



ALLAN GIBB

20 November 1939 – 21 December 2019

IN GRATITUDE

An Inspirational Pioneer



Professor Allan Gibb OBE was an inspirational pioneer in the field of Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprise development for 50 years. His concept of Entrepreneurship was broad, stretching beyond conventional models. It was not solely focused on new business ventures and business growth but upon the development of the skills, attributes and behaviours of enterprising people, to be used in any context (business, social enterprise, healthcare, NGOs, universities and governments). Importantly, it was about building links between concept (idea/intention) and practice (know how/application).

Allan was also a great entrepreneur himself. He founded the Small Business Centre, which became the Foundation for SME Development. It was an organisational innovation, creating a world-leading centre in small business and enterprise within a University setting and in ways that enabled those within it to be entrepreneurial, to learn and to succeed. For those of us who worked in it... we perhaps only realised the opportunity, freedom and stimulation that environment gave us once we had left and moved on to less innovative working environments. Launched in 1971 within Durham University Business School, it was the first in Europe of its kind and grew into a substantial social enterprise with more than 40 staff.

Learning with & from entrepreneurs



Allan was responsible for the development of a wide range of innovative approaches to small business management in the UK and internationally:

- He established the first UK small firm counselling service, Enterprise North, run by and for small businesses.
- He devised and ran all of the training for the DTI Small Firms Counselling Service for many years. He was instrumental in working alongside Business in the Community in training the directors and key staff of virtually all of the UK Local Enterprise Agencies.
- The Small Business Centre offered leading-edge enterprise programmes for schools, colleges and universities, as well as a wide range of new venture, survival, growth and internationalisation programmes in partnership with business and development agencies. These have since been disseminated around the world.
- The First UK Business Competition 'Build Your Own Business'. Sponsored by Shell UK in partnership with the SBC and Enterprise North, it offered cash awards and business support. Researching applicants' needs led to the MAIR business start-up model (Motivation, Ability, Idea, Resource), subsequently used extensively in counselling and training programmes nationally and internationally.

As a result of its success and innovation, the Small Business Centre at DUBS grew over thirty years to become a flagship for entrepreneurship and small business development regionally, nationally and internationally and the largest Research, Development and Delivery Centre of its kind in Europe. Allan was described in an OECD publication as "the doyen of entrepreneurship and small business development academics".

Over the years Allan served on many advisory boards and committees in both the public and private sectors. He was a consultant on small business to the European Commission, the World Bank, UNIDO, ILO, ITC and many governments across the world. He was a member of the small team that wrote the initial Terms of Reference for the establishment of the EU Small Firms Directorate - DG XX111.

A deep and wide-ranging philosophy on entrepreneurship



Allan's inaugural lecture as Professor, delivered in November 1985, focused upon the question, *"Has entrepreneurship a place in the University?"* Given this interest, he became involved in a number of initiatives to facilitate improvements in the enterprise culture within Higher Education. These included the International Enterprise Educators Programme (IEEP), launched in 2007 through the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NCGE, now NCEE) and Enterprise Educators UK (EEUK). Two years later, in 2009, he led the launch of the Entrepreneurial University Leaders Programme (EULP), as a joint venture between the then NCGE and the University of Oxford.

Allan's many papers (available on his website, www.allangibb.com), are underpinned by extensive literature research and have been widely published. Always in high demand nationally and internationally, he worked in over 60 countries and with many international organisations.

Influence and recognition



Allan worked closely with the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), was the first Chairman of the UK Enterprise Management Research Association (now ISBE), had been a Vice-President of the International Council for Small Business (ICSB) and helped to establish the European Council for Small Business (ECSB). He served on the Editorial Boards of many of the major journals in the field. His influence and involvement also included, amongst many others: the UK Manpower Services Commission on Entrepreneurship Training and the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship.

