

THE *Irish Forester*

IRISH FORESTRY, WOODLAND & BIO ENERGY SHOW
Birr Castle Estate, 6&7 May

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS

SUMMER 2011

News on afforestation grants, premiums and COFORD forecasts

Grant aid for 2011 will cover the cost of establishment and while the rates have been reduced for broadleaves and diverse species, actual costs have also been reduced because of the lower plant densities now required. Last December, the Forest Service, in consultation with the various stakeholders, reduced the stocking densities for broadleaved species in order to create savings in forest establishment costs.

Alder stocking density was reduced from 3,300 to 2,500/ha while oak and beech stocking densities were reduced from 6,600 to 3,300/ha. Conifer stocking densities did not change. Stocking densities for species mixtures will be assessed by Forest Service inspectors on a case-by-case basis.

The premium rates remain as in 2010 but one rate now applies for each planting category regardless of plantation size. This may be seen as a disincentive to plant larger plantation blocks.

New forecasts issued by COFORD predict that timber supply from privately owned forests will increase from 0.4 million m³ to 1.5 million m³ by 2020 and to more than 3.0 million m³ by 2028.

The big increases in volume production will come from privately owned plantations. If issues such as access and thinning are fully addressed private timber supply will surpass Coillte supply in 2027. Forecasts for Coillte show an average production of 2.9 million m³ throughout the forecast period. Private sector production increases gradually for the first 12 years and increases rapidly thereafter.



Society President John Mc Loughlin presented the 2011 Augustine Henry Memorial Awards to Luke Heffernan, Waterford Institute of Technology and Brynmor Day's, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology at the Society's field day at the Medite Europe Ltd board mill in Clonmel on 15 April. The other prizewinner, Colm O'Driscoll, UCD received his award earlier (see page 3). The annual awards are presented to forestry students who gained the highest marks in their final year examinations.

Message from the President



I welcome readers to this special edition of our newsletter which marks the Irish Forestry, Woodland & Bio Energy Show 2011 in Birr Castle Estate. We are delighted to be involved through the Association of Irish Forestry Consultants (AIFC), the group representing consultant foresters affiliated to the Society of Irish Foresters.

There are a number of challenges facing Irish forestry. The Society will play its part in addressing these, as it has done in the past. I believe that the central role of forestry is to produce the raw material necessary for a viable forest industry. From this, other environmental and social benefits flow.

One of the hallmarks of Irish forestry since the foundation of the Society has been its social function, especially since the 1960s when our State forests were opened to the public – north and south. We should think long and hard before rushing to privatise this magnificent resource and civic amenity, which was created by hard working foresters and staff, and funded by Irish taxpayers.

In addition to maximising timber yields and non-timber benefits, the resource must also be protected. Responsible forest management and vigilance are essential to ensure that our forests remain the healthiest in Europe. The threat of disease is always present in an open economy such as ours, as witnessed by the recent damage caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*.

Next year, the Society of Irish Foresters will be 70 years in existence and we have planned a number of exciting projects to celebrate this milestone. In addition, we will continue with our programme of encouraging new members, especially forestry students, to join.

Finally my thanks to you, our members, for your continuous support over the years. I hope you will enjoy our summer edition of *The Irish Forester* and that you will continue to support the Society of Irish Foresters.

JOHN Mc LOUGHLIN – President

AIFC at Birr forestry show

SEAN LENIHAN



Shane McEntee, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with responsibility for forestry with Sean Lenihan, Chairman, AIFC at a recent meeting of the Forest Service Liaison Group.

The Association of Irish Forestry Consultants (AIFC) is proud to represent the forest consultancy profession at the Irish Forestry, Woodland & Bioenergy Show 2011 in Birr Castle Estate. Affiliated to the Society of Irish Foresters, our members are located throughout Ireland and now have a client base of more than 1,500 forest owners.

We continue the proud traditions of the Society, which was established in 1942. To become a member of AIFC, foresters must satisfy strict criteria regarding qualifications, experience and professional indemnity insurance. We place strong emphasis on continued professional development (CPD). To retain membership of AIFC, consultant foresters must undertake field days, lectures and study tours to attain a specified number of CPD points annually.

