

Society's Activities

Twenty-second Annual General Meeting

THE Twenty-second Annual General Meeting of the Society was held in the Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin, on Saturday, March 21st, 1964. The outgoing President, Mr. M. McNamara, took the chair at 7 p.m. and opened the Private Meeting.

Minutes.

The minutes of the 21st Annual General Meeting, having been published in Vol. XX, No. 2 of the Society's journal, were taken as read and were duly approved.

Council's Report for 1963.

During the year 7 meetings of the Council were held and the attendances were as follows :

- 7 attendances each : Miss Furlong, Messrs. Sheridan, O'Carroll, Luddy, O Neachtain, O Muirghesa and Swan.
- 5 attendances each : Messrs. Hanan, and McNamara.
- 4 attendances each : Miss Cahill, and Professor Clear.
- 3 attendances each : Messrs. Joyce and FitzPatrick.

The year just gone by marked the Twenty-first Anniversary of the founding of our Society. To celebrate the occasion, a dinner was held in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin and was attended by over 100 members and their guests. The principal guests included Mr. Frank Aiken, Minister of External Affairs, and Mrs. Aiken, Commissioner O'Brien, Secretary of the Department of Lands, and Mrs. O'Brien, Mr. S. Mac Piarais, Mr. and Mrs. S. M. O'Sullivan, Mr. and Mrs. T. Manning, Mr. H. Harbourne, President, Trees for Ireland, and Mrs. Harbourne, and Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Craig.

At the dinner a presentation of Waterford glass was made to Professor Clear to mark his twenty-one years of unbroken service on the Council of the Society. The President presented Mrs. Clear with a bouquet of flowers.

Only one other member can claim the distinction of unbroken service to the Society since its foundation, he is Mr. Craig, our Hon. Auditor and the Council was very pleased to have him and Mrs. Craig as guests at our Twenty-first anniversary dinner.

The annual study tour was extended from our usual three full days to five days and instead of being centred in one town it took the form of a tour starting in Dublin and going by way of Wicklow, Carlow, Tipperary, Limerick, Galway, Mayo and Sligo crossing to Fermanagh and Tyrone and back by Monaghan and Meath to Dublin. The study tour dinner was held in Omagh and our Northern friends introduced

a pleasant surprise of a birthday cake. Before dinner the party was entertained to cocktails by the Ministry of Agriculture for Northern Ireland who was represented by Mr. Elliott. The start of our tour was covered by Telefís Éireann and was the subject of a special Newsview programme.

During the year excursions were held to Killakee Forest, Ossory Forest in the Slieve Blooms, to Clonsast Bog, to the proposed National forest park at Gougane Barra, Rostrevor forest and to Johnstown Castle, Wexford. Early in the year a symposium on *Pinus contorta* was held in Clonmel. The speakers were led by Mr. O. V. Mooney who dealt with the natural range of *Pinus contorta* and its divisions into provenances, its introduction into Irish forests and its development and place there. Mr. J. O'Driscoll outlined the programme for improvement of *Pinus contorta* by breeding and selection while Mr. Hanan dealt with the timbers, its uses, advantages and disadvantages. Mr. Joyce gave a review of the statistics of growth and yield for the species. The meeting was well attended and a lively discussion followed the papers. In addition, Mr. Joyce on another occasion gave a very interesting illustrated lecture in Galway on his visit to Holland where he had attended an F.A.O. study course on silviculture.

In October, a party of forestry enthusiasts from Brittany, France visited this country. The Society was associated with the Department of Lands in the arrangements for their tour. There were 32 members in the party and the tour covered Co. Wicklow, the Midlands, Co. Clare, Galway, Mayo and back to Dublin.

The Royal Scottish Forest Society had requested our Society to arrange a tour of 8 or 9 days for its members. It is expected that a party of 50 to 60 members will visit us on this tour which will take place next October. The Department of Lands has very kindly promised to extend every help and facility.

The Council has received notice from the Central Examination Board of Great Britain that they are prepared to accept Forester Certificates issued by our Society as qualifying for entrance to the examination for the National Diploma in Forestry. The examination for and issue of Forester's Certificate will be a matter entirely for our Society. The Council is now arranging for the necessary machinery to operate the scheme.

