

Frank Dickson, 1891-1969

C. E. Yarwood



Frank Dickson was born in Leicester, England, May 10, 1891, and died December 9, 1969, in Glasgow, Scotland, while on a visit to a son. He taught public school in Leicester from 1908 to 1912, and came to Canada in 1912 where he was principal of a public school in Brantford, Ontario, from 1912 to 1914. He attended Queens' University, Kingston, Ontario, from 1912 to 1914, and again in 1919-1920 to earn his B.A. degree in 1920. From 1914 to 1919, he served in the Canadian Army and was wounded during overseas service. From 1920 to 1923 and 1929 to 1930 he attended Cornell University and received his Ph.D. degree in Plant Pathology in 1930. He served as Assistant Professor to Professor in the Department of Biology at the University of British Columbia in 1923 to 1956; he then retired to Kelowna, British Columbia. Next to D. L. Bailey at Toronto, Frank Dickson was probably the leading teacher of Plant Pathology in Canada. Working as a one-man staff in a Liberal Arts Biology department, he taught Mycology, Plant Pathology, and Forest Pathology on the Cornell pattern. During a time when U.B.C. was small and the Physical Education Department was in its infancy, Frank Dickson and a few other faculty members gave much spare time to games. The miniature Big Block letters worn on

his watch chain were a source of quiet, modest pride. He was not a teaching personality by some current standards, but I regard him as my best formal instructor of Plant Pathology in three universities. He considered attainment of knowledge a serious business to be achieved by hard work, including detailed drawings of specimens. Although a single course in Plant Pathology was taught before 1928, an undergraduate major in Plant Pathology was introduced in that year, and for the next 20 years or more Frank Dickson taught all of some five courses in Mycology, Plant Pathology, and Forest Pathology, as well as participating in some courses in general Biology and Botany. His research specialty was the Sclerotiniaceae, and his photograph of visual ascospore discharge by *Sclerotinia libertiana*, now *S. sclerotiorum* (Phytopathology 13:31, 1923) is one of the earliest if not the only photograph of active spore discharge in the fungi. Such a mass discharge of ascospores makes an audible puff. This photograph is commonly reproduced, sometimes without acknowledgement, by other investigators and reviewers. Dickson, however, was primarily a teacher, not a researcher. He attracted students from Agriculture and Botany and encouraged and aided them to go elsewhere for graduate work. Considering his situation and his heavy load of teaching, his record for starting enthusiastic plant pathologists on their careers is outstanding.

He is survived by a brother, B. T. Dickson, also a plant pathologist and retired chief of the Division of Plant Industry in Australia, and by two sons and two daughters.