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OBITUARIES

Thomas Davidson Veitch Lawrie

Ian Hutton, Ross Lorimer

Walton professor of medical cardiology University of Glasgow (b 1920; q Glasgow 1943; MD, FRCP), died from myeloma and systemic infection on 3 September 2015.

Thomas Davidson Veitch Lawrie, who died a few days before his 95th birthday, was appointed to the inaugural Walton chair of medical cardiology at the University of Glasgow, based at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, in 1966. He held the post until 1985.

He was born in the Springburn area of Glasgow and attended Whitehill Secondary School, where he was dux. He graduated from the University of Glasgow with BSc (Hons) in 1940 and MB ChB in 1943. War service followed where he served with the Royal Army Medical Corps in India and Burma.

On his return to the UK he decided on a career in hospital medicine, with cardiology as his specialty. His potential was recognised by J H Wright, who had the foresight to establish cardiology, firstly as a major clinical speciality, and subsequently as an academic discipline. He appointed VL, as Veitch Lawrie came to be known, as a member of a team of enthusiastic young men who made a very important contribution to the development of clinical cardiology. VL's continuing clinical research into various aspects of coronary heart disease led to the award of the degree of doctor of medicine.

In 1958, while attending an international conference in Brussels, he witnessed a demonstration of gas chromatography and recognised its potential application in the identification of the structure and compositon of atheromatous plaques in the coronary circulation. At an early stage he realised that the need for cooperation with other academic departments was essential, and so he initially conducted his research at the University of Glasgow Veterinary School, using these techniques.

He was appointed to the Walton chair of medical cardiology in 1966 with little in the way of resources, namely a salary for the head of department and his secretary, and without any facilities for conducting research. Supported by the British Heart Foundation, the Walton Trust, and the Fraser Foundation, he established laboratories to continue his research into the composition of the atheromatous plaque. His work was complemented through collaboration with the academic clinical biochemistry department in order to expand further the role of lipids in the pathogenesis of coronary heart disease.

Thanks to his earlier experience of academic departmental collaborations, close links were established with the physiology and pharmacology departments at the universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, leading to high quality research, publications, and numerous higher degrees.

He had remarkable prescience for identifying areas of research that were likely to be fruitful and have future potential. He initiated experimental work on prostaglandin E in the late 1960s, which led to the development of the drug prostacyclin now used in clinical care. He stimulated research into the role of platelets, now recognised as an integral part in the genesis of thrombotic occlusion in coronary arteries. He favoured the hypothesis that cholesterol was a factor in the genesis of atherosclerosis and subsequently led one of the earliest trials of thrombolysis in the treatment of coronary artery occlusion. Another departmental interest was in hypertension and, in particular, the contribution of stress.

One of his most important contributions to medical cardiology was to initiate the development and the application of computer technology to electrocardiology. He appointed P W Macfarlane, now emeritus professor at the University of Glasgow, to develop methods for automated interpretation of electrocardiograms (ECGs). This led to the availability of what has become known as the Glasgow Program [sic], which is currently used worldwide for the analysis of over 20 million ECGs per year, through its licensing to many companies by the University of Glasgow.

He reorganised undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and introduced an MSc in medical cardiology, leading to associations with universities in other countries, Egypt in particular.

VL was a man of few words. He was intensely loyal and supportive of those members of staff whom he had appointed, and for this he will be well remembered by his team. This was in evidence at his 90th birthday celebration, when eight professors and 21 consultant cardiologists from home and overseas attended. He had few interests outwith his profession but he was a first class golfer, having a handicap of 6, while the *Herald* crossword had to be completed daily within 30 minutes.

In 1972 he married his secretary, Edith Jamieson, who predeceased him by approximately one month. Theirs was a happy marriage and, although they had no children, they were very close to Edith's nieces and their families.

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