

Notes and News

"A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME"

Because of the centralization of all wildlife services within the Forestry Division of the Department of Lands, the name of that division has been changed to the Forest and Wildlife Service, or in the Irish language, *An tSeirbhis Foraoise agus Fia-Dhulra*.

HISTORY OF BAUNREAGH

The many foresters who have had associations with Baunreagh, Mountrath Forest, will be interested in the following extract from *The Realities of Irish Life* (1868) by W. Steuart Trench, supplied by Mr. H. M. FitzPatrick, showing that the land which has grown such fine Sitka spruce was ploughed, limed, manured with guano and planted with potatoes in 1845.

"I went to reside at Cardtown, my place in the Queen's county, in 1845. It adjoins an extensive tract of mountain land which I had purchased (3,000 acres for £10,000) and which I was reclaiming. This was done chiefly through the means of the potato, as the only green crop which grows luxuriantly in rough ground with previously imperfect tilth and I planted each year larger and larger quantities of that root. Guano having been recently brought into use as a manure was found to be particularly suited to the production of the potato and I applied a liberal quantity to the crop.

"The land consisted generally of rough mountain pasture covered with heather. There were no stones, or few of sufficient size to impede the plough. The land was first

limed with 80 barrels of lime to the Irish acre, spread broadcast upon the surface and was then ploughed into 'lazy beds', narrow ridges about five feet in width, with a furrow between each ridge. Into these ridges the seed was put by dropping it at the back of the spade. Guano, six hundred-weight to the acre, was then scattered over the ridges and this being done, the furrows were dug and the clay shovelled over the ridges. The potatoes grew to perfection in this rude description of tillage. The guano stimulated an enormous growth of the potatoes and when they were being dug out, the act of digging mixed the lime, manure and the several soils together leaving the land previously worth one shilling per acre permanently worth at least one pound per acre.

"I planted in the year 1846 about one hundred Irish acres of mountain land under potatoes, counting, as surely as any farmer can count on reaping any crop, upon a produce worth at least £30 per acre. My reclamation had succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations, and in the month of July 1846 my potato crop, for its extent and luxuriance, was the wonder of everyone who saw it; and at the very moderate price of threepence per stone, I felt certain of realizing at least £3,000.

"For some years I had not less than two hundred labourers, employed constantly draining, levelling, liming and the heavy work of digging out enormous quantities of potatoes and a more cheerful sight it was scarcely possible to conceive than these numerous labourers employed at good wages. But all this passed away like a dream on the sudden failure of the potato, and the "happy valley" as the sloping sides of my mountain property of Baureigh, with a clear trout stream running in the hollow, was frequently called, turned into a valley of woe.

"On August 1st I was startled to hear that all the potato fields in the district were blighted and I immediately rode up to visit my crop and found it as luxuriant as ever. On August 6th—I shall not readily forget the day—I rode up as usual to my mountain property and before I saw the crop, I smelt the fearful stench, now recognised as the death-sign of each field of potatoes. And as I wound down the newly engineered avenue* running through the heart of the farm to the steward's house I could scarcely bear the fearful smell which came from the crop growing all round. The stalks soon withered, the leaves decayed, the disease extended to the tubers. My plans, my labour, my £3,000 were gone!"

*The avenue from Moore's farm (H.M.F.).

FORESTRY ATTACKED . . .

In an article in the *New Statesman* of 5 March 1971, Gilbert Ellice seriously questions the present and future value of British forestry, which he claims should be more correctly, if less romantically, called the "British softwood production industry." He admits that there is something in the argument that home production of timber helps to improve the balance of payments situation, but in view of the uncertainties involved suggests that more thought should be given to whether or not the money spent on forestry could have been used to encourage other industries which might be more beneficial. He discusses the two great dangers to the forest industry: substitution and competition. On substitution he quotes a prediction by Mr. H. C. Dawkins of the Commonwealth Forestry Institute that in certain areas of the world "all non-aesthetic, large-scale, industrial uses of wood will be taken over by synthetic plastics and derivatives of the Al Fe Si Ca minerals within the next half century." On competition he refers to three-year pulpwood rotations in West Africa. He concludes that "a large-scale softwood production industry is not a viable commercial proposition" for Britain, but suggests instead that British forest policy should concentrate on the production of hardwoods for which there "is a permanent if small-scale market", with the additional amenity benefit.

. . . AND DEFENDED

In the *Irish Times* of 1 April, 1971, Christopher Moriarty, in a leader page article, defended Ireland's State conifer forests against the attacks, mostly on aesthetic grounds, which have been made against them. He suggested a common bond between foresters and architects, insofar as the results of their work are conspicuous and more or less permanent. Mistakes, while admitted, are difficult to conceal or obliterate.

AVONDALE HOUSE OPEN

The Forest and Wildlife Service of the Department of Lands announced that certain rooms of Avondale House would be open to the public between 11.00 and 18.00 hours on Fridays through Mondays from May 7th until September. The presence of a tourist adviser to assist visitors is being arranged by the Eastern Regional Tourism Organisation Ltd. The rooms which will be open are those which have been set aside as a repository for articles associated with Charles Stewart Parnell, whose home Avondale was.

FOREST FERTILIZATION (1)

The year 1967 saw the publication of the first text-book on forest fertilization. Entitled *Die Düngung von Waldbäumen* by Hubert Baule and Claude Fricker, it gave an excellent account of the basis of forest fertilization and collected all the important published information on the subject. Recently an English translation has been published (by B L V Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, Munich), under the title *The Fertilizer Treatment of Forest Trees*, complete with 157 illustrations, 45 of them in colour. The book can be strongly recommended, despite the fact that the translation, while accurate, is in a very awkward style and is not easy to read.

FOREST FERTILIZATION (2)

Reprints of the article *Fertilization of Conifer Plantations* (with 13 illustrations, 12 in colour) by C. P. van Goor, published in *Irish Forestry* Vo. 27, No. 2 (1970) are available from the Hon. Secretary at 25p each. There are also a few copies of the book *The Forests of Ireland* available at £1.50 each.

Abstract**Forest cover and the water table
in peat**

We in Ireland are deeply involved in peatland forestry, but so far our research efforts in this field have been concerned mostly with aspects of the establishment and early growth of forest crops. As the crops develop the nature of the problems will change and it would be prudent for us to look ahead a little and see what may concern us during the periods of later development and crop regeneration.

A good example of the kind of information which we will need appeared some years ago in a publication* by Leo Heikurainen from Finland, a country where peatland forestry research has reached an advanced stage of development.

Heikurainen studied the effects of clear cutting on the ground water table in peat. His method of investigation was to observe the water table levels for two years before stand treatment and for two years after. He found that clear-cutting led to a rise of 20-40 cm in the ground water table during the growing season. The effect was much less in