OBIITUARY

Professor Gordon Ferguson, MRCVS, TD

Gordon Ferguson’s sudden death on 4th October, 1984 came as a shock to his many friends and colleagues. Gordon was born on 28th September, 1920 and after attending Blackburn and Manchester Grammar Schools entered the University of Edinburgh and the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, Edinburgh. He qualified as a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and graduated BSc in July 1944. He immediately joined the Royal Army Veterinary Corps and was soon sent to India, where among his appointments, he was Garrison Veterinary Officer, Ahmednagar. He also served in Egypt.

After the war he returned to the United Kingdom to command the Veterinary Hospital at Melton Mowbray. Gordon would happily have made his career in the RAVC but for family reasons he returned to civilian life in 1947 and to the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College where he obtained the Diploma in Veterinary State Medicine in 1948. He then joined the Department of Veterinary Hygiene of the “Dick” as a junior lecturer becoming a senior lecturer 2 years later. After the “Dick” became part of Edinburgh University, the Department was renamed the Department of Animal Health. He became its Acting Head in 1971 and William Dick Professor of Animal Health in 1973. Throughout his career he gave a lead in veterinary public health especially where an interdisciplinary approach could succeed. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s those of us involved in Sports Medicine in Scotland appreciated Gordon’s quiet courteous diligent involvement through his commitment to the British Horse Society. He joined the BASM in 1965.

All equine matters greatly interested him and he was responsible for Bush Home Farm Stables which are a valued resource for teaching equine management and equitation, not only to veterinary students, but to other undergraduates and members of the University Staff.

He was involved in horse riding for spastics and disabled children and in the Scottish Trekking and Riding Association as well as being an official of the British Horse Society. He became a member of the Council of the British Equine Veterinary Association in 1960 and its President in 1971. As a member of the Worshipful Company of Farriers he was a Freeman of the City of London.

Despite this academic and professional activity, Gordon Ferguson retained his enthusiasm for military matters and he served in the regular army reserve of officers from 1947 to 1968. After an interval in the Civil Defence Corps, he joined the Territorial Army in 1963 and was staff captain, squadron officer and then second-in-command of the Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt Universities’ Officers Training Corps until his retirement from the Territorial Army in 1975. For part of this time he served with the Royal Corps of Transport, a reflection of his ‘hands-on’ approach to mechanical matters and his pleasure in cars and vehicles of all sorts. He was especially well suited for responsibility in the OTC because of his interest in the personal development of students. When he retired from the Territorial Army he became Commandant of the Lothian Battalion of the Army Cadet Force, an appointment he still held at the time of his death. He continued, also until then, to represent the two Universities at the Council of Military Education Committees of the Universities of the United Kingdom.

The extent of his activities would have daunted many a younger man yet, since 1976, when he was badly injured in a road accident, he had also borne physical disability and almost constant pain with great fortitude and determination.

Colonel Gordon Ferguson, TD, committed himself to the service of others. He strove for perfection and he set high standards for himself and for those he served. His quiet firmness of purpose was blended with courtesy and moderated by his understanding of both people and animals.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to his wife Jean, and daughter, Sheila, in their sad loss.

Elizabeth McSwan, MB, ChB, DObstRCOG