

Paper 19
NEWTON RIGG:

A CENTRE OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
IN FORESTRY

by A. G. Pyman

Summary

The origin of what is now the Cumberland and Westmorland College of Agriculture and Forestry at Newton Rigg, near Penrith, Cumberland, as a centre of forest training in 1896, is described. The effects of the Lampard-Vachell Committee (1961) on forestry education is dealt with and the beginning of formal forestry courses in 1963. Ninety courses have been held at Newton Rigg since then and details are given of the Ordinary National Diploma in Forestry. The requirements of the forester of the future are considered and the paper ends with a speculative glance into the future organisation of forestry education in Great Britain.

1. Forestry education, which is today promoted by the Cumberland and Westmorland College of Agriculture and Forestry, at Newton Rigg, near Penrith has a deep foundation in Cumberland. The first *Quarterly Journal of Forestry* published by the Royal English Arboricultural Society in 1907 noted the members of its publication committee. Amongst famous names in British forestry it stated that forestry education was in the hands of Mr J. Smith-Hill, Principal of the Agricultural College at Aspatria in Cumberland. This gentleman noted in the first edition "... and after all is said and done, there is as yet little inducement for an able-bodied youth of average intelligence to learn more than the routine which was followed on an average estate and which is much the same, apart from minor details, as was followed a hundred years back."

2. When the Technical Instruction Act of 1889 was passed, giving opportunity for systematic agricultural education, there were only four centres providing courses for instruction in agriculture: Cirencester, Downton, Aspatria and Hollesley Bay. Aspatria, established in 1874, drawing students from all over the world, prepared them for the Forestry Certificate and Diploma Examinations of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, as well as many other Agricultural Certificates and Diplomas.

3. In 1890, a special fund known as "whisky money" was made available to Local Education Authorities for technical education and of this fund, 10% was apportioned to agricultural education. A quote from the Technical Education

Committee's Minutes during this period reads "The fund for the disposal of the County Councils for promotion of technical education is not derived from rates but consists entirely of a grant paid from the Imperial Exchequer out of the proceeds of the Customs and Excise Duties." At this time both Cumberland and Westmorland each had a full-time lecturer in agriculture, and, no doubt inspired by the success of Aspatria, they opened the Newton Rigg Farm School in 1896.

4. The College at Aspatria closed in 1914, never to re-open, whilst Newton Rigg has prospered from the eight students who formed the first course 75 years ago, to well over a hundred students who are currently in residence. In 1896 only the principal was bearded!

5. So much for the history of the College; let us go forward some 60 years to 1961. Compared with the agricultural industry, forestry had for a long time lacked an educational provision, and in this year the situation was reviewed by the Advisory Sub-committee on Further Education for Agriculture of the National Advisory Council on Education for Industry and Commerce. Little wonder that with a title like that it is usually referred to as the Lampard-Vachell Committee. This committee recommended that the Ministry of Education should select one centre, initially, preferably a farm institute working in conjunction with a technical college to develop courses for forestry workers and foresters and this training should be provided for employees of the Forestry Commission and Private Woodland Owners.

6. They suggested that schemes and courses should be developed as a result of collaboration between the Forestry Commission, other employers and local education authorities. In view of the scattered nature of employment, block release was recommended. Block-release means short full-time courses which the students attend for periods of a few weeks, away from their place of employment.

7. It was as a result of this report that the Cumberland and Westmorland Joint Agricultural Education Committee was invited to provide the first national centre for forestry education at this level.

8. Formal forestry courses were started in January 1963, based on the recommendations of

the Lampard-Vachell Committee. That is, an Introductory Course for Young Forest Workers, for young people up to the age of 18 who had entered the industry about six months previously. A Woodman's Certificate Course for more experienced workers, following the syllabus of the Royal Forestry Society's Examination, and a pre-Forester Training School Course for trainees selected for entry to the Forester Training Schools of the Forestry Commission. All these courses were based on six weeks block-release, and with the exception of the Woodman's Certificate Course, followed the Committee's suggestion that young men from both sectors of the industry, public and private, should meet on common educational ground.

9. In order to give you some idea of the forestry work of the College may we just glance back over the last eight years.

10. During this time we have run some 90 courses, mainly of 6 weeks' duration but including some very short courses of only a few days. They have ranged from forestry "tasting" courses for school leavers, to forestry appreciation courses for Rural Studies Teachers; from Introductory Courses to Refresher Courses for study for the National Diploma, and management courses for Woodland Owners and their Land Agents and Factors.

