

NOTES.

TWO SUFFOLK FORESTS.

During the last few years a remarkable thing has happened in East Anglia. The Forestry Commission has taken over thousands of acres of land for afforestation purposes. Much of this land had been stripped of its timber during the Great War, but much of it had gone out of cultivation or had never been cultivated at all and had been given over to rabbits and bracken. Now, this is all being reclaimed and useful trees are being planted, and instead of the vast wastes of Breckland Wilds and other parts, there will be in a few years time, thousands of acres of Forest land, producing valuable timber and providing work for a large number.

RENDLESHAM FOREST in the south-east of the county, was first started in 1919, and now comprises about 4,604 acres. Scots and Corsican pines have been the principal species planted, but Maritime pine, Douglas fir, Larch, with some Beech, Spanish chestnut, Black Italian poplar, and Cricket Bat willow have also been included.

In the north-west of the county, the Commission have established their Divisional Office 5, which has been removed from Whitehall, at SANTON DOWNHAM, the centre of an important area which has been given the name of "THETFORD CHASE," the district having been in former times a favourite hunting ground of King James the First, who used the King's House, Thetford, as his hunting lodge. Thetford Chase includes an area of about 24,000 acres, of which 9,657 are in Suffolk.

Operations in this area were started in 1920, and each year many hundreds of acres have been fenced with rabbit-proof fencing, the rabbits killed off and the enclosures planted.

During the last season 1926-27, twelve million seedlings, chiefly Scots pine, have been raised in the Nursery at Santon Downham and about 4,000 acres have been planted.

Santon Downham, which since the War had become almost a deserted village, has now, it is hoped, entered an era of prosperity. Buildings have been converted into good bungalows, and several families of forest workers have been settled there.

The old Hall has been pulled down but the bricks, etc., are being used, and in time many more houses for the workers will be built. Seed extraction from locally gathered cones is carried out on the spot, and at the saw-mill such timber as is felled to clear

the ground for new planting is dealt with and stakes for netting and timber for building purposes is provided. Many pests besides rabbits have been encountered on the plantations, and are being dealt with, but one cannot help feeling sorry that it has been necessary to kill off the small herd of Roe Deer which has roamed wild in this district for many years, because of the damage that they did to the young trees.

The effects of this large enterprise on these parts of our county have been admirably summed up by Mr. W. L. TAYLOR, one of the officers of the Forestry Commission, in an article entitled "NEW FORESTS IN EAST ANGLIA" in the Quarterly Journal of Forestry, July 1925. He writes, "What will be the influence of the new forests now in process of formation upon the conditions of East Anglian life? The one thing that is certain is that with the young plantations will arise a new forest tradition and a new population of forest communities looking to the forests for their livelihood, whose pride in the woodlands and solicitude for their welfare will be as the pride and solicitude of ownership, for the love of trees is inherent in the minds of Englishmen at home and throughout the world. Labour in the forest is a very old and honourable calling in this country, irrespective of grade, and although the forest populations of our ancient woodlands have sadly dwindled or, as in all too many cases, have disappeared, yet in these districts "the forest" is still spoken of with a tinge of the sadness of regret that former glories have passed. The forest tradition lingers in such parts, and men are always to be found still dwelling therein who are able, or who can speedily learn, to ply the axe and other forest tools as to the manner born, as indeed they are.

Work in the woods has always tended to descend from father to son and will be found to do so again. It is this trait which gave rise in medieval England to the jealousy with which woodland rights and privileges were safeguarded despite the harsh trend of forest law in these earlier times. This feeling will grow up once more, but it will be the jealousy arising from love of woodland home and task, and will have no baser origin.

The new woodlands can hardly fail to exercise a beneficent influence over the countryside. Open heath land has its own beauty, the beauty of barren unproductiveness which the confines of Great Britain in these days are proving too narrow to permit. There is no intention merely to convert the new forests into series of hard-outlined rectangular plantations of conifers, devoid of relief, if not frankly ugly. Rather will the prospect be one of masses of the distinctive greens of the Scots and Corsican pines and other

conifers, with intervening spaces and glades occupied by the forest workers' homesteads and the cultivated lands, the whole being set off by the more delicate colouring of the European larches and the various broadleaved trees, among which beech is likely to be the most prominent, affording vistas of leafage from the palest green to russet, according to season, and poplar, which will rear its head here and there above all. Later on the colour of the boles of the various species will blend into the scheme. Scarlet oak and beech will be planted by the roadsides, and will in due season add colour and beauty to these thoroughfares. When once the new woodlands begin to acquire character it is inevitable that a residential population will be attracted also, and this circumstance cannot fail to re-act to the benefit of the locality as a whole."

H. TYRRELL GREEN.