

Society's Activities

Twenty-First Annual General Meeting

THE Twenty-first Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, on Saturday, 16th March, 1963. The outgoing President, Professor T. Clear, was in the chair. He opened the private meeting.

Minutes.

The minutes of the Twentieth Annual General Meeting which had been published in the Journal were taken as read and were approved and signed.

Council's Report.

There were five meetings of the Council during 1962 with attendances as follows:—

- 5 attendances each : Miss Cahill, Miss Furlong, Mr. McNamara, and Mr. O'Carroll.
- 4 attendances each : Messrs. Sharkey, Luddy, Cosgrove, FitzPatrick, Hanan, and Swan.
- 3 attendances each : Messrs. Gallagher and McCarthy.
- 2 attendances : Professor Clear.

The activities of the Society in the field have been fully reported in our journal and need not be repeated here. They indicate a successful year. In respect of membership also we have had a successful year. Since 1960, when we fell on rather lean times, our paid up membership has just doubled. At the end of 1960 we had only 136 paid up members, in 1961 the number increased to 187 and at the end of 1962 the figure was 258. This has been due to the vigorous policy pursued by the Treasurer who over his two years in office has also succeeded in collecting a large amount of arrears.

However, membership alone does not make a Society healthy and active and the Council regrets to report a certain reluctance on the part of its members to join fully in the running of the Society. The numbers who completed nomination forms for the Council and who voted in our elections show no change on previous years, about 20 nomination forms and 110 voting papers were received. There is also a marked reluctance to accept nomination for posts of responsibility requiring some effort and time on the holder's part and as a result there was again no contest for the posts of Secretary and Treasurer, there being only one acceptor in each case, and nobody at all willing to act as Editor or Business Editor.

Some years ago a sub-committee of the Council reported on education within the Society and it was felt that the best way of inducing members to persevere in their studies was to offer recognition for

knowledge gained, and the possibility of our Society sponsoring Foresters' Certificates on similar lines to those obtainable through the British Societies was mooted. The Council also felt that it would be desirable if our certificate could open the way to higher qualifications. With this object in view negotiations were opened with the Central Examination Board of Great Britain to have our certificate accepted as qualifying for entry to the examination for the National Diploma in Forestry. In July last a meeting was arranged in Edinburgh at which we were given the opportunity of putting our case to the Central Examination Board who are responsible for the N.D.F. examinations. Our representatives at that meeting were our President, Professor Clear, Vice-President, Mr. McNamara and the Secretary. At this meeting it was agreed, subject to ratification by the Councils of the constituent Societies of the Board that:—

- (1) Forester Certificates awarded by the Society of Irish Foresters would be recognised for entry to the Diploma examination.
- (2) That the written examination for the Diploma could be held in Ireland under the supervision of the Society of Irish Foresters but that for the first three years we should accept an invigilator from the British Societies.
- (3) The Central Examination Board would recognise the Certificates of the Society of Irish Foresters based on examinations by that Society only and they would not accept certificates or documents from any other body.
- (4) That after three years of operation the question of representation on the Central Examination Board by the Society of Irish Foresters would be considered.

To date the Council of the Royal Forestry Society of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland have accepted these suggestions but the Council of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society have not yet reached a decision.

The Committee set up to publish a book on Irish Forestry as agreed at the last Annual General Meeting has made good progress under its Convenor, Mr. FitzPatrick. Much of the copy is in hands but much work, particularly editing, has yet to be done. The Joint-Editors appointed are Mr. FitzPatrick and Professor Clear. At a meeting with contributors they have been given very full powers to edit, rearrange and co-ordinate the material supplied.

As illustrated lectures are now a regular feature of our winter activities the Council has purchased a 500 watt 35 mm. projector and screen.

The proceedings of the Fifth World Forestry Conference in Seattle have been published in three volumes and the Society has secured a copy. In addition Dr. H. Mooney has kindly donated another copy of these proceedings to the Society. The Council wish to express to Dr. Mooney their thanks for his generous gift.

The Council also wish to thank the Minister for Lands for facilities granted during the year and the Officers of his Department for the courtesy, help and co-operation which they have always so willingly extended to our Society.

Treasurer's Report.

The Statement of Accounts which had been circulated with the notice of the meeting to all members, appears in this issue.

In discussion on the Council's and Treasurer's reports it was asked if copies of the proceedings of the 5th World Forestry Conference would be available to members. The President said they would, but he pointed out that we had two copies and that they were quite bulky and expensive; he asked that members should be specific in stating their interests and that they should return the volume promptly at the time promised.

