

NEIL CAMPBELL  
OBE, BSc, PhD, DSc, HonDSc(H-W), CChem, FRSC

Neil Campbell was born in Edinburgh on 29 August 1903 and died in Kinghorn on 24 July 1996. He spent his early formative years at George Watson's College with which he maintained strong ties throughout his life, being elected President of the Watsonian Club 1962-63. He was an outstanding athlete and whilst at Watson's he had particular success in running the quarter mile and playing rugby for the 1<sup>st</sup> XV. At Edinburgh University he was inspired by the great runner Eric Liddell, who went on to win a Gold Medal in the 1924 Paris Olympics. Campbell ran in many races with Liddell and in his own words, "often admired his style from behind". These were vintage years for University athletics and Campbell was awarded his Edinburgh University Blue in 1925. Success on the track and on the Rugby field later inspired him to help and encourage others. This he did at all levels with characteristic enthusiasm, whether at a modest school sports, the Scottish Amateur Athletic Association, or the Empire and Commonwealth Games. He was selected as an official timekeeper for the 1958 Empire Games and played a prominent part in the organisation of the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in 1970. His Rugby career was cut short by injury but he continued as a referee, becoming a well-known "whistler" who commanded the respect of the whole Borders. In this, as in every other aspect of his life, his integrity and impartiality were widely recognised.

He entered Edinburgh University in 1922 to read for a BSc Degree and was in the first class to begin their studies in the new Chemistry building at King's Buildings. At that time West Mains Farm still stood on the site and cattle grazed in the fields not yet built upon. He achieved early notoriety when, during a delay in the opening ceremony for the King's Buildings, he successfully impersonated the young Prince of Wales. Graduating in 1926 with First Class Honours, he went on to obtain his PhD under Sir James Walker in 1930. Then, after a year in Tübingen under Professor Meisenheimer, he returned to Edinburgh as a Lecturer in the Chemistry Department. His research in the field of Organic Chemistry soon flourished and his interests spanned the range from the total synthesis of polycyclic aromatic and heteroaromatic molecules, mechanistic studies of electrophilic aromatic substitution and the Friedel-Crafts reaction, to physio-chemical investigations of tautomerism, geometric isomerism and liquid crystallinity. He was the author of the well-known text *Qualitative Organic Chemistry*, Editor of Schmidt's *Text-book of Organic Chemistry* and contributed review chapters to Rodd's *Chemistry of Carbon Compounds*. He spent a year at Duke University in the USA (1933-34) and was awarded a DSc in 1941.

Neil Campbell taught generations of medical students who remember him still with great affection. Those who came with a weak background in Chemistry were given his special assistance and he was always available for discussion and advice. His lectures were spiced with humour and he was able to arouse enthusiasm, confidence and respect in his students. In 1952 he was promoted to Senior Lecturer, to Reader in 1954, and in 1967 he was appointed to a Personal Chair in Chemistry. He was to remain at Edinburgh University for the whole 51 years of his academic career. Throughout this period he served on innumerable committees, becoming a member of the Edinburgh University Court between 1960 and 1968. He contributed greatly to the quality of life in the University through his support, in many capacities, of the Men's Union, King's Buildings Union and the University Staff Club, even after his retirement in 1973. He was elected President of the Graduates' Association in 1976. Over many years he gave enthusiastic and invaluable support to numerous charities through the University Settlement.

In addition to what many would regard as a fully committed life at Edinburgh University, Neil Campbell also gave his considerable energies to the Heriot-Watt University. Whilst a member of the Heriot-Watt University Court, (1968-76) he acted as Chairman of the Recreation Facilities Committee, which was responsible for the planning of the sports fields and the sports centre on the then new Riccarton Campus. In recognition of his input to this and to student sports in general, he was awarded the first Honorary Blue by the Heriot-Watt Sports Union in May 1973 and in 1975 he was awarded an Honorary DSc. In May of that year he attended the Blues Ceremony to present a new trophy - the Neil Campbell Quaich - for the best overall individual sportsman/woman within the Sports Union.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1950 and soon became a central figure in the Society. He served on the Society's Council, as Meetings Secretary, Secretary to the Dining Club and as a Vice-President (1972-75). Together with Martin Smellie he authored the book entitled *The Royal Society of Edinburgh, 1783-1983*, to mark the Society's Bicentenary. He was awarded the Society's Bicentenary Medal in 1983.

Neil Campbell gave freely of his time in many ways, and especially in the promotion of youth work. Whilst an undergraduate, he ran the Canongate Scout Troop and later was a joint founder of the Craigmillar Boys Club. He became Chairman of the Edinburgh Union of Boys Clubs and a member of the Executive Committee of the Scottish Association of Boys Clubs. His work for youth was recognised by the award of an OBE in 1961.

Neil Campbell had a multitude of other interests: he enjoyed music, hill-walking, expeditions to the Highlands and above all convivial company with which he could share his fund of humorous stories. Throughout his career he was greatly assisted and supported by his wife Marjory, herself an athlete and a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, who died a few days before him. His wisdom and company will be missed by many.

ROBERT J DONOVAN