AIFC members come from diverse backgrounds in forestry. Our members have worked in State and private forestry and in educational and research bodies. We have pooled our experience and by drawing on the better aspects of our previous careers, listening to our customers and trying hard to be creative, we have succeeded in attracting and retaining satisfied customers throughout Ireland. We are represented on many strategic and policy-making forestry forums including the Forest Service Liaison Group, the Forest Policy Review Group and Food Harvest 2020.

We welcome visitors to call to our stand and also to check out our website (www.aifc.ie) which is the first port of call for foresters, growers, the press and other stakeholders who need the latest information on developments in the Irish forestry and forest products industry.

Society of Irish Foresters – spreading knowledge of forestry since 1942

The Society was founded in 1942 'to advance and spread the knowledge of forestry in all its aspects'. It fulfils this objective by organising field days, study tours, workshops, lectures and symposia. The Society also publishes *Irish Forestry*, the sole technical publication on forestry in Ireland, a bi-annual newsletter *The Irish Forester*, and other books of both technical and historical interest.

The Society of Irish Foresters represents the interests of more than 650 members who are predominantly professional foresters, but includes through its Associate and Student membership, a wide cross-section of people who have an interest in Ireland's forest and timber industry.

The Society of Irish Foresters places great emphasis on promoting professional standards in forestry among the public, and the regulation of the forestry profession.

By joining as a Technical, Associate or Student member, you are helping the Society of Irish Foresters to achieve its aims and objectives. Further details are available on www.societyofirishforesters.ie

Irish Forestry, Woodland & Bio Energy Show Birr Castle Estate, 6&7 May



The Madagascar forestry experience

Colm O'Driscoll



I recently spent four months working with i-to-i (www.i-to-i.com), a not-for-profit environmental NGO which was established to improve environmental conservation efforts in poorer regions of the world. I worked as an environmental conservation officer overseeing a project to compile a list of the tree and plant species in Tzimbazaza National Botanical Park, to help identify and plant new species for conservation and to erect signs in English, French and Malagasy for the thousands of daily visitors to the park.

As the project developed, it became apparent that the park staff had little understanding of the need for rainforest conservation. Thus I began to teach my first English/Forestry classes - an English class whose lessons and vocabulary were based entirely around rainforest conservation.

Madagascar's rainforests deliver many locally important products and services such as charcoal, vanilla, tourism, timber, firewood, nuts and shelter. However, this bounty comes at a terrible cost to the rainforests. If you fly across Madagascar you will see many forest fires clearing the rainforest. It is illegal to burn forests now, but Madagascar is so large that it is difficult to enforce this law. Madagascar has depleted much of its natural environment to grow rice. Only 15% of its once extensive rainforests, now remain intact. It is estimated that a further 125,000ha are destroyed annually.

Joining NGOs such as i-to-I, and later the Association Mjinsto, gave me an opportunity to acquire new skills such as intensive tropical tree identification, boundary inspection, public speaking and, of course, the French language. Other benefits gained from my work experience are the contacts I made during my time there.

Madagascar is a wonderful place with an amazing potential for forestry, economically and socially. However, the Malagasy people must be convinced of the need for rainforest conservation - only then will their rainforests be safe.



Colm O'Driscoll has led a busy life since he graduated from University College Dublin (UCD) last year. A recipient of the Society of Irish Foresters Augustine Henry Memorial Award (presented by Society President John Mc Loughlin), he has gained wide experience of forestry and conservation issues in Western Madagascar where he photographed this magnificent avenue of baobab trees (top). He is seen with conservation worker Perrot at the site of a new tourist hostel designed to improve agri-tourism. Colm will begin a five month forest conservation and education role in India and Nepal in May.

Madagascar at a glance

- Location: Island off the east coast of Africa. Latitude between 12°S and 26 °S and longitude 43°E and 51°E. Because of its isolation most of its mammals, half its birds, and most of its plants exist nowhere else on earth.
- Area: 587,041 sq km (fourth largest island in the world)
- Capital: Antananarivo (pop. 1,390,800).
- Population: 20.7 million.
- Life expectancy: 61 years (men), 64 years (women).
- Political status: Colonised by France in the 1800s and gained liberation on 25 June 1960. Currently a caretaker government in place.
- President (of the High Transitional Authority): Andry Rajoelina.
- Government: A democratic republic.
- Language: Malagasy and French.
- Ecology: Home to more than 6% of the world's plant and animal species; 80% of which are endemic to the island.
- People: Originally from Indonesia, the Malagasy have absorbed influences from both Africa (Mozambique), and Europe (France and England).
- Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world. Nominal GDP is €5.7billion (€267 per capita).
- Madagascar has depleted much of its natural environment to grow rice. Only 15% of its once extensive rainforests, now remain intact. It is estimated that a further 125,000ha are destroyed annually.

