

EDITORIAL

Forest Diversity and Irish Forestry

As many members of the Society may have noticed, *Irish Forestry* has embraced the modern era with the recent revamping of the website. All issues of the journal are now freely available online to members and non-members alike, except for the most recent ones. It will be an important archive of information, especially for our younger members who may have received only a few issues of the journal. In addition to the many obvious benefits of this move, primarily for Irish readers, it will improve the international profile of the journal. *Irish Forestry* is an important medium of communication for the forestry sector in Ireland. In particular, researchers will benefit from this, with published articles now being readily accessible internationally. The Society should be commended for taking this important step. Furthermore, the editorial board plans to get the journal listed on one or more international citation databases.

Advances in science and technology impact on our lives almost daily. A few years ago the idea of using satellite data in our daily lives might have seemed unlikely, but now GPS systems are common place and indeed most mobile phones now have this capability. Therefore, it is not surprising that remotely sensed imagery will play a greater role in forestry in Ireland, so the McInerney et al review paper in this issue is timely in that regard. The authors explore the use of satellite data in forestry, but they also present information on data derived from other sources, including terrestrial, and active remote sensing methods.

Sitka spruce is deservedly the most important tree species in forestry in Ireland and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, despite the moves to diversify species composition. This species is often the subject of unfair and biased commentary. This negative commentary is often based on subjective views rather than on scientific evidence. In this issue, O'Hanlon and Harrington present the results of their study of fungal biodiversity in Irish Sitka spruce forests. The results of their study show that stands of Sitka spruce in Ireland have higher macrofungal species richness than native Sitka spruce forests in Canada and is as high as that found in native Irish oak forests. On foot of these results, "put that in your pipe and smoke it" might be said to some of the critics of Sitka spruce! Perhaps Sitka spruce forests are not the damp deserts they are sometimes made out or perceived to be.

Sitka spruce is also the subject of another paper, by Farrelly et al. The results reported in this issue and in a series of other papers published by the senior author as part of his Ph.D. studies at UCD, focus on the development of models to predict the productivity of Sitka spruce. The authors point out that Sitka spruce is being planted increasingly on better quality land than was the case in the past, so new models need to be developed to quantify the potential productivity of the species on these newer site types. The research will contribute towards the development of a decision-support system for use in *Irish forestry*. The results of their analysis also suggest that the planting of an additional 457,000 ha of forests in Ireland could likely be achieved

using predominately marginal agricultural land, without compromising agricultural productivity.

In the Forest Perspectives section, Niall OCarroll summarises some extracts from Lady Gregory's Journals on the Cultivation of Trees at Coole Park, with some explanatory notes. Niall provides a brief background as to how he developed an interest in this topic, going back to the time that he worked during his 'practical year' in Gort State Forest as a UCD undergraduate student of forestry. Lady Gregory's frequent references to the woods stimulated Niall's interest in the exercise. The article is a fascinating account of the activities in Lady Gregory's estate, especially the background from Lady Gregory's perspective, preceding the handing over of the estate to the then Forestry Division of the Department of Lands.

John Joe Costin presents a very interesting account of his travels in China and Japan where he viewed many fine and unusual conifer species, many of which are important amenity species in Ireland. He describes some of the historical background to the origins of several species and provides interesting anecdotes about trees and burial traditions.

The sheer diversity of topics covered in this issue is impressive, from mycorrhizas below the ground to satellites high in the air. There should be something of interest in this issue for virtually all readers, which is good for the sustainability of the journal. However, the relatively low number of articles published in this issue is cause for some concern. It may reflect an underlying decline in research activity, or more likely it may also reflect the fact that Irish researchers are increasingly publishing in other journals. This apparent dearth of submissions provides an opportunity for increasing the content in the non-reviewed article sections, and there is a wealth of material in this issue combining culture with science and technology, the combination of which our new President regards as the contemporary genius of our people. These developments, in addition to the steps outlined above regarding the website, should improve the profile of the journal and secure its status as a medium for communicating issues of importance to forestry in Ireland and beyond.