



SIR ARTHUR OLVER

(1875-1961)

Foundation Fellow

BIRTH, EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION

ARTHUR OLVER was born in 1875 in Trescowe, Bodmin, Cornwall, England. His father Mr. Robert Sobey Olver was a prominent agriculturist. The agriculture profession of his father greatly influenced his career because since the very childhood he was associated with the scientific breeding and care of high class stock of various kinds. He was always greatly interested in all matters affecting the practical breeding and rearing of such stock.

After completion of his school studies he was a student at the Royal Veterinary College, London and graduated in 1897 and he was one of the few who ever gained honours in the final examination. He wrote and submitted a thesis on "Trypanosomiasis of Domestic Animals in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan" and was awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (FRCVS) in 1908, from the data which he collected while working in Sudan during 1906 to 1908.

CAREER

After qualifying for the Veterinary profession in 1897 and spending two years in practical Veterinary work in England, he was commissioned Lieutenant in Army Veterinary Corps in 1899. During South African campaign he served as Staff Officer to Sir Frederick Smith, under whom he worked at Daspoot Laboratories before they were removed to the present Onderstepoort Research Institute. During the Boer War in South Africa he worked with Sir Arnold Theiler under whose able guidance he got intensive training in tropical diseases. Infact, it was this training which helped Col. Arthur to achieve higher positions both in civil and military services. He was seconded to the Egyptian Army and Sudan Government during 1906 to 1908 as P.V.O. He initiated a Civil Sudanese Veterinary Services under his control and were able to stamp out Rinderpest on the Nile, North of Khartum and was able to establish a lucrative cattle trade with Egypt.

On his return from Sudan and Egypt in 1908 he was appointed as Assistant Director General of Veterinary Services to the War Office. Then came the Great War I in which he was closely associated with the direction of a highly successful Army



Veterinary expedition in France and towards the end of that war he was charged with the direction of the British Remount Commission in Canada and North America. He was greatly benefitted of gaining practical experience of the work of the Bureau of Animal Industry of the United States of America of which another outstanding Veterinarian Dr. J.H. Mohler was the chief. Col. Arthur became A.D.V.S. and retired as D.D.V.S. Northern Command RAVC India in 1930 as Colonel. For eight years (1930-38) he was Animal Husbandry Expert to the Govt. of India. Col. Arthur relinquished charge of this post on 25th, May, 1938 and was selected as representative of India at Imperial Veterinary Bureau, Paris. But instead of joining this post he joined as Principal of the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College (1938-45).

During Boer War the intensive training on tropical diseases which Col. Arthur received under the supervision of Sir Arnold Theiler gave him ample opportunity to have considerable experience of the control of diseases among large number of animals under such widely different conditions as those which existed in South Africa and subsequently in Sudan and Egypt, Canada and United States of America. In all the work, the great economic value of Scientific Veterinary control of diseases and scientifically directed Veterinary and animal husbandry services impressed him greatly. He was of the view that scientifically directed service would be capable of producing far greater results than a less well organized and ill-equipped services.

While working in Sudan and Egypt he was able to completely clear of such scourges as Rinderpest and East Coast Fever as a result of critical investigation of diseases under scientific direction. In the great war, the Army Veterinary services which for the first time in history was able to function as an organized service under his control as Vety. Director, succeeded in keeping contagious diseases so well under control that wastage of operation during this war seldom exceeded 10% per annum, whereas in no previous war it had been less than 50% per annum.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN INDIA

After retirement from the Royal Army Veterinary Corps with a vast amount of experience at his credit in various capacities in different parts of the world. Arthur was selected to join the newly created post of Animal Husbandry Expert to the Govt. of India on the recommendation of Royal Commission on Agriculture in India and the Advisory Board of Imperial Council of Agricultural Research. The appointment of this eminent person was gratifying in view of the fact that the highest position in Veterinary and Animal Husbandry wing was being occupied by a Veterinary Surgeon, although the post was open for even non-professional as well. It was this period when Veterinary and animal husbandry work in civil departments in India was at very low level because these departments had been without a Veterinary expert at the Central Govt. for previous 18 years. He initiated a new era in Veterinary and animal husbandry work in India. Although the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research



was established towards the end of 1929 but the Departments concerned with Animal Husbandry in India were not in a position to utilise the financial facilities offered by the council because they lacked coordination. The animal husbandry work lagged behind the agricultural work because; (i) the Veterinary Deptts. in India were greatly undermanned, (ii) the existing Veterinary colleges were compelled by circumstances to accept comparatively low standard of educational and scientific training for their graduates.

After Col. Arthur joined, the work got impetus and schemes for research came up for provinces and private bodies. The first and foremost scheme which Col. Arthur got sanctioned was the appointment of Veterinary Investigation Officer in eight major provinces and Hyderabad State with a view to investigate and systematic study of various disease problems and coordinated measures for their control that striking results on the prevention, control and eradication of diseases could be hoped for. He gave due importance to the local condition and said that without the knowledge of local disease conditions, obtained from such investigations, further research was impossible and without an organized Veterinary Service capable of applying this knowledge, it was not possible to reap the benefits made possible by research.

