Original wooden bastion, Fort Victoria, built in 1843.

FOREST BRANCH NEWS LETTER

An entirely unofficial budget of news, nonsense, 'n'opinion compiled from time to time for the profit, amusement, and annoyance of the staff.

No. 15 Victoria, B.C., January 30, 1937. 08581

That blessed "slack" winter period when Rangers and Chief, and all the lesser folk in between, are popularly supposed to be (and we sometimes kid ourselves we might be), able to put our collective feet on our figurative desk and enjoy the novelty of nothing much to do, is on the wane again without enough slack developing to notice. Annual reports, fall session of the Legislature, the Forest Development Projects (of which more below), ranger and regrading examinations, proposed District Foresters' meeting and various other expected and unexpected jobs, added to an ever-increasing load of routine work incident to improved business conditions, keep us considerably better than busy in Victoria. Reports from the districts indicate that they are not far behind--maybe a jump ahead of us in this respect.

Timber sale business, Inspection work, and office routine have been on a steady climb throughout the year. If we had to choose any one figure to illustrate the trend it would probably be the log scale, which incidentally is just now complete for the past year. Total scale amounts to 3,021 million--highest since the 1929 record of 3,346 million. Third highest on record (1928), 3,207 million. Increase of 14% over 1935.

Of the total cut about 50% (1,562 million) was fir, with hemlock (464 million) and cedar (457 million) in second and third places.

1937 starts off with promise of still busier days to come.

This is our first opportunity to welcome to the family circle of the Service between 1,200 and 1,400 men now employed in co-operation with the Labour Department on some 20 improvement projects. Housing is a difficult problem in our work which invariably calls for small, scattered crews. We have to rely largely on canvas which isn't so hot, literally or figuratively, under winter conditions in the interior so the work is confined to the south coast district.

Crews are located at the Green Timbers Nursery, Cowichan Lake and North Arm Experiment Stations, Campbell River Ranger Station, University Experimental Forest, and on various trail, road, and park projects.

The work is in charge of Kenny (K.C.) McCannel who is assisted at Victoria in headquarters and field supervision by Bert Conway (Campbell River) and Jim Pedley (Revelstoke), Harry Forse (newly arrived, not yet quite dry behind the ears), and Si Oldham (Research). Alex Gordon, C.L. Armstrong, and D.M. MacKenzie are in charge of the larger experiment station projects. Foremen have been drawn largely from Assistant Ranger ranks, amongst them Adamson from Merritt; Miller, Salmo; Corbett, Vernon; Hepher, Boswell; Porteous, Victoria; Underwood, Vancouver; Dearing, Tappen; Ott, Nakusp; Miller, Marysville; Webber, Kaslo; Denny, Comox; Barbour, Invermere; Tranfield, Parksville; Morrison, Coombs; Bodman, Kettle Valley; couple of Hales from Dome Creek and Robson; Haggart, Beaverdell; Ritchie, Salmon Arm; Southworth, Hope; Menzies, Port Haney; Rumble, Ladysmith; Jansen, Ganges; Whiting, Kettle Valley; Lennox, Vedder Crossing; Flynn, Vancouver; Conway, Campbell River; and Baldwin, Sechelt.

There isn't enough paper in stock to give a roster of the other 1,200 odd.

Work has been under way since early December and weather conditions have been unusually favourable to date. Much valuable work is being done which, under normal conditions, we would have had to postpone and complete over a long period.

We are glad to welcome and to be associated with these most recent additions to the Forest Branch staff. Between us we should be able to accomplish much of real value during these winter months.

Incidentally this winter programme, designed for the employment of single, homeless, unemployed, is quite a different undertaking from the Y.M.F.T.P. of the summer. The permanent staff, however, finds itself, after two months' association with our newest recruits, to be equally anxious to make this experiment of mutual benefit. We think perhaps some of them come to us with chips on their shoulders. We hope they stay with us long enough to learn that chips are an unnecessary form of protection in the Forest Branch organization.

