

# Symposium—‘The Forest and Recreation’

On the occasion of The Annual General Meeting of the Society,  
March, 1962.

THE Symposium was opened by Mr. H. Naylor representing An Bórd Fáilte, who said :

I would like first of all to express the thanks of Bórd Fáilte for the opportunity of participating in this important discussion. And I want to congratulate the Society of Irish Foresters for its initiative and foresight—indeed these qualities are evident in the very title of this symposium : “The Forest and Recreation”.

So far there has not been very much serious thought given to the secondary or incidental benefits which the afforestation programme will through time confer on the nation as a whole. This meeting therefore serves a most useful purpose, and it will act as a catalyst to start people thinking of the multiple uses of the forest.

It is a curious fact that we are not a nation of tree lovers. As individuals we may appreciate the beauty of trees, or we may express an occasional desire to plant a few ornamental varieties in our suburban gardens. But the small amount of tree planting done outside the programme of the Forestry Division suggests that we have not yet come to realise fully either the aesthetic or economic advantages of tree planting.

From the point of view of the tourist industry, the programme of planting 25,000 acres a year is adding to the appearance of the country, and in a short while should start providing new tourist attractions. Admittedly there is a danger of over-planting, but in terms of land area this is a remote contingency. The main danger lies in the planting of coniferous varieties only. Already some parts of the country have lost what could be regarded as the traditional Irish character. That in itself is not necessarily a bad thing as in most areas the afforestation programme improves the eye appeal of the landscape. However there is a more subtle danger which may not yet be fully realised. There has been a lamentable gap of at least 50 years in large scale tree planting in Ireland. Many of the fine deciduous trees, the stately beeches, chestnuts and oaks which characterise certain districts will disappear shortly. Some have already disappeared. There has been no large scale planting of deciduous trees to replace them, and unless attention is given to this soon we shall in years to come be denuded virtually of deciduous varieties and have only conifers.

We appreciate the reasons for having softwood varieties chosen for our new forests, but now that there is a growing public acceptance of the long-term advantages of afforestation, perhaps the time has come when we could think of having, say, contrast belts of deciduous trees around our forests, or bordering certain stretches of public roadway running through forest areas.

Turning from the passive to the active aspects of forests and tourism, an event of considerable importance is the creation of our first forest park at Gougane Barra in the Green Valley Desmond, source of the River Lee. Bórd Fáilte is co-operating wholeheartedly with the Forestry Division in this project and we are looking forward to the creation of several other forest parks in Ireland in the next few years. Bórd Fáilte has approved a grant of £1,000 for the improvement of the access road at Gougane Barra. There will be a motor road of about two miles in length which will circle the glen. Picnic facilities will be provided at various points, and there will be shelters and paths to view points.

This is the first step in a new approach to our forests. We hope that through time the public will be encouraged to look upon the forests as their own, and to treat them with the same respect which they show to their own domestic possessions. At the moment the visitor, to say the least, does not feel welcome in walking through a forest. Bórd Fáilte would like to look forward to a time when most of our forests, certainly those of scenic merit, would have pathways through them,

and signs inviting the visitor to use them. What we have in mind is a sign at the entrance to the forest showing its name—and here we think that every forest should be given a name if it has not got one already—and pointing to topographical features. For instance, at Gougane Barra one of the interesting features is that the River Lee rises there and that a visitor can leap across the infant river. The entrance signs would also show the year in which the forest was planted, and indicate how much the people of Ireland invested in it. And the sign would have a sketch map showing colour-coded pathways. This last bit about colour coded pathways might sound a trifle complicated to the outsider, but foresters know the simplicity of the scheme. Small wooden pointers painted with the code colour are all that is needed to lead the visitor safely and surely through a forest, taking him to vantage points, topographical features, and leading him to exits or the starting point as the case might be. The cost involved in having coloured coded pathways would be negligible. I think also that it would overcome the reluctance to give the public free access to forests.

By encouraging the visitor to keep to a defined path there would be very little risk of hundreds of young trees being crushed to death by careless feet. We would look upon walking paths as being the first requirement in turning our forests into a working asset for the tourist industry.

