

CHRIS BARNARD

Animal behaviourist

Chris Barnard spent his professional career at the School of Biology at Nottingham University, from 1996 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 120 papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals and wrote or edited seven books, including a highly regarded textbook, *Animal Behaviour: function, mecha-*

nism, development and evolution (2004).

He preached the gospel of the "selfish gene", exploring the implications of natural selection on behaviour and ecology, including that of humans. His heroes were Darwin (of course) and early forerunners of Darwin, as well as Arthur Cain (who taught him at Liverpool University), Richard Dawkins and W.D. Hamilton. The last two were his true intellectual mentors in their passion for interpreting natural history through "hard-line" evolutionary theory, and in their decisive rejection

of religion in all its manifestations.

Barnard graduated with a First in Zoology from Liverpool University in 1975 and took a DPhil from Oxford in 1978. The same year he was appointed to a lectureship at Nottingham University. He began by studying bird foraging, branching out to consider risk, individual differences and the way some individuals parasitise the efforts of others. He then looked at kin discrimination, culminating in a seminal clarification of "kin recognition", arguing that kin bias in behaviour may often reflect incidental discrimination based on social-group membership and experience rather than recognising kin.

Two themes predominated in the latter half of his career. First, he saw the need for an integrative approach to the evolved interplay between behaviour, hormones and parasitic infection. Behaviourists did not understand physiology and its implications;

physiologists rejected the importance of behaviour and individual strategies; and parasitologists stuck to tradition. Unsurprisingly, Barnard suffered in trying to persuade referees of the importance of his unique work. Nonetheless, he and his collaborators conducted controlled laboratory experiments together with field studies to unravel adaptive variation in individual host life history strategies. Time will show how vital Barnard's insights were.

Secondly, he realised that ideas about animal welfare (and consequently UK law) were full of unsupported human-based assumptions about what was best for animals. He and his colleagues completely rewrote the field. Natural-selection results in animals adapted for self-expenditure to maximise reproductive success, voluntarily trading off activity costs against their reproductive benefits, rather than evolving coping mechanisms for individual

well-being. "Suffering" happens when an animal is forced to act outside the adaptive bounds of its life history strategy, rather than when it fails to cope.

These pioneering ideas are only gradually becoming accepted and have yet to affect welfare policy, but they probably will in time. They have radical implications for current law and its over-restrictive rules about experimentation and caging. Barnard's last paper, "Ethical regulation and animal science: why animal behaviour is special" (*Animal Behaviour*, 2007), shows that regulation based only on standardising laboratory practice is totally inappropriate. He had no time for "animal rights" and its woolly, uninformed and anthropomorphic thinking, strongly championing a more meaningful animal-centred concept of welfare.

As Barnard's reputation grew, so national recognition came, and he played a very active role in the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB).

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sition as the world leader in the behavioural research. He was elected president of ASAB for 2003-06, 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.

Chris Barnard regarded teaching as of equal importance to research, an unfashionable view in these days of RAE-driven strategic thinking, and he was awarded the Lord 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 autoblab". Characteristically, Chris loved telling this story directed against himself.

He never relaxed his highest of stan-

dards, and this had its negative side. 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. With colleagues, using his 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 before he died.

It is probably true to say that Nottingham University underused his 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 and academic life were for. To preserve this vision, he fought many battles in university committees, and willingly made himself persona non grata 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, in addition to taking great delight in intellectual exchanges of views.

Francis Gilbert

Christopher John Barnard, evolutionary biologist: born Great Yarmouth, Norfolk 2 September 1952; Lecturer, School of Biology, Nottingham University 1978-90, Reader in Animal Behaviour 1990-96, Professor of Animal Behaviour, Nottingham University 1996-2007; Executive Editor, Animal Behaviour 1997-2001; President, Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour 2004-07; married 1976 Sian Alexander (one son, two daughters); died Radcliffe on Trent, Nottinghamshire 1 June 2007.



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 po-

Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Barry Gibb, singer, 61; Mr Ruud Gullit, footballer and manager, 45; Mrs Jessica Hand, Consul-General, Moscow, 50; Mr Allen Jones, artist, 70; The Earl of Lisburne, barrister, 89; Baroness Park of Monmouth, former principal, Somerville College, Oxford, 86; Lord Parkinson, former government minister, 76; Mr Leonard Slatkin, conductor, 63; Miss Lily Tomlin, actress and comedian, 68; Ms Jasmine Whitbread, chief executive, Save the Children UK, 44. **TOMORROW:** Mr Tony Alva, skateboarder, 50; Dame Beulah Bewley, epidemiologist, 78; Professor David Blake, composer and Emeritus Professor of Music, York University, 71; Mr Jimmy Connors, tennis player and commentator, 55; Mr Lennox Lewis, boxer, 42; Mr Keanu Reeves, actor, 43. Mr Victor Spinetti, actor and director, 74. For GAZETTE notices, telephone 020 7005 2012, fax 020 7005 2010 or e-mail gazette@independent.co.uk. Charges are £2 a word (VAT extra)