Obituary Notice

ETHEL CRUICKSHANK
(14 November 1898–17 January 1989)

Ethel Margaret Cruickshank, a past Council Member of the Nutrition Society, died in Aberdeen on 17 January 1989, in her 91st year. She played a most helpful role in the formation of the Nutrition Society, assisting the first Secretary, Dr Leslie J. Harris, by keeping meticulous records of all the Society's business. She also assisted in the establishment of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences.

Ethel Cruickshank was born at Cruden Bay in Aberdeenshire and was educated at Aberdeen Girls' High School. She took her BSc degree at Aberdeen University in 1922 and subsequently became a research scholar at the Rowett Research Institute. She obtained her PhD at Aberdeen in 1925 and then became a Ministry of Agriculture Scholar at the School of Agriculture in the University of Cambridge. For 1 year from 1926 she carried out research at the University of Wisconsin, USA, and then returned to the Rowett Research Institute, where she became a member of the research staff. In 1929 she joined the research team of the Animal Nutrition Institute in the School of Agriculture, Cambridge.

She commenced collaboration with Dr Thomas Moore, of the Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge, on vitamin A and other nutritional factors in poultry in 1937, and later, on the invitation of Dr L. J. Harris, transferred to the scientific staff of that laboratory for general nutritional work where she continued until the end of her professional career.

Dr Cruickshank's early research interests included techniques for the determination of vitamins in poultry feeds. At the Rowett Research Institute she published a paper on 'Observations on the iodine content of the thyroid and ovary of the fowl, during the growth, laying and moulting periods'. Other research interests, while at the School of Agriculture, included the effect of cod liver oil on the flavour of poultry products. At the Dunn Nutritional Laboratory she continued her interest in poultry nutrition but her main concern was vitamin D. She published a large number of scientific papers, some of them jointly with Dr Moore and others with the late Dr Egon Kodicek.

Although vitamin D had been discovered in the early years of this century its function and mode of action were unknown before the 1950s, except for its obvious effects on calcium deposition. A contributory factor to this lack of knowledge was the difficulty of measuring the minute amounts present in tissue and cells. Furthermore the biological method for testing for vitamin D was very time consuming, each assay taking several weeks rather than hours or minutes. However, in collaboration with Dr Kodicek, Ethel Cruickshank performed many trials with experimental rats to investigate the antirachitic effects of the vitamin, and its absorption and distribution in the animal body. The

investigations followed the administration of initial large doses of calciferol or ergocalciferol.

It was not until some years after the experiments described above that the use of radio-active labelled vitamin D was developed by Dr Kodicek, Dr Lawson and others which led to quicker and more far-reaching results regarding the metabolism and function of vitamin D.

Dr Cruickshank's other interests included gardening, farming and entertaining. Whilst at Cambridge she played a significant part in the founding of Lucy Cavendish College which specializes in helping mature women to study as undergraduates at Cambridge University and encourages senior women scholars to return to and remain in academic life. In the early days Dr Cruickshank was a member of the so-called 'Dining Group' which was subsequently recognized by the University of Cambridge as the Lucy Cavendish Collegiate Society in 1965. The following year Dr Cruickshank was elected a Fellow and served as such until her retirement at the age of 70. She was at once elected a Fellow Emeritus and continued her great interest in the College where she took an active part in the reorganization of the College gardens, and dined regularly to the pleasure of all the members.

Dr Cruickshank made a generous bequest to the College which will provide the nucleus for a fund in her memory to support the work of the College. She has also endowed a Cruickshank Trust Fund to be set up in Aberdeen to promote education in Scotland in the applied use of agricultural science.

In her latter years Ethel returned to her native Scotland to live with her sister at Cruden Bay. Her kindly personality and varied interests will be greatly missed by her friends and by her colleagues both at the Dunn Nutritional Laboratory and at Lucy Cavendish College.

IVAN M. SHARMAN

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