

RHEOLA FOREST

Britain's Forests. Forestry Commission. Price 6d.

The British Forestry Commission evidently intends to keep the public interested in its work and informed of its achievements. This well-produced booklet, of seventeen pages, is the third publication in the series dealing with Britain's forests. In this instance the forest is that located at the Rheola estate near

Rosolven, in the heart of a coal-mining area some six miles from Swansea.

The subject has been dealt with on the broadest basis, with a resultant widening of interest. Geologically, the coal measures of the carboniferous series predominate, and it is interesting to note that the species most widely used are Japanese larch, Scots pine, Corsican pine and Norway spruce. Of these the Japanese larch has been the most successful. On high-lying and exposed areas sitka spruce is now being extensively planted after the ground has been ameliorated by deep ploughing. European larch and Douglas fir have fallen into disfavour because of their poor performance. It is stated, however, that the Douglas fir has made fair growth on the better quality and more sheltered ground.

In dealing with the climate of the area, it is pointed out that while proximity to the Atlantic leads to a mildness of climate, it also results in exposure to strong winds which are "one of the forester's major difficulties." The rainfall of the locality is 70" (approximately).

To interest the naturalist, notes on the plant and animal life of the forest are given. The topography is also described, and a brief account of the archæology and history of the district is given.

Centred on a coal-mining region, it is but natural to expect that one of the main reasons for the establishment of this forest was that it should supply the pits with timber which would otherwise have to be imported. Though now but twenty-seven years established, the forest is beginning to fulfil this object. The demands of the mines for timber can be assessed when it is known that for every 35 tons of coal raised in South Wales an average of one ton of timber is required.

Of the present total area of 13,660 acres, 6,776 acres carry crops ranging through a complete series of age classes—up to the maximum of twenty-seven years. Some of the first planted trees now measure 50 feet in height. This land which, prior to 1922, "sufficed to support but a handful of shepherds" now provides employment for five foresters, three foremen and one hundred and twenty-eight labourers.

This is a thoroughly useful and interesting booklet—especially so for the people of Wales who may find it possible to visit the forest. It is obvious that the Forestry Commission, though ever mindful of the fire hazard, desires that the public should visit its forests and learn to appreciate their natural grandeur and material worth.