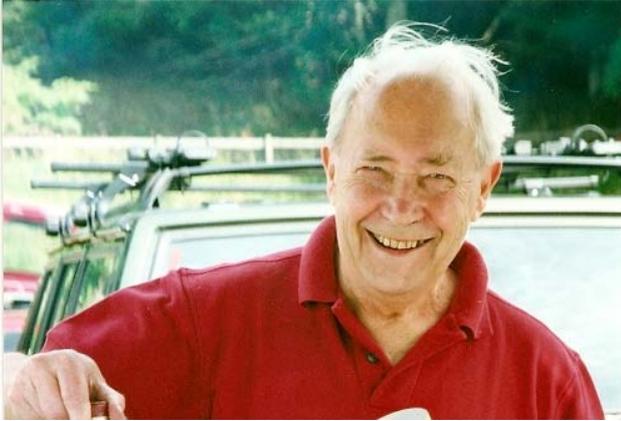


ALASDAIR DUNCAN MCINTYRE
CBE, BSc, DSc, HonDUniv, HonDSc, FIBiol, FRSA
Marine Biologist



Alasdair McIntyre, a Scottish marine biologist, born in Helensburgh in 1926, died in Aberdeen on 15 April 2010, after a short illness. In his long and eventful life, Alasdair travelled many different roads, following his many interests along pathways that sometimes led to unexpected destinations.

The starting point for his lifelong intellectual and scientific interests was the family home in Helensburgh. The Hermitage School, his first school, was close by, as was also the rocky seashore where Alasdair and his brother, Gordon, spent many hours exploring the pools for shrimp and limpets.

Unsurprisingly, both brothers became biologists, Alasdair graduating from Glasgow University in 1949 with First-class Honours in zoology. His dissection of the cranial nerves of the dogfish was considered so perfect that a picture of it was permanently displayed on the wall. The next stage of his journey saw him complete his graduate studies, after which he moved north to join the staff of the Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen in 1951. There he remained for the next four decades, making his way up the career ladder until his appointment as Director of Fisheries Research for Scotland in 1983 and co-ordinator of Fisheries Research and Development for the United Kingdom in 1986. His retirement in 1987 was far from marking journey's end; new opportunities presented themselves, and not only when Alasdair became Emeritus Professor of Fisheries and Oceanography at Aberdeen University, a position that he retained until his death.

During his early years at the Marine Laboratory, Alasdair's research and his scientific activities developed across a broad range of interests. Initially, he studied the halibut stocks in the North Atlantic, working from research vessels and also from the commercial long-liners that fished off Greenland. His abiding interest in the investigation of the fauna on the seabed led to his efforts to improve the efficiency of bottom-sampling gear, the results of which, in the form of the 'Smith-McIntyre grab', have been used by successive generations of marine biologists. He was one of the first to recognise the importance of the meiofauna that play a critical role in transforming the debris reaching the sea floor into food for the larger macrofauna. His *Biological Review* article *Ecology of Marine Meiobenthos* (Wiley, 1969) remains the starting point for their study. The handbook *Methods for the Study of Marine Benthos*, first produced in 1971 with Norman Holme, is now in its 3rd edition (2005), co-edited with Anastasios (Tasso) Eleftheriou.

From the early 1960s Alasdair, working with a diverse group of researchers, began a decadal study of a sandy beach at Loch Ewe in the west of Scotland. The aim was to demonstrate how the food web, from plankton through benthos to fish, determined the annual production of juvenile plaice and its inter-annual variability. This was relevant to the burgeoning interest in fish farming, as well as being of basic ecological interest, and grew into a much larger investigation of marine ecosystems involving experts from around the world.

Alasdair's time as Director of Fisheries Research for Scotland was a challenging period, not only with the decline in fisheries but also with the expanding oil industry causing many turf issues concerning the marine environment. Alasdair became a leading authority on the international aspects of these questions and served as Chairman of the United Nations Joint Group of Experts on Scientific Aspects

of Marine Pollution and as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Marine Pollution of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. He was very active in the UK, Chairing the Atlantic Frontier Environmental Forum that involved a wide range of industries and research organisations. He was President of The Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) and the Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science. The award of a CBE in 1994 was recognition for these and many other achievements.

The advancement of marine science in Scotland was an important concern. Alasdair supported the creation and development of SAMS as Vice-President and then President, and played a key role in the marine interests of Scottish Natural Heritage. As Emeritus Professor in the Zoology Department of Aberdeen University, he helped found and develop their MSc courses in marine science. He received honorary doctorates from Stirling and Edinburgh Napier Universities. In these roles, after he retired, he was able to speak openly about the many problems facing the marine environment in Scotland. Because of his great experience, incisive mind and clear expression of the science, he was often called on in public inquiries and in legal challenges in marine cases.

Alasdair produced a great number and variety of scientific papers, reports and edited volumes. Generations of marine biologists received help from Alasdair, whether as a teacher of students or PhD examiner. His gentle way of speaking and impeccable manners masked a sharp mind. Woe betide any student who tried to pull the wool over his eyes! He was Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Fisheries Research* from 1987 until his death. Over the last decade, Alasdair was heavily involved in the 10-year global initiative "Census of Marine Life" (COML), helping to set up the European component of this programme and establish the office at SAMS. During the programme's last year, Alasdair edited the synthesis volume *Life in the world's oceans: diversity, abundance and distribution*, which brought together the work of over 2000 scientists from 89 nations around the globe. This volume, completed very shortly before his death and published by Wiley-Blackwell, was launched at COML's Decade of Discovery symposium/celebration in London on 4th October 2010.



In addition to all his scientific achievements, Alasdair will be remembered as a very cultured man - always extremely well dressed and well mannered, fond of good food, a connoisseur of wine, a keen member of the Scotch Malt Whisky Society and a great conversationalist with time for everybody. He was, in fact – that rarity of modern times – a true gentleman. To show a broader side of his character, he was a season ticket holder for Aberdeen Football Club, an activity that must have tested his patience in recent, lean years!

For his friends and acquaintances, it was a privilege to have known him and he will be sorely missed. Alasdair is survived by his wife Catherine, daughter Alison and grandson Sebastian.

Some lines from Cavafy's *Ithaca* provide a fitting description of Alasdair's long journey from the seashore of Helensburgh:

Pray that the road is long.
That the summer mornings are many, when,
with such pleasure, with such joy
you will enter ports seen for the first time;
stop at Phoenician markets,
and purchase fine merchandise,
mother-of-pearl and coral, amber, and ebony,
visit many Egyptian cities,
to learn and learn from scholars.

Always keep Ithaca on your mind.
To arrive there is your ultimate goal.
But do not hurry the voyage at all.
It is better to let it last for many years;
and to anchor at the island when you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting that Ithaca will offer you riches.

Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.
Without her you would have never set out on the road.
She has nothing more to give you.

John Steele and Margaret Eleftheriou

Alasdair Duncan McIntyre, CBE. BSc, DSc (Glasgow), HonDUniv(Stirling), HonDSc (Napier), FIBiol, FRSA. Born 17th November 1926; elected FRSE 3 March 1975; Died 15 April 2010.