During his early years in the office of A.H. Expert he knew that diseases like haemorrhagic septicemia, black quarter, Anthrax and a variety of acute contagious diseases were being attended to more or less effectively being dealt with, but a number of other diseases of equal or even greater economic importance such as parasitic infestations, protozoal diseases of various kinds; and diseases caused directly or indirectly by mineral or other deficiencies in the food require greater attention, because the facilities for the systematic investigation of these diseases were not available. He wanted all the Veterinarians working in various provinces to make careful clinical observation, through post-mortem examination whenever an opportunity occurred and thus collecting materials for further investigation.

While presiding over the Seventh session of All India Veterinary Conference held in December 1930 at Mysore, he was emphatic that without effective measures for the prevention and control of diseases all efforts to improve livestock would be a waste and impressed that Veterinarians working in Veterinary civil service ought to increase the knowledge about stock and their diseases. In concluding his presidential lecture he further impressed that the primary function of the Veterinary Services of India was the control of contagious diseases and advised both students and graduates of Vety. to have their own endeavours for the advancement of animal husbandry. At the first meeting of the Animal Husbandry wing of the Board of Agriculture held in New Delhi in February 1933 an estimate was submitted by Col. Arthur in collaboration with Mr. Vaidyanathan, Statistician, Imperial Council of Agricultural Research according to which the total yearly value of animal products in India including labour amounted



to something into the neighbourhood of 1900 crores of Rupees at September 1929 prices. To many this figure appeared unbelievably high. In the above mentioned estimate one of the most important products credited to livestock was their labour on which the agriculturist was almost entirely dependent.

As has already been pointed out that the introduction of specially trained disease investigation officers in each major province was his first innovation and which fortunately coincided with the time when Mukteswar Institute was able to place in the field its well known goat virus adopted vaccine against rinderpest. Col. Arthur gave sanction to another Scheme on Tuberculosis and Johnes Disease for thorough study of these diseases amongst livestock. The investigation on rinderpest and nasal granuloma produced results of great economic importance to the country. Besides these developmental aspects he was also interested in getting Staff of Veterinary Services trained in United Kingdom, so that the knowledge acquired during the period of training could be utilized in India. He was also aware of the disease problem in poultry and drew up a scheme under which a research worker was to be sent to United Kingdom for training in poultry diseases and thereafter to be employed for a certain number of years on the investigation of poultry diseases in India. The value of work done by Disease Investigation Officers in various provinces drew attention to the necessity for precise investigation of disease conditions of which the causes were known but the control measures were not adequately available.

He knew that animal nutrition was but a short way to human nutrition therefore, he gave due importance to the problems on animal nutrition investigation, and took keen interest for provision of proper facilities for the investigation of animal nutrition in some provinces and in the existing organization at Izatnagar with an objective to provide better care and management of livestock through India.

After attaining much success in disease control and animal nutrition, Arthur gave sanction to the research work on goat breeding scheme at Etah and it was during his period that some advances were made particularly in the matter of developing some of the Indian breeds of milch goats. Sheep breeding also occupied his attention and he gave a sanction to a Coordinated sheep breeding programme to be experimented within the areas against each viz. Bikaneri sheep at Hissar, Deccani at Hissar, Dumbas at Bharkhand Baluchistan (now Pakistan) and Guddi at Kangra.

He wanted to establish Animal Husbandry Bureau in India with a view to continue the systematic examination, collation and publication of such statistical matter as was available. He also considered useful to make a start with official registration of the best breeds of pure bred stock on All India basis. Arthur was aware of systematic development of indigeneous breeds of Indian milch cattle carried out by Military Dairy Farms. The results of the work done in this regard had shown that, cows of the best Indian milch breeds could with proper care and strict selection



be raised to levels of milk production even exceeding those of good dairy herds of European cattle in this or other countries. During the investigation of milch qualities of Indian cattle the question of pedigree naturally came to his mind and he found this subject very close to his own heart. He was aware of the indiscriminate breeding which was practiced in India. He wrote an article on "The necessity for Authoritative definition of Breed characteristics and unchanging control of breeding policy in India", in 1931. He pointed out that in India the danger of inbreeding in cattle was certainly far less than from indiscriminate crossing and from the frequent changes in breeding policy, which have taken place in the past. In this regard even Royal Commission in Agriculture also drew attention that much of ill success was due to frequent changes in policy of breeding. He concluded that before anything could be achieved, accurate surveys of the present position; authoritative definition of distinctive characteristics of the various breeds, and some form of permanent control of breeding policy should be done. He continued to lay emphasis that unless something was done to define and preserve a few pure basic strains of blood which existed at that time, there was grave danger that some of them would be entirely lost or extinct. This was the farsightedness of Col. Arthur and today we realize that this forecasting on breeding policy has come true. He was also instrumental in introducing herd book registers for seven recognized milch breeds of cattle and buffalo. Arthur in the course of his surveys of Indian cattle conditions saw the necessity for authoritative definition of breeds characteristic and published a monograph on the subjects. He noted that 21 breeds of cows observed by him may be reduced to five main types viz., the large white cattle of North, the distinct Mysore type, the highly peculiar cross cattle of Kathiawar, the small and scattered Hill cattle and Dhani cattle of Punjab. These investigations showed that in a few years selected milch breeds of pure Indian origin could; by scientific feeding management combined with systematic breeding control, would be raised to levels of efficiency as high as or higher than those of imported European cattle and their crosses.

