

DAY SAFARI TO COLLIE PLANTATIONS

By P. C. Richmond

On Wednesday, 24th April, Dave Lejeune from Kirup and half a dozen Forest Officers from Grimwade and Nannup visited Collie where Phil Shedley and Stan Casson were our hosts for the day.

We foregathered in the Collie office about 9 a.m., having been on the road for a couple of hours, quite ready for a cup of tea - but no such frills at Collie : straight into the day's work.

First up, plans showing a multiple row seeder were examined. These plans were brought from New Zealand by Don Grace. It was generally accepted by the party that a multiple row seeder was a necessary innovation to our nurseries. The use of this type of seeder would ensure straight parallel rows in the nursery seed beds and thus facilitate post seeding mechanical works such as weed control, application of artificial fertilisers etc. It was also thought the rate of seeding would be much more uniform and, of course, the time taken to sow the seed would be considerably reduced. The great objection to this machine was the cost, being in the region of £600. I would have thought there may be cheaper models on the market, which with possibly slight modifications, would be suitable for our purpose. There is also the point that the cost could be spread over more than one Division and over a number of years.

So into the field and the first stop was Mungalup nursery. Here there was firstly a watering, or more accurately a non-watering experiment - Collie nursery is watered regularly. Here we were shown an area of seedlings which had not been watered since February/March. There was a definite difference in height growth, although it was felt the trial should have been started earlier in the season to give any significant results. Next there was a control of couch grass experiment with the use of "Dowpon" applied at the rate of 2½ lbs./acre. The results we saw appeared to show that complete control had not been achieved and Oscar Pears voiced the opinion that there should have been a heavier application of "Dowpon" followed up by heavy watering of the couch grass. Lastly, after a general look at the nursery, a weeding machine, fabricated at Collie, was examined. This machine, which fitted to a tractor three point linkage, could be drawn straddling a nursery bed. On the machine three men could sit (under cover) and hand pick the weeds. I consider this type of machine would be of more use in a nursery much, much larger than Collie's and that the aim should be to remove weed growth preferably by chemical or mechanical means.

The well trodden path of foresters from a nursery is into the plantations and into the plantations we went: Mungalup Section A - *Pinus radiata*, planted 1957 - which had been high pruned to 14 ft.

The method used to select the trees for high pruning was the '1 in 8' system, (a modification of the Queensland method) that is selecting from a group of four pairs the best tree, vigour/form (I personally prefer form/vigour). The first selected tree is marked and with this tree at his back the marker selects the best tree from the next group of four pairs. If there are two trees of equal merit the tree nearest the marker is chosen. From this point, in 8' x 8' spacing, approximately a minimum of 100 trees per acre are selected for high pruning. This method is also used satisfactorily at Namup. A general discussion on high pruning ensued.

Into the cars and to Wellington Section D Plantation of *Pinus radiata*, planted 1957, to see nettic competition. However, before we could inspect this, Alan Hill's car began to show her age and broke a wishbone pin. Contact was established with Collie workshops and arrangements made for the repair of the car and other transport to continue the safari. (Let us raise a silent prayer to V.H.F.) So to the nettic competition and resultant suppression of the pines. This weed had been slashed twice and bulldozed once and we hope the pines were now well on their way. No plantation can stand the cost of having a bulldozer in to weed too often!

At this point a sandwich lunch was taken. Refreshed, the party moved onto Wellington Section A - *Pinus radiata*, planted 1960 - where we were shown a trial slashing of *Acacia pulchella* with a 4 ft. rotary slasher. This model has since been discontinued. Here at Collie it was found to be too light for this scrub. The next item was a management boundary; this is where two age classes of pines had been planted in contiguous rows with the resultant marked difference in height growth. Jock Gilchrist's remark on seeing this was: 'There has been different forms of treatment here!' From the discussion it was finally agreed there should be some form of break between two age groups.

Continuing into Section C for a stop at McCluskey's pines, which were planted when private property, we inspected them. Adjacent we were shown what was listed on the itinerary as a poor spring burn, but those in the party with many years' experience behind them did not agree that it was a poor burn, but was better classed as a good burn.

Thence into the last Section of Wellington Block, Section B, where some rather frightening competition from the *Connidia* creeper was seen in pines planted in 1962. In an attempt to knock this back and give the pines a chance to get away, a 5 ft. rotary slasher had been hired and we were shown the results. They were good and in a Division like Collie with the amount of weed growth of various species and habits one would imagine a rotary slasher to be an essential item of equipment. In this block the question of road sub-division was given as a topic. General opinion was - the subject should have been 'lack of road sub-division'. The final subject seen and discussed was stag falling in the strip of forest around the periphery of the plantation block to form a green belt,

deemed essential, but must be carried out thoroughly.

Next a scenic drive through Gervasse and Davis Blocks where the question was 'good soil in steep country - should this be planted'? The very broad answer I say is "Yes" when all other more accessible plantable land is under plantations. I did not see any extensive areas too steep for plantations. On to the Wellington Dam and the hydro-electric station. The dam and surrounds are really magnificent and must be a splendid picnic or barbeque spot in the summer (are there any flies?). A few miles further on we stopped for a few minutes at the television relay station being built in the heart of the forest. Not yet erected is the 500 ft. aerial, on which Phil Shedley hopes to have a fire lookout half way up.

Then to our final port of call - Wellington Section T (Tookes). Firstly we saw a new, to the visitors, type of wooden earth fill dam which had only been constructed this year. Next a problem plantation of pines, planted in old pasture. The pines were well over the $3\frac{1}{2}$ " D.B.H. and yet were barely 14 feet high. Pruning to 7 ft. when they were $3\frac{1}{2}$ " D.B.H. would have been impossible and the branching was very heavy. What to do with them? I didn't hear any answer to solve this problem and quite frankly I don't think there is one without getting down to the basic facts of why the trees are growing in this manner. Just to cheer us up we were next shown a plantation on a steep rocky slope where there had been numerous deaths from lack of moisture on the shallow soil above rock. These deaths are inevitable in this type of country. One finds that as the trees grow there is increased demand on the limited moisture available. There was further discussion on road sub-division and fire control which as any forester knows can be very lengthy and so I leave it unsaid. Lastly foliage spraying of Eucalyptus suckers and prickly bush in *Pinus radiata*, planted 1961 was discussed. This was carried out three months previously with a 0.2% solution of 2.4.5-T in water with Agrol L.N., as wetting agent. The results were extremely good with approximately an 80% kill and the pines appeared to be healthy. On the return journey to Collie a stop was made to see a highly successful autumn clearing burn, so Stan Casson told us. (Heard later in the evening he had been in charge of the burn! !)

Back to Collie office about half past five, where unfortunately Dave Lejeune had to rush back to Kirup. However, that most excellent West Australian forestry custom of retiring into committee to discuss the events of the day was carried out. We were most fortunate in being able to use the saloon bar of the Victoria Hotel where a really interesting and enjoyable day was finished off in the right spirit and correct manner and forestry in Western Australia, in general, and Collie, in particular, discussed at length and put to right. This inter-Divisional visit was most enjoyable, our thanks to the Collie officers and I am sure everyone present learned something of value.