

## Notes and News

### *Long Term Forestry Policy for Britain*

According to the British Timber Growers Association a long-term forestry policy agreed by all major political parties is now urgently required in Britain. They claim that government inaction is destroying the confidence of private timber growers at a time when imports of timber and timber products are running at £2,754 million per year. The recent report from the Centre for Agricultural Strategy at Reading University urges a planting target of 60,000ha a year, making Britain 15% self-sufficient by the year 2000. However, present planting rates are well below even this target. In 1979 new planting dropped to 20,000ha and unless government and politicians underwrite a long-term policy Britain may well fall further behind projected targets, it is claimed.

British Timber Growers Association.

### *Massive Loss of Forest Area*

#### *Emphasises Need to Make the Best Use of Wood*

"By the year 2000, the world will have lost 320 million hectares of tropical rain forest, an area equivalent to that of Western Europe." This statement was made by Dr. W. E. Hillis of the Australian CSIR in his keynote address on "The Efficient Use of the Wood Resource" to the Forest Products Division of the International Union of Forestry Organisations' Conference in Oxford in April.

Dr. Hillis commented that the high rate of loss of forest area emphasised the importance of making the fullest use of the available wood, and the need for improved co-operation in research and development if the forests are to continue to provide man with this most versatile of raw materials. He felt that "Conferences such as this play a central role by providing contacts between specialists worldwide and identifying priorities for future research".

In Oxford, 170 scientists from 30 countries, spent 7 days in discussions, the major topics being

- variations in wood quality and the problems of optimum utilisation
- wood processing systems, and the growing importance of the man-material-machine interface
- the structural use of timber
- energy from the forest biomass
- the management of technology transfer

IUFRO All-Divisions Meeting, Oxford.

*Augustine Henry Meeting*

On 7th November 1980, in University College, Dublin, a meeting was held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Augustine Henry, born on 2nd July 1857 in Dundee, Scotland, studied at the university colleges in Galway and Belfast, before joining the Chinese Maritime Customs Service in 1881. While in China he made a remarkable contribution to the exploration of the Chinese flora. On his retirement from the Service, he went in 1903 to Nancy to study forestry, but soon abandoned that in favour of working with H. J. Elwes on *Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*. Later Henry became the first Reader in Forestry at the University of Cambridge, and in 1913 accepted the chair of forestry in the Royal College of Science in Dublin (later University College, Dublin). He died on 23rd March 1930.

H. M. Fitzpatrick spoke on Henry's return to Ireland as Professor of Forestry and Miss Sheila Pim, Henry's biographer, read a paper on his associations with the Dun Emer Press, one of the features of the Celtic revival early this century. Dr. J. Durand recalled Henry's influence on forestry in Ireland and J. O'Driscoll paid tribute to his work in plant breeding. Dr. C. Nelson explained Henry's influence on the exploration of the Chinese flora and the introduction of Chinese plants into European gardens.

The meeting, jointly sponsored by this society, the Forestry Graduates Group of the Agricultural Science Association, and by the Irish section of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History was well attended and was a small tribute from Irish foresters, botanists and horticulturists to a man whose influence is still tangible in our landscape and gardens.

C. Nelson.

*Another Alternative Energy Source*

Methane gas produced from farmyard manure can wholly replace fuel oil for heating and hot-water purposes on a medium-sized farm, according to a report from the National Swedish Industrial Board which has subsidised research into the question. With the Board's encouragement a Swedish farmer, aided by students from Gotenburg University, installed such a system on his farm and it has worked so effectively that no oil has been used there for heating or hot water production since March of last year.

The system provides for the manure to be pumped into a hermetically sealed container with a capacity of 90 cubic metres. The manure remains there for 20-30 days at a temperature of 35°C, at which point the methane bacteria become active and produce gas. A pump is used to stir the manure for 5 minutes each day to prevent stratification. Daily gas production in the tank is some 80

cubic metres, equivalent to 40 litres of fuel oil, and this is burned in two furnaces. This would give an aggregate energy production of some 1 TWh for all Swedish farms with a minimum of 100 pigs or 25 cows.

Certain design problems remain to be solved before the system is directly profitable on small or medium-sized farms but it could already pay for itself on larger agricultural units, the Board says.

Swedish International Press Bureau.

### *A Better Yield from Sawlogs*

The Princes Risborough Laboratory of Building Research Establishment has developed a computerised sawmilling system which will enable sawmillers to have greater control over log conversion, leading to an increased yield in volume of saleable sawn timber and hence an improved income from the sawmill. The system (Laser Optimiser and Cant Alignment System, or LOCAS) was demonstrated at a seminar held at the Newton Hotel, Nairn, Scotland, on Thursday 6th and Friday 7th November. Delegates had the opportunity to see the prototype of LOCAS in operation in the sawmill of John Gordon & Son.

