

THE ERIC ASHBY MEMORIAL PRIZE IN BIOLOGY

Sir Eric Ashby (1904 - 1992)

Sir Eric Ashby, botanist and administrator, earned a place in history through his work at a multitude of universities around the world. He published many papers and books on varied topics, travelled extensively as a consultant and lecturer, and contributed to many societies, councils, committees and conferences. He was knighted in 1956, and written into *Who's Who* (Adam and Charles Black, London) in 1963.

Ashby was educated at City of London Schools, then attended Imperial College of Science. He received an M.A. at Cambridge, and a D.Sc. at London University. In 1926 he began work at Imperial College as a Demonstrator, and in 1929 became a Commonwealth Fund Fellow at the University of Chicago and at the Desert Laboratory of Carnegie Institution. He returned to Imperial College in 1931 as a Lecturer, and in 1935 went on to Bristol University as a Reader in Botany. After two years, he left to become Professor of Botany at the University of Sydney in Australia, and stayed there for eight years. Four years employment followed as Professor of Botany and Director of Botany Labs at the University of Manchester in England, then in 1950 he was appointed President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland. From 1959 to 1975 he was Master at Clare College in Cambridge, and was Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cambridge as well for the years 1967 to 1969. He was Chancellor of Belfast University since 1970. He was a Fellow of Clare College in Cambridge since 1958, and a Life Fellow there since 1975.

The groups world-wide who benefitted from his input as member, trustee, director, vice-chair, chair or president are too numerous to detail here. They included: the Australian National Research Council, the Power Alcohol Committee of Enquiry, the Australian Museum, the Scientific Liaison Bureau, the Northern Ireland Advisory Council for Education, the Royal Commission of Environmental Pollution, the Commission for Post-secondary and Higher Education in Nigeria, and the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Honorable titles granted to Sir Eric Ashby included: Fellow at Clare Hall, Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry (now known as the Royal Society of Chemistry) and Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Honorable degrees conferred included 14 Doctor of Laws, four Doctor of Science, two Doctor of Letters, a Doctor of Civil Law, and a Doctor of Humane Letters, at various institutions. He was awarded the Jephcott Medal from the Royal Society of Medicine, and inducted into the Order of Andrés Bello in Venezuela.

Publications included papers on aspects of experimental botany and on education, and 13 books on these topics as well. A frequent collaborator in these works was historian Mary Anderson.

Eric Ashby was married in 1931 to Elizabeth Helen Farries of Castle-Douglas, Scotland, and they had two sons. For recreation, Sir Eric Ashby enjoyed chamber music and mountain walking.