

## Obituary Notice

DOROTHY HOLLINGSWORTH OBE  
(1916–1994)

Dorothy Hollingsworth became a member of the Nutrition Society in 1941, the year she joined the Ministry of Food, at the age of 24, to work on the food survey that started the year before as an integral part of the government's wartime food policy. She was well suited to the task. She grew up in Newcastle upon Tyne, obtained a B.Sc. in Chemistry from the University of Durham in 1937, and went on to study Dietetics at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, qualifying in 1939. She then worked for 2 years as a dietitian at the Royal Northern Hospital in London, providing meals to patients throughout the Battle of Britain. She thus combined a sound scientific background with experience of practical application, and a strong sense of public service. These attributes characterized her entire career. (She has written that one of her reasons for not wanting to work in the chemical industry after graduation was the possibility that this might have involved her in chemical warfare.)

The wartime food survey was confined to urban working-class households, then thought to have been most at risk, but in 1950 it was extended to all classes and to all parts of Great Britain. It was overseen by the National Food Survey (NFS) Committee, established in 1947 with membership from universities, research organizations and government departments. The Committee was serviced by two secretaries from the Ministry: a statistician and a nutritionist. Dorothy was the latter, a position she held until 1965 when she became a full member of the Committee, continuing to serve until 1985. Thus for 44 years she had an intimate connection with a unique source of information about changing patterns of food consumption in Britain, helping to shape the Survey's policy, practice and interpretation, and the application of its findings. And, as with food consumption, so with food composition: one of her first tasks in the Ministry was to compile a table of food composition to apply to the Survey to estimate the nutritional value of wartime diets. She developed close links with research workers at Medical Research Council laboratories, food research institutes, and universities, who were studying the nutrient content of foods or the nutrient requirements of individuals. She was Chairman of the interdepartmental Committee on Food Composition from its inception in the mid-1960s to her resignation from government service in 1970, initiating *inter alia* the revision by Alison Paul and David Southgate of McCance and Widdowson's 'The Composition of Foods'. She was actively concerned to follow evolving understanding of nutritional requirements, and their application to assess the nutritional adequacy of diets and food supplies.

Dorothy's breadth and depth of experience regarding food consumption, food composition and nutritional requirements, coupled with her forthright and outspoken manner in discussion, tempered always with good humour, led to many invitations to speak at meetings, participate in expert committees and working groups, and write articles for scientific and lay readerships. She was a good committee woman. She especially valued her contacts abroad, and loved travelling. She sometimes was a member of the British delegation to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

conference, and served on international bodies concerned with nutrition, dietetics and food science. This brought her into contact with a wide variety of people, and led to many friendships.

It was, she says, The Nutrition Society that provided her first experiences in public speaking and debate: perhaps 'experience' is not a sufficiently adequate word, for she writes of her gratitude for 'that early tutelage'. She certainly enjoyed her membership, and served the Society well: as Honorary Programmes Secretary from 1957 to 1962; as Honorary Secretary from 1962 to 1965; and as an elected member of Council for 1975, 1976 and 1977. She was the formal representative of the Society to the Institute of Biology for many years, until 1983, and was Vice-President of the Institute from 1978 to 1980. It was while she was Secretary that the Society recognized that the scope of the work had become so large that an Executive Secretary was warranted, and she and the Honorary Treasurer, Arnold Bender, appointed June Schulkes' predecessor and installed her in a small office in Chandos House at the Royal Society of Medicine.

Other societies with which Dorothy was actively involved included the British Dietetic Association, of which she was Chairman from 1947 to 1949; the Society of Chemical Industry, where she chaired the Food Group's Nutrition Panel between 1966 and 1969; and the Institute of Food Science and Technology, where she served on the Council from 1970 to 1989 and was Vice-President from 1976 to 1980. She served on the Royal Society's British National Committee for Nutritional Sciences from 1970 to 1989, and was Secretary-General of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) from 1978 to 1985. She was the first woman on the IUNS Council and the first woman to hold office.

Dorothy was always very interested in the history of nutrition, and was enormously appreciative of the opportunity to prepare a revised edition of Drummond and Wilbraham's classic 'The Englishman's Food. A History of Five Centuries of English Diet'. She contributed a final chapter bringing the story up to date with an account of the development and application of food and nutrition policy up to, during, and after World War II. She was especially well placed to do this, having worked with Drummond for most of the time he was Scientific Advisor at the Ministry of Food from 1940 to 1946, and kept up with him until Sir Jack's tragic murder, together with that of his wife and daughter, on a camping holiday in northern France in 1952. The book led to the making or strengthening of many friendships, both in its preparation and as a result of its publication in 1957.

In 1958 Dorothy was awarded the OBE in recognition of her public service and achievements, which gave her much pleasure and satisfaction. She had been Head of the Ministry's Nutrition Branch since 1949, and continued in this position, after the merger into the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, until she retired in 1970 at the age of 54 to become Director (later Director-General) of the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF), with Professor Frank Young as President. The BNF was established as an independent organization, concerned to promote research, education and information in nutrition, with funding from industrial members; its first Director-General, Alastair Frazer, had died suddenly the year before. Dorothy managed this substantial transition with characteristic verve, and relished the challenges of promoting authoritative and independent judgements on nutritional issues to the food industry, the public, and the mass media. She enjoyed co-editing the proceedings of the several Conferences on food and nutrition that were sponsored by the BNF, and remained a member of its Scientific

Advisory Committee and Editorial Advisory Board after her retirement from the BNF at the end of 1977.

Retirement permitted her to become more selective in pursuing the subjects that interested her. She was happy to continue association with many of the bodies with which she had been involved, including membership of the Medical Advisory Panel of the independent Broadcasting Authority, and her substantial work with IUNS began.

Her interests in nutrition history, food policy and social issues came fittingly together in her work for the Family Budget Unit (FBU) during the last decade of her life. The FBU continues in the tradition of Seebohm Rowntree at the beginning of the century, and Beveridge in the middle, and is unique in the UK in providing budget standards to mitigate the risks of poverty and financial injustice. These are being found of great value by an increasing number of private and institutional users. Dorothy with her extensive knowledge of the NFS and related matters and her wide range of contacts was extremely helpful to the Nutrition Working Group which produced the food component of the budgets for various family types (expenditure on food typically accounting for 14 to 21% of total household expenditure). Latterly she became a trustee of the FBU, and assiduously attended meetings.

Dorothy was a lively companion and able in retirement to spend more time enjoying her interests in the theatre and in music, in gardening and the countryside. She enjoyed walking with her brother Bob in their native Northumberland. She became a voluntary guide at the National Trust properties at Knowle and Ightham Mote, readily accessible from her home in Petts Wood. She spent increasing time in local activities, and became a formidable bridge player. She also became more involved with her local church, surprising herself by discovery of new and supportive friends.

Right up to her sudden death on 16 February 1994, after a brief illness in hospital, she continued to receive invitations to give talks, or write articles. Indeed, the January 1994 issue of the BNF Nutrition Bulletin contained a book review by her which concluded, with characteristic pithiness: 'a book to be used and enjoyed'. In a way that almost amounts to an epitaph, for her life was unquestionably useful, and she enjoyed it to the full with an enthusiasm that brought much pleasure to her many friends.

J. PETER GREAVES