

Honorary Members

MR. D. STEWART

On September 11th, 1965 at Gortin Glen Forest, after the Northern Ireland Forestry Competitions, Mr. David Stewart was made an honorary member of the Society.

Although he may not be known to many foresters in the south, it can be said that Mr. Stewart devoted a long and active lifetime to forestry in Ireland and that it benefited in a very positive way from his early activities and then in a widespread and very enduring way from his tenacity and administrative ability when he reached high rank later in life.

Mr. Stewart who lives at Hillsborough, Co. Down was born in 1885 at Argyll where his father was a forester on the Stonefield Estate. As a boy he worked as a forest trainee and later as an apprentice at the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens and as a student at the East of Scotland Agricultural College. In 1908 he came to work at the Lisduff Estate and became head forester there. He left in 1911 to join the State Forest Service, the then Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, and worked for a short time there before transferring to Baunreagh—now Mountrath Forest—in 1911, as Forester in charge. There he remained until 1920 where he trained many of the now older Foresters. He is remembered as a strict but fair master.

In 1920 he was appointed District Officer by the B.F.C. at Baronscourt and transferred as Inspector to the Ministry of Agriculture in Northern Ireland in 1922.

In 1927 he was moved to Belfast to organise the setting up of a technical headquarters for the first time and to institute an Advisory and Grants system for the private estates. Here he acted as the Senior Inspector in charge of operations in Northern Ireland and was responsible for Timber Control by the British Board of Trade during the last war. He was honoured an imperial award for these services. After nearly 40 years in the service of forestry in Ireland he retired in 1950 at the age of 65.

Since then he has been honoured by the Royal Scottish Forestry Society with honorary membership and has been awarded a Gold Medal by the Royal Forestry Society of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Apart from his early contribution to Forestry in the south, Mr. Stewart, starting with 25 men and only 400 acres planted at Ballykelly, virtually built up the Northern Ireland Forestry Service as it exists to-day. When he retired in 1950 there was a staff of five Inspectors, 30 Foresters and 600 men with an acreage of 25,000. Those who experienced the early work of forestry in the south will readily appreciate how, with such a small staff, the force of the individual must have influenced the planting of each acre of the annual planting of about 100 acres as it was in those days.

His greatest achievement was the establishment of a forestry tradition, the training of personnel with high skills and principles leaving behind him a hard-working conscientious and efficient service.

A determined man of purpose he fought many battles for forestry with administration and politicians. Brought up in a tough period of forestry he asked much of those who served but in his own turn worked hard and was respected as a man with integrity beyond reproach.

He can truly be said to have made a great contribution to forestry and deserves well the honour of honorary membership which we have bestowed upon him.