

Harold Gough: *Born – 27th July, 1914, Birmingham; Died – 27th April, 2012, Whitehaven*

Professional Career

Harold had just completed his PhD at Imperial when he went to work at Rothamsted in 1938. His work was in the use of soil insecticides to control wireworm, and it was partly sponsored by ICI. His PhD had been on the fumigation of tribolium (flour beetles), and his other early work was on bedbugs! He was only at Rothamsted until 1941, but it was clearly the most important experience of his life – until the end he remembered all the people he met there, and many of the events, and of course, the research that they were doing. I think he would have loved to have stayed there – there were many outstanding scientists there in that era. However, he kept in touch with Rothamsted all of his working life, and the network of contacts was of great value to him later.

However, it was wartime, and he moved to the Agriculture Department at Leeds University, which brought him nearer to the farming advisory work which was his aim. In 1946, with the formation of the National Agriculture Advisory Service he finally had a permanent job and a salary – at first he was the assistant advisory entomologist for the Yorkshire and Lancashire Province, then in 1948 he was promoted to be head of the Entomology Department of Eastern Province of the NAAS based in Cambridge.

His main research work in this period was on wireworms, potato cyst eelworm, wheat bulb fly and cereal cyst nematodes.

In 1954 he was one of the first members of the Interdepartmental Scientific Sub-Committee on Pesticides and Harold later became chairman of this committee – one of the committee's decisions was to allow the use of DDT, and then later, when the full consequences were realised, to ban it again. He moved to the Ministry of Agriculture in London in 1963 as head of the Science Advisory Service, where his earlier contacts became invaluable, and he performed a valuable role making policy to encourage the application of science to agriculture.

Personal Life

Harold was born in a different era!!

He collected stamps, initially East Germany, and then Papua New Guinea, which were remarkable for the main Post Offices being on board the ships which toured the settlements, bringing supplies and collecting products. He was very disappointed when he sold his main collection (by auction in Australia) that values had dropped so low. He supported Epsom Philatelic Society, joining in all their competitions for "best display". They were very grateful to receive all his minor collections, and his "swaps". He also collected "pre-Post Office" early postal history.

He also had an extensive collection of insects, and he had a lovely garden, with an excellent plum tree. In his younger years he had rowed for Eton Excelsior RC, and played rugby, and he remained

very interested in rugby and cricket all his life, almost to the end.

In the 40's and 50's he was very keen on ballet, and he had good collections of books about ballet, nature, agriculture, and England. He also loved murder mysteries. He kept up with the news and with developments in agriculture, especially through "Countryfile".

He was very active until the age of 94, when he had a bad fall, and he declined in his strength and abilities after that, but he was very pleased to become the oldest ever member of the Gough family. Harold and Margaret were married for 60 years, but, sadly, Margaret died soon after the celebrations for this. He was so fit that he went on activity holidays in Spain and Crete in his early 90's! In previous years Harold and Margaret initially had caravan and boating holidays, but later they spread their wings and travelled the world. However, deafness blighted his later years, and it was a great burden to him.

He took up computing at the age of 90 but he was quite disappointed in the internet, in that the technical level of information about botany and insects was not available there. However, he enjoyed scanning in many of his favourite slides from his foreign holidays

His enthusiasm for cake remained with him to the end!!

Personal

I first met Harold in 1988, when I first moved to Epsom. I had been living in Germany, and had boldly taken on a project to translate "The Cultivated Plants of the Tropics and Subtropics" by Professor Rehm from German to English. (I also needed the money, and I liked the idea that I might get paid to improve my German by learning more vocabulary).

I quickly realised I was out of my depth with the technical terms, and enquired at the local library if they knew of anyone who might be able to help me. They put me on to the Epsom Common Association, and I phoned Harold. He came to look at the text, offered to read and correct what I did, and helped me throughout without any fee – I think he enjoyed having something challenging to do!

This began our friendship, and when I took over as chair of the ECA, he kindly also read through all my newsletter texts and corrected and improved those too.

We stayed in touch, and after Margaret died he became a bit isolated and I helped in the garden and called in for lunch most weeks, and I got him started with an old PC computer, and then helped him buy an Apple computer when the virus risks got too high. He stored my "compost heap on a trailer" demonstration in one of his garages (his house had two!). My neighbours bought his car when he gave up driving when he was 93 – what a relief it was that he gave up driving – he put the