

OBITUARY

ROBERT P. GILLESPIE,

Dr R. P. Gillespie, who died at Edzell on 1st January 1977, at the age of 73, gave a lifetime of devoted service to the University of Glasgow, where he was successively Assistant, Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Mathematics.

Robert Pollock Gillespie, born in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, on 21st November, 1903, received the latter part of his secondary education at Paisley Grammar School of which he was Dux in 1920. He then entered Glasgow University where in 1924 he graduated M.A. with First Class Honours in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy and B.Sc. with special distinction in these two subjects. For the latter degree he also studied Astronomy to a considerable extent and was greatly influenced by Professor Ludwig Becker whose lectures on Hamiltonian mechanics as applied to the solar system were superbly good. Being the top man of his year in Mathematics, Gillespie was awarded the Bryce fellowship, of which he was the first recipient. This award enabled him to go to Cambridge where as a research student of E. W. Hobson he worked on the calculus of variations. For a thesis on this subject he was awarded the degree of Ph.D. in 1932.

In 1928, Gillespie returned to Glasgow University as an Assistant in Mathematics and after four years was promoted to a lectureship. His main contribution to the Mathematics Department during the 1930s was the reorganisation of the analysis side of the class work of the final honours year. The Second World War then intervened, and for a major part of it Gillespie served in the Royal Air Force, finally holding the rank of Squadron-Leader. His main work was at Prestwick, where he was in charge of the flight control of aircraft over a region stretching out to mid-Atlantic. He was held in high esteem by all ranks and was affectionately known as the "Prof." On the cessation of hostilities Gillespie returned to his university post and during the next few years assumed with his slightly younger colleague, Dr T. S. Graham, an ever increasing responsibility for the running of the Department. He was meticulously careful in everything, had a strong sense of duty and stood for the highest standards. His own devotion and vigilance along with a rigorous sense of fairness made him highly respected by both staff and students alike.

The fruits of Gillespie's teaching are preserved in his three books *Integration, Partial Differentiation* and *Solving Problems in Advanced Calculus*, Vol. I. Unfortunately, Vol. II of the last named book, though completed in manuscript, was never published as the publishers decided to abandon the *Solving Problems* series. These books contain beautiful examples, devised by Gillespie as examination questions but some of which, intended to stretch the ablest students, are extremely demanding.

Gillespie served Glasgow University well in various other ways. For example, as a young member of staff he acted for a number of years as Warden of the student residence MacBrayne Hall, while in his latter years he served for a period on the University Court and on several of its committees. Here his sound common sense along with his perceptive judgement and realistic attitude to everything was highly valued.

Gillespie was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1932. He was twice

President of our own society and, during his second term of office, presided very acceptably over the St Andrews Colloquium of 1968.

In his home life, Gillespie was serenely happy and was devoted to his family and grandchildren. His wife was formerly Mary (Maisie) Bowman, daughter of the late Professor A. A. Bowman, and they had three daughters and one son, Alastair, who is at present a Lecturer in Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh. Their interests were wide, their activities many, and their hospitality both generous and widely embracing. Gillespie will long be remembered with gratitude by a host of former students and friends.

D. MARTIN