

# 9 Training and Publicity

## Forest School

(Plate 19)

From 1932 to 1941 a forest school for training rangers had been sited at Kityerera in south Busoga, but then had to be closed due to invasion of the area by tsetse flies carrying the sleeping sickness epidemic. Training lapsed during the war and was not resumed until 1948.

By great good fortune an ideal site for the new forest school became available. During the 1939–45 war large numbers of Polish refugees, originally deported to Soviet Russia then later permitted to leave, had arrived in Uganda. They were accommodated in two camps one on Kojja on the shore of Lake Victoria near Mukono, the other at Nyabyeya in Masindi district, on the edge of the Budongo forest. In 1943 the latter held 3,200 refugees, mostly women and children, but by 1948 all had left and the camps had been closed, so the Department was given the use of the camp at Nyabyeya and opened it for courses immediately (Kiyaga-Mulindwa, 2000).<sup>1</sup>

By 1951 the school was fully in operation with ranger students in residence and the Budongo forest being used as a convenient area for practical instruction. A major programme had been started to replace the original buildings (all of timber cut in the Budongo forest and some now showing the ravages of termite attack) with new masonry ones, though the large Polish masonry church and its graveyard still survive (Osmaston 2001).<sup>2</sup>

In August 1953 the Principal, H.R. Webb MBE, retired after 24 years of exceptional service in Uganda. The School was almost entirely of his making, physically, instructionally and morally, and the tone of the School was as substantial a record of his work as the buildings and curriculum. It was fitting that on the eve of his departure, H.E. the Governor and Lady Cohen, should visit the School and lay the foundation of Webb Hall, the new instructional block named in honour of Ray and Helen Webb.

1953 was a memorable and arduous year for the school. Major building developments were begun during a period of staff changes and under considerable difficulties. Much of the

---

1 Kiyaga-Mulindwa, 2000. 'Uganda: a safe refuge for Polish refugees', *Uganda Journal* 46, 67–72.

2 H.A. Osmaston, 2001. 'Snakes and Poles', *Uganda Journal* 47, 80–82.



PLATE 19

The Forest School, Nyabyeya, near the Budongo Forest in 1958/61. Founded in 1948 on the site of a former wartime Polish refugee camp, during 1950–65 this was developed into an effective training establishment for the large numbers of rangers and foresters required by the expanding department (it survived the terrible events of the 1980s and has expanded further, being now (2001) 'Nyabyeya Forest College' under the control of the Education Department but staffed by foresters).

(J. W. M. Stephens, Principal, The Forests and the Forest Administration of Uganda, 1961)

time of the staff was devoted to the building programme necessitated by the expansion of the training programme. A sum of £76,000 was provided for this work out of the African Development Fund. From the very beginning, difficulties were experienced in obtaining building contractors and in arranging for delivery of materials. Eventually, building was undertaken under the supervision of the school staff, employing such local artisans as could be found. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties, good progress was made by the end of the year. Progress continued throughout the next two years and by 1956, the programme was nearing completion.

Sporting activities were not neglected. The school football team won the Omukama's Cup in 1951 and had another successful year in 1952. In 1952, Learner Wagabono had the distinction of winning the bantam weight Amateur Boxing Championship of Kenya and Uganda.

## Ranger Training

Two successful years were recorded in 1951 and 1952 but it was disappointing that none of the trainees achieved a first class certificate in the final examinations. Instruction generally followed the lines of former years but more time was spent in Budongo forest to improve training in topographical and stock surveying and enumeration. An important feature of training was the actual carrying out of field works under the Budongo Working Plan. Owing to heavy recruiting in other more popular departments, it was not possible in 1953 to fill all vacancies in the junior year and only four FD candidates joined the School along with three ALG learners. In the final examinations, all students passed but again the standard reached did not permit the award of any first class certificates. Eleven students completed the course in 1954, four FD and seven ALG, but there were still no first class certificates.

In 1955, recruitment for the first year Ranger course was exceedingly disappointing. Out of a target of 25 recruits, only five FD and ten ALG were enrolled. There were better results in the following year when 25 recruits were enrolled. The general level of marks in the finals was extremely high and the three top men were unlucky to miss a first class certificate. This distinction was, at last, achieved in 1957 when three students gained the coveted first class. Any satisfaction, however, from this result was mitigated by the failures in the junior class to complete the course. Of the 16 candidates recruited, only five survived at the end of the year. The others appeared to have little taste for field work.

