

## **Dr Roy Thomas Brittain**

**1930–2013**

Dr Roy Thomas Brittain was the Head of Research in Glaxo Group Research from 1983 until he retired in 1992. He died on 21 June 2013, aged 82.

Roy was a positive and jovial man, liked by members of the BPS and all he met. It is well known that he played a critical role in the discovery and launching of several, important new medicines out of the Ware laboratories during the 60s, 70s and 80s. Undoubtedly Sir David Jack, the Head of Research & Development during that period, provided the vision, but Roy provided the inspiration and motivation to all the research teams by his enthusiasm, commitment and determination to succeed. What an incredible leadership duo David and Roy made with their complimentary skills and styles.

Roy was born in Biggleswade in 1930 and as a boy attended Luton Grammar School where he captained the football team and remained an ardent football supporter all his life. Roy did his National Service in the Royal Army Medical Corps where he also found time to play in the band.

After National Service, Roy studied for a degree at the School of Pharmacy, University of London, and was later to be honoured as a Fellow of the School. Following graduation in 1955, Roy joined Allen & Hanburys as an assistant in the Pharmacology Department and his first published research paper, co-authored with the eminent Harry Collier, was prophetically on the antagonism of 5-hydroxytryptamine by dock leaf extracts. Later work focussed on neuromuscular blocking drugs, an interest that continued up to the discovery of fazadinium in the Ware laboratories. In 1962 Roy was appointed Head of the Department. He gained his Ph.D. in 1964 and in 1979 became the Research Director at Ware. He was awarded his D.Sc. in 1982 and by 1983 was Head of Research for Glaxo Group Research, with overall charge of the research on the sites at both Ware and Greenford.

Roy was eternally optimistic and, through his ebullient, outgoing, down to earth personality, he inspired great personal loyalty. He had the ability to get the best out of people; when he asked people to do something for him, they did so, willingly, *for Roy*. The success of his input and leadership is evidenced by the drugs that came out of the multidisciplinary teams that he led over the years, which included salbutamol, fazadinium, labetalol, ranitidine, salmeterol, ondansetron and sumatriptan. Further evidence for the success of his approach is provided by the Royal Society's Mullard Medal, award jointly to Roy and David Jack, for their contributions to drug discovery and development. With all his positive attributes and talents, Roy had more to demonstrate when he retired in 1992 as an Honorary Fellow of the BPS.

Roy was a great character; he could talk to anyone at any level and always had a story to tell. Outside of work he had many interests. For a long time Roy was secretary of the Pirton Branch of the Royal British Legion. Furthermore, he played several musical instruments including trumpet, cornet, trombone, euphonium and organ, and was a member of the Hitchin Town Band. With friends, he used to play at many local retirement homes for the residents' entertainment. He was also a proficient watercolour artist and was a member of the Hitchin Art Club. Roy also loved gardening, and he

belonged to the local Pumpkin Club. Sadly, he never became King Pumpkin because the largest he ever grew was a mere 78 lbs!

Perhaps Roy's greatest passion, which he shared with his wife, Hazel, was horse racing; so much so that at one time he had shares in a few racehorses – mainly their left feet, according to Roy! He was a member of Newmarket Racecourse and always liked to place a bet. Perhaps it was this latter skill honed on the race courses of England that led him to be one of the most successful pickers of winners in the Pharmaceutical Industry.

GM Drew and PPA Humphrey