

## *Society Activities*

### **Minutes of 28th Annual General Meeting**

6th MARCH, 1970, AT THE ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY

The President, Mr. McNamara, opened the meeting, and welcomed those present. The minutes of the 27th A.G.M. had appeared in the Journal and were taken as read. The Council Report for 1969 was read and approved, proposed by Professor Clear, seconded by Dr. Joyce. Following the report, the facilities offered by the Royal Dublin Society were discussed briefly. The scheme appeared to have been a success to date, and services provided had been generally free. Mr. McEvoy congratulated the Society and Professor Clear on taking advantage of these facilities.

**Abstract of Accounts:** The Treasurer had circulated the statement and it was assumed that those present had studied it. The present position was more buoyant with a balance increase of £120 over 1969. There were 382 members of whom 93% were paid up for 1969. Profit from "The Forests of Ireland" amounted to: £482 15s. 0d., but deducting £202 in donations, the actual profit was: £280 15s. 0d. The Society was losing on the Journal. The selling price was 10s., but each number cost 12s. 3d.; average income over the past 7 years was £245 with £403 costs for the same period. Despite the promising balance, the Society could not afford to undertake any ambitious projects. The main source of income was members' subscriptions, and if the Society ever became involved in heavy expenditure, it would have to rely on 100% paid up membership. Mr. McEvoy proposed that the statement of accounts be adopted, and congratulated the Treasurer on his presentation of them. This was seconded by Mr. Hanan.

A discussion followed in which the possibility of producing a second edition of "The Forests of Ireland" was raised. It was felt that editions could be published at 5 year intervals; that these could concentrate on technical aspects of forestry, to be a source of information, and a guide to forests. Regarding financing, it was quite usual to obtain subscriptions prior to publishing.

The valedictory address was then delivered by the President.

The 1970 Council elections were confirmed as follows:—President: H. M. FitzPatrick; Vice-President: M. McNamara; Secretary: M. C. Cassidy; Treasurer: T. Moloney; Editor: N. O'Carroll; Bus. Editor: J. Durand; Hon. Auditor: D. M. Craig; Councillors: Grade I: P. M. Joyce and R. O. Cinneide; Grade II: J. J. Prior; Associate: Miss E. Furlong.

Mr. H. M. FitzPatrick then took the Chair, having paid tribute to the outgoing President.

The motion: "That there be one grade of Technical Membership," was introduced by Mr. Macken, who felt that members united as one grade would benefit the Society. Mr. Prior, seconding the motion, felt that the financial concession was the main reason for having two grades, and if such was the case, then thought that grades should be abolished.

In the following discussion it was mentioned that the original idea might have been for technical members to work up to Grade I. However, technical members could become Grade I by payment of the additional 10s. and it was felt that there was now no need for the cheaper subscription rate, especially if the rule was causing a rift between grades. It was assumed that the motion meant that subscriptions should be brought up to the Grade I level. Before voting it was pointed out that

the motion was a "motion of intent," and that wording to be included in the constitution, together with necessary alterations to it, would have to be decided by Council and members notified of the wording in writing before the actual change. A General Meeting would have to be called, and it was felt that this might take place during the Annual Study Tour.

The motion was put to the meeting and with 44 in favour, and 1 against, was declared carried.

The 1970 programme was briefly discussed. One meeting to be held in Armagh had been held over from 1969. The Annual Study Tour in Wexford would be held the third week in May, and members would stay at the Ferry Carrig Hotel, which had been booked, together with the bus. The itinerary and cost had not been worked out, but a circular would be issued soon.

Mr. McNamara proposed the setting up of a Southern Region. Permission from Council would not be necessary for him to contact members. As with the Northern Region, there should be 50 members in the area of whom two-thirds would wish to form a region.

Apologies were received for non-attendance from: Messrs. Mooney, O Cinneide, McAree and Mulloy.

