cornwall raised the question of whether it would be wise to buy in to eke out the estate's supply and maintain markets. But whatever they eventually did, the excellence of the Douglas fir on the estate, as seen at the depot, made it imperative that this species should be grown wherever possible.

An answer to a previously dodged question as to why the contractor's men were not wearing "hard hats" was insisted upon by the Prince before we moved to the next stand. It was that they should have been and would be told to do so. In fact we all should have been for that matter!

During the walk to the next stop the Prince again talked to many members, and again took part in the discussions at a vantage point from where Restormel Castle, a popular tourist spot, could be seen, making the whole area one of visual importance. Here the P45 Japanese larch had been heavily thinned and, in groups beneath them, *Nothofagus dombeyi*, *N. procera*, *N. oblique*, *Acer rubrum* and *Thuja plicata* had been planted, giving promise of a colourful scene from the distant viewpoint, as well as allowing the larch to mature satisfactorily. Further down the hill, we stopped in a stand of P69 Douglas which had replaced Japanese larch felled at 26 years of age. Here Mr. Wilson again stressed that the thinning had been heavier than proscribed because of the estate's need to reduce its stake production in the long term, and also to encourage growth of the final crop which he hoped to start felling at half rotation to increase the current low production of sawlogs. En route we saw the forest trail, with

tree species clearly named, along a path which funnels walkers towards the forest nursery and the container-grown trees on sale there.

At Restormel Farm a superb buffet lunch (collations of cold meats, pasties, salads, strawberries and cream, "Restormel" gateaux and much else) was laid out on long tables in a field, and promptly at 1 p.m. a red helicopter of the Queen's Flight made its noisy and air-stirring appearance to sit softly down in an adjacent field. There was something very touching about the emergence from this great red bird of the slim, young and beautiful Princess of Wales who had come to join the Prince and us for lunch and for some of the afternoons programme, adding something particularly heart-warming and special to the day.

After the lunch the Deputy President thanked the Prince for his hospitality and reminded all of us of the Society's main aims and objects and of the many ways in which it seeks to promote them including the

meetings we had enjoyed during the week. He then invited Scott Leathart to present to the Prince the reprinted copies of Elwes and Henry's *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* which he did after briefly outlining the history of this publication which was first published in seven volumes between 1906 and 1913. The Prince then thanked the Society for the gift and went on to outline some of the activities on the Duchy Estate and showed us how deep is his interest in the forestry and tree planting. A full transcript of his speech can be found on p. 249.

At the first stop after lunch—a 33-year-old stand of Douglas and Japanese larch—the form of the trees led John Workman to mention once again the importance of provenance and to take a small swipe at the larch for its tendency to grow crooked. But George Stevenson came to its rescue, blaming insufficient frequency of thinning for its drawn up and whippy appearances and paucity of crown. This led Mr. Wilson to remark

that in Cornwall trees tended to be the correct height for their yield class but to be deficient in girth. These diagnoses of the somewhat below par performance of the Japanese larch were surprisingly agreed *nem. con.*; a result which Brian Howell, after attending Society meetings for 30 years, labelled both unique and amazing. But he added that the assembled company was really adopting what he called a "land agent's stance"—judging the trees from the ride side instead of, like foresters, from within the stand. The trees were really better than they appeared to be.

Next we found ourselves in a plantation of red cedar, western hemlock and redwood, planted in 1965 beneath the willow scrub with the object of a final crop of redwoods. Again provenance, this time of the redwoods, came under discussion (members seemed determined to impress their royal host with their knowledge of this subject) and certainly they were of poor form, many being forked, although this defect may have been caused by too much scrub cover being left at planting time. In general it was

thought that only the best of these rather poor redwoods should be left to grow on. They would thrive in company with the red cedars and hemlocks which, where redwoods were not present, could be included in the final crop. One unusual hazard facing the redwoods in this stand was bark-stripping up to 2½ ft. by badgers from a nearby sett. Red squirrels often do the same higher up the trees.

The royal couple left us at this point, and although we had no opportunity to thank them publicly, we all felt extremely grateful to them for giving us so much of their valuable time and so much pleasure by joining us on this very typical example of our Society's outdoor activities—a woodland walk.

In the final few furlongs we walked past some hybrid larch which were a great improvement upon the maligned Japs and to another plantation of hemlock, red cedar and redwood, also planted under scrub. Although the redwoods looked better, it was the hemlocks which were to be favoured,

and very fine they looked after their first high pruning. As we walked on it was interesting to see how satisfactorily valuable conifers had been established where useless hardwoods had once grown; and established in a way which could, if so desired, provide permanent cover by management under a selection system.

A tea as varied and appetising as the lunch lay spread and waiting for us at the estate. We were consoled by the Deputy President voiced our thanks to the estate staff and especially to Mr. J. R. Hickish, the land steward, for the faultless arrangements which had made the day go so smoothly; and he also praised and thanked Esmond Harris and Frances Wright for all the work they had done over many months in arranging the whole week of meetings all of which had been highly instructive and thoroughly enjoyable. We all left for our homes with cherished memories.

