

Surname: Robertson

Christian Names: Eric Desmond.

Place and date of birth: Neemuch, India. 15th October, 1914.

Nationality: British.

Education:

1921-1927: Eddington House Preparatory School, Herne Bay, Kent.  
 1927-1930: Aberdeen Grammar School.  
 1930: Entered Aberdeen University at the age of 16.  
 1933: Graduated B.Sc. (Forestry). The course included a study tour in Thuringia.  
 1935: Graduated B.Sc. (pure science; principal subject, Zoology required on occasion to subsidiary subject, Botany).  
 Shared Hunter Memorial Prize with A.E. Ritchie. (Awarded annually to the "most distinguished graduate of the year in the faculty of science").  
 University authorities supported application for Commonwealth Fund fellowship. and delivered a number

1928-1933: Sustained study of violin and theory of music. took part in broadcast plays with casts including Marie May and other professional actors then in Singapore.

Career:

1936-1937: Temporary appointment with H.M. Forestry Commission. Duties also included handling of American

1937-1938: Joined Messrs. Guthrie & Co. Ltd. and underwent preliminary office experience prior to proceeding to Malaya as the company's scientific officer. Wilken Durdin, New York Times, and George Waller,

1938-1939: Planned and implemented, from headquarters in the Federated Malay States capital, the extension of an embryo organisation set up by Messrs. Guthrie & Co. Ltd. for research in soil science and plant genetics. This work was completed to the satisfaction of the company in August 1939, and I gave three months notice prior to resignation. and made first recordings of Ple-Temiar dream music.

October, 1939: Appointed to Colonial Service. Duties included preparation of a Working Plan for the next ten years for the Matang Mangrove Forests, - an area of Japanese approximately a thousand square miles.

Leisure hours and short leaves devoted to work with H.D. Noone, Field Ethnographer and Protector of Aborigines, Perak, at archaeological sites, and on anthropological research among Ple-Temiar Hill Tribes.

February- April, 1941: Attached to 3rd Corps Headquarters, Malaya Command, on special duty.

January, 1943: Seconded by F.R.B. to Government of India, and appointed Special Officer in charge of Far East

10th April, 1941: Transferred to the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation, Singapore. Placed in charge of talks planning and production. Increased output from ten talks a month to fifty. Planned and produced various series on scientific, literary, political and general topics. programme time daily at the end of 1942 to fifteen

Talks output included a weekly discussion series, drawing on well-known personalities resident in and in transit through Singapore, a weekly commentary on Far Eastern affairs, with speakers ranging from the Commander in Chief, Sir Robert Brooke Popham, to a member of the Burmese House of Representatives, and



a science series on subjects ranging from stone age artefacts in Malaya to practical hydroponics. Weekly book and film reviews were initiated after trials of potential critics. "Utility" talks on A.R.P., gardening, etc. were introduced as well as travel talks and interviews. The planning of the service, in the absence of a listener research organisation, was based on the questioning of representatives of the various communities, discussions with the Ministry of Information representative and the Malayan Government's Department of Information, and frequent informal talks with the Chairman. Plans were developed and adapted in the light of increasing programme correspondence.

Owing to shortage of staff, I was also required on occasion to read the news, recruit and train part-time announcers, commission and produce features. This involved me in the planning of English programmes; latterly, I was required to attend to co-ordination of English and vernacular programmes. I also wrote and delivered a number of news commentaries and short stories, and took part in broadcast plays with casts including Marie Ney and other professional actors then in Singapore.

Duties also included handling of American correspondents who made use of MBC transmission facilities, including Cecil Brown, CBS, and Harrison Forman, NBC. Discussion series had Tilman Durbin, New York Times, and George Weller, Chicago Daily News, as guest speakers. Gave some background material on Malaya to Weller, who refers to this material and the source in his book on the Malayan campaign.

Took MBC experimental recording unit on tour of Malaya, and made first recordings of Ple-Temiar dream music.

2nd March, 1942: Arrived in Delhi, and was subsequently absorbed into the Far Eastern Bureau, Ministry of Information. Wrote a report of 80,000 words on certain Japanese activities in Malaya.

September-

December, 1942: With Press Attache's Office, Chungking, planning and making provisional arrangements for a "British Hour" which it was hoped to initiate after the completion of negotiations with the Chinese Central Broadcasting Administration.

January, 1943:

Seconded by F.E.B. to Government of India, and appointed Special Officer in charge of Far East Broadcasts, All India Radio. This post involved editorial and administrative duties and the maintenance of liaison with F.E.B., as well as continual attention to the planning of a constantly expanding service, which grew from three hours programme time daily at the end of 1942 to fifteen hours daily in 1945. I also planned and presented a daily session of thirty minutes in English for the Far East.

Organised Far East Newsroom from scratch. Latterly, its staff consisted of newsmen from



the BBC European Service, London dailies and a Singapore paper, some of whom required training in radio news technique, along with a number of Indian sub-editors loaned by A.I.R. This newsroom produced basic bulletins for language units, corresponding roughly to four editions a day, each edition averaging 1800 words. In the early days, I copy-tested and edited the bulk of these bulletins, and latterly wrote lead-stories, sent out flashes, and made up the English bulletin. The Far East Section also produced an average of four news commentaries a day, sometimes six, for the various language services, of which an average of two a day were written by myself over a long period. Periodically, I broadcast despatches, generally political, to the BBC. Duties involved contacts with the U.S.C.W.I. office in Delhi, principally with Messrs. Carter and Andrus.

Received Hunter Memorial Prize with I.A. Ritchie. Annual leaves spent on journeys to Lahoul and Tibet. In the Faculty of Science, University authorities supported application for Resignation from F.E.B. took effect on 14th April, 1945.

15th April, 1945: Joined B.B.C. as Malay Editor. Duties involved editing of daily news bulletin and news commentary, supervision of translation, and presentation of programme. Acted for Japanese editor on a number of occasions, and wrote large part of basic Japanese news bulletin during period of staff shortage.

References: Planned and implemented, from his day-stories in the Federated Malay States capital, the extension of an Professor James Ritchie, Department of Zoology, University of Edinburgh. This work was completed to the satisfaction of the company prior to resignation.

Charles Strachan, Esq., Department of Mathematics, Liverpool University.

E.A. Kennard, Esq., Reuters Ltd., 95, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

Charles Barns, Esq., Director of News and External Service, All India Radio, Delhi. He Managing Mangrove Forests, - an area of approximately a thousand square miles.

W.R. Reid, Esq., New York Office, B.B.C. short leaves devoted to working with F.D. Moore, Field Ethnographer and Protector of Fish Aborigines, Perak, at archaeological sites and on anthropological research among Pils-Tamier Hill Tribes.

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