

Annual General Meeting, 1946

The fourth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Engineers' Hall, Dawson Street, Dublin, on Tuesday, 29th January, 1946, at 7.45 p.m. In spite of a heavy downpour about 40 members attended. At the suggestion of the President, Mr. FitzPatrick, who was in the chair, the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting, which had appeared in the *Journal*, were taken as read and were signed.

The report of the Council for the year ended 31st December, 1945, was then read by the Secretary.

COUNCIL'S REPORT FOR 1945.

Council Meetings.

Five meetings were held, four in Dublin and one in Aughrim during the Excursion. Out of a total of 13 members, 11 attended the first meeting, 10 the second and the third, and 8 the fourth and the fifth. Considering that many of the members who live in the country have to spend a night from home in order to attend, the numbers who came to meetings must be regarded as satisfactory.

Membership.

24 new members were elected, 2 Technical and 22 Associate. This substantial increase in our Associate membership is particularly gratifying and shows that the aims of the Society are receiving support among the tree-loving public. Membership now stands at a total of 185—39 Grade I, 78 Grade II and 68 Associate.

There are still many foresters who have not become technical members and it is hoped that a number may join during the coming year. Members are asked to obtain as many new members as possible, so that the Society may become in time fully representative of all foresters and forestry-minded people in Ireland.

Subscriptions continue to come in slowly and members in arrears are asked to forward the amount due at the earliest moment. Subscriptions are due on the 1st January and those for this year should now be paid.

Finance.

Members have received a copy of the audited abstract of accounts. It will be seen that income amounted to £121 9s. 2d. and expenditure to £103 14s. 9d. Taking into account the credit balance from 1944, balance in hands on the 31st December was £90 12s. 11d., an increase of £17 14s. 5d.

Journal.

Two issues of *Irish Forestry* were published, one in May and one in October, amounting together to 86 pages. These followed the lines of the 1943 and 1944 numbers. The design of the cover was changed, but the Council have not yet made a choice of a permanent design. They propose in the coming year to have a cover embodying a crest which might be suitable as the official crest of the Society and plans are being considered. It was decided to reduce the price to non-members from 5/- to 3/- in order to encourage sales.

It is hoped to bring out two issues this year and, if supplies of paper can be obtained, to have each number larger and in larger print. Some original articles and other material are already available and members wishing to have contributions published are asked to send them to the Editor at an early date.

Excursion.

An Excursion, to which 36 members came, was held in Aughrim in June. A full report is in the last *Irish Forestry* and there is nothing to add except that all who attended spent a profitable and pleasant three days in the State Forests and privately owned woods of the neighbourhood. A Meeting of the Society was held in the evening of the second day to hear a paper read by Mr. F. McMahon on "The Sitka Spruce in Irish Forestry" in which he dealt with the many attributes of that well nigh ubiquitous species in our country. This paper is published in the October issue of the *Journal*.

Library.

Following a suggestion made by a member at the last Annual General Meeting, the Council got in touch with the Central Students' Library and were fortunate in coming to an arrangement to have the resources of that library put at the disposal of the Society. As members have already been informed, books on forestry and allied subjects, if available, may be obtained from the Central Students' Library on application by our Secretary. Since the inception of the scheme a few months ago 44 books have been requested. It is hoped during the coming year to prepare a list of books on various branches of forestry, which are readily obtainable, and to circularize it to members.

The Council wish to express their appreciation to the Carnegie Trust and to the library authorities for the facilities granted.

Register of Notable Trees.

The project initiated last year to record in permanent form all the remarkable trees of Ireland has advanced a stage. The Committee have had printed a set of forms on which a full description with dimensions and other particulars of importance of every notable tree will be entered. These forms have been placed among

the Society's permanent records and the Council look to the co-operation of members in the location of trees sufficiently remarkable to warrant inclusion.

On the motion of Mr. T. McCarthy (Athy), seconded by Mr. D. A. Quirke, the report was unanimously adopted.

ABSTRACT OF ACCOUNTS.