A long way from Clare – The life and times of Michael McNamara

Donal Magner

It is difficult to imagine, when talking to Michael McNamara, that he was born two years before the outbreak of World War I such is his sharpness of memory, enthusiasm and good humour. He paints a vivid picture of an Ireland that would be unrecognisable to most people today, especially the period of his childhood and early years as a forester.

A native of Cratloe, Co. Clare, he quickly realised that there were few employment opportunities when he left secondary school. The country was beginning a slow protracted recovery in the aftermath of independence and the tragic Civil War. He mixed politics and sport in his late teens as secretary of the local Fianna Fáil Cumann and athlete with O'Callaghans Mills Athletic Club. He was a fine athlete and was selected for the Irish cross-country international panel. He won a scholarship from Clare Co. Council to attend Athenry Agriculture College followed by two years in the Albert College, Glasnevin, Dublin.

After successfully completing the Albert College course, he received two career offers: a three-year forestry course in Avondale and a job opportunity as agricultural and rural advisor with the Land Commission. The Commission had replaced the Congested District Board, which was dissolved in 1923. "I had fluent Irish which this post required and I must confess that I was tempted as I would be based in the west of Ireland, probably close to my native Clare" admits Michael. "The position also offered a reasonable salary but Professor Drew – an excellent lecturer at the college – advised me to opt for Avondale. He said that a forestry course would eventually provide a good qualification even though it offered only a paltry allowance to begin with."

When he entered Avondale in 1935, Michael, like many of his fellow students, had little knowledge of forestry and the difficult challenges that lay ahead. The training regime was tough; a mixture of manual forestry and nursery work combined with lectures by Alistair Grant a Scottish forester. Grant was a strict but fair disciplinarian recalls Michael. "He was a good teacher but we were also fortunate to receive brilliant lectures every month from [Mark Loudon] Anderson who was then acting director of forestry in Ireland."

Anderson impressed him but he could be prickly and authoritarian in his relationship with students. "He was a born lecturer but the advice was 'not to question him' which the youthful Clare student ignored to his peril on one occasion. "I got on very well with him until one day when he was discussing windblow in the forest, I offered an alternative view to his," recalls Michael. "My comment was given in the spirit of youthful enthusiasm, but Anderson took serious exception to my remark which he perceived as questioning his knowledge and his authority. It was neither, but he barely acknowledged me after this."

Luckily, for Michael by the time the final exams and interviews came around in 1938, Anderson had been replaced by Otto Reinhardt, a former Oberforstmeister in the Prussian Forest Service. Anderson returned as Director, after Reinhardt went back to Germany at the outbreak of World War II.

"Reinhardt put great emphasis on German silviculture and was instrumental in providing two final year students with an opportunity to further their education in Germany," says Michael. "Joe Deasy and myself were chosen and we headed for Wageningen in 1939 but had scarcely arrived when we were ordered to return home, as Britain and France were about to declare war on Germany."

So instead of an exciting adventure in Germany, he began work as a forestry foreman in Kilbeheny where large-scale afforestation of the Galtee Mountains was taking place. Now he was about to begin the serious work of establishing the 'new forests' in an Ireland that had less than 2% forest cover in the late 1930s. He quickly realised how serious this would be when shots were fired over him by some aggrieved landowners when he was cycling to the planting site early one morning.

"The registered owners had sold a large stretch of land and the money was paid over," Michael explains. "However, some of the sheep farmers who sold the land, wished to retain the hill for grazing and when I told them that this wasn't possible they threatened me and gave me 10 days to get out.

"We persevered and planting began but I was transferred before the tenth day to Ravensdale, Co. Louth," smiles Michael. "After Ravensdale, he was transferred to Cong Sawmill in 1941 and the following year he was back in Avondale as housemaster.

Despite qualifying as a forester in 1938 and managing forests with large numbers of employees his status was a forestry foreman. "We were unestablished public service workers but when we sought Civil Service status we were refused," he says. "We were liable to be transferred almost on a yearly basis with neither security of employment nor pension rights."



