

FRIDAY, 3RD JULY.

Leaving Aberdeen at 8 a.m., the party motored via Keith to

*Orton,*

where excellent examples of Scots pine and larch woods were seen. After lunch the party proceeded up the valley of the Spey to inspect the Seafeld Woods, Strathspey, a detailed reference to which will be found elsewhere in this report.

*Upper Tomvaich Plantation.*

This area is divided into two compartments—(1) containing 267 acres, and (2) 36 acres. (1.) The crop consists of Scots fir of about ninety years of age, with a few larch-trees, standing to the number of about forty to fifty trees to the acre. A number have been marked for sale, but about fifteen trees have been left to the acre as seeding-trees. (2.) This area consists of Scots fir standards, with an outcrop of natural plants. This part was fenced against sheep a number of years ago, only cattle and horses being allowed access. Young plants have come up well, and show what might be expected from the larger area.

*Lower Tomvaich Plantation.*

This wood has an area of 208 acres, divided as follows: (1) 200 acres of Scots fir and larch standards, (2) 8 acres of old Scots fir, with an undercrop of natural Scots fir and larch. The large area is to be thinned out and left to fill up naturally, farm stock being excluded. The 8 acres formed until a few years ago part of the same area. When fenced off against farm stock natural plants came up freely, which shows pretty conclusively what might be expected from the adjoining area. The standards have been left too long, but are to be removed next year. Meantime the area is a pretty picture, and shows well the result of the system adopted.

*Policies of Castle Grant.*

On the right is Drumdunan Wood—250 acres—consisting of a pure crop of Scots fir reared naturally. A number of old standards are left on the drive side to form a wind-screen and shelter to the young crop. These trees show the nature of the previous crop.

Milton and Old Grantown Woods also form part of the policies, and carry a crop of Scots fir about 140 years of age. The trees have long clean boles and a limited branch area. The woods in their young stages are very carefully thinned, and from notes it has been ascertained that for a long number of years only dead trees were taken out, which no doubt accounts for the clean nature of the stems. The highest of the trees, measuring from the top of the leader, is 109 ft., and many have clean boles up to 70 ft. and 80 ft. From old history it appears that the plants for this wood were carried from Abernethy Nursery, a distance of six miles, on panniers strapped on the backs of ponies, and that they were of a larger size than is now generally employed in planting, consequently they were all pitted.

*Lower Lynmacgregor Wood.*

This wood contains a more or less pure Scots pine crop, and was planted sixty-two years ago. No thinnings of any consequence have been taken out beyond dead and completely suppressed trees. In some part a light thinning was necessary.

SATURDAY, 4TH JULY.

*Curr Plantation.*

This plantation extends to 260 acres, and contains a natural crop mainly of Scots pine, with a few larch. The trees are of various sizes and ages, the oldest being about thirty-five years of age; but the difference is small, as the plants come up with surprising regularity. There is very little space entirely bare of trees, and, generally speaking, it can be said that the whole area is fully stocked. Naturally the trees form thickets in spots specially favourable to the germination of seed, but in these parts a few of the strongest have gone ahead and formed themselves into dominant stems, to the suppression of those not able to keep abreast. Thinning in some parts is now absolutely necessary. The soil is of an open tilly nature, admirably suited for the reception of seed and the growing of Scots fir and larch, especially the former. The old timber in this wood, which is only about one mile from the estate sawmill, was used for estate purposes, the trees being taken out as the young plants came up. This is the method from which the best results have been obtained in the way of a natural crop. It is scarcely to be expected that with ordinary and regular thinnings, each taking a few months, in stated years the same satisfactory result would be obtained. A few old trees remain, which show the nature of the old crop.

*Balnagown Wood.*

This wood has an acreage of 73 acres and a crop of Scots fir standards, with an undercrop of natural plants. The number of standards per acre varies according to the condition of the undercrop, whether complete or otherwise. In this wood also the old timber is manufactured at the estate sawmill, and accordingly the management is similar to that followed in the case of the Curr plantation, and somewhat different from the management generally followed. The mother trees are being taken out as the young crop comes up, none being removed until the latter is complete. This method is giving here a closer and more complete crop than generally can be had from stated and complete fellings.