C. KELLY

## Public Business

An address entitled "The Forester and Conservation in the 70's" was given by William Grant, Chief Forester, British Forestry Commission, Grizedale Forest. This was similar in substance to Mr. Grant's contribution, "The Role of Forest Parks in Conservation" to the Fifth Symposium of the British Deer Society on 22 February, 1969, and published in that society's journal, *Deer*, Vol. 1, No. 9, June, 1969.

Speaking after the lecture, **MR. HENRY GRAY**, vice-chairman of the Irish National Committee for Conservation Year, said that the arrangement of the lecture was one of the contributions of the Society of Irish Foresters to the programme for Conservation Year, and continued: Conservation Year has provided such tremendous and widespread interest that it is no longer necessary, in a gathering such as this, to explain what it is all about.

My brief comments now may, nonetheless, help you, having listened to this most interesting and valuable lecture, to put the subject of "The Forester and Conservation in the '70s" firmly in the context of the objectives of Conservation Year.

Not too long ago, nature conservation was generally understood to be concerned almost exclusively with the protection of the rarer species of animals and plants. In recent years, the increasing pressures and threats to environmental values from so many diverse sources has led to a growing awareness that conservation must be concerned with the totality of the natural environment—with the interplay of all its elements of soil, air, water, plant and animal life—and with mankind's role as a central and active factor in his environment.

Today, a sound conservation policy is recognised as being one which, based on ecological principles, provides for the wise long-term use and management of natural resources to the best advantage of mankind. The criteria of advantage must reflect the physical, mental and spiritual requirements of the human race, including economic and social needs, now and in the future.

Well-planned land use is a fundamental part of such a conservation policy. Both the agriculturalist and the forester are, therefore, deeply involved, for better or worse, in conservation—the forester to an even

greater extent perhaps than the agriculturalist because of the long-life-cycle of tree species and the great environmental significance of the forest.

Today's foresters must then examine all their policies and practices against a broad spectrum of environmental values, *with* a full realisation that their decisions in 1970 will affect many decades to come, *and* with a firm determination that the forests for which they are responsible must be managed against the criteria of long-term human advantage to which I have referred.

This brings us straight into the field of multiple use of the forest in which it is certain that tonight's lecturer has done much to stimulate even further the wide and effective interest already evident in Ireland.

May I then, on behalf of the Irish National Committee for Conservation Year, thank the Society for having arranged this very timely lecture. To Mr. Grant may I say that he has made it a most rewarding evening.

Proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Grant, **Mr. C. S. KILPATRICK**, Deputy Chief Forest Officer, Forestry Division, Belfast, said:

'Mr. Grant has given us some very interesting and inspiring insights into the problems of conservation in the forests and National Parks of North America. They have led the world in this field for a century and more and are likely to continue to do so for another century.

They are now tackling the problems of the fourth wave. I am not quite sure of the sequence of the waves, though I read about them in Dr. Frazer Darling and Noel Eckhorn's book, "Man and Nature in the National Parks."

Many countries have gone through these phases. Firstly, man lives in harmony with his environment amid great natural resources. Then follows ruthless commercial exploitation of timber for short-term commercial gain and the destruction of resources and habitats. Then comes timber conservation without regard to the other resources and with gates kept tightly locked. This is followed by an open gate policy to allow the people to enjoy their forests but with such success that the wildlife and game resources are endangered.

I hope that the last state will be back to the first idealic balance, at least that must be our aim.

'Mr. Grant has certainly been a pioneer in this field in Great Britain and speaks with authority not only on recreation and deer management but also on fishing resources. He has not told us what we should be doing in Ireland and I suppose that is the main subject left to Mr. McEvoy and myself.

In Northern Ireland we have long ago given up the closed gate attitude and have gone out of our way to provide facilities for the public, not only in our five forest parks but in virtually every forest. We have also given a lot of thought to game and fish management and yet European Conservation Year has brought home to us the realisation that we have still not given serious consideration to the conservation of wildlife habitats in the true sense of the word.

