

# Society Activities

## ANNUAL STUDY TOUR 1974

The 1974 Annual Study Tour took place on 21st–23rd May with headquarters in Westport, Co. Mayo. The tour leader was Mr. Tom de Gruineil, District Inspector, Castlebar. Over fifty members took part.

### Tuesday, 21st May

Following a drive through Newport and along the north shore of Clew Bay, the first stop was at Mulranny. The centre of interest here was a patch of Mediterranean heath (*Erica mediterranea* L.). This species, a native of Spain and S.W. France, absent from Britain, occurs locally in western Mayo and Galway.

Further north, at Ballycroy, Mr. Joe Fahy, Acquisition Officer, Castlebar, gave an account of the special problems of land acquisition in the west of Ireland. A discussion developed on the general question of land use in that region. A question was raised as to the propriety of converting considerable areas of blanket bogs into forests of moderate productivity, thereby detracting from the visual quality of these unique tracts of landscape, while large areas of land of the highest forest potential, for instance in the drumlin belt, continue to be devoted to sub-marginal agriculture.

The first forest stop was at Glenamoy Research Forest (Forester in Charge Mr. P. J. Lyons; Assistant Mr. Seamus O'Connor). At Glenturk property Messrs. Maurice Swan and Ray Keogh described an investigation, part of the International Biological Programme, into the primary productivity of forest on peat, and aspects of its hydrology. In general, runoff is about one half of precipitation and there is very little difference between runoff from plots with deep and shallow drains.

A little further on Mr. Art Lance of the Agricultural Institute described his research on grouse. This work, which is funded by the Forest and Wildlife Service, has two aims: To understand the processes limiting population size, and to explore ways of increasing grouse numbers. The main limiting factor seems to be the quantity and quality of heather for food, a fact not conducive to great enthusiasm from foresters. A general account of the research carried out at Glenamoy by the Agricultural Institute was given by Mr. Louis Grubb, Station Manager.

The highlight of the day came at Belderg, about 10 miles west of Ballycastle, where Mr. Seamas Caulfield, of University College, Dublin, showed us his excavations which revealed a farmstead occupied in the Neolithic Period sometime before 2500 B.C., abandoned, and re-occupied in the Bronze Age around 1500 B.C. The whole area was subsequently covered by a deep layer of blanket bog peat. It was the removal of some of this peat for fuel which first revealed the traces of stone walls which led to the present excavations. On the site we could see the remains of a round house, tillage plots with ridges intact, stone walls of both periods of occupation, and an area of pottery manufacture. Evidence of burning was visible in a distinct layer of ash in the remaining peat.

N. O'CARROLL

### Wednesday, 22nd May

The party were taken north from Westport by the scenic route to the east of Nephin More to enter Nephin Beg forest by the northern entrance. They were welcomed by the forester-in-charge Mr. M. Costelloe. The first area visited was a crop of badly frosted Sitka spruce in the pre-thicket stage planted 1964. The

bad weather conditions prevailing at the time cut short discussion but the consensus of opinion was that with the powers of recovery of the species a crop should result.

The next stop was at a manurial experiment. Dr. N. O'Carroll, Research Branch, Forest and Wildlife Service, explained an investigation in progress in a 10-year-old fertilizer experiment in a crop of Contorta pine 23 years old. The present investigation is aimed at finding out how the major nutrients are distributed in the ecosystem (trees, litter, ground vegetation and peat) and if possible the source of these nutrients. He also demonstrated a typical excavated root system showing extensive root development to a depth of about 60 cm. After some discussion lunch was provided at a comfortable site in the forest.

In the afternoon a Salmon Research Station was visited at Furness. Here Dr. David Piggins gave a talk and demonstration on the artificial rearing of salmon stocks to smolt stage to increase the numbers of adult salmon over natural spawning, and so conserve stocks for rod fishing in the area. Natural spawning beds he said were badly affected in recent years by flash floods which he attributed to forestry drainage.

The day's itinerary was completed by visiting a deciduous woodland area at Oldhead, Doolough forest, Co. Mayo. The party were met by Mr. Michael Neff, Conservation Section, Forest and Wildlife Service and forester-in-charge, Mr. Maurice Lynch. The objects of management were outlined by Mr. Neff. The elimination of alien species and conservation of native ones he said was the main aim. A discussion followed, during which considerable interest was shown in the ground vegetation.

Mr. O. V. Mooney, President of the society thanked the leaders at the different stops for the considerable trouble to which they had gone to facilitate the society

THOMAS J. PURCELL

#### Thursday, 23rd May

Despite a certain amount of tour attrition, and a rather feeble sun, the drive through the stone walled countryside, south of Westport to Cong forest, was pleasant. At Cong, Mr. Tom Guilfoyle, assistant District Inspector, welcomed the party and Mr. P. Campbell, forester-in-charge, gave us the vital statistics of the very fine stand of 42-year-old Sitka spruce. This stand had suffered in the January wind blow and the party was shown blown specimens with volumes up to 4 cubic metres.

