



PARR TATE

A photograph printed in *Parasitology*, vol. 59 (1969).

Obituary Notice

Parr Tate, 1901–1985

During my third year as an undergraduate reading Zoology at Cambridge, I found a relatively large parasite inside one of the *Asellus aquaticus* that had been allocated to me for the afternoon's practical work. After we had failed to identify even the group of animals to which it belonged, someone suggested that I should take my find to The Moltano Institute on the Downing Site. There I was ushered into Room 3 where I first met Dr Tate. After listening to my account he looked at my specimen and said, 'Now just one second . . .' in his rich Irish accent. As I later came to know, so much of his teaching or advice began with that highly characteristic phrase. He told me that I had found an acanthocephalan worm in its intermediate host, and when I returned some days later to tell him the results of my search of the literature, he suggested that I should work on the Acanthocephala under his supervision for the Ph.D. Degree after my graduation. I never regretted for one moment my decision to take up his offer. He maintained close contact with me, as he did with all his former research students, and the last letter I received from him was dated 16 September 1985, written just a few weeks before his death on 7 November 1985 in hospital in Cork. During the 24 years of our association I was never on Christian-name terms with him. He was always 'Dr Tate' or, when talking with equally close mutual associates like Donald Lee, David Molyneux, John Barrett, Vaughan Southgate or Roger Tatchell, we referred to him as 'P.T.'. He had great integrity and fairness in all that he did and an ability of seeming to know exactly what you were thinking. These attributes, coupled with his extraordinarily wide parasitological knowledge, generated our respect. He also had a delightful sense of fun and even his sarcasm was kind and gentle. Our children loved him and his steady supply of sweets for those who visited him in Room 3 and the book tokens that came without fail every Christmas were expressions of his kindness.

P.T. was born on 27 April 1901 in County Cork and when four years old he contracted a severe attack of whooping cough which left him a lifelong sufferer from asthma. This affliction was so debilitating that he had to withdraw from school and study at home with the help of private tuition. Many years later, he wrote of David Keilin (*Parasitology* 55, 1–28): 'David was not a robust child, probably already suffering from the asthma which was to handicap him throughout life, and until the age of ten he was taught at home . . .'. P.T. and David Keilin also shared research interests and they worked and published together on the biology of dipterous larvae and as an editorial partnership.

P.T. obviously adapted to the restrictions placed on him by asthma, and in 1920 he passed the entrance examination for the Faculty of Science at University College, Cork. In 1923 he graduated with First Class Honours in Botany and Zoology and in 1924 completed his work for the M.Sc. Degree and was awarded a Travelling Studentship for two years at £200 per year. During P.T.'s second year as an undergraduate in Cork, Louis Renouf was appointed to the Chair of Zoology. Professor Renouf went to Cork from the University of Glasgow, where he had been a lecturer in John Graham Kerr's Department of Zoology. Before that, however, Renouf had studied at Cambridge and he advised P.T., whose studentship was conditional on his working outside Ireland, to go to Cambridge. So in 1924, P.T. arrived at The Moltano Institute for Research in

Parasitology to work under the supervision of G. H. F. Nuttall, Quick Professor of Biology at the University of Cambridge, first Director of the Institute and the vision and energy behind its foundation and eventual inauguration in November 1921. P. T. 'sent down deep roots' (his words) and stayed at The Molteno Institute for 44 years until his retirement in September 1968. He became Director of the Institute in 1953 as successor to David Keilin. After retirement, P. T. retained and regularly visited his Cambridge home and kept up a keen interest in the affairs of The Molteno Institute, but towards the end of his life more and more time was spent happily in Cork with his sister Lilian Tate.

During his early life in Cork, P. T. became greatly interested in birds and he kept and bred canaries and was a regular prize-winner at local bird shows. This interest and skill must have helped him with his early experimental work on malarial parasites. He investigated antimalarial compounds with M. Vincent (*Parasitology* **24**, 284–288) using *Plasmodium relictum* and canaries as the host, and his most significant discovery (with S. P. James, *Parasitology* **30**, 128–139), which was concerned with finding the exoerythrocytic stages of *P. gallinaceum*, again involved birds as hosts. In that paper the reader can see fine examples of P. T.'s talent as a scientific draftsman. The paper does not tell how he cycled from Granchester to The Molteno Institute in the middle of the night to search the dustbins for the carcass of an infected chicken because he had suddenly realized that the anticipated but elusive exoerythrocytic schizonts of *P. gallinaceum* must be in the brain. P. T. was fascinated by the excitement and thrill of research and he had a fund of stories about the ups and downs of his own investigations and those of David Keilin, Ann Bishop, Hans Laser, Elspeth McConnachie, T. Mann and the many other distinguished scientists who came from all over the world to work in Cambridge during his time. P. T. loved Cambridge and never even left it for sabbatical leave. Despite being a Reader, he played little part in college life until 1965, when he became a founding Fellow of University (later Wolfson) College. He rarely travelled to scientific meetings, but every summer for 30 years he, his sister and Professor Malcolm Dixon went to stay at 'The Racehorses', Kettlewell, where P. T. would immerse himself in natural history in the Yorkshire Dales.

In addition to his pioneering work on malarial parasites, P. T. became known internationally to numerous parasitologists because of his work for this journal. His first publication in the journal appeared in 1927 (*Parasitology* **19**, 54–60) and the last was his obituary notice on David Keilin in 1965 (*Parasitology* **55**, 1–28). His first editorial appointment was formally announced in the journal in 1935, when Keilin succeeded Nuttall as editor, and in 1953 Keilin and P. T. were listed as joint editors. In 1964, P. T. became sole editor until his retirement in 1968 and he stayed on as member of the editorial board until 1974, giving him a connexion with *Parasitology* lasting 47 years. Editing in his time was an enormous task and involved all the correspondence with authors, marking up for the printer, proof-reading, compiling the indices and all the chores, as well as struggling to decide what to publish and what to turn down. Picturing P. T. at work as an editor brings my impressions full circle; complete integrity, helpfulness and generosity were his hallmarks and these great qualities inspired his students and gained for him their admiration and affection. Few scientists will ever become so influential in their subject with so little conscious effort.

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