

## Day Excursion to the Fermoy Area.

ON Sunday 9th July, a small party led by Mr. P. Verling, visited two areas of interest in this North Cork District.

In Ballyhooley Forest, on a water-catchment area, Mr. Verling demonstrated an area of 20 acres, which had been cultivated with a "ripper". This implement, which consists of three 26 inch vertical cutters, is mounted on the back of a D.7 tractor. The rippers are 3 feet apart and the grinding action in the soil, particularly where large stones are present, gives an almost complete breaking up of the soil. Where pan occurs, this is also broken. Mr. Verling found that the machine working up and down hill, which was as steep as 1 in 6 in places, could cultivate 20 acres for a hireage cost of £39. Planting is in the ripper fracture which is a ready-made "pit" and the plants are well-firmed in. In spite of a particularly dry season the Sitka Spruce, Contorta pine and Birch planted here looked very healthy in their first growing season with no suggestion of dying off. It is hoped that run-off of surface water will be reduced by absorption into the spongy tilth left by the ripper. Mr. Verling also has trials of cross-ripping, ripping with rotovating, and planting regardless of the fracture. It was thought by some members that broadcast manuring would suit this type of cultivation. It was shown that a heather or gorse vegetation must be burned off before ripping, or clogging of the implement occurs.

The main point of interest at Walshtown Property of Killeagh Forest was the behaviour of *Abies procera* under varying planting methods. The species was seen planted pure in the side of the furrow, following Clark ploughing. After two years it was not showing the usual slow starting characteristic. However *Larix leptolepis* treated similarly was already almost twice as tall, though suffering from wind-lean. At another stop we saw *Abies procera* in groups of nine trees in a matrix of *Pinus contorta*. The Fir comprised 25% of the crop but had been left behind by the Pine and in places almost swamped by it. However, the Pine was almost all badly butt-swept and it was felt that a lot of it could be sacrificed to let the Fir away. Large areas of *Abies Procera* were seen as strip and pure planting and some members were doubtful of the future growth of the species and also of the saleability of the final product.