
IAN DONALD

Ian Donald was born in Scotland in **1910** and educated at Warriston School in Moffat, **Fettes College** in **Edinburgh** and following the family move to **South Africa** he graduated BA from the Diocesan College in **Cape Town**. He then studied medicine and was awarded MB BS at **London University** in **1937**. During **1942-1946** he served as a **medical officer** in the RAFVR; was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the MBE for rescuing airmen from a burning aircraft. In **1951** he became **Reader** in **Obstetrics and Gynaecology** at **St. Thomas Hospital Medical School** and, at what is now, the Royal Post-Graduate Medical School in 1952. During this time he received a Research Scholarship from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists for work on neonatal respiration and in 1954 gave the **Blair Bell Memorial Lecture** on that subject.



In the autumn of the same year he accepted the **Regius Chair of Midwifery** at **Glasgow University**, where, to quote his own words he "arrived with the residue of a Leverhulme Research grant from the RCOG, a rudimentary knowledge of radar from my days in the RAF and a continuing childish interest in machines, electronic and otherwise". This was combined with an awareness of echo-sounding (hence the preference for the term sonar) and contact with some of the few others in the world who were interested in its possible medical applications.

In recognition he received many honours including the Eardley Holland gold medal (RCOG), Blair Bell gold medal (RSM), Victor Bonney Prize (RCS of England), **Honorary DSc** from London and Glasgow Universities, **CBE** in 1973 and an **Honorary FRCR** in 1983. In 1984 Ian Donald and **Tom Brown** were made the first Honorary members of this Society. Only a fortnight before he died Ian made the journey to the **Royal College of Physicians of London** to receive an Honorary Fellowship.



Ian Donald with the NE 4102

The work by which Ian Donald is known to most members of this society only represents part of his life. His paramount responsibilities were as a doctor and teacher and these he welcomed. To his patients

he gave his full attention, and treated them as individuals, to his students he gave lectures delivered with care and enthusiasm. He was author of "**Practical Obstetric Problems**" which ran to five editions and gained a fine reputation while being widely regarded as a delight to read. His wider responsibilities extended to the supervision of the planning and design of the **Queen Mother's Hospital** which opened in 1964.

For many people not involved in ultrasound a dominant aspect of Ian Donald was his vigorous and sincere opposition to the 1967 Abortion Act. This act he saw as an "attempt to eliminate an evil by substituting a different evil".

Throughout nearly half his life Donald was beset by ill health and three times required major cardiac surgery. Following the last he was persuaded by a friend to commit to writing his memories of the ordeal. "On the receiving end" (*Lancet* 1969) is a moving yet wryly humorous essay of this painful experience. Among these recollections he tells how during the preoperative stage he self-diagnosed a retroperitoneal haematoma but that it required an ultrasonogram to convince his doubting, cardiac colleagues.

For recreation Ian took great pleasure in music and painting. The pictures decorating his office included some of his own watercolours, appropriately depicting boats and the sea since he was a keen and energetic sailor and in his earlier days built a number of boats.

Professor Ian Donald passed away on 19th June 1987 and was buried in the quiet country churchyard of St. Peters, Paglesham, Essex. He is survived by his wife Alix, whom he married in 1937, their four daughters and thirteen grandchildren.

In honor of Professor Ian Donald, [Professor Asim Kurjak](#) founded the **Ian Donald Inter-University School of Medical Ultrasound** in Dubrovnik, Croatia in **1981**. It is one of the world's largest school of medical ultrasound and each year many celebrated students come through their advanced courses in medical ultrasonography.

And in recognition of Donald's pioneering work in Ultrasound, an [Ian Donald Gold Medal](#) was awarded each year by the [International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology \(ISUOG\)](#) to the person whose pioneering work is considered to have the most profound influence in the development of Obstetrical and Gynecological ultrasonography.

In part excerpted from the **Obituary of Professor Ian Donald** by [Mr. John Fleming](#), which appeared in the British Medical Ultrasound Society Bulletin, no. 46, September, 1987.

- ▶ Read also: "[**A short History of the Development of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology**](#)"
- ▶ See an excerpt of Professor Donald's paper in 1958 in the Lancet: "[**Investigation of Abdominal Masses by Pulsed Ultrasound**](#)" which covers his considerations and outlook at that time.
- ▶ For a detailed history of the pioneering development of medical ultrasonics in Glasgow, Scotland, read: '[**Medical Ultrasound ---- A Glasgow Development which Swept the World**](#)', by [**Dr. James Willocks**](#) which appeared in the University of Glasgow publication '[**Avenue**](#)' No. 19 in January 1996; the [**Biography of Tom Brown**](#) and an important unpublished paper by [**Brown**](#) on the [**Development of ultrasonic scanning techniques in Scotland 1956-1979**](#).
- ▶ Visit the pictorial presentation: [**Scenes from the History of Ultrasound**](#) from the [**British Medical Ultrasound Society**](#) (BMUS) Historical Collection.
- ▶ Read also: " [**Ultrasound scanning - Prof. Ian Donald \(1910-1987\)**](#)" -- by [**Professor Asim Kurjak**](#) in the Eur J Obstet Gynecol Reprod Biol 2000 Jun 90:2 187-9.
- ▶ Read also: " [**Ian Donald - A Memoir**](#), by [**James Willocks**](#) and [**Wallace Barr**](#). RCOG Press, 2004.
- ▶ Read also: " [**Ian Donald - Diagnostician and Moralist**](#) by Malcolm Nicolson Centre for the History of Medicine University of Glasgow. From the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.
- ▶ Read also: "[**Chapter 1: Medical Ultrasound - germination and growth**](#)" in [**Clinical Diagnostic Ultrasound**](#), Baxter G M, Paul L P Allan and Patricia Morley, Eds. Blackwell Publishing. 2nd Edition, 1999. and
- ▶ And: "[**Forty Years of Obstetric Ultrasound 1957-1997: From A-scope to Three Dimensions**](#)". Margaret B McNay and John E.E. Fleming. Ultrasound in Med. & Biol., Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 3 - 56, 1999.