It was asked if the 35 mm. projector would be available for hire. The meeting agreed that hiring, if at all, should be at the discretion of the Council.

Mr. McNamara explained in detail the scheme for the Woodman's and Forester's Certificates and for the Diploma in Forestry. The Woodman's and Forester's Certificates were the responsibility of the Society and no other body would have any say in their issue. The Diploma, however, was the responsibility of the Central Examination Board and we would have no say in it unless and until we got representation on that Board.

The adoption of the Council's and Treasurer's reports was proposed by Mr. McEvoy, seconded by Mr. Cosgrave and passed unanimously.

Motions.

- (1) To amend Article *VIII* as follows:—

Delete from			
"Technical Members Grade I	15s. 0d."
and substitute:—			
Technical Members Grade I shall pay	...	£1 10s.	0d.
Technical Members Grade II shall pay	...	£1 0s.	0d.
Associate Members shall pay	...	£1 0s.	0d.

- (2) To amend Article *XI* by the insertion of the words "Secretary and Treasurer", after "Vice-President" and before "Editor".

First Motion: Proposed by Mr. Hanan, seconded by Mr. Sharkey. Mr. Hanan said that our build up of capital had been over the 21 years of our existence. We had at the last Annual General Meeting decided to spend our surplus moneys in producing a book on Irish Forestry. A careful analysis of income and expenditure showed that one almost balanced the other when reviewed over several years. We have our ups and downs; last year showed a loss of £170 odd but included, were

several non-recurring items of expenditure and two journals which were larger and more expensive than usual. Without some moneys in hands we would have been in difficulties and now that surplus moneys are to go on our book, and our N.D.F. scheme may yet bear fruit, we would be very much in a hand to mouth position.

Mr. Durand said that with stock on hands we had a reserve of some £740 and we had agreed to spend £500 only on the book. He felt there was no reason to hurry and that we should wait and review the position in a few years time.

Mr. T. McCarthy supported Mr. Durand's view. The Secretary said that £500 was voted for the book last year but that printers had increased their rates considerably during the year and it was possible the Council would have to approach a General Meeting before the book could be published. Also we had made good progress in persuading the Central Examination Board to accept our suggestions on our inclusion in the N.D.F. examinations and this would involve us in the expenses of setting up our own examinations for Woodman's and Forester's Certificates. Lastly the new subscription rates could not come into operation until 1964. We would always have this time lag whenever we agreed to the increase.

Mr. Galvin supported the motion : He felt that we should not run too close and find ourselves embarrassed for lack of funds. If we did accumulate, we could spend it on another book or other good work. It had taken 20 years to accumulate our present funds.

Mr. McEvoy said we should have an income from the books and this might recoup most of our expenses on it.

Mr. McGuire said that instead of increasing subscriptions we should get more new members.

Mr. Sharkey and Professor Clear both agreed that on careful analysis our accounts showed the need for this increase. The subscriptions now being charged were the same as when the Society was founded 20 years ago.

Mr. Mooney also spoke in favour of this motion. The chairman then put the motion to the meeting and it was carried by 27 votes to 6.

Second Motion: The purpose of this motion was to include the Secretary and Treasurer as members of the Council from which our constitution at present excluded them. It was passed unanimously.

Proposed Activities for the year.

Mr. Morris, meetings' convenor, outlined the proposed activities for the year. The Annual Study Tour would be longer than usual. It was proposed to have five days' touring beginning and ending in Dublin. The route would take the Society through Wicklow, Carlow and Slieve na mBan to Cahir; from there by way of Bansha, Limerick and Tulla to Galway; thence to Sligo via Cong, Castlebar, Foxford

and Lough Talt. From Sligo we would go into Northern Ireland visiting some of the forests there and spending the night at Omagh, where we would have our annual dinner. From Omagh we would return to Dublin visiting Cootehill Forest on the way.

During the year it was proposed to hold afternoon excursions to :

(1) Killakee Forest where the theme would be site assessment, choice of species and development of management plans.

(2) Ossory Forest on problems associated with felling and regeneration.

(3) Gougane Barra on recreational facilities and multiple forest use.

(4) Clonsast Bog on pollen analysis and the history of our bogs.

(5) Johnstown Castle of the Agricultural Institute had agreed to act as host for a day excursion.

This concluded the Private Business of the Society.

President's Valedictory Address.

Since I am the main speaker at the public session of this Annual General Meeting and since I am then reviewing forestry progress in Ireland up to the present time, I will be forgiven, I know, and I am sure you will be relieved, if I shorten my valedictory address to a few remarks.

