JOHN HAWTHORN
BSc, ARCS, PhD (Glas), CChem, FIBiol, FRSC, FIFST, FIFT (USA), HonFIFST (UK, Australia, Singapore)

John Hawthorn was born in Glasgow on 30 March 1921, and died, while on holiday at Portpatrick, on 21 July 1993. He was educated at Shawlands Academy and at Glasgow High School, then worked for two years as an apprentice engineer with J & J Weir Ltd, Cathcart. In 1939 he enrolled at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow, and at the University of Glasgow for their joint degree in Engineering. However, he showed such an aptitude for chemistry, which was a subsidiary part of the course, that he accepted the advice of his lecturer, the late Emeritus Professor John MacLean, and transferred to Chemistry, graduating with First Class Honours in 1943.

He was recommended for commissioned training by a War Office Selection Board, but he was rejected on medical grounds and redirected to industry. John worked as an assistant chemist at the Trent Yeast Extract Co, Burton-on-Trent, then as assistant chemist, later chief chemist, at Batchelors Peas Ltd, Sheffield. He returned to Glasgow in 1948 as chief chemist at R D Waddell Ltd (meat processors). During these formative years he learned to adapt his engineering skills to the problems of food processing technology and, like many other contemporary chemists in the food industry, he became a self-taught food scientist.

At that time there were thriving milling and baking businesses in Glasgow whose technical and managerial staff were trained at the Scottish School of Bakery in the Royal College of Science and Technology (the 'Tech'). The School was supervised by Professor J P Todd, Head of the School of Pharmacy (the only Department teaching biological sciences such as microbiology and biochemistry). Priorities during the war years heightened the need for scientists and technologists trained specifically for the food industry. In 1948 E C Bate-Smith (who is credited with introducing the term 'Food Science' to describe the scientific study of foods in the context of food production, storage, manufacturing, and distribution) organised a Summer Course on Food Science in Cambridge. Professor Todd's views on the importance of Food Science were confirmed at this meeting, and with support from local industry he established four-year Associateship courses (with honours) in Bakery Technology in 1948, and in Food Science in 1949. Various aspects of Food Science such as nutrition, bakery technology, brewing technology and dairy technology were already well established subjects at various centres, but they had not yet been viewed as a single, albeit multi-disciplinary, subject. John Hawthorn was appointed as the first lecturer in Food Science in 1950, as Principal Lecturer in 1956, and in 1958 he became the first person in Europe to hold the title of Professor of Food Science.

When Honours degrees were conceived in the Royal College of Science and Technology, under affiliation rules with Glasgow University, the courses had to be approved by Glasgow. One of the first proposed in 1960, soon after Sir Sam Curran became Principal of the College, was a new Honours course in Food Science. Sir Hector Hetherington, then Glasgow Principal, asked Sir Sam in a somewhat disparaging way 'What is this thing called Food Science?'. The answer he received was that it concerned the third largest industry in the UK. Sir Sam says that this exchange helped to convince him that the 'Tech' in Glasgow had to become an independent second university in the city. These affiliation arrangements duly ended when the College received its Charter as the University of Strathclyde in 1964, and Sir Sam became its first Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

Without doubt, John was a key personality in the establishment of Food Science as an academic subject and as a profession throughout the world. When one considers the pace and scale of developments, superimposed on normal academic duties, it is small wonder that he had little time to pursue his personal research interests in food enzymology and nutrition as he would have wished.

Although apparently easy-going in many matters, John was at the same time sensitive almost to a fault and rather easily upset by some matters. Sir Sam recalls that around 1970 he received a letter of resignation from John. Normally, this was a dangerous thing to do, but Sir Sam handed it back across the table, saying that John did not realise the high regard in which he was held by his colleagues in the young university, and that he should come back in two weeks if he did not find that this was true. Sir Sam is convinced this was one of his best moves as Principal, and he maintains that John remained his own most severe critic all his days. The University of Strathclyde awarded him an Emeritus Professorship on his retirement in 1983.

In developing undergraduate and postgraduate courses John placed particular emphasis on the need to teach fundamental principles (which were not well understood in these days) with sufficient practical examples to show how they related to technology and processing. Since there were no textbooks in this new multidisciplinary area he was inevitably drawn into publishing, and in 1956 he became the first editor (with J M Leitch) of Recent Advances in Food Science - a series which continues to the present.

In 1962 Denis Mounfield initiated moves to found an Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) in the UK. John, like many other food scientists, was sceptical about its chances of success, but he was soon persuaded to join, and rapidly became a central figure in the development of the Institute, serving as Chairman of various committees and of the Scottish branch, Vice-President (1972) and President (1973, 1974). In 1980 the Council of the Institute made him an Honorary Fellow in recognition of his outstanding contributions and distinguished services to food science and technology.

In 1960 John organised a residential course at Chesters House, Bearsden, sponsored by NATO, which attracted many eminent food scientists from the USA and Europe in particular. This led directly to his becoming a founder member of the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST) in 1968, and he retained a central role in the activities and development of the Union until his death. He was Chairman of its International Liaison and Constitutional Committees from 1970 onwards, the Ethics Sub-Committee from its inception in 1989, and he served as Vice-President (1970-74), President (1974-78) and Immediate Past President (1978-82) of the Union.

In recognition of his wider achievements John received the International Award of the American Institute of Food Technologists in 1979, and the Copernicus Medal of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1983. He also received Honorary Fellowships of the Australian and Singapore Institutes of Food Science and Technology.

John was much valued as an independent expert by government, industry, and academia. Among his many appointments were Chairman of the Scottish Hygiene Council, member of the Food Additives and Contaminants Committee, scientific adviser to the British Food Manufacturing Industries Research Association (now the Leatherhead Food R A), member of the Food Research Advisory Committee, a governor of the West of Scotland Agricultural College, Auchincruive, and a governor of the Queen's College, Glasgow. It was also appropriate that, since his PhD had been on the role of enzymes in breadmaking, he should be admitted to the Incorporation of Bakers of Glasgow, becoming a member of the Master Court in 1978, Collector (1983-84) and Deacon (1985-86). John was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1963, he served on Council from 1971 to 1974, and was Vice-President from 1974 to 1977.

John had a wide circle of friends, and particularly valued the close contacts he maintained with his former students throughout the world. He was much appreciated as a raconteur and wit, and to his English and overseas colleagues he was the archetypal Scot, often being referred to as 'the Laird of Strathclyde'. His main recreational activities were fishing, hill-walking and painting, but he had wide-ranging interests in art and Scottish music which greatly enlivened conversation at his dinner parties.

John enjoyed good health during his retirement, and his sudden death was quite unexpected. Sadly his wife Greta, to whom he had been happily married for over 40 years, died five months later. They are survived by their son John and daughter Margaret.

I am grateful to Sir Sam Curran, Dr K M Clegg and Mrs M Martin for their personal reminiscences.

W R MORRISON