

*IRISH RESOURCES AND LAND USE*

Institute of Public Administration, Dublin

D.A. Gillmor (Editor)

295 pages; Hardcover; 50 sketch maps. £11.99.

Members of the Society will be somewhat pleased that the dust-cover of this book shows a map of state forests; there is little joy however for members who live and work in Northern Ireland since most of the book deals only with the Republic of Ireland.

There is however a lot to interest the forester in this new book, even though much of the information is available in other books, journals, etc. Dr Gillmor opens with a chapter on the nature and role of our natural resources and makes a strong plea for an integrated policy on management and use. The following chapter, Atmosphere, by Dr Bourke, includes, as well as a detailed account of the work of the Irish Meteorological Service, a section on practical aspects of weather data. Chapter 3, on

Water by Dr Drew, is more encompassing, dealing with hydrology; domestic, agricultural and industrial usage; water quality, etc., and he compares the Republic with Britain and Europe.

The current situation with respect to base metals, building materials, peat, coal, petroleum and natural gas are discussed by Professor Holland under the title "Minerals". A more detailed description of the surface geology of the country would be welcomed by the average reader. Dr Gardiner (Chapter 5, Soils) discusses the origin, nature and distribution of the Republic's major soils. He outlines their suitability for agricultural use and shows the distribution of marginal land (45% of the landscape) both by map and in tabular form.

Dr Gillmor uses seven page-size sketch maps to depict aspects of agricultural land usage in the state and deals succinctly with land improvement and productivity. He comments authoritatively on drainage, fertilizers, hedgerow removal, dangers of pollution, etc. One must however dispute his figure of 1.5 million tonnes of lime being needed annually to counteract soil losses. Mr McEvoy's chapter, Forestry, the shortest by a few pages, discusses the economic and non-economic aspects of forestry in Ireland with comments on the spatial distribution of both private and state-owned forests. His discussion on management and policy includes comments on wildlife, soil and water conservation, visual aspects of the landscape, etc. and he predicts that at least 500,000 hectares of the Republic's land will ultimately be afforested.

Dr Went gives interesting statistics both for our inland and sea fisheries and deals effectively with the problems of fish-stock conservation. Similarly, Dr Cabot's contribution (Wildlife) is more statistical than descriptive and he warns against the excessive use by other Europeans of our limited and fragile wildlife resources. He makes a plea for proper management and enlightened land-use planning.

Mr Mawhinney's chapter, Recreation, discusses some of the visual aspects of the Irish countryside including our mountain and cliff scenery, our beaches and coastal waters. He emphasises the richness of the western counties and discusses the strong peripheral pattern to outdoor recreation and tourism. The recreational use of forests and water are discussed separately; the Lough Key Forest Park experience is highlighted.

Chapter 11, Transport, by Mr Killen, convinces us that transport constitutes both an important resource and a significant land user. Road and rail networks and usage, and water and air traffic are discussed . . . In the final chapter, Urban Land, Dr Bannon comments on urban growth and urban land usage, and provides figures and estimates as to future demand for urban land. That 27,000 hectares, most of it land of very high agricultural potential, will be converted to urban use by 1991, one-third of it in Dublin alone, must be a concern to us all.

This is a well-produced, readable and interesting book with a good bibliography and index and few mistakes or errors. My only criticism is that Northern Ireland has been excluded and hence the book has a misleading title. This did not have to be so, since most of the information is available, and a little extra effort, and a few Northern Irish authors could fill the gaps. Anyone used to using and studying Irish maps such as road and rail networks, forest maps, distribution of wildlife, soil maps, etc., will find the blank north-eastern section of the country very displeasing. Had each of the chapters been enlarged one would have little hesitation in saying that this book was well worth its price and in recommending it as a reference or text to accompany the Royal Irish Academy's Atlas of Ireland.