



## **Obituary of David Charles Watts 1931-2015**

David Charles Watts was an acknowledged expert in enzymology, and during the 1960s - 1980s he published significant papers on the structure, function and distribution of a variety of enzymes involved in general metabolism. He was also enthusiastic about the communication of science to a wider public, and from the early 1970s until 1986, David was responsible for setting up the Biochemical Society information stand at meetings of both the International Union of Biochemistry, and the Federation of European Biochemical Societies, and became a well-known and popular representative of the Society overseas.

David was born in Enfield in 1931 and was educated at Enfield Grammar School. He developed an early interest in the technical side of photography, which led him to concentrate on scientific subjects at school, and then to apply to King's College London to study Zoology. It was during a College field study trip that he met Rosemary Randall, a fellow King's student who shared his interest in wild life and photography, and after their marriage in 1957 they went on to share a life-long interest in rambling and natural history.

After graduating from King's, David moved to University College London (UCL) to study for an MSc in chemistry, and was then required to complete two years of National Service. David thrived in the military environment, and at the end of the two years he was offered promotion and officer training. However, David knew that he wanted to follow an academic career, and after he was demobbed, he returned to UCL to enrol for a PhD in biochemistry, focusing on the study of the enzyme creatine kinase.

He joined the UCL department as a lecturer in Biochemistry in 1961 and continued to study the way that enzymes involved in energy regeneration in muscle vary between different animal species. As part of this work, he and Rosemary and his research team spent several weeks at the Marine Biology Station at Plymouth, studying the creatine kinase and arginine kinase enzymes in a variety of marine animals.

When David transferred to the Biochemistry Department at Guy's Hospital in 1966, and took up the post of Reader in Biochemistry at the young age of 35, he broadened his research to study the role of enzymes in disease processes, and especially the early use of enzyme measurements in the diagnosis of diseases such as Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. During this time his dedicated and encouraging supervision inspired numerous research students towards the successful completion of their PhD studies.

During his career, David published over 30 papers in the Biochemical Society's main journal, the "Biochemical Journal", and also a number of papers in the journal "Nature". David was an active member of the Biochemical Society and served on the Editorial Board of the "Biochemical Journal" from the mid 1960s until 1974. In 1977, he took on the demanding role of Managing Editor of the journal "Biochemical Society Transactions". This new journal had been introduced in 1973 to speed up the communication of science research by publishing the research reports from Biochemical Society meetings. As Managing Editor, David attended as many Biochemical Society meetings as he could around the UK, and continued in this role until 1988.

At Guy's, David lectured on the undergraduate medical and dental courses, and he will be especially remembered for his enthusiastic organisation of the Intercalated BSc course in Biochemistry, taken by a selected number of medical and dental students. During this one-year course, the students gained training in a wide range of biochemical techniques, and a number of them went on to combine a successful career in clinical medicine and dentistry with research.

David was fascinated by all aspects of science, and before his retirement from Guy's he became interested in the chemical composition of coloured glass, and also in the history and technology of early English glassmaking. He joined the "Glass Circle", a society of Antique Glass collectors, and after retirement he became one of the Circle's Vice Presidents. A 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his well-researched book "A History of Glassmaking in London" was published in 2014 and received much praise. David's wife, Rosemary died in 2003; he is survived by his son, Benedict.