

INVENTORY OF OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPES IN IRELAND

An Foras Forbartha, 1977. Price 75p. Soft back. 64 pages. One map.
20 Black & White landscape pictures.

Why produce such a report? The stimulus came from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and National Resources (I.U.C.N.). Ireland was chosen as part of a pilot programme and was asked to prepare an inventory of outstanding landscapes which would eventually be world-wide and complementary to the U.N. List of National Parks and Equivalent Reserves and to the World Directory of National Parks and other Protected Areas. The I.U.C.N. requested that ten areas be submitted from each country. This inventory under review contains all the landscapes of Ireland out of which the best ten were chosen.

This report, to my knowledge, is the first comprehensive assessment of the better landscapes of this island. The authors freely admit to its limitations and do not make any claims that it is the definitive work on this subject.

The difficulties of selecting and evaluating landscapes are acknowledged. If landscapes are selected on a county basis then areas in a scenically dull county may rate highly where as the same landscapes in a county blessed with great beauty would not register at all. That landscapes were assessed on a regional basis is of great merit here.

Human curiosity, being what it is, I would have liked to know which ten areas were selected for the international inventory.

No doubt there were lengthy deliberations on defining 'Outstanding Landscapes': The introductory comments are however thin in this regard. Indeed this is my only criticism of the book. One area designated as such is part of the Wicklow/Dublin mountain range. The area is 102,400ha. It stretches from Saggart to Stepside to Baltinglass. Within this area there are certainly jewels (Glendalough?) worthy of the classification 'Outstanding Landscapes' but it is questionable if the whole mountain range should be so classified.

A most useful reference book for anyone involved in planning or development of the countryside. The descriptions under 'Landscape Type' and 'Distinctive Features' for each landscape will prove of special value.

As usual with An Foras Forbartha booklets, the cover on this inventory is a delight depicting a romanticised Killarney scene.

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