

The Royal Society of Western Australia Medallists, 1997

Dr Ernest Hodgkin, OAM



Ernest Hodgkin was born in Madagascar in 1908, and subsequently grew up in the United Kingdom. He graduated in 1930 with a BSc (Hons) in Zoology from the Victoria University of Manchester. Following his graduation, he was employed as an entomologist for the Institute of Medical Research for the Federated Malay States, where he worked on arthropod vectors of malaria, filariasis and rickettsial disease until 1942, when he was interned in Singapore as a civilian Prisoner of War.

After his release from internment in 1945, he was reunited with his family, who had moved to Perth. Ernest was appointed a lecturer in the Department of Zoology at the University of Western Australia in 1946, where he remained until 1973 having been promoted to Associate Professor. In 1950, he gained a DSc from UWA on "The transmission of malaria in Malaya", and has published 14 papers on this subject. From the mid-1950s he carried out research on the ecology of invertebrate fauna of freshwater, estuaries and rocky shores, and coastal geomorphology. He supervised the research and training of a series of research students and published 28 papers in this area up to 1974. Many of his students have gone on to positions in Universities, Government Departments or private consultancies.

From 1955 to 1958 Ernest was also a Trustee of the Western Australian Museum, being Vice-Chairman from 1960-1981 and Chairman from 1982-1983.

On retiring from his University position in 1974 at the age of 65, Ernest has continued a remarkable contribution to science in Western Australia. From 1974 to 1996 he was Environmental Consultant at the Department of Conservation and Environment, and the Environmental Protection Agency, when he co-ordinated team research studies of the Blackwater River and on eutrophication in the Peel-Harvey estuarine system. He published a further 25 papers on the Blackwood Estuary, the Peel-Harvey and other Estuaries, including the "Estuarine Studies Series" published by the EPA. This series sets out geomorphological and biological characteristics of the 21 estuaries from Augusta to Esperance. From 1989-1996 he was environmental advisor to the Department of Environmental Protection, when he provided advice on the management of Culham Inlet and other estuarine systems. In 1996 he co-authored the book "Estuaries of the South Coast".

In recognition of his outstanding work, Ernest was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 1983, and the Royal Society of Western Australia is pleased to acknowledge his remarkable contributions to various aspects of knowledge of estuaries in the south-west of the State both before and since that time, by the award off the Royal Society of Western Australia Medal for 1997.

Dr Arthur McComb



Arthur McComb was born in Melbourne in 1936. He attended the University of Melbourne where he graduated in 1956 with a joint major in Botany and Zoology, and an Exhibition and First Class Honours in Botany. This was followed by an MSc from the University of Melbourne in 1959. With the help of a Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 Overseas Scholarship, he undertook his PhD research at the University of Cambridge, which was completed in 1962.

Arthur returned to Australia with a lectureship at the University of Western Australia (1963-1967), and was promoted to Senior lecturer in 1967. He spent two years carrying out research abroad, first in 1969 as a Research Associate at the Atomic Energy Commission, Michigan State University, and then in 1976 as an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Leicester. Promotions followed, first to Associate Professor in 1977 and Head of the Botany Department at UWA (1981-1986), then to Professor of Environmental Sciences at UWA (1981-1986), and Professor of Environmental Sciences at Murdoch University (1989-present). From 1982 (until present), Arthur has been Joint Director of the Centre for Water Research.

His work has been in two major areas, the control of plant growth by internal factors, and the control of plant growth by the environment. The first area involved plant growth regulators (gibberelins). As a logical extension to this work, Arthur's interests began to move towards ecological aspects of plant physiology, particularly in relation to annual Western Australian plants, but also studies on resins produced by native species, that have similar structures to gibberelins. The major part of Arthur's work has been on control of growth in aquatic plants, particularly understanding the fundamental processes that control plant biomass in aquatic systems. This has been of considerable management significance, especially in relation to the accession of nutrients from catchments and their effects in receiving waters.

Publications include more than 120 scientific papers has written or edited six books. Arthur has supervised some 30 PhD students. His former students are spread throughout Australian science, in Universities, State Government Departments and in private consulting firms.

Service to the scientific community includes President of the Royal Society of Western Australia (1978), on the Scientific Advisory panel of the World Wildlife Fund (1984-1986), Deputy Chair then Chair of the WA National Parks and Nature Conservancy Authority (1985-1995), Chair of the WA Lands and Forests Commission (1988-1998), and President of the Ecological Society of Australia (1987-1988).

Arthur McComb has had a seminal influence on a generation of researchers. The Royal Society of Western Australia is pleased to honour his contribution to Western Australian and world science by the award of the Royal Society of Western Australia Medal for 1997.

[MGK Jones, President, RSWA, July 1997]