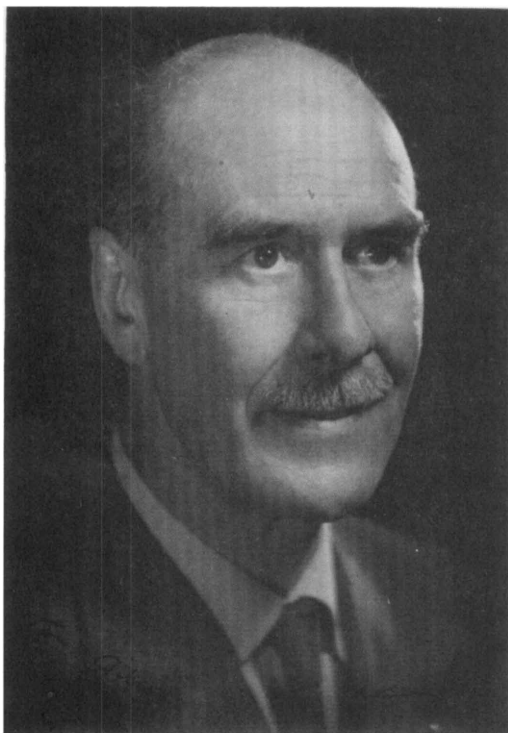


Obituary

THOMAS GIBSON

1897-1973



Dr. Gibson died suddenly in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 9 November 1973.

Born on 17 December 1897 of a farming family, he spent his boyhood in East Lothian, some 15 miles east of Edinburgh. He was educated at the Knox Institute in Haddington and at Edinburgh Academy. Studies were interrupted by the 1914-1918 war in which he served, reaching the rank of Captain before his release from the army in 1919. He then proceeded to Edinburgh University, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Science.

In 1923 he joined the teaching staff of the Bacteriology Department of the Edinburgh and East of Scotland College of Agriculture, now combined with the University as The Edinburgh School of Agriculture, where he worked until his retirement in 1963. His work was his life, however, and he continued working on his own in the School until the day before his death, a stimulating and helpful presence to all who

sought his aid. Staff and students held him in high regard as they came to appreciate the depth of his knowledge, his remarkable memory, and his keen and tidy mind.

A visit to the United States in 1925, a time when travel was more arduous than today, afforded an opportunity for him to work at the Bureau of Plant Industry of the U.S. Department of Agriculture where, under Professor F. Lohnis, he studied the root nodule bacteria. The bacteria of soil and their activity in decomposition processes were to become an absorbing and lasting interest, and the results of this and further work appeared in a paper (1928) dealing with the morphology and reproductive processes of *Bacillus radicicola* Beijerinck. His attention turned next to the decomposition of urea in soils, with comprehensive studies of the *Bacillus pasteurii* group and of the motile, spore-forming *Sarcina ureae*. For this work he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science from Edinburgh University in 1935.

During the following years he built up a reputation as a bacterial taxonomist, while his work on *Bacillus subtilis* and related spore-forming bacilli brought him into prominence as an authority on this group of organisms. His culture collection was well known, and many bacilli were sent to him for identification. Other subjects of agricultural interest have included extensive investigations of the bacteria that occur in milk and of those that are found on herbage and in grass silage.

As a recognized expert in the field of agricultural bacteriology, Dr. Gibson was invited by the Egyptian Government to spend some months in Egypt, where he gave help with bacteriological problems at teaching centers and in advisory work related to agriculture.

Dr. Gibson gave up much of his time for committee work and editorial duties, first in the Society of Agricultural Bacteriologists and later with the Society for General Microbiology; he did much for the Society for Applied Bacteriology of which he was President for the years 1963 to 1965. Always interested in taxonomy, he presented a paper on the state of the taxonomy of the genus *Corynebacterium* at the International Congress for Microbiology

held in Rome in 1953. The same year he became a member of the International Committee on Nomenclature of Bacteria. He served on the Subcommittee on the Taxonomy of *Staphylococcus* and *Micrococcus*, and in 1962 he was elected to membership of the Judicial Commission. He served as pro tem Chairman of the ICSB to 1966 following the retirement of Dr. Cowan. Recently, he had been occupied with a revision of *Caryophanon* and preparation of the sections on *Oscillospira* and *Sporosarcina* for the forthcoming eighth edition of *Bergey's Manual*, as well as the joint preparation, with Dr. Ruth E. Gordon, in the preparation of the *Bacillus* section. He had finished the work of

proof correction not long before he died.

Tom Gibson, as he was known to many, was an unassuming person of integrity, thoughtful and considerate, a great leader by example to those who worked under him, and a person to whom one could turn at any time and be assured of help from the fund of knowledge at his disposal. Any task he undertook was completed with thoroughness and he was meticulous in every detail. There was a place for everything and everything was in its place.

He made many friends throughout the world, and there is no doubt that his quiet presence and pertinent comments will be missed at many a gathering.

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