Obituary Notice

Colin Panton Beattie
11 September 1902–16 July 1987

Professor Colin Beattie, Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology in the University of Sheffield, died on July 16, 1987. He was born at Oban and educated at Fettes College, Edinburgh, from where he proceeded with a Fettesian Exhibition and a Crichton Bursary to the University of Edinburgh. He took an MA degree in classics before reading medicine and he qualified MBChB in 1928. After obtaining the Diploma in Public Health in 1930 he joined the staff of the Bacteriology Department of Edinburgh University under Professor T. J. Mackie, first as an assistant and then a lecturer. In 1937 he was appointed Professor of Bacteriology in the Royal Faculty of Medicine of Iraq and Director of the Government Bacteriology Laboratory, Baghdad, where he spent nine very happy years and developed a love of the country and its people. He returned to Britain in 1946 when he was appointed to the Chair of Bacteriology in the University of Sheffield, a post which he held until his retirement 21 years later. He was also Honorary Consultant Bacteriologist to the United Sheffield Hospitals, working principally at the Sheffield Children’s Hospital. During this period he was a major influence in the development of the medical and dental schools, which included planning the move of the paraclinical departments into the new Medical School/Royal Hallamshire Hospital complex. After his retirement in 1967, he derived considerable satisfaction and provided, well into his late seventies, an invaluable diagnostic service as a locum consultant in several hospitals in the
Sheffield area. He also continued to teach in practical and tutorial classes for medical and dental students. He was popular with students and his group was always one of the best attended and most attentive.

Colin Beattie's early research had been with brucellosis; he was the first to show that *Brucella suis* could infect cattle. Whilst in Baghdad he undertook valuable research with the late Dr J. H. Bowie and members of the British Forces on the diagnosis and control of typhus, including early vaccine trials. After his return to Britain his principal research interest was in the field of toxoplasmosis in which he became a leading authority, and on which he continued to work until his death. Under his guidance the Bacteriology Department in Sheffield achieved an international reputation for work on toxoplasmosis. He encouraged the late Professor J. K. A. Beverley in his development of animal models that led to the elucidation of the life-cycle of *Toxoplasma gondii*, and later collaboration with Professor L. Henry provided invaluable information about the disease. This extended to studies with veterinary colleagues and provided much of what is now the established data on the natural history of toxoplasmosis. With Professor J. L. Emery at the Sheffield Children's Hospital, he developed the technique of intracerebral inoculation of mice with toxoplasma-infected tissue which provided a sensitive diagnostic system for the detection of low numbers of parasites. He always adopted a very modest attitude towards his research abilities and achievements; he frequently passed all the credit on to young research colleagues. The research work of Dr Jitendra P. Dubey with Colin Beattie was also extremely productive and their longstanding collaboration culminates with the publication later this year of a book on toxoplasmosis that is certain to become a definitive reference work on the subject. Only weeks before he died he completed editing the proceedings of an international symposium on toxoplasmosis of which he had been recorder.

He was a highly respected and gifted teacher who treated colleagues and students alike. He enjoyed lecturing and partaking in discussions at all levels, whether in undergraduate or postgraduate classes or at learned society meetings such as those of the Pathological Society. Throughout his headship of the Sheffield department he undertook the brunt of the formal teaching. His lectures were concise, up-to-date, entertaining and full of anecdotes. He was always prepared to give his time to anyone who wished to learn but he was characteristically and unrealistically modest about his contribution to medical education. When he arrived in Sheffield, the department comprised himself and one lecturer; one of his major achievements was to build a flourishing academic department from this minimal base. He also recruited the valuable assistance of the graduate staff of the United Sheffield and other local hospitals. This contribution has remained a strength of the Sheffield department and from it developed a fruitful cooperation between the University and the hospital departments of bacteriology. His wide range of contributions to microbiology in Sheffield included the recruitment of S. R. Elsdon who later became first head of the Department of Microbiology in the Faculty of Science, and the establishment, in conjunction with Professor (later Sir) Charles Stuart-Harris and Dr David Tyrrell, of one of the earliest departments of Virology in which pioneering work on influenza was done.

In 1937, when Colin Beattie accepted the chair in Baghdad, he married May Hamilton Christison, who had been his assistant in the Public Health Laboratory of the Edinburgh department. During their 9 years in Baghdad, a city within easy reach of the ancient cities of Nineveh and Babylon, the Beatties were surrounded by a wealth of material to stimulate their natural interest in the arts and history of the area. This continued when they moved to Sheffield, where they provided a considerable input into extra-curricular activities through their enthusiastic support of University and city arts groups. Many people have been delighted at their introduction to the mysteries of Oriental carpets through the Beatties. Although she did not pursue her bacteriological work after their marriage, May became and still is an international authority on such carpets.

Colin Beattie was an avid reader; he was interested in everything and frequently questioned established dogma. Topics raised during conversation with him were always remembered and, often, researched to the extent of providing appropriate references for further follow-up. His memory was extraordinary and he always had a good fund of stories especially relating to his Scottish childhood and his Baghdad experiences; many of these were jokes against himself. He was a good friend to academic colleagues, technical staff and students alike who will miss his gentle counsel.

A. CLARK
B. I. Duerden