

## RETIREMENT OF DR. GERALD F. COCKBILL

Dr. Gerald F. Cockbill retired from the post of Assistant Director of Veterinary Services (Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control) on 17th April, 1972, his sixtieth birthday.

Dr. Cockbill was born in Cardiff, Wales in 1912. He was educated at Cardiff's Canton High School and then at London University, where, in 1937, he gained a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology and Botany with honours in General Entomology.

He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1940 by London University.

He was engaged on research work at Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden, Hertfordshire until 1941, which included investigations on gall midges, migration among the Lepidoptera and agriculture.

From 1941 to 1945 he was attached to the Provincial Research and Advisory staff of the British Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries at Cambridge University.

In 1945 he moved to Ireland, where he was attached to the Agricultural Advisory Service of Northern Ireland's Ministry of Agriculture, in which organisation he remained until 1949. During this period he also lectured in Agricultural Zoology at Queen's University, Belfast.

In 1949 he emigrated to Rhodesia and was appointed to a post in the Entomological Branch of the Department of Research and Specialist Services to investigate and advise on agricultural pests in this country.

He was just becoming established with his agricultural entomology work, a job in which he was particularly experienced and interested, when, in September 1953, with hardly any prior discussion and certainly without his full agreement he was transferred to the Branch of Tsetse Fly Operations as Senior Entomologist, under the late Mr. J.K. Chorley. (Tsetse fly operations had then only

recently been divorced from the Entomological Branch under which jurisdiction it had been for many years. The new Branch, however, still came under the control of the Department of Research and Specialist Services).

He joined the Branch of Tsetse Fly Operations at a difficult time. It was a period of considerable turmoil and unhappiness for the Branch. The criticism of Government and the responsible senior civil servants for the game elimination policy of that time, by well meaning, but very ill informed members of the public was at its height. Letters to the Press, which were almost a daily occurrence, and questions in the Legislative Assembly caused endless correspondence in reply. The Branch was required to carry out a number of ill-advised control schemes including two very unsuccessful aerial spraying operations. Much of this burden fell on Dr. Cockbill. The final outcome of this difficult period was the setting up of the Commission of Inquiry on Human and Animal Trypanosomiasis in Southern Rhodesia by Government, in 1955. Dr. Cockbill served as Secretary to the Commission.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry a new organisation, the Department of Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control and Reclamation, came into being on 1st July, 1956. Mr. J.K. Chorley had retired in March of that year, (for the second time in a distinguished career), and Dr. Cockbill assumed control on an Acting Director basis. This arrangement continued until 27th September, 1957, when Mr. John Ford, who came from East Africa, was appointed Director of the Department. Dr. Cockbill remained as his second in command, first as Senior Entomologist and then as Chief Entomologist.

In early 1964, following the break-up of the Federation and Mr. John Ford's retirement on abolition of office, Dr. Cockbill assumed control of the organisation on a permanent basis, as Assistant Director of Veterinary Services (Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control). (The Department of Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control and Reclamation had been incorporated into the Department of Veterinary Services on 1st April, 1961 with the senior post of the new Branch being designated Assistant Director of

Once again promotion coincided with a difficult period for the organisation. Game elimination, which had been the main method of control for many years, was terminated in 1960 on all tsetse fronts as a result of public demand. Following this there had been a rapid deterioration in the tsetse position generally and by early 1964 the problem in nearly all areas was regarded as extremely serious.

After consultations with his senior staff Dr. Cockbill prepared a plan to meet the escalating problem which was set out in detail in a document entitled "A Second Review of the Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Position in Southern Rhodesia, 1964". This was presented to Government and accepted and the Branch then set to work under the guidance of Dr. Cockbill, in late 1964, to implement the recommendations. Basically the plan involved the reintroduction of game elimination, albeit in a much modified form, now known as selective game elimination, supported by the selective application of residual insecticides to dry season resting and refuge sites of tsetse flies. Initially there was a considerable clamour from the game-loving public but they were persuaded of the necessity of the measures by Dr. Cockbill's able pen and tongue. The criticism has virtually died away today as a result.

The results of the control measures have been gratifying with the recovery of all the land lost during the period 1960-63 and more, in all about 20 000 km<sup>2</sup>, since 1964.

Dr. Cockbill can certainly be proud of what was achieved in the minimum of time as a result of the efforts of the Branch under his guidance and there is no doubt that on his retirement he left the Branch in good heart.

Finally in order to set Dr. Cockbill's tsetse career fully in perspective it is of interest to note that he saw the organisation grow from the one he entered in September, 1963, which comprised a Director, four professional officers and an establishment of 17 other staff, with an annual vote of \$173 614, (the 1953-54 vote), to that when he retired, of an Assistant Director of Veterinary Services, 18 professional officers and an establishment of 164 other staff, with an annual vote of \$1 251 700, (the 1971-72 vote).

We wish Dr. and Mrs. Cockbill a long and happy retirement together.

D.F.L.