

## TWELFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in Jury's Hotel, Dublin, at 7 p.m. on Saturday, 20th March, 1954. The President, Mr. H. M. Fitzpatrick, was in the chair and there was a large attendance of members.

Opening the meeting the President paid a tribute to the late Mr. K. L. Schorman who was a long-standing member of the Society and also a member of its council. A vote of sympathy with his family was passed in silence, all members standing.

On the suggestion of the President the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting, which had appeared in *Irish Forestry*, were taken as read and were signed.

The President then called on the Secretary to read the Council's report for 1953.

## COUNCIL'S REPORT FOR 1953

The first meeting of the Council was held on the 9th February, 1953. Nine members were present. The Secretary reported that Mr. J. McDonald, Director of Research, British Forestry Commission, had agreed to give a lecture on forest research on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting. Arrangements were made to secure speakers and to send invitations to all likely to be interested. Arrangements were also made to hold a general excursion to Clonmel in May and day excursions to forests near Blessington, Castlepollard, Dundalk, Kilworth.

Further meetings of the Council were held in May, June and November.

### MEMBERSHIP

During the year three Grade I, ten Grade II and seven Associate Members were elected. Income from membership subscriptions in 1953 amounted to £152, as against £156 in 1952, so there are indications that our effective membership declined. The number of members in arrears also increased and the sum due for 1953 was £65 15.

## INCOME

The total income for the year was £353, of which over £201 came from the Journal, mainly from advertising. The best thanks of the Society is due to our subscribers and to the Business Editor. The Council urge members to support our advertisers.

## JOURNAL

Two issues of the Journal appeared during the year. The Editor is to be complimented on the high standard of both issues. The Editor reports that difficulties in securing material for the Journal and also delays at the printers, are tending to hold up the publication of the issues beyond the scheduled time.

## EXCURSIONS

Reports on the excursions held during 1953 appear in Vol. X, No. 2 of *Irish Forestry* recently issued.

The excursions were very successful in every way but for some reason the autumn day excursions were not so well attended as those held earlier in the year. The Council has the question of excursions under active consideration and is planning a much fuller programme of day excursions for 1954. The Council has also had the Annual General Excursions under review and is planning ahead for 1955.

The Council wishes to acknowledge its indebtedness to the Minister for Lands, the officials of the Forestry Division and the private woodlands owners for the facilities provided to members on the excursions of the Society. The Council is particularly grateful to Messrs. Irish Forest Products and Messrs. McAinsh for the very welcome fare provided for members on the occasion of the visits to Castlepollard and Clonmel.

## PROPOSED DAY EXCURSIONS—PROGRAMME FOR 1954

April 25th. Ballinagee, Holywood State Forest, Co. Wicklow.

May 16th. Gloster Roscrea—Estate of Major E. T. T. Lloyd.

August 15th. Slievenamon State Forest.

August. Ballymanus, Glenealy State Forest.

September. Glaslough, by invitation from Sir Shane Leslie.

## ANNUAL EXCURSION, 1954

Lake District, England, June 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

The adoption of the Council's Report and Abstract of Accounts, was proposed by Mr. M. Bogue and seconded by Mr. J. J. Maher, was passed unanimously. Speaking to the adoption of the Abstract of Accounts Mr. A. B. Ross said that as the Society's finances were in such a healthy condition he would suggest that some of the money should be transferred to an excursion fund.

The outgoing President then gave his valedictory address in which he reviewed the growth of State Forestry over the past half-century. He also gave an outline of the present position with regard to private forestry.

The meeting formally confirmed the election of office-bearers for the year 1954 and the incoming President, Mr. T. McEvoy, took the chair.

After a short recess the President called on Mr. E. G. Richards, Utilization Development Officer, British Forestry Commission, to read his paper on "Modern Trends in the Utilization of Forest Products," a copy of which appears elsewhere in this issue.

The vote of thanks to the speaker was proposed by Mr. T. Deirg, Minister for Lands, who spoke first in Irish and then in English. He pointed out that from the evidence offered by the speaker, from publications, etc., there would appear to be a similarity of problem facing the British Forestry Commission and ourselves. The Commission, however, were a much larger organization, with greater resources and research facilities, and there was no doubt that the necessary markets could in time be built up.

