

Harold Edward Monk, 1898-1976

Harold Edward Monk, Public Analyst and Official Agricultural Analyst for the County of Kent from 1946 to 1963, died on 7 January 1976 at the age of 78.

Monk was born on 30 November 1898. He was educated at the Wallasey Grammar School, on leaving which he entered a bank; but he joined the Army in 1917 and served in the Tank Corps until 1919. After demobilisation he went to Liverpool University and obtained an Honours Degree in Chemistry in 1922. He then became an assistant analyst in the laboratory of the Liverpool Public Analyst, Professor W. H. Roberts, and while in his employ he worked for and obtained what was then "The Fellowship of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, Branch E (The Chemistry and Microscopy of Food, Drugs and Water)" but is now known more simply and perhaps more imposingly as the Mastership in Chemical Analysis. Armed with this qualification, he applied successfully for the post of Public Analyst for the City of Salford; he used to say that at the age of 29 he was at that time the youngest Public Analyst in the country.

In 1936 he was appointed Public and Official Agricultural Analyst for the County of Worcestershire, in succession to C. C. Duncan. Duncan had made representations to the County Council, some time before his retirement, that improvements to the laboratory were urgently needed; and Monk reaped the benefit of Duncan's efforts, taking over a laboratory that had been extended and equipped with new apparatus at a cost of £3,200, which in those days was no small sum. The modern Public Analyst will be very surprised to learn that Monk's laboratory undertook not only the usual chemical and bacteriological analyses of food, drugs and water but also the examination of samples of sputum for T.B. and throat swabs for diphtheria; the *Worcestershire Daily Times* in November 1936 published an account of a visit to the new laboratories ("a scientific wonderland") and an interview with the new County Analyst, from which it appeared that in the previous year, 16,000 bacteriological examinations had been made, "chiefly for diphtheria and tuberculosis".

Monk moved again in 1946, when he was appointed as Public Analyst and Official Agricultural Analyst for the Kent County Council. He regretted going from his fine laboratory at Worcester to a very old laboratory in the County Hall at Maidstone; but it was not long before he persuaded the County Council to reconstruct and modernise the laboratory and its equipment, and he had a major share in the design of the new laboratories, of which he was very proud. He remained with Kent until his retirement in 1963.

For information about Monk's career up to his Kent appointment—I have always regretted that I did not meet him until the early 1940s—I am indebted to his older daughter Mrs Barbara Earnshaw and to Dr G. H. Walker, sometime Public Analyst for Lancashire, who went through Liverpool University with Monk and was his lifelong friend. Walker, speaking of Monk's (and his own) first employer, Professor Roberts, says in a letter to me that he was "what I call a P.A. of the old school. He took a great pride in his profession, made every effort to further the interests of P.A.'s, and interested himself closely in the S.P.A.O.A.C. and its Committees . . . Roberts imbued this spirit in his staff and particularly in Harold." All who knew Monk professionally will agree that what Walker has said of Roberts was applicable word for word to Monk.

Thus it was obvious that he would take a great interest in, and work devotedly for, first the Public Analysts' Committee of the old S.P.A.O.A.C. (he edited the Bulletins this Committee issued to all Public Analysts from time to time) and then its more official successor, the Association, of which he was (like me) a founder member in November 1953. As such, he was a member of its Council; in 1955 he was elected Honorary Treasurer and held that post until 1957, when he became Vice-President and in 1958, President. After his term of office he continued to serve the Council as a Past-President until 1966, when he brought to a close a continuous 13½ years of service on the Council. Moreover, he was also an active member of the Standards Committee of the Association, acting as its Chairman for a period, and took part in many negotiations with the Trade leading to voluntary agreements relating to standards of composition and labelling. He was a most valuable member of Council; he never proposed or supported a course of action without first listening to and considering what others had to say, but once he had made up his mind, he stuck to his views with rugged persistence (or extreme obstinacy, depending on whether one agreed with him or not). Always he was mindful of the necessity of behaving towards the Ministry, Local Authority organisations, and all the other official bodies with which the A.P.A. has to deal, in a manner that would maintain and if possible enhance its prestige and professional standing. Public Analysts in general owe him a great debt for helping to steer the A.P.A. along the right lines, particularly in the early days when those lines were not clearly defined, and all who knew and worked with him will remember him with admiration and respect.

Socially, Harold got on well with everybody and was a popular man; but he had few close friends. He had a keen sense of humour and was a good *raconteur*; he was interested in almost every kind of mental activity, but particularly in books, plays, music (Wagnerian opera was his speciality) and bridge. He greatly enjoyed foreign travel, and my wife and I will always remember a fortnight we spent in Morocco with Harold and a friend of his (male!) as one of the happiest holidays we have ever had. He was physically active, too; he had played rugby at Birkenhead Park as a young man and was a strong swimmer, and he was an enthusiastic golfer almost right up to the time of his death.

His daughter Barbara says of him "He was full of fun and so alive ... he has left us many moments to remember and smile or laugh at. He taught us how to work and also how to play ... he left us a gap not to be filled." That last remark will be echoed sadly both by his friends and by the other members of his family (another daughter Phyllis and a son Peter); yet all of us who knew him will remember him with affection and happiness.

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