Geoffrey Dean Loftus-Hills was an able scientist dedicated to a cause – helping the dairy industry introduce new products, improve manufacturing efficiency and improve quality. Lawrie Muller remembers his qualities and achievements.

Loftus, as his colleagues and friends called him, graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1930 with a Bsc. Agr. Sci. After postgraduate studies he joined the Victorian Department of Agriculture, where he worked on factors influencing the keeping quality of dairy products.

During 1934 and 1935 he studied at the National Institute for Research in Dairying in the UK and visited research centres in US and Europe. He left the Department of Agriculture in 1937 to work in private enterprise on continuous buttermaking.

In 1940 he joined the CSIRO Division of Chemical Engineering to work in a small group concerned with chemical engineering developments in dairy manufacturing. This led to his appointment as officer in charge of the Dairy Research Section of CSIRO, which became the Division of Dairy Research in 1962.

Another prominent industry figure, John Bryant, impressed by the usefulness of the Society of Dairy Technology in the UK, proposed a similar society in Australia. Loftus strongly supported the concept and worked hard to bring it about. In the mid-1940s the Australian Society of Dairy Technology (ASDT) was formed.

The first issue of the Australian Journal of Dairy Technology was published in 1946. At that time, each State Division of the Society appointed an editor. Loftus was the editor for Victoria and was editor-in-chief from 1952 to 1968.

When the ASDT formed, I was working on butter quality in the Department of Agriculture and Stock in Queensland. I joined the Society and through this channel met Loftus, who helped me with the presentation of a paper about butter quality. Naturally, I was interested in following the developments at CSIRO and the success of Loftus’ policy of appointing scientific and technical staff who were keen on his concepts and welcomed his leadership to help the industry. Therefore, I was pleased to join the Division in 1958. My original appointment was as technical secretary, but Loftus made it clear that I could undertake research. I learnt a lot from his dedication and drive to make substantial achievements.

Significant advances were made in many areas and the industry responded by adopting the findings and supporting the division.

Loftus’ interests were global and the advent of the International Dairy Federation (IDF) provided a channel of communication he followed. He was Director of the XVIII International Dairy Congress in Australia in 1970 and he was pleased to show IDF personnel his laboratory. He was also president of IDF Commission B – Technology and Engineering.

Loftus retired in 1971, ending an outstanding career. He continued his interest in the ASDT and IDF. He died on July 16, 1999.

The Dairy Industry Association of Australia, the ASDT’s successor, instituted a silver medal in Loftus’ honour in 1976. It is awarded annually to a person who has published an article or articles that make a significant contribution to dairy science or technology.