One of the most important developments taking place in tourism to-day is the growing mobility of the tourist, and we are rapidly arriving at a situation in which the average visitor will hire a motor car for the length of his stay in Ireland, or he will bring his own car with him. He will stay put in a region for a shorter period, but each day he will want to see the entire district. In particular he will want to explore by getting off the main roads and into the hinterland. There will be no part of the country that will not be a tourist area. The provision of picnic facilities and car parking space on the fringes of our forests would be a decided advantage to the tourist industry in coping with this new development. I am sure that all of you who have visited North America and the Continent will have noted the widespread use, even in winter time, of log tables, log benches and safe cooking points provided just off the main road.

There is a further possibility within this context. This is the provision of bungalows for visitors in some of our forests. In other countries holiday accommodation is provided literally under the trees. The comparatively damp conditions in our forests might militate against this, but perhaps we will see bungalows in forest clearings.

But the biggest single benefit to the tourist industry that is likely to accrue from our forests will be the improvement of our game stocks. At one time Ireland had some of the finest shooting in Europe, and there are still areas which provide excellent sport. During the last few years Bórd Fáilte and local development interests generally have been trying to catch the attentions of sportsmen in other countries, and so

far our efforts have had a modest measure of success. However, the potential is enormous. First of all the sportsmen would come in the valley period; secondly they would spend during their stay more money than any other classification of visitor. A hotelier in the south west told me last month that his French visitors in January spent an average of £11 a day each, including the hire of cars and the air fare from Paris to Cork. So the rewards for the nation are very great indeed. However, there are several serious stumbling blocks to making use of this potential asset.

We can say that at the moment our forests are refuges for game. But many of them are also breeding grounds for vermin. We would like to see this position being changed in two steps to turn the forests into game sanctuaries. No tracts of land can be cleared as easily of vermin as forests since poison baits can be laid in the full knowledge that domestic animals cannot get at them. This might not apply all the way in a few forests with open boundaries, but in the main they are fenced in. A concerted effort is being made all over the country, through regional game councils, to control vermin, and if this is successful nature itself will build up the game stocks without any help from man. I have described the forests at the moment as game refuges in the sense that they provide a temporary resting place for game frightened in from the open fields or plains. But most of the forests cannot yet be regarded as breeding grounds for game birds—although technically I suppose they are sanctuaries—because of the fact that they also harbour pillaging birds and animals.

The grey squirrel has become Public Enemy No. 1 to the forester in England as it is now damaging trees—usually by picking out the leader—as well as killing off other wild life. This tree rat has already ousted the red squirrel from many parts of Britain. In Ireland the grey squirrel has crossed the River Shannon, and if it explodes biologically here as it did in England it will give us quite a headache. In spite of an all-out campaign in England, the grey squirrel is still multiplying. Another newcomer, the pinemartin, is now to be found in Wicklow and Connemara. This lad, as you know, climbs trees and kills young birds. Four were shot within the course of a year at Ballinahinch in Galway.

Now if these and many other woodland gangsters could be controlled, game stocks would increase very rapidly. Small plantations of larch are ideal breeding grounds for woodcock, one of our greatest sporting birds, and it is not so long ago that Ireland could boast of possibly the best woodcock shoot in western Europe. The forests could also be sanctuaries for pheasant, grouse, and mallard duck. A more exciting prospect is that we could introduce some game birds which are not found at the moment in Ireland. Take the capecaille for instance. This large member of the grouse family was driven from Ireland when our woods were cut down, but there is no reason why he could not be invited back now. There may be several other species which will occur to the experts whom we have with us to-night.

Before sitting down I want to say something about deer. We realise fully the damage which deer can do to young trees, and indeed adult trees, rubbing the velvet from their antlers, but isn't it a pity that the red deer and fallow deer in Wicklow were allowed to be wiped out. I do not have to spell out the great importance of deer-stalking as a hard-selling tourist attraction. However, because of this importance we may soon be able to think in terms of special forests for deer, something on the lines of those in Germany. In other words, forests where the return from the initial capital investment would come from the game rights and not from the sale of lumber.

Invariably, the Forestry Division acquires the game rights when purchasing land for afforestation. Already some hotels have run up against the problem of uncertainty as to whether or not their tenders will be successful in the following season. It takes a number of years for a hotel to build up a reputation among overseas sportsmen, and at least one hotel owner that I have talked to would like to see some system introduced whereby recognition would be given to the value to the country as a whole of the visitors attracted here in winter time. The present maximum term is three years, which is too short for this type of development.

