

Society Activities

ANNUAL STUDY TOUR 1976

Tuesday 1st June

The first stop was at Coolnamuck property of Thomastown Forest (Forester in charge: S. O'Sullivan; Deputy: S. Doyle; Assistant: P. J. Walsh) where the group was welcomed on behalf of the Minister by Mr. L. Condon, Divisional Inspector, and Tour Leader.

Coolnamuck was planted in 1928-30, mainly with Douglas fir giving crops with yield class ratings of 16-20. The main output at present is electrical power transmission poles and a discussion centred on the costs of this activity.

Next, to Woodstock, to see the current developments in the restoration of the gardens and pleasure grounds formerly owned by the Tighe estate. We were joined by Messrs Chris Kelly (Arboriculture Section, Research Branch) and Ian Sherriff (Amenity Officer) who passed around coloured post cards showing the gardens in the full glory of their Victorian flowering. Unfortunately there are no plans to restore the flower beds.

The large pigeon house attracted great attention; the ranks of genuine pigeon-holes may have struck a note of sympathy in the hearts of the assembled Civil Servants.

After lunch the party stopped at Jerpoint Abbey, a monastic ruin founded in 1158, and partially restored in recent years. The local guide, Miss Hegarty, provided all the information that was needed.

The main business of the afternoon was the Castlemorres property of Knocktopher forest (Forester in charge: P. Crowley; Assistant: D. Magner). This area surrounds the great house (now in ruins) formerly owned by the de Montmorency family, and afforestation took place in the years after 1935. The fertile soil led to the use of a high proportion of broadleaved species and the resulting crops are now highly interesting, even if only for their rarity. They also present interesting silvicultural problems, for instance, how to prevent the development of epicormic branches on oak. Underplanting with western hemlock was suggested, but the continental European practice, involving the use of beech, was preferred for a number of reasons.

Cases of ink disease in Spanish chestnut were seen. Diarmuid McAree gave an account of the disease caused by the fungus *Phytophthora cambivora* which attacks the roots, causing the tree to wilt and die. The disease is characterised by an inky exudate from the roots and is controlled by improving the drainage.

A thirteen year-old clonal trial and a seventeen year-old plantation of poplars were visited. The best growth was attained by a clone of the *Tacamahaca* (Balsam) group.

It was suggested that a greater production of poplar wood for pulp might be obtained with a closer spacing than the 7 m used in the plantation.

A small spacing trial with ash was also seen and discussed.

Wednesday 2nd June

That the role of the Forest and Wildlife Service has considerably diversified in the past five years or so was again emphasised on this our second day of the Study Tour. Cappoquin Forest was our first venue. At Glenshelane Property adjoining the recently developed riverside picnic site we were introduced to the local forestry staff. Our theme for the day was to be "Problems of afforestation in the Knockmealdowns". Incidental to this topic we were also to gain a considerable insight into the amenity/recreational dimension of Forestry in the region. The amenity development at Glenshelane was an example of the con-

tribution made by the Forest and Wildlife Service to the enhancement of the landscape and the provision of facilities for rural recreation and tourist enjoyment. As a public relations exercise, someone mentioned, this type of development yielded far greater benefits than those measured in N.D.R. or £ sterling.

At an unscheduled stop near "Barry Lyndon's cottage" on our way across the Knockmealdowns the problems of land acquisition in the region were described. Besides the obvious legal and land-use problems that one encounters here, the impoverished nature of the land acquired poses its own particular difficulties. The soil is an intractable podsol derived from O.R.S. Its nutrient status is low and therefore the choice of species to work with is limited. At Boggaduff property we saw how these problems were now being researched. Considerable interest was shown in the nutrient trials and the species trials there. The main problem it seemed was one of a continual nitrogen supply to the planted crop. Sitka spruce went into check on these O.R.S. non-peaty soils due to the unavailability of N, even though its phosphate requirements were satisfied. Research has shown that N may be supplied by leguminous species such as broom, lupins or *Ulex*. The nutrient may also be supplied in fertiliser form but this is expensive. The main questions under examination were:

(a) How long must the N supply continue?

(b) How much needs to be supplied?

Lodgepole pine grows on these soils with phosphate but without additional N.

