

**Professor John Russell Anderson,
MRCP, FRCPG, HonFRCP, CBE**

Always known by his colleagues as JRA, he was born on 31st May 1918 in Middlesborough, the son of a Glasgow-trained general practitioner. He entered St. Andrew's University with an open scholarship in 1936, proceeded to a BSc in Anatomy in 1939 and then graduated MB with Commendation in 1942. After house jobs in Dundee, he spent a year in laboratory medicine, six months of which were with Professor Daniel F Cappell in pathology. There followed three years of National Service in Ghana, Libya (where he first learned to sail) and Egypt as a pathologist with the rank of Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps. In 1947 he was recruited to Glasgow as Lecturer in Pathology by Cappell, then Professor at the Western Infirmary.

The Institute of Pathology at the Western Infirmary was inaugurated in 1896. The first two professors, Joseph Coates and Sir Robert Muir built up the department to be one of the pre-eminent centres of research and teaching in pathology in the English-speaking world with a particular emphasis in the developing discipline of immunology. Cappell continued immunological research in particular into aspects of autoimmune haemolytic anaemia; JRA pursued research in this area, pursuing research on haemolytic mechanisms in an experimental rabbit model. As a promising scientist he was awarded a prestigious Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship to the University of Rochester, New York, which he held in 1953-1954, working with George Hoyt Whipple of the eponymous disease, who had shared the Nobel Prize for Medicine or Physiology of 1934. JRA returned to Glasgow in 1954 as a Senior Lecturer in Pathology and met, fell in love with and in 1956 married Audrey Wilson, one of his students. They remained together happily for 55 years and she was totally supportive of him in all his activities.

In 1955 he was awarded the degree of MD with Honours and the St. Andrews' University Gold Medal for his thesis on 'Immune Antibodies in Haemolytic Anaemia: An Experimental Study'. A logical progression was to extend these experimental studies from disorders of blood to autoimmune disorders of solid organs in which the immune system attacks the patient's own tissues. Collaborating with Professors Robert Goudie, Watson Buchanan and Dr Kathleen Gray, they were the first to demonstrate circulating autoantibodies against the adrenal gland in Addison's disease. Similarly, they found a range of autoantibodies in thyroid diseases and in various connective diseases. Together with Doniach and Roitt's group in the Middlesex Hospital in London, this work was at the forefront of the investigation of immunological diseases globally.

He was a founder member of the British Society for Immunology. His national and international reputation now firmly established, he was appointed to the George Holt Chair in Pathology at the University of Liverpool in 1965, returning to Glasgow as the Professor of Pathology and Head of Department in 1967. He continued and directed research, and furthered a policy of encouraging the next generation of pathologists to sub-specialise in diagnostic pathology; this anticipated the subsequent widespread international trend of such subspecialisation.

Muir's *Textbook of Pathology* was first published in 1924, and quickly became a major international undergraduate and postgraduate text. Firstly with Cappell and subsequently alone Anderson was responsible for editing four editions of 'Muir'. In his eulogy, JRA's son commented that during these periods of intense editorial work there were three persons in his parents' marriage: John, Audrey and 'Muir'. He was elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1968. Despite his eminence, he was an invariably modest man. In all his activities he was scrupulously honest, even-handed and of total integrity.

On election to the Council of the Royal College of Pathologists, he quickly made his mark and proceeded to the Presidency in 1978. Travel from Glasgow to London added to the burden of the office but it was alleged he spent more time in the College than any of his predecessors. He inspired the greatest respect and affection in those who came into contact with him. He served on numerous Department of Health committees and also on the newly and largely autonomous Education Committee of the General Medical Council. His tact and fairness were invaluable in highlighting shortages of resource in the laboratory disciplines to the Department of Health and Local Health Authorities, and he promoted the formalisation of training programmes, in some ways anticipating 'Modernising Medical Careers'

Conscious of the stresses that had become manifest at the founding of the College of Pathologists in 1962, he sought to heal real and potential divisions in the various laboratory disciplines and other professional associations. To this end he visited all the NHS regions in the UK to discuss the problems confronting the College nationally and locally.

His contributions were recognised by the award of a CBE in 1980 and an Honorary Doctorate of Laws by the University of Dundee in 1981. After the end of his term as President, he returned to full-time work in Glasgow, retiring in 1984. This was to leave him with 27 years of happy retirement. This was well-filled by entirely non-medical interests, notably within his local community, serving the Baldernock Community Council in protecting the village's rural character. He was early to recognise 'green' issues and with Audrey collected innumerable acorns and beechnuts and hand-reared thousands of saplings, which they planted with the permission of landlords locally and furth of Glasgow. His manual labour complemented Audrey's refined gardening skills and the market garden produce was sold in a local charity shop. Always a keen sportsman, retirement allowed him to develop once again, skiing, racket sports, golf, hill-walking and, perhaps his favourite pastime, yachting. With a crew of retired friends, he sailed extensively off the west of Scotland, including a visit to the remote archipelago of St. Kilda.

John Anderson was in some ways idiosyncratic. With a shock of unruly hair he was not noted for sartorial elegance, on occasion wearing trousers at half-mast to reveal an unmatched pair of socks, which did, however match a similar pair at home! His body language was characterised by a quizzical and mischievous sideways glance and a restless twitch of the shoulders. He seemed to be unaffected by cold; in his room in the College the ambient temperature was maintained at a balmy 55 degrees Fahrenheit, to the dismay of a less hardy College staff. Following hill walks, he would cool off by immersing himself, fully clothed in a burn.

John Anderson passed away on 30 October 2011. He is survived by his wife Audrey, daughter Lois, sons Kenneth and Russell, seven grandchildren and one great granddaughter

Professor Sir Roderick MacSween

**Professor John Russell Anderson, MRCP, FRCPG, HonFRCP, CBE. Born 31 May 1918.
Elected FRSE 1968. Died 30 October 2011.**