

THE HON SIR DAVID GILBERT FERGUSON – FORMER VICE-CHANCELLOR (1919–21)

An early graduate of the University of Sydney (BA 1886), the Hon Sir David Gilbert Ferguson was a Fellow of Senate from 1913 to 1934 and Vice-Chancellor from 1919 to 1921.

PROFILE

(1861 - 1941)

BA *Sydney*

**Fellow of Senate 1913 - 1934, including election by Senate as
– Vice-Chancellor 1919 - 1921**

Early years

David Gilbert Ferguson was born on 7 October 1861 at Muswellbrook, New South Wales, second son of John Ferguson (d.1862), store-keeper from Scotland, and his native-born wife Elizabeth, née Johnston.

He was educated at the Scone national and Church of England schools and finally at Fort Street Model School, Sydney.

He worked as a clerk in the copyrights office and was then employed by Want & Johnson, solicitors, as a shorthand writer.

Student days at the University

In 1882 Ferguson entered St Andrew's College, University of Sydney and financed his studies by reporting for the 'Sydney Morning Herald' and the 'Daily Telegraph' and, while living in Brisbane for several months of the year, for Queensland Hansard.

He graduated BA in 1886.

Career and achievements

Ferguson settled in Sydney and was admitted to the Bar on 8 March 1890.

While practising as a barrister and member of the Bar Council, Ferguson was Challis lecturer in the law of procedure, evidence and pleading at the Sydney University Law School from 1901 to 1911, and a founding vice-president of the Sydney University Law Society in 1902 (president in 1913).

He was a judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales from 1912 to 1931.

Other career highlights included:

- chairman of the Amelioration Committee during World War I
- royal commissioner inquiring into the Wheat Acquisition Act in 1915, and into the cost of production and distribution of gas in 1918
- 1932: chair of the Commonwealth royal commission on taxation, which sat for three years and whose findings were largely accepted by all Australian governments
- 1936: chairman of the Returned Soldiers and Sailors' Employment Board.

Captain Arthur Ferguson, his second son, was killed in action in France in June 1916.

Ferguson was knighted in 1934.

He divided his time between his Sydney home and his garden at Bowral. He never completely retired, and early in 1941 was on a committee to study various aspects of law reform.

He died in hospital at Woollahra, Sydney, on 2 November 1941, aged 80.

From the Australian Dictionary of Biography

Membership of the Senate

Ferguson was a Fellow of Senate elected by the graduates from 1913 to 1934 and was elected Vice-Chancellor between 1919 and 1921.