Allan was awarded the title of Professor of Small Business in 1985 and, upon retirement from Durham University, became Professor Emeritus. He received many awards for his work including:

- the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the small business community;
- Honorary Doctorate in Economics, Turku School of Economics, Finland;
- the Queen's Lifetime Achievement Award for Enterprise Promotion (2009);
- the first European Entrepreneurship Education Laureate Award funded by the Sten K. Johnson Centre for Entrepreneurship, Sweden (2012); and
- the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE) International Lifetime Achievement Award (2015).

An irreverent leadership style



As a leader, Allan was renowned within the Small Business Centre for his unconventional style: he had both a great determination to get things done and to lead with a disregard for status and a huge concern to motivate all the staff he worked with, managing “by walking around” and giving time to all. Similarly, at international conferences, his aspiration was always to facilitate learning among those who were in attendance. He did not seek to be regarded as an elitist academic guru, but as someone who listened to and helped others with their own concerns and problems.

Allan Gibb was humble, kind and dedicated to others. His concept of entrepreneurship and personal ethos was never about making money and becoming rich. Rather, he was very much focused on social concerns and believed in the value of entrepreneurial behaviour as a means of making the world a better place.

It was often the passionate and enlightening discussions in the corridors and at the bar at DUBS with Allan that we learnt so much and flourished as colleagues, friends, students and entrepreneurs. Allan fostered a culture of the ‘lived experience of the entrepreneur’ in all those who worked at the SBC/FSMED, making sure we lived and breathed their world in the design and delivery of our programmes. His legacy lives on in the marvellous diaspora of entrepreneurial thinkers, researchers, practitioners, educators and support staff who worked with him and embraced his pioneering way of thinking about entrepreneurship and small business.

A passionate supporter of the North East



Allan's life as a researcher started by working directly with local entrepreneurs in the North East. Many in the enterprise agency networks and local business organisations will have benefitted from his passion for local entrepreneurs.

Beyond the world of entrepreneurship, Allan and Joan loved tennis. His love for his beloved Sunderland Football Club was steadfast, irrespective of their colourful and offered chequered experiences up and down in the football league. Every year, Allan bought a season ticket to the Stadium of Light and was particularly happy when his son Stephen was in the North East from France and able to accompany him to the matches.

Over the last three years, Allan's beloved wife, Joan, was suffering with ill health and he was steadfast in caring for her. Sadly, Joan died a few weeks before Allan. They both benefitted hugely in the final months of their lives from the care shown to them by their son, Stephen and his wife Josie, and by their daughter, Jennie and her husband, René and their grandchildren, Lola and Elfie.



Allan belonged to that small group of people – fiercely intelligent curious and committed about his ‘subject’ of entrepreneurship and how it could transform individuals and communities. Yet he was so generous and enthusiastic in openly sharing his knowledge and insights on this subject with others. It was a great pleasure knowing and working with him.

Pat Richardson

Former Director, Network Development, Small Business Centre / FSMED,
Partner, Richardson Howarth

I was only at DUBS for a short time but I will always be grateful to Allan for hiring me and having faith in me to help set up the GAP programme. He was a terrific leader and mentor figure to me.

Roger Brooksbank

Associate Professor of Marketing, University of Waikato, New Zealand

I benefitted hugely from his generously shared knowledge and wisdom, not to mention his never-ending curiosity and good humour.

What I really learned from Allan was not what to think about small business, but how to think about small business. He was a great man and I am grateful to have known him.

Mark Havers

Former Head of Overseas Development Group, Small Business Centre,
Business Owner

Allan led the field in thinking about how universities could and should change. I never tired of listening to him and even the anecdotes, oft repeated, were always entertaining. He had a warmth and sense of humour that endeared him to people. I also think he was extremely generous with his time and never made you feel that you didn't have something to contribute.

Chris Baker

Director, Work and Learning Opportunities and Former Director, Entrepreneurial University Leaders Programme

World renowned scholar, colleague, mentor and great friend to us all. I was privileged to work with Allan, for over thirty years in a field that we were both passionate about and to call him my friend. Always present, Allan was a truly kind leader who genuinely cared about all those around him. Allan, you will be missed profoundly but your inspiration will live on.

Dinah Bennett

Network Development Unit, Small Business Centre / FSMED
Director, International Consultants for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise

As well as being a world-acclaimed academic, Allan was also an entrepreneur in the true sense of the word. Entrepreneurs think and do things differently and change the rules of the game. In designing the business model for the SBC, he created an entrepreneurial organisation that defied academic convention and tradition. The best tribute that I can pay Allan is that had he been appointed as Manager of Sunderland Football Club; the Club would have been European Champions for the past three decades. Such was his passion, personal charisma and dedication to task.

Tim Atterton

Former Director, Small Business Centre,
Managing Director, Business Dynamics

Herewith a few thoughts of commemoration and celebration

from Allan's friends and colleagues at the Small Business Centre and the Foundation for SME Development in Durham and around the world...



There was once a young man called 'Gibb'
At Durham University he started his indenture
His future became the Small Business Centre
From Allan Gibb to a famous rover
He circled the world many times over
Spreading the word of enterprise culture

(Jackson and Watts)

Monica Jackson and Anne Watts

Former PAs to Allan Gibb, Small Business Centre and the Foundation for SME Development

Having worked in the Small Business Centre
for quite a number of years, I know very well
that Allan meant so much to so many people
that I feel very privileged to have known him.

Lynda Anderson

Former PA, Small Business Centre / FSMED

Allan was a wonderful man. He didn't judge.
He didn't patronise. He became our good
friend because he liked us and we liked him.
We will miss him terribly but will never forget
him.

Therese Winter and Marie Helme
Catering Managers, DUBS (1980 - 2005)

I absolutely enjoyed working with Allan. His insight and passion for entrepreneurship was imbued with a sense of joie de vivre and deep engagement with both theory and practice! I loved his quirky diagrams through which he explained his ideas and concepts. Allan (and Joan), what a great legacy you leave us. Hamba Kahle Tata Allan Imizekeloyakhoiyohlalaiphilakithi (Farewell Father Allan. Your example forever lives in us.).

Keith Herrmann
Former Director of Programmes (SED),
Foundation for SME Development
Director, Higher Ed Research

Allan was one of a small group of researchers who understood deeply the importance of enterprise, business start-up and small firm growth and developed that insight into a new pioneering field. He was also a people person, caring, being concerned and also curious as to how others felt and thought.

A constant through time at the SBC was that everybody counted and was important, and that hierarchy and position were not as important as some thought it should be. A "bonnie lad" or "pet lamb" was never far away in conversations with Allan, disarming and opening up conversations and people.

Andrew Atherton
Former Director, Foundation for SME
Development



Allan was instrumental in encouraging me to join Durham University Business School in 1979. I will always remember him as well as a passionate believer who did so much to foster the growth and well-being of small business entrepreneurs.

Terry Webb
Director of the Post Experience Programme
1985 - 1987 and Lecturer in Organisational
Behaviour, DUBS 1979-1987

Allan was a great inspiration to me personally. I learnt so much from him and still apply many of his ideas, concepts and principles. He had a rare talent to motivate people into action.

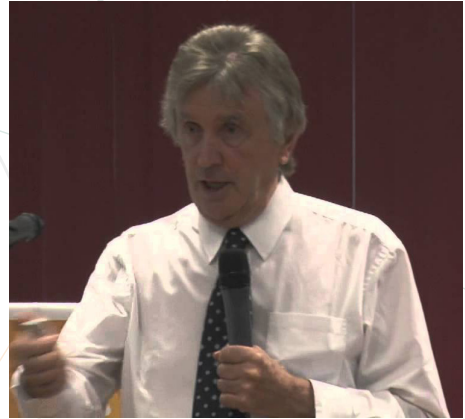
Vin Morar
University of Twente, Holland

Some years ago, I reached out to Allan on behalf of a group of entrepreneurship educators in Ireland for some advice, and instead I got a mentor and supporter who travelled to Ireland on numerous occasions to work with our group. His expertise, reputation and friendship had been known to me for many years, but then I learned of his incredible generosity of time and spirit. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam (May he rest in peace)

Professor Tom Cooney
College of Business, Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)

There were unforgettable months in Durham in his Small Business Centre, where everything was organised and thought out so that it was not just training, but integration into life and getting the very energy of entrepreneurial and creative transformative autonomy, which to this day - stays in us and helps in difficult times...

Liudmilla A. Kolesnikova
Professor, Department of Public Sector
Economy & Finance
Russian Presidential Academy for National
Economy & Public Administration (RANEPA)
joined by RANEPA Professor Ludmila
Vasilenko, Ekaterina Mityasova and Andrei
Kolesnikov



Allan would fill the largest, most daunting of spaces with his warmth, mercurial intelligence and mischievous humour. He charmed everyone he came across in Aidan's, not through a superficial charisma but through his genuine interest in others, his wide-ranging passions and the elegant way he expressed it all in that compelling, gravelly voice. Some tall men unwittingly inhibit those around them, but Allan was more like a great oak tree offering shelter, drawing out the shyest and drawing in the fractious. He encouraged us all to dream of a better world and to do something, however small, to bring it about. A lover of all the Arts, he was a poet of human possibility. He will be missed more than words can convey, by so many. While there will be scholarly testaments to the scale of his talents and achievements, the love and friendship he inspired so widely and deeply is the purest witness to his presence in this life and his enduring legacy.

Dr Susan Frenk
Principal St Aidan's College, Durham University





Allan was a huge influence on me and PNE (Project North East) and I will always appreciate his support and encouragement.

David Grayson CBE
Emeritus Professor of Corporate Responsibility
Cranfield School of Management

‘Allan really was an exceptional man who left such a mark on us all.

Ruth Lowbridge MBE
Executive Chair, SFEDI Group

Allan was my mentor on the IEEP in 2008, gave time to teach my students and consequently mentored my PhD research; a huge influence on the way so many see [enterprise] education now. Thank you Allan. You made us smile every day.

Katie Wray
Lecturer in Enterprise (Science, Agriculture and Engineering)
Newcastle University

I first met Allan in 1976, whilst a Durham University undergraduate engineering science student, who had elected to take a management option instead of undertaking a technical project. It was his enthusiasm for small business and the potential of entrepreneurship that kindled my own enthusiasm, resulting in me co-founding one of the UK's first enterprise agencies in 1980 and then, in 2000, being appointed founder chief executive of the UK Government's Small Business Service.

David Irwin PhD
Founder Chief Executive, UK Small Business Service, DTI
Partner, Irwin Grayson Associates



Change seeker, knowledge builder, intellectual mentor and friend. Allan always insisted on experiential learning, which opened a door to using drama for teaching about complicated, multifaceted features of entrepreneurship in the most creative and entertaining way – a precious side effect of it was our experience with sparkling teamwork of Allan and Joan.

Slavica Singer

Professor Emeritus, UNESCO Chair in Entrepreneurship Education, University of Osijek, Croatia and

Sunčica Oberman Peterka

Professor, International Center for Entrepreneurial Studies, University of Osijek, Allan's former doctoral candidate

Allan, you were a Colossus in our field. You laid the foundations and pioneered the pathways that carried our minds towards the richness of opportunity offered by the study of the theory and practice of entrepreneurship and small business. You built a centre in Durham University which became a Mecca for those in academia or business seeking best practice.

Ken O'Neill

Professor Emeritus, Ulster University

Allan had an ability to make you really think! I believe that without Allan's insight, influence and support I would not have got involved with #ented at all! By the time we had our Global Summit of Entrepreneurial Educators in 2014 much had changed, but Allan of course saw further ahead. Such was the nature of this incredible man, to whom we are so indebted.

Prof Emeritus Andy Penaluna

Chair, QAA Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Group

Allan touched the hearts and minds of so many people around the world. His curiosity and intellect were inspiring, but it was his humanity and sense of fairness that always shone through for me. It was a gift to know him. Thank you Allan, for your support, your friendship, and for all that I learned from you over the years. You are missed.

