

## Alan G Brown

1939–2006



Alan Brown was a distinguished Edinburgh neurophysiologist who will be remembered for his originality, enthusiasm and humanity. He died on 6 December 2006 at the age of 67. His enduring interest was in the physiology and anatomy of the mammalian central nervous system, especially those components concerned with somesthetic mechanisms in the spinal cord. His 1982 book *Organisation of the spinal cord* contains numerous neuronal reconstructions reminiscent of Cajal's illustrations, but accompanied by precise information as to their functional characteristics, the nature of their afferent inputs and the potential role of descending pathways from higher centres in the dynamic regulation of somesthesia. He contributed prominently to our understanding of the diversity of sensory mechanisms in the dorsal horn and his unique contribution was the correlation of these physiological mechanisms with detailed morphology and ultrastructure.

A native of Nottingham, Alan Brown read Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, qualifying with an honours BSc in Physiology in 1961 and MBChB in 1964. After graduation he joined the newly formed Department of Veterinary Physiology at the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College, University of Edinburgh. He received his PhD in 1968, progressed to a Readership in 1976 and to a full Professorship in 1984. He received some prestigious research awards including a Beit Memorial Research Fellowship and

MRC Research Fellowships during this period. A member of The Physiological Society since 1968, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1984 and Fellow of the Institute of Biology in 1988. He served as a member of the MRC Neurosciences Grants Committee and held editorial positions on *The Journal of Physiology*, the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Physiology*, the *Journal of Neurophysiology*, *Neuroscience* and *Brain Research/Brain Research Reviews*. He was Head of Department of Preclinical Veterinary Sciences for much of the 1990s.

Alan mentored a number of distinguished neuroscientists who achieved high positions in their own right in North America, Australia, UK and elsewhere. They have written uniformly of the warmth of the welcome they received when they visited his laboratory, and of their happy memories of time spent in Edinburgh and the high productivity at that time in their careers. His personality and character were those of the true academic, with dedication and commitment to his discipline, integrity in the conduct and presentation of his research, and a love of the broader intellectual and cultural life that enriches and enlivens the human spirit. He approached life with a characteristic meticulous and thoughtful approach, lacking hubris and self-promotion, and his enthusiasm for scientific debate in the best tradition of The Physiological Society will be remembered by many. Other visitors to his laboratory felt they learned through their visits that the destructive behaviors that existed in their home institutions were not inevitable. Many have commented on how they and their families were welcomed into his home, in the best of Edinburgh traditions, during their visits. Other senior visitors during the period of his headship have commented that despite successive rounds of cuts, his department was a settled one, due not least to his own personal qualities and support for his staff.

My own links with Alan and his family date back to his undergraduate days in Edinburgh and I fully concur the

feelings of his distinguished students and colleagues from the 1980s and 1990s. I too enjoyed some time in his laboratory, but my main contact was with him and his family in our home environments over a span of more than 40 years, when he would often talk about science, music, politics, art, literature and education, not to mention everyday matters of family and work, and one of his favorite hobbies, gardening. Our families visited each other regularly, and our shared enthusiasm for music originated from participation in chamber music of various genres. Alan was a skilled violinist and in adulthood also learned to play the cello; in recent years he was an active member of the New Edinburgh Orchestra.

Alan took enormous pride in his two children, Jeremy and Jessica, who are both in academia. He is survived also by his mother, his first wife, Judith, and his second wife, Patricia, whom he married just weeks before his death, and who looked after him lovingly throughout his final illness.

## John F B Morrison

## W E Balfour

1927–2007



Bill Balfour died on 1 February after a very long illness. He was educated at Harrow County Grammar School, but because his father had died when he was 11, Bill left immediately after passing School Certificate in 1942 and went to work in the local Kodak factory. While there he took evening and weekend courses at Birkbeck