attention to the danger of it contaminating vaccines for man. He was a Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society, a member of the Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Unfortunately just two years later, disaster occurred. Alan Goffe slipped overboard and was drowned in a yachting accident off the Isle of Wight, at the early age of 46. In his obituary it was written: “It can only be speculated how much cytology and science generally have been lost by the untimely death of an outstanding scientist at the height of his powers.” He was certainly one of the United Kingdom’s most respected microbiologists in the 1950s and 1960s, and in the biography written by his cousin, Gaia Goffe (2008), it is stated that “He was almost certainly the only black man to play a prominent role in the world of research science in Britain at that time.” Alan Goffe certainly won himself a place among the foremost virologists in this country, and had an international reputation. “At international conferences he appeared to know everybody.”

“His untimely death is therefore the more tragic, for one will never know what his outstanding talents would have contributed to science.”

The Times (1966).

Alan Powell Goffe (1920-1966) [Epsom College 1933-1936] was the British born son of a Jamaican father, Dr E. G. L. Goffe, of Kingston Hill, Surrey. In 1936, he left Epsom College to spend a year at the Institut auf den Rosenberg at St Gallen, Switzerland, before studying medicine at University College Hospital in London. He graduated M.B., B.S. in 1944 and, after completing the usual house appointments, joined the Bernhard Baron Institute of Pathology at the London Hospital. Two years later he accepted a post in the Public Health Laboratory Service to work at the Central Public Health Laboratories, at Colindale, West London. Almost immediately he was given the opportunity to take the course at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine leading to the Diploma of Bacteriology. He then undertook National Service in Egypt (1949-1951), serving as a specialist pathologist in the R.A.M.C. with the rank of major. He returned to the Central Public Health Laboratory in 1951 as senior bacteriologist in the Virus Reference Laboratory, and visited the United States to learn the new tissue culture techniques being developed there. It was at that time that the pioneering work of Dr John Franklin Enders, the Nobel laureate, and colleagues in the cultivation of the poliomyelitis virus had opened up a new era in virology. Nobody realised this better than Alan Goffe, who immediately applied these new techniques to the polio virus in order to prepare pools of the virus grown in tissue culture as prototypes for vaccine production. At that time he was a member of the Medical Research Council Committee on poliomyelitis. In 1955, he joined the Wellcome Research Laboratories in Kent. He said that his intention on making this move was to play an active part in the development of vaccines against polio and other virus infections of man, which the newly developed techniques of tissue culture had made possible. He made extremely important contributions to the development in Britain of both the Salk and Sabin types of polio vaccine. This work helped develop and refine these potentially dangerous vaccines, making them safe for use throughout the world, and it is certainly due to this that poliomyelitis is now virtually abolished throughout most of the world.

After his work on the development of polio vaccine he turned his attention to the measles virus, once known as “the greatest killer of children in history.” Alan Goffe’s team carried out a step-wise adaptation of the Enders strain of the measles virus, leading to the development of the ‘Beckenham strain,’ sometimes known as the ‘Goffe strain,’ and the only further attenuated strain of measles virus developed in Britain. In 1964, a new department of experimental cytology was created for him at the Wellcome Laboratories. “He set to work with energy and enthusiasm planning this department, both with regard to its lay-out and to its long-term programme of research.” Goffe was then one of the first scientists to conduct a full-scale study of the human wart virus, which was recently discovered to cause cervical cancer. He was also one of the first to recognise the monkey virus, SV 40, and to draw