

obituary

Charles Enrique Dent, Professor of Human Metabolism at University College Hospital Medical School (UCHMS), died on September 19, 1976. He was born in Spain in 1911 of a Spanish mother and English father but received his schooling in Bedford and Wimbledon College, London. He started work at 16 as a bank clerk and studied chemistry at evening classes. He won a scholarship to Imperial College, London, and in 1931 graduated with a first class honours degree in chemistry. He spent a further two years there making a study of copper phthalocyanin for his Ph.D. thesis and then worked for three years in the dyestuffs division of ICI in Manchester; many of the blue dyes in use today have their origins in his work at that time.

In 1937, at the age of 26, Dent started his medical education at University College, London, only to have it interrupted two years later by the outbreak of war. As a Territorial he was among the first who went to France with the British Expeditionary Force and was engaged in military intelligence. He was besieged in Arras, mentioned in dispatches and evacuated from Dunkirk. After a short spell back at medical studies he was called by the War Office to undertake counterespionage work in Bermuda; by applying his chemical knowledge to detect messages secreted in mail passing between the United States and Europe, he helped to uncover an important spy ring.

At 33, Dent at last had the chance to qualify MB, BS and he became the last house physician to the celebrated cardiologist and clinical scientist Sir Thomas Lewis. Soon after, he passed the Membership examination of the Royal College of Physicians and was appointed an assistant to the Medical Unit of UCHMS under Professor (later Sir Harold) Himsworth. He was promptly seconded to a Medical Research Council team which went to Belsen concentration camp to study the value of protein hydrolysates in the treatment of severe starvation. Subsequently he began his studies of amino acid disorders, making use of the technique of paper chromatography which had only just been described by Martin and Synge. He improved the technique and his paper on the behaviour of some 60 amino acids and other ninhydrin-reactants on phenol/collidine filter paper chromatograms, which was published in the *Biochemical Journal* in 1948, rightly became a classic reference because it

represented the culmination of a vast amount of meticulous work. He then proceeded to apply this tool to the study of various inborn errors of metabolism, helping to elucidate the precise defect in known amino acid disorders and discovering previously unrecognised syndromes. He contributed greatly to knowledge of renal tubular disorders and of mental defects caused by metabolic errors. In less than 10 years he became a world authority on this group of disorders, sparking off a new interest in them.

The study of renal disorders led on to an interest in metabolic bone disease and impressed by what he learnt when he visited Fuller Allbright's department at the Massachusetts General Hospital while holding a Rockefeller Fellowship in 1946-47, he resolved to persuade UCH to build him a metabolic ward. This finally materialised in 1951 and from then on his research interests progressively shifted towards the study of calcium and phosphate metabolism. He systematically studied hyperparathyroidism, osteomalacia and the actions of Vitamin D, but he also acquired an unrivalled experience of rare bone diseases as patients and skeletal radiographs were referred to him from far and wide. He obtained the MD(Lond.) in 1949, became Reader in Medicine at UCHMS in 1951 and was elected Professor of Human Metabolism in 1956.

Despite Dent's insistence on a scientific approach to medicine, he remained essentially a clinician and his ward became a Mecca for doctors from all over the world. Many honours came his way, including honorary MD's from Louvain and Uppsala Universities, Fellowship of the Royal Society, the Gairdner Foundation Award and, in the 1976 New Year Honours, the CBE. In spite of his fame he remained modest, approachable, and greatly concerned for the welfare of his patients. He also put much time and effort into the teaching of medical students and for many years he was Staff President of the Student Union. He was very hard-working and his enquiring and original mind, tremendous enthusiasm and readiness to share ideas made him a stimulating colleague and an inspiring teacher. He contributed 166 scientific papers to the medical literature, many shared with the small research team he directed.

In spite of Dent's prodigious medical achievement he had the capacity to enjoy many other things. He was a keen squash player, made wine from

his own vines, reared trout, played the flute, and enjoyed entertaining in a relaxed and happy home. He was fluent in Spanish but was also able to lecture in French, Italian and Russian. His final illness emphasised his great stature for though aware of its relentless progress he remained cheerful and hard-working, sustained by his strong religious faith. He is survived by his wife, son and five daughters.