Michael and Marie McNamara at their home in Little Island, Cork.

He recalls a dramatic meeting with Civil Servants in the early 1940s. During a typically confrontational meeting when Establishment was top of the agenda, the State Foresters' Association delegation received a half promise of Establishment, which was greeted by a mild round of applause from the members present. "I remember the day as I couldn't join in the applause, even if I wanted to, because my hands bore the scars of a heavy fall from my bicycle the previous day."

"The day before the meeting on Establishment, I paid up to 60 men their weekly wage of one pound, nine shillings and four pence each," he clearly recalls. But the badly worn bicycle tyres and poor brakes – there was a shortage of bicycle parts during World War II – proved his downfall in every sense of the word. "As I fell from the bike, I watched the coins pour out of my pay satchel and roll down the hill before me," he says. He spent the next few hours picking up coins including all 240 pennies.

Despite his precarious financial situation and poor prospects, he married Mona Boyle, a native of Co. Donegal, in 1941. He continued to fight for Establishment and reasonable conditions, but says that nine years after qualifying his weekly wage was still a paltry two pounds, six shillings and two pence. His final appointment as a forester in charge was in Freshford Forest, when he was based in Jenkinstown, north of Kilkenny city.

He was promoted to the position of Assistant District Inspector in 1948 and was based in Navan. Here he worked with the District Inspector, Roddy Crerand in an area that covered North Meath, part of Westmeath and Cavan.

He was promoted again a few years later to the position of Acquisition Inspector. Now based in Dublin, his skills as a negotiator served him well in buying land from individual farmers or groups of farmers when commonages were purchased.

He recalls sad moments, especially when the vendor was emigrating or

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Artist-forester publishes book of etchings



Connections - Verbindungen, a new publication, features etchings by Gerhardt Gallagher – Society member and former President – and his grandmother Margarethe. It spans more than a century of work as Margarethe, who was born in Wittmannsdorf in Germany in 1878 attended art

college in 1904. She also took master classes in graphic art with Hermann Struck whose students included Marc Chagall and Max Lieberman.

The works by Margarethe date from 1910 to the 1930s and feature



His Excellency, Busso von Alvensleben (left), German Ambassador to Ireland who launched *Connections ~ Verbindungen* with co-authors Micheál Ó Haodha, Gerhardt Gallagher and Gisela Holfter at the University of Limerick.

scenes of the North German landscape such as *Schirm am Walde* (left).

Gerhardt has worked in watercolour and oils over the years but *Connections* concentrates on his more recent development as a graphic artist.

His work is diverse, but as one might expect, trees and woodlands are well represented. He is not afraid to take his easel and sketchbook into the woods and undergrowth and emerge with enigmatic images such as *Figure in Birches* and *Burren Hazelwood*. He is also at home at woodland edges where he depicts defiant, gnarly beech standing against the elements in the lyrically beautiful *Cruagh* (below).

The Society is offering copies of *Connections - Verbindungen* to its members at a reduced price of €30 (including postage).



Long Way from Clare, continued from p4.

was forced to sell because there was nobody left to inherit the land.

But there was also humorous side to the job. Land was a measure of a person's status in the community and to illustrate this point Michael cites an example of a land purchase deal he was negotiating in Tipperary.

"I had agreed a price for the purchase of 90 acres and had the various documents drawn up but when I returned I was told that the farm had been sold to a neighbour for the same price." A dejected Michael met the neighbour who told him that he would sell him the land within a year. "I sensed that he was speculating, so I told him I wasn't interested. But he assured me that he would sell it for the same price and sure enough, a year later, true to his word, he sold the land to the Forest Service at the original price." A bemused Michael asked him why go to all this bother especially as he had lost some money in the transaction due to legal fees. "I asked a girl from Limerick to marry me but her family farm was 70 acres while mine was only 40 acres," he explained. "By purchasing the 90 acres I had a farm which was much larger than the Limerick holding so my future in-laws were very impressed. Now that we are married, we are both happy to farm the original 40 acres which is the best of land and as good as the 70 acres below in Limerick."

Highly regarded as a forester, he was elected President of the Society of Irish Foresters in 1963. He was later promoted to Divisional Inspector of Acquisition and was in charge of the southern half of the country. He played a major role in achieving an annual land acquisition programme of close to 10,000ha.

