

ANNOUNCEMENT

J. W. FAIRBAIRN 1914–1982: AN APPRECIATION

Professor James Fairbairn, Professor Emeritus and former Professor of Pharmacognosy at the School of Pharmacy, Brunswick Square, University of London, died on 3 July in Hertford, at the age of 68. Apart from two years as a junior lecturer at Sunderland Technical College (1937–1939) and a brief span in industry (1940–1941), his entire career was at the School of Pharmacy. He was appointed assistant lecturer and became successively lecturer, senior lecturer and Head of the Department of Pharmacognosy and reader. In 1960 he was appointed the first Professor of Pharmacognosy in the University of London. He was awarded the degree of D.Sc. in 1965 for his work in botany and chemistry and in 1973 he was given an honorary doctorate of the University of Lausanne.

His major contribution to research was in the chemistry of medicinal plants; he substantially changed the emphasis of study in pharmacognosy from being botanical to being chemical and pharmacological. He was particularly well-known for his contribution to knowledge on cannabis (his work led to a change in legal regulations), on the purgative anthraquinone glycosides of such drugs as cascara, rhubarb and senna and in the biochemistry and functions of alkaloids in the opium poppy and hemlock. His interest in anthraquinones led to membership, and eventually chairmanship, of the Plant Phenolics Group (later the Phytochemical Society and now the Phytochemical Society of Europe). In 1961, he was appointed a founder member of the Editorial Board of *Phytochemistry* and continued to serve in this capacity until shortly before his death. He contributed a pioneering study on alkaloid turnover in *Conium maculatum* to the very first issue and subsequently published all his more important research papers in this journal.

Because of his extensive knowledge on medicinal plants, he became a member of several committees of experts for the British Pharmacopoeia, British Pharmaceutical Codex and the European Pharmacopoeia. In 1974 he was a member of a United Nations working group on *Papaver bracteatum*. He spent one year at the University of Washington, College of Pharmacy and toured extensively in Europe, Africa and Asia, giving lectures on his research. In 1975, he received the Harrison Memorial Medal of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain in recognition of his outstanding international contribution to Pharmacognosy.

Professor Fairbairn was a devoted Christian and preached the gospel with enthusiasm and vigour. His wife, Rachel, and four daughters from his first marriage survive him.

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