APPENDIX A

The Speech made by the President, H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, to members at Restormel on May 27, 1983:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am enormously grateful for the kind words that Sir Marcus has just spoken and also for these marvellous volumes, of which I shall say more in a moment. Indeed, the great problem is to read anything, let alone seven volumes! I shall no doubt be able to peruse them as a means of improving my knowledge and understanding of silviculture. I cannot help feeling as well that you should really have asked me to be President, when I was about 80 years old, because I feel very strongly, particularly today when seeing 200 of some of the best-informed and most intelligent foresters that there are in this country walking through the woods of the Duchy of Cornwall, that you really have asked me at too early an age. At the moment I am enjoying myself enormously in experimenting with planting trees in the place that we have in Gloucestershire and making a great number of mistakes—but of course you can learn, from making mistakes. I know what will happen to me—in 25 years' time I shall perhaps have got to the stage where I begin to know what I am talking about, but it will be too late because I will have made all the mistakes before that. But perhaps in 25 years' time they will have found the secret of replacing all one's different organs and limbs so that we shall be kept going on for ever and ever. Just think of how many trees we could plant!"

"But as I say, I am enormously grateful for those books and I remember only too well that in my first remarks to you as your President last November I said that 'I must emphasise that I am by no means an expert in the art of silviculture, as will become only too apparent in what I have to say'. Clearly it did become only too apparent and as a result you have decided on a practical example of education. However, joking apart, I do very much appreciate this particular gift which will help to fill the bookshelves in Gloucestershire.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you are of course approaching the end of a five day gruelling tour of woodlands in Devon and Cornwall and after a programme like that, I suspect half of you must have contracted some kind of butt rot! I suppose I daren't actually suggest that you have saved the best part of the tour till the last in case some of your other hosts of the week are present and are going to take offence. I know Lord Bradford is here on an industrial espionage mission—he is our major competitor down the road (though I am sure he won't mind my saying so), but I do wish, I must say, that I could have been with you for some of your other trips. I have heard this morning of the success of the whole week and I think it would be appropriate if, wearing my presidential hat, I were to express the thanks of the Society to all those who have contributed towards this particularly impressive and enjoyable programme.

"This morning you have seen something of what we are trying to do in the Duchy and some of you, I am sure, may disagree or have better ideas—but that is one of the great advantages of having these outings. You have seen the depot, the nursery and some of the stands of timber on the hill over there and I am sure you will not believe me if I tell you that what you have seen and are about to see this afternoon is a reasonable cross-section of our woodlands, for it is customary for the hosts to show their guests the best. Nevertheless it is actually true and, as you will see from the notes, most of our woodlands have been planted in 1950, though the Douglas you saw this morning does date from an earlier period. Over the last 30 years we have pursued a policy of planting a great deal of land in the district which we judged was better used for timber production than for farming, and the result is that the woodlands are very scattered and we do have to contend with long hauls of timber to the depot.

"The very high yield class for conifers, particularly Douglas fir and larch, in Cornwall has meant that conifers predominate. Perhaps we would really have liked to have more mixed woodlands and more broadleaved species—certainly I would, I must admit—but at the same time by a careful approach to the landscape and by some blending of broadleaved species among the conifers, we feel that we have been sensitive and produced somewhat encouraging results. There are few Duchy farms in the county which do not have woodlands within or actually on their boundaries and to that extent we have made some progress in integrating farming with forestry, which I do believe is most important.

"Here at Restormel I believe that you have only to look around to see the effects of this particular policy and the successful integration of field with wood. Part at least of the satisfaction for me of being involved with a great estate like this is the variety which the various enterprises contribute and I think it would be very dull if it was only made up of farms. To have other enterprises working side by side does much more than provide variety, for it contributes to the well-being of the countryside as a whole. I do hope that in the Duchy we are continually enterprises there are, the more we can contribute in all sorts of ways and help to halt the decline in rural services and standards. Our Duchy woodlands, for example, create a lot of employment, direct and indirect, in an area with serious employment problems. They do contribute to wildlife and conservation by providing a wide range of habitats, and we are working on this with the Nature Conservancy Council and other interested bodies. They contribute to the amenity aspect for the thousands of people who want to use the countryside for recreation, as well as for those who live in it, for example the nature trail you have seen today. I do think that besides producing timber we have to remember all these other factors.

"I would be foolish, of course, to suggest that we have no problems—the over-riding one is financial. Large scale planting, as you all know, does soak up a very large amount of money, money that one sometimes feels could be put to better use. Brian Howell, our forestry adviser here, has just been through our operation with a fine-tooth comb (he keeps a special one of the occasion) and has given us a clean bill of health, but the return at the end of the day—when the end of the day might be 30 years off—is cold comfort. It would be easy to be more cheerful if timber prices seemed more satisfactory than they have done in recent years. It is extraordinary for a country producing only 8 or 9 per cent of its timber that prices remain so poor. Maybe they will improve before too long. We are always told anyway that they will be better in X years' time. As used to be said of smallholders at the turn of the century, the woodland owner's lot would seem to be jam yesterday, jam tomorrow, but never jam today, but we shall battle resolutely on, watching our values increase and waiting for the millennium.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we shall now set off and look at some of the plantings of the 1960s to conclude this particular visit. I do very much hope, as I said at the beginning, you have enjoyed this visit and that you have found it worth while. I certainly have found it most enjoyable. I only wish there was more time to pick some of your brains. I have done a little bit and I have found it very helpful indeed."