The second stop brought the varied life of the modern forester home to us as Mr. Brian Stronach discoursed with some erudition on the sexual life of the woodcock. Cong was the best woodcock shoot in Europe and we were told that in 1908 five guns shot 280 birds in two drives in one day. The present day death toll is somewhat less—the shoot producing about 50 birds.

Mr. M. Maye, forester-in-charge, Cong sawmill, discussed the background to the present mill which dates from the fifties, and told us that the annual production is about 50,000 cubic feet of sawn timber, mostly roofing material. The mill operates at a working profit and also produces huts and amenity signs to meet inservice demands. This brought us to lunchtime and the hotel hampers were unpacked with the enthusiasm of hungry men (and women).

A short stop, after lunch, was made at Broad Avenue, Ashford Castle, where we saw the oldest *Pinus Contorta* in the country, unfortunately laid to rest by the January storm. Mr. Cambell and Mr. Mulloy supported by Mr. Galvin discussed the shooting, while Mr. Tony Mannion gave us some facts regarding the ornamental woodland, leased by the Forest and Wildlife Service to the hotel.

As the little man with the hammer, in the engine of one of our omnibuses,

became more adamant we were forced to abandon the vehicle, so the party doubled up in the remaining bus and with the help of car transport, provided by the local staff, the tour proceeded to Moore Hall.

Moore Hall, with its snotgreen lake (though I doubt if Joyce was ever a house guest there), is always evocative of recent history. The ruins of the mansion still dwarf the sea of Norway spruce on its front lawns, while a curious juxtaposition of revolutionary thinking allows a memorial plaque on its walls.

Mr. Stronach talked on the ecology of mallard in the pleasantly situated amenity area and discussed the findings from his research work here over the past six years. The party was shown a Norway spruce/oak mixture, where Mr. J. Tighe, forester-in-charge, and Mr. P. Murray, deputy forester, were introduced. Mr. Murray gave us the statistics of the stand and the possible treatment was discussed at some length, the future of the oak being the main point at issue. The consensus was for the retention of the oak.

The last stop of the tour was at Moore Hall itself, where Dr. N. O'Carroll, speaking from the steps in a light drizzle, discoursed on the history of the Moore family in some detail, dwelling mostly on George, the best known member of the family and, obviously, the speaker's favourite. Dr. O'Carroll, with relevant quotation and amusing anecdote (helped by Mr. R. O'Kinneide on the classical side) conjured the ghosts of the gamblers, paterfamilias and litterateurs that once were lords of those walls.

Rejoining the bus the tour headed for Westport and the society's annual dinner, stopping briefly at Ballintubber, where some members visited the abbey and others an adjoining premises.

L. P. O'Flanagan

### Participants

Mr. O. V. Mooney (President), Mr. T. de Gruineil (tour leader), Mr. F. Mulloy and Miss L. Furlong (meetings committee), Mr. S. Carney, Professor T. Clear, Messrs. M. Costello, C. C. Crowley, J. J. Crowley, G. Cunningham, J. M. Doyle, F. Drea, D. Egan, F. Fahy, J. Fahy, G. Karragher, J. Fennessy, A. M. Finnerty, P. Finnerty, M. Forde, A. Gallinagh, S. Galvin, G. V. Harney, C. J. Jeffers, F. Jennings, J. E. Johnston, J. Kelly, E. J. Lynch, D. Mangan, A. Mannion, D. Murphy, T. McCarthy, N. J. McCormack, M. O'Brien, Dr. N. O'Carroll, Messrs. M. F. O'Donovan, L. P. O'Flanagan, T. J. O'Mahony, P. O'Malley, M. O Neachtain, D. O'Sullivan, G. H. Pickles, T. Purcell, J. Quinn, Miss J. Tierney, Messrs. C. Tottenham, R. Tottenham, J. Twomey, D. Walsh, A. van der Wel, D. P. Willis, J. Whyte.

### ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

At a meeting in Shell-BP House, Dublin, on 16th August 1974 Dr. Frank Convery, Assistant Professor of Natural Resource Economics, School of Forestry, Duke University, North Carolina, U.S.A., delivered a paper entitled *Concepts for Environmental Policy*.

In the first part of his paper Professor Convery discussed the necessity for change from a cowboy economy to a spaceship economy, from an economy of dynamic economic growth to a no-growth economy, or nearly, and gave examples on a world scale of damage to the environment resulting from our present system, and the likely future consequences of current development, for instance in the field of nuclear power generation.

He went on to consider two possible methods for the control and abatement of environmental pollution: residuals charges and subsidy/enforcement. The first of these envisages the levying of a charge on the pollutor related to the amount of degrade caused to the environment by the residuals released thereto, while the second would involve subsidies and tax reliefs for pollution abatement equipment together with legal enforcement of specified discharge standards. Professor Convery favoured the first method mainly on the grounds that the cost of the pollution resulting from any process would be directly reflected in the price of the product, thereby reducing the demand for that product in relation to the degree of pollution caused. He concluded with some examples of this system in operation.

