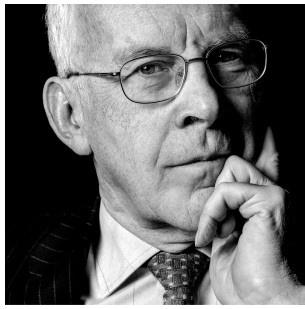




Sir Ian Wood KT GBE 1942 - 2026

OBITUARY: SIR IAN WOOD, 21st JULY 1942 - 26th JULY 2026

Ian Wood was a visionary business leader, industrialist and philanthropist, instrumental in Aberdeen's emergence as a major international energy hub. Born in Aberdeen in 1942, Ian Clark Wood was the second of John and Margaret Wood's three children. He grew up alongside his sisters Meg and Lorna in a family steeped in the city's fishing and maritime heritage, but it was in Aberdeen's nascent North Sea oil and gas industry that he made his mark.

He was educated at Robert Gordon's College and the University of Aberdeen where he excelled at rugby, playing lock forward for North & Midlands District XV. After graduating with a first-class degree in psychology in 1964, he joined the family fishing and marine services business, John Wood & Son.

By 1967 he had become Managing Director, overseeing significant expansion. He remained Chairman of the legacy business, The Don Fishing Company Ltd, until his death.

However, it was Wood's reorientation of the family business towards the needs of the emerging North Sea oil industry that was to define his own career and shape his city's fortunes over the following decades. His father expressed reservations, but Wood saw the opportunities and the business flourished under his leadership.

In 1970 he married Helen Macrae and they welcomed three sons in the years that followed. Wood worked extremely long hours, but he cherished family life, making time to watch his sons' rugby matches and giving them his undivided attention during holidays.

Meanwhile the business continued to thrive. Wood Group became a stand-alone company in 1982, delivering engineering, oilfield logistics and drilling services to domestic and global markets, and anchoring development of Aberdeen's world class energy supply chain.

His most difficult times came in 1988 with the Piper Alpha disaster in which 39 Wood Group employees were among the 167 men who lost their lives. Wood was deeply affected by the tragedy. He spent weeks making personal visits to bereaved families and became a champion of improved offshore safety.

In 2002, Wood Group went public, joining the FTSE 100 a few years later. When Wood stepped down as Chief Executive in 2006 and as Chairman in 2012, Wood Group plc was operating in over 50 countries worldwide and employed over 42,000 people. Recognition followed his achievements. Wood was appointed CBE in 1982 and knighted in 1994. In 2009, he was inducted as an Industry Pioneer in the Offshore Energy Centre's Hall of Fame in Houston, Texas.

Business success freed him to devote time and energy to philanthropy and public service in his later decades. In 2007, with his wife, Lady Helen, he established The Wood Foundation. Together they pioneered an approach to venture philanthropy that combined long-term

investment, practical expertise and high expectations to help people build better futures for themselves.

Projects in Scotland included the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative, working with young people across Scotland to improve their skills and employability, as well as major gifts to youth sport initiatives, NHS Grampian, Robert Gordon's College and Robert Gordon University, which he served as Chancellor from 2004 to 2021.

In 2015, Wood joined the Giving Pledge, publicly committing to donate more than half his wealth to philanthropic causes. He became a driving force in efforts to invigorate Aberdeen, chairing two not-for-profit private-sector-led economic development companies; Opportunity North East and Energy Transition Zone Ltd, enabled by over £100 million of support from The Wood Foundation. These initiatives were built on his experience chairing Scottish Enterprise from 1997 to 2000. Wood also played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Net Zero Technology Centre.

Accepting a Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in New York in 2019, Wood stressed that "charity must not end at home", highlighting The Wood Foundation's work with partners in East Africa to provide the finance, skills, operational and marketing support to build sustainable industries and improved livelihoods for more than 100,000 smallholder tea farmers in Rwanda. Wood described this ongoing project as among the most rewarding of his career.

Public appointments in his later years offered further opportunities to share his expertise. In 2013, for the UK Government, he led a review of UK oil and gas recovery and its regulation. The Wood Review (2014), a huge personal undertaking, led to a new strategy for maximising economic recovery from the UK continental shelf and the establishment of what is now the North Sea Transition Authority. Also in 2013, Wood was invited by the Scottish Government to chair the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, which called for improvements to vocational education to strengthen the relationship between education and employers and continues to shape opportunities for young people across the country. Further honours were bestowed. He was made Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire in 2016, and in 2018 became a Knight of the Order of the Thistle, personally granted by Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his distinguished service to national life. Sir Ian Wood died at home in Aberdeen on Sunday 26th July 2026. He is survived by his wife, Lady Helen, their sons Nicholas, Graham and Garreth, and seven grandchildren.