

Visit to Teagasc Laboratories, Johnstown Castle on the 14th January 2012.

In the Teagasc reception area we were welcomed by John Finn, club member and ecologist at Teagasc. He gave a brief history of Teagasc which started working mainly as a research centre for farmers. Now no commercial testing takes place. At the moment they are completing a soil map for Ireland which will go into the GIS system. (GIS= Geographic Information System). The GIS will be used by other institutions like the EPA, Department of Agriculture etc. A secondary project is the water quality research.

We were brought outside to look at a few bioreactors in which experiments were made to study the absorption of polluted water or the growth of grasses. The first had about 10 test sites for polluted water absorption. Each test site was made up of different soil structures and the water was caught at the end of each test to compare it with the water at the start of the test. Another site looked similar but with different grasses. The aim of this test was to find out which grass would be best for grazing cattle. This site is linked up with the Johnstown weather station so the relationship with grass growth and weather could be established. As well as this another test was to find out how each grass reacted to different nutrients.

Inside we were shown a Soil laboratory and a Water laboratory.

In the soil lab the soil sample will be analysed for:

- Lime & nutrients status of the soil;
 - Crop nutrients required for low fertility soil;
 - How much to reduce nutrient input when fertility of the soil is high;
 - Detection of deficiencies
 - Accurately prediction of the nutrient maintenance requirements.
- All tests and studies have to comply with the international nitrate directive policy.

We ended with a coffee or tea in the canteen and there was cake for a 50th birthday celebration.