Last year our receipts were in the region of £150,000, excluding receipts from our sawmills. Cong Sawmill was at present undergoing reconstruction but receipts from Dundrum Mill were around £16,000 mainly for oak cross-arms for the E.S.B. and Rural Electrification.

Mr. Richards, he said, estimated that the minimum economic requirements of a pulp mill would be about 100 tons of timber per day. He would ask his audience to consider what this would mean in felled timber and what its effect on our forest programmes would be. He said he would like to see pulp factories here but we have at present a ready market for our timber and so there was no need for the State to go into the business of processing.

Before closing, the Minister paid tribute to the late Mr. K. L. Schorman, who had been associated with the Forestry Division since its infancy.

Mr. A. B. Ross, seconding the vote of thanks, said:

"Speaking as a member of the Native Timber Merchants' Federation I would like to try and show how utilization of Forest Products have changed in a space of ten to twelve years.

*On the Question of Conifer Thinnings.* Prior to 1950 practically no market existed for Sitka or Norway Thinnings other than a very limited demand for fencing. With two factories now accepting fairly large quantities of conifer thinnings a ready market is available, but as obviously ever increasing quantities of thinnings come available, it is fairly evident that a third outlet is or will be required, and perhaps in time the paper factory situated on the Suir will be equipped to utilize fairly large quantities of thinnings. I do not say this from the point of view of increasing competition but purely as an opinion of the availability of supplies.

*Larch and Scots Pine Thinnings.* For the past year practically no pit-wood or pit-props have been shipped to Wales or England, mainly because of the quantities available in Scotland resulting from the disastrous storm of early last year, and presumably increased supplies from English forests. Eventually it is hoped this market, or portion of it, will return. On the question of what can be extracted from conifer thinnings for manufacture into nylon, etc., I shall leave to someone with scientific knowledge. At this point I might mention that the Institute for Industrial Research and Standards, with their laboratory at Glasnevin, could undertake tests. In addition, perhaps a section equivalent to the Forest Research Station at Princes Risborough could be added at Glasnevin.

*Hardwood Thinnings.* This portion of Mr. Richards's address interested me very much, not because of the difficulty of obtaining a suitable market for hard-wood poles, but because there are hard-wood plantations of apparently fairly large area to be thinned. It is sad to say such is not the case in Ireland and it would appear if there are to be any reasonable-sized areas of young hard-wood plantations the Forestry Department will require to acquire these for preservation. There is no doubt that a few of these do exist in the country. There are possibly six private estates in the country where schemes of re-afforestation exist, and in at least two of these properties no hard-wood is grown or being planted.

*Conifers. Large Thinnings.* In a few years' time large quantities of Spruce (Sitka and Norway) will be available and provided there is co-operation between the various interests, no difficulty will be found in finding a ready market. It has already been proved that flooring of 5" to 7" widths can be produced from these thinnings, and when dry can compare with the very best quality.

*Mature Conifers.* Prior to the Emergency no difficulty was found in disposing of native soft-wood, railways, canals, etc., being ready buyers. When the Control of Timber Order came into operation all first quality soft-wood was reserved for house-building and special construction schemes. Railways were forced to use low-grade soft-woods and now that ordinary trading conditions have returned little native soft-wood is accepted by the builders and railways are now inclined to purchase their requirements abroad, though it is doubtful if a finer sleeper exists than a Scots Pine one. Other home-grown conifer sleepers are not acceptable. The Canadian Douglas Fir sleeper does not take creosote and it is therefore presumed the native Douglas Fir is the same but I would like to see this species and others tested. For many years one of the principal furniture manufacturers has been using native conifers instead of Columbian Pine, having discovered the home-grown article equal to or better than the imported article for his particular job.

*Mature Hard-woods.* A happier story to unfold here. Prior to 1941 practically all hard-wood was shipped cross-channel, either

in the round or rough sawn, for many varied purposes. As a result of the second World War little or no foreign hard-wood arrived in Ireland and for a few years furniture manufacturers and many others were forced, against their will, to use the native article. As time went by they discovered that if this was handled properly it was an excellent alternative and by now practically all are using it, having installed kilns, etc., for proper seasoning.

