

---

## DISCUSSION ON MR. McEVOY'S PAPER.

At 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5th, a meeting of the Society was held in the Glebe Pavilion, Killarney.

Mr. FitzPatrick opened the proceedings by introducing Mr. H. Downing, Chairman of the Killarney Urban Council to the assembly. Mr. Downing said that he had come to represent the Council at the meeting and to welcome the members of the Society to Killarney. Had he known that the meeting was open to the general public he would have ensured a greater attendance of local people. In Killarney they were all aware of the valuable work being done by the Forestry authorities not only for Killarney but also for Ireland as a whole.

The President thanked Mr. Downing on behalf of the Society for his attendance at the meeting and for his appreciative comments.

After a short discussion on the question of the proposed one-day excursions and on the venue of next year's annual excursion, the

President called on Mr. T. McEvoy to read his paper on "The Vegetation of Irish Woodland." The text is recorded elsewhere.

Proposing the vote of thanks to Mr. McEvoy for his paper, Mr. T. Clear asked what was the value of such a study of vegetation as Mr. McEvoy had made. What connection had the study of oak-wood vegetation with modern Irish forestry, which was largely concerned with coniferous species? In answer he said that the forester has to deal with a long-term crop and cannot afford to make mistakes in planting, i.e., in his selection of species. The study of vegetation *in situ* (i.e., ecology) is a great help to him in guiding him along the proper course, enabling him to grow healthy tree crops.

Forestry, he said, is not just a matter of planting trees—the aim of the planter is to establish forests. To do this the forester must first get to know nature's secrets and having done so, must make use of the knowledge to harness her productive powers for his own benefit. It is through the science of ecology that the forester learns most about the various planting sites.

To-day the aim of the forester is not to grow indigenous species, but fast growing exotics. These may be grown on much shorter rotations than the native hardwoods. Through modern processing methods, timbers having all the good qualities of the slow-grown timbers may be produced from fast-grown soft-wood trees. Hence in his opinion the days of the oak-woods were past. Whether we aim at producing oak crops or crops of exotic soft-woods, however, we must study the vegetation which has survived the vicissitudes of the years.

He formally proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. McEvoy for his interesting paper.

Mr. M. O Beirne seconded the vote of thanks saying that the paper provided much food for reflection. One point that struck him was that the presence of such vegetation as Mr. McEvoy had mentioned, on the floor of Irish oak-woods indicated faulty treatment. In properly managed woods such vegetation would not occur.

He said that natural regeneration is prevented by the browsing of stock. It is also prevented by the formation of raw humus. The growth of trees is bound up with the presence of certain bacteria and fungi in the soil. When vegetation of the *Luzula* type occurs on forest floors raw humus accumulates and natural regeneration is prevented. This is because the biotic complex does not favour the growth of the tree species. On high ground imperfect seed formation may prevent natural regeneration. In cases where natural regeneration is prevented by excessive floor vegetation, scarifying the soil, or the planting of a beech understorey may encourage it. The production of large quantities of seed was another essential for natural regeneration.

Dr. M. L. Anderson, associating himself with the vote of thanks said that Mr. McEvoy's paper followed logically on Dr. Gallogher's paper on "Some Aspects of Soil Classification." Referring to Mr. Clear's question as to the value of the study of vegetation, he said that the study of vegetation in any woods gave an indication of what the conditions prevailing in those woods were and hence was of great value to the forester. The study of woodland vegetation

also gave an indication of the value of the understorey of shrubs, e.g., holly, hazel, etc., which at present appeared to be useless. We may yet find it profitable to plant such under-shrubs, he said. He did not agree with Mr. Clear's assertion that the days of the oak-woods were over. Weight production per acre was sometimes more important than volume production per acre. Also, in wood distillation, the hard woods, e.g., oak, had a greater number of by-products than the soft woods. He thanked Mr. McEvoy once more for his interesting paper.

Mr. N. O Muirgheasa said he found Mr. McEvoy's paper particularly interesting because in Woodford forest where he was stationed he was surrounded by sessile oak woods. As a result of the information obtained from the paper he would in future derive much more benefit from his study of the vegetation in the woods.

Mr. L. Condon said that as a result of the paper he would concentrate on the floor rather than on the canopy when walking in the woods in future.

Mr. FitzPatrick said that Mr. McEvoy's paper made us see the woods in a new light. Had we heard it before that day's outing we would have derived more benefit from our trip through the oak woods. Mr. McEvoy was continuing the work of botanists in Ireland and other countries. Cajander of Finland was an outstanding example. He had gone the length of preparing volume tables for tree crops as a result of an ecological examination of the vegetation on the ground to be afforested.

Commenting on Mr. O'Beirne's contribution to the discussion, he said that Mr. O'Beirne reminded him of the old text-book which said that "silviculture is the pivot of the whole forestry business." Mr. O'Beirne realized this and always came back to silviculture because it was of fundamental importance.

He pointed out that nobody had mentioned the importance of birds in the woodlands. In France the understorey of shrubs which was maintained in the woods encouraged birds, while in Germany nesting boxes were provided for them.

He did not agree with Mr. Clear that the days of the oak-woods were past. He held the view that people would always prefer real to composite timber.

Mr. McEvoy in his reply said he was pleased that Mr. O'Beirne had mentioned silviculture because silviculture was the application of ecology.

It was very important in studying vegetation that its history should be ascertained. Burning and grazing had great effects on vegetation and due regard must be given to them. He had found in some cases that grazing was favourable to the establishment of natural regeneration for a time but then became detrimental due to damage to the seedlings. He suggested that it would be interesting to carry out an experiment by allowing stock to graze in the forest until a crop of seedlings grew and then to remove the stock and see if the seedlings would survive.

He was pleased that Mr. FitzPatrick had mentioned bird-life in the forest and its relation to the undergrowth. Birds had a very important function in the forest.

Thanking the speakers for their appreciative comments on his paper, he concluded the discussion.

Mr. Mangan proposed a vote of thanks to the Minister for Lands for permitting the Society to visit Killarney State Forest and also for the facilities provided there. He also thanked Mr. O Sullivan, Mr. Swords, Mr. McCool and Mr. Doyle, who represented the Forestry Division on the excursion.

He proposed a vote of thanks to Colonel The McGillicuddy and to Miss Pettit for allowing the members to visit their properties.

Mr. McCarthy seconded the votes of thanks and the members signified their assent by a round of applause.

Mr. Langley proposed a vote of thanks to Dr. Anderson, Mr. Clear and the Council of the Society for the efficient arrangement of the excursion. Mr. Chisholm, seconding, said that in his opinion it was the best excursion of the Society to date.

Mr. O Sullivan replied suitably to the vote on behalf of the Minister and his representatives.

Dr. Anderson replying to Mr. Langley's vote, said that with goodwill and co-operation much can be accomplished.

---