

Local Excursion to the Botanic Gardens, Dublin

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The mild, dry weather of Autumn, 1947, lasted long enough to provide a very enjoyable afternoon for members in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, on Saturday, the 18th of October. More than thirty members and their friends attended, as follows:—Messrs. Meldrum, O'Beirne, Clear (Secretary), McEvoy, Maher, Mrs. A. Henry, Miss Brunner, Miss Cahill, Miss Long, Miss Ryan, Messrs. Almack, Bogue, Chisholm, Clarke, Connolly, Donlon, J. P., Doyle, FitzPatrick, Haas, Hanahoe, Jeffers, McCarthy (Athy), McMahon

(sen.), McMahon (jun.), Mangan, Mooney, O'Sullivan, Ryan, Shiels, Spillane and "Tatler" (of the *Irish Independent*).

On arrival at the entrance the members were welcomed by the Curator, Mr. Walsh, who gave a brief account of the general history and growth of the gardens since the time of the first Director, Mr. Underwood. The greenhouses date back to 1850 and the original area of 17 acres has been added to from time to time, the Arboretum being formed in the time of Mr. David Moore's directorship, about 1880.

Setting forth on their round of the Gardens, the party passed such attractions as *Arbutus* and *Thuia plicata* at a brisk canter and came to their first halt at some Silver firs. *Abies pinsapo* was discussed in detail and sympathy was expressed for an unfortunate *Abies forestii* which had fallen foul of chermes.

When we reached a very vigorous *Populus generosa*, Mrs. Henry described the breeding of this tree from *P. trichocarpa* and *P. angulata*. While the two parents had a yearly growth in height of 3 feet each, the progeny added 9 feet per annum. The specimen seen looked to be about 75' high and at approximately 30 years of age, had a quarter girth of 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

A near relation of *P. generosa*, namely *P. vernerubens*, had a very beautiful leaf resembling somewhat in colour the Copper beech.

A backward specimen of *Abies pectinata* drew varied comments as to the cause of its failure. Mr. FitzPatrick suggested that possibly the high lime content in the soil had brought about a potash deficiency.

The *Picea Omorica* represented drew speculation from members as to the possibilities of this species in Ireland, Mr. Clear mentioning its rapid growth-rate and superiority to Sitka and Norway spruces in frost-hollows. This tree has proved very satisfactory in experimental plantings in Scotland but it only survives as a native species to-day in parts of Yugo-Slavia.

When the *Ginkgo biloba* was reached, it was difficult to realise that it is a conifer, so closely does this "Maiden Hair" tree resemble a hardwood.

Having admired the old yew trees of Addison's Walk, we next pondered on the considerable variety to be met with in different specimens of our old friend, *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots pine), for here, growing within a few paces of each other, were a bushy or spreading type, a fastigate type and what we might call the normal type. Members could draw their own conclusions as to the importance of collecting seed from a desirable type of Scots pine.

Other trees in this section of the Gardens which called for attention were the *Zelkova*, the fern-leaved Beech, a *Pinus hartwegi* (a variety of *P. Montezumi*) which had leaves in clusters of 3, 4 and 5.

almost indiscriminately, *Cupressus Leylandi* (a crossing of *macrocarpa* and *nootkatensis*) which Mr. Wlsh explained was very difficult to raise from cuttings, and that rugged pioneer of Jutland Heath fame, the Mountain pine.

Coming to the arboretum formed in 1880, we were able to appreciate the effect of the grouping in close proximity of trees of related species. Referring to the Ashes, Mr. Walsh said that he was on the look-out for a specimen of what he called the "Stag's Horn" Ash, some trees of which he had seen in Co. Tipperary (so Tipp. members, please bear in mind!)

A very wide range of Beech types drew our attention, including the Dawyck beech (*F. sylvatica* var. *fastigiata*) while in the Maple section the sugar variety (*Acer saccharum*) with its leaves displaying to the full their autumn colours, was much admired. It was suggested that this latter might be a suitable tree for street-planting.

Having circumnavigated the Gardens, we now came to what was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the afternoon, namely, the Augustine Henry Herbarium. In an upper room of the office and Laboratory attached to the Gardens, we found this priceless collection of over 9,000 specimens of broad-leaved and coniferous trees which forms the basis of the seven volumes of *Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* by Henry and Elwes.

Mrs. Augustine Henry addressed the members and told of her decision to perpetuate her late husband's memory in this enduring manner. The collection represents the fruits of 18 years of travelling and collecting in China and on the European continent. The classification and arrangement of the specimens took 8 years. Thanks to Mrs. Henry's idea of running a strong cord horizontally around the middle of each of the cardboard containers, the collection is in excellent condition, each specimen in a separate folder neatly numbered for catalogue reference. The information on the labels allows one to go through the entire collection with the least possible amount of disturbance or damage. Copious notes accompanying the boxes of specimens will provide great assistance to students wishing to carry out research work in tree species.

Before breaking up the President, Mr. Meldrum, expressed the thanks of the Society to Mr. Walsh for the thorough and capable manner in which he showed us over the Gardens, while a special round of applause was given to Mrs. Henry for her charming and whole-hearted contribution to the afternoon's enjoyment. Mr. O'Beirne (Vice-President) associated himself with the votes of thanks and the members then parted for their far-flung destinations.