There is bound to be an occasional clash of interest between various national interests concerning minor aspects of the afforestation programme, and that in itself is all to the good. By stimulating thought, discussion—and perhaps an occasional heated argument—we will come to get the maximum benefit from our forests, surely one of the proudest and greatest achievements of this young State.

However, I don't want to give the impression that Bórd Fáilte's contact with the Forestry Division is anything but harmonious. I know that the term harmonious relations has become something of a cliché, but we are fortunate in that we have a happy and constructive relationship between Bórd Fáilte and the Forestry Division.

Bórd Fáilte accepts that most of the plantations are commercial forests and that the primary economic consideration must take precedence. The Forestry Division, for its part, acknowledges that in some of its forests—notably Killarney—the tourist interest must take precedence over commercial timber. In the matter of deer-stalking we would like to have one or two forests given over primarily to deer. We do not want to fill every stretch of standing timber with deer, but we are confident that in Killarney and perhaps Wicklow we could offer the visitor some of the finest deer-stalking in the world. But our forests, like Bórd Fáilte, and, indeed, the Forestry Division, are young, and we cannot hope to achieve overnight maximum utilisation of the recreational potential of our forests.

Mr. C. S. Kilpatrick then delivered the following paper:—  
*The Need for Recreation.*

As long ago as 760 years Before Christ the Prophet Isaiah cried "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till

there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth" (Isaiah 5, 8).

Since his day so many fields have been laid to fields that natural open spaces have almost disappeared from whole continents. Houses have continued to be joined to houses to such an extent that the whole world is becoming increasingly urbanised.

In 1900 only 39% of the population of the U.S.A. were urban dwellers, to-day the proportion is 70%.

Australia which used to be the country of the out back has a population containing 80% of urban dwellers and the proportion for Great Britain is similar. Even in both parts of Ireland the people living in cities and urban districts now form a majority of the inhabitants. Though the proportion here is still only 54% it increases by 1% and 2% at each census.

The reasons for this drift to the towns are manifold, more opportunities for employment, better wages and working conditions. Yet having attained this higher standard of material well-being man is still dissatisfied with his lot.

In the U.S.A. before the war "keeping up with one's neighbours" meant having a large car, refrigerator and washing machine but now the great urge is towards outdoor recreation. Man seems to retain an instinctive urge to return periodically to an existence similar to that experienced by his ancestors and the more industrialised a country becomes and the greater the tedium of urban routines the greater is the press for recreational opportunities in the natural surroundings of mountains, trees, lakes and rivers.

The higher wages, more leisure time, ease of travel, associated with higher levels of education and perception have all added to the trend and made its realisation possible.

#### *American Reaction.*

An indication of how this reaction has snowballed in the U.S.A. is given in the figures of the number of visits paid to national forests yearly.

1940	...	16 million visits
1955	...	60    "    "
1961	...	100    "    "
Estimated 2000	...	600    "    "

This shows a rate of increase of from 10% to 20% per annum.

To meet this increasing demand the U.S. Forest Service plans to spend \$50 million per year for the next 10 years in providing 28,000 new camp grounds with roads, caravan and car parks, picnic tables, toilets, ablutions, water supplies, bathing places, shelters, information centres, museums and buildings. This expenditure is greater than that to be spent on fire protection or forest roads.

The position in Canada is very similar. In the province of Ontario the annual visitation to Forest Parks increased from 2 million visits in 1957 to 5½ million in 1961 and the Provincial Government Department of Lands and Forests spent in 1961 \$2½ million out of a total of \$23 million.

The cost to the individual is not negligible as in America distances are great and families have to be properly equipped. It has been estimated that 8% of American family spending is spent on recreation—mostly outdoor recreation totalling \$20,000 million per annum.

*Forester's Reaction.*

There are, of course, many other natural open spaces for the public to enjoy without involving State Forests. In fact prior to 1925 the American public were excluded from all but a few of the National Forests. But Dr. Gilligan of the University of California has said that if the U.S. Forest Service had not tempered its utilitarian attitudes with a wild life and recreation policy there might be no national forests in the U.S.A. to-day. Now the public are the greatest guardians of their forests and co-operate in every way to preserve them.

