



PERRY IN PORTUGAL

It is a year this month since I left Western Australia and I expect most of the chaps on the staff who know me, are beginning to realise that they have not seen me about recently, and are beginning to wonder what has happened to me. I can report that I am still very much in the land of the living, and up to my ears in *Pinus pinaster*, and so, as happy as it is possible for me to be outside Western Australia.

Any Australian and particularly a Forester, would love this country and feel completely at home. The climate is very similar to that experienced in the South West part of our State, the people are kind and friendly, the March flies are numerous and vicious and have a very silent approach, the sand flies are most affectionate, and the ticks numerous and aggressive. I have lost about half a stone since coming here, a result I guess of the miles I have walked searching for the elusive plus phenotype. However, I am as fit as the proverbial fiddle and am now probably better acquainted with the pine forest of Leiria than most of the local Foresters and Guards.

The Pinhal de Leiria, or Pine Forest of Leiria, is actually some eight or ten miles from Leiria, but was so named when it was established by Royal decree some six hundred years ago, because Leiria was the nearest town. Later on the town of Marinha Grande grew up on the edge of the forest and the forest headquarters and administrative centre is now established there. A considerable area of the forest facing the Atlantic ocean is purely protective, established and maintained to stabilise the dunes along the coast. It is an interesting sight to see trees a hundred years old and more

contorted and prone, but healthy and vigorous. *Pinus pinaster* will stand considerable exposure to the salt laden winds from the ocean, if it can get its roots into something with a little nourishment in it. These sands are more fertile and contain a negligible amount of calcium when compared with the coastal sands comprising the "Quindalup" association north of Perth and along our beaches.

The forest is managed on an eighty year rotation for the production of timber, and if some of our *Pinus radiata* enthusiasts will excuse me, the older stands of site quality 1 and 2 forest are most impressive. Mean dominant height for site quality 1. is about 106 feet. It is not easy to obtain useful production figures here as branch wood fuel is included and past thinnings are not included. For what the figure is worth site quality 1. yields 190 loads of logs and firewood plus all past thinnings, at age 80 years. To keep things in perspective keep in mind the very poor soils that are producing these yields. The final clear felling produces some magnificent logs with a high percentage of knot free wood.

The peasants clean up all the debris and cart it away for fuel and bedding for their animals, the stumps are all grubbed out and split up for fuel, yielding an average return of three shillings and four pence Australian per stump in royalty. The compartment is then rotary hoed and broadcast sown with about 15 lbs. of seed per acre.

It is interesting to note that although *Ips* occurs here, it is of little economic importance. Debris is never permitted to accumulate on the forest floor to serve as a breeding ground and this combined with its natural predators apparently keep it under control. *Sirex* occurs here, but attacks *Pinus pinaster* extremely rarely.

The first thinnings are carried out at three to four years of age and again at seven years. These tending costs would render any attempt at establishment by broadcasting in Australia uneconomic. Stocking is very dense by our standards in early years, a number of counts in eight and nine year old stands showing an average of 1800 trees per acre. This helps to reduce branch size and improve form, but is achieved at a considerable loss of timber production.

Although the rotation is 80 years for *Pinus pinaster* in this country, trees up to 170 years are to be seen in the forest. Health and vigour remain good to 130 and 140 years of age and the log as sound as a bell.

The quantities of *Pinus pinaster* seed collected and sown in this country are fantastic, the Forest Service requirement for this year alone being 500 metric tons. There is no supervision of the collection of cones and they can come from anywhere and from any type of tree. A most favoured collecting spot is the horizontal protection forest along the Atlantic coast.

A quarter of the area of this country is under forest and woodland, the bulk of this being *Pinus pinaster*, but only 5% of this

area is State Forest.

The search for plus phenotypes which brought me to this country is now more than half completed and the results have been most satisfactory. I have been successful in locating some splendid trees, and scions for grafting from all of these, are now in Australia and New Zealand. When the progeny of these trees are being used for plantation establishment in a few years time we will really be in business.

Some of the older members of the staff may remember Dr. Stoa's efforts to employ women and girls in the field during the last war. He could have learned a thing or two in this connection by visiting Portugal. The Forest Service has some 300 women and girls working in the Pinhal de Leiria alone. They are employed to hoe, rake and sweep the firebreaks, carry out all the early thinnings and scrub cutting, build roads, tend the nurseries, in fact do the bulk of the work not concerned with resin tapping, falling, log hauling etc. They are a gay and happy lot and one hears more singing while you work and sees more smiling faces than is the case at home. Apparently split level homes, linings to the bath room, bridge afternoons, motor cars and a Dior frock are not essential to the making of a happy and light hearted person. Although these people, both men and women, work very hard and own few material things, they are a proud and happy people.

In the Serra Estrela, the highest mountain range in Portugal, the Forest Service is engaged in restoring the forests to this region and the first requisite is access roads. Some of these roads are really frightening in the way they cling to the mountain sides. Many of them are only jeep trails and as one rounds the spurs in a hairpin turn all that can be seen is sky. A swerve of a couple of feet and one would be on the way straight down as there are no guard rails. Each peak seems to be a challenge to these Portuguese Foresters to put a road to the top. They zigzag upwards for a start and when sufficiently high they take the track round and round in a spiralling climb. Going up is frightening and coming back down is terrifying, or perhaps it is I am getting old. We spent a couple of hours with one gang of men who were building a road the hard way, using picks, crowbars, shovels, etc., and moving the earth and rocks in wheelbarrows. They work 10 hours a day for six days a week, and receive 30 escudos (10/- Australian) per day. They walk anything from two to seven miles to work and climb from 1,000 to 5,000 feet in the process, walking the same distance home after work, both ways in their own time. These chaps really know how to work and are as tough as nails, but the thing which impressed me was that they still had enough wind to spare to sing, rib one another and laugh frequently. One gained the impression they not only liked what they were doing, but they were taking a very real pride in doing it.

