

## R.J.P. Williams

By Joachim Krebs



Professor R.J.P. Williams, FRS, is Emeritus Fellow at Wadham College and Emeritus Professor, University of Oxford. He studied Chemistry at Merton College, Oxford, graduating in 1948. During the course of his Part II work the Irving-Williams series of the stabilities of complex ions, which is of paramount importance in both non-living and living systems, was discovered. He took his doctor's degree at Oxford in 1950 working with Professor H.M.N.H. Irving. With Professor A. Tiselius (Uppsala, Sweden) 1950-51, he developed certain (gradient elution) chromatographic methods of analysis. He then became lecturer and tutor in Chemistry at Wadham College, 1955-65.

After a year at Harvard University, 1965-66, with Professor B.L. Vallee, he changed to teach biochemistry until 1974, and was Napier Royal Society Research Professor at the University of Oxford from 1975-1991. In 1961 he proposed proton-gradient-driven ATP formation as the driving force of bio-energetics. He pioneered the field of Bio-Inorganic Chemistry, especially concerning the role of calcium as a biological messenger, and contributed substantially to our understanding of the evolution of life. Together with J.J.R. Frausto da Silva he just published a book on the Chemistry of Evolution. He was elected Fellow of The Royal Society in 1972 and is a Foreign Member of the Swedish, Portugese, Czechoslovakian and Belgian science academies. He received various medals of the Biochemical Society, the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the European Biochemical Societies and of the International Union of Biochemistry. He has honorary degrees from Louvain, Leicester, Keel, Lisbon and East Anglia Universities. Bob Williams was a founder member of the Oxford Enzyme group in which he and his colleagues devised many new methods for the study of in vitro and in vivo biological systems, especially using nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy.