

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Dame Bridget Ogilvie Hon DSc

Oration by Professor Richard Lilford
Warwick Medical School



Dame Bridget Ogilvie Hon DSc

Professor Dame Bridget Ogilvie is, as her titles suggest, a person of exceptional achievement.

Bridget grew up on an Australian sheep farm and this engendered, in her receptive mind, an interest in the animals she saw around her, in the diseases that afflict the animals and, in due course, in the power of science to transform animal husbandry. Bridget also had educational advantages - her father was an alumnus of Oxford University (no University of Warwick in those days) and she had the benefit of an exceptional teacher at her local village school - one AB Clark. A fascination with life in all its forms, and her passion for education, run like a thread through her career.

Bridget started higher education at Queensland University, but her 'pure science' course failed to excite her imagination so, on learning of a course in 'rural science' at another University, this farmer's daughter immediately made the switch.

Bridget became especially interested in 'animals that infest animals' - namely parasites. Why was it, she asked, that worms, unlike most other infections, are not cleared from the system despite eliciting a vigorous immune response? To find out why, Janet embarked on a PhD in 1963 - still no Warwick, so she went off to Cambridge.

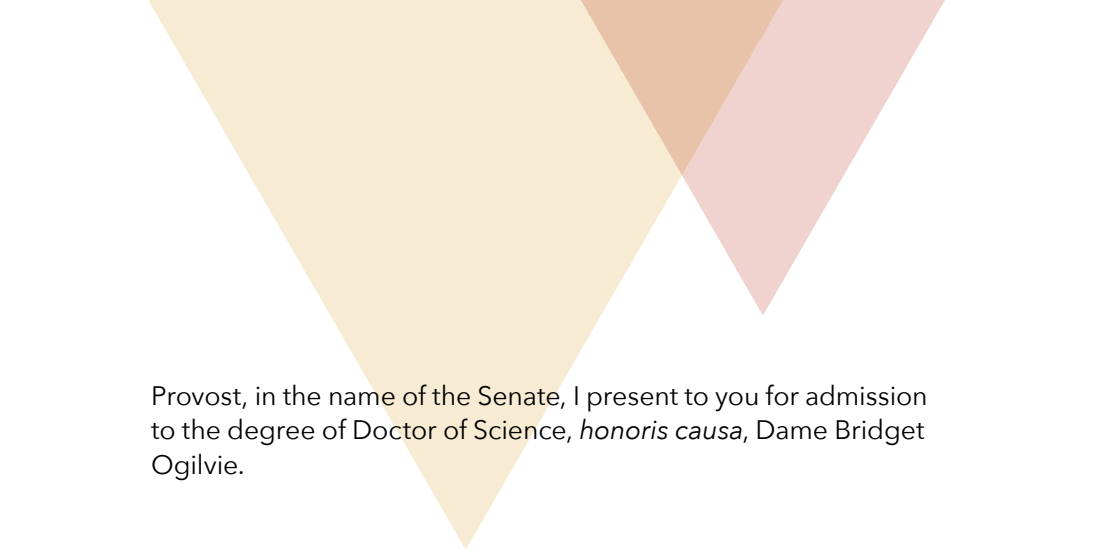
There, and subsequently at the Medical Research Council's Institute in North London, she found that worms excite a type of antibody response not seen in other infections - a response that actually helps worms survive and that, to everyone's surprise, also protects against allergies such as those that cause asthma.

But it was time for Bridget to move on. It is easy to attribute scientific discovery to us scientists. But modern scientists are dependent on how science is funded and governed. So in 1981 Bridget decided to stretch her wings, and accept a senior science policy role at the Wellcome Trust, rising to become its Director in 1991. The Wellcome Trust is the world's second largest medical charity, after the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and currently invests over £1 billion in research each year. Bridget established the Sanger Centre in Cambridge, the first centre in the world to sequence the human genome.

She also increased the rate at which scientific discoveries are translated into practical improvements by sponsoring Clinical Tropical Medicine Centres and our previous Dean of Medicine, Professor Peter Winstanley, was director of such a centre.

True to her passion for education, Bridget also created a career structure for clinical specialists in tropical medicine and expanded the Wellcome Trust program to make science intelligible and interesting to the public at large - a mission she continues since stepping down as Director in 1998. For instance, she is Chair of the Committee on Public Education in Science and Vice-Chair of Sense about Science, an organisation that responds to requests for scientific information from the public.

Bridget Ogilvie has awards too many to mention, but she is a Fellow of the Royal Society and she is a Companion of the Order of Australia - the highest civilian honour that her home country can bestow.



Provost, in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, Dame Bridget Ogilvie.