Regarding the publication of the proposed book, a draft is being submitted by Mr. FitzPatrick and it is hoped to get it in its final form by the next Annual General Meeting. Mr. FitzPatrick has had a very onerous and difficult task and the best thanks of the Society are due to him.

The Council also wishes to thank Mr. N. Morris for the excellent arrangements for the extended study tour and the other excursions and activities during the year.

Finally, the Council wishes to extend thanks to the Minister for

Lands and the officers of his department for the help and facilities which they again so generously extended to our Society. They also wish to thank the Minister for Agriculture, Northern Ireland and his officers in the Northern Forestry Service for the co-operation, assistance and hospitality extended to us.

Treasurer's Report.

This report was circulated to all members with the notice of the meeting. There being no discussion, the Treasurer's Report was adopted and passed unanimously.

Motions.

There being no business under this heading the meeting passed on to the next item on the agenda.

President's Address.

The coming of age of our Society has tempted many of us to try to assess the progress of Forestry in Ireland to date.

The early years of the Society's existence saw forestry, like all other enterprises, passing through a difficult period. Timber for fuel and constructional work had to be obtained from our all too meagre tree reserve, and due to a scarcity of materials planting programmes were low.

Viewed against the background of the past twenty-one years the position to-day looks encouraging. To-day five factories engaging in the conversion of home-grown timber into particle and fibre board are in commission. They use between them $4\frac{1}{2}$ million cubic feet of round timber annually. A substantial proportion of the end product from these factories is exported. According to the United Kingdom Year Book of Timber Statistics—1962 Ireland was the largest exporter of chipboard to Britain, accounting for one-quarter of that country's imports at 5,859 tons, valued £280,000. At almost £50 per ton you will note that our timber has gone up substantially in value in the processing. According to the same source our total exports of paper and paper board for 1962 was 16.8 thousand metric tons with a value of £840,000.

It may appear slightly odd that we should be exporting one timber product while at the same time we are importing 90,000 tons of wood pulp and paper in other forms. However, if we can be competitive in the world market in one type of wood product we might be wise to strive for maximum efficiency in that field rather than dissipate our efforts in more diversified fields of production covering all the timber derivatives. Under free trade conditions such a policy would be a natural development. Under such conditions no country aims at full self-sufficiency, but concentrates on those products for which they are by nature best equipped to produce.

On the constructional timber market state forests in the Republic supplied $2\frac{1}{2}$ million cu. ft. to the trade in 1962. That represents

roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ th of our softwood requirements. In this field we have to face competition from the highest quality timber from countries such as Finland, Sweden and Norway and if we are going to succeed without a falling off in standard we must first, understand the qualities which constitute good constructional timber and second, we must set out to attain them. In this respect it is encouraging to note that the Institute of Industrial Research and Standards has set up a timber testing station at Glasnevin and have an exhaustive programme in hands to evaluate the properties of the various species of timber included in the national programme. The Institute is also working towards the production of grading rules for constructional timber. It is of interest also to note that pruning methods have been standardised in the forest to ensure knot free timber.

It is not easy to assess the full value of forestry from the employment aspect. We know that there are 5,000 men directly employed in state forestry in the Republic and 1,400 men similarly employed in Northern Ireland but it is difficult to estimate the number employed in felling, haulage and conversion in sawmills and in wood processing factories. There are no figures available but at a conservative estimate the number should exceed 12,000.

What of the future of our forests? It is clear now that we will reach the point where national production of wood will equal national demands before all our potential forest land has been utilised. An outlet for our surplus produce will then become vital. It is encouraging, therefore, to note that according to F.A.O.'s European Timber Trends and Prospects 1950-1975, Europe will have become a timber importing area by 1975. At the Fifth World Forestry Conference, Dr. Egan Glesinger, Director, Forest and Forest Products Division, F.A.O., produced elaborate figures to substantiate his statement that despite substitution, per capita consumption of industrial wood has risen over the last decade in nearly every region in the world. It, therefore, appears that we need have no fears about over production in forestry for a long time to come.

A notable event in Irish Forestry was the visit by a group of forestry enthusiasts from Brittany, France. These people had chosen Ireland as having conditions similar to their own and problems similar to theirs and they believed we could help them. They were particularly interested in our progress with western peat afforestation in which field they regarded us as leaders.