Although much of the softwood timber used in the UK is imported, an increasingly important contribution comes from British-grown sawlogs and it is desirable that these should be cut to the best possible advantage. Until now, the operator has used his skill and judgement to determine how to cut individual logs to obtain the maximum amount of usable sawn timber. LOCAS had been developed by Keith Maun and Nigel Smithies of Princes Risborough to help the operator make the correct decisions. It uses a laser-scanning device to measure accurately the dimensions and shape of each log as it passes the headsaw. This information is fed to a high-speed microcomputer which carries out a complete simulated conversion on line to determine where the next saw cuts should be positioned to produce the maximum number of pieces in the sizes required. In the prototype to be demonstrated, the processed data are used to control a cant alignment aid which ensures that the operator can accurately set up the cant for sawing.

The system has been designed to fit into the existing equipment and layout of mills which use a double band saw as the headsaw, but it can be developed for use in mills with different headsaws.

Trials held during the past year have indicated that application of LOCAS can increase the yield of sawn timber from a mill by 8-10 per cent. It is hoped to make complete, turnkey installations available to sawmillers through a suitable manufacturer licensed to use the LOCAS technology. Although costs can only be estimated with caution, these suggest a pay-back period of 1-2 years on the basis of the improved yields obtained.

UK Building Research Establishment.

*Forestry Meeting in New Zealand*

The first ever combined Australian and New Zealand Institute of Foresters conference was held in Rotorua, New Zealand from 12th to 18th May 1980. The conference was attended by three hundred delegates, ninety four of whom had travelled thirteen hundred miles across the Tasman sea from Australia for the event. It took as its theme, "Plantation forest — what future?" and was officially opened by the New Zealand prime minister, the Hon. R. Muldoon.

Although sixty six papers were presented on a wide range of specific topics, few apart from the keynote address given by the Director of the Forestry Industry Division of F.A.O., Dr. A. Leslie, actually looked to the future. Dr. Leslie, in a rather cautious presentation did predict a bright future for plantation forestry because of the growing demand for wood, the limited land bank available for producing timber and the increasing likelihood of forests being utilised for energy purposes.

Individual papers dealt with such topics as establishment, management, and methods of improving and maintaining production in plantation forests. Also covered were industrial and marketing aspects, the role of hardwoods (eucalyptus spp.) agroforestry, forest protection and some social, recreational and wildlife topics.

An interesting paper by K. F. Wells detailed the energy costs of growing plantations. The author found that fifty per cent of the liquid fuel consumed in growing pines in a mountain region in new South Wales was used to transport workers to and from the forest. A paper by M. Henderson dealt with the serious hearing problems suffered by forest workers who do not wear ear protection when using chainsaws. Stress grading and its implications for radiata pine silviculture as dealt with by personnel from the New Zealand Forest Research Institute. The main advantages seen were that stress grading would enable new markets for the species to be explored that are closed to or difficult to penetrate by visually graded timber, and secondly it also enables economies to be made in timber usage.

Those people who may have been sceptical with regard to the experimental work with clover and Sitka spruce at Cloosh Valley and Ballyhoura in recent years, may be interested to hear that the Forests Department in western Australia is currently planting 2500 ha of radiata pine each year using subterranean clover as the nitrogen source. The soils are extremely impoverished and the trees will not grow without nitrogen inputs. Grazing is used in some situations to optimise the use of the clover.

The question of a government forest service being financially involved in timber utilisation was discussed by R. M. Cowan of the Woods and Forests Dept., South Australia. Dr. Cowan saw many advantages, the main one being better vertical integration and

understanding within the industry. Although the conference did not look too seriously to the future, the proceedings did indicate that both Australian and New Zealand foresters are thinking deeply about plantation forestry. Their plantations future will be all the more secure.

M. L. Carey.

*Record Number of 116,000 Elks Shot in Sweden  
During 1979 Hunting Season*

A total of 116,000 elks were shot in Sweden during the 1979 hunting season. This is a new record and close on 25 per cent more than the previous peak figure, 94,200 registered in 1978.

The number of elks in Sweden has grown rapidly in recent years and great efforts are being made to reduce the elk population to an ecologically acceptable level. In the early 1950s the annual figure was approximately 20,000 elks shot, and as recently at 1976 the number was 57,000.

Swedish International Press Bureau.

*University College Dublin Forestry Society*

The Forestry Society in U.C.D. is run by the students to promote an interest in forestry and related topics in the college. Last year it enjoyed its largest membership ever with many students from outside the Forestry Department joining. During the year a number of talks were organised which included "The development of Irish Forestry" by Dr. J. J. Gardiner, "The shapes of trees" by Dr. J. White, "Teak in Tropical America" by Ray Keogh and "Forestry in Sweden" by Dr. T. Farrell. The society holds its Annual Inaugural Meeting in spring which provides a forum for debate for students and those related to the forestry services and industries. Last year's inaugural address was entitled "A re-appraisal of Irish silvicultural practices" given by the society's auditor John Gilliland and answered by Niall O'Muirghéasa and Dr. P. Joyce (Published in this issue pp. 107-111). This year in addition the society hopes to organise a number of outings for its members.

Dermot Houlihan, (Secretary).

*Have you been to a Meeting?*

Many of our members attend international conferences of forestry interest. If you have been to a meeting recently write to the journal about it. A brief note on the proceedings written from personal knowledge can be of much greater interest than a sterile press agency release.

The Editor.