At one time it was comforting to know that we had declared no less than 10 Forest Nature Reserves in conjunction with the Ministry of Development, 2 Forest Nature Reserves in co-operation with the RSPB, and 2 Bird Sanctuaries in conjunction with the Ministry of Home Affairs, yet these are only a few small corners and in themselves can never make a major impact on the wildlife of our country.

I am not even in a position to state our policy on conservation but we must use this ECY 70 to think this matter out and come to definite conclusions. The best contribution that we can make will be to manage our own land and other resources wisely.

A forester is by nature thrifty; he resents the loss of even small areas

of plantable land. This may be partly due to our small areas, and difficulty of acquiring good land. In this the forester is perhaps no different from others interested in one single resource.

The agriculturist, the sportsman, the fisherman, and the naturalist can be even more single minded. The solution is for the forester to cease being purely a timber grower and to become a wise manager of all the resources under his control for the benefit of present and future generations.

To start the ball rolling and to see ourselves as others see us the Forestry Division in the North recently wrote to the Nature Reserves Branch of the Ministry of Development and invited their comments on the effects of our large scale afforestation on conservation.

The committee which considered the matter consisted of Professor P. J. Newbould of the New University of Ulster, Mr. R. E. Parker of Queen's University, and a member of this society, Dr. H. G. Heal, a chemistry lecturer at Queen's and a noted lepidopterist, and Mr. J. C. L. Phillips, our Divisional Forest Officer, based on Omagh.

Naturally and predictably after expressing sympathy with afforestation and our policy on recreation, sport and tourism they called for more research into vegetation and animal population changes brought about by drainage, fertilisers, pesticides, and the monoculture of Sitka spruce. They understandably asked to be consulted about plans for afforestation in areas delineated as areas of scientific interest under the Amenities Lands Act (Northern Ireland). They then made a *cri-de-coeur* for greater diversity. Which of us have not echoed that cry many times and committed many economic sins in its name.

In their own words:

"We therefore recommend diversification wherever possible. This might include:

(a) the use or retention of indigenous species especially on margins, or as firebreaks. In old estate woodlands blocks of deciduous trees should be retained.

(b) The use of reasonably wide rides or firebreaks, or grazing corridors.

(c) the creation of clearings by not planting certain areas.

(d) variation of initial spacing.

(e) the use of mixtures of species, e.g. Sitka and Lodgepole.

(f) avoidance of planting on some habitats such as areas of scrub, mature deciduous woodland and the areas close to mountain streams and small loughs.

(g) the manipulation of planting and felling programmes so that at any time there are some young plantations in each locality.

The advantages of such diversification may include:

(a) the conservation of a variety of fauna, flora and habitats, and

(b) the creation of ecological stability thereby, including biological control of forest pests.

(c) beneficial long-term effect on such factors as fertility and depth of rooting, especially from species such as alder.

(d) beneficial effects on the use of the forest for education, recreation and as an element of the landscape. In the long run these could become as valuable as its timber production.

In the long run we feel therefore that to set aside some part of an afforestation scheme for so-called non-profitable uses may in fact prove profitable. But even if it does not, it would seem desirable that there

should be some clause in the White Paper on Forest Policy encouraging the Forestry Division to have regard to wildlife conservation in their afforestation plans."

The committee rightly felt that if the habitat is right the forest animals, birds and fish will be able to look after themselves. Already one of our Forest Officers has been given the task of reporting on the possibility of growing considerable areas of alder on heavy clay sites. We have to get our own policy straight in these important matters. We can then go out and give talks to school children and the public with a clearer conscience.

It should be a stimulating and rewarding year.

**MR. T. McEVOY**, Inspector General, Forest Service, Dublin, in seconding the vote of thanks, joined with Mr. Kilpatrick in thanking Mr. Grant for his very comprehensive, all-embracing talk with its fresh, imaginative approach especially creditable in one who admits to being trained in the older, narrower concept of the forester as a mere grower of trees.

