

2 The Forest Estate¹

Reservation

In Buganda an important agreement was reached in 1951 with the Land Officer whereby areas of land required for protection forestry in uninhabited country could be gazetted as undemarcated forest pending demarcation by the Forest Department. Such demarcation would not be necessary until pressure of population made it desirable to establish firm boundaries.

In West Nile local negotiations to complete the reservation of 1,000 acres (400 ha) in the highlands for the growing of eucalyptus fuel for the tobacco industry were well underway at the end of the year. In Acholi local opposition to the reservation of the Kilak-Ceri area held up the declaration of AFE (adequate forest estate) for the district.

In Lango matters were brought to a head when the District Council refused to make fuel reserves for the tobacco industry which it wished established. It was necessary for the Council to be told that its powers of embargo were limited and a start was made with a programme of fuel reserves for industry and townships with the approval of the majority of the Lango people, as indicated to their chiefs and the District Administration.

In Busoga the District Council, after rejection of a more detailed programme, approved in principle an outline scheme of forest reservations for the district leaving the details of each individual reserve to be settled with the lower councils. This far-sighted resolution seemed to have cleared the way for progress at a more practical level and survey and mapping were able to proceed for a time. A few years later, however, the attitude of the Council changed and it appeared that settlement of the outstanding reservation problems would be delayed indefinitely. However, towards the end of the year (1954), the senior officials of the Council gave a written assurance of agreement with the reservation proposals which would be completed as soon as circumstances permitted. The assurance was accepted and AFE (adequate forest estate) was gazetted in December 1955.

In 1952, agreement was at last reached on the reservation programme for Acholi and it was expected that 1953 would see its completion. This was not achieved until 1954 when an adequate (minimum) forest estate was declared. Similar declarations were made in respect of Teso and Ankole.

1 See 'Statistical Tables', Tables 1, 1A and 1B. See Appendix D for previous history of reservation.

During 1952, the Payera CFR in western Acholi district was degazetted primarily to permit settlement as a barrier against the advance of the tsetse fly from the north. The area had little woody growth of any value.

In Lango severe local opposition to any form of reservation continued but under pressure from the Administration, the first LFRs in the District were gazetted in order to provide fuel for the tobacco industry. In spite of this concession it remained doubtful, however, whether there was any possibility of securing a reasonable forest estate in Lango. The doubt was later proved to be justified – by the end of the period covered by this history (1965), Lango was still without an adequate forest estate.

In Teso and Karamoja the large West Amuria CFR of 212 sq m (550 km²) was degazetted, only some 22 sq m (57 km²) being retained in the form of three LFRs. This area was the backbone of the pre-war Teso Climatic Belt Scheme intended to form a barrier to the spread of drier conditions into Teso from Karamoja. Experience showed, however, that most of the scrub savanna in the Belt was incapable of improvement, much of it being ill-drained alluvium characterised by *Acacia drepanolobium*. As an obituary on the Belt, its conception was felt to have been erroneous and that it was considered that degeneration of the Karamoja plains would very doubtfully have had any effect on the districts to the west.

Steady progress was made throughout 1954 with the consolidation of the forest estate and this continued in 1955. It was considered that new reservations were unlikely to be of any considerable extent except possibly in Karasuk. In 1954, A.F.E. was declared for Ankole, Acholi and Kigezi.

In Bukedi the District Council gave its final approval to the reservation of two small additional areas and after their demarcation, survey and gazetting, the District was declared to have AFE in 1955. A similar declaration was made in respect of Busoga District.

In Bugisu political agitators aroused local opposition to the reservation of the Namarale Forest which had already been approved by the District Council. Firm administrative action was taken and demarcation was resumed without further incident.

Detailed consideration was given in 1955 to the status of the major CFRs in Ankole. With the passing of the new District Council's Ordinance, it became possible for those areas not required for forest reserves to be developed under planned land-use conditions and early in 1956 proposals to this end were under consideration. In the North Ankole reserve some 50–60 sq m (130–155 km²) were excised for planned settlement and a more realistic boundary agreed.

In Toro, 500 acres (200 ha) of grassland were excised from the Kibale Forest and further excisions of agricultural land were proposed.

In Bunyoro, the Native Government District Council agreed in 1955 to revision of the boundaries of the Budongo and Siba reserves which, in the case of the former, meant a loss of 5% of the area. The parts to be excised were the long thin arms of riparian forest jutting out from the main forest blocks which were proving to be increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain. The District Council did not agree, however, to the boundaries proposed in 1957 for the hitherto undemarcated Bugoma CFR and after protracted negotiations, the Protectorate Government ruled that these boundaries be adopted and demarcation began at

the end of 1958. As a result of this settlement, ten CFRs amounting to 212 sq m (550 km²) were transferred to the control of the Bunyoro Native Government and regazetted accordingly.

