

## VISIT TO BROWNHALL, CO. DONEGAL

Members attending the Annual Excursion in Sligo were very kindly invited by our oldest member, Capt. J. S. Hamilton, to visit his place at Brownhall, Co. Donegal, on Friday, 2nd June. Many had other engagements and could not wait over an extra day but the following party were able to avail of the invitation: Mrs. Keane, Miss Grey, Mrs. McEvoy, Capt. Ryan, Messrs. Langley, O'Carroll, Chisholm, Mangan, Galvin, McEvoy. In spite of very heavy rain the party had a most interesting and enjoyable day and brought away a very pleasant memory of Hamilton hospitality.

Early records of this estate are meagre but a written record dating from about 1700 states that "the House is approached by a fine avenue of lime trees" so that planting must have begun very early. This lime avenue is still in being and adds much to the beauty of the curved avenue. There are many fine old trees, the tallest being a Silver Fir 112 ft. high and 12 ft. 6 ins. girth at breast height. There are many fine old specimen beeches—green, purple, and copper. One of the latter was particularly admired for its straight stem clear of branches for 60 feet and girth of 9 ft. 2 inches. Douglas firs reach girths of 13 ft. 6 ins. with timber heights over 60 feet, and an oak with timber height of 40 feet has a girth of 12 ft. 4 ins.

Captain Hamilton himself is a keen planter and has many excellent young plantations to his credit. Between 1920 and 1939, he planted approximately 65,000 trees—over 20,000 Sitka, 13,000 Japanese Larch, 8,400 Douglas, 5,575 Norway as well as Scots Pine, Thuya Plicata (*gigantea*), Common Silver, Poplars and Willows. He has had remarkable growth of Sitka and Japanese Larch especially. From a well-stocked Sitka wood planted in 1923 he obtained from a pole removed in thinnings a 9-inch board 16 feet long. This crop would certainly fall in Quality Class I of the British Yield Tables. Yet it is growing on what was a very poor grazing field. Japanese Larch has given poles 45 ft. long at 20 years and is exceptionally straight. Douglas also grows very fast but except when there is a deep well-drained rooting medium it tends to blow over. Like most planters, he has had little success with Common Silver which once grew so well on the estate.

Amongst other attractions of the visit were the limestone caves with stalactites and stalagmites which Miss Hamilton lit by magnesium flare, and the many family heirlooms in the House itself. Mrs. Hamilton entertained the guests to lunch and tea.