Obituary

David Jenkinson

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Professor David Jenkinson FRS died on February 16 this year after a short illness. He was born in 1928 at the Hollywood Hospital, Beverly Hills, CA, but he grew up in Ireland, where the family, forced by the great economic crisis, returned in 1932 to run a small farm. He joined Rothamsted Experimental Station in 1957, and he remained there till he retired in 1988. During his career he published over 100 scientific papers in refereed journals, many of which have been among the most highly cited in his field.

During the 1960s, David Jenkinson was among the first soil scientists to exploit the use of radioactive carbon labelling to study the transformation of plant residues in soil. This work eventually led to the development of a method to measure the amount of C held in microbial cells (Jenkinson 1966; Jenkinson and Powlson 1976). It was a revolutionary step, leading to new understanding of microbial ecology in soils. It also led to one of the very first soil carbon models (termed RothC) to accurately predict future changes in soil organic carbon caused by different farming practices in soils under different climatic and soil conditions (Jenkinson et al. 1991; Jenkinson and Coleman 2008).

David was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1991 in recognition of his outstanding research in soil science and received the Massey Ferguson National Agricultural Award in 1993 for his work on increasing the efficiency of

nitrogen fertilizer use. He was also made an honorary member of the Soil Science Society of America in 1995 and of the British Society of Soil Science in 2007.

While David was much respected by his peers, he possibly enjoyed having discussions of their experiments with research students both at conferences, and at Rothamsted, as much as anything. Several very well-known scientists have written to say that they will never forget this experience as students and how much they valued it. He will be much missed for his exceptional scientific ability, his wonderful sense of humour and, most of all, his great humanity.

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