

Obituary

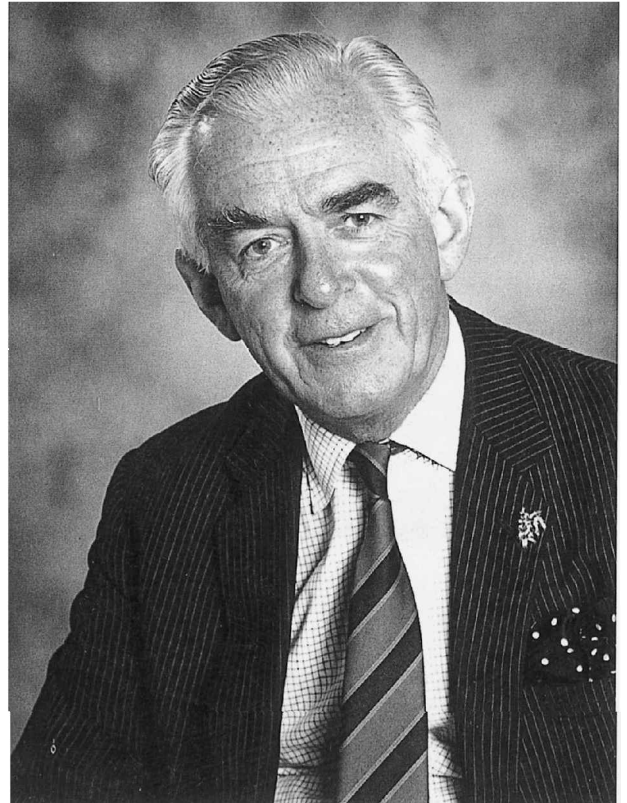
Hamish Watson, 1923–2001

HAMISH WAS THE FOUNDER AND FIRST, AS well as longest-serving, President of the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology. He was also the Chairman of its third meeting, held in St Andrews in 1965. It was he who, in 1963, brought together colleagues in the United Kingdom, and other European countries, who were interested, or already working, in congenital heart disease to form a professional society. Their first meeting was held in Lyon, under the chairmanship of Robert Verney, where the Association was formally established, with Hamish as president.

He was born and trained in Edinburgh, and had specialised in adult cardiology. But the tragic death of his son, who had a severe form of congenital heart disease, made him concentrate in this field for the rest of his career, even though he did not give up adult cardiology. For further training he went to Sweden, where angiography and other diagnostic tools of congenital heart disease were already well advanced. He had been appointed Consultant Cardiologist to the Royal Infirmary and Ninewell Hospital in Dundee, where he spent the rest of his career. He soon became the centre of referral from many parts of Scotland. He was among the pioneers of the Rashkind atrial septostomy in the United Kingdom, and wrote a textbook of paediatric cardiology, in addition to many other publications in this field. His landmark studies of Ebstein's malformation stand out in this regard.

But this was only one aspect of his life. He was also a farmer, having inherited a farm from his father. As a friend of his put it: "When others went on holiday, Hamish gathered in the harvest". He was also a passionate rider, and became joint Master of Fox Hounds with the Fife Fox Hounds.

Hamish was very much his own man, but at the same time gregarious and friendly, open to the outside world, interested in many things. This aspect of his personality was, from the beginning, reflected in the way the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology was set up and developed. From the start, its meetings have rotated between different European countries. It was one of the few medical



societies that, again from the start, tried to bring in colleagues from behind the then "iron curtain". When, at first, the Association was accused of being too much of a club, Hamish felt and expressed the need for members of our relatively small specialty to support each other and have more than just narrow professional contacts. And this spirit has guided the Association ever since. The serious and thoughtful side of his character was perhaps most vividly demonstrated when, as some of you will remember, at the meeting in Rome, in 1967, the Association had been granted a Private Audience with the Pope. On behalf of the Association, Hamish addressed the Pope on some of the ethical problems related to our specialty, a topic which over 30 years later has become highly topical.

Seven years ago, Hamish had a terrible car accident. It involved no one else, and its cause has never been established. But it left him paraplegic and in almost constant pain, which he bore with extraordinary courage. He died, of the sequels of his terrible

accident, on 23rd May, shortly after celebrating with his wife Lesley their 50th wedding anniversary among their children and grandchildren.

Gerald Graham