Emeritus Professor Robert (Bob) Reid, one of Australia's outstanding agricultural scientists, died on 23 September, 1996 in Canberra at the age of 75. He was born on 11 April 1921, in Melbourne, but moved with his family when seven years old to Sydney. He was educated at Fort Street High School and on leaving took a year off before deciding to study for a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Sydney. He specialised in agricultural chemistry and graduated in 1944 with first class honours and was awarded the University medal.

He was immediately recruited by the CSIRO to join the famous McMaster laboratories in the University of Sydney. His exceptional talents were recognised by the award, in 1946, of the Thomas Lawrence Powlett Scholarship to read for a PhD degree at King's College, Cambridge, England.

While at McMaster he met and married his first wife, Catherine, and their honeymoon was a trip up the New South Wales coast on a tandem bicycle. A more exciting journey was to follow, on one of the first passenger ships to sail, post war, to the UK. While there he pursued, with exceeding diligence, two years of intensive study into the intermediary metabolism of sheep under Professor Sir Joseph Barcroft and as a result of collaboration with two other eminent ruminant biochemists/physiologists, Phillipson and Elsden, produced a distinguished PhD thesis and several scientific papers.

On returning to Sydney, he found himself with a dual role: as a lecturer in the University and as a research scientist at McMaster. Later he transferred to the new Sheep Biology Unit in the Ian Clunies Ross Laboratory at Prospect where he achieved steady and rapid promotion.

Bob Reid’s early research encompassed a range of topics including calcium, phosphorus and magnesium balance studies, calcium deficiency, phytic acid phosphorus metabolism, cyanide poisoning, fluorosis and biochemical studies on pregnancy toxaemia. His interest in fluoride brought him into contact with the Dental School in Sydney and particularly with Noel Marten who pioneered the use of fluoride to prevent tooth decay in children.

Importantly, however, his Cambridge studies had stimulated a highly novel programme of research on carbohydrate and protein digestion in the rumen leading to a comprehensive study of the nutritional physiology of the pregnant ewe. This involved investigation of the inter-relationships between carbohydrate, fat and protein in the metabolism of the under-nourished ewe and the endocrine control of nutritional stress. This innovative science was seminal to the subsequent development in their laboratories of objective methods of determining nutrient requirements for pregnant and lactating ewes and how these could be met for both hand-fed and grazing animals.

Recognition of the outstanding and exceptional quality of this research culminated in the award, in 1963, of the Australian Medal of Agricultural Science while he was still a comparatively young man.

In addition, due to his boundless enthusiasm, energy and imagination, Bob Reid had a profound impact on the growth, development and organisation of research programmes at Prospect.

In 1964 he came to Scotland, first as Associate Director and then as Director of the Hill Farming Research Organisation. Although HFRO was originally established as a development Institute, the new Director was quick to realise that tinkering with a traditional system, constrained by the mythology of a conventional wisdom, was pointless and that an integrated scientific programme involving research on soils, plants and animals was essential.

A dynamic and mercurial leader, he rapidly established groups working on nutrition in relation to pregnancy, lactation and reproduction in sheep. Special emphasis was placed on the effects of under-nutrition, on nutrient intake from pasture under a range of conditions, and on the effect of grazing and other factors on pasture growth. Allied to this were studies of grazing intensity on soil, plant and animal nutrient cycles. Such was Bob Reid’s influence on the disciplines of controlled scientific analysis that the groups working on nutrient physiology, reproduction, grazing ecology and nutrient cycling, ultimately received international recognition. Although his stay in Scotland was of short duration - only four years - Bob Reid’s leadership was seminal in establishing HFRO as an Institute unique in the UK in being committed to a programme of integrated research on soil, plants and animals. His outstanding achievement and impact was recognised by his election, in 1967, to Fellowship of the RSE.

While in Scotland he was able to pursue enquiries into his Scottish ancestry and also to conduct a comprehensive review of malt whiskies. This latter skill was later to influence many of his Australian colleagues (to the significant benefit of Scottish exports).

Much to the regret of many of us working in agricultural science in Scotland, Bob Reid was persuaded to return to Australia in 1968 as the Foundation Professor of Agriculture at the new La Trobe University, Melbourne. This post he held for 10 years with seven of them as Dean.

An energetic evangelist for a new approach to agricultural education, he rapidly established novel teaching programmes for a range of degrees associated with a concomitant research programme. He built a thriving Faculty and many
renovations in agricultural education can trace their genesis to the pioneering approach at La Trobe. Further recognition followed with the award of Fellowship of the Australian Society of Animal Production and a similar award from the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science.

A man of prodigious energy, Bob Reid owned a heritage house with a large garden in Melbourne and to that he added a 93 hectare property in the highlands of North-East Victoria where he established a nut tree plantation. He retired from La Trobe in 1979 after coping, as Dean, with student unrest and when his wife died in 1980 he thereafter spent much of his time tending his nut groves and becoming immersed in the life of the small hill tops community of Whitlands. When eventually he moved away from the area, he sold the house but left 81 hectares of the property to the lyre birds and to nature.

Nonetheless, he was not totally divorced from an academic environment. He continued to lecture on and research into his favourite topic - human nutrition. This culminated in the publication, in 1984, of his book, *Healthy Eating in Australia*. But he was not just an academic theorist since he possessed exceptional skills, with jams and jellies his specialities. Indeed, recipes for marmalade and cassava are to be found in his book.

His love of literature and good words, combined with a meticulous attention to detail, established a life-long commitment to the editing of books, conference proceedings and scientific journals. As a consultant editor for CSIRO over 100 papers were to receive his scrutiny while notable amongst his other contributions was his editorship of the 4th and 5th editions of *A Manual of Australian Agriculture*. This latter publication involved over 100 authors for each edition and is acknowledged as a definitive review of the science of Australian Agriculture.

When attending a nutrition conference he met Margaret Robinson, a fellow nutritionist and senior lecturer in Canberra University, with whom he shared many and varied interests. They married in 1988 and Bob moved east to live in Canberra.

In spite of an illness, blood cancer, in his later years he retained his good humour and devoted his time to working for the Lifeline book fairs, pursued his obsessional interest in cricket with vigour, studied later in the University of the Third Age and continued to be a meticulous builder of model railway panoramas. But above all his enduring interest was his children, Ronia, Jane and Robbie and six grandchildren who, with his wife Margaret, survive him.

Emeritus Professor Robert L Reid will be remembered as one of Australia's outstanding agricultural scientists of his time, a man with immense energy and rich imagination who always provided positive and productive leadership.

J M M CUNNINGHAM