

The President then read his address.

## President's Address

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Constitution of the Society lays down that at the Annual General Meeting at which he demits office the President shall deliver an address in which he shall *inter alia* review the advances in forestry and forest knowledge during the year.

I do not think, therefore, that I will be straying too far from my set course when I use "*inter alia*" and "*forest knowledge*" as my terms of reference for taking up first and foremost, what I consider to be outstandingly the most important events in Irish Forestry in the twelve months between this and our last Meeting.

I refer to the violent storms that occurred on Thursday, January 31st, 1957 and the following Monday, February 4th, 1957, which, in their effects, must have equalled or exceeded the destructive effects of the hitherto most famous big wind of 1903.

The first of these storms swept up from a southerly direction and drove through a somewhat confined strip in the N.W., mainly Mayo, Sligo and Donegal, and caused considerable damage to trees. The actually recorded velocity of the storm emphasises the event which otherwise passed almost unnoticed: 105 m.p.h. at Malin, 108 m.p.h. at Belmullet were maximum gusts recorded. This storm did not touch the midlands, E. or S. or S.W. at all.

The storm of the 4th of February which followed was on a much wider front and roared up from the S.W. across N. Kerry, Clare, Galway, Mayo, Donegal, striking also across the midlands and the east in a wider belt causing considerably more destruction than the more confined earlier gale, but adding more chaos to earlier destruction in the N.W. counties. This is the storm that must be fresh in the memory of all Dubliners.

On this occasion maximum gusts of 84 m.p.h. were recorded at Dublin. 107 m.p.h. at Malin, 100 m.p.h. at Belmullet and 80 m.p.h. at Shannon.

Strangely, to my way of thinking, these two important phenomenal storms missed their proper place in the headlines and their significance was passed over. Perhaps indeed, it is not strange that in an age of Rock 'n Roll and atomic explosions that gales of phenomenal strength should pass without a great deal of notice.

Such may be the case, but these storms should have had a profound effect on all thoughtful foresters. This sort of thing *can* really happen once in half a century—I hope not too many times more. An irresistible wind, no respecter of species, pushing over and cracking the regular coniferous forest stands and smashing down old broad-leaved belts, groups, single and roadside trees, limes, oak, beech, elm, horse chestnut, they all seemed to get much the same treatment.

Many of our members will remember the contribution by Mr. R. Lines in "Irish Forestry" Vol. X, No. 1, Summer 1953, in which he gave a very learned account of the famous gale in Scotland, 31st January, 1953. This was the gale that sank the "Princess Victoria" on the Larne to Stranraer route.

This storm was undoubtedly more devastating than ours—it blew down 40 million cubic feet of timber—due to the unusual wind directions, i.e., N.W. and N., and the length of time which it blew—up to 14 hours—and the great force—the highest wind velocities recorded were from 101 m.p.h. up to 107 m.p.h. It is not my purpose or place to-night to give a detailed lecture on these storms but it is my purpose to draw foresters' attention sharply to what has happened. Here is something—a series of events and effects which must be studied, and recorded with the greatest vigour by our foresters. There are fundamental silvicultural lessons to be learned, in fact there are great silvicultural advantages that might be gained from well considered conclusions as to the contributing reasons for the various types of damage caused. The older ones amongst us may search our minds and remember how much wind protection dominated silviculture as it was taught in our time years ago. The power of the wind was always in the old foresters' mind. Has 50 years and more without a phenomenal gale made us forget a little—perhaps not, but this new event will serve as a very sharp and serious reminder to a future generation.

We in the Society of Irish Foresters will be doing very poorly indeed if we allow Mr. Lines' excellent study of the Scottish Gale of 1953 to stand much longer as the only contribution on the particular subject, and we would be failing in our duty to the foresters of the future if we do not get something worth while on permanent record.

Reviewing routine events on the home front we see from the final figures up to March, 1956, and from reasonable assumptions on the results to be expected at the end of the present year that there has been expansion along the line in State Forestry. The total area owned by the Department in 1956 was 320,998 acres of which 269,442 acres was

productive ground. It may be expected that some 20,000 acres will be acquired at the end of 1957 which compares with 17,358 acres in 1955/56, 17,513 acres in 1954/55, 20,436 in 1953/54, and which will bring the total to date up to 340,098 acres.

The total area planted to 31st March, 1956 was 209,481 acres which, with an estimated planting programme of 17,578 acres for this year, would give a total of 227,059 acres planted at the end of March, 1957.

An interesting trend worth noting is the fact that in 1955/56 out of a total State planting programme of 14,996 acres 3,695 acres or about  $\frac{1}{4}$  was planted in Mayo, Donegal, and Galway; in 1949/50 this figure was about 1/7th, and before that the proportion planted in the West was negligible. Income also has a strong improving tendency with £166,091 in 1953/54, £176,711 in 1954/55 and £220,911 in 1955/56. Of the last mentioned figure £178,594 was from round timber sales and about £29,000 from sawn timber sales. There is every reason to believe that in spite of depressed commercial conditions that the timber industry will be able to keep pace with a rising production of raw timber. One paper mill has got off to a very good start in mechanical pulping of spruce during the year, while wall board production is being well maintained as before.

