

Arthur St George Joseph McCarthy Huggett

* 23 April 1897. † 21 July 1968.



»Hugo« and his younger sister were the only children of Arthur Henry Richard Huggett and his wife Helen Mary. Their father was a Lecturer in Botany at London University. Hugo qualified in medicine at St Thomas's Hospital in 1918, before entering the army and serving in the Archangel expedition of 1918—1919. In 1919 he came back to the Department of Physiology at St Thomas's and started research under Professor John Mellanby. In 1930 he was appointed Lecturer in Physiology at Leeds, and 1931 Reader in Pharmacology there. He became Professor of Physiology at St Mary's Hospital Medical School, London, in 1935, retiring from there in 1964. From then on, he worked as consultant and research worker at the Moredun Institute at Edinburgh, having been made Emeritus Professor of the University of London when he retired from St Mary's.

He had several degrees and fellowships, including D Sc (London), Fellow of the Royal Society, Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He married thrice, first Margaret Mary Head, who died in 1934 leaving a daughter and a son: then Professor Esther Margaret Killick, by whom he had two daughters: she died in 1960, and he married finally Professor Helen Kemp Porter, FRS.

Hugo was devoted to his research, to the pursuit of truth, and to his friends, who were numerous. After initial research on the circulation, respiration and digestive enzymes, Hugo started research on the physiology of the foetus and mother, which he was to continue for over forty more years. At the same time, he published a series of papers on blood clotting and anticoagulents. At St Mary's, once the war was over, he set out to build his department to numbers adequate to carry out its teaching and research. What two full-time scientists carried out in 1939 is now shared between three whole departments and one sub-department. Hugo sought out men »with fire in their bellies«, and the measure of his success is shown in the future careers of those who worked under and with him — there is an almost surprisingly high number of professors of physiology or medicine.

With all this, he also found time to play an active and even decisive part in the modernisation of conditions for both staff and students in the medical school, after the war. No-one ever sought his help over personal difficulties without getting this in ample measure. He was a great human being.

In his research, Hugo was not concerned solely with the human, but with variants through the whole animal kingdom. His foetal research started in goats and subsequently a major experimental animal was the sheep. Rats and rabbits were also used extensively. During sabbatical leave in Baltimore in 1953—4, much time was spent in working on monkeys with colleagues at Johns Hopkins University. He did some work on sloths, and even visited Madagascar in search of lemurs. His visit to Føroyar (The Faroes) in 1957 as leader of a 2-man team from the Royal Society was in order to explore the possibility of using grindahvalur (the pilot whale) for research. But while anatomical and biochemical data were obtained, it was not possible to carry out research comparable to his sheep work. However, this visit was the stimulus for later work on foetal growth rates in a number of whale species, which was continuing up to his death. One of his last international visits was to the Whales Research Institute in Tokyo.

Dr. J. F. D. Frazer.