

University Secretary
J Roger Gair MA

The University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

Tel +44 (0) 113 343 4011
Email: j.r.gair@adm.leeds.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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Dr Keith Parker

Colleagues will be sorry to learn of the recent death of Dr Keith Parker, former Senior Lecturer in the Astbury Department of Biophysics.

After graduating from Cambridge in 1946 and completing his National Service, Keith joined the Department of Biomolecular Structures in 1949 working under Professor Astbury on the three dimensional structure in protein molecules, completing his PhD in 1953. Not long after he was appointed as Lecturer in 1963, the Department merged with the Department of Botany to form the Asbury Department of Biophysics, where Keith was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1969.

Keith used the technique of infra-red spectroscopy to complement Astbury's x-ray diffraction studies on biopolymers. He was one of the founders of modern spectroscopy and the first spectroscopist to examine the effect of deuteration on the infra-red spectra of fibrous material. His study of hydrogen bonds helped to pave the way for the recognition of these interactions as one of the most important contributors to the structure and function of biological macromolecules. His participation in the application of modern physics to biological problems led to the birth of molecular biology.

Keith was also a fine cricketer, playing for the University staff for many years. He joined the Ben Rydding team just before retirement and was hailed the 'oldest newcomer to the Bradford League'. He was an impressive opening batsman and a prominent run-maker. He was a charming and modest man with infinite patience, always making time for his students. On his retirement in 1989, he continued to work part-time as a senior research fellow.