Yolanda Gibb

Programme Director, SME Internationalisation Unit, Small Business Centre.
Co-Director of SIEF

We were the first ever cohort on the International Entrepreneurship Educators Programme (IEEP), and I think took for granted that he was the guru, if only because there was much laughter (and red wine) as we all learned. With Allan it was serious learning, but in a fun and very comprehensible way, and the lessons we learned will stay with us forever.

Kathryn Penaluna

Enterprise Manager, University of Wales Trinity Saint David



As well as being truly inspirational – I once saw Allan being referred to as ‘God’ at a conference – Allan was intellectually challenging, supportive and, above all, a joy to be with. He left a gigantic footprint and will be massively missed.

Jane Rindl

Network Development, Small Business Centre
Director, Rindl Consulting

Prof. Allan Gibb, a giant in the world of Entrepreneurial Education. He was a gentleman and a friend of Sri Lanka. We will sadly miss him.

Chandra Embuldeniya PhD

Founder Vice Chancellor, Uva Wellassa
University of Sri Lanka (2004-2011), Past
President, National Chamber of Commerce of
Sri Lanka

Allan was a great man and a great thinker and great fun to be around – I have and always will have extremely fond memories of that first Entrepreneurial University Leaders Programme (EULP) programme at Saïd Business School.

Paul Kirkbright

Deputy Provost, University Centre,
Shrewsbury

Thirty one years ago next week I joined the Business School. I met Professor Allan Gibb who greeted me with ‘Hello Pet’. From that day I came to realise that he was the most kind, compassionate, empathetic and ‘down to earth’ person you could ever meet. He was always concerned for others and I feel so privileged to have known him. His legacy will live on forever.

Anne Bailey

Administrator, Business Development Group,
Small Business Centre
Learning & Teaching Co-ordinator, Durham
University Business School

The field of entrepreneurship loses a great scholar, widely known and recognised.

Professor Alain Fayolle
emlyon business school

Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship,
Associate Editor of JSBM

A true Geordie. Many happy memories. He was such fun! Always a heart-beat away from bursting into Geordie songs!

Lucy Winskell OBE

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Employability and
Partnerships), Northumbria University

Where Allan led, we all followed.

Dan Brophy

Former Associate, Small Business Centre



Meeting Allan in 1991 at DUBS-EFMD entrepreneurship trainers’ course changed my life in the best possible way. Both as a professor and as a wonderful human being, he became my inspiration and role model – a true luminary! His belief that small business grows when the entrepreneur grows has been the cornerstone of my entrepreneurship school for 30 years.

Dr Marju Unt

Founder and CEO, Estonian Euromanagement Institute

A life's work

1961-1965

Consultant Associate with the Economist Intelligence Unit, London.
Industrial and Management Research/Consultancy for UK and overseas clients.

1965-1967

Senior Research Associate, Business Research Unit, Durham University.

1967-1970

Senior Research Fellow, Durham University Business School.

1971-1992

Launched Small Business Centre, DUBS and became Director. The Centre was established in an effort to provide a focus on indigenous business development in the Northern Region of the UK.

1992-2001

Chair of the Small Business Centre and subsequently Foundation for SME Development, Durham University.

2001-2019

Founded the Entrepreneurial University Leaders Programme at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford; was Chair of the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (CEL), Durham University; was Chair of the Durham University spin-out 'Societal Innovation and Enterprise Forum' (SIEF). He also supervised many PhD students globally and was a keynote speaker and guest lecturer across the world. Allan also continued to host international academics and policy makers on study tours in the UK and contributed extensively to book chapters, reports on entrepreneurship and SME development. He was a mentor, counsellor and adviser to all those who requested his support.



Paraphrase of a typical quote from Allan about the lifeworld of the small business entrepreneur:

small business is a way of life;
 it is about personal risk;
 it means managing interdependencies;
 know-who & know-how are most important;
 small business means standing alone;
 it means the buck really stops with you;
 it means learning by doing.

Reference: UNCTAD 2001: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development:
 Improving the Competitiveness of SMEs In Developing Countries – The Role of Finance to Enhance Enterprise Development