F. V. Flynn

Dr W. F. Bewley, CBE, DSc, VMH, died on December 11, 1976. In his death, agricultural research has lost one of the few remaining scientists who were concerned with the expansion of research facilities in the early 1900s which laid the foundation for the present Agricultural Research Service. Following the scheme initiated in 1911 by the then Board of Agriculture and funded by the Development Commission, Fleming Bewley joined the staff of the Rothamsted Experimental Station in 1912 as assistant bacteriologist to Dr H. B. Hutchinson in the James Mason Laboratory. In 1919 he was appointed mycologist at the Experimental and Research Station, Cheshunt, which had been established in 1914 and had close connections with Rothamsted. He was promoted to Director in 1921, a position he held for 34 years until the Station closed in 1955. With the formation of the Glasshouse Crops Research Institute in 1953 he became its first Director and was responsible for the initial development of the Littlehampton site, for the assimilation of the work of the Mushroom Research Association and for the transfer of the staff and facilities from Cheshunt to Littlehampton in 1955. Following his retirement in 1956 he took a keen interest in local government and was Chairman of the Worthington Rural District Council.

Early in his career he established his authority as a plant pathologist. His book *Diseases of Glasshouse Plants*, first published in 1923 was for many years a work of reference. He applied his mycological knowledge to the cultivation of edible fungi and his book *The Cultivation of Mushrooms* ran to three editions. In 1939 he had almost completed a comprehensive handbook *Commercial Glasshouse Crops* but publication was delayed to 1950 by the war. Though it became quickly outdated by rapid technological development in the 1950s it remains as a

monumental record of glasshouse crop husbandry in the first half of this century.

Fleming Bewley was a man of character and of strong will who was wholly dedicated to serving the glasshouse industry in the United Kingdom and in the Channel Islands. The industry owes him a great debt and he will be remembered not least by the developments he initiated in disease control, biological control of glasshouse pests, virus free seed and CO₂ enrichment.

G. F. Sheard

James Edgar Dandy died at his home at Tring, Hertfordshire, on November 10, 1976, leaving the ranks of taxonomic botanists sadly impoverished. He was born at Preston on September 24, 1903, and attended the Grammar School there until entering Downing College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA in the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1925. In that year he was appointed a temporary assistant in the herbarium at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where for two years he worked with the late Dr John Hutchinson, a taxonomist of deep understanding and wide experience who, at that time, particularly specialised in the African flora and in the genus *Rhododendron* but who was also formulating his ideas for a new system of classification of the Flowering Plants. Hutchinson's powerful yet genial influence greatly stimulated Dandy and his first publications in joint authorship with Hutchinson appeared in 1926. Again, prompted by Hutchinson's questing approach to classification, Dandy undertook an investigation of the *Magnoliae* (though he also worked on the families *Loasaceae* and *Saxifragaceae*) and he published a number of papers on the group though, alas, his most important contribution and indeed the culmination of his botanical life-work, a monograph of the genus *Magnolia* the result of nearly fifty years of research, remains in manuscript because of his reluctance to accept the work as sufficiently complete by his own exacting standards.

In 1927 Dandy was appointed Assistant Keeper in the Department of Botany, British Museum (Natural History) and during the war became responsible for the collections evacuated to Tring where he made his home. He became Keeper of Botany in 1956 and when he retired in 1966, relieved to shed his administrative load, he was able again to concentrate on his research. While Keeper he completed two important works, his *List of British Vascular Plants* (1958) and *The Sloane Herbarium* (1958). The first work is a bible for botanists who seek the correct name of any British flowering plant or

fern and it has been unquestionably accepted as the key work and a tribute to his unequalled knowledge of nomenclature and taxonomic insight. It was a fortunate circumstance that enabled the merger in Dandy's *List* of three similar previously independent and competing lists.

