

Letter to the Editor

To clarify the position of the present state of broadleaved forests in Ireland the editor invited Mr. R. M. Keogh, Crop Structure and Wood Technology Section, Forest Service, to submit statistics on broadleaved forest cover. Mr. Keogh has kindly done so as a letter which follows:

Dear Editor,

Considering your request to me for an over-view on broadleaf statistics, the following data may be of interest to readers. They present, for 1985, all figures for broadleaf woody vegetation in the Republic of Ireland in context of the forest as a whole. Burren-type scrub and preserved areas are included; this information is not normally given in countrywide breakdown of forest area.

All figures in hectares.

Total Area of Republic: 7,028,000

Land Area of Republic: 6,889,000

Total Forest Area: 432,068

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ownership	Conifer	Broadleaf					Total (2+7)
		High Forest		Scrub		Total Broad- leaf	
		Non Protected	Protected*	Non Burren Type	Burren Type**		
State	309,839	12,509	2,700	1,213	250	16,672	326,511
Private	17,610	32,347	—	33,102	22,498	87,947	10,557
Total	327,499	44,856	2,700	34,315	22,748	104,619	432,068

*Includes 1,700 ha of woodland in statutory nature reserves and about 1,000 ha of forest in national parks.

**Burren (Co. Clare): a region of 45,000 ha of carboniferous rock outcrop.

Broadleaf High Forest				
Dominant Species	Private	State		Total
		Non Protected	Protected	
Oak	7,660	2,084	1,635	11,379
Beech	7,858	4,247		12,105
Ash	5,430	614	990	7,034
Sycamore	3,080	367		3,447
Elm	1,664	124		1,788
Birch	4,452	683		5,135
Alder	1,138	161	75	1,374
Other Broadleaf	1,065	4,229		5,294
	32,347	12,509	2,700	47,556

The total broadleaf figure of 104,619 ha sets an absolute limit on the amount of woodland still in existence which may be derived from the 'original' natural forests. When an allowance is made for early plantation work on estates and reversion of farm land to scrub, it is likely that the actual figure for ancient woodland would be considerably less — perhaps as low as 20,000 ha.

Figures for elm are undoubtedly overestimated as this species has suffered attacks from Dutch elm disease since the inventories were undertaken.

There is a small area of Burren-type scrub (about 50 ha) in protected statutory natural reserves but this area has not been extracted from the high forest category to avoid complications in presentation of the data.

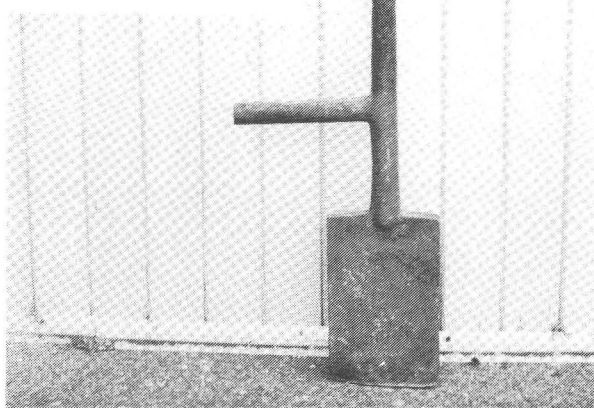
The information is based on (1) The Forest and Wildlife Service, 1978 Inventory of state forests; (2) Purcell, T. J. 1979 — The inventory of private woodlands, 1973 — Forest and Wildlife Service; (3) Ministers' reports of the Forest and Wildlife Service (1981-84); (4) Neff, M. J. 1974. Woodlands in the Republic of Ireland. Colloques phytosociologiques III. Les forêts acidiphiles: 273-285; (5) Kirby, E. N. 1981. An ecological and phytosociological study of *Corylus avellana* L. in the Burren, Western Ireland. Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland; (6) Cross J. (personal communication).

R. M. Keogh.

Can You Help Please ?

Picture shows implement received for the intended 'Forest Museum'. The item is solid metal, extremely weighty (6.7kg.) and probably had a wooden handle threaded into the ferrule at the top. Size approximates to that of a planting spade. Side-view of the 'head' is thick and wedge-shaped.

Would any of our readers know the proper name for this implement and what it was used for?



(Photo: M. Keane)