

On Wednesday we met at Thoresby Hall, and were joined for the whole day by our President H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. After the President's arrival we were welcomed by our hosts Mr. Hugh Matheson, Lady Rozelle Raynes and Mr. Ian Thorne, the "triumvirate of cousins" as Hugh Matheson put it, who are the present owners of the estate, and moved off in coaches to the woods owned by Lady Rozelle Raynes (Pierrepont Estate) comprising 506 hectares out of the 946 hectares total woodland area at Thoresby.

Under the chairmanship of the Deputy President the first stop began at Tappers Folly, an ornamental planting named after the retired agent, Mr. Hugh Tapper who was present with us, and whose enthusiastic contribution to the post war re-forestation on the estate was plain for all to see. The planting comprised mixed species sited at the junction of eight rides like the boss of a cartwheel and followed the precedent of Repton's original plan. The President planted an English oak in the previously unplanted centre to commemorate the Society's visit. The Director's wife, on behalf of the Society, presented His Royal Highness with a specially made and suitably engraved spade with which to do this and as a memento of his presidency, and summed up the feeling of all members of the Society when she thanked him for taking such an active part during his term as President and for being much more to us than a mere figurehead. His Royal Highness, in thanking the Society for the spade, replied that he wished he could have done more with the Society but time just did not allow this. He said he looked forward to using the spade at Highgrove.

We then moved to Little London where with the agent, Mr. R. P. H. McFerran, and the Head Forester, Dennis Turnbull, on hand to answer questions, we got down to basics by looking at a marked sample plot of 1/20 hectare in this P.25 stand of mainly Scots pine and European larch.

Dennis Turnbull stressed the importance of regular calculations of increment in order not to overcut, although in the discussion that followed the problems of attempting to include annual increment in a full balance sheet approach to woodland management were brought out.

Greyhound Lodge Wood provided our next stop and in spite of gale damage in 1976, we were able to admire this P.40 stand of Scots pine and Japanese larch which received a gold medal in 1967. High pruning enthusiasts were given a run for their money, or to be more accurate the estate's money spent in 1959 and 1966 (4d. per tree) on dominants and co-dominants. It was pleasant to note P.57 and P.74 stands adjacent including the same species which will provide similarly profitable and beautiful crops in due course.

The last stand before lunch started with a P. 62 plantation mainly of red oak: members wondered about its future timber quality and saleability, but were reminded not for the first time in the week of the major fears of local atmospheric pollution in the early 1960s that had led several estates in the area to try out species. Another view of the Forestry Commission's prize-winning stand of P.26 Corsican pine in Duncan Wood seen in more detail on Tuesday, provoked more discussion on pollution and its causes. Dr. Enghardt thought that perhaps industrial pollution was being overplayed in the "Acid Rain" debate on the continent, although the destructive results were not, as a delegation of eight initially sceptical British M.P.s had discovered in Germany the previous week. The President commented that eight ministers rather than M.P.s might have achieved a greater sense of urgency, it being a national characteristic to react slowly to the whole concept of pollution and its problems.

Lunch was taken in the gardens of Thoresby Hall, a Victorian mansion built by Salvin and the only Dukeries' seat still occupied as a home by the original owners. Before moving off for the afternoon tour we witnessed two much deserved presentations by the President. The first was the award of the Society's "Gold Medal, for Distinguished Service to Forestry", to Scott Leathart, retiring this year after 24 years as Editor of the *Quarterly Journal* and one time Secretary of the Society. In thanking the Society, Scott referred to his relief that an "Over 60 Age-Class could win a gold medal without being high pruned!" The second presentation, of an autographed copy of N. D. G. James' *A History of English Forestry*, was to Dennis Turnbull, also retiring in 1984. As the Deputy President commented in his closing speech of thanks this was really "Dennis's day" and members were keen to return to the woods to see further examples of Dennis Turnbull's scrupulous tending of the Thoresby plantations.

The first stop after lunch among the mixed species of Kitchener's Plantation provoked spirited discussion, particularly on the contribution to wildlife made by conifers, a highly appropriate topic following the Society's recent publication of *Birds and Coniferous Plantations* by J. A. Harris. Their value as shelter in bad weather, as a better breeding ground for various caterpillars favoured by certain birds and their capacity to support different species of birds through successive stages of growth were all discussed. As the President remarked, the subject seemed to be highly suitable for the new Duke of Cornwall's Conservation Trophy. The ability of the Society to vary the level and appeal of its discussions at a moment's

notice was nevertheless amply demonstrated at the end of this debate by an impromptu cross-talk act between Messrs. Stephenson and Good in which the latter recounted in his inimitable way the warm response of a group of farmers to a lecture of his on the different members of the tit family inhabiting his own woods.

Cocked Hat Corner provided a good overall view of a 62-hectare reclamation scheme carried out in 1968 on which scrubland heathland were converted to 24 hectares of arable and 38 hectares of plantations. The question of how long foresters and landowners (who have traditionally taken pleasure in improving apparently useless ground) continued this process, particularly on heathlands in the face of nature conservation objections, was raised by John Workman. The estate's reply on this particular scheme came from Mr. McFerran who explained that a further portion of this area had been left undisturbed. Members then walked to Osland Wood where a P.60 larch/beech/red oak mixture had its future management keenly debated with the usual range of preferences for the composition of its final crop. The meeting then concluded next to an exceptionally large sweet chestnut (the soundness of every one of its 402 hoppus feet being personally vouched for by Dennis Turnbull) and some handsome beech.

The warm thanks to The Deputy President, who felt his prize awards in 1967 had been completely vindicated 17 years later on, to this impressively well run estate, were fully echoed by the meeting. During the tea at Thoresby Hall at the end of the visit the President continued to mix informally with members as he had done throughout his visit, making it a specially memorable occasion for everyone present.