## OUTDOOR MEETINGS

### Forest Walks

In accordance with what has now become an accepted tradition the Society's guided forest walks for members of the general public took place on the second weekend in September. While attendance on Saturday 7th was limited by rain and wind, it is estimated that 4,500 to 5,000 people attended on Sunday 8th. The walk locations and leaders were as follows:

<i>Forest</i>		<i>Leader</i>
Churchhill, Meenirroy, Co. Donegal	...	James Melia
Killygordon, Co. Donegal	...	C. Jeffers
Tardree, Co. Antrim	...	W. J. Crawford
Baronscourt, Co. Tyrone	...	C. S. Kilpatrick
Ballyfarnon, Co. Roscommon	...	M. Donnelly
Castleshane, Co. Monaghan	...	M. Dooley
Headford, Virginia, Co. Cavan	...	J. Crowley
Ballymahon, Co. Longford	...	J. Quinlivan
Mount Bellew, Co. Galway	...	J. Cronin
Breaffy, Castlebar, Co. Mayo	...	J. A. Mannion & T. de Gruineil
Union Wood, Collooney, Co. Sligo	...	J. E. Johnston & B. Moloney
Dromore, Ennis, Co. Clare	...	P. J. White
Coole Park, Gort, Co. Galway	...	T. Guilfoyle
Portumna, Co. Galway	...	P. Keane
Donadea, Co. Kildare	...	P. Crowe
Monasterevan, Co. Kildare	...	F. Fahy
Killakee, Co. Dublin	...	M. O'Brien & D. T. McAree
Glencree, Co. Wicklow	...	D. McGuire
Glenealy, Co. Wicklow	...	H. M. FitzPatrick
Stradbally, Co. Laois	...	B. J. Collins
Durrow, Co. Laois	...	L. Condon
Gorey, Co. Wexford	...	G. Murphy
Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny	...	J. Dooley
Carrickbyrne, Co. Wexford	...	J. Vaughan
Dundrum, Co. Tipperary	...	J. Hanley
Currachase, Adare, Co. Limerick	...	M. O'Donovan
Newcastle West, Co. Limerick	...	J. Costello
Muckross, Killarney, Co. Kerry	...	P. J. Bruton
Macroom, Co. Cork	...	M. F. Darcy

Curragh, Co. Cork	...	J. Ryan
Kilworth, Co. Cork	...	P. Verling
Glengarra, Co. Tipperary	...	M. Mac Giolla Coda
Mount Hillary, Co. Cork	...	M. J. Doyle

### Lettercran and Kesh Forests

A meeting organised by the Northern Region was held in Lettercran forest, Co. Donegal and Kesh forest, Co. Fermanagh on Wednesday, 2nd October 1974. The leaders were Mr. Paul Hand, District Inspector, Donegal, and Mr. Peter Savill, Research Officer, Belfast. The Forestry Division, Belfast, and the Forest and Wildlife Service, Dublin, facilitated members who wished to attend, resulting in an attendance of over sixty, an encouraging sign of the potential of mid-week meetings in contrast with the steadily declining attendance at Sunday meetings.

In Lettercran the subjects discussed included provenance and rooting habits of contorta pine, and nutrition of Sitka spruce on peat, and in Kesh an experiment on soil preparation for the establishment of Sitka spruce on gley soils was demonstrated and discussed.

### Cratloe Forest

A meeting in Cratloe forest, Co. Clare, led by Mr. Michael O'Donovan, District Inspector, Limerick, was held on 13th October 1974. The topic for the meeting was the management of high quality conifer plantations having a wide variety of species in varying stages of development.

### Clonsast Bog—Trench 14

The first plantations on Bord na Mona machine-cutaway were established in 1955 in Trench 14, Clonsast Bog, Co. Offaly. These plantations have been extended as more cutaway ground has become available, and a number of experiments are in progress. Some of the original Japanese and hybrid larch plots were thinned in the spring of 1974. The meeting, led by Mr. Michael Carey (Research Officer, Forest and Wildlife Service) saw and discussed the development of these plantations and experiments. Some of the highlights were a twenty-year-old crop of *Abies grandis* of yield class 22 (metric) with roots descending about two metres into calcareous glacial till, and a similarly aged crop of *Pinus radiata* on a deep layer of peat with a yield class of 20.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1974

### COUNCIL REPORT FOR 1973

#### Meetings

Attendances at indoor and outdoor meetings held during the year were encouraging. One venture in particular met with great response. This was a weekend tour held on the 28th and 29th September, which combined the Annual Dinner held at the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon, with visits to Lough Key Forest Park and Drumkeeran Forest. The Guided Forest Walks, which were also held in September, were highly successful. This was due to the extensive advertising campaign launched by the Meetings Committee in the weeks preceding the Walks. The Society was honoured by the presence of both the President of Ireland and the Minister for Lands at the Forest Walks held at Glenealy and Monaghan. The Forest Walks were organised in co-operation with the Forest and Wildlife Service, Dublin and the Forestry Division, Belfast and held in fifteen counties so that they were easily accessible to the public.