
Excursion to Kinnitty Forest.

THE appallingly wet weather of the summer of 1956 relented at the eleventh hour and lifted during the morning of the 9th of September in time to allow a large and representative gathering of members and friends of the Society to enjoy their visit to Kinnitty Forest. The party of about 50, including a very welcome group from Northern Ireland, met at the main gates of Kinnitty Castle forestry school where they were introduced by Mr. O. V. Mooney, President, to Mr. T. Prior, instructor-in-charge and district inspector, and Mr. D. Horgan, forester-in-charge. Mr. Prior welcomed the Society on behalf of the Minister for Lands, and gave a brief resumé of the history of Kinnitty Forest since the first planting took place in 1935.

The party then moved off to inspect some european larch and beech planted in belts on rich grassland which had been ploughed for planting. This ploughing had not, however, appreciably reduced the cleaning costs. The beech on this site is showing remarkably good growth in spite of severe frost damage in the spring of this year. We were then shown a plot of pure spanish chestnut growing on the other side of the main avenue. These are of the same age as the larch/beech mixture and had also been planted into ploughed ground. These chestnuts had not yet been cut back and a discussion followed as to the best means of producing straight stems. Mr. Chisholm said that, in his experience, they should be cut back twice, the first cutting to be done when the plants are 3-4 years old and the second, three years later. He further suggested that the cutting is best done during October or November and that the cut should be made almost at ground level leaving one good bud. The majority opinion was, however, in favour of one cutting only, followed by a careful selection and pruning of the shoots which were destined to become the timber crop.

Returning to the cars members had an opportunity to admire the instructor's new house which is nicely situated on an eminence overlooking the well wooded grounds.

Next on the programme was a series of visits to sitka spruce plots at various elevations starting with one at 1,100 ft. which was planted in 1938. This compartment had been thinned once, in 1954, yielding poles of about $\frac{1}{2}$ cu. ft. each but due to its slow early growth did not even reach Quality V on Yield table rating. At this point Mr. Mooney raised an interesting point concerning the damage done by flocks of starlings roosting, in large numbers, in the crowns of sitka spruce from the thicket stage upward. Mr. Cremin confirmed that he had considerable experience of this type of damage at Killavullen Forest where fairly large patches of sitka spruce had been killed off. It is found that thinning and other forest operations disturb these colonies but they only move on to another, quieter, part of the forest!

Another plot of sitka spruce visited at the 800 ft. level, which was planted in 1935, showed a distinct improvement and after two thinnings is now rated as 3rd quality, with an average height of 33 feet. Peeling of pulp-wood logs was the main topic at this stage. Mr. Cusack of Clondalkin paper mills was strongly in favour of peeling the logs in the wood before transit. He also produced figures which spoke eloquently in favour of clean knot-free poles, as knotty wood requires the chipping-knives to be sharpened twice a day, as against once every three days with clean timber.

The excursion concluded with a very welcome cup of tea, which was most efficiently provided by Miss Morris, matron, Kinnitty training school, and her staff. Before the members finally departed Mr. Mooney proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Messrs. Prior and Horgan and Miss Morris for a most instructive and enjoyable afternoon. This was warmly seconded by Mr. Galvin and carried enthusiastically by all present.

A.M.S.H.