The Abstract of Accounts (published elsewhere) was next considered, its adoption being proposed by Mr. J. J. Maher and seconded by Mr. Eoin O'Mahony who made an appeal for the institution of life membership subscriptions. He thought the annual annoyance of sending in a cheque might deter some people from joining. The Abstract was agreed to and the meeting proceeded to the next item, the President's Address.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

One of the tasks of the President of this Society is to review the advances in forestry and forestry knowledge during his year of office. With this in mind early in 1945 I started to take notes of what was happening in the forestry world but it soon became borne in on me that, though the year gave promise of many remarkable events, when its annals were written forestry would receive scant mention.

By midsummer only two or three small items of news had come my way in the newspapers and technical journals. During the autumn and early winter a few more cropped up. I have done my best with the little I got and must ask the indulgence of the meeting in retailing my meagre harvest.

State afforestation in Ireland, in spite of formidable difficulties of supply, continued at its wartime pace and an area of 4,000 acres was planted. The Minister, when asking the Dail for an increase of £93,000 in the vote spoke of two principal limiting factors, land for planting and fencing wire. It is presumed that now the war is over the second shortage is about to be ended and the Minister's remarks about additional acquisitions give rise to the hope that next year more land will be on hands for planting.

The report on post-war agriculture contains a few items of interest to foresters. The majority and one of the minority reports advocate the planting of sub-marginal farm land, which is uneconomic for agricultural production. This would place at the disposal of forestry a considerable area of excellent planting land if the proposal should become state policy. The extension of the Farm Improvement Scheme was urged and the adoption of this recommendation by the Government is bound to lead to an increased demand for poles and timber for fencing and other agricultural purposes.

The national census of woodlands was completed early in the year and for the first time data is available of our growing stock.

Realizing the importance of this information to all foresters, the Society has requested the Minister concerned to publish the figures at an early date.

Felling for firewood and timber continued in all parts of the country. Speaking on the scarcity of timber for house building, Mr. Lemass appealed to woodland owners to market all suitable trees and this appeal will hasten the disappearance of our few remaining stocks of merchantable trees. The provisions of the Forestry Act provide for replanting after felling and it would appear from the official report that vast numbers of young trees are due for planting as soon as the supply position permits. Norway Spruce ranks high in the totals of these enforced plantings and it is to be hoped that those members who can do so will take steps to provide the young trees.

In Great Britain a Forestry Act was passed by the Houses of Parliament. It reconstituted the Forestry Commission in the light of the experience gained since the last Act of 1919 and laid the foundations of post-war reconstruction in the forests. It was announced that a series of short courses would be held for men released from the forces and wishing to take up forestry as a career. Some debates took place in the House of Commons about the disposal of surplus plants by the Forestry Commission. The surplus arose from the policy of increasing the nursery area from 1,000 to 1,500 acres during the war in order to have on hands ample stocks for the expected post-war planting schemes and the prolongation of the war rendered disposal by sale necessary.

A few sidelights on forestry in France, Germany and the Netherlands were thrown by accounts written by foresters serving with the American Army. Woods seen in Normandy had suffered great destruction from shell fire but damage over France generally was less than might be expected. The French Forest Service functioned during the entire period of occupation and the staff was able to conform to the regular working plans to some extent at least in supplying the German demands for material. The woods of Belgium and South Holland suffered more from neglect than from war. One observer speaks of the dense masses of pole crops crying out for weeding and thinning. All were impressed by the orderliness of the German forests and the fine stands of sizeable timber. These woods are now in the charge of the American Lumber Corps who are drawing on them for military and civilian supplies. Let us hope, as foresters, that these unique forests will be spared total destruction however great the needs of the moment may be. They are the cradle of silviculture as practised in the world to-day and their felling would mean the loss of the accumulated knowledge of hundreds of years.

The President then announced the results of the election of Office-bearers for 1946, which are given on page 2.

EXCURSION, 1946.

Mr. O'Mahony said he thought Killarney would appeal to members as venue for this year's excursion; Mr. Mangan seconded his proposal. The President announced that this was also the Council's recommendation and Killarney was unanimously agreed on.