In the past four years, probably following the modernization and erection of kilns at the State-owned Dundrum Mills (perhaps some day some member of the native trade will admit that this was the incentive for the additional kilns later erected) manufacturers and, believe it or not, native timber merchants, erected drying kilns and modernized their plant, with the result that at present there are no less than twenty-eight modern drying kilns in this country and there may be one or two more. In addition, there are probably a further six drying chambers. Of the twenty-eight kilns, only four are in Dublin City and four are belonging to the Forestry Division.

Without fear of contradiction, the articles of furniture, etc., being manufactured from Irish hard-wood in these factories are equal, and in many cases better than can be seen abroad. It is not generally known that one of the factories using home-grown hardwoods has turned out such excellent articles of artistic design that these can be found in the Irish Embassy in London, in one of the principal stores in New York, and in the offices of heads of semi-Government concerns, Priorities and Churches all over the country.

From the foregoing it can, therefore, be assumed the modern trend in the utilization of native timber has been forward, and the future is so full of possibilities that the next few years in the life of a native timber merchant is going to be very interesting.

Supporting the vote of thanks Mr. O. V. Mooney said:

"There seems to be little doubt that now, at last, the time is fast approaching, or has already arrived, when our forests are forcing upon us the realization of the basic reason for a forester's work, which is the growing of trees for timber and ultimate sale and profit.

For long years past, one may say indeed for forty years or more, foresters have worked hard and immersed themselves in the task of establishing plantations at the least cost and with best effect.

Foresters have always kept a vigilant eye on the unit costs, whether in the nursery or in the planting field, and so they still do and will do, but it seems to me that, wrapped up as we have been in the many ramifications of the early silviculture of forest crops, we have not often had time to raise our heads and look ahead and upwards at the rising timber tree. These trees are now forcing our attention.

Outside the ranks of professional foresters we have often heard the virtues of forestry enumerated but very often these eulogies, whilst stressing the value of forestry as a provider of employment, a protector of the soil, a beautifier of the countryside, an ameliorator

of the climate and so on, have failed to emphasize the ultimate objective.

The theme to-night is to emphasize the real meaning of forestry and Mr. Richards has done a fine job here by putting before us a realistic picture of everyday thinking amongst the uprising forests in Britain and by throwing into relief the now necessary utilization approach to forestry.

Those, and there should be many here, who know the older stands at Avondale, particularly those of Douglas Fir, Silver Fir, Norway Spruce, Sitka Spruce and Tsuga, which were planted between 1904-1910 and which are now solid timber crops up to an average of 80' high, will doubtless have a feeling of regret when they think that there was only about 2,000 acres of forest plantation laid down up to 1920. They might say: 'If only we had 15,000 acres—a recent one-year planting figure—of Avondale timber to-day how well off we would be.'

Between 1920-25 5,345 acres were planted and 15,912 acres in the five years between 1925-30, and 20,465 acres between 1930-35. Between 1935-40 36,047 acres were planted. It is the young forests from the twenties and the early thirties that we now are handling for sale and utilization mainly. While any forester realizes the absurdity of relating productivity to area of planted land, these figures may serve to impress that we have now entered our productivity and utilization era very definitely. We must, of course, expect big increases in productive area and dimension of timber as the years go on, but our main problem to-day is development of markets and utilization for trees ranging from say 3" in diameter x 20' high, to trees up to 16" diameter x 60' high, involving sizes from rustic poles and pulp-wood and pit-wood at one end to boxwood and small timber sizes less frequently at the other.

In dealing with thinnings Mr. Richards makes an early reference to Douglas Fir when quoting species percentages for plantations between ten and forty years of age and shortly afterwards he drew down on the price differential favourable to European Larch over other conifers which also exists in this country. Most of our Douglas was planted between 1920-30 when it may have reached a peak of 7 % or 8 % of all other species, but thereafter it fell to a low percentage of about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  % average through the thirties and lost favour altogether after that.