It is natural that at first the forester's reaction was to keep the public out as he naturally did not want to increase the danger of fire or vandalism and he feared the possibility of his becoming a sort of glorified park superintendent. Yet few foresters in the U.S.A. to-day would suggest a return to the old policy of exclusion.

*Prospects in Ireland.*

So far I have been dealing largely with America where as in most things they are several steps ahead of us, but how does all this affect Ireland.

It will be argued by some that, because we have here neither the vast opportunities for a wilderness policy nor the dense concentration of population which exists in the U.S. of America, our people neither need nor desire National Forest Parks. Certainly the need is not so great but our public will none the less respond just as whole-heartedly as elsewhere.

Many of our forests may be unsuitable for the purpose but those that are suitable are often, unlike American forests, within easy reach of our towns and cities and can be enjoyed on a Sunday afternoon outing which is an enormous advantage.

*Tollymore Park.*

At the end of the last war the Interim Report of the Northern Ireland Planning Advisory Board 1947 recommended that Tollymore Park Forest, County Down, should be developed and opened as a Forest Park. The proposal was received in forestry circles with no

enthusiasm and was quietly forgotten. The reason, as far as I can understand, were :—

*Firstly*—It was considered that the park was unsuitable as it had too much undergrowth of laurel and rhododendron. Consequently no one would visit it and in any case it was too far from the nearest town which was at least three miles away.

*Secondly*—It might be overrun with trippers with the resulting litter, damage and risk of fire.

*Thirdly*—A commercial forest was a business concern with no time nor money for such frills. In addition there might be claims for injury to persons or to cars in the event of accidents.

Six years later with the passing of the 1953 Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) and its special clause on Forest Parks the matter came to light again. This time very little opposition was raised and in June 1955 after considerable preparation and planning the Park was declared open. It is interesting now to look back and see just how far the understandable fears of those who opposed the idea were well founded.

The answer to the first point—that no one would be interested has been overwhelming. In the first season 1955 there were 7,000 daily visits by cars

1956	10,000
1957	12,400
1958	14,000
1959	17,600
1960	20,500
1961	22,600

A steady annual increase of about 20% per annum. Every camp site and caravan park site has been booked out throughout the main holiday season from the time the park was opened. In addition something like 500 'buses a year have carried parties to the park, an average of three per day travelling from Dublin throughout the summer season.

In terms of persons this represents something of the order of 90,000 visits per year with a very good chance of reaching 100,000 in 1962. These figures compare favourably with even the most popular forests in the U.S.A. or Canada.

The second possible type of trouble has not arisen. The public have responded wholeheartedly and have co-operated in a way never imagined possible. Now as one goes about the province one is continually hearing of Tollymore Park and one is left in no doubt about the favourable reaction resulting to forestry in general.

Lastly the Commercial Forest has carried on uninterrupted and no one is keener on the whole project to-day than the local foresters and district forest officer. The cost of the Forest Park is around £2,000 per annum and more than half of this is recovered in receipts.

Only two claims for damages due to injuries have been made. Both cases resulted from the use of a field as an overflow car park last Whit week-end.



### *Rostrevor Pony Trekking.*

This successful venture, I am certain, can be repeated elsewhere where forests attractive in themselves are situated in scenic countryside and within reasonable distance of towns.

In 1959 a small hotel in the village of Rostrevor, on Carlingford Lough, started pony trekking in a small way. The main routes lay through Rostrevor forest on to the open mountains above. The increase in numbers trekking each year has been remarkable—

1959	...	57	man weeks
1960	...	224	" "
1961	...	472	" "

Now 80% of the clientele of the hotel are pony trekkers and a new annex is being built to house the greater number. Not surprising is the fact that the majority of trekkers come from the industrial areas of England—London, Sheffield, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester.

### *Type of Forest Which Appeals.*

Yet not every forest appeals to the public imagination. Valuable experience on this point was gained in 1960 when a series of open days for the public were held at 14 forests during week ending, Saturday, 18th June, as part of the celebrations marking the Golden Jubilee of State Forestry in Ulster.