Arthur presented a paper "The organization necessity for further development of animal husbandry in India" in the first meeting of the Animal Husbandry wing of the Board of Agriculture held in 1933 wherein he emphasized the need to systematically improve the best indigeneous breeds and organize grading, marketing and effective distribution of all kinds so that both producers and consumers could receive the greater benefit from stock. Such organization was necessary for dairy Industry in India. He further continued to emphasize that to place this dairy industry on a more sound footing far more strict control was necessary as regards standards of purity and to sanitary methods of production while better organization and facilities for handling and distribution was essential. He also gave similar remarks to the egg and poultry industry and to the trade in wool and hair and in hides and skin. He was of the opinion that better organization and closer Government control of these trades would be required in India if they were to be satisfactorily developed.



Arthur had also arrived at a conclusion that through scientific feeding and management the average daily milk yield per cow could be increased from 8-15 lbs to 14.6 lbs and cost of production also would be reduced by about 40 percent. He was optimistic about the future of livestock development in India, because he was of the view that there was unlimited scope of such work in this vast country. He was the greatest missionary of cow in India.

VETERINARY AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY EDUCATION

Another important area which drew the attention of Arthur was the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Education. He recommended in this regard to the five Veterinary Colleges which existed during those times, to include a dairy farm in each college in order that the students might have a greater bias towards animal husbandry. He also suggested the provision of a Central Veterinary College at Izatnagar to provide training upto the M.R.C.V.S. standard, with a view to provide higher standard of education and training facilities in the field of animal husbandry and Veterinary sciences. On 19th September, 1937 while giving a broadcast talk from Delhi he observed that the lot of the people of India could be greatly improved provided their cattle were reasonably well fed and maintained on cultivated land; instead of being kept in a State of Semistarvation on uncultivated land and overgrazed village grazing areas.

He concluded that great economic and social benefit could be derived from the adoption of the Sounder's system of agriculture based on maintenance on the cultivated area of such numbers of livestock as were needed to produce adequate supply of milk as well as working bullocks.

The first Animal Husbandry Research workers conference was organized in 1936 under the chairmanship of Arthur with a view to discuss and exchange information amongst persons working in animal husbandry and Veterinary Service of various provinces. Similarly organization of cattle show at national level which is held every year is the brain child of Arthur. The purpose of the show was to demonstrate the valuable material already available in this country for livestock improvement work and also to stress the potentialities of the Indian breeds of cattle. The first cattle show was organized under the chairmanship of Arthur who left no stone unturned to make the event a great success. A special attraction was a special bulletin by Arthur which contained a brief description with photograph of representative twenty five of best known breeds of cattle and buffaloes. During the year 1937-38 Arthur gave sanction to a number of schemes on different problems viz. diseases produced by anaerobes particularly the investigation on the incidence of black leg in cattle; incidence and control of diseases among sheep and goats, and establishment of Quarantine Stations. He relinquished the charge of the office of Animal Husbandry Expert on 25th May, 1938.



He was the principal of the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College (1938-45). During this period he had to overcome with many difficulties, war, economics, depleted staff and other troubles. However, inspite of the adverse circumstances Sir Arthur rendered great service to the college and added considerably to its development and prestige.

Keeping in view the accomplished tasks and future schemes Arthur put the animal husbandry and Veterinary Services of India in firm footing and today the enormous growth in Veterinary and Animal Husbandry work which we observe, whether it be disciplines on animal health or production and technology, it is the result of far reaching schemes formulated by Arthur.

HONOURS

During his army career, Arthur was recipient of many honours viz. Queens S. Africa medal with two Clasps, Order of Osmanieh 4th. Class, 1914 star, British war and Victory Medals, CB and C.M.G. He was awarded F.R.C.V.S. in 1908. He was the President of VII All India Veterinary Conference held at Mysore in 1930. Col. Arthur was decorated with the title of 'Sir' sometime during 1936. He was President at the Silver Jubilee session of the Indian Science Congress in 1937-38. Col. Sir Arthur was conferred with 'Knight hood' at the time of coronation of His Majesty King George VI for the commendable contribution in the field of animal husbandry, some time in 1937-38. His election to Fellowship of the Society took place in 1939 and he served as a member of Council for the period 1940-43. He died on 15th August, 1961 in London.

PERSONAL LIFE

He married Marjorie Beart in 1914. A son was born to them. After retirement from the post of Principal Royal (Dick) Veterinary College he left to his farm in South of England which he developed as one of the finest pedigree herds of Jersey cattle. But the difficulties of labour compelled him to sell out the farm in 1959. After leaving this work he spent his time in sketching and painting. Sir Arthur was not only an energetic person in office but he played with same vigour.

P. C. HARBOLA

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