

Robert Somerled Cameron Fergusson 1923–2005

Somerled grew up in the remote peninsula of Ardnamurchan, in Scotland's far northwest. His father was the GP. Somerled himself graduated in medicine from Edinburgh in 1947, at the time of inception of the NHS.

Fascinated by obstetrics, he nevertheless returned to Ardnamurchan when his father fell ill, to help out. It was expected, but on the death of his father, he was not appointed to the post. This cruel twist sparked his interest in the organisation of isolated practice.

In 1953 he was appointed to single-handed practice in the equally remote fishing village of Lochinver. In the same year he became a founder member of the RCGP. In the snowy winter of 1955 one single home visit took him 9 hours, another involved 30 miles by boat, and another 24 miles on a tractor. Tractors had no cabs then.

He then moved to Beauly, near Inverness, where he practiced for 25 years until his retirement in 1988. He trained 21 GPs, supported the College and was always active in BMA politics. He was awarded the Fellowship of the College in 1978, an MBE in 1989, and Fellowship of the BMA in 2002.

He was a strong proponent of the NHS and sought to establish a framework in which its benefits might extend to the remotest patients and doctors. Meticulous, unyieldingly tenacious, and knowledgeable, his great achievement was the Associate Practitioner Scheme which saved remote, single-handed practice from becoming a refuge for misfits.

In his 'retirement' he served on the Highland Health Board, worked for the College locally, and wrote a regular column for *Hoolet*, the journal of the

College in Scotland. He also named it: after the Scots word for 'owl'. He fished the rivers and stalked the hills where formerly he practiced.

He leaves a wife, a daughter, a son, and grandchildren.

**JAMES McLARDY
ALAN MUNRO**

