

ANNE FERGUSON (Mrs ANNE COLLEE)  
BSc, MB, ChB, PhD(Glas), FRCPG, FRCP, FRCPE, FRCPath

Anne Ferguson was born in Glasgow in 1941. She died of an unsuspected pancreatic adenocarcinoma on 21 December 1998. Her colleagues were shattered by the sudden most untimely loss of this wonderful person and this great spirit.

Anne qualified BSc with Honours in Physiology at Glasgow University in 1960, and then MB, ChB in 1964 with Honours and with the Brunton Medal (awarded to the outstanding medical graduate of the year). After her early clinical training posts at the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow, she did research for her PhD degree with Dr Delphine Parrott in the Department of Bacteriology and Immunology at the Western Infirmary, Glasgow. Here she developed her early pioneering studies on cell-mediated immune systems in the intestinal mucosa that led to her important contributions to our knowledge of coeliac disease and Crohn's disease. She successfully exploited the technique of whole-gut lavage for this work and she did parallel pioneering research on the phenomenon of oral tolerance whereby foreign antigens in the gut might suppress rather than activate some arms of the immune system.

In 1975 she was appointed as a Senior Lecturer and Consultant Physician to the Gastro-Intestinal Unit of the University of Edinburgh at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, where she quickly established a reputation with her work and her clinical interest in inflammatory bowel disease. In 1971 she was the Alexander Fletcher Lecturer in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, and in 1977 she gave the prestigious Goulstonian Lecture at the Royal College of Physicians in London. She was the Research Medallist of the British Society for Gastroenterology in 1980, and in 1986 her work on food allergy was recognised with the International Prize in Modern Nutrition. In 1987 she was awarded a Personal Professorship in Gastroenterology at the University of Edinburgh. She was elected FRSE in 1990.

She was intensely involved in her clinical work, her research, and her team at the Gastro-intestinal Unit, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh. Her patients adored her. With her research associates, she established a reputation for excellence that was acknowledged with admiration and much respect around the world. Professor Oswald Jarrett has paid tribute to the development of Anne's greatest professional skill of investigating directly in her patients the concepts generated by her basic research, and using her observations to the benefit of her patients. Within the GI Unit, a multi-disciplinary laboratory was developed to provide a comprehensive service for the assessment of gastric, intestinal and digestive functions, gut inflammation and intestinal bleeding. She travelled widely and was constantly in demand for her lectures which she delivered without notes and with a restless energy and an infectious enthusiasm. She gave her time unselfishly to patient support groups that she admired and she will be fondly remembered by members of the Ileostomy Association for her constant encouragement.

In her younger days she was a strong athlete and a mountaineer. She played basketball for Scotland. She loved Scotland and things Scottish, and her questing spirit was perhaps only at peace in the hills or the remote countryside. She had a keen eye for colour and design, in paintings, ceramics and fabrics, and she admired the art of the Glasgow Boys, the Scottish Colourists, and the designs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. She had a passion for craft fairs and she was an avid reader with a huge collection of books.

Anne's first husband, John Ferguson, shared her love of mountains; they married in 1966 and they adopted two children, Kathleen and Douglas. John died in 1989 after a dreadful struggle with cancer. Early in 1990, Anne was joined by Gerald Collee, Professor of Medical Microbiology at Edinburgh Medical School. He set about refurbishing the house at Newhaven and creating a garden that Anne loved. They were married in 1995 and were devoted to each other, sharing many common professional interests and travelling widely together.

Anne loved to help, to make links for young people, to give a hand to disadvantaged people and to counsel wisely. She and her colleagues have given specialist training to many doctors and biomedical scientists from around the world. She made special links with Sierra Leone, with Bangladesh and, more recently, with South Africa; and she added these to her long-standing highly productive links with colleagues in Europe, Scandinavia, USA, South America, Hong Kong and Australia. Many research associates of former years now hold senior posts. She published 264 scientific papers, alone or jointly, in world-class journals, and was the author of three books and many chapters in other texts. Just a month before her terminal illness, her term of office as President of the International Society for Mucosal Immunology was completed. A member of many senior advisory committees, her practical common sense and her analytical skills will be missed in the Committee for the Safety of Medicines, in the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee, London, and on the Board of Governors of the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen, where she was admired. Anne will be desperately missed by her family, her wide circle of friends, her former colleagues, her postgraduate research workers, and the many patients to whom she was a dedicated counsellor.

GERALD COLLEE