Foreword

Dr Herchel Smith, in whose honour this Festschrift has been prepared, through his generous endowments created the Herchel Smith Chairs in Intellectual Property and Herchel Smith Research Fellowships in Intellectual Property at both Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Cambridge. Annual public lectureships in intellectual property are delivered at both universities.

Born in Plymouth, in 1925, Herchel Smith was educated at Exeter College, Oxford and at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he took the Natural Sciences Tripos. He worked at both universities, with Professor Lord Todd at Cambridge and as a post-doctoral fellow in the Dyson Perrins Laboratory at Oxford. Appointed a university lecturer in organic chemistry at Manchester University, he invented and patented new chemical reactions for the synthesis of novel steroids. Dr Smith emigrated to the United States in the 1950s to work for Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. Herchel Smith's work on new methods for the total synthesis of steroids led to the development of commercially feasible methods for the industrial production of estrone, equilin (an important constituent of treatments for post-menopausal syndrome), 19-nor-testosterone, and Norgestrel (a novel progestogen). Norgestrel was found to be a potent contraceptive and formed the basis for a range of contraceptive drugs.

Dr Smith retired in 1973 and started a new career as a philanthropist in which he returned to the academic community the major part of the substantial fortune that had accrued from his patent and licensing fees. On his death on 20 December 2001, in addition to the intellectual property gifts to Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Cambridge, he endowed the Herchel Smith Laboratory for Medicinal Chemistry, a leading centre for the research and development of magnetic resonance imaging, a Chair of Immunology and the Herchel Smith Chairs of Medicinal Chemistry and Organic Chemistry. Harvard University received similar endowments. The University of Pennsylvania Medical Center in Philadelphia and Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, were also beneficiaries of his generosity.

This Festschrift is a celebration of the contribution which Herchel Smith made to establishing Queen Mary, University of London as one of the foremost intellectual property research institutes in the world.

Michael Blakeney