As you are all aware, very rapid progress has been achieved in State Afforestation in recent years and planting has now levelled off at the desired planting rate of 25,000 acres per year. Current gross expenditure on State Forestry is running at about £3¼ million a year. With the achievement of the planting target, so long the main purpose of State forest policy here, and with the very high level of current State investment in Forestry, there is every likelihood that the purpose of our afforestation programme will come more closely under review in the future.

What has been accomplished is no mean achievement. It is however, as if a climber has climbed a very steep and stiff ascent to arrive at a plateau and pauses to draw his breath and to congratulate himself on the magnitude of his achievement. He looks round and up to the peak that he set out to scale. There is still a long way to go with ups-and-downs but no really spectacular cliff to scale: a long steady grind with no thrills or surprises. This he realises is the toughest level to have reached, with nothing but a steady grind ahead and no laurels to be won except the final one, achievement of the final goal.

It is interesting, therefore, to see that foresters overseas are becoming more and more concerned with the long-term economic aims in the working of a State forestry authority. At the Eighth British Commonwealth Forestry Conference held in East Africa in 1962, there were several contributions on this topic. The contributions by delegates from

Britain and especially from the British Forestry Commission are notable indeed in so far as they are more applicable to conditions here at home. It is apparent that it is more and more being recognised by foresters that forestry has no prior or overriding claim on the available resources of the economy and that the claims of forestry are likely to be increasingly considered jointly with other industries.

Foresters and forest economists are now more than ever, seeking criteria by which the value or profitability of forestry may be fairly assessed. The Faustmann formula is being taken out and dusted and put to increasing use to find the answers and to illustrate the economic factors which influence the type of timber grown and the methods of growing it. It is recognised that there can be no justification for the devotion of pounds worth of labour and materials to large acreages of land if the resources involved could have yielded higher revenues when allocated amongst labour, plants, material and land in some other way. Investment policy in forestry has not always followed the calculated best results. "Why has this been so?" asks the economist. "Is it that forestry has different objectives, social, aesthetic, strategic, to other forms of enterprise and that decisions on resource allocation to forestry are influenced by this to a major extent?"

Other issues that are being discussed at forestry conferences and symposia at the present time include the utilization of small-sized thinnings, inferior grades of wood and sawmilling and other forest waste. Costs of manual work in forestry are rising; the extent to which rising wage costs can be offset by greater mechanisation and the use of better working methods varies greatly with circumstances but in general, it is true to say that it is when dealing with small diameter wood that those labour costs are more difficult to overcome.

Do our present silvicultural methods lead to increased yields of small produce which are expensive to handle, transport and process? Can we have wider planting without losing in productivity or affecting timber quality? Does the answer lie in thinning skilfully, using crown thinning or eclectic thinning which provide larger and more profitable assortments from the first thinnings? Or should thinning be avoided altogether especially in remote areas and clear felling by machine harvester visualized? Such questions are being posed by foresters everywhere to-day, in Britain, in Europe, in America and in the Southern Hemisphere as well. It is evident that rapidly changing circumstances and conditions are particularly hard on a forestry enterprise and that a great volume of research, both economic and silvicultural, is required so that forestry objectives can be fully understood by all concerned. We have skilled men here at home who are ready and able to evolve a system of forestry appropriate to our country if only the objectives can be fixed, economic, social, industrial, strategic or a combination of all. The main risk that one can sense from current discussions abroad is that afforestation will be pursued on lines that are traditional and conditioned by out-of-date concepts, that policies will be pursued long

after the original objectives have changed or disappeared. To avoid the apparent risks associated with those changes in objectives is one of the main tasks of forestry research to-day.

Public Business

After a short interval the meeting began its Public Business with an address by Professor Clear on "Twenty-one Years of Irish Forestry." This address appears as the first article in this issue.

Mr. C. S. Kilpatrick, Deputy Chief Forest Officer, Forestry Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, then reviewed progress and achievements in Forestry in Northern Ireland. He was followed by Richard Delahunty, a student in Shelton Abbey, who in representing the future hope of Irish forest manhood, in a rallying speech, left us in no doubt that the tomorrow for Irish Forestry was one that held every promise for those who were prepared to work for it.

Mr. J. Galvin, nurseryman, one of the Society's oldest friends, then spoke on behalf of the Private Forestry interests and Associate Members.

Our President, Mr. McNamara, commented on the past 21 years and spoke optimistically for the future. He then thanked the speakers and closed the meeting.