

# **Prof. Derek Frank Bruce Roberts**

## **(London, July 1925 – Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, December 19<sup>th</sup> 2016)**

**Prof. C G Nicholas Mascie-Taylor**

Derek Frank Bruce Roberts was born in London, UK in July 1925 and after army service during World War 2 received a degree in Geography from the University of Cambridge. While at Cambridge he developed an interest in the biology of human variation. From 1949 to 1963 he worked in the Department of Anatomy, University of Oxford with Wilfred Le Gros Clark, undertaking anthropological field surveys in Sudan and forming an informal group of Oxford based workers interested in genetics. In 1960 he spent a year with James Neel at Ann Arbor, Michigan before moving to the University of Washington, Seattle, USA.

In 1963 he joined Alan Stevenson's Medical Research Council unit in Oxford and in 1965 was appointed to develop Human Genetics at Newcastle University. Among other activities there he continued with population studies, notably of the evacuated Tristan da Cunha population, while laying the foundations for medical genetics, including a cytogenetics laboratory and clinical genetics services. Derek has been credited with the use of the term 'anthropological genetics' referring to research on small populations in the context of human variation and evolution.

Derek's service to the profession of Biological Anthropology has been very substantial. For example, he was one of the founding fathers of the study of Human Biology in the UK and was instrumental in setting up the European Anthropological Association. He was an honorary member of the Society for the Study of Human Biology and the Biosocial Society. He edited the *Journal of Biosocial* for over 10 years, was an active Trustee of the Parkes Foundation from its inception for nearly 30 years and was Secretary-General of the International Association of Human Biologists for 12 years. He was the recipient of many awards and honours including the higher degree of Doctor of Science (ScD) from the University of Cambridge, made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (FRSE) in 1985 and he received the Franz Boas Distinguished Award from the Human Biology Association in 2001.

Derek died in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, UK on 19 December 2016 at the age of 91 years.

Derek was always courteous and kind and had a quiet and genial manner. He was an excellent mentor and as an editor was always very encouraging and fair. With his passing we have lost an extremely distinguished scientist and a very dear friend and colleague.