In No. 11 last July we mentioned the fact that Henderson of the Vancouver Office was to be one of a party to make the attempt to climb Mt. Waddington. He has been good enough to give us a brief account of the trip, which follows below:

MT. WADDINGTON EXPEDITION

The following is a short resume of the Mt. Waddington expedition last summer, the idea of which was conceived the winter before. Because of the increasing interest in this Mountain and publicity given it in Eastern, British and Foreign journals, it was felt that a Canadian party should use every effort to make the first ascent. I happened to get stuck on the organization committee. On account of the expense and to secure the best personnel, co-operation with some other club seemed necessary. The Canadian Alpine Club could not give a definite answer for several months so the Sierra Club of California was invited and accepted. They had attempted the Mountain in 1935.

After a succession of headaches in raising funds, selecting personnel, obtaining equipment and transportation, an advance party of seven left Vancouver July 1st to transport supplies as far up the Glacier as possible before the rest of the party arrived. These left 7:00 P.M. July 11th, reached the head of Knight Inlet at dawn, July 13th. The whole party camped at Icefall Pt. 20 miles inland on the 15th after making one relay from the Glacier cache five miles below. Two more days were spent putting in a camp at Lower Dais Glacier, and after failing to make the peak from here, a camp was placed 3,000 feet higher at head of Upper Dais Glacier--elevation approximately 10,300 feet.

At the same time a German-American party was keeping pace with us and as we were first in the field agreed to let us have one more attempt before the war was on. Our route petered out too high on the Mountain to try a fresh one while they were reconnoitering a route lower down which also failed them. Next morning Weissner and House of their party succeeded in making the peak, the trip taking from 2: A.M. to 3:20 P.M. up and from 3:50 P.M. to 1:30 A.M. down, about 2,000 feet vertical distance. Weissner by the way is one of the best climbers in America, has done the more difficult peaks in the Alps and Caucasus and was on the Naga Parbat Expedition in the Himalayas and is going back there this year. He said Waddington was the toughest for its size he has tackled. Two of our party remained at high camp to attempt to duplicate his feat, but a blizzard forced them to descend to Lower Dais Camp. Four of us climbed the north peak of Waddington 13,200 feet two days later, four more climbed Mt. Bell, 11,750 feet for the first time, and three did the three lesser peaks facing Waddington across Dais Glacier. We were all collected at Icefall Pt. on the 28th and were back in town August 1st.

Three of us "packers" also made a first ascent of Mt. Vigilant across the Franklin Glacier from Icefall Pt. at the time the main bunch made the first attack on the main peak.

Random Notes - The country above Icefall Pt. is absolutely bleak, no timber, not even heather. All water had to be melted on primus stoves. Anyone caught washing would have been beaten up but there were no casualties from that cause. I found whiskers better protection than various anti-sun greases on exposed parts. Lips and nose took a beating. Weather - 1:00 P.M. July 16th--sun temperature 135° , air temperature 65°. From top of north peak we could see from Chilcotin Plateau to Queen Charlotte Sound. Bill House of the Eastern party attends Yale Forest School--lost interest in B.C. Forest Service after enquiring about Rangers' and Junior Foresters' pay. You can't get a 'full' feeling on concentrated food diet, sans meat, sans bread, sans vegetables, but after gorging for a week on return weighed more than before. Some of the Californians could fill in corners with sugar sprinkled on butter but we couldn't go it and had to mix up a quart or so of powdered milk for roughage. Complete high camp eating outfit--1 spoon, 1 aluminum bowl. Sleeping on an air mattress in snow is much more comfortable than a tarp in wet bush.

Bill (W.S.) Batchelor, Station Foreman at Nodales, Thurston Bay, Sonora Island, Vancouver Forest District, is a married man with two fine daughters. He was born in Montrose, Scotland, long enough ago so that he knows his way around. After finishing school at Montrose Academy and Dundee Technical School and serving an apprenticeship he came to Canada 26 years ago. He worked in Ontario and British Columbia on the coast in various jobs as mechanic and marine engineer.

