

Peter Plesch

Peter Plesch's death marks the end of an era not only for Keele (he was the last surviving member of staff from early 1950s and an advocate throughout life of multi-disciplinary university education) and for Chemistry (who now has the glass-blowing techniques so essential to his research), but for the wider intellectual history of Europe. For he was one of the last surviving members of the European Jewish diaspora of intellectuals forced to escape the obscenity of Nazism in the 1930s and '40s. His contributions to Keele and to Chemistry should be viewed (and evaluated) in this wider context.

Did it matter to him? Indubitably. I once asked him, when he was in one of his rare reflective moods, why he remained so positive and enthusiastic about almost everything. His reply was both illuminating and humbling. "I live my life to the full for all those whose lives were taken. My duty to them forbids anything less." I can think of no better epitaph.

Chris Harrison