

A Founding Conservationist

Michael Graham, who died on January 1st, was among those in the forefront of fishery research over a long spell of years, and, since the study of marine biology was in advance of terrestrial biology, particularly in its approaches to ecology and practical conservation, he should count among the founders of the conservation movement. His philosophy of fishery conservation is excellently expounded in simple terms in *The Fish Gate* (1943), but at an earlier date he had already turned his attention to the land in *Soil and Sense* (1941), and later he became deeply interested in human ecology as witnessed by *Human Needs* (1951). This trio of books was widely read at the time and their study is still rewarding. It is good news that the lectures on ecology, which he gave while a lecturer at the University of Salford, his latest activity after retirement from the Directorship of Fishery Research in the Ministry of Agriculture, are to be published posthumously. It is to be hoped that this will include some account of his remarkable feats in restoring vegetation to slag heaps, acting as pied-piper on pony back scattering soil and seed, and followed by a string of child helpers from the depressed areas.

Though a sound and deep thinker, Michael Graham was essentially a practical man, and never was this more apparent than during his diversion from the seas to fresh water during the fishery research of Lake Victoria in 1927, a period of intense activity which led to his book *The Victoria Nyanza and its Fisheries*, published by the Government in 1929. This survey revealed among other things a classic example of over-fishing for the 'Ngege' (*Tilapia esculenta*) and set the stage for a long series of researches by others, leading to fisheries development in the Great Lakes of Eastern Africa. Having participated with him in the original survey, it was a pleasure to take part in implementing one of his most important recommendations, by establishing the Fisheries Research Laboratory at Jinja in Uganda in 1952, after a latent period of a quarter of a century.

Michael was a born teacher. No-one could have been more sympathetic or more thorough in leading the student through the intricacies of methodology, including the modern statistical and mathematical approaches. His deep sympathy with human beings and their environment owes much perhaps to his Quaker upbringing, and for nearly half a century he was strongly supported in his many activities by his wife Edith.

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Somali Wild Ass Numbers

Dr Hans Klingel, whose report on the Somali wild ass situation was summarised in *Oryx* (September 1971, page 110), but before he had the final figures, writes that there are between two and three thousand wild asses in the areas he surveyed in Ethiopia. This is considerably more than the figures in the *Red Data Book* where the largest Ethiopian herd (near Sardo) was put at 200 with a maximum of 350. Moreover the ratio of adult mares to immature animals is about 1:1 showing that the asses have a healthy reproductive rate. Dr Klingel also reports that the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation organisation is taking action to enforce the protection of the wild asses.