Douglas Fir is, in the opinion of many, one of the most promising timber trees we have now. In many of the demesnes and in the older State plantations, it has proved itself a fine volume producer of quality timber. In the young and pole stages it may also have a great future for it tends to replace European Larch for many uses where durability is the paramount requirement and, indeed, there seems to be a growing conviction amongst foresters that it is a better fencing post than European Larch. It looks, indeed, as if it has high qualifications for uses in all work exposed to weather and in this respect it

can be seriously considered for use in gates and weather-boarding for houses, whilst it makes a fine scaffolding pole, tripod, pea-stage and so on, and it is hoped in the future that it may find favour as a transmission pole for which, of course, there would be a very great market in this country. Douglas Fir is also readily acceptable for wall-board and cardboard manufacture.

Indeed Douglas Fir should commend itself highly to planters, especially in an era when the uprising generation of European Larch is not always measuring up to the high virtue of older generations.

We are not likely to be troubled for a long time with utilization problems from our hard-wood plantations but the pattern is much the same. An exception, however, is Poplar which, as we all know, is a faster grower than practically any of the conifers and produces a vast bulk of useful wood quickly. Here in Ireland where we have known Poplar so well and for so long, we have very few stands of utilizable size but it should profit us well to consider the Black Poplars more, not in the hectic rush of fashion but in the selective process of site suitability. Poplar is an all-round tree from the utilization standpoint, from pulpwood to plywood, matches to boards.

In his talk Mr. Richards has placed the emphasis on thinnings and rightly so for, as I have mentioned before, it is with the sale of light and heavy poles that foresters will mainly be concerned in the coming years. If we are to make a success of our sales here we must study with the greatest concentration the utilization of small produce.

Here in Ireland we have very much the same kinds of sale for poles as Mr. Richards tells us of in Britain. But in the better-off counties local sale to farmers is prodigious and so far in these places this market is, I am glad to say, insatiable. Experience seems to show that the more wood is used in rural life the more it is wanted.

We have also a wallboard factory which absorbs a considerable quantity of thinnings and it is hoped in the near future that another mill will open for the manufacture of brown wrapping paper and packing cardboards. The much fluctuating pit-prop market which seems always to live through the most violent crises is picking up somewhat of late and export of anything up to 8" in Douglas Fir, European Larch, Japanese Larch and even Norway and Sitka Spruce, can be made in that direction.

Thus local sales, fencing posts and poles, pulpwood, scaffolding poles and pit-wood can cope fairly well with our produce in small pole sizes but we must start to think of other things for the 5" or, more generously for 7" upwards.

And here we know at once that boxwood is the answer to the greater part of the problem. In this respect we know too that there is no doubt as to the suitability of our wood. For boxes not requiring high quality specification, Japanese Larch, Douglas Fir, Silver Fir, Scots Pine and many other woods are suitable and the ideals of high-grade boxwood, strength, whiteness and lightness, are present

in both Norway and Sitka Spruce. It is probably only fair to say that until now the quantity and supply of home-grown boxwood has been too erratic to make boxwood sawing worth while to commercial saw-milling firms and it has only been a sideline for most. It looks as if there is every hope that things will change for the better in the near future and that supplies will then be greater and more even.

Our greatest concentration must be on the economic utilization of small-sized wood, even though it is hard to keep wastage in such work below 50 %. Mr. Richards has covered this field well and has made an interesting remark when he states that it takes 200 cubic feet or  $6\frac{1}{2}$  tons of round wood to make one ton of rayon and that about two tons of round timber will make one ton of mechanical pulp. There seems to be a wide field in the pulping field—particularly in the production of newsprint, of which there is large home consumption, but the possibility of production of other pulps would, no doubt, be influenced by factors of our own small home consumption. The use of plastic finished products has greatly increased and is bound to increase more and this is a line that deserves consideration.

Finally, there is home-grown constructional timber for the larger sizes and there is no utilization problem here where there is good quality timber of the well-trying species such as Scots Pine, European Larch and Norway Spruce. However, there is no particular significance in this trend as good standing timber in substantial sizes is very scarce indeed.