A review during 1957 indicated that the existing training programme should just suffice as far as Assistant Foresters were concerned but that it would not meet demands for Rangers. Some expansion would be needed at the school. Prospects improved in 1958 when the new course started with 25 trainees. For the first time, there were sufficient applicants with the Cambridge School Certificate to allow selection to be restricted to this category. The rise in the educational standards of trainees continued in 1959/60 and was marked by the award of seven first class certificates in the finals. One trainee who joined the course in 1959 was the son of a serving Ranger – a very welcome first occasion.

From the beginning of 1960, the time devoted to survey and administration was increased and botany decreased because of the weakness of so many serving Rangers in these subjects. There was a good deal of wastage from the 1960 class which dwindled during the year from 17 to 10. Two left to take up Indian Government and American scholarships, one on account of ill-health, one was dismissed and the others resigned. The resignations were attributed to a dislike of the rigours of forestry and because there were plenty of opportunities of softer jobs. During the year, it was decided to shorten the course from three years to two years, the main reasons being the higher educational standard of entrant now being obtained and the need to accelerate the output of Rangers. The results in the final examinations in December were disappointing after the excellent results in earlier years – nine 2nd class, five ordinary pass and five failed. Once again the weak subjects were surveying and administration, despite the extra attention being given to these subjects.

Because the number of Rangers in training would meet the needs of the Department at its present level of work and as no funds were in sight for the expansion proposed in the Development Plan, no trainees were recruited in 1961/62. A limited number were recruited in 1962/63 and 1963/64 but defections during the course meant that only six and four respectively survived.

## **Assistant Forester and Forester Training**

An important decision was reached in 1952 on the question of sub-professional training. During the late 1940s, the decision had been taken not to recruit any more expatriate Foresters so that the cadre should be fully open to Africans. It was the intention of Government that Africans be trained for these posts. The full details of the course had not yet been fully worked out but a provisional syllabus was drawn up by the Principal of the Forest School and the first two trainees would start their studies early in 1953. On successful

completion of their training, the men would be posted to the Professional Division of the Local Civil Service as Assistant Foresters and would be eligible for promotion to the rank of Forester. These two trainees completed a year's advanced course at the School in 1953 and went on a short training course with the Forestry Commission in the UK. They then received their well-earned promotion to Assistant Forester.

Three Rangers and Senior Rangers joined the course in 1955. The Principal recorded that 'their willing and cheerful work on all practical jobs set a splendid example to the younger students and, on the School tour in particular, they showed high qualities of leadership'. Early in 1956 they went to England for six months with the Forestry Commission. The syllabus followed that of the Ranger course but at a considerably more advanced level and all class work was on a round table discussion basis. It was a promotion course for Rangers of at least three years field service who had already proved their work in the field.

A further class of seven men was selected for training in 1957/58 but was subsequently reduced to six when one was awarded a Government scholarship for full professional training. In 1958, passing of the Departmental examination for promotion to Senior Ranger was made a qualification for selection for AF training.

In 1959, applications were received from Nyasaland (Malawi) and Tanganyika (Tanzania) for places on the AF course. Four men from the former country joined the course in September 1961, but Tanganyika withdrew their application. The presence of the Nyasaland men on their course was stated to have a most stimulating effect on the other trainees. All eight, including the four Malawians completed their course successfully in 1963/64.

When the Department lost more than half of the expatriate professional staff after independence in 1962, the Foresters played an important part in maintaining the progress of the Department and justified fully their promotion.

## **Professional Training**

In the absence of professional training facilities in East Africa, candidates had to go outside Uganda. The first candidates were four ex-students of the Forest School who had undertaken or been selected for full professional training in the UK. One (Martin Rukuba) was awarded a Toro Government scholarship and after taking his GCE (Advanced) was accepted by Aberdeen University. He completed his training and joined the Department in November 1959, the first Ugandan professional officer to do so. In July 1965, he was promoted CCF.