In West Nile, the Provincial Commissioner over-ruled the objections of the local council to the reservation of Mt Wati with the result that AFE was in sight. This was achieved in 1959/60 when the council agreed to the reservation of certain bamboo areas and an area of grassland for softwood planting. This declaration meant that only two districts, Lango and Karamoja, both in the Northern Province, were without AFE: the first because four local councils were adamant in refusing to reserve one square mile of woodland in each of their areas in spite of being addressed by their Secretary-General and three members of the Natural Resources Committee; the second because, although it had the largest forest estate of any district, the district administration did not have the trained staff to manage the estate.

After considerable negotiation, agreement was reached in 1956 with the Kabaka's Government on the question of AFE for the Province and formal declaration was made in July. The main points of the agreement were:

- (a) the Kabaka's Government would assume responsibility for all CFRs in Mubende District, the Singo Hills and 25 sq m (65 km²) in South Mengo;
- (b) some exchange of reserves in West Mengo to simplify the management of the local forest estate.

Because most districts already had AFE, there was little new reservation except in Karamoja and the main work in all other districts consisted of the consolidation of reserves by re-opening and re-beaconing boundaries, adjusting them where necessary to give a shorter or more easily maintained boundary or a more rational use of land. Good progress was made with the field work of this consolidation but no regazetting was done pending determination of the best form of regazetting. This was eventually settled – regazetting would be carried out henceforward as data became available for each district.

One major alteration was in respect of the S Busoga CFR, an area depopulated after the sleeping sickness epidemic of 1901–09. The revised boundaries were finally selected in 1957 and reduced the area from 242 sq m to 62 sq m (from 630 km² to 160 km²). The reasons for this big reduction were to eliminate from the reserve low productivity scrub which was of little use for forestry and to make land available for resettlement.

The main work in most districts continued to be consolidation. The ultimate aim when the field work of consolidation was done, was to regazette the whole forest estate so as to give legal sanction to the many changes that had been agreed from time to time and to define more precisely the boundaries of the reserves which made up the estate.

By 1959/60 the regazetting process was taking much longer than had been expected, largely because of the amount of resurvey that was necessary. The regazetting notices for several districts were nearing completion and it was hoped that they would be published in the coming year. This was not achieved but regazetting of all CFRs was finally carried out in 1962/63.

Regazetting of LFRs, however, did not go as well as expected due to numerous discrepancies and omissions in the field work which required considerable checking and resurveying and

to the large number of reserves involved (348). In an attempt to reduce such errors to a minimum, a survey team consisting of two Rangers and one Forest Guard was set up under the control of the Map Officer. At the end of 1962/63 it was decided to form a second team to accelerate completion of the remaining regazetting work. It was confidently expected that this time-consuming but essential operation which had been going on for six years would be completed within the coming year but the expectations were not realised before legal control of LFRs was transferred to the Forest Department in 1964.

Numerous requests for excisions from the estate were received in 1962/63 but all were refused by the Minister.

Proposals were submitted the same year by the Chief Forest Officer, Kabaka's Government to the Buganda Land Board for substantial additional reservation (260 km²). The Board approved the application the following year.

Private (Mailo) Land in Buganda

The receipt of some new 1:50,000 maps from the Directorate of Colonial Surveys in 1957 enabled a start to be made with a re-assessment of mailo (private) forest in connection with a dedication scheme (see below). A total of 126 sq m (326 km²) of private forest for the three sheets alone indicated that the previous estimate of 100 sq m (260 km²) for the total mailo forest in Buganda was very wide of the mark and helped to explain the prolonged existence of mailo sawmills.

Assessment continued in 1959/60 when approximately half the province was completed. The area of closed forest in that portion was estimated to be about 470 sq m (1,220 km²). A rough estimate of the remainder indicated a further 160 sq m (410 km²) making about 600 sq m (1,550 km²) in all. Of this it was reckoned that 100 sq m (260 km²) were first-quality forest – the remainder being poor or partially exploited forest.

Buganda Dedication Scheme

A forest dedication scheme, modelled on the UK one, had been started by Sangster in 1949 for the management of privately owned African land in Buganda (Sangster, 1951, see Appendix A). By 1951 it had attracted only three acceptances: one high forest area of 900 acres (364 ha) for 49 years belonging to the Kabaka, and two small areas on a short-term basis for the establishment of eucalyptus plantations. The dedication of the former was complicated by special problems of land tenure, but the other two went ahead and completed their ten-year terms, when control then reverted to their respective owners.