In the light of Herr Oedekoven's address on North American Conifers which we will hear to-night it is interesting to examine the percentage figures of species planted in 1956. They are firstly 5% broadleaved and 95% Conifer. Of the conifers we find: norway spruce 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ %, sitka spruce 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ %, european larch 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ %, japanese larch 4%, *Pinus contorta* 29%, scots pine 4%, corsican pine 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ %, other pines  $\frac{3}{4}$ %, other conifers 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ %. The total percentage here for sitka spruce and *Pinus contorta* is 67 $\frac{3}{4}$ % and what with other conifers used, that is douglas, *Abies grandis*, *Tsuga heterophylla* we might say that 70% of our total plantings are Western American conifers.

In the Forestry Division report of 1935/36, which was not abnormal for those times, the species planted were sitka spruce 18%, douglas 1%, *Pinus contorta* 5% or a total of 24% for the Western North American conifers! With broadleaved trees showing 9% the remaining 67% went to other conifers with scots pine supplying 32% of the trees planted and norway spruce 17% a tremendous contrast with modern trends is shown. At that time the report stated "that scots pine, norway spruce and european larch are still regarded as the most important softwood species and are grown wherever possible."

It appears that having used N. American conifers in a pretty high proportion before 1930 we turned away from them only to return more whole heartedly to them in more recent times. We must interpret this as the forester's factual assessment of results.

*Private Forestry.*

There is I feel a stirring in Private Forestry which is gathering momentum in the last few years. Private owners are turning to their trees as a part of their overall business connections and many in their own wisdom or with professional advice are ploughing back a part of their realised profits in establishing well managed young forests. There is, I believe, an awakening now and, if I am right and if the trend continues Irish Forestry will stand to benefit greatly in the future from the efforts of private enterprise.

Turning to European affairs we search amongst the E.C.E. Timber Committee Reports 1956 and the F.A.O. Year Book of Forest Products Statistics, to seek their findings on the utilisation and marketing side. Production of broadleaved sawn wood in Europe has risen in recent years to 102 million cubic metres—mainly for internal use and the import of hardwoods from tropical regions has doubled since 1952 and the trend still continues.

At 8,000 million m<sup>3</sup> Ireland is the lowest consumer with such countries as Luxembourg 17,000 million m<sup>3</sup>, Denmark 210,000 million m<sup>3</sup> and Portugal 31,000 million m<sup>3</sup>.

*Small Sized Round Timber October 1956.* The principal feature was a considerable improvement in the situation compared with that anticipated and the situation of supply in relation to demand was satisfactory. The pulpwood review revealed further prospective increases in import requirements in European countries whilst estimates of export availabilities fell sharply from the 1955 level.

A marked trend away from wooden pit props is evident in some European countries, notably in France and is becoming more general. Total consumption of pitwood seems to have reached its highest in 1954/55 and a slow decline is now evident.

Europe's wood pulp production rose to 13.2 million tons in 1955 from 12.3 in 1954 and pulpwood consumption reached a new record level in 1956 at 15 million tons. The principal small roundwood exporting countries of Europe such as Finland and Sweden tend more to extend their domestic pulping and are moving towards full utilisation of their raw material supplies in their own country which must lead eventually to a curtailment of small roundwood supplies especially in pulpwood available for export.

*With sawn softwood the outlook for 1956/57* is that for the first time in recent years available export supplies seem to exceed import demand said to be due mainly to deflatory precautions taken by Britain and other countries. Hitherto the difficulty was to get sufficient supplies. A corresponding gradual decline in prices consequent on smaller demands is stated to be evident all over Europe.

Europe may therefore be moving into a surplus sawn wood position.

E.C.E. Timber Committee, October 1956.

*Trends in Utilisation of Wood—Its By-Products and Its Products.*

While the decline in sawn wood per dwelling has been pronounced since the war there are certain signs that in the coming years it will be less precipitate. Adequate supplies and removal of controls since the war has halted this trend and even removed it in some countries. Wooden houses are unlikely to survive except locally—they depended on speed of erection, being prefabricated.

The strongest fall in wood consumption compared with pre-war has been in structural elements due to architectural changes and changed methods of construction in the form of economies in use of timber. Timber, however, still plays a dominant rôle in roofing. In the joinery field sawn wood has numerous rivals, yet, on the whole, it has stood its ground fairly well, the decline being less marked in this sector.

