

DAVID NICOLL LOWE
OBE, MA, BSc

David Lowe was born on 9 September 1909, and died on 10 August 1999. He was the son of a tenter, and one of a family of ten raised in a four-room dwelling in Arbroath. Intending to enter the Ministry, he went from Arbroath High School to St Andrews University in 1928 with a Kitchener Scholarship (his father had been on active service in the Black Watch throughout the First World War). There he read first for an MA, and in turn this general degree kindled an interest in science which led on to a BSc with First Class Honours in Botany, having won several class medals on the way. While at University he was founding President of the Mountaineering Club, a Hockey Blue, and became President of both the Union and the Students' Representative Council.

In 1935 he went to London as Assistant Secretary of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and then, at the outbreak of war, he was recruited into the Civil Service to apply his developing administrative skills, first in the War Cabinet Secretariat and then in the Ministry of Production. There he came into contact with many great political figures of the time, and received an OBE for his services. When war ended he was offered a permanent post in the Civil Service but preferred to return to the British Association as its Secretary from 1946 to 1954. Amongst his responsibilities was the organisation of the Association's Annual Meeting in different parts of the UK, each attracting large numbers of scientists and interested lay people, and opening with a high profile Presidential Address. The 1939 Meeting in Dundee had been interrupted by the outbreak of war and he had great pleasure in returning there for the 1947 meeting.

Early in his Secretaryship there was a significant re-appraisal of the Association's objectives, following a review in 1946 by his predecessor. The Annual Meeting continued to be "the principal public forum in Great Britain for the review and general discussion of progress in all branches of science" (Nature Leader 1951) but there was to be a new emphasis on popularisation and public understanding and on the encouragement of the young to take more interest in science. At the Annual Meeting in Belfast in 1952 (which attracted a record attendance of 4600) the Young People's Programme was introduced and its success eventually led to the foundation of the Junior British Association. There were, however, some differences at Annual Meetings between those who encouraged the Section programmes to become steadily more specialised, and others who believed that the fundamental idea of the Association explaining scientific trends should not be lost: the success of the Society's meetings was to be judged by their impact on public opinion.

From 1947-59 he contributed the chapter on scientific discoveries in the Annual Register of World Events, an increasingly demanding task that involved a huge collection of newspaper and journal cuttings each year.

In 1954 David Lowe returned to Scotland to become Secretary (and later Treasurer) of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust in Dunfermline. The period of his Secretaryship of the Trust has been described by a Trustee "as one of the happiest and most successful in the history of the Trust. He initiated a new conception of the relationships between the Trust and its successful applicants. Whereas before the Trust was chiefly a source of income for causes it judged worthy, David taught us to enter into a true partnership with our clients He himself was much trusted and respected because of his qualities of mind and heart and his ability to relate to a wide variety of fellow human beings he was, above all, a man of exceptional integrity".

The work of the Trust was concerned with a wide range of activities in the fields of Social Services, Adult Education, and Art, Music and Drama. The support of Libraries had long been a prominent objective, and to this was added Museums (particularly small private museums or those in local authority ownership) and Village Halls. During David Lowe's Secretaryship a major programme of re-equipping pre-war village halls was undertaken, at the end of which 1,500 communities from the Scilly Isles to Fair Isle had benefited, and many of them he visited personally. Other social service work included encouragement for the first of the Cheshire Homes, and help to national bodies for social service that had new ideas and needed support to get going. Youth services, the expansion of the YMCA and social amenities for new council estates and new towns also benefited, while work with the arts led to visits to many amateur art exhibitions and the support of weekend painting schools. In connection with his work he served as a Member of the Executive Committee of the Scottish Council of Social Service from 1953-71.

One of his major contributions was in the development of field studies and outdoor education generally. His own scientific background and interests coincided with the thinking of his first chairman, and led to innovative projects designed to encourage the use of leisure in developing an educated interest in the countryside. The David Marshall Lodge above Aberfoyle in the Trossachs was the first of a number of countryside education and interpretation centres pioneered by the Trust at that time. An important grant in 1959 helped to establish the Conservation Corps as a new kind of voluntary youth movement. David Lowe also recognised the importance of empowering learned and amateur societies to help create public opinion sympathetic to the role of science in contemporary society, particularly through the study of natural history.

Retiring in 1970, he and his wife Muriel went to live in Crieff where he applied himself with vigour to voluntary activities. He was a founding Member of the Countryside Commission for Scotland from 1968 to 1978, where a former Chairman described him "as such a support in those early days and full of wisdomhis support of the interpretation initiative was key, particularly at a time when it was seen as a new approach linked with education. Such a modest and kindly person, but full of experience and quiet authority when it was needed". He was a member of the Executive Committee of the National Trust for Scotland from 1971-81, of the Pollock Memorial Missionary Trust from 1973-84, and a Governor of

the Scottish National Memorial to David Livingstone from 1974-80. In his earlier years he had been a member of the Congregational Church and served as Chairman of the Scottish Congregational College from 1961-68, but transferred to the Church of Scotland on his retirement, which he served as an Elder for many years. He became an active member of the Crieff Probus Club and was keenly interested in choral music. He had a great love of the countryside and enjoyed gardening and painting in water colours: mainly landscapes and flowers. Above all he was a family man, deeply attached to his wife, and to his children and their families, in whose interests he shared.

Towards the end of his life he wrote with typical modesty in his diary "I think I came to a conclusion that I had not done anything particularly significant with my life considering all the very bright people I have consorted with, but that I could take credit for having been of some help to people who were shaping the future, in war and peace: all those brilliant scientists pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and altering our lives by their discoveries; the politicians who had to take difficult decisions during the war; those wonderful Carnegie Trustees who were leaders in so many branches of welfare: all lovely people". His wife Muriel Enid Bryer predeceased him in 1991, and he is survived by a son, three daughters, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

MARTIN LOWE