The event was well publicised in all papers and on radio and T.V. Altogether some 3,200 persons responded to the invitation. It was found that the ordinary straight commercial forest, well off the beaten track, was sadly lacking in appeal and was only visited by organised parties of school children. Generally it could be said that it was the scenery, the combination of water, trees and mountains which appealed to the public. In fact water plays a very subtle part in the appeal of an area and it is, to a large extent, the rushing river and the quiet lake along with the trees which make Tollymore Park so attractive.

In a recent report to the President and Congress of the U.S.A. by the Outdoor Recreation Commission (January 1962) it is stated "Water is a focal point of outdoor recreation. Most people seeking outdoor recreation want water to sit by or to swim and to fish in. Boating and fishing are among the top ten activities. Camping, picnicking and hiking, also high on the list, are more attractive near water sites".

### *Present Policy in Northern Ireland.*

(1) *General*—The present policy in Northern Ireland is that the public are admitted on foot to roads and paths in all forests where there are no legal restrictions. Amenity aspects are considered in the planning and lay-out of all forests so as to avoid hard artificial lines and make the forest look more pleasing and natural. If our forests were larger it would be pleasant to allow the public to drive through them but as forest roads are narrow and often steep this is impossible

at present, especially during working hours. Car parks are often provided near the entrance to forests and from there the public are expected to explore the forest on foot.

(2) *Forest Parks*—About 10 forests are regarded as potential forest parks and are being developed with that object in view. At present most of these are too immature or present too great a fire risk but within the next 10-15 years nearly all should be able to take their place as forest parks.

There are great possibilities around Lough Erne and here a number of forests may be grouped to form a Lough Erne Forest Park. Similarly Rostrevor and Mourne Park could be grouped with Tollymore Park to form a Mourne Forest Park.

One of our more unusual potential Forest Parks is Belvoir Park which is almost within Belfast City boundary and next door to a new housing estate. The Forestry Division were asked by the Northern Ireland Housing Trust to co-operate in making the best use of this large estate. One-hundred-and-fifty acres of the estate has been leased at a normal forestry rental with the condition that the public be eventually admitted to the forest paths and arboreum.

Time alone will tell whether or not we have been too optimistic but indications to date are favourable. We are now planting our second P. year without any unusual difficulty.

I would like to finish with a few general points worth handing on.

#### *Gradual Development.*

It is unnecessary to have the full range of facilities at a Forest Park on the opening date. Sufficient must be done to make the public feel that they are welcome and encouraged to use the forest. Then as the public responds more can be added each year so that there is something new in the way of paths or shelters, etc., each year. However, development must not be overdone in such a way as to spoil the natural atmosphere, such as bringing in counter attractions like putting greens or similar features. The number of signs must also be kept to a minimum. Even these should be attractive in themselves.

#### *Concessionaires.*

Where reasonable numbers of the public are attracted to an area they very much appreciate the chance to purchase ice cream and minerals and, in the most successful parks, teas. It is much more satisfactory for this concession to be undertaken by an outside firm rather than to be run departmentally, though in the first season there may be no other way to run it until the project has proved itself.

#### *Dispersal of the public.*

The public tend to congregate near the car park and an effort must be made to entice them further afield. There should be plenty of sign

posts to special features such as waterfalls, viewpoints or items of historical interest. Another help is what they call in America "labelled trails"—a system of planned walks of different length each indicated by different coloured arrows. This has been most successful at Tollymore Park and helps to persuade the stranger to delve deeper into the forest without fear of being lost.

#### *Overflow Policy.*

In America all comers are made welcome to the National Forests and no one is turned away from camping grounds or caravan parks. This may be necessary where people have travelled great distances and may be possible where vast forest areas are available.

In Tollymore Park only a fixed number of sites are provided and when these are filled no further bookings are accepted. However, no one is turned away from the car park and when the regular park is filled emergency ones have to be found.

Strangely the peak period for visitors is at Easter and Whit weekends. This is probably because at that time of year the weather is too cold for the seaside. Another peculiar point is that attendances have not been greatly affected by the weather. In fact bad weather may drive people away from the exposed coast and into the shelter of the forest.

#### *Integrity.*

I quote from an Australian forestry publication—they seem to have been more unfortunate in their public relations than we have been. "Recreation is loaded with social and political pressures and the forester should try to establish for himself a reputation for professional integrity in the face of partisan irritations and misundeestandings". In other words the rules must be firmly and politely adhered to without fear or favour. In a small country like ours this is very important.