As Uganda approached independence in 1962, more scholarships from various donor countries became available and six men were awarded scholarships. Also as the first Natural Science (General) degree candidates at Makerere University approached the end of their course, recruitment of potential ACFs from this source was investigated. None of the final year was likely to apply to join the Department but some of the first and second year men appeared interested. In fact, one graduate was recruited later on completion of his degree and went to Oxford on a special forestry course. A second Makerere graduate was recruited in 1962/63 and after entomological training was appointed Entomologist.

In 1963/64 the position was:

on undergraduate training or selected for it	12
on postgraduate training (entomology)	1
	Total 13

In addition to the above, there were five Ugandan professional officers who had completed their training as well as two professional officers on secondment from the UK Forestry Commission who gave valuable service for a number of years.

During 1965, the feasibility of providing professional training at Makerere was raised by the Norwegian Government which also indicated its willingness to co-operate in such a venture. Investigations were begun which seemed to be promising but for various reasons a decision was not possible for several years.

## Publicity

In the end, the security and development of the forest estate must depend on the existence of a well-informed official and public opinion in favour of forestry. With increasing levels of political interest and concern among the public, increasing powers for local governments, and increasing numbers of officials, some ignorant of forestry, on the administrative teams, it became important to show more widely and more clearly that forestry is an essential and useful activity at all levels from national to domestic. As self-government approached the creation of such an opinion was increasingly urgent, to replace the unflattering image of the Department among many of the public as being primarily concerned with the sequestering of land and forbidding the cutting of trees.

Largely because of the calls of other and, at the time, more fundamental work such as the creation of the forest estate and the introduction of scientific management, publicity and propaganda lagged far behind the other activities of the Department. During 1959/60, i.e. only 2-3 years before the arrival of independence, a start was made towards remedying this by increasing forest publicity and propaganda. The work was made the responsibility of the OC Map Section but, unfortunately, owing to shortage of staff, he was able to make only a very modest start. The work was mainly exploratory into ways and means and the relative utility of various media. A travelling exhibit was prepared, lectures and talks given as opportunity occurred, and news items and features submitted to the Press.

Not much work was possible in 1960/61 but the travelling exhibit was displayed for the first time at the Bugisu District Show (attendance about 30,000) at which it won first prize and the prize for the best Government stand. Results the following year were mixed. Travelling exhibits were displayed most successfully at a District Show and two other centres. Towards the end of the year, preparations were in hand for the Nile Centenary Festival and the British Commonwealth Forestry Conference. In connection with the latter, open days were held at the Utilisation Section Workshops, Nakawa.

But attempts to increase the flow of publicity material from district staff and to make them more news-conscious met with a poor response and it appeared that something very

startling was needed to make Uganda foresters publicise their work. Some new thinking and perhaps a new approach was needed on this problem to break the traditional taciturnity. In 1962/63, there was at long last an encouraging response from field staff to appeals for material and effort in the field improved. There was no longer any doubt that there was a growing body of foresters who were conscious of the necessity to publicise the policy and work of the Department. This applied to Local Government staff as well as to Departmental staff.

A Departmental float was entered for the Independence Pageant in 1962 and gained second prize. Exhibits were staged at the Nile Centenary Festival and at the Science and Industry Pavilion which drew very large crowds. A Departmental instruction was issued which laid down that Open Days must be held annually at all major forestry centres. Preparation for such events was very time-consuming but was considered to be well worth the effort.

The number of Press releases and radio talks increased considerably as did the production of leaflets and booklets. The *FD Gazette* was replaced by the more attractive *The Woodsman* which went to all English-speaking staff in Uganda and abroad and also to the forestry staff of local governments and to the other East African Forest Departments.

The posting of an AF to the Section in 1963 gave the work added impetus especially in the field of radio talks and news releases. Although the Section's activities covered a wide range considering the limited staff and the money available, too much was left to it by the field officers and they would have to participate much more if the maximum possible effort was to be achieved. But in spite of all the increased efforts by the Publicity Section and other Departmental officers, there was still in 1963/64 regrettably little sign that the people of Uganda were beginning to realise the importance of forestry and the long-term value of the forest estate. Consequently there were numerous requests for excisions from the estate, some of them from people in responsible positions who should have been guiding public opinion towards forestry and not against it.