

ASHBY, ARTHUR WILFRED (1886 - 1953), agricultural economist

Name: Arthur Wilfred Ashby
Date of birth: 1886
Date of death: 1953
Spouse: Rhoda Dean Ashby (née Bland)
Parent: Hannah Ashby
Parent: Joseph Ashby
Gender: Male
Occupation: agricultural economist
Area of activity: Economics and Money; Nature and Agriculture
Author: Llywelyn Phillips

Born 19 August 1886, eldest son of Joseph and Hannah Ashby, Tysoe, Warwickshire. He was educated in the village school and after leaving at the age of twelve he helped his father (who appears to have been a very remarkable man and a local leader) until he was 23 years old, when he gained a scholarship at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1909. He took a diploma (with distinction) in economics and political science. In 1912 following the award of a scholarship by the Board of Agriculture he went to the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics at Oxford and then to the University of Wisconsin. There he studied the history of allotments and smallholdings and his book *Allotments and smallholdings in Oxfordshire* (1917) on this topic remains a standard work. He worked with the Board of Agriculture between 1917 and 1919, and during those years played a leading role in establishing the first Agricultural Wages Board. After a period on the staff of the Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics at Oxford, he went to Aberystwyth in 1924 as head of the new department of agricultural economics in the University College of Wales. He was made professor in 1929, the first chair in agricultural economics in Great Britain. He returned to Oxford as director of the Institute of Research in Agricultural Economics in 1946 and held the post until he retired in 1952.

Ashby was a prominent figure in a small group who pioneered agricultural economics as a separate area of study. During the years he spent at Aberystwyth he had an opportunity to reveal his talent in this field; he gave strong leadership both within the college and in agricultural circles outside. The education of young country people was important to him, and as a member of the committee which awarded scholarships to the sons and daughters of rural workers he had an opportunity to do his best for them over the years. With his practical experience of farm life and work he endeavoured as a member of the Agricultural Wages Board from 1924 onwards to maintain and deepen the good relationship between farmers and farm-workers. He also worked tirelessly to promote agricultural co-operation and supported the activities of the Welsh Agricultural Organisation Society. He played a great part behind the scenes in forming agricultural marketing schemes, including establishing the Milk Marketing Board, which more than any other initiative was responsible for bringing the agriculture of the lowlands of Wales (and the whole of the United Kingdom for that matter) out of poverty from 1933 onwards.

He contributed numerous articles on his subject to many journals, and his book (with **Ifor L. Evans**, 1897 - 1952) in 1943, *The Agriculture of Wales and Monmouth*, is a mine of information on agricultural history for the period 1867 to 1939. He received an honorary degree of M.A. from the University of Wales in 1923 and M.A. by decree in 1946 from the University of Oxford; he was elected a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford in 1947. He was a justice of the peace, and was appointed a C.B.E. in 1946. In 1922 he married Rhoda Dean Bland and they had one son. He died 9 September 1953, in Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford.

Author

Llywelyn Phillips, (1914 - 1981)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 1951-60

Richard Phillips, *Pob un Âç'i gwys* (Aberystwyth 1970)

Who was who?, 1951-60

personal knowledge

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Arthur Ashby](#)

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