Boundary opening, climber cutting and enumeration were carried out in the high forest area for a few years but work gradually ceased, possibly due to further problems of land tenure or the political vicissitudes of the Kabaka. In spite of this, the Buganda Government made several attempts to revive dedication, but the only offers were for small areas which were considered to be unsuitable. So ended a very promising scheme for the management of private forests.

Boundary Demarcation and Maintenance

All new reserves were demarcated and surveyed in 1951. Increasing use was made of aerial photographs in most districts which accelerated the progress of reserve selection. It was disappointing that the mountainous areas of the south-west remained unphotographed, largely due to cloud conditions. The fragmented nature of the forest estate in Buganda was emphasised by the fact that an area of 270 sq m (700 km²) of reserve in South Mengo had an external boundary of 890 miles (1,432 km) whereas a compact block of this size would have a periphery of only 65 miles (105 km).

Routine maintenance of reserve boundaries continued but it remained a permanent source of anxiety. After consultation with Provincial Forest Officers (PFOs) and District Forest Officers (DFOs), a consolidated statement of boundary demarcation methods was issued in 1953 as a Standing Order. It had become increasingly obvious that this tedious and unrewarding work required more attention and substantial progress was made in the more permanent marking of boundaries. In the highly fragmented forest reserves in Buganda, the steadily mounting record of encroachment and theft demanded radical reorganisation of maintenance methods. The PFO reported: 'During 1953 it was decided that these forests required a regular patrol organisation and that this could only be secured by opening a footpath along all boundaries. It is intended that maintenance shall be carried out by patrolmen posted at regular intervals.' Work on these lines was started in the middle of the year.

Boundary demarcation and maintenance continued for the next few years to be a major concern for all DFOs. It was expensive but in areas where encroachment and theft were rife, it was the only way by which the forest estate could be made secure. For example, the forest reserves of Buganda with an external boundary of over 1,200 miles (1,930 km) cost an annual expenditure of some £6,000 which would probably continue at this level unless some cheaper method of maintenance could be found. By 1958 the total of direct expenditure on maintenance reached £14,000 per annum, a figure which was regarded as being as low as was consistent with adequate protection.

The use of aeroplanes for inspection of boundaries increased due to the ease and speed with which this essential operation could be carried out. For example, the boundaries of all reserves in Ankole and Kigezi Districts were inspected in only five hours. In a flight over the Kitomi reserve in Ankole, the DFO 'unsportingly' detected an illegal village of 30 Bakonjo who had apparently been there for several years.

As a protective measure against encroachment, a directive was issued in 1962/63 that the highest priority should be given at all times to efficient demarcation and maintenance of boundaries. In that year maintenance was badly hampered by heavy rain. A total of about 2,300 miles (3,700 km) of boundary was maintained for a direct expenditure of £14,800 which was 12% of the total expenditure on Forest Field Works. This disproportionate expenditure on such protection work could have been reduced substantially with more co-operation from the chiefs against encroachers and with better understanding by the people of the value of their forest reserves.

In 1963/64 boundary maintenance on Ruwenzori was interrupted from time to time by the political troubles which afflicted Toro Kingdom but most of the boundaries were maintained.

Encroachment

In 1951 the undemarcated reserves in Mubende continued to offer irresistible temptations to tobacco growers and 68 evictions of squatters without permanent crops were ordered through the Resident's Office. Attempts at encroachment were also numerous around the Mabira forest where the disappearance of the 'mbwa' fly (*Simulium damnosum*) following treatment of the Nile at Jinja made living conditions much more attractive. The programme of planting up encroachments in Mengo with timber trees was held in abeyance in 1951. In a number of cases the planted trees were uprooted or destroyed and several occupiers possessing permits to cultivate encroachments in CFRs attempted to obtain legal restraint on tree planting.

In 1953, it was found on opening the boundaries of a number of ALG reserves in Busoga that gross encroachments were rife. A serious aspect of the problem was that it had been aggravated by the connivance of the local chiefs. Despite strenuous efforts by the Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry of the Busoga ALG, it was not possible to make much progress with eviction.

The DFO West Nile recorded 'some comings and goings in the Kei reserve by people from the Sudan during the recent (1955) disturbances'.

In the Western Province a group of encroachers were evicted from the Bugoma and Nyabyeya CFRs. Encroachers were finally evicted from the Budongo reserve. In the South Ankole reserve over 100 people were evicted through the much appreciated support of the Administration.

