

## David Finney celebrates 100th birthday

Congratulations to Professor David Finney, ISI member for 65 years, and former Director of the ISI Research Centre 1987-88, who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2017.

Former colleagues at the University of Edinburgh and the Agricultural Research Council Unit of Statistics held a reception on 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 to celebrate his centenary.

David was born in Cheshire, England, and won a scholarship to study mathematics at Cambridge University from 1934 to 1938. While at Cambridge, he attended courses on statistics. Following graduation, he worked for a brief period with R.A. Fisher on human genetic linkage before taking on the role of assistant to Frank Yates at Rothamsted Experimental Station in 1939. Spurred by the urgent need to improve food production in wartime Britain, he, together with other notable statisticians of the time at Rothamsted, including Frank Anscombe, William G. Cochran & Oscar Kempthorne, developed new ideas about experimental design and promoted the need for statistically valid sample surveys. David's contributions on design were principally in fractional replication of factorial arrangements, Latin squares and split plots.

He began his university teaching career in 1945 at Oxford University with a remit to teach, but also, quite uniquely for the time, be available for consultation on statistical methods in biology. In 1954, he was asked to create a Department of Statistics in the University of Aberdeen. Alongside the Department, he set up a Unit of Statistics funded by the UK Agricultural Research Council to provide a service to researchers in Scotland along the lines of the Rothamsted Statistics Department in England. In 1966, he was invited to move the Unit to Edinburgh and to take up the post of first Professor of Statistics at the University of Edinburgh. He retired from this post in 1984 but his statistical advice and wisdom has continued to be sought by organisations and individuals ever since.

Public duty and the conviction that statistical methods are valuable tools in the service of society have been core themes in David's career. In 1952-53, he spent a year in India acting as a consultant for the FAO. A report he co-wrote with Frank Yates led to the establishment of the Indian Institute of Agricultural Research Statistics. In 1984-85, he worked as visiting scientist at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines.

During a sabbatical year at Harvard University in 1962, he was prompted by the thalidomide drug tragedy to consider what role statisticians might play in monitoring adverse reactions to medicines. He wrote a report that was widely distributed amongst health ministries across the world. Subsequently, he played a key role in setting up a UK monitoring system, as well as an international system, on behalf of the World Health Organisation.

He served as President of the International Biometric Society 1964-65 and of the Royal Statistical Society 1973-74. He is a founding member of the World Cultural Council.

He is the author, or joint author, of more than 250 published papers, the first of which appeared in *Biometrika* while he was an undergraduate. Of the eight books that he wrote, *Probit Analysis* (1947) and *Statistical Methods in Biological Assay* (1952) are his best known works.

David still lives in Edinburgh where he enjoys listening to music, reading and conversations with family and friends.