

WILLIAM JULIUS EGGELING
CBE, BSc(For), PhD(Edin)

In the heyday of the Uganda Forest Department in the 1930s and 1940s, and in the formative years of nature conservation in Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s, Dr W J (Joe) Eggeling was a dominant figure. He died peacefully in hospital in Perth on 10 February 1994. Today when the forests of Africa are under threat, and the natural heritage of Scotland is cared for as never before, the life and work of W J Eggeling is remembered with deep gratitude.

Intellectual gifts, training in forestry and natural history, a pioneering spirit, an instinct for nature, and an ability to cool human conflicts, all combined to make Joe a heavyweight as a forester and conservationist. He brought order to forestry and nature conservation where before there was confusion, firmness instead of indecision, and a reliance on common sense amid flights of high-minded scientific dogma. His feet never left the ground.

Joe Eggeling was born in Upper Largo, Fife, on 18 July 1909. He was the son of a doctor, and his upbringing gave him an intellectual and moral integrity which lasted a lifetime. At seven years of age, while nominally at Kirkton of Largo Parish School, he spent 18 months on his back with tuberculosis of the hip, but, despite this, he rose to a distinguished career. Following St Mary's Preparatory School, Melrose, where he was Vice-Captain, Dux and Victor Ludorum, he finished his schooling at Giggleswick, Yorkshire. At Edinburgh University he was awarded a BSc in Forestry, gaining the Younger Medal in Practical Forestry, and three class medals for Indian and Colonial forestry, and forest mycology. In 1930-31 he attended the Colonial Service Postgraduate Course in Forestry at Oxford University.

Turning down an offer of going to India, he joined the Uganda Forest Department in 1931, and became an Assistant Conservator supervising the draining of a large papyrus swamp near Kampala for fuel plantations of *Eucalyptus*. Regarded by his colleagues as one of the more dreary chores, it was for him an opportunity of ecological study leading to the first of his many published works, *The Vegetation of Namanve Swamp, Uganda*, in the *Journal of Ecology* in 1935.

The Uganda into which Joe went had already enjoyed 40 years of stable government which was bringing increasing prosperity based mainly on coffee and cotton. Famine and sleeping sickness had been kept at bay, and the country was poised for the intensive exploration and development of its natural resources. The forests were one of these resources and the opportunities of discovery awaiting a keen, well trained young forester like Joe were enormous, and he took them with both hands.

Joe played a leading role in the survey of the natural forests of Uganda. His inventory and management plan of the Budongo Forest in Bunyoro was a masterpiece in tropical forestry. He proved to the full his capabilities as a forest officer at Budongo, which was a huge and varied forestry charge. At the same time he incorporated his accumulated knowledge and experience in a revised *Forestry in Uganda*, the handbook for trainee rangers at the Uganda Forest School - one of the early textbooks in African forestry and a leader in its day. He took a particular interest and pleasure in the training of new staff.

By 1939, he had collected 3800 specimens for Kew and the British Museum (Natural History). He was awarded a PhD at Edinburgh University for his book *The Indigenous Trees of Uganda* (1940), which is still the standard work on the subject. His other principal work was *An Annotated List of the Grasses of the Uganda Protectorate* (1942). He also gave 'invaluable assistance' to Charles Pitman, the author of *The Snakes of Uganda*, through a large collection of specimens.

He had remarkable charisma in the eyes of his African colleagues and staff, and took a deep personal interest in their work and welfare. I had the opportunity of meeting many of his African and European staff when I visited Uganda in the 1960s, and many showed emotion at the recall of his name. Once, on hearing Joe returning from a long home leave, his African clerk, Joseph Kabengwa, exclaimed with joy 'Dr Eggeling, he is a man!'. Joe's sincerity and good humour, unaffected by rank or colour, combined with a shrewd, but kindly, assessment of his fellow men, removed barriers of officialdom, and won respect for himself and for his department.

In 1939 Joe married Jessie Elizabeth Tothill, the daughter of Dr J D Tothill, CMG, who was Director of Agriculture in the Sudan, and had formerly served in a similar appointment in Uganda. Jessie shared with Joe his highly itinerant life in Africa, and thereafter in the UK, and provided a happy and stable home for their family of two sons and three daughters.

During the war, in addition to his normal forestry duties, he organised the collection of wild rubber by gangs of workers encamped throughout the country. Camps competed with each other for the weekly prize for best collection - a cow and 40 gallons of beer - a munificence which ensured that the same gang was knocked out of winning the prize on two weeks in succession.