Appreciating that all our staff are not necessarily interested in *Pinus pinaster*, working girls and road building, they may be interested to hear a brief account of a Portuguese bull fight. I have only had an opportunity to attend one of these functions so far, but to my surprise I find I have the makings of an ardent fan.

I think if I could get the Conservator, Fred Gorringe, Ernie Budd and a few more of our football enthusiasts to see a bull fight, they would reckon Australian Rules footy is strictly for cissies, and devote their energies to establishing Portuguese rules bull fighting in W. A. I should state at this stage that although I am an enthusiast for this sport, so far as I am concerned this enthusiasm is confined to the spectator's angle. I have no desire to become a participant. The men who engage in this pastime are either very foolish, very brave or a mixture of both. I had no trouble in deciding I was a coward after taking one look at an angry bull.

The ring in which the performances are held is about 100' to 120' in diameter, and is surrounded by tiers of concrete seats. Everything is set in concrete and either bolted or welded in place. This is necessary as the volatile and excitable spectators are liable to hurl everything movable into the ring, if a bull or a fighter displeases them.

Each performance consists of eight fights with eight separate bulls. In Portugal where the people are more civilised and humane than in Spain, the bull is never killed, and apart from having five small barbed darts stuck into his hide on top of his shoulders, is not harmed in any way. Any danger is to the men who participate and they are only a hairs breadth from tragedy all the time. However they are there from choice and not like the bull, from compulsion.

There are two types of performance, one in which the bull is irritated by a man on horseback, who places five darts in the bulls hump, the animal then being tackled by eight men on foot who catch him and hold him still for a short period before releasing him. In the second type of performance, the bull is fought by a man on foot, who first irritates the bull by placing five darts in his hump and then tackles him with a cape and an aluminium sword, this latter only being used to manipulate the cape.

Associated with bull fighting is a lot of colourful pageantry, beautiful uniforms, trumpets and fanfare. In the first mentioned type of bull fight, the horseman enters the ring and takes up his position opposite the point where the bull will be released. He comes bellowing and raging in and charges everything that catches his eye and as soon as the man and horse move, they become the preferred target. The bulls horns are sheathed in big leather pads so that the horses will not be harmed if touched, but the latter are so clever the bull only rarely grazes them. The horse and rider are superb and act as a single unit, wheeling, turning, stopping and leaping away as if their minds as well as their bodies were one, I have never seen such beautiful horsemanship. Both the horse and rider look as if they loved the fun and allow the bull to chase them around the ring, at the same time carrying out all sorts of skilful manoeuvres. When the bull realises he is not getting anywhere much, he stops and the rider then faces him across the width of the ring. Both the bull and often the horse too, paw the ground before charging one another, the horse and rider at what seems to be the last moment, turning aside and causing the bull

to swing in the pass just under the horses tail. As he does so the rider leans over and jabs the dart into the bull's tough hump. This really irritates him and by the time the rider has done this five time the bull is fighting mad. The rider then leaves the ring and is replaced by eight very foolish and brave young men on foot whose task it is to capture the bull bare handed and hold him quite still for a given time. They line up in single file across the ring from the bull, their captain in front, and march towards the bull hurling abuse at him. The bull, already very mad, is not standing for this nonsense, and lowering his head charges flat out. The captain or leader who is out in front, tries to take the bull's head in his stomach, passing in between the horns. If he is successful he wraps his arms around the bull's neck and his legs around his head to avoid being tossed, while the other chaps pile in and grab handfuls of bull, one man grabbing the tail. They then exert all their strength to try and stop the bull before they all pile into the safety fence or wall. If the manoeuvre is successful, which it generally was not and took two or three tries while the men were being tossed around like rag dolls, the next step is to release the bull without getting hurt before vaulting over the safety wall. The key man in this act is the man on the tail, who is the last to let go, and cannot do this until his mates are clear. He tries to get the bull near to the wall before letting go, but does not always succeed.

Herb Elliott simply has nothing on this chap. He would fly if he had a few feathers and generally just cleared the wall with the bull's hot breath fanning the seat of his pants as he strove to help him up and over. These young men are all volunteers out to prove their valour and are sons of the old aristocracy and people of importance in the country. It is considered a great honour to be selected. This ends the fight and some belled steers are then released into the ring and the bull driven out with them, still looking mighty full of fight.

In the second type of performance the bull is released into the ring minus the leather sheaths on his horns. He is fought by a single man on foot who first of all places the traditional five darts in the bull's hump, a mighty dangerous pastime as the bull gets madder as each one pricks his hide. Having done this the fighter arms himself with the aluminium sword and cape and proceeds to wear the bull out and get him under some sort of control for the final act of symbolically killing him. The man keeps still and moves the cape which the bull always charges, and this he does again and again, gradually working the bull closer and closer to him, so that he misses him by a hairs-breadth. He then passes the bull alternately in front and behind him until the animal gradually slows down, not so much from tiredness as from the frustration of continuously charging something which flutters away. In this type of fight in Spain the bull is killed with the sword as the final act, and he is then submitted to the indignity of having his ears cut off, an un-fitting end to a brave animal, who has done his best in the only way he knows how. In Portugal the bull is manoeuvred into the position

for killing and the fighter then places a dart in his hide at the point the sword would enter if he was using one. Actually this is more dangerous than killing the bull as the fighter has to stand right in front of the animal and close up, and the small dart galvanises the bull into action and the man has to be might quick to step aside and avoid the passing horns. This completes this type of performance and the bull is removed from the ring with the help of some friendly steers.

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