The President then introduced Sir Shane Leslie who delivered his address on "National Parks in State Forests" which is published elsewhere in this issue.

Discussion following Sir Shane Leslie's Address.

Prof. F. Hackett proposed a vote of thanks to Sir Shane Leslie for his great crusading address on behalf of national parks. He thought our Society was in a particularly favourable position to survey the problem in all its aspects and might be palpably more aware of the defects that lie ahead in the acceptance of the idea than any other body.

He reminded us that there already existed in Ireland a national park—the Bourne-Vincent Memorial Park at Killarney—a gift which so embarrassed the Government that they have quietly let it subside into the background lest this dangerous idea should spread amongst the people.

The segregation of land for the preservation of natural beauty, for the continuance of farm use, and also for accessibility to cross-country walkers, etc., would involve taking control of the planning of land use and would come up against the characteristic Irish individualism which has been fostered by peasant proprietorship. Outside Dublin the idea of planning, as embodied in the Town and Country Planning Act, had not taken.

To establish national parks there must be co-operation between all the interested groups; the Forestry Division was one; there were also the naturalists' societies, the Bird Protection Society, the Society of Antiquaries, the I.Y.H.A., and the tourist industry. He hoped that all present would take the idea to heart and encourage Sir Shane to lead this crusade further so that something definite might materialize somewhere inside the next twenty years.

Mr. Nally (Assistant Secretary, Department of Lands) in seconding the vote of thanks, conveyed to the meeting the apologies of the Minister for Lands and of the Secretary, Mr. Deegan, who were prevented by 'flu from attending.

He understood that the idea of national parks started in America. There large cities grew up as if by magic—in three or four years in one instance a town which is now the city of Detroit became a city of nearly a million people because of the activities of a single motor manufacturer. At the same time the Americans had sense enough to carry out development of another kind to provide their tired city and factory workers with open spaces. Their national

parks cover over 8,700 square miles. The Yellowstone Park alone amounts to about 3,300 square miles. In addition they have over 163 million acres of national forest. These parks have a magnificence which we could never hope to realise here. They have been provided by nature with geysers and hot springs and waterfalls, one of which has a fall a third of a mile in depth. The Americans had in their usual way developed their parks to an extraordinary degree and it would not surprise him in the least to hear that they had accommodation for electric plugs and slot machines to facilitate picnickers to boil a kettle or roast a joint in the open air!

He mentioned the Argyllshire National Forest Park established in Scotland before the commencement of the last war by the Forestry Commission in association with the Corporation of the City of Glasgow. Its establishment involved the State in a capital expenditure of over £3,000 and the running costs for a period of seven years amounted to £1,860 with receipts over that period amounting only to £570. A camp warden was in charge of the camping ground. In Great Britain, he explained, it is only the bare and unplatable ground of the forest that is open to the public and set aside for recreational purposes. It was possible for interested parties, however, to get access to the planted ground provided that every possible precaution was taken against damage by fire, etc.

Although the considerations involved in parks were much more than financial, he thought it would be hard to persuade the people that it would be worth while spending their money on recreational facilities which would not pay their way.

Dr. Anderson, supporting the vote of thanks, was very glad to have Sir Shane Leslie put his ideas before our Society and also to have him as a member. The excellent address to which we had just listened was the first advantage of that membership.

He was not sure that in this very free country there was much scope or necessity for large-scale parks. In the Killarney district, for instance, he knew of nothing to prevent the holiday-maker going where he or she wished, and the mountains of Kerry were still open to the walkers while at the same time affording a living to the sheep-farmer. That also applied to the Galtees, the Knockmealdowns, Donegal and elsewhere in the country. There seemed, therefore, to be little need for large-scale parks as a means of providing for free access for the holiday-maker.

In Britain the Forestry Commission had been extremely glad to form these parks from the high proportion of unplatable land which they happen to own and which has been a burden on them. We, fortunately, had a smaller proportion of unplatable land in the possession of the Forestry Division so that the same considerations didn't arise. However, he thought that our first national park would come into existence more or less automatically. The Forestry Division would find itself one day with a large block of unplatable

land, possibly some other Departments would have equally unusable areas, and it might be possible to combine these and so form a national park.

