

# Forestry Commission Report on Forest Research

for the year ended March 1969. H.M.S.O. £1.12½ (£1 2s. 6d.),

Until the formation of its own Research branch in 1957 the Irish Forest Service in Dublin relied heavily on the results of research carried out in Britain by the Forestry Commission. The great advances in the afforestation of blanket peats and difficult Old Red Sandstone soils in the early nineteen fifties were made possible because of fertilising technique and ploughing equipment developed in Britain. At that time the publication of the B.F.C. research report was (or should have been) as important an event here as in Britain.

Now that forest research is carried on independently in Ireland this situation has changed. The report is now regarded as an invaluable record of results of research which can confirm our own results, or contradict them (in which case a search for the reason may provide valuable new insights) — or as a source of possible new approaches towards the solution of similar problems.

In this present situation the form of the report, that of the “follier-upper,” presents difficulty. The report covers the whole field of forest research (also Management Services and Marketing) and under each heading the advances made during the year under review are reported. Here lies the difficulty for those outside Britain, most of whom will be reading the review from the point of view of a specialist interested in one subject. Such a reader, in order to get the background, the design, and the results of a single experiment may have to consult three or four separate issues of the report. (This also leads to difficulties in reference citation, which the lazy might be tempted to solve by omission). For the outside reader the value of the report would be considerably increased if projects were written up when complete, or when an important stage of development had been reached, in the form of discrete and self-contained papers. The needs of the Forestry Commission’s own staff for hot news around the board could then be met by internal communications of a more ephemeral nature.

The Commission’s Research staff is to be envied on the speed with which its results are now published.

One unhappy feature of the report is the tendency in the

results of work carried out by the Commission's own research staff to give tables of mean values without any indication of degree of variation or of the statistical significance of the differences. Compare this with the tables of results at the end of the book in the reports of work carried out for the Commission in such institutes as Rothamsted, The Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, and the University of Oxford Department of Forestry, where such information is strictly provided.

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