

# IRISH FORESTRY

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VOLUME IV

OCTOBER, 1947

NUMBER I

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## EDITORIAL

Since the first issue of the *Journal* saw the light of day in November, 1942, we have attempted to provide suitable mental fare for the Irish Forestry public. Looking back we see—naturally enough—that historical matter predominated in the early numbers; that this phase was succeeded by another in which the major contributions consisted of general summaries of our present position (e.g., on pathology and vegetation). From this phase we have yet to emerge. In fact the *Journal* has not become—in the best sense—topical. It does not hold the mirror up to forestry, to reflect the latest sylvicultural trend or fashion, and such items as the vagaries of weather and markets and their effects in the forest. In short, it has yet to become the sensitive vehicle of forestry thought and the day-to-day record of foresters' observations and experience. When it does enter this desirable phase it will lay the foundations on which a high technical standard of work and a proud tradition must rest.

With the best will in the world, the Editor is quite helpless to alter the present state of affairs unless he gets the co-operation of members. In fact at the moment, the main hindrance to what the Constitution terms the "timeous appearance of the *Journal*" is the difficulty of obtaining in time sufficient material for the issue in hands, not to speak of building up a reserve for future numbers. The remedy is in the hands of the forester. He must overcome his natural disinclination to prepare material for publication; he must not lull his conscience with thoughts of leaving writing to professors, scientists and research workers; he must be prepared to observe acutely developments in his woods and to record them with all possible accuracy.

There is a tendency to think that because a contribution is brief and simple in form it is unimportant and unworthy of permanent record. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are using in afforestation inadequately-tested exotics of which no mature plantation exists here, e.g., *Pinus Contorta*. We are planting in conditions of soil and altitude of which we have all-too-little previous experience. In fact our whole essay in forestry might be described as an expedition into the unknown in which we cannot afford to ignore the smallest tittle of evidence. Few are equipped or have the opportunity for advanced research but every individual

can do his bit as scout, intelligence officer or observer to spy the dangers and pitfalls that beset our path and guide us safely past!

Retreating to his last line of defence, the forester may claim that there is nothing remarkable to record from his particular area. But, like beauty, lessons in forestry, lie in the eye of the beholder, and the discerning eye seldom fails to learn from the apparently commonplace. The field for observation and record is vast. Take, for example, the forester working on limestone soils. Our general teaching regarding planting on this type is taken *en bloc* from English and Continental literature and may not apply in full here where rainfall is higher and leaching more pronounced. Yet the Editor has received nothing on this topic.

Again the milder climate of our Atlantic seaboard and its effects on vegetation are so remarkable as to be the subject of repeated studies by British botanists. Surely foresters must now be able to set down their experience in establishing tender exotic tree species such as *Pinus Insignis* and Eucalypts on the Atlantic coast? To cite a case in point, are the remnants of the very successful Maritime Pine plantation on sand dunes exposed to the Atlantic's fury at Mullaghmore (Co. Sligo) to disappear unrecorded, so that the history of a courageous and significant experiment may be traced only in the fickle and uncertain memory of the local "ancients"?

Two years ago a more-than-usually destructive May frost caused complete defoliation of mature oaks and killed outright many Sitka, *Insignis*, and even *Contorta* plants. This exceptional event scarce stirred a passing mention in our Journal. Lists of species in order of severity of damage for different districts would have been of general interest but the Editor did not receive a single account. Yet this is such stuff as silviculture is made on!

If members are still diffident about authorship, may we at least hope for contributions couched in the more informal style of "Notes" or even "Letters to the Editor"? Associate members too can contribute much to the Journal, perhaps not always of a technical nature but touching the general aspects of forest policy and the views of private woodland owners. Such contributions will be of general appeal and will be particularly welcomed as catering for associate members' interests—interests which lack of suitable material has forced us to neglect in the past.

There is just one other matter which has obtruded itself unpleasantly into the deliberations of the Editorial Committee and of the Council, and to which we might draw members' attention. Last year the publication of two issues of the Journal cost £90. With a 40 *per cent.* increase in printing costs in the interval, two similar issues would cost £125 this year so that the entire subscription income of the Society, if not more, would be absorbed. The Council is reluctant to economise by reducing the size or quality of the

Journal but may be forced into this course to maintain our solvency. The obvious, and in every way desirable, alternative is an increased income through a substantial increase in membership. The point may be emphasised by giving costs of production. The first 400 copies of a 48 page issue now cost 2/3 each to print but an extra 100 can be printed at less than a shilling each. Increased membership will enable us to produce the Journal quarterly and to improve all our services. It is therefore important, and indeed urgent, that everyone should seek to introduce as many new members as possible in the immediate future.

In conclusion, may we apologise for this tedious Editorial introspection and hope that future Editors, secure in the knowledge that Irish forestry has reached adult stature and become fully articulate, will be able to address their eloquence to forestry problems proper as distinct from the growing pains of the Society's organ ?

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