In his opinion the national park should not be administered by the Forestry Division. The two projects were quite incompatible; forestry was distinctly utilitarian, its one important aim being the production of timber and raw material for industry; the national park on the other hand was purely for amusement and æsthetic value and any effect economically was indirect and incidental. The task of maintaining the scenic amenities of the countryside, of deciding what was, or was not, beautiful should not devolve on the Forestry Division which was engaged in a purely commercial enterprise. He emphasised that forestry could not be made subsidiary to a national park project—he would be sorry that the national industry of forestry should be degraded to become a sort of adornment of vast pleasure grounds for the amusement and delectation of multitudes of workers from this or any other country. Although not entirely hostile to national parks, he was against them anywhere near a State forest, if it could be arranged.

He distinguished between a “ park ” and a “ reserve.” A park was essentially an enclosure which was enclosed solely with the object of keeping inside something which would otherwise be harmful to the community, e.g., deerparks for deer, zoo parks for wild animals and car parks for motor cars! The national park should be for those individuals dangerous to forests as, for instance, the youngster who, a short time ago, deliberately set fire to the vegetation in one of our forests in three different places. The reserve, on the other hand, was an enclosure made solely with the object of keeping safe inside something which, in the general interest, should be preserved and of keeping out anything which might be harmful to what was inside. A State forest was a good example of a reserve. It was enclosed against cattle, rabbits and, where possible, against undesirable humans, the intention being to preserve the trees.

He was in favour of national *reserves*—for areas of peculiar natural beauty or areas of vegetation in its natural state, etc. The Minister responsible for forestry could, in fact, purchase and form a national reserve of areas of native woodland with the object of preserving native tree strains as well as on account of their scientific interest to the botanist, entomologist, ecologist, etc.

The Forestry Division was anxious to be a conserver, not a destroyer. Whenever they had known that they happened to own a locality of scientific interest they had taken steps to preserve part of that locality untouched by their reclamation work. He failed to see how the Division had come to have a bad reputation in this regard.

The forester had to protect his charge against damage by harmful agencies, amongst which, he regretted to have to include *homo sapiens* and, more particularly, *homo adolescens*.

Mr. O'Beirne dealt with the combination of the amenities of a park with economic forestry which he had seen in German forests. He instanced such inexpensive and simple expedients as the placing of seats along forest roads where the traveller could rest his limbs and allow the eye to roam over a pleasing vista of woods and fields and mountain. Afforestation favoured the increase of certain birds and wild animals which were either recent immigrants or had been nearing extinction. Cases in point were the spread of the jay, the cross-bill and the pine marten in our woods.

Mr. Meldrum was not in favour of combining forestry and national parks. The young lovers who, in plighting their troth, hack out two interlocked hearts on the nearest tree had little regard for the property they damaged. Even more serious was the fire hazard. Untold damage could be done in one afternoon by a carelessly thrown away match or cigarette-end. He was not to be taken as against national parks, he was wholeheartedly in favour of them—but within boundaries and those boundaries should not include State forests.

Col. Magan, who was personally acquainted with some of the American parks, drew attention to the successful combination of reserves and forestry in the Yosemite Valley in California and the area of the Great Square. These were run as reservations—nobody was allowed into them with matches—and they paid their way. In fact there was a considerable balance every year. This was spent in planting with Sequoia large areas to the south-east of the Mariposa Grove. In the surrounding district 8,000 acres of Sequoia had been planted on land on which it never grew before. He suggested that we should make a combination between our reserves and forestry, using the surplus money to finance further afforestation.

Sir Shane Leslie replied briefly. As he had anticipated from an audience of practical foresters, his ideas had not been blindly accepted, but had been subjected to a critical analysis which he appreciated. He valued this, his first contact with the foresters of Ireland, and hoped to acquire in the future a fuller knowledge of the men and their work.