

# THE FIRST FORTY YEARS 1955-1995

The story of the Institute of Wood Science really began with young men returning from the 1939/1945 war, some to resume interrupted careers in the timber trade, and some to start a new career. Everyone had an urge to catch up on lost time, resulting in a demand for training.

These young men were prepared to attend evening classes on two nights a week for three hours. The demand was there, and it was satisfied all over the country, particularly in those centres where the trade was strong, i.e. London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Scotland, Hull and even as far south as Brighton. Classes were started in 1945, and by 1947 there were 53 courses being run, attended by 1,781 students. By 1951 there were 1,052 students taking the first year course, 525 taking the second year and 334 the third year.

In order to improve the quality of teaching, the Timber Development Association (the forerunner of TRADA) under its technical director, E.H.B. Boulton, assisted by Dr. F.W. Jane of the University of London, together with a wonderful staff, Bernard Alwyn Jay and Bob Woods, also T.J. Price, lecturer at the City of London College, organised a five-day annual course, the first of which was held in the School of Forestry, Oxford, in the summer of 1945. Subsequent courses were held at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, resulting in the trade's close association with that foundation.

In 1948, TDA commenced examinations for a certificate, and in 1950, for a higher certificate: the way was open for the formation of an Institute giving a qualification in wood technology.

The Institute of Wood Science was formed by several leading members of the timber trade far-sighted enough to envisage the advantages for the trade of such qualifications. The signatories to the Memorandum on November 30, 1955 were Alistair John McIntosh, Joseph Cecil Walton, Alan Robertson Gemmel, E. Bryan Latham (uncle to Peter Latham, Vice President), David Burdett Irvin, David Walker Robinson and Rodney Russell Perry (father of John Perry, Hon Treasurer).

The presidents in chronological order have been: 1955-58 E.B. Latham; 1958-60 H.A. Cox; 1960-62 E.H.B. Boulton; 1962-64 Dr. W.P.K. Findlay; 1964-66 R.R. Perry (died in office July 1966); 1966-69 B. Eagle; 1969-70 J.E. Walton; 1970-71 G.G. Garlick (died in office January 1971); 1971-73 Dr. J.F. Levy (now Professor Levy); 1973-75 Dr. D.S. Belford; 1975-77 F.S. Palmer; 1977-79 C. G. Latham; 1979-81 Dr. D.J.B. White; 1981-83 C.C. Lorenzen; 1983-85 Dr. G.K. Elliott; 1985-86 T.S. Mallinson; 1986-88 Jean M. Taylor; 1988-90 Dr. J.D. Brazier; 1990-92 R.G. Venables; 1992-1994 K. Purcell; 1994 -present Dr. M.P. Ansell.

The Institute started with 351 members, but in 1963, Brookie Boulton organised a recruiting drive, resulting in a membership of about 900, and by 1966 membership had risen to 1,262. Now in our 40th year we have a membership in the United Kingdom of 83 Fellows, 469 Associates, 121 Members, 375 Certificated Members, 32 Ordinary Members and 136 Students. Overseas there are 64 Fellows, 173 Associates, 10 Members, 38 Certificated Members, 48 Ordinary Members and 24 Students, a total of 1573.

The Institute's Journal, which was first published in March 1958, has become our shop window to the world, and has always been subscribed to by the leading forest products laboratories. This has, perhaps unfortunately, resulted in an esoteric publication. Although various attempts have been made by successive Editors to obtain articles of a more general nature they have met with little success, although the introduction of papers from the National Conference and a more open approach by our present Editor has helped to make the Journal more widely read. The need for a more general publication was recognised in 1989 which gave birth to the Newsletter which Jean Taylor (then immediate Past President) launched in March of that year.

The first IWSc Conference, on 'Hardwoods today', was held at Attingham Park, near Shrewsbury, on November 11-13 1966, and was organised by the Midlands Branch. The first National Conference was held in Brighton on April 5-7, 1968. Some 180 members of the IWSc and the trade attended making today's conference attendances look small in numbers (although Bristol '95 might match those figures.) Since then conferences have been held in Brighton, Banbury, Harrogate, London, Lytham St. Anne's, Southport, Stratford-upon-Avon, Cheltenham, Bath, York and Chester. All in their way have been successful despite trade recessions.

Local Branches of the Institute were formed in Birmingham, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Glasgow, High Wycombe, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Tyne-Tees, Western Counties plus overseas Branches in Australia and Ireland, and in March this year an East Anglian Branch will be launched. Unfortunately, not all have been successful for various reasons, in many cases travelling distance being the problem.

The examination syllabus has been reviewed from time to time. Originally the Certificate Examination in technology was a two-year course, followed by a further two years for the Final Associateship Examination. Later a working party, mainly of trade members but with some academics, changed the emphasis by including 50% trade practice and administration, whilst the Final Examination course was reduced to one year. This virtually halved the time allowed for the study of wood as a material. Since then in 1993 the course has again been updated under the direction of the Chairman of the Education Committee, Dr. John Brazier, embracing a work book concept. The Certificate Course which is in modular form has five compulsory workbooks which can be completed in one year, although there is no time constraint, and the Associate Course has two compulsory modules and a number of optional modules with a similar study time. This new course structure has been widely acclaimed, giving the students flexibility in their study. Both courses over the years have slowly moved away from the laboratory in answer to the present needs of the trade.

In 1988, after certain amendments were made to our Articles of Association, the IWSc was accepted and became registered as a Charity with its ensuing benefits, and a year later the introduction of Corporate Membership was approved. We now have some 35 Corporate Members who contribute almost 25% to our total income and without them one shudders to think of the consequences. But despite this financial support from the trade and the intake of trainee managers to our courses, one still senses that there is no real recognition by the trade of the benefits that a recognised professional body such as ours has to offer them. Only once in the past many years has the writer seen a vacancy advert in the TTJ for a sales person suggesting that the successful applicant should have an IWSc qualification.

Dr. John Brazier, in the September 1989 issue of this Newsletter wrote "The IWSc has 1026 members in the United Kingdom and yet there are probably some 50,000 people whose livelihood involved the handling or use of wood. Where are they and why aren't they members of the IWSc?" Our aim now must be to answer that question to get the trade as a whole to recognise the importance of education and the benefits to them, and we in turn, must make sure that education in the form of our courses is easily and readily available.

We now have a new logo and our marketing friends tell us this will give us the right image to carry us into the future. We have forty years of sound, solid progress, on that we must continue to build.

M.W. Holloway AIWSc.