Joe's powers of leadership which had developed in remote up-country areas, matured at the Government centre in Entebbe and, in 1945, he succeeded Norman Brasnett as Head of the Forest Department in Uganda. He consolidated the work which Brasnett and his colleagues had so faithfully begun in the 1930s and maintained in the face of great frustration during the war. His success in placing forestry in Uganda on a sound footing by 1950 can be measured by his transfer in 1950 to Tanganyika which was emerging from years of uncertainty, frustration, and inadequate funding. The Forest Department had suffered more than others from Government neglect, and the newly appointed Governor, Sir Edward (later Lord) Twining brought Joe into his team to instil confidence and reorganise the Forest Department. This was no promotion for Joe, but it represented a great challenge, and he met it with characteristic modesty and determination.

In the four years, 1950-54, he gave the Tanganyika Forest Department a proper staff structure, set its goals clearly, and drew out its talents to form an efficient and serviceable organisation. A large reservation programme was launched to give the country a permanent forest estate, while research and training echelons were given priority. To crown these achievements, Joe, by his deep convictions and gentle persuasion, obtained complete Government acceptance of a forest policy which was unanimously approved by the Legislative Council in February 1953. In 1954, at the age of 45, Joe retired from the Colonial Forest Service and returned to the United Kingdom. Thereafter, he wrote and lectured with great authority on East Africa, and was a member of the advisory council of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania.

Back in Scotland in 1955, Joe joined Dr John Berry at the head of the Nature Conservancy in Scotland, becoming Conservation Officer (Scotland). He helped in the establishment and played a leading role in the management planning of many of the National Nature Reserves, which are now the proud possession of Scottish Natural Heritage. His book *The Isle of May* (1960) is the standard work on that island Reserve and, in 1965, he produced the first checklist of plants on Rum (*Trans Bot Soc Edinb* 40, 20-99). The partnership between Berry and Eggeling lasted 12 years during which, on account of the recurrent ill-health of the former, the latter carried a heavy load of responsibility, which earned him much credit. From his forestry background, Joe developed the management plan format for National Nature Reserves which was adopted throughout Great Britain. He saw the opportunity in Rum of producing a

management plan for a nature reserve on the grand scale with international status; this plan became a prototype of its kind, and was published in the first volume of the *Journal of Applied Ecology* in 1964.

Joe brought the objectives of woodland conservation to a new focus on diversity of native species, and sought new methods of creating diverse natural-type woodland by a combination of natural regeneration and planting techniques. From his background as an angler and wildfowler, he understood the mind of the sportsman and the ways in which it could be married to the needs of nature conservation. Above all, his love and knowledge of ornithology and botany gave him a high standing among naturalists, and he was a popular figure in the voluntary conservation movement.

He became a Vice-President of the Scottish Wildlife Trust which he helped to found in 1964, a Member of Council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Chairman of its Scottish Advisory Committee, and President of the Scottish Ornithologist Club 1966-69. Joe had a life-long interest in birds, and was an enthusiastic bird-ringer and student of migration; a pair of elderly fulmars on the Isle of May were popularly known as 'Joe and Jessie'! Though shy by nature, Joe was an evocative lecturer, and was a highly popular speaker in the cruises of the National Trust for Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s, and in the syllabuses of many public bodies.

In 1967, he was made Vice-Chairman of the Nature Reserves Committee of Northern Ireland and played a leading role in the development of conservation in the Province. In 1968 he succeeded Dr Berry as Director (Scotland) of the Nature Conservancy. On retirement in 1970, Joe was made a member of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, and was appointed CBE in 1972.

Early in retirement Joe and Jessie moved from Anstruther, which had been their home since returning from Africa in 1954, to Dunkeld and, in 1973, he suffered a stroke. True to character, he overcame his debility to continue his appointed term as a Countryside Commissioner and published a memoir describing his early days in Africa. Jessie's sudden death in 1988 came as a great blow but he was joined by one of his daughters and her family, and continued to take a great interest in conservation, his garden with its birds, and his many friends until the end of his life.

Joe's testament for posterity lies in the forest reserves of Uganda and the nature reserves of Scotland and their wildlife which he loved.

In the writing of this obituary, I am most grateful to Dr John Berry, CBE, the Rt Hon The Viscount of Arburthnott, CBE, DSC, Mr Robert G Sangster, CBE, and members of Dr Eggeling's family for their advice.

JOHN MORTON BOYD