It will have been seen from the reports of the Minister for Lands for some time past now that *Pinus contorta* has taken an important place in our afforestation. However, it will also have been seen that *Pinus contorta* shows a wide variation in its success and development. Much of the variation can be attributed to provenance. In the year under review the Department has taken a major step to ensure that we get the best and most suitable provenance of *Pinus contorta* seed. It sent a special mission to Western America to select suitable areas for

seed collection and make arrangements to ensure that we would get seed only from those areas which we have chosen.

Proposed Activities for the Year.

The convenor Miss Furlong had the proposed activities for the year outlined. This year's study tour would take place in Brittany, France. The proposed date was the end of August and beginning of September. The departure from the usual time was due to the late decision to hold a foreign tour. The programme for local excursions would be as follows :

April—Delgany—*Pinus radiata*—a discussion on growth trends.

May—Abbeyleix—Management of private estate with emphasis on group planting.

June—Castleshane—Discussion of silviculture treatment of elm, oak and other hardwoods and thinning of Norway spruce and Sitka spruce on dry site types.

July—Newport—Growth of coniferous species on old red sandstone.

September—Hillsboro—Tree felling competition.

Confirmation of Election of Council for 1964 as follows :

President, M. Swan; *Vice-President*, C. Kilpatrick; *Secretary*, J. O'Driscoll; *Treasurer*, A. M. S. Hanan; *Editor*, M. J. Sheridan; *Bus. Editor*, P. Joyce; *Hon. Auditor*, D. M. Craig; *Councillors, Grade I*, M. McNamara, S. Campbell; *Councillor, Grade II*, E. Joyce; *Councillor Associate*, Miss E. Furlong.

Any Other Business.

There being no further business the meeting concluded.

The public meeting commenced at 8 p.m. A paper entitled "The Potential and Economic Aspects of Forestry on Marginal and Sub-marginal Land" was read by Mr. D. R. Johnston, Chief Officer, Management Section, British Forestry Commission, Alice Holt. This paper appears as the first article in this Journal. A second paper read by E. A. Attwood, Rural Economy Division, An Foras Taluntais, appears as the second article. Papers were also read by Dr. W. H. Jack and Mr. T. McEvoy.

Dr. W. H. Jack, in his paper, said: The system of land tenure in Ireland has a very important influence on the use of marginal land. Many Irishmen feel that they not only have a right but a duty to own land and even if they emigrate they often feel obliged to hold on to an existing farm while at the same time not expecting any great monetary return from the land which is often worked as one unit by other members of the family. Farm ownership has mostly passed by

inheritance and the average farmer is content to obtain his daily needs without considering any return on the capital value of the property. Current land prices include an "expectation" value for agricultural subsidies which in Northern Ireland are approximately 16/- for basic subsidies and 33/- if allowance is made for fatstock guarantees per annum per acre per annum of hill land. The small average size of farm and a lack of economic appreciation by the farmer make the acquisition of large compact areas for forestry difficult and greatly increase establishment, maintenance and supervision costs.

Where unemployment is high, as in Ireland, the creation of more employment per unit of land area by changing from marginal agriculture to a forest land use is a very valuable social tool. One must not forget the view of many agricultural economists that the efficient hill sheep farm will only employ two to four men per thousand acres and consider this figure, rather than current employment statistics, when considering the relative merits of agriculture and forestry as employers. This does not run contrary to Mr. Johnston's criticism that employment in industry may create more wealth per worker but can, in fact, be treated as a palliative until sufficient national industry can be encouraged or created—the resulting production, in fact, helping to create a wood-based industry. This does not mean that forestry should be treated as low grade employment and it is farcical that my family would get more money were I an unemployed person in Northern Ireland than if I were an unskilled forest worker.

One must not forget that in afforesting marginal land one is dealing with very variable sites. An assessment of Forestry Commission quality classes for Sitka spruce in Cam Forest where 1,400 acres of this species had been planted in pure blocks gave the following percentages by area :—

Forestry Commission Quality Class	Percentage of Land Area	Remarks
III	20	Nil
IV	36	Nil
V	23	Nil
(a)	7	Leaders growing at 18" and over per year but total height not up to Forestry Commission Quality Class standard.
(b)	9	Leader growth 12"—18" per year.
(c)	5	Leader growth under 12" per year.

