
Excursion to Cong Forest

A highly enjoyable and interesting day was had by the members of the Society and their friends who attended the excursion to Cong Forest on Sunday, 27th July. The capricious weather favoured us kindly and this factor coupled with the magnificent scenery of far famed Cong helped in no small measure to make this outing a memorable occasion.

The President, Professor Clear, welcomed the group and in a short address he expressed gratitude to the Minister for his kind permission to tour the Forest. Then the Professor placed the party into the capable hands of Mr. T. Grunnell who led us forthwith to see, examine and

criticise a pure stand of 31 year old Sitka spruce growing on limestone drift.

In the discussion that followed the ever present controversy of silviculture versus economics raised its hoary head and the problem of to clear fell or not to clear fell also instigated some interesting arguments. According to Mr. Grunnell the stand would in all probability be clear felled inside 10 years as the close proximity of a saw mill had the tendency of shortening the rotation. Economics ordained that an early crop should be utilised at an earlier date than a similar or even slightly older stand say 60 miles away.

The talk then drifted into the timber sphere and the forester in charge of Cong Sawmills, Mr. Fahy, gave us a picture of the type of produce held in preference by the local consumers. It appears that untreated Sitka spruce is considered a most suitable material for constructional work. A big factor in its favour is its lightness—a property much appreciated by builders.

The members were then brought on a sightseeing trip and a bewildering assortment of the lesser known exotic trees were pointed out. Included among these were such trees as *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Cryptomeria japonica*, *Abies nordmaniana*, *Podocarpus*, *Acacia*, and within sight of Ashford Castle itself was a *Ginkgo biloba* or as one member of the group so aptly called it "The Living Fossil Tree".

In the midst of these rarities was a *Pinus contorta* but it was a *contorta* with a difference. Instead of the lowly insignificant pulpwood pole we have come to associate with this species we saw a towering awe inspiring tree vying in cubic content with any of our better known high volume producers. It was gratifying to see the capabilities of *Pinus contorta* and as Professor Clear remarked the qualities of the timber of this much maligned tree had in many respects proved superior to both Sitka spruce and Scots pine.

Enraptured by the lively discussion and enthralled by the varied collection of trees, the party did not feel the hours flitting by and it came as a surprise when we began to experience the mild pangs of hunger. This state, however, was short lived as we finished the excursion in the traditional manner by enjoying an excellent cup of tea and sandwiches.

Before departing on our respective journeys homewards, the President expressed on our behalf our deepest appreciation to all those who had helped to make the excursion the resounding success it was.

E.McG.