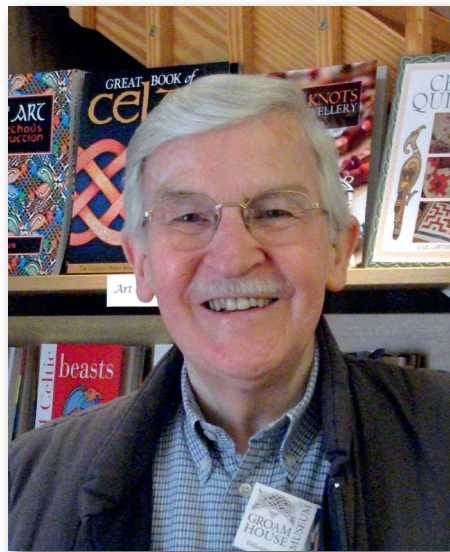


Professor Hamish Macdonald Keir, BSc, PhD, DSc, CBIol, FIBiol, CChem, FRSC, FRSE (1931–2013)



Hamish Keir was born in Moffat in Ayrshire on 5 September 1931. He was educated at Ayr Academy, where he excelled academically and also played for the first teams in rugby and cricket. His higher education was at the University of Glasgow where he obtained a BSc and a PhD in the relatively new science of biochemistry. He subsequently undertook postgraduate research both in Glasgow and at Yale University in the USA from 1958 to 1960.

His research interests at that time were predominantly in the metabolism of nucleotides (the building blocks of DNA) and his supervisor and mentor in Glasgow was Professor Norman Davidson whose *Biochemistry of the Nucleic Acids* remained the standard text on the subject for many years.

Hamish was appointed to the Macleod-Smith Chair of Biochemistry in Aberdeen at the age of 37 – one of the youngest individuals to have been appointed to a full academic Chair at that time. At Aberdeen,

Hamish continued his research in the area of nucleic acids and DNA polymerases in particular, from which many publications emerged including several papers in *Nature*. He also expanded his interests into the area of polyamine metabolism which remains an active research area at the University to this day. Hamish gradually moved into a more administrative role, but he continued his scientific studies through teams of research students and fellows in Aberdeen and was awarded a DSc by the University of Glasgow in 1976 for his work on nucleic acid metabolism. In addition to being Head of the Biochemistry Department at Marischal College, Hamish was a Vice-Principal of the University from 1982 to 1984.

Hamish had a huge interest in biochemistry which he shared enthusiastically with new graduates, peers and colleagues. He was a great supporter of the Biochemical Society promoting its activities worldwide. He was Honorary Meetings Secretary of the Society from 1970 to 1977 and rose to Chairman (1986–1989). He was also involved in the discipline internationally being President of the Council of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (1980–1983), President of the European Union of Societies for Experimental Biology (1989–1996) and a member of a number of Committees of the International Union of Biochemistry from 1974 to 1982 and European Science Foundation (1989–1999). Hamish also took on roles in governance being Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Rowett Research Institute (1989–1993), Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors, Macaulay Land Use Research

Institute (1987–1998), a member of the Board of Governors of North of Scotland College of Agriculture from 1976 to 1991, and Chairman of the Institute of Marine Biochemistry (1969–1984).

On the national scene, he was a member of the committees of the Medical Research Council (1970–1974), Scottish Home and Health Department, BRC (1974–1978), Ethical and Research Committees, Grampian Health Board, Science and Engineering Research Council (Biology) (1980–1984), University Grants Committee (Biology) (1984–1990), Tenovus Scotland, Grampian Region (1980–1986), Universities of Scotland Purchasing Consortium (1988–1996).

After he retired to the Black Isle in 1996, as you would expect, he lived another full life enjoying his hobbies of politics, the piano and travel. As part of the church in Avoch, he used his skills and new interests in photography to enhance the church magazine. He also involved himself locally being an Executive Member of Ross, Skye and Inverness West Conservative and Unionist Association from 1996 and taking over as Director of Groam House Museum in 2003, a role of which he was very proud.

On the personal side, Hamish was always charming, a great raconteur – a man with a constant twinkle in his eye, a superb pianist and a lover of political debate. He died peacefully on 22 March 2013 after a short illness. He is survived by his five children, Catriona, Deirdre, Kenneth, Lindsay and Catherine, his seven grandchildren and his partner, Eve. ■

Heather M. Wallace
(University of Aberdeen, UK)