There is, however, still a prejudice against home-grown timber for constructional material and the qualification of foreign timber is frequently met with in building specifications.

Though we know, and are fully convinced, that the well-trying and better-known conifers such as Scots Pine, Norway Spruce, European Larch and perhaps Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir are at least the equal of the imported wood, we have to admit at the same time that there has been ample justification from time to time for criticism of the quality of our timbers as presented for building purposes. War emergency conditions tended to encourage certain malpractices and timber of all sorts and species, very often not suitable at all, and in all sorts of unseasoned conditions, were used, thus bringing our home-grown timber into low repute.

Foresters and timber merchants can win back and establish the good reputation of our home-grown conifer timber in the first instance by concentration of all skill in the production of high quality timber in the forest, and the second by devoting study and available resources to proper seasoning and skilful sawing of the timber.

The importance of the seasoning of wood properly is not generally appreciated, perhaps, in Ireland and there certainly is no time now to mention more than the great benefits to be derived from judicious air-drying and kiln-drying of softwoods and hardwoods.



Perhaps we always think of the seasoning of timber as a process of reducing moisture content to a degree where wood will not warp or twist afterwards. We may less often remember that seasoning: 1. Imparts greater strength to timber; 2. Makes it lighter; 3. Makes it resistant to decay; 4. Makes it take preservatives; 5. Makes it take paints and polishes and other finishes."

# SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1953

INCOME		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	EXPENDITURE	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Balance from last account		316	7	5				By Stationery and Printing	..			28	7	10
In Bank on Current Account		23	16	6				" Printing of Journal	..			147	19	5
Less Amount due to Secretary					292	10	11	" Postages	..			19	15	6
								" Expenses re Meetings	..			18	3	3
To Subscriptions received								" Bank Charges and	..					
1 1st Grade Tech. 1951		1	0	0				Cheque Books	..			1	5	2
5 " " 1952		5	0	0				Honoraria	..			30	0	0
34 " " 1953		34	0	0				" Purchase of £200 Dublin	..					
2 " " 1954		1	10	0				Corporation 5 % Redeemable	..					
1 2nd " " 1951		10	0	0				Stock 1968/73	..			195	15	0
10 " " 1952		5	0	0				Balance						
51 " " 1953		25	10	0				In Bank on Current Account	211	15	7			
3 " " 1954		1	10	0				Less Amount due to						
1 " " 1955		10	0	0				Secretary	..	4	19	10		
4 Associate		3	0	0								206	15	9
13 " 1951		9	6	0										
84 " 1952		63	0	0										
2 " 1953		1	10	0										
1 " 1954		10	0	0										
1 " 1955		15	0	0										
1 " 1956					152	11	0							
Interest on Investment					1	14	4							
Journals sold and advertisements					201	5	8							
												£648	1	11

I have examined the above Account, have compared same with vouchers and certify it to be correct, the balance to credit being £206 15s. 9d. which is on current account at the Ulster Bank, Ltd. There is also a holding of £200 Dublin Corporation 5 % Redeemable Stock 1968/73. Credit has not been taken for Subscriptions for 1951, £4 10s. 0d.; for 1952, £22 10s. 0d. and for 1953, £65 15s. 0d. which were outstanding at 31st December, 1953.

D. M. CRAIG, *Hon. Auditor*,  
85 Harcourt Street, Dublin.

23rd January, 1954.

## COVER PHOTO

Our cover photo is of a large Sessile oak tree popularly known as the "Raven's Tree," which stood in Desart property of Callan State Forest. It was blown down in 1947 when it was found that heart was gone to a height of 9 ft. above ground-level. Its total height was 95 ft. and its diameter at 6 ft. was 10 ft. 3 ins. Its age was about 1,200 years and its total weight, including branches, was 65 tons.

There may be a connection between this tree and the famous Irish chieftain, The O Brennan Mor. Known as "The Raven," he was mentioned by Spencer in *The Fairey Queen*, and was worthy of the special attention of Mountjoy and Carew between 1570 and 1600. He is also mentioned in the story "Bog of Stars."

This tree grew near the centre of the scene of the Raven's activities and close by is the ruins of an old fort.