It is interesting that the continental forester never suffered from this narrow view of his function but remained the guardian of the total environment of the forest — game, wildlife, recreation, nature as well as timber. Indeed, it is possible that at times his interest in deer, and his privileged position in the matter of shooting rights, caused him to neglect his timber, or at least to tolerate very considerable losses, for the sake of his hunting prestige.

Perhaps the situation in Britain and Ireland reflects the difference in forest history. Most forests here are man-made, not primeval, and very many were created by landlords to provide privacy and game with timber only as an incidental by-product. This priority of objectives was reflected in the hierarchy of management — estate owner — agent — farm manager — game keeper — forester. The forester at the tail end was not even allowed into his woods when the game-keeper decided the birds must not be disturbed! This division of responsibility between game-keeper and forester may well have been responsible for the confinement of forester education to the narrow field of timber production. It was against this background that formal forest education at forester school and university level began and developed in these islands in this century.

In these difficult circumstances it is fortunate that the broad ecological basis of silvicultural education survived — thanks to the influence of continental foresters who could look back on several centuries of management of the environment of their forests — especially in Germany. In fact it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the forester is the first example of the practical habitat manager — he was doing it and aware of some of the complex inter-relationships of the habitat before ecology came to be recognised as a separate branch of science. This broad basis of training, together with his daily contact with nature and the necessity for long-term thinking when one is dealing with forest rotations, enables the forester to adapt easily to the new demands now being made on his ability by the change from single-purpose timber management to multi-purpose use.

This brings me to the difficult question of what will be the appropriate 'mix' of uses in the 70's and beyond. We can accept the principle laid down by Mr. Grant — that which yields the best total output — but this rather begs the question of measurement — how does one find a common yardstick for such diverse elements as the cubic foot (metre) of timber, the lb. of venison, the pleasures of the chase, the

satisfaction of the nature photographer, the simple pleasure of the picnic or of just lazing about in natural surroundings. A difficult question — but studies such as the pioneer work in Britain by Dr. Mutch do indicate that the public puts a high value on the imponderables and is in fact prepared to pay hard cash for them (if they have to). Many of them even put their money in conscience boxes without anyone looking over their shoulder!

This new outlook — and it is new — is of course a development of the affluent society. The mediaeval multi-use forest in Europe on the other hand was a product of the privileged class society. It is, I think, axiomatic that affluence determines the hierarchy of forest values. In a subsistence economy timber is at the top (for shelter, for housing, for fuel, indeed for survival). On the other hand in the affluent U.S. enormous areas — one-tenth the size of Ireland — can be devoted to recreation with commercial timber production ruled out completely. In Europe the Netherlands is perhaps the most interesting case. There a dull, flat landscape lacking in vertical scale plus an immense pressure of industrial urban population has placed landscape and recreational values above timber production. In Britain we have seen these recreational and other secondary values steadily climbing the scale and indeed it is obvious from the prices paid for wooded estates in the "home counties" near London that in some areas they already exceed the primary timber production value.

Where do we in Ireland stand? We have a very low population density by European standards, especially in terms of people living in crowded, urban environments, oppressed by the tensions of megalopolis and demanding a change to rural peace and quiet; we have a standard of living in money terms well below that of our industrial neighbours. We have a rather short tourist season. In sum, the pressures on our rural areas are much less. On the other hand compared with Europe we have the capacity for very high yields of timber — £20 per acre per annum — due to soil and climate.

In these circumstances I see the timber production function continuing to be of prime importance in most of our forests, at least in the foreseeable future. But this certainly does not preclude the proper consideration of all the secondary values mentioned by Mr. Grant. In fact I find one point in his paper particularly encouraging and *apropos*. He emphasised that rich, varied and profitable wild life and flora can be provided by special attention to less than 1% of the forest area. He painted indeed a most attractive and persuasive picture of a forest with open glades, varied canopy and a rich understorey. This is so different from the usual allegations of tedious monotony against the coniferous mono-culture. In this matter I think we foresters suffer unduly because so many plantations are now in the thicket or early thinning stage where the canopy is at its densest and the forest floor bare of vegetation. If only the critics could wait to see the normal forest with its proportion of older, more open stands in which the ground flora has re-entered.