The relative growth performance of coastal L.P., Noble fir and Japanese larch were discussed. These three species seemed best suited to the site conditions there. The ameliorative effect of Japanese larch on the soil was discussed and its visual impact on the landscape noted.

Onwards now to The Vee where, under the shadow of Colonel Grubb's upright grave, we discussed the impact of forestry on the landscape. This traditional viewing point commanded a superb view of the Suir Valley and the Golden Vale until the newly planted forest obliterated the vista and left its enjoyment solely to Col. Grubb. Forestry came under severe criticism for this misdemeanour and steps have since been taken to rectify the situation. Amongst the remedial measures practised were the selective thinning of trees to give a see-through effect, the clearfelling of a tree belt adjacent to the road edge and an attempt to plant some native hardwoods in order to enliven the monotonous landscape pattern. We were given a remarkable account of Col. Grubb's career and never did I think that the upright stalwart behind us had been such a character in his day!

After lunch we travelled to Mount Anglesby Property, Clogheen Forest and saw quite vividly why *Rhododendron ponticum* is such a problem in this region. The successful use of 2-4-5T as an eradicator spray was described and demonstrated. Its proper use does not, we were told, constitute an environmental hazard.

A survey was now underway to quantify this problem which is one of the major constraints on forest management in the area. Yield figures quoted for two Scots pine stands in the property differed remarkably and brought into question whether soil survey data should form the basis for production forecasting. The soil here was an indurated iron pan podsol but was yet able to produce seed-stand quality Scots pine. One felt that interest in genetically proven S.P. could be restimulated on the basis of its performance here.

Our final stop for the day at Kildanoge property Knockmealdown Forest was indeed a memorable one. It started with "whatever you were having"—a small one or a bottle—laid on by courtesy of the local gun club. We were then shown how the area had been developed as a wild-fowl habitat and were given a very interesting account of grouse management in the Knockmealdowns. What practical co-operation and good-will between the F.W.S. and a local gun club

can achieve was clearly demonstrated here. The area was managed for mallard rearing prior to its acquisition for forestry in 1974. There was some concern that the entire area would be ploughed and planted and that the gun club would be excluded from the property. However after an initial "grouching" session an amicable agreement was reached whereby the F.W.S. left unplanted the area adjoining the pond. An expansion of the wildlife habitat area was undertaken by artificially creating three more ponds. A wide variety of conifer and broad-leaved trees were also planted, to provide shelter and improve the insect life of the area. It is also planned to increase the pH of the water with broken limestone in order to encourage plant and insect life and thereby improve the feeding for wildfowl. The grouse development locally does not conflict with forest management. Proper heather management for grouse, we were told, and indeed for sheep also, means burning the heather on a 10/12 years rotation in narrow strips or belts not more than 30 metres in width. Our day finished, literally and physically, on a high note. We had a fly-over with dipped wings by the elusive mallard. Their plans to settle on their newly created wildfowl habitat must have been thwarted by the vocal chords of local gun club impressario Peter Butler, and of Liam Condon as they vied with one another to plough the Rocks of Bawn and praise the Bould Thady Quill!

Thursday 3rd June 1976

The President, Dr. P. Joyce opened proceedings for the day by nominating Mr. T. Mannion as Chairman of the morning session at Rocketts Castle car park and picnic site. Mr. Ned Gaffey, District Inspector, Mr. E. Cunningham Assistant District Inspector and Mr. J. P. O'Donoghue, Forester-in-Charge, Curraghmore, were introduced and the party moved on to the Wildlife Sanctuary at Coolfin.

Mr. D. Scannel, Wildlife Inspector gave a brief history of the area stating that this was originally a salt water marsh and reclaimed by building embankments along the river Suir. A flock of 110 to 160 greylag geese winter in this area and the local gun club are anxious to protect them.

The next stop was at Curraghmore Forest where Mr. Gaffey said that 2,000 acres here were leased from the Curraghmore Estate in the early thirties. Norway spruce and Scots pine were the main species planted and an interesting discussion ensued on the incidence of spiral grain in Norway spruce.

Sawn planks from a tree with spiral grain were displayed and though no particular visual defects were observed the timber had been freshly sawn and it was thought that it could twist during seasoning. Dr. G. Gallagher spoke on grading systems and though none were in force in this country at present, the I.I.R.S. have been working on grading and a mechanical stress grading machine was being installed in one large sawmill.