If in formwood and scaffolding, wood has retained its importance, the cause may be partly the slowness with which the structure of the building trends evolves in the residential constructional field. The structure is changing however and forms of wood other than sawn wood are likely to play an increasing part in the growing total demand for wood.

It is not difficult to establish that consumption of sawnwood has fallen but it is less easy to define why.

A major factor has been change in size, types of buildings and the building methods employed, wood too has often been dearer than other materials; this would tend to accelerate the trend.

Another major factor has been the more rational use of sawnwood, the straightforward economies achieved through using smaller dimensions and reducing over-generous balances.

Finally there has been widespread substitution in the narrow sense—the direct replacement of sawnwood by other materials and in certain applications the new product is technically superior to the wood product it has replaced, e.g., flush doors compared with solid doors, plastic tiles with wooden tiles, etc.

Fluctuating prices also militate against timber for builders who have to make estimates.

European consumption of sawn softwood and sheet wood requirements.

Year	Sawn softwood mill. m <sup>3</sup>	Hardboard and insulating board. million metric tons	Plywood and blockboard. mill. m <sup>3</sup>
1938	59.2	.19	1.18
1955	49.1	1.09	2.08

The United Nations Organisation has been in the news very prominently during the year and whether or not it can survive effectively in

the political arena is a much discussed question but its forestry technical organisations such as under F.A.O. will, I presume to hope, survive, as it is my view that they are now turning out really useful work which is of great value to professional foresters and those interested in forestry all over the world.

Their publications are becoming more and more useful to the foresters in the field. I would like to draw attention in particular to the 1955 production entitled "Eucalypts for Planting" which is practically an omnibus textbook on eucalypts. Also there is the Forest Seed Directory published by F.A.O. in 1956. This Directory provides the means of seeking out seeds of most tree and many shrub species, the country of origin, and reputable seed merchants from whom the seeds can be procured. This seed directory should be of real value to the private estate owner as here small quantities of seed including eucalypts may be ordered.

Other publications worthy of mention that I have seen, and I have not seen many, are The National Forest Inventory, and Tractors for Logging (F.A.O. 1956).

Finally ladies and gentlemen, I hope I am not exceeding the proper bounds of advertisement for our own Society when I include—without any apology—our own Study Tour in Germany as one of the important events of the forest year. This tour brought 58 members of our own Society to the great and famous, classically managed forests of Baden-Württemberg and the Black Forest. It gave opportunity to the vast majority of the members of that party who were directly associated with forestry to broaden their outlook and deepen their knowledge of the subject, and we all indeed can do with a little of that. And that is why I would like now to add my voice to a recent editorial and appeal to all of you to help the Society in a big way by getting new members. The Society offers facilities which if availed of will increase and broaden the forestry knowledge of any member, whoever he may be. There is in fact more advantage to be gained by the professional members than by the associate members among whom we have so many keen and loyal supporters.

I speak only for myself when I say that I regard membership of this Society, frequent attendances at its functions and the reading of its journal as an essential stimulant to and rejuvenator of whatever forestry knowledge and skill I may have.

Concluding, I would like to thank, most sincerely, all those members who supported our functions and outings frequently and with enthusiasm, thereby making the work of the Council worth while and satisfying.

During a very difficult year in committee I can offer my compliments and thanks to a Council and Secretary who were never afraid of work, and who were generous enough in their approach, and sufficiently

conscious of their main objectives, to solve problems and conflicting viewpoints which might have confounded councils of lesser calibre.

Following his address the President announced the results of the election of office bearers and councillors for 1957 which are given on page 2.

The private business of the meeting having been concluded there was a short interval after which the President introduced Herr Oedekoven of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forests in the Federal German Republic, and asked him to deliver his address on "European Experiences with North American Conifers," the text of which appears in this issue.

Mr. H. M. FitzPatrick, Mr. T. Clear and Mr. J. J. Deasy spoke to the paper. In thanking Herr Oedekoven the President said:—

Herr Oedekoven has come a long way to deliver his address to us, and if I find myself in a difficulty to formulate effective and adequate words of thanks I would like him at least to know that he will go home having left something permanent behind him in the minds of Irish foresters and those who have been privileged to listen to him to-night. From a forester's point of view Herr Oedekoven's paper has been an exposition of deep knowledge and forest culture delivered from an unmistakeable background of authenticity, which comes from having walked in the great forests of the continents and talked with foresters throughout the world; not only that, but from having worked for years in intimate company with his own forests in Germany.

I can only thank him with deep sincerity for having brought this paper to us and for all the work that must have gone into its preparation which involved translation of ideas and technicalities from one language to another.

Herr Oedekoven's paper will appear in our Journal in due course and it will be an outstanding contribution which will be read and remembered for many years after it was spoken.

Almost every paragraph it contains is worthy of examination and invites deeper penetration and expansion of thought; indeed, as a stimulation to every possible silvicultural and utilisation consideration—some of them quite new to us—it will be of enduring value.