

In memoriam: Prof. Thomas Barrett

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We are sad to report the untimely death on 19 September 2009 of our friend and colleague Tom Barrett. Tom was born on 16 April 1947, and was educated at University College, Dublin, where he obtained a first class BSc degree and an MSc degree, then at King's College London where he received a PhD degree in 1975.

He then moved to the University of Cambridge to work, initially as a post-doctoral fellow in the laboratory of one of us (BWJM) on the transcription and replication of influenza virus RNA. Later, he also worked on paramyxoviruses, particularly Newcastle disease virus.

Tom was not only a highly skilled molecular virologist, but also, due to his remarkable personal abilities, was able to integrate himself and stimulate others in the laboratory

to work as a team. Tom was always a pleasure to work with and he spent a lot of his time developing the skills of young scientists. He was particularly able at helping postgraduate students, and became mentor to several who have now gone onto high level research positions.

When in 1983, one of us (BWJM) was appointed Director of the Animal Virus Research Institute, Pirbright, Surrey, Tom also moved to a senior position in the Institute, where he remained for the rest of his career. He brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to work on globally important animal viruses, especially rinderpest (cattle plague) virus and the related virus peste des petits ruminants (PPR). One of us (AB) first met Tom at the Institute for Animal Health. Tom would always allow younger scientists to really take control of their projects and explore their own avenues of research using his experience and knowledge to guide individuals when necessary. Tom seemed to gain a great deal of pleasure from being in the laboratory and worked with an enthusiasm that was infectious. Tom never treated people as just work colleagues. He often went to great lengths to forge strong relationships with his team and it is this caring, gentlemanly, kind and generous nature that he will be remembered for. Tom just wanted to carry out research that would make a difference to those where help was needed most; to push towards sustainable agriculture, and ultimately improve people's lives in some of the poorest parts of the world. This was where his scientific vision was maintained to the end and it is a strong vision instilled in a number of those who have worked with him.

Tom's morbillivirus group at the IAH was prolific over a numbers of years and made many valuable contributions to the scientific community, especially through molecular-based advances in scientific research. Through this work, Tom became closely involved in the global eradication of

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rinderpest, which now has become only the second virus disease to be globally eradicated.

Tom had close links with scientists in India and in Japan, and in 2001 was invited to spend 1 month teaching molecular virology by the veterinary faculty of Nihon University in Japan, and in the same year he was invited as a visiting professor to the University of Florida veterinary school at Gainesville Florida. Then in 2003 Tom was made a visiting Professor in molecular virology at the Department of pathology and infectious diseases, The Royal Veterinary College, London.

Tom spent much of his time in the service of virology as an Editor of Archives of Virology, and on the editorial

boards of Virus Research, the Journal of General Virology, The Journal of Veterinary Medicine, and the Journal of Veterinary Pathology.

In all his many endeavours, Tom will remain in the hearts of all who had the privilege to know him as a warm, wonderful person with whom it was always a pleasure to interact. He will be sadly missed by all.

On behalf of virologists worldwide,
Respectfully,
Ashley Banyard and Brian WJ Mahy