

# Excursion to Roundwood Forest

Report by M. SWAN.

THE second of the Society's Day Excursions was held to the Department of Lands forest at Roundwood on Sunday, 9th September. Mr. Mooney, having first welcomed the party on behalf of the Minister for Lands, gave a short history of this forest. The first acquisition here was of 81 acres from Lord Powerscourt in 1931 and then in 1935 some 965 acres were acquired from three local farmers. At the time of acquisition most of this ground was covered with strong *Calluna* with various admixtures of *Molinia*; there was about 80 acres of lower enclosed fields with strong furze and about 50 acres of the better grass-bracken type.

Although this property ranges in elevation from 995 ft. to almost 1,800 ft. it is well sheltered from the prevailing west and south-west winds. The average annual rainfall is about 50 ins.

Our first stop was to inspect a 1937 planting of S.P. at 1,135 ft. elevation. The vegetation had been *Ulex Gallii* dominant, with *Calluna* and *Molinia* but the furze was cleared before planting. This plantation cannot be considered a success. After 14 years the best trees are only 8 to 9 ft. high while the average is only 2 to 3 ft. Although the furze had been kept in check for several years after planting it had been allowed to gain control again and Mr. Mooney said he believed much of the blame could be attached to competition with the furze and suggested ploughing as a possible solution. Mr. McEvoy said the *Molinia* in the vegetation indicated impeded drainage as another adverse factor present and agreed with Mr. Mooney that the solution seemed to lie with mechanical cultivation.

The next plot visited was at an altitude of 1,255 ft. and was of S.S. also planted in 1937. Here the average tree was 12 to 15 ft. high and the crop was vigorous and healthy. It was interesting to note that this crop had been established over a vegetation of *Molinia*, *Calluna*, with some *Vaccinium* and *Ulex* species.

At 1,375 ft. elevation we again saw the failure of S.P. This time the vegetation was strong *Calluna* with a *Molinia* understorey and the soil under a light layer of peat was considered good. This area had been beaten up last year with P.C.

In Compartment 14 we saw where a recent introduction of P.C. in beating up had been seriously damaged by deer. Mr. Mooney said that although there was no report of deer in the early years of establishment at this centre they had of late become a major problem. The Department now employ a trapper full time here and he has done good work in stemming the invasion and the situation is now under control. Mr. Mooney then went on to give a very interesting lecture on the different species of deer to be found in this country, their habits and the damage they cause. Messrs Chisholm, Fitzpatrick, Hamilton and Cremin also contributed valuable information from their own observations of deer and the damage they do at home and abroad.