

Excursion to Durrow Forest

THE excursion to Durrow Forest, Co. Laois, was attended by members from areas as far afield as Galway, Waterford and Dublin. The party was welcomed by the President, Mr. Swan, and by Mr. D. Hayes, who represented the Minister for Lands. A short history of the property was given by Mr. Hayes who explained that the area carried a crop of hardwoods, mainly beech, in which it was proposed to carry out regeneration felling. Unfortunately the storm of 1957 intervened when only a limited amount of regeneration had taken place.

The leader for the day, Mr. McNamara, skilfully steered the discussion which followed into the economics of beech growing in comparison with conifers. The general opinion was that to grow beech economically the price would require upward adjustment. Along the route reference was made to the high quality of the beech and the absence of butt rot.

Leaving the beech we were introduced to a Norway spruce stand growing on sandy loam. In the original planting 25% oak groups were introduced only to be completely suppressed by the spruce. Mr. T. McCarthy remarked that this is a rather common occurrence and that the oak should be relieved at 10 to 15 years if it is to survive. Mr. Hayes was of the opinion that oak does better in lines than in groups. Mr. Mooney concurred and considered that on this particular site ash would have been a better choice than oak to compete with the spruce.

We were now directed to a Scots pine stand which in comparison with the spruce looked poor, but still managed to compare favourably with Quality Class I of the B.F.C. Yield Tables. Again the question of economics in the growing of Scots pine was introduced, but although comparison with spruce was futile on a volume basis, it was agreed that

the demand for P. & T. poles might offset to some extent the relatively low volume production.

A unique feature of the excursion was a competition in the ocular estimation of volume of two poplars. This was won by Mr. Hanan whose estimate was within 2% of the measured volume. Mr. Hayes presented the prize.

Following an enjoyable tea in the open Mr. Swan thanked everybody for attending and remarked that we were much too prone to compare volumes of conifers at 50 years with those of hardwoods at 100 years, sometimes forgetting that the criterion is the values of the different timbers. He expressed his opinion that the price of beech would influence its planting.

P.M.J.