At our next stop, the effects of wind blow were discussed—Mr. Condon considered soil conditions a very big factor. Other speakers emphasised that silviculture was of prime importance, particularly early and heavy thinning. Mr. McAree spoke of the fact that blow timber can be degraded through fungal attack after one year, particularly where briar and heavy undergrowth cause semi-permanent damp conditions.

The party moved on to Tower Hill where Mr. J. P. O'Donoghue gave brief details of this property. A poor Scots pine stand (Yield Class 6) was seen and though soil appeared quite acceptable, Dr. Joyce wondered why this particular crop was so poor. Mr. T. Mannion suggested provenance. A long discussion ensued and Mr. Condon rang the death bell by stating that the crop would be clear felled for pulp wood as soon as market conditions permit. An equally poor Corsican pine stand was our next stop but good young Sitka spruce along-

side, probably one of the top yield classes, gave some food for thought.

Mr. P. J. Morrissey, acting as chairman for the afternoon session introduced Mr. D. White, Agent for the Marquis of Waterford in the courtyard of Curraghmore House. Mr. White welcomed the party on behalf of the owner and said that the estate covered 2,500 acres of which 1,500 were farmland and 850 woodland. The mansion and courtyard, designed on the lines of a French chateau was quite unique and certainly very impressive, particularly with the show of rhododendrons in the surrounding ground.

Mr. White led the party to see part of the 350 acres of oak woodlands which Mr. Neff said were the best example of sessile oak on a good soil in Ireland. The regeneration was very good and the ground flora typical. Some oak had been felled and prices of up to £50 a tree had been obtained. Mr. White explained that the estate ran a commercial shoot which cost about £10,000 a year and typical charges were about £200 a gun day. Obviously there is some money left somewhere in the country.

Tempus fugit and the party left for the more humdrum experience of the factory floor at Munster Chipboard Ltd., Waterford, where we were welcomed by Mr. McMahon, the Chief Executive. Mr. McMahon explained that pulpwood only (mainly thinnings) was used as a raw material for this plant. The current price was £8.50 per ton at factory gate and they produced a high quality chipboard. The party had an interesting tour of the factory and saw all the relevant stages including new uses such as bonding roofing felt onto the boards.

This ended a very successful tour and the Society left for the hotel and Annual Dinner where members and guests enjoyed a pleasant night.

N. O'CARROLL, D. McAREE, L. O'FLANAGAN

Participants

Dr. Padraig Joyce (President), Liam Condon (Tour Leader), Lily Furlong and Fergal Mulloy (Meetings Committee), Paul Clinch, Monica Connelly, Maureen Cosgrave, Myles Cosgrave, Jim Dillon, Pat Doolan, Lily Furlong, John Gillespie, Pat Herbert, George Hipwell, Christie Jeffers, Dr. Padraic Joyce, John Kelly, Harry Kerr, Ted Lynch, Dermot Mangan, Tony Mannion, Fergal Mulloy, Diarmuid McAree, Tadgh McCarthy, Dr. Eileen McCracken, Evelyn McCreesh, Michael McNamara; Jim McSorley, John McSorley, Brendan D. Neill, Jim O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Dr. Niall O'Carroll, R. O'Cinneide, Liam O'Flanagan, Paddy O'Malley, Denis O'Sullivan, Tom Purcell, Kevin Quinlan, Jim Quinlan, Margot Robinson, Martin Sheridan, Charles Tottenham, Robert Tottenham, Dan Walsh, Harry van der Wel, Pat White, Jack Whyte, Michael Conway, Jerry Crowley, Pat Crowley, Dan Dinneen, Joe Doyle, Frank Drea, Brendan Friel, Dr. Gerhardt Gallagher, Seamus Gavigan, George Harney, John Healy, Joe Kilbride, Nicholas McCormack, John McGovern, Liam Moloney, P. J. Morrissey, Con Nyhan, Michael O'Donovan, Nora O'Donovan, Cuimin O'Fathaigh, Sean O'Laoite, Jim O'Mahony, Jim O'Riordan, Michael O'Sullivan, Bill Phelan, T. G. Riordan, Jim Vaughan, Paddy Verling, David A. T. White.