He tried to enlist in Canada in 1914 but was turned down because of his eating equipment. He then went to Scotland, worked on Naval construction work and later qualified as chief motor mechanic and was assigned to a sub. chaser. Apparently the Scotch had found out by this time it wasn't necessary to eat the enemy. After the war Bill worked as foreman in the Wallace Shipyard, North Vancouver. He started with the Forest Branch in 1926, and has been in charge of Thurston Bay boat repair station ever since.

Bill's chief diversions and dissipations at home are reading the scandal in "News of the World" and listening to the radio.

We used to think this Davey Tree surgeon stuff was all bunk until we came to this office and found how many people call for advice regarding their sick pet trees. And at first we quite fancied the role of tree doctor. But our insects turned out to be fungus; and our fungus was usually winter damage; and our winter damage, plain, decrepit old age. Now we avoid giving an opinion if possible but the troubled enquiries continue to roll in. Do you reckon you could have answered this one?

A lady called concerned about recent damage done to an 18" ornamental cedar tree on her place, asking what might have been the cause. Something had removed two sections from the tree, wedge-shaped extending from bark to pith, the larger of the two some nine inches across at the bark and 18 inches high--a good sizeable excavation. A couple more of the same sort and the tree would topple over.

We suggested mischievous boys but that was ruled out on several counts. The holes were too high up and too well done; it would have taken an expert axeman to do the finished job; and anyway there weren't any boys. So having an element of Protection involved we called in G.P. Melrose who failed to add anything of value. Then we got an inspiration and called up Mr. Kermode, Curator of the Museum, who immediately identified the culprit as the Pileated Woodpecker. A 9" x 18" x 9" hole didn't sound like a woodpecker but he invited us over to have a look, and between the specimen, Mr. Kermode and Dr. Cowan of the Museum staff we were convinced. Pileated, Phloeotomus pileatus if you like it better, is a lot of bird and all woodpecker. Look him up in your "Birds of Western Canada."

All of which illustrates two things admirably--how to make a short story long and that the average forester doesn't know all there is to know about the bush.

At any rate we had enough sense not to suggest beavers.

The public speaking bug has attacked about half the Victoria staff. The bitten ones are industriously studying the subject under competent instruction. If you want a surprise, get someone who knows to tell you how little you know about the art. Speaking seriously, it might do much for forestry in the West if a lot of us could stand up, speak up and shut up (that's a good, if hackneyed, formula for a good speech) in the best approved style.

The east half of the Big Bend of the Columbia, up to Kinbasket Lake, and the Golden area were recently transferred from the Kamloops to the Nelson District. This area transferred was previously under Ranger Pedley at Revelstoke (Kamloops) who had no access by road. Hereafter it will be handled by Ranger Little at Invermere (Nelson).

Recently Prince George District requisitioned some railway fusees for starting their speeders. Upon questioning this and asking them how they were used we were forwarded the following from J.K. Frost, Vanderhoof: "Sometimes it is necessary in the Northern Ranger Districts to leave cars out in the weather at 40 or more degrees below zero. If one uses anti-freeze, as I do, this gets so cold that it is almost impossible to start the cars. I have found that by lighting a railway fusee and playing the flame around the intake manifold, not keeping it in the one spot all the time, that by the time the fusee has burnt down to about a quarter the original size, the engine is warm enough to turn over and starts right away.

"In starting Fairmont speeders in very cold weather I put a little straight gas in the petcock, and usually carrying a small priming can of this with the speeder."

Every so often we find a newspaper trying to impress us with the longevity of some family by giving a statement of collective ages. You know the sort of thing--family group, 5 brothers, long whiskers, combined ages 499.9 years. We hate to think of how many thousand years of bush work are represented by Branch personnel, but it is enough and to spare to give us a sympathetic vantage point from which to view and judge our latest associates on the Development Project.

For most of these we are possessed of a world of sympathy and understanding. We'd like to take the uninitiated aside and try to tell them some of the things the woods and this tough old world have taught us. We'd like to save them some of the disappointments and stubbed toes, some of the sweat and blistered hands which we ourselves have experienced. We'd like to tell them of the pride which every member of the Service has in his job, of the vastness of B.C.'s Forest Development task, and of the opportunities this development offers. We'd like to tell them of the placements of Y.M.F.T.P. enrollees in private industry and on the staff of the Forest Branch. We'd like to tell these fellows that jobs and advancement do come to a man who "keeps his chin up and his nose clean."

