

## **A. RALPH MELVILLE 1912-1982**

### **OBITUARY**

Mr A. R. Melville, CB, CMG, who died on 10 December, 1982 at the age of 70, had played an important role in the world of tropical agriculture, initially in Africa, but later in the wider international sphere.

Ralph Melville was born on 24 May 1912. After taking a degree in agriculture (with honours in Zoology) at Edinburgh and post-graduate work at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad he joined the Colonial Agricultural Service in Kenya as an entomologist in 1936.

He served throughout World War II in East Africa and Ethiopia as a malaria control officer in the RAMC, reaching the rank of major. On return to Kenya he was given the task of establishing and directing the central coffee research station at Ruiru, where his pioneer work successfully established control methods for several important pests of coffee.

In 1956 he was appointed Chief Agricultural Research Officer and in 1960 became Director of Agriculture. At the request of the late Bruce McKenzie, he stayed on after independence in 1963 to help the Minister adapt agricultural policy to the changing pattern of land ownership.

A wider field opened to him in 1965 when he was appointed Chief Agricultural Adviser to the Minister of Overseas Development in London. He travelled indefatigably in the developing world and played a major role in gaining the confidence of ministers and agricultural professionals and orientating development assistance to practical goals.

In 1971 he was made Chief Natural Resources Adviser with the function of

co-ordinating the work of a multidisciplinary team of over twenty specialists in the whole range of professions concerned with renewable natural resources.

He was also prominent in the international field, representing Britain at FAO and playing a significant part in the creation of the Consultative Group on International

Agricultural Research. In this context he served from its inception on the Governing Board of the International Crops Research Centre for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Hyderabad.

He retired from the Ministry in 1976 but remained as active as ever as a consultant to the World Bank and the International Service for National Agricultural Research, a member of the Board of the Commonwealth Development Corporation and President of the British Tropical Agriculture Association.

His wife Terry pre-deceased him. He leaves two daughters and a grandson.

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