In his suggestion for forest capability classification, Mr. Grant was on the right lines in taking the inherent advantages of the site but he might have added location in relation to the consumer — the centres of larger population. In our case we are fortunate that we have at Dublin's backdoor the 60,000 acres of Wicklow forest, rich in geological and topographical diversity and reflecting that diversity in a forest rich in tree species, age classes and ground flora. Advantage is being taken of this fortunate combination of circumstances to develop the recreational and scenic values of the Wicklow forests to the full and the public is

responding avidly to the opportunity. Gougane Barra, in Co. Cork was a pioneer effort in opening forests for public enjoyment and is remarkably successful. Rockingham on Lough Key will soon follow. But the policy is to encourage public access to all forests wherever this is consistent with the safety of the forest itself — fire especially being the danger. Nature trails play a useful rôle in introducing the general public to the riches of nature. Three of these will be established in forests this year and many more will follow. The visitor is taken metaphorically by the hand and the wonders of nature are pointed out.

If I may turn to a conservation aspect in the stricter scientific sense of the term. It is well known that Ireland's primeval forests of oak, birch, ash, elm etc. were almost completely eliminated in the course of our chequered history. Now only a few thousand acres of recognisable remnants remain — and these considerably altered by human exploitation in recent centuries. While the man-made forests are important and welcome additions to our biological environment, these indigenous remnants have a special scientific and historical value transcending their commercial value. In this Conservation Year '70, the Forest Service has begun a detailed mapping and assessment of all such woods in its possession so that they may be dedicated permanently to scientific use and managed in accordance with ecological requirements. Some people may be shocked by the term 'managed' — they distrust the human in his effect on the natural. But Mr. Grant has shown clearly that even a two million acre wilderness of a National Park is not immune from environmental changes originating outside its boundaries, the destruction of vermin etc. Management with the proper objectives is therefore necessary. The aim will be to bring these native woods closer to natural conditions and to learn all we can of the balance of nature in the process.

To revert to the paper — for me the supreme lesson to be learned from it is the danger of too narrow a view of the rôle of the forester. We have seen the dangers which arose when he became subject to the game-keeper and retreated into the narrow rôle of tree grower. It is clear to me that the forester should be trained and employed for the job of forest habitat management with ecology as his basic science.

It is quite out of date to think of the forester only as a grower of trees and even more so as a producer of commercial timber. At the same time it is clear that he must be assisted by many more specialised scientists, botanists, zoologists, soil scientists and others. He must be in a position to co-ordinate and apply the expertise of many scientists in forest habitat management. His special knowledge is concerned with the largest and dominant feature of the forest habitat, the tree itself, without which the whole dependent community fails. He is therefore the key to its conservation and must remain the manager.

## **"Down in the Forest . . ."**

Under this general title a series of guided forest walks was organised by the Society in co-operation with the State Forest Services on the weekend the 12th and 13th September, 1970. This was a contribution towards European Conservation Year, and was intended to provide the public with an opportunity to

visit the forests and learn something about them. Walks were organised in the following forests:

Forest	Leader
Avondale, Co. Wicklow.	H. M. Fitzpatrick, (Saturday).
Ballymahon, Co. Longford.	O. V. Mooney (Sunday).
Binevenagh, Co. Derry.	Wm. Breslin.
Carnagh, Co. Armagh.	R. Lamb.
Castlecaldwell, Co. Fermanagh.	H. Conn.
Curraghchase, Adare, Co. Limerick.	C. N. Parker.
Dunaree, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan.	J. Horgan.
Foxford, Co. Mayo.	A. McGinley.
Glendav, Macroom, Co. Cork.	T. de Gruineil.
Gortin Glen, Omagh, Co. Tyrone.	Wm. Shine.
Hillsborough, Co. Down.	J. W. R. Devenney.
Iniscarn, Co. Tyrone.	R. T. Sherwood.
Killavullen, Co. Cork.	G. Jones.
Killygordon, Co. Donegal.	J. Ryan.
Knockmany, Co. Tyrone.	M. O'Donovan.
Lough Gill, Co. Sligo.	C. N. Parker.
Mount Bellew, Co. Galway.	J. E. Johnston.
Pomeroy, Co. Tyrone.	E. McGuinness.
Randalstown, Co. Antrim.	G. Jones.
Rockingham, Co. Roscommon.	J. McCurdy.
Woodstock, Co. Kilkenny.	J. Duane.
	T. J. McCarthy.

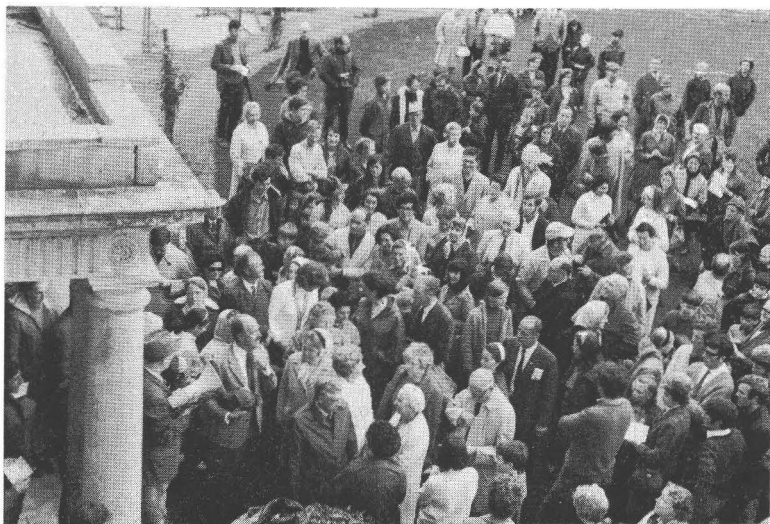
The leaflet advertising the walks drew attention to the fact that our forests "are essentially vast cellulose factories but they pollute no air and contaminate no water." The walks were well covered in advance in press and on radio, and were reported on television. At each centre copies of a leaflet were distributed in which the President, Mr. H. M. FitzPatrick, had condensed the basic principles of forestry into about 2,000 words of layman's language. The attendance was variable, but generally higher than anticipated, averaging 120 over all the walks.

The success of this series was the result of a great deal of hard work by Mr. Fergal Mulloy (Convener) and Miss Lily Furlong of the Meetings Committee.

On Sunday at **Avondale**, the President, Mr. H. M. FitzPatrick, opened with a welcome from the door of Avondale House and a word of thanks to the Minister for Lands for the co-operation of his Department. He then outlined the history of



the house and its occupants. Because of the large number of people present it was necessary to divide them into two groups for the walk, the second group, led by Mr. A. M. S. Hanan, covering the same ground as the first. At the first stop at the end of the Big Ride, Mr. FitzPatrick explained how the original plots were used to test the potential of newly introduced and untried species. A little further on he explained the use of nurse species, spoke about the native Irish tree species and explained



Part of the crowd at Avondale on September 12th being addressed by the President.

how to distinguish between pedunculate and sessile oaks. Carrying on he spoke of the silver firs and at a young plot of *Pinus contorta* he explained how Ireland had come to pioneer the use of that species. He demonstrated the natural regeneration of *Tsuga heterophylla* and spoke about the giant redwoods. Finally he pointed out a smallish specimen of *Tsuga canadensis* to exemplify the difference in growth between species such as this from eastern North America, and those such as *Tsuga heterophylla* from the west.

All the participants were clearly intrigued by what they saw and heard, and many expressed pleased surprise on learning that the grounds of Avondale, and indeed other State plantations, are open to careful walkers.

N. O'CARROLL