Animal behaviourist

Chris Barnard spent his professional career at the School of Biology at Nottingham University, from 1966 in the post of Professor of Animal Behaviour. He founded the Nottingham research group in Behaviour and Ecology, building it into an internationally recognised centre of excellence. He published 123 papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals and wrote or edited seven books, including a highly regarded textbook, Animal Behaviour: function, mechanism, development and evolution (2004). He also edited the 10th edition of Animal Behaviour (2013). His work on kin discrimination, spatial memory, and the evolution of animal sociality is widely cited.

He was a key figure in the development of the ASAB Medal, which he received in 2006, a position in which he took great pride, and whose duties he undertook with an enthusiasm and diligence that will be hard to match. He was awarded the ASAB Medal earlier this year.

Chris Barnard regarded teaching as of equal importance to research, an unfashionable view in these days of RAEng-driven strategic thinking, and he was awarded the 2016 Dearing Award for "outstanding contributions to teaching and learning". Among students, his own tutees knew him best, but they often were in awe of his erudition. He loved being the centre of attention, but this hid a shyness that he masked by talking - affectionately described by one student as "setting off on a tangent". Characteristically, Chris loved telling this story, which often drew on his own experiences and insights. He never relaxed his highest of standards, and this had its negative sides. Research students could easily be demoralised by the ocean of red ink on draft chapters, but they would eventually see his incisive critique as hugely productive - really this was one of his greatest talents. He was a master of the world-class writing talent, he distilled his views about how to do science in a textbook, Asking Questions in Biology (1993). He was determined to complete the extensive revision of the third edition of this book before his death.

It is probably true to say that Nottingham University has never used its talents, and he would have been the first to agree that he was partly to blame. Barnard held a clear strategic vision of what a university research institute should be for. To preserve this vision, he fought many battles in university committees, and willing to make personal sacrifices in pursuing the interests of whole-organism biological science in an era when molecular and applied biosciences often appeared to take precedence. He also held strong views on the interdependence of research and teaching in a healthy academic environment.

Chris Barnard was an accomplished artist, musician and poet, and a superb raconteur with a wicked sense of humour. He was a hard worker, and this was reflected in the remarkable body of work published during his lifetime. He was a true scholar, and his legacy will live on in the many lives he touched and inspired.

Francis Gilbert

Gazette

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Today: Mr Barry Gibb, singer, 62; Mr Ruaidhri Guile, footballer and manager, 43; Mrs Jessica Ward, Consul-General, Moscow, 50; Prof Alan Jones, 76; 7 Edin Coll, barrister, 89; Barones Park of Monmouth, former principal, Somerville College, Oxford, 86; Lord Parkinson, former government minister, 76; Mr Leonard Statkin, conductor, 63; Miss Lily Tomlin, actress and comedian, 68; Mr James Whitfield, chef executive, 52; Thornton Heath, 78; Mrs Janette Golden, 72; Mr John Alva, skateboarder, 50; Dame Beatrice Beeley, epidemiologist, 78; Professor David Blake, composer and Emeritus Professor of Music of the University of New South Wales, 74; Mr Jimmy Connors, tennis player and commentator, 55; Mr Lennox Lewis, boxer, 42; Mr Keami Reeves, actor, 43; Mr Victor Spinti, actor and director, 55.

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Barnard: no time for 'animal rights'

He became consulting editor for the association's journal, Animal Behaviour, then Editor, and finally Executive Editor, modernising to ensure its position as the world leader in the behavioural research. He was elected president of ASAB for 2005-06, a position in which he took great pride, and whose duties he undertook with an enthusiasm and diligence that will be hard to match. He was awarded the ASAB Medal earlier this year.

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