

DAVID GILFORD ARMSTRONG
BSc, MSc, PhD, DSc (Newcastle) FRIC, FIB

David Armstrong was born in Whitley Bay on 9th July 1926 and died suddenly at his home in Ponteland, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 8th February 2000. The son of a bank clerk, David attended Whitley Bay Grammar School, before proceeding to study agricultural chemistry at Kings College, Durham University (later renamed Newcastle University). On graduating with an Honours Degree in 1946, followed by an MSc and a PhD in 1951, he stayed in Newcastle as a lecturer in agricultural chemistry before spending a year at the University of Illinois, USA, working with H H Mitchell. He then joined the staff of the Nutrition Department at the Hannah Research Institute in 1954 and over the following nine years, working with K L Blaxter (later Professor Sir Kenneth Blaxter FRS) and N Graham, he contributed substantially to present day understanding of the energy metabolism of farm animals. Indeed, their studies set many of the foundations for modern ruminant nutrition research.

In 1963, his love of the north east of England drew him back to the newly established University of Newcastle (formerly Kings College, Durham University) as Head of the Department of Agricultural Biochemistry. From then until his retirement in 1991, David established his Department in Newcastle as one of the leading centres for ruminant nutrition research within Europe and created for himself an international reputation in animal nutrition. This was recognised by a series of honours and awards, both national and international. The University awarded him a Personal Chair in 1968 and the same year the British Society of Animal Science awarded him their prestigious Sir John Hammond Memorial Prize. Later, he was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, a Fellow of the Institute of Biology (where he served as a Council Member) and, in 1969 a Fellow of this Society. In 1987 he was the recipient of the Hoffman-la Roche Prize for Animal Nutrition and the Italian Society of Zootechnia Premio Internazionale Uovo d'Oro award, and the following year was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium, and the Massey Ferguson Award for 'Contributions to the Agricultural Industry of the UK in the field of research in animal nutrition'. Then, in 1990 he was awarded the National Dairy Science Award by the American Dairy Science Association.

Throughout this period, David contributed widely to the administration of Newcastle University where he was a very active member of the Council, the Senate and the Research Committee throughout the later part of his tenure. Outwith Newcastle, he served the nutrition profession by his membership of many national bodies. He was on the Governing Body of four government funded institutes, the Hill Farming Research Organisation at Edinburgh, the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute at Aberdeen, the Grassland Research Institute at Hurley and the Institute of Animal Health at Compton. He was a member of the Agricultural Research Council/University committee for granting research awards and the Meat and Livestock Commission's Research Advisory Committee. He was also a member of several ARC working parties concerned with the nutrient requirements of farm livestock and from 1976 until his retirement, he was one of two UK members on the EU Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition. From 1987 to 1993 he was also a member of the Cabinet Office Committee responsible for the Individual Merit Review Scheme. When David retired from his post in Newcastle University in 1991 he continued his research interests through membership of the Council of the Institute of Biology, the Nutrition Committee of the Rank Prize Fund, and as a scientific adviser to the Institut de Recerca Tecnologia Agroalimentaries in Barcelona, Spain.

David Armstrong was essentially an enthusiast who had the capacity to stimulate others in the pursuit of knowledge. Part of his continued research success was his awareness of the need to embrace new ideas, as witnessed by his Department's role in the application of biotechnology to animal science during the 1980s. Yet he never forgot the need to consider livestock production in association with the welfare of the animals and the needs of the consumer. One of David's major attributes as a communicator was that he felt equally at home talking either science or farming and holding office as President of both the Nutrition Society and the North of England Holstein/Friesian Club.

Away from work, David was always an enthusiastic golfer, fisherman and horse rider until a serious car accident curtailed most of these and his international travel in 1997, but above all he was a dedicated family man. He married Susan Hannah (granddaughter of the founder of the Hannah Research Institute) in 1963 and thereafter he found great joy in his family life and great pride in their two children, Neil and Helen.

JOHN MACRAE