

### **G.A.H. Buttle**

We record with sadness the death, on May 3rd this year of Professor Gladwin A.H. Buttle OBE, MA Cantab, MRCS, LRCP, at the age of 84. Gladwin Buttle was a Fellow of St. John's College Cambridge. He qualified in medicine in 1924 and subsequently joined the staff of the Wellcome Physiological Laboratories. His work for Wellcome covered a broad pharmacological field during the 13 years he spent there, probably the most notable aspect being his outstanding work on antibacterial sulphonamides and sulphones, and the value of the latter in the treatment of leprosy. He served with the RAMC during the 1939–45 war, and was in charge of the blood transfusion service for Monty's desert army. His search for empty bottles, be they whisky, gin or beer containers, in which to store plasma ('Bottles for Buttle'), and culminating in his design of the familiar waisted blood bottle that a small-handed, harassed nurse might safely grip, is a fascinating story in its own right. In October 1945, he was appointed Wellcome professor of pharmacology at the (then) College of the Pharmaceutical Society, in Bloomsbury Square ('The Square'); shortly thereafter it became the School of Pharmacy of the University of London and eventually it moved to Brunswick Square. And so Buttle continued an illustrious succession having been preceded as professor of pharmacology by first J.H. Burn and then J. Gaddum. Gladwin Buttle retired from the Square in 1966 to become professor emeritus of pharmacology of the University of London, but his zest for teaching and for students remained unsatiated, and he continued his University career with professorial appointments in Mexico City and Riyadh.

While at the Square, Gladwin Buttle carried out important early work in the immunological aspects of cancer, and in chemotherapy. His infectious booming laugh, his intense innate kindness, and his abhorrence of all kinds of pomposity endeared him to his staff and students alike. His dislike of pomposity was exemplified in numerous, pseudo-eccentric ways, but perhaps none more strikingly than his possession, as his sole automobile, of a rather decrepit and terrifying 3-wheeler van in which an upturned box served as the only passenger seat. Dignified foreign visitors were invariably collected from London Airport by him in this vehicle. From time to time, he inadvertently overturned the contraption, sometimes to his own serious discomfort. On one such occasion, the East Berlin police were sufficiently disconcerted by his intense amusement at his own predicament that they hastily helped right the conveyance and escorted him back to the border, without remembering to ask him what he had been doing there in the first place.

Gladwin Buttle's staff and graduate students remember him with especial affection. Perhaps the most important lesson he unconsciously taught them, by example, was that there is no need to try to ride to glory on the backs of your juniors. He always deliberately directed inconspicuously from the wings whenever there was an opportunity to enhance the career or reputation of any of his people. His juniors are now spread widely over the world, in Universities and in industry. Perhaps a few names of some of his old staff and students and their places of work will serve to illustrate the breadth of his contribution to pharmacology; Adam (Pfizer), Barrett (Leeds), Blaber (Roche), Bowman (Strathclyde), Brittain (Glaxo), Brocklehurst (Scripps Clinic), Burke (Sydney), Callingham (Cambridge), Child (Glaxo), Collins (Sheffield), Cox (Aberdeen), Cuthbert (Cambridge), D'Arcy (Belfast), Dawson (Lilly), Day (Reckitt & Colman), Harris (Brighton), Hemsworth (Sunderland), Kellett (Huntingdon), Parratt (Strathclyde), Pascoe (University College, London), Rand (Melbourne), Raper (Melbourne), Spencer (Cardiff), Spriggs (Cardiff), Stockham (NRDC), West (North East London Polytechnic – retired). It is interesting to note that at the last meeting of the Society that Buttle attended at the end of 1982, ex-members of his staff who were office-bearers in the Society at the time, included the chairman of committee, the general secretary, the treasurer, and the chairman of the editorial board. Gladwin Buttle was not quite, but almost a founder member of the Society having joined in 1932. The Society will miss and be poorer for the lack of his kind but pertinent comments, his laughter, and his enthusiasm for the endeavours of youth. Our sympathy in their great loss goes to his wife Eva, and to his son Richard and family.

W.C.B.