#### *Multiple Use of Forests.*

It is the taxpayer who pays for the establishment of our forests. There is no doubt that he has a right to the enjoyment of what is rightfully his own. If this enjoyment can be combined with the most profitable use to which the land can be put, if in addition employment and raw materials for industry are provided, the tourist trade advanced and the mental and educational horizon of the population uplifted, then we will indeed have used our land—our most valuable asset—to the very best advantage and greatest satisfaction of the whole nation.

Mr. H. J. Gray of the Department of Lands said that in any appraisal of the recreational and general amenity potential of this country's forest areas it was necessary to keep constantly in mind the fact that the social and amenity values of forestry were necessarily subordinate to the prime objective of ensuring a sound economic return from the considerable amount of public money invested in the forests.

The total investment in State Forests up to and including the current year by successive Governments amounted to £22½ million. If allowance were made for interest accretion over the years on the sums invested the present gross figure of investment would approximate £35 million. The current level of fresh net investment is £2½ million per annum. Obviously forest policy and management must ensure above all that the taxpayer ultimately reaps the benefit of this very considerable investment and commercial forest management must take precedence in all forest planning over such ancillary values as amenity or recreational facility. This country's biggest asset is land. Not all of that land unfortunately is suitable for agricultural purposes and afforestation is the means of bringing much of the non-agricultural residue into useful production. There are some people who would prefer to see the mountain slopes and the bogs left in their virgin state but national economy could not support the maintenance of large areas of land in a useless virgin state if they can be put to economic use.

Economic forestry objectives did not, however, preclude a substantial contribution by a well-planned afforestation programme to incidental public amenity including recreational potential. The Minister for Lands has publicly referred on a number of recent occasions, to the growing attention which the Department is paying to those secondary values attaching to its work. The Forestry Division of the Department now holds almost half a million acres of land and with the continuance of planting at the present rate the total area of the State Forests will ultimately exceed one million acres. At a guess perhaps up to 90% of the total forest area is situated in mountainous and other amenity areas. In Co. Wicklow, a county where amenity considerations are very high, Forestry Division holds already some 60,000 acres, or about 12% of the total land in the county. There are similar extensive forest blocks in almost all the areas of the country with a high reputation for scenic amenity. For example, in the Galtee, Knockmealdown and Comeragh Mountain ranges along the Nore and Blackwater valleys, in Glengarriff, Inchigeela, Gougane Barra and other strategically important areas in West Cork, in locations in Kerry, such as Killarney, Kenmare and Glencar and up along the western counties in places like Cong, Ross and Ballinahinch in Connemara, Foxford, Nephin Beg, etc. in Mayo and Lough Gill and Collooney in Sligo. It is obvious that holding so much land in all of these amenity areas the Forestry Division can contribute in large measure to their amenity and, incidentally, their tourist potential.

He felt that the Forestry Division's past record in relation to the preservation and improvement of amenity had given little cause for criticism. Such criticism as had arisen usually stemmed from the extensive use of conifers instead of the broadleaved species of trees, the appearance of which most people preferred. Unfortunately the general quality of the land available for forestry in this country did not permit of the large-scale planting of hardwoods. Irish foresters

generally can be relied on to put in some hardwoods whenever the opportunity offers irrespective of whether they are likely to give as high an economic return as coniferous species would on the same high quality sites, but the devotees of hardwoods outside the Department would prefer to see hardwoods planted even in locations where they would have no chance whatever of growing. For example when the Department was engaged in recent years on a new planting project on top of the Feather Bed Mountain one of the hardwood enthusiasts made a strong plea against the use of conifers in site conditions in which even the hardier conifers will have a fairly tough battle. Generally, however, this particular criticism was less noticeable in recent years, presumably because the development of some of the earlier coniferous plantations had brought a greater public awareness of the contribution which even conifers, especially when there is a mixture of larch present, can make to scenic amenity. Increased attention was being given by the Forestry Division in important areas to the avoidance of geometric plantation patterns and efforts were being made to secure the maximum benefit from contrasts between the planted areas and the natural vegetation on adjoining stretches of hillside. Great care had been taken, for example, in Glengarriff in the work being carried on in recent years there in converting former scrub woodland into productive forest to maintain the splendid view down over the forest property from the Tunnel road and to preserve suitable open spaces and so on through the forest. In Muckross in Killarney large valuable coniferous plantations have been successfully established behind screens of broadleaved trees with an ultimate successful blending of amenity with productive use of the land. On the far shore of Lough Leane care was similarly being taken to preserve amenity woodland of little commercial value. All over the country where plantations adjoin tourist roads care was being taken to keep the plantation edges back from the road margins and to preserve worthwhile vistas.

