

John Barker (1929-2020) – an appreciation

John Barker was a lovely man as well as being a gifted teacher, a great raconteur and a connoisseur of wine. John was always modest but he had a discerning ability not to be swayed by foolish pronouncements from others, however senior. He was also a very fine writer though he was perhaps fortunate to be employed by a leading UK university at a time when writing was understood more broadly than it is now so that instead of being cajoled into turning out a string of publications in academic journals, he could focus on his real area of expertise, namely improving the quality of biology education in schools and elsewhere. John produced some extremely well written articles on such things as the history of scurvy and was responsible for one of the great biology education books, *Teaching Biology Today* (1980), which is listed as being by his colleague Dorothy Dallas but was really put together by John because of Dallas' untimely death.

John was a biology education tutor at Chelsea College's Centre for Science Education (later to become the Centre for Science and Mathematics Education) where he contributed, among other activities, to the development of the Nuffield Biology course. When Chelsea College merged with King's College and Queen Elizabeth College, John moved to the newly-established Waterloo site, running the PGCE Biology course, and also taking on the role of PGCE Director. His innovative and sometimes unusual approach to teaching and learning was greatly appreciated by the many hundreds of biology teachers, who entered the profession under his careful eye. John fostered a deep admiration and interest in, and for, practical biology which was obvious when you visited his teaching lab, with its myriad of plants and assorted animals. He was also a keen supporter of the London Zoological Society and Field Studies Council.

But it is for his 25-year editorship of the *Journal of Biology Education* that John will perhaps be most remembered. *JBE* has been fortunate in its editors over the years but John was associated with the journal for longer than any other editor and helped make it pre-eminent in the field. John was always keen to include a broad range of biologists and biology educators in the work of the journal. One of us (MR) can still remember being dumbfounded when, as a young school teacher, he opened a letter one day from John, who he had never met, inviting him to join *JBE's* editorial board.

John was an outstanding editor. He was crystal clear in his mind that *JBE* had above all to be of value to biology teachers, whether at the very beginning of their career or well-established. It was a delight to receive each issue and John's editorial skills were in evidence in the balance of articles and the other sections of each issue.

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