In 1957 encroachment was a serious problem in several areas, especially Buganda. The worst areas were East and West Mengo where the number of encroachments at the end of the year was 245. Prosecution of offenders was accelerated and this, coupled with success in all the cases prosecuted (19), resulted in a considerable improvement in the situation. There was, however, still room for improvement and as an aid towards this and to relieve the burden on the police, who normally prosecuted forest offences, the nomination of a Forest Officer to act as a Prosecutor for forest offences in Mengo was under consideration at the end of the year. The authorisation the following year was a great help but owing to a loophole in the law, prosecutions had to be suspended for 18 months which resulted in a crop of new encroachments.

Following the closing of the loopholes, vigorous action was taken and 73 convictions were obtained in the South Mengo District Court. By the end of the year (1961), the number of encroachers in Mengo had been reduced from well over 300 to 220 and the large concentrations in the Mabira and Mpigi ranges had been largely cleared, over 600 acres (243 ha) being recovered for forestry. It was encouraging to record the co-operation of the Kabaka's Government staff in this work.

Successful action over the next 2–3 years resulted in a remarkable transformation. All unlicensed encroachers were evicted from East Mengo reserves and all but 12 from West

Mengo and against those few, legal proceedings had either been taken or were pending. Great credit was due to the staff concerned for carrying out so successfully without incident a most difficult, unpleasant and, at times, dangerous operation. The cleared areas were planted up with musizi (*Maesopsi eminii*) as fast as possible, about 500 acres being planted.

In the Eastern Province the most serious case was in the Mt Elgon CFR where, after a change of Forest Guard, some 47 people were found living and cultivating illegally in the forest. Thanks to the aid of the Administration, all were evicted.

In Karamoja, because of the unsettled state of the district, people were moving into forest reserves, especially Mt Moroto, in considerable numbers to escape from raiders. In the state of the district at the time (1962/63), it was virtually impossible to evict them and efforts were concentrated on containing them in the lower valleys. Tribal raiding decreased the following year and a start was made with eviction of encroachers from forest reserves. With the help of the Administration nearly 400 people were removed from Kadam CFR.

During 1963/64 there were incursions from Rwanda into the Echuya and Mgahinga CFRs in Kigezi and cutting of bamboo reached alarming proportions. Discussions were held on the demarcation of the international boundary but agreement had not been reached by the end of the year. Clearing and theft of bamboo was, however, contained by vigorous patrolling and after a new forest reserve boundary had been demarcated well inside the Uganda side of the border.

Theft

In the early 1950s large-scale illegal felling was rife in East Mengo but on a minor scale in the rest of the country. The old system of merely claiming fees on the traceable timber was replaced with heavy compounding charges. Although the offenders wriggled hard, all the amounts levied, plus the fees, were eventually collected. A detailed survey by the Forest Ecologist in Mpanga Research Forest in West Mengo revealed an average of one sawpit per 1½ acres (0.6 ha), an indication of the intensity of illegal felling in the past.

In plantation areas theft of produce remained at an astonishingly low level due partly to the sale of lop and top in exploited plantations at nominal prices. Although in 1957, petty pilfering of poles and fuel was reported from most plantation areas, it was considered that, on the whole, theft of forest produce was not a serious problem in Uganda. But only a few years later, theft increased to a serious level in the Kampala plantations. Most of the thieving took place at night and was occasionally accompanied by violence. The most serious depredations were in the Kalume and Mpanga plantations from which an average of about 500 poles a month were being stolen. These thefts were nearly all carried out by gangs with whom the somewhat scarce and elderly forest staff were unable to cope. In 1962/63 some relief was effected through a meeting between the local chiefs, the Administrative Officer, the Regional Forest Officer and the nearby villagers.

During 1956, while illegal timber felling was on a reduced scale in Mengo, due probably to more intensive patrolling, there was no reduction in thefts from the lake shore forests in Masaka. It was also reported that much mvule was being stolen from the Busoga islands of

Lake Victoria which found its way to Kenya. Little could be done about these pirates whom even police found very difficult to control. Theft of timber trees continued in West Mengo and Masaka but energetic measures by the staff kept the loss at a reasonable level.

In Kigezi there was a marked increase in theft and illegal grazing in the bamboo reserves. Some 92 cases were dealt with, of which 38 resulted in convictions. In the Echuya reserve on the Uganda-Rwanda border, great difficulty was experienced through large bands of armed Banyarwanda stealing bamboos and attacking any forestry staff attempting to interfere.