By now he was living happily in Dublin with Mona and their two sons,

Fergus and Conor. Sadly, Mona died suddenly in 1969, which left a huge void in Michael's life.

As most of his work was now in Munster, he eventually transferred to Cork and set up home outside the city in Little Island. Despite enjoying his work and his hobby, golf, he admits life was empty until he had the good fortune to meet Marie O'Connell, a secondary school teacher in Cork. They met through their involvement with the Samaritans and married in 1972.

Michael retired in 1976 and began a new career as a consultant forester with the support of Marie. It has been a rewarding experience for them both and his career in State forestry helped him enormously in carving out a second career in the private sector. By now Marie had also retired and Michael emphasises the important role that she played in their new venture.

Although he sometimes questioned his decision to opt for a career in forestry, especially in the early years, he believes that he made the right choice. Undoubtedly there were times of hardship, but he recounts his experiences with humour and this article merely skims the surface of an eventful life and a rewarding career as a forester and Acquisition Inspector.

We wish Michael a happy 99th birthday next July and thank him and Marie for their hospitality and for sharing their memories with us.

This article is the first of a series which we propose to publish in the newsletter. In the next edition we will feature the life and times of Denis Hayes a native of Co. Cork who finished his career as District Inspector in Co. Kilkenny.

Society at the Urban Trees Research Conference



Trees, People and the Built Environment: Dr Mark Johnston (Conference Chair), Shireen Chambers (Executive Director, Institute of Chartered Foresters, UK), and Kevin Collins (Forest Service), at the Urban Trees Research Conference, Birmingham, 13-14 April 2011.

The conference, hosted by the ICF, brought together a wide array of UK and international experts focused on realising the environmental, social and economic benefits of trees and woodlands for people living in towns and cities. Kevin Collins was invited by the ICF to attend the conference as a representative of the Society of Irish Foresters.

Kevin has written and edited a number of publications on urban forestry including the critically acclaimed "Amenity Trees and Woodlands" which the Society supported.

Society field days in Westmeath and Tipperary

The Society held two contrasting field days in February and April. The February event was a successful forest fires awareness day held in Windtown forest property and at the Downs GAA Club, outside Mullingar. Coillte staff demonstrated how protective burning should be carried out. This is an important operation as many fires occur when burning vegetation close to forests gets out of control.



John O'Sullivan and PJ Fitzpatrick, Coillte with Ciaran Nugent, Forest Service, at the Society field day on fire protection.

A large crowd attended our recent field day which was held at the Coillte owned Medite (Europe) Ltd medium density fibreboard plant in Clonmel. Medite staff provided a tour of the mill while Coillte personnel provided information on eucalyptus growing and harvesting for wood energy and fibre production.

The Irish Forestry Society

Hugh Crawford reports that while researching a landed estate he came across information on the Irish Forestry Society which was probably founded in 1900 or 1901 by Dr. Robert Thomas Cooper, who hailed from Coopers Hill just outside of Carlow town.

The objectives of the Irish Forestry Society were:

- the advancement in Ireland of scientific and practical forestry in all its branches,
- the dissemination of a knowledge of such branches of science and arts as are connected with forestry; and
- the diffusion of information as to the benefits to be derived by the Nation (collectively and individually) by the science of arboriculture properly understood and applied.

From a brief look at various papers the organisation had a membership of 100 or more and a large number of these were the landlords of the time together with many eminent professionals. They appeared to hold meetings in the Oak Room of the Mansion House, thanks to the Rt. Hon., the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr. Joseph Hutchinson.

There are a number of records relating to the period from the early 1900s up to 1921 but none thereafter. Perhaps some readers could provide information on this very interesting organisation.

TEAK 21 Update

Gerhardt Gallagher reports that further contacts have been initiated with aid NGOs to encourage cooperation in the area of Community Forestry Development (see also the Society's Winter 2010 newsletter).

A pilot project to evaluate synergies between community and private growers in Kilombero, Tanzania is being developed and initial contacts have been quite positive.

A paper outlining the benefits to be gained by private /community forestry collaboration will be delivered by Ray Keogh at the TEAKNET Conference in Costa Rica in October/November 2011. For updates check the Teak 21 website: www.teak21.org/new/index.asp

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