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## Excursion to Emo Forest.

A substantial gathering of members met at Emo forest on Sunday, 29th June, 1956 under the convenorship of Mr. O'Leary. They were met by Mr. Cronin head forester who, on behalf of the Minister for Lands, guided the party round the forest. In expressing appreciation on behalf of the Society to the Minister for Lands for the privilege of being allowed to visit the forest the President recalled that the Society had visited Emo in 1946 and that because of this comparisons between the state of the plantations then and now would be of special interest and value.

Mr. O'Leary presented the party with a number of silvicultural problems on the ground. The first offered was a P/35 plantation of sitka spruce at 5 ft.  $\times$  5 ft. which had been beaten up shortly afterwards with scots pine between the original plants. Scots pine had so far taken command to the extent that it was present at spacings of 20 ft. to 25 ft., pruned to 8 ft., in healthy condition and growing strongly with sitka spruce spaced at 4 ft. to 10 ft., badly suppressed and, with a few exceptions, very short leader growth. In a short discussion Mr. Hayes suggested that the scots pine crop must now be accepted except in certain cases where poor groups of scots pine had allowed the sitka spruce to get away. This view appeared to meet with general agreement from the party as did the "treat on its individual merits" judgement on a norway spruce-beech-oak mixture where many of

the hardwoods had become badly suppressed and it would hardly be worth sacrificing the norway spruce as a general policy. At this stage it was noted how strongly frost affects the growth of sitka spruce in these grassy midland areas. An area of P/35 sitka spruce had not yet closed and varied from 3 ft. to 10 ft. on to a maximum of 20 ft. high. Mr. Cronin also later showed us a crop of sitka spruce P/30 on fertile grassland over limestone drift where in places the crop had not yet closed with trees at 10 ft. to 20 ft. high. Trees of 20 ft. high had grown from 6 ft. in the last 10 years and the crop having got above frost level was growing vigorously now. The closed areas showed better sitka spruce at 6 ins. B.H.Q.G. by 40 ft. which suggested growth of only about fourth quality class up to the present time. Mr. Hayes pointed out how much better a line of scots pine at  $7\frac{1}{4}$  ins. B.H.Q.G.  $\times$  40 ft. had done in the same crop. The improvement in the douglas stands since 1946 when their clearance and replacement was discussed was remarkable. Some P/33 douglas/european larch mixtures had been reduced to some 400 stems per acre and practically all the larch had been removed. Though the height growth of this douglas crop suggested 4" quality class or lower it was now growing with great vigour and all were agreed that when high pruned this would develop into a very good stand. Douglas beside the latter stand planted three years later at 5 ft.  $\times$  5 ft. pure showed much finer form of tree.

Mr. O'Leary showed the members the area where the douglas had been cleared in groups and belts in 1946 and replanted with beech and scots pine. This is fully recorded in the journal and some of the members present remembered the 1946 discussion.

The performance of the P/46 beech and scots pine in the grass from one group to another varied considerably. In some groups beech had grown to 10 ft. high and scots pine to 6 ft. or more but in other areas the beech had not yet come away and was at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ft. — 2 ft. high with scots pine at 4 ft. or thereabout. The douglas in the retained belts (P/30) are growing well, look healthy at 35 ft. to 40 ft. high and when high pruned should make a good stand. Some thought that the douglas might in future so far dominate the P/46 scots pine and beech as to press it out except for the middle trees. Neither Mr. O'Leary nor Mr. Cosgrave, however, subscribed to this view but thought the P/46 plants would compete successfully. The area of naturally regenerated beech in compartment 1 was revisited and was now very closely stocked, probably 4,000 stems per acre at 15 ft. high in places. It was generally considered that the time had come for some more of the seed trees to come out but opinions differed considerably whether it was the right time to thin the young beech.

The party also visited the grapery by kind permission of the Jesuit Fathers and spent some time admiring the various exotic conifers and magnificent beeches.

In concluding the proceedings the President thanked Mr. O'Leary

for the skilful way he had brought out the important factors in silviculture in the district and given those who had been there in 1946 a chance of reviewing what they had seen then. He also thanked Mr. Cronin the head forester for making the way easy for us and for the comfortable arrangements he had made for our well being at the end of the day. He also alluded to the heartening change that had come over all crops since 1946 and commented on the lesson in patience that should be well learned by all foresters arising particularly from the great recovery of the douglas which seemed a doomed tree in 1946.

O.V.M.

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