

Forest of Ae. His Majesty's Stationery Office. Price 6d.

This 12-page booklet, written in clear non-technical English and excellently illustrated and produced, is apparently the first of a series designed to interest the general public in the work of the Forestry Commission by introducing it to the individual forests.

The Forest of Ae in the Southern Uplands of Scotland

is a typical forest with no striking historical associations or scenic features, yet this account is extremely interesting. It is a young forest, the oldest plantations being only 20 years old and it is almost entirely on land previously used for sheep-grazing. Of a total acreage of 10,683 acres, over 3,000 have so far been planted and 4,500 remain to be planted; 250 acres of better land are reserved for agriculture and the remainder is too poor or too high-lying for planting.

The forest opened in 1927 with 16 men in employment. This had increased to 27 at the beginning of the war and it is estimated that there will be work for at least 90 men by 1960. This figure of one full-time permanent worker for every 80-90 acres of productive forest on mountain land is of great interest and indicates the high labour-content of forestry as compared with hill sheep-farming. The housing of the workers has been tackled from the start and ten new houses have been erected. If one can judge from photographs these houses are of attractive appearance and reasonable size.

The erection of isolated workers' houses has not proved satisfactory and plans are now in being for the creation of a complete new forest village of 80 workers' houses, as well as sawmills, shops, school, playing field, church, village hall and an inn.

To return to the forest proper, the species used are mostly Norway and Sitka spruces, with some Scots pine and the two larches. 400 acres is the most that has so far been planted in a season but it is expected that much larger areas will soon be tackled with tractor ploughs. Thinnings yielding pit-props have begun and forest road construction is now necessary.

The close similarity between this typical Scottish forest and some of our mountain forests, especially in Wicklow, needs no stressing and points to the necessity of a comprehensive development plan covering land use, labour supply, social amenities and communications as well as planting, as soon as a decision to afforest a large block is taken.