The Sloane Herbarium is a work in which Dandy deployed his discriminating scholarship and the full scope of his incisive and analytical mind. The main commentary to the *Sloane Herbarium*, which was acquired by the nation with Sir Hans Sloane's other vast collections in 1753 for £20,000 as the actual foundation of the British Museum, was in the form of loose paper slips on which Mr James Britten, a member of the staff for thirty eight years, had recorded the results of his scrutiny of the herbarium and its history. Members of the staff continued to add additional information and in 1953 it seemed appropriate in the bicentennial year of the British Museum, that this valuable commentary, of immense value to botanists throughout the world, should be published. Initially the task of editing was entrusted to Mr Spencer Savage, formerly Librarian and Secretary of the Linnean Society who was well versed in the history of botany at the time of Sloane and Linnaeus but to complete the work needed the critical understanding of an experienced taxonomist with a deep knowledge of the relevant literature. Dandy was persuaded to undertake this charge and he examined every sheet of the 265 copious volumes, carefully revised and edited all that had previously been written and produced a volume of the utmost importance.

Other valuable publications by Dandy are his *Index of Generic Names of Vascular Plants 1753-1774* (1952), the result of 25 years labour with about 3,000 entries each checked by reference to an extensive literature and his *Watsonian Vice-Counties of Great Britain* (1969), a basic work in recording the distribution of British Plants. Both these volumes embody years of painstaking investigation by one with a keen, well-ordered mind.

Dandy developed a great interest in aquatic Monocotyledons, especially in the families *Hydrocharitaceae*, *Najasaceae* and *Potamogetonaceae* and some of his conclusions were used by Hutchinson in *Families of Flowering Plants*. I was associated with Dandy as a colleague and firm friend for nearly fifty years and it was our intention eventually to prepare a monograph of the genus *Potamogeton* in Britain and though much preparatory work was done in a series of joint papers our careers so diverged that close collaboration became extremely difficult and

thus our aim was never achieved. Dandy, however, continued his studies in the group and was its undisputed authority and in other aquatic genera. For some years he had been unhappy about the identity of a plant only found in Britain in Esthwaite Water and accepted by botanists as a species of *Hydrilla* from the Baltic region. Detailed morphological study enabled Dandy to place the plant in the related genus *Elodea* and so established an additional amphiatlantic species, *E. nuttallii* as a member of the British flora.

His ungrudging help is acknowledged in countless publications and no one—and they were many—appealed for his assistance in vain. He was an inveterate perfectionist with high intellectual integrity, so much so that he left much of his material unpublished, and yet unsparingly scrutinised and polished the contributions of others. He was highly critical of sloppy writing in scientific papers and he did a great deal to ensure the highest possible standards in all matters referred to him. It was particularly in the legalistic realm of nomenclature in which he was an acknowledged international authority that Dandy's advice was constantly sought and willingly given. Many works including the prestigious *Flora Europea* bear the stamp of his influence.

Dandy was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society in recognition of his work on Magnolias, especially for help given with the publication of G. H. Johnstone's *Asiatic Magnolias in cultivation* which was sponsored by the Society. He was an Honorary Member of the Botanical Society of the British Isles of which for a period he was a Vice-President. He was elected to Fellowship of the Linnean Society in 1927. The genus *Dandya* was named in his honour by his friend Professor H. E. Moore of Cornell University.

Dandy in his younger days was a keen footballer and supporter of Preston United in their heyday. He played in the position of goalkeeper for his College and also in the staff team of the Natural History Museum. He thoroughly enjoyed his angling exploits and on several occasions he scaled the high defences of Gunnersbury Park before the place officially opened so that he could secure his favourite swim for carp. The lake at Blenheim with a particular tench-holding deep was another preferred spot. He was also an excellent bridge player.

This accomplished, modest, generous and earnest man will be much missed, especially in the botanical world.

In 1929 he married Joyce Isabelle Glaysher and they had a son and a daughter (deceased). **George Taylor**