The Forestry Service was now considering what could be done not merely to make the forests a contribution to the landscape but also to permit of greater recreational access to forest areas. The big problem in providing free access to the forest areas was, of course, the danger of fire. A picnic fire or carelessly dropped match can cause damage amounting to many thousands of pounds. The intensive propaganda which the Department has been carrying on in recent years has, however, made the public far more conscious of the danger of fire in forest areas. There was too a rapidly growing awareness of the valuable communal investment represented by the forests and a greater incentive to the public generally to assist in preserving such investment. Relying on this increasing public consciousness of forest value and the need for care in forest areas, the Minister for Lands had been able to announce recently that plans were in preparation to open up some of the particularly attractive forest blocks as National Forest Parks. These plans were currently under discussion with Bórd Fáilte and other interested bodies, including the local authorities in the areas concerned. Gougane

Barra in Co. Cork and the Derrybawn and Lugduff properties of Glendalough Forest had already been selected as the first two areas for this new development. In Gougane Barra development would be based on the opening up of a new circular road climbing up around the side of the Green Valley Desmond and from which a wonderful view could be obtained. It is expected that it will be possible to make car parking and picnic facilities available at the head of the Glen and later on steps will be taken to mark out walks and climbs up over the craggy mountain buttresses on either side of the Glen. Glendalough Forest has tremendous potential. In any development in the Glendalough area it is essential that the religious, historic and antiquarian importance of the valley area should be fully respected. But, Glendalough is also already a tourist focal point of prime importance and there is a need to expand the tourist facilities in such a way as to preserve untouched the historic and other aspects of the valley. The opening up to the public of a new road which climbs up Lugduff Mountain from the shore of the Upper Lake and circles back around Derrybawn ridge will be the key point of development here thus providing new tourist and recreational potential away from the national monument area in the valley. The view in places on this new mountain road route is truly magnificent and it is intended to develop attractive walks radiating out from this road up through the mountain block of forest property which actually stretches right across to join up with the State Forest in Glenmalure. In the course of time it is hoped that if these initial National Forest Park areas prove as successful an addition to the country's recreational and tourist facility as it is hoped they will, other suitable locations in the country will be similarly developed. The successful exploitation of this recreational value of the forests must depend on the fullest co-operation from the public in avoidance of damage particularly by fire.

Professor Hackett said that he was indebted to the Society for his invitation to the meeting. He said that the objects of the National Trust in Ireland were much the same as those of its counterparts in England and Wales; that with the minimum of resources these bodies were engaged in work concerning the preservation of scenic amenities and in the periodic sending of admonitions to public bodies in this context.

With reference to 'An Óige' he said that this organisation was primarily concerned with the active enjoyment of the countryside—especially the hills and mountains, on which plantations were now encroaching.

He held that at present these plantations lack the romantic associations which need cultivation in children not acquainted with fairy tales. For his part 'Ivanhoe' and other stories had a profound effect on him in his youth, not found in the youth of to-day.

In Ireland people were not so much used to exploring forests as to using them as avenues to the hills. Glencree, a substantial forest area,

well provided with mountains and streams, was at present rather remote from the Dublin population and access to it was not easy enough.

The professor then read a statement prepared by Mr. Butler of 'An Óige' setting forth the following points:—

Firstly, that access to the mountainside must be maintained: Next, that scenic views (such as the Drumgoff and Aughavannagh skylines) should be preserved. The statement continued—that there should also be sign-posted paths for these areas, that the stiles should be erected and maintained and that open spaces should be left in the forest. It was also stated that forest areas should be held as nature preserves and that wild animals and birds should be protected.

Winding up the case for 'An Óige', the professor said that the natural vegetation—which enhanced scenic amenity—as the rhododendron on the road to 'Mountain lodge' situated in the Galtee forest area should be preserved.

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