Since collectively we can't do anything of the sort we are glad to be able to confine supervision to a few of our own staff who may be able to do it for us. Incidentally their job of organizing a programme of these proportions is no snap. McCannel opines if some of the Assistant Rangers on the job thought they had a variety of work and duties in their usual capacities they now believe their former positions were a "pipe", and not half as interesting or varied as the work they are obliged to undertake on this programme. Exacting as the duties are, however, they are not without their own brand of humour. At Cowichan Lake, for example, Gordon was visited the other day by a Camp committee presenting a request for poached eggs. The young woodsman explained that the men didn't like fried eggs or boiled eggs or scrambled eggs as now served at breakfast, but thought they might like poached cackle berries.

Now, if you've the patience to see it, there is a bit of a smile in the mental picture of a chef and three or four flunkies trying to poach eggs for one hundred camp breakfasts. Fortunately Alex has that sense of humour.

Then at the Nanaimo Camp we had a strike because one man found apple seeds in his apple sauce! Strike us pink! So help us, Apple Seed Johnny! Believe it or not! Two apple seeds in his apple sauce equal one full-fledged strike! But that was smoothed over and we all need a laugh once in a while anyway.

On the other hand Hepher, at Sooke, says he will back his crew against all comers as a cheerful and effective outfit.

From the Prince George District we have a "Final Inspection Report" on *T.S. X1936 submitted by Walter Henning (Quesnel) which we would like to reproduce but can't work in. Henning fell down on his scale, accounting for only 365 days, and was duly reprimanded by the District Forester. He reports that "with exception of occasional lapses, operations were continuous throughout the year" and under Para. 15, "operations for the year completed with an appreciation of a happy association with the District Staff. It is the hope of this office that *T.S. X1937 will bring health and happiness to you all. Kindly delete T.S. X1936 from Records. Final."

*- Time Sale?

From Kamloops we have a New Year's resolution to contribute items regularly and generously to the News Letter. Other Districts please note. Regular contributions have not been, and will not be, solicited because we know that to depend on any such spells an early end. That doesn't mean however that we will be very much annoyed if you send us in a bunch of interesting dope from time to time. We think we'll try to do something really generous for Kamloops some day (provided they live up to their resolution).

VITAL STATISTICS (Hatched, Matched and Dispatched), etc.

Since our last letter Messrs. Ternan and Greggor have established themselves at Vancouver, Marling has moved to Nelson, and Clarke to Kamloops.

Ed Basset is transferred from Vancouver District to be Assistant to E.B. Prowd in Management at Victoria.

Lex Johnson returned from Ranger duty at Prince Rupert to Victoria early in December.

The Chief Forester went east early in January to attend a meeting of the Forestry Advisory Committee of the National Research Council, and the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers, at Ottawa. He is expected back in Victoria about the end of January.

Open and Regrading Ranger examinations were held at Victoria on January 25th, Vancouver on the 27th and Kamloops on the 29th. Regrading exams were held at Rupert, Prince George and Nelson on the 27th.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE FOREST BRANCH LIBRARY FROM November 23, 1936 to January 18, 1937.

.216 Test of Pruning Equipment and Methods in Western White Pine - K.C. Davis.
.32 Deterioration of Timber Caused by Fungi - Part 1 - Decay.
.147 Eucalyptus - Trees from other Lands for Shelter and Timber in New Zealand - J.H. Simmonds - 1927.
.7154 Tree Heights from Air Photographs by Simple Parallax Measurements - G.S. Andrews.
.448 Crossley publications in regard to producer gas.
.427 Use of wood waste in regard to producer gas.
.201 Highlights of Douglas Fir Natural Regeneration - L.A. Isaac - Forest Research Notes - Jan. 2, 1937.
.05 U.S. Dept. of Agriculture - Monthly list of publications, Nov. 1936.