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Obituary : Richard Philip Roberts : 1906-1961

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Obituary

RICHARD PHILIP ROBERTS

1906-1961

Richard Philip Roberts, M.Sc. (Agric.), Officer-in-Charge, Rural Economics and Marketing Section of this Department, died 26th August, aged 55 years, while spending the weekend with relatives and friends at his holiday house at Point Peron. His death was sudden and quite unexpected as he was apparently in good health. His passing has deprived the Department of an outstanding officer of wide experience, sound judgment and great knowledge of his special fields of work.

Mr. Roberts was born in England but came to Western Australia at an early age and lived with his parents on a dairy farm at Waroona. He was educated at Hale School and University of Western Australia where he graduated B.Sc. (Agric.) in 1928 and completed an Honours Course in 1930. This commenced his special studies in rural economics for which in 1934 he was awarded the degree of Master of Science in Agriculture.

From the commencement of his University studies in 1925 Mr. Roberts was a cadet in the Department of Agriculture and became an Agricultural Adviser in 1929 after his graduation. His work was at first mainly in wheatbelt areas and included a period in 1932 on soil surveys in the Gabbin-Bullfinch areas and at Salmon Gums. From 1938 to 1942 he was seconded to the University Institute of Agriculture for rural economics studies. These included power farming, gas producers, the pig industry, dairying, land settlement and organised marketing. In 1945 he associated with Professor G. A. Currie in preparing for the Commonwealth a scheme for the rural training of ex-servicemen.

He was a member of the Royal Commission on Wheat Stabilisation and Marketing in 1945, of a Committee of Enquiry on War Service Land Settlement in Western Australia in 1947, and also served on the Superphosphate Enquiry Committee in 1950. On many occasions he assisted the Director of Agriculture and the Hon. Minister for Agriculture at meetings of Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agricultural Council. He also accompanied many important overseas visitors on tours in Western Australia to give them the benefit of his wide knowledge of the State's agriculture.

Mr. Roberts was for many years Secretary of C.S.I.R.O. State Advisory Committee and State Secretary of the Food and Agriculture Organisation. He resided at St. George's University College since 1943 with post of senior tutor.

A very wide circle of friends and colleagues will long remember the good companionship of Phil Roberts as a sportsman, host, traveller or camper. Visits with him to his holiday homes at Point Peron and Nornalup were a special pleasure for they revealed his interests in nature as well as his wide reading habits, also his culinary skill and taste for good food and wines. He had played cricket, tennis and golf and was still an active squash player.

Tree planting was a special hobby and in the weeks immediately before his death Mr. Roberts saw a large tree planting programme in the Department's South Perth grounds actively in progress. He had been the convenor of the tree planting committee.

Mr. Roberts was unmarried. Two sisters and three nieces survive him.