These figures were obtained by assessing to the nearest half-acre and many of the different yield classes were closely situated in space. This heterogeneity and the difficult wind climate of Ireland requires

much more detailed supervision and better trained foresters than large expanses of sheltered uniform ground.

Mr. Johnston gave a reasoned argument on why interest rates on capital must be considered but this argument cannot always be valid when dealing with national assets and economies. His comparison between the interest rates of Scandinavian integrated wood processing and wood growing concerns indicates how a broad assessment can equate low and high interest rates within different sections of the same industry. Thus, if Northern Ireland, which imports £13 million worth of wood and timber imports, or 20 million cubic feet round wood equivalent per annum could produce this from 250,000 acres or one-third of its hill land, surely it is better from the national point of view than the current gross output from *all* hill land of approximately £4,500,000 per annum. Expressed in a somewhat different way, the current gross output per acre per annum for hill land in Northern Ireland, excluding the value of pigs and poultry, is some £5.8 which would only require a timber production, valued at 2/- per hoppus foot at roadside, of 54 hoppus feet mean annual increment or half the growth rate of Forestry Commission Quality Class V for Sitka spruce to equal it. One must also look at possible trends in timber consumption and here it is interesting to compare the per capita consumption of wood in 1962 in a few countries.

Country			Industrial Wood Metres Cubed	Paper Consumption Kilograms
U.S.A.	...	...	1.93	192
G.B.	...	...	0.64	97
Northern Ireland	...	...	0.41	59
Republic of Ireland	...	...	0.30	40

Finally, let me remind you that in a journey through Ulster it would be pleasant to pass from Beaghs via Ahoghill, Meenakeeran and Derrygonnelly to Ballybeagh. Could this ancient forested country not, with benefit, be re-afforested and if the exotic conifers now being used are to become part of the local heritage, would it be wrong to call *Pinus contorta* and Sitka spruce the 'hairy yins' and 'jaggy boys' as they are known in County Fermanagh.

Mr. McEvoy in his paper said, that it probably was a mistake to think in terms of an industrial rate of interest around 7% without free choice of land and management objectives. It was true he said that best forest land yielded high returns in interest and the choice was clear to the private grower. For the state it is different as there were pressures to use marginal forest lands.

He went on to say that our western peats were, in the economic sense, our most controversial planting site; there were so many unknowns. He thought, however, that if we adopted an intelligent approach to site selection on these peats and used a good coastal strain

of *Pinus contorta*, we should get quality class II growth, giving at least 80-85 H. ft. M.A.I., and thus we would have the increment that Hummel and Grayson considered was critical to yield $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ on capital outlay.

He said that there was a lot in what Mr. Johnston said when he talked about simplified silviculture on marginal sites: wider spacing, elimination of thinnings, and short rotations.

Mr. Johnston referred to high capital cost of providing permanent employment for a man in forestry, but in this country 75% of these costs were labour costs and it was a resource we had in abundance in our rural areas.

It was particularly true in forestry, he said, that the end product—the mature tree—should not be looked on as an end product as such but rather as a stage that passed on to the sawn log and finished up as an armchair, Sunday newspaper or sheet of plywood. Due to the high cost of transport it was not possible to have a forest industry without a forest.

He ended on this note that if we could get an area of western peat to produce 80 H. ft. of pulpwood a year, this could produce a ton of ground wood pulp worth £30 or a ton of newsprint or chipboard worth say £50 in terms of balance of payments. Compared with this the national average for agricultural production (including turf) was less than £20 per acre.

The President in his closing address said that in all our discussions we come back to the Faustmann formula—costs incurred during the rotation versus receipts all brought to some point in time at compound interest. Compound interest was the common enemy therefore, as it was the single factor that affected the result of our calculations. Hence, we tried to convince ourselves and others that forestry was entitled to a low rate of interest.

Mr. Swan went on to say that should we not consider rather how useful and necessary timber was. The very fact alone that we had to import £12-14 millions worth of timber and timber derivatives only emphasised the need to grow it. Further, he said, the last war taught us and most other countries the danger of depending on imports of an essential commodity.

The President ended by saying that he saw no reason why this country, having the climate and the soil to produce excellent crops of timber, should have to import from countries whose capacity for timber production was less than our own.

He thanked Mr. Johnston and the other speakers for their papers and the meeting was brought to a close.