PETER JOSEPH HEALD

BSc, MSc(Manc), PhD(Aberd), DSc(Manc)

Peter Heald was appointed Professor of Biochemistry in the University of Strathclyde in 1966, his appointment more or less coinciding with my own as Professor of Biology. Although both disciplines had been well-nurtured under the umbrella of Professor Ernest Morris of Applied Microbiology, we were both heading newly-created Departments and as such had a considerable amount of what was somewhat cruelly, but quite accurately, termed 'empire-building' to do. In time we came to share the newly built 'Todd Centre'. Peter was a 'bonny fechter', a top-class scientist, a penetrating mind and a superb administrator. We had many constructive animated meetings together; some of them were heated but Peter was never a man to hold a grudge. 'Issues are what matter' was his favourite phrase. I had enormous respect for his abilities.

Peter Heald was born in Alderley Edge, Cheshire, on 26th July 1925, the middle of three boys. His father was headmaster of a school in Manchester, and from him Peter gained his enquiring mind and his love of reading. Also from his childhood in Alderley came his great love of the countryside and of country folk and he spent much of his free time working on the local farm.

His early education was at Stockport School, Cheshire where he shone in mathematics and science. Later, in 1945, at the Manchester Institute of Technology, he gained a First Class Honours degree in Chemistry and subsequently gained his MSc. It was there too that he met his wife-to be, Kathleen, a fellow student. They made a good team as he was exceptionally gifted on the practical side and could always get difficult experiments to work while she made useful contributions involving theory. They spent a lot of their leisure time together walking the Derbyshire, Lakeland, and Welsh hills.

In 1948 Peter made his first foray into Scotland to become a Scientific Officer at the Rowett Research Station. For the next four years his biochemical career blossomed and he gained a PhD of the University of Aberdeen for a thesis on ruminant micro-organisms involved in the fermentation of pentoses. He and Kathleen married in 1951.

His next move was into hospital work and over the next eight years on the Biochemistry staff of the Maudsley Hospital he moved rapidly through to a senior lectureship (which was also recognised by the University of London). In 1960 his book, *Phosphorus Metabolism of the Brain* encompassing much of his own research, was published. It was during this period, in 1959, that he spent three invigorating months as Associate Professor in the world-famous Mayo Clinic in the USA.

He then moved into industry, being from 1961 till 1966 Head of Animal Biochemistry at Twyfords laboratories, London, where he carried out research and published extensively on the biochemistry of chicken reproduction. His work led to the award of the degree of DSc of Manchester University. He was gaining valuable experience in both animal and human biochemistry in academia, hospitals and industry. Thus he was ideally suited to meet the aims and aspirations of the newly-emerging University of Strathclyde, building up a superb Department, outstanding in research and forging close links with Industry. He was an 'old-fashioned' professor, 'the professor in the white coat' who listened to the views of his staff (and others) but who made up his own mind. His favourite phrase was 'at the end of the day'. 'At the end of the day, the decision is mine'

He established an international reputation in the field of reproductive biochemistry and still found time to take on the labour-intensive editorship of *Biotechnica et Biophysica*. In 1968 he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

But his feet were itchy again and in 1978, at the age of 53 he joined the 'brain-drain', crossing the Atlantic to become Dean of Science at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Here he rapidly established a considerable reputation as an administrator. His passion was for raising faculty standards. Only top scientists sat on promotion panels and they were encouraged to seek opinions from peers across Canada. He was also very concerned about teaching and community service. Those who sought appointment or promotion under his regime had to meet very stringent requirements. He often raised hackles but he won the respect of top scientists and all respected him for his fairness and accessibility. He promoted a Food Science group within the Biochemistry Department and set up a well-equipped Food Science Pilot Plant that specialized in marine products.

He was very interested in Marine science and was perturbed that the nearby Logy Bay Marine Laboratory was not part of his mandate. It was largely devoted to marine biochemistry. Peter felt that its role should be expanded into biological and physical oceanography and he was instrumental in creating many joint appointments of geologists, physicists, biochemists and others to the Laboratory. He also established close contact with the Principal and others at the newly-established College of Marine Technology. Eventually the Laboratory became part of the Science Faculty and the College part of the University.

On a wider canvas, he became involved in the influential Atlantic Provinces Inter-Universities Council for Science and becoming Chairman he set up a permanent office, established a newsletter *Atlantic Science* and enhanced its professionalism.

On retiral he returned to Britain to live at Church Stretton in the Welsh Marches before coming north again to Helensburgh in 1994. He loved gardening, was a talented pianist and latterly became involved in creative writing with a group in Helensburgh. He died there on 3rd October 1996.

Peter had a great love of Scotland and was at his happiest when hill-walking in Mull where he acquired a cottage in 1969. It was in a poor state with no electricity, water-supply or sewage but with characteristic energy and drive, Peter and his family cleaned it up, put up fences, led in a water-supply from a nearby burn, lit it with Tilley lamps and warmed it with a huge wood fire. It became a very special place. He leaves behind his charming wife Kathleen (who took Peter's ashes over to Mull in the Spring of 1997 and buried them near their beloved cottage), one daughter Margaret (a doctor in Norway) and two sons Richard (a merchant banker on the board of Rothchilds) and Jonathan (an air-line pilot).

I am indebted to Professor E R W Neale (Vice-President, Academic) and Professor John T Brosman (Head of Biochemistry) of the Memorial University of Newfoundland for information relating to Peter Heald's work in Canada.

W W FLETCHER