

Schools for Foresters

What the forester plants his son will harvest; the crop from his acres takes fifty years to mature. His planning must be far-sighted and its profit to the nation is consequent on the skill of his judgment.

Two of five Forester Training Schools founded by the Forestry Commission are in Scotland where half of Britain's afforestation programme is being carried out. One is at Benmore, Argyll, the other at Faskally House in Strath Tummel.

Not a huntsman's "halloo!" but warning of forestry's most savage enemy—fire. The alarm is raised with the small fire horn, sounded here by Forester Scott, an instructor. From the gates of Benmore (below) he takes a class to practical work in the forest.



Story by **MARTIN REID FOSTER**

SINCE the end of the last war, Scottish forestry has undergone a remarkable revival. During the urgent years of hostilities home grown timber was swept off the hillsides into war production and a small corps of men was faced with the task of replenishing woodlands which suffered almost complete depredation.

After a century of industrialisation and two exhausting world wars Britain was left with the least proportion of forest land to its total area of nearly any European country. It was, in 1945, a familiar tale—too much had been stripped from the land and through either lack of opportunity or initiative little was returned.



Stripping a young larch which has been thinned-out to make room for growing trees—a job to be done quickly and neatly.



Felling is a matter of precise judgment. There are foresters who can lay a 70-foot high tree exactly where they wish.



Tree heights are measured with a hypsometer, used here by students. Timber bridges, like that on which they stand, gates and buildings, are a feature of Scottish forests where material is ready to hand.



Examining Sitka spruce plants in the forest nursery at Benmore. All saplings here are grown from seed, to be transplanted to the forest proper when one foot high.

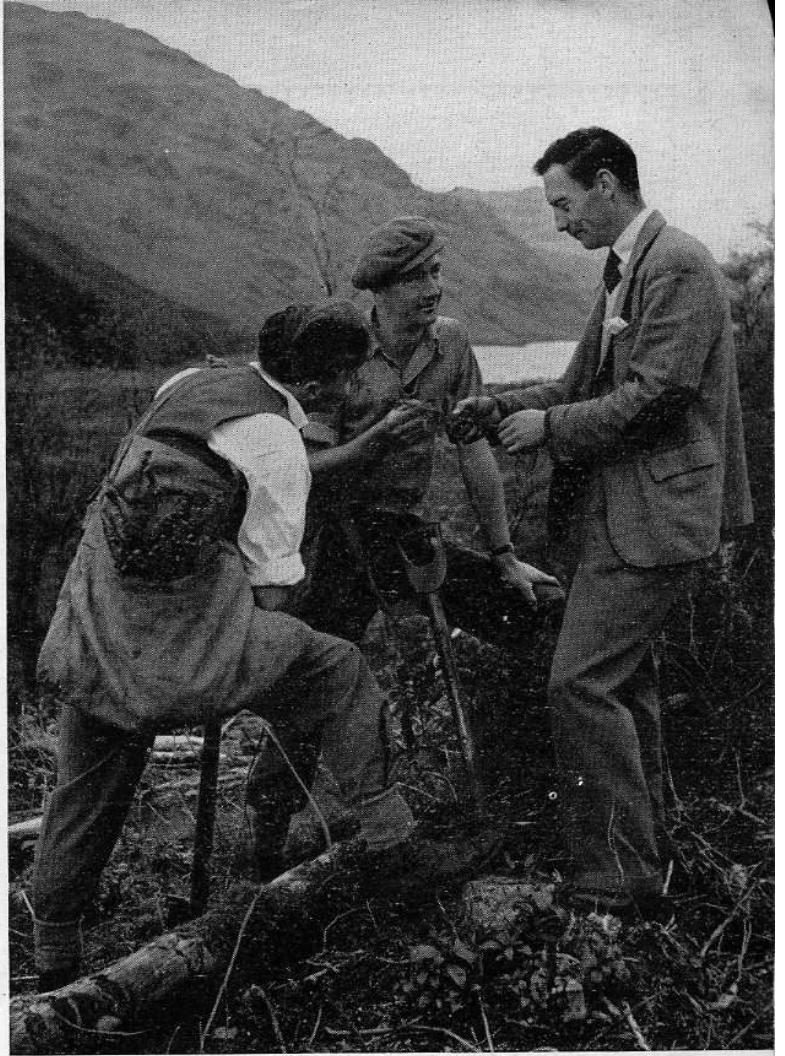
only their sons can reap

The vigorous re-afforestation policy assumed by the Forestry Commission since then has made great progress, particularly in Scotland, where remote areas of hill country unsuited to economical agriculture were untouched and depopulated. Already almost six hundred square miles of bare glen slopes and hillsides have been transformed into valuable plantations of evergreen conifers.

With this progress, which has involved the co-operation of private woodland owners, the need for manpower in forestry work has rapidly increased. Expansion of established forests and planting of new areas have created an attractive career open to men of robust health and sound education. Each of the Scottish schools can accommodate fifty resident students and is located in country ideally suited for training them.

The Argyll forest of Benmore is a splendid range of green-mantled hills about slender Loch Eck, a few miles from Dunoon. Acquired by the Forestry Commission in 1930, it was formerly one of the finest private forests famed—as it is to-day—for the quality and variety of trees and shrubs.

Faskally House lies below the Pass of Killiecrankie at the confluence of the Tummel and Garry rivers. It was taken over by the Commission last year from the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board who used it as a staff college. Near the school are remnants of the ancient natural pine forest of Rannoch, surviving fragments in the stark mountains that stand westwards to the wasteland of Rannoch Moor. In easy reach are the forests of Allean, Black Craig and Drummond Hill.]



Students are taught to plant young trees. Once bedded on the hillside, the trees, if allowed to mature, will top 100 feet in 50 years.



Surveying is specialised work, but the young forester must master the subject—it is a vital aid to afforestation.

The recreation room at Benmore—here the students appreciate the fraternity of the forest and the relaxation which comes easily after a hard day's work out of doors



Seed beds at the forest nurseries are treated before germination begins. Flamethrowers are used to kill off weeds which would choke young growth.

It takes at least three years to train a forester. Before a man can enter one of the schools he must have at least one year's practical experience in a state or private forest. In this period, the forestry recruit is thoroughly introduced and acclimatised to conditions in the four seasons of a year. The schools then give a student a two-year course in basic theory and practice which will fit him for supervisory work with the Commission, on a private estate, or with a Colonial forest service. Entry is normally available to men between 19 and 30 years of age and students are given free board and cash allowances. The two years are busy years. In them the student must grasp the essentials of botany, forest botany, silviculture, geology and forest protection.

All the practical operations and their problems are presented to the student. He must learn to handle and maintain equipment, learn to recognise poor workmanship, to instruct and encourage forest workers, and to assess the effect weather conditions may have upon operations in a forest.

Applicants for training are interviewed by a Selection Board and to be successful they must either pass a written examination in Arithmetic, English and General Knowledge, or possess a General Certificate of Education. As forestry workers are not exempt from National Service, the majority of students do not begin their courses until they are 20 or 21 years of age.

On passing an examination at the end of the course, students are awarded Forester's Certificates. The Forestry Commission, however, does not guarantee employment, nor are the new foresters obliged to work with the Commission. Those who do take Commission appointments start as gangers and merit earns them promotion to foreman and forester grades.