

In Memoriam

BRIAN F. C. CLARK 1936–2014

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Brian F. C. Clark passed away on 6th October 2014 at the age of 78 after a long fight with cancer. In spite of the burden caused by the disease, Brian remained active until the last days, always telling colleagues about the numerous ongoing activities he was committed to. Besides having been a remarkable scientist who made seminal contributions to basic science, Brian dedicated a substantial amount of his time to promote the internationalization of science and networking of scientists beyond their countries. Moreover, he spent much effort in the later stages of his career to increase collaboration between academia and the Biotechnology industry, with the aim of promoting the translation of basic discoveries into applications that impact society at large.

Brian received a PhD in Chemistry in 1961 from Cambridge University, UK under the guidance of Dan Brown, and a ScD (Molecular Biology) in 1975 from the same University. After finishing his PhD, he did post-doctoral work both at the MIT's Division of Biochemistry (1961–1962) with Jack Buchanan and at the NIH's National Heart Institute (1962–1964) with Nobel Laureate Marshall Nirenberg. It was in these places that he was introduced to biochemistry, in particular to cell-free protein synthesis and to the initial steps aimed at the elucidation of the genetic code.

In 1964, Brian returned to Cambridge to become a member of the scientific staff of the Medical Research Council (MRC) Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB), a world-class institution where

he had the opportunity to work with Nobel laureates Aaron Klug, Francis Crick and Sidney Brenner. Major contributions from this period included the discovery of the protein initiation code in 1966 and the first crystallization of a tRNA molecule in 1968. His stay at the LMB was crucial in shaping his future career as he was touched by the quality of science being carried out at the laboratory, the striking international scientific environment, and the remarkable networking with top laboratories across the world.

Professor Keld Marker – who had been in Fred Sanger's division at the LMB and with whom Brian had collaborated in the identification of the

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formylmethionine initiation of protein synthesis while at the LMB – convinced him to move to the University of Aarhus in Denmark. In 1974, Brian became Professor of Biostructural Chemistry at the newly created Division of Structural Biochemistry at the Department of Chemistry. His main areas of research included macromolecular mimicry and molecular mechanisms of protein synthesis as well as molecular and cellular mechanisms of ageing. Highlights included the first determination of the structure of a GTP-binding molecule, the crystal structure of the ternary complex of Phe-tRNAPhe, elongation factor Tu and GTP, as well as studies on the concept of structural macromolecular mimicry. Brian brought in foreign expertise to the Division in order to cover other areas of protein synthesis; in particular, he strongly supported the initial steps of what we now know as proteomics. Over the years, the Division grew considerably, and many young scientists were educated and encouraged to go abroad to pursue postdoctoral studies.

Brian provided long-term services to the biochemical and molecular biology community worldwide. He was Chairman of Federation of European Societies (FEBS) in 1998–1999, Chairman of FEBS, Brian was Vice Chairman of the EMBO Council in 2003, President of the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUMB) from 2000 to 2003, and Chairman of the Task Group on International Relations (TGIR) of the European Federation of Biotechnology (EFB) in 2001. He was a member of EMBO and foreign member of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. Brian received several honours including the Copernicus medal from the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the FEBS Diplôme d'Honneur.

Brian was board member of the Danish Biochemical Society during 25 years, and was responsible for the relations to the International organizations including FEBS, IUBMB, and EFB. He created important international networks, and he inspired the Society to a global thinking and activity. Brian was also committed

to the progress and success of the field of biochemistry and molecular biology in Denmark.

Brian organized many meetings worldwide, including the 25th FEBS Congress in Copenhagen, but without doubt his highest priority was the organization of the Advanced Courses in Molecular and Cell Biology in the Greek island of Spetses, over 47 years. In 2012, a lecture hall at the Spetses hotel was named after him.

A few months before his death Brian celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Division of Biostructural Chemistry, and co-organized a memorial symposium at the New York Academy of Sciences to pay tribute to Marshall Nirenberg for the identification of the genetic code.

Brian is survived by his caring wife Margaret. He will be missed dearly as he was a unique individual, full of enthusiasm, never afraid of speaking his mind, and with a broad vision of science that we rarely see nowadays.