

OBITUARY

Keith John Middleton (1943-1993)

Keith John Middleton died unexpectedly on 14 January 1993 after a short illness.

Keith had worked for the Department of Primary Industries for the last 23 years and was well known to many Society members through his work on diseases of field crops. He was born at Tall-egalla near Rosewood in south-east Queensland and completed his secondary education at Gatton. He gained a diploma in plant pathology with honours from Gatton College and was offered a scholarship with the Department of Primary Industries to complete a degree in agricultural science. His first posting was to Toowoomba where he worked for seven years on problems such as seedling diseases and verticillium wilt in cotton as well as rust and rhizopus head-rot of sunflower.

After transfer to Kingaroy in 1975, he concentrated his research on diseases of peanuts and navy beans. Local producers can cite many examples of new agricultural practices which resulted from his applied work on problems such as sclerotium rot of peanuts. In that instance, his recommendation to retain more organic matter virtually eliminated a problem which had been estimated to cause a loss of \$3.5M per year.

Keith became involved with the aflatoxin problem in peanuts, and in 1977 was part of a Queensland delegation which visited the United States to investigate ways of minimising contamination. The policies developed then are still in place today.

Other significant contributions include his work on rust and sclerotinia blight of navy beans.

Keith's influence in plant pathology extended overseas through consultancies and through his considerable involvement in a recently completed ACIAR project on peanut improvement in Indonesia. He had visited China twice, the peanut growing areas of Georgia in the United States, and Indonesia on many occasions. The Indonesian work resulted in integration of expertise in plant pathology into broader cropping systems, and he was particularly interested in management of losses from rust and peanut stripe virus, which he recognised as major threats to the peanut industry. His efforts on peanut stripe virus resulted in the present ACIAR project in which coat protein resistance is being engineered into susceptible genotypes.

In recent years, Keith turned his attention towards management, first as Regional Manager in



Plant Pathology Branch and then, under the new Departmental structure, as Field Crops Manager for the South-East Region.

Many of his colleagues were aware of his involvement in community organisations, but the depth of his commitment was revealed only during the eulogy delivered by Mr Doug Collyer at his funeral. He was deeply involved in church matters at St Michaels and All Angels where he was church warden, a member of the parochial council and liturgical assistant. He was also a charter member of the Kingaroy-Taabinga Rotary Club and was President in 1990/91. The youth exchange and group study exchange programs were of particular interest to him, and he was awarded a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary in 1988 for his services. He was also deeply committed to community organisations throughout the education of his daughters, Kerri and Jillian. He was one of those people who served his community through P&C Associations and other activities which flowed from this work.

Keith is survived by his wife Betty, and his two daughters. His dedication to his family, his community and his profession serve as examples to us all. We, his colleagues, are proud to have known him and record his passing with a great deal of sadness.

I F Muirhead