11. At present each year there are some 18 courses still displaying a similar diversity, and at the end of last term we had given forestry instruction to over 1,600 students.

12. The changes in the last decade have been brought about by great technological development in forestry. These have needed a new approach to business organisation, marketing skills and the uses of science and engineering. The forester of tomorrow must appreciate the role of science and technology, sound business judgement and accounting to play his part in this development.

13. To meet a similar change in agriculture, the report of the Advisory Committee on Agricultural Education, published in 1966, suggested a new pattern of courses, one of which was to be called the Ordinary National Diploma. This course, it was suggested, should be a sandwich course aiming to equip students with a more reliable approach to the problems of the industry, ensuring a closer integration between teaching and practice. In addition, it would give students an opportunity to adjust to the atmosphere of their role in industry as their education progressed. This would be similar to and equivalent to courses and qualifications in other technologies.

14. An Ordinary National Diploma has been introduced at Newton Rigg. It has been designed

to cover a period of three years, providing suitable education and associated training for work in the forestry industry at supervisory level. The needs of both the State and private sectors have been considered in planning the course, as well as the career prospects of young people coming into the forestry industry.

15. Once the student has acquired skill, knowledge and the confidence to accept supervisory responsibilities with authority and understanding, he should be able to make a more positive contribution in forestry. He should have an improved career prospect and be able, eventually to undertake management responsibilities.

16. The course is college-based, but normally the students will have undertaken from one to two years' practical work in forestry prior to attendance at the college. After the first year in college, the second year will be spent in practical work in the forestry industry, and the final year will be back at college. The three years will be integrated to ensure that knowledge and the ability to apply it will be developed progressively throughout the whole period. In short, the aim will be to educate a man to be a sound practical forester with modern knowledge, a broad view of land use, and an ability in management.

17. It is of the greatest importance that the college should maintain a close liaison with the industry and the industry training boards, both in pre-college and the sandwich periods, and indeed over the whole period of learning.

18. There has been a great deal of consultation with the industry before this course was designed and it appears that the forester of the future should have these qualities:

- (i) the craft skills of a forest worker
- (ii) understanding of the importance of good labour relationships
- (iii) the ability to communicate effectively with both forest workers and managers
- (iv) leadership qualities and the ability to organise and control labour
- (v) ability to plan short-term work programmes
- (vi) ability to supervise the use of and maintenance of forest machinery
- (vii) ability to understand and interpret management plans
- (viii) ability to train his staff in the rudiments of their crafts
- (ix) knowledge of operation costs and business management.

19. To equip a young man with these qualities, the sandwich year in the industry is most important with co-operation required between the

employer, the student and the college. The employer will be asked to co-operate by employing the student as an integral member of his forest staff and to allow him, as far as possible, to widen his practical experience to stimulate interest. It is hoped that some employers would think of these men as permanent employees, since they would be able to be replaced annually, and one would like to think that they would be so effective that they would be an acquisition for any enterprise.

20. Let me turn now to Industrial Training and mention the Industrial Training Act of 1964 which established the idea that each industry should be responsible for its own industrial training and laid down the levy-grant principle, sometimes rudely referred to as the "stick and carrot principle". However, the idea was technical training for all.

21. Unfortunately, for a small industry like forestry, with only about 16,000 employees, half the industry was not within the scope of an Industry Training Board since the Forestry Commission was responsible for itself in industrial training. Other quite large employers in forestry e.g. Crown Lands and National Trust were also out of the compass of a Board. Added to this difficulty was the fact that employers whose main occupation was harvesting timber belonged to another Industry Training Board. Further difficulties were encountered by the A.H.F.I.T.B. when the farming fraternity obtained permission

for the training levy to be deducted at source from Agricultural subsidies.

22. Forestry found itself in a difficult position as part of the industry was having to supply a levy which cost a good deal in overheads to collect.

23. The present position is that ways are being considered to obtain industrial training by other means providing the essential requirements of the Industrial Training Act are still maintained.

NOTE:

By The Forestry Commission's Chief Education and Training Officer

A Forest Industry Training Council has now been established and has met once under its chairman Professor J. D. Matthews of the Forestry Department, University of Aberdeen. The Council draws its members from both State and Private interests and has representatives of the Trade Unions, Education Authorities, Forestry Societies and Colleges of Further Education giving courses in forestry. Levies are no longer raised from the employers and grants for training are no longer given. The identification of the training need, the provision of adequate facilities to meet the demands of the whole industry at an acceptable cost and the development of a pattern of education and training to meet the requirements of all forest workers in the industry are all matters of urgency pressing for the new Council's attention.