



Sir Alexander Haddow
1907-1976

OBITUARY

Professor Sir Alexander Haddow

Alexander Haddow, who died last year, was born in West Lothian, Scotland, and qualified in medicine at Edinburgh University in 1929. He worked in the Department of Bacteriology at Edinburgh and was always grateful to Sir John Bruce and Professor J. Mackie for their support. In 1936 he joined the staff of the Research Institute of the Royal Cancer Hospital. His work in Edinburgh and London showed that polycyclic hydrocarbons and other compounds that cause cancer also inhibit the growth of tumors. These discoveries led to the development of chemotherapeutic agents that were effective in the clinical treatment of cancer. Soon after the war, with the retirement of Sir Ernest Kennaway, Alex Haddow was appointed Director of the Research Institute, which became known as the Chester Beatty Research Institute and was a part of the Institute of Cancer Research, a school in the British Post Graduate Medical Federation of the University of London. After the nationalization of hospitals the Institute was financed mainly by the Medical Research Council and the British Empire Cancer Campaign. As a director Haddow was very effective in obtaining funds for the development of research and particularly in encouraging young workers with new ideas. Under his leadership the Chester Beatty Research Institute became even more important as a world center for research into the causes, nature, and treatment of cancer. Many of the therapeutic agents widely used in the treatment of cancer and leukemia were developed at the Institute during Haddow's directorship. Important progress was also made in increasing the knowledge of carcinogenesis and immunology.

Alex Haddow never spared himself, often working through the night. He had contempt for those who worked only from 9 to 5 and found it convenient to begin his own experimental work when others had ceased to bother him. At one period he insisted that every book or journal coming into the library pass across his desk; the other readers in the Institute had to wait for the books and journals to emerge.

He believed in giving free rein to individual scientists with promising ideas and the capacity to work them through. The new official Rothschild doctrine of closely defined, target-oriented investigation, which might be useful for developing disinfectants, was not appropriate for cancer research. He maintained that "although a long-range program is certainly essential, I am struck by the almost accidental nature of the really great discoveries, although as Pasteur said, 'These only come to the mind prepared.'"

The personal qualities that, even more than the ability to lead the research of the Institute, commanded the respect and loyalty of Haddow's staff were his generosity and tolerance, which were unstintingly available in overcoming the personal problems of junior, senior, and visiting workers. He knew the family circumstances of all his colleagues. He had little time for officialdom. He once queried the right of a finance committee to make judgments on research policy:

"Your function," he said, "is to find the money; it is my function to spend it."

Direction of the Chester Beatty Research Institute was a full-time job, but Alex Haddow found time to contribute to many external activities. He was a member of the Grand Council and Executive Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Council of the British Empire Cancer Campaign (now the Cancer Research Campaign). He was a member of the Press Council; the Chairman of the British Broadcasting Corporation's Science Consultative Group; a member of the Executive Council of the Ciba Foundation; the President of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War; the deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Association for World Government; the Treasurer of the National Peace Council and United World Trust; and was associated with the Pugwash movement. His fears that atomic energy would literally change the face of the world found expression first in 1950 in his organization for the Institute of Biology (together with the Atomic Scientists Association) of a symposium at the Royal Institution on "The Biological Hazards of Atomic Energy." In a letter to *The Times* in 1954 he advocated a world council of science in which these and similar problems could be rationally examined. He gave help to the Institute of Biology in its early days (and subsequently became a Fellow).

Haddow was the founder President from 1970 to 1971 of the Oncology Section, Royal Society of Medicine. He was a Vice-President of the British Cancer Council, which maintains the relationship between Britain and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC). It was to this international cancer coordinating body that Haddow devoted a tremendous effort. He had attended all International Cancer Congresses from 1933 and was President from 1962 to 1966. He presided over many international meetings of councils and committees, and his UICC colleagues in other countries liked and respected him. In 1961 he was elected a Foreign Member of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the U. S. S. R., and of the Academy of Arts and Sciences of the U. S. A. He was already a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences, having been elected in 1955. France awarded him the *Croix de Chevalier* of the *Legion d'Honneur* in 1965, and Cuba, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia also paid him honor. Honorary doctorates were conferred by the Universities of Perugia, Helsinki, and Edinburgh. The Royal Society elected him to its fellowship in 1958, and he was knighted in 1966.

It was impossible for any man to continue to work at the pace and intensity that Haddow set for himself. He did not readily delegate, but like other busy men he could still find time to take on something extra rather than allow it to be done improperly. The Chester Beatty Research Institute expanded in 1960 and this, with his many other commitments, overtaxed his health. His sight became increasingly

bad, and on September 30, 1972, he retired from the directorship. He carried on with his reading and writing and left the Institute in Fulham Road for The Lodge at Pollards Wood, Chalfont St. Giles, the village in which the blind John Milton lived 300 years ago. The dependence on others necessitated first by Haddow's blindness and then by a loss of limbs irked him initially. He wrote about his blindness: "it would be absurd and idle to attempt to make out any general advantage, since nothing can affect a world of ghosts, nor diminish the ever-present dark." But he was, he said, "impressed by an apparent real increase in extent of perceptivity and depth of recall." Alex now had time to think, to write, and to prepare some exceptional lectures, exceptional even for one who could actually see his slides and quite remarkable for one who had to recall both text and slides.

In 1932 he had married a fellow student, Lucia Black, who died in 1968. His marriage to Mrs. Feo Standing in 1969 brought him not only the security for which his friends had hoped, but also a new devotion, a new sense of purpose, and a new, young stepfamily. Without Feo, Alex might have lost his battle; with her by his side he fought his increasing disability and faced the inevitable outcome of the disease.

By a strange coincidence 2 eminent cancer research workers, Professor Sir Alexander Haddow and Dr. Waro Nakahara of Tokyo, died on January 21, 1976. These gentlemen made outstanding contributions both to research itself and to the direction and organization of cancer research and treatment. They will be missed by many friends and colleagues throughout the world.

The "ever-present dark" that stood between Alex Haddow and us during his last few years has now become the screen that keeps him from us, leaving us just the memory of his life and work.

E. Boyland
TUC Centenary Institute of Occupational Health
The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
London, England

R. J. C. Harris
Microbiological Research Establishment
Porton Down
Salisbury, Wiltshire, England

Cancer Research

The Journal of Cancer Research (1916–1930) | The American Journal of Cancer (1931–1940)

Professor Sir Alexander Haddow

E. Boyland and R. J. C. Harris

Cancer Res 1977;37:1584-1586.

Updated version Access the most recent version of this article at:
<http://cancerres.aacrjournals.org/content/37/5/1584.citation>

E-mail alerts [Sign up to receive free email-alerts](#) related to this article or journal.

Reprints and Subscriptions To order reprints of this article or to subscribe to the journal, contact the AACR Publications Department at pubs@aacr.org.

Permissions To request permission to re-use all or part of this article, use this link <http://cancerres.aacrjournals.org/content/37/5/1584.citation>. Click on "Request Permissions" which will take you to the Copyright Clearance Center's (CCC) Rightslink site.