
Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

For the sake of other Clare farmers, I must protest at the 1st Conclusion to "Land Drainage in County Clare", in your last issue, that: "Draining the wet land of the county can be done. The technology and techniques of doing it are there, and the proof of success is there in plenty". To make such claims after only two years trial is surely unscientific.

It must be agreed, that the biggest problem of the "32%" of the lands needing drainage, is the utilization of the crop—either by grazing or harvesting with machinery—during prolonged periods of rainfall.

I would like your readers to note figure 1. The upper graph (histogram) gives the number of wet days as recorded at Mount Callan, Inagh, Co. Clare during the six months April-September (the period when the crop is utilized) for the last 37 years. The lower graph (vertical lines) is for the total rainfall for the same periods. The dotted lines show the average in each case. The data are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of wet days and rainfall between 1st April and 30th September at Mount Callan in relation to averages for 30 year period.

Period	1948-'57		1958-'67		1968-'77	
	+*	-*	+	-	+	-
Days with rain	4	5	9	1	1	9
Rainfall	5	5	8	2	2	8

*+ = Number of years above average

— = Number of years below average

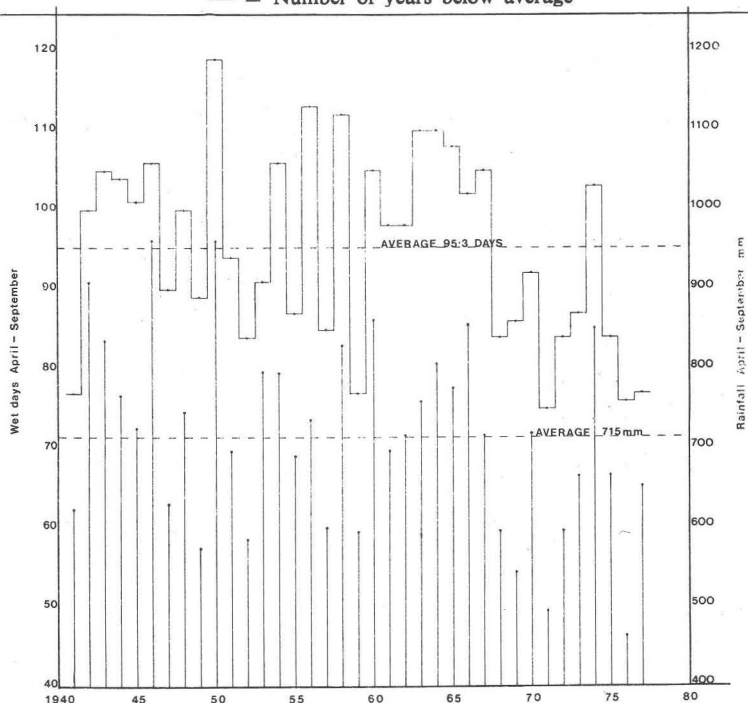


Table 1 — Distribution of wet days and rainfall between 1st April and 30th September at Mount Callan in relation to averages for 30 year period.

It will be noted that the drainage works referred to were carried out towards the end of a ten year period of exceptionally dry summers. If one looks at the previous ten years (1958-67) it will be seen that there was a complete reversal of conditions.

I was unfortunate (or fortunate) enough to attempt to drain land at the beginning of this wet period and found that a drainage scheme would tolerate *one* wet Summer but that the cumulative effect of poaching during successive wet Summers caused a complete breakdown in soil conditions and a magnificent sward of *Juncus effusus*.

I am confident that, given similar conditions to the 1958-67 period, the drainage in question will prove equally ineffective.

What a pity the "£1.8 million spent from 1949-76" was not used for planting Sitka Spruce. Some of these "Tree Farms" would now be yielding £150 per ha/per annum in thinnings, with a final crop worth £15,000 per ha only 12 years away.

Mount Callan,
Inagh,
Co. Clare

Yours sincerely,
Robert Tottenhan

P.S. — It is of interest that the County Leitrim Resource Survey was carried out during the ten year dry period referred to, and this should be borne in mind when reading the Conclusions and Development Proposals in Part IV. (c.f. Part II, p. 72, last para. and Table 51).

Dear Sir,

Beyond this brief note your former editor's letter in the last issue of Irish Forestry compels no further response. If any of your readers so wish they could read once again the editorial in question and my response to it and draw their own conclusions on matters of clarity and precision. The reader after all is the final judge on all written material!

Yours faithfully,
P. MacOscair