

## Professor Ian Earnest Barnes

BDS (1962), FDS (1970), PhD (1979)



Friends and colleagues have paid fond tribute to Professor Ian Barnes who died recently after a short illness. He was 68. Born and brought up in Winchmore Hill, North London, he graduated in 1961 from UCH Dental School, where practical teaching in the final 3 years was at the National Dental Hospital, Great Portland Street.

Ian's career was inextricably linked with seals of one sort or another, commencing with a 3-year tour of duty as resident dental surgeon to the Falkland Islands (his photographs and anecdotes would punctuate many a lecture in the years to come). On returning to UCH, he obtained his FDSRCS and studied for a PhD with Alan Boyde, becoming one of the first clinicians to examine a practical clinical problem (the adaptation of composite resins) by Scanning Electron Microscopy. His return to UCH coincided with the opening of a new dental hospital, the old National Dental Hospital, deservedly many would say, having been scheduled for demolition. After the improvised portable equipment to which he had become accustomed in the Falklands, it must have seemed luxurious. At first he held positions in Oral Surgery, consolidating the surgical experience he had gained in scarily isolated outposts of humanity in the South Atlantic. He developed and never lost a self-confident mastery of surgical dentistry, but before long opted to become a Lecturer in what was then called

simply 'Dental Surgery'. That traditional and deliberately vague title enabled the Dean to get any member of his small team to lecture on any topic in the syllabus as needed, a far cry from today's specialization. Ian certainly did so, with rapidly-growing self-assurance and wit. At UCH, 'Dental Surgery' in the clinic meant mostly Conservative Dentistry, at which Ian particularly excelled, with a weekly excursion into Periodontology where his surgical skills were an asset. As a clinical teacher he was friendly but meticulous, always direct and analytical in his feedback, unstinting with his time and prepared to be a true friend to those in whom he recognized talent. His choice of spectacles and attention to detail led, as he evidently knew very soon, to the knick name 'Granny', the apparent insolence of which did not diminish the recognition it afforded of the generally benign and affectionate nature Ian displayed. Students knew that the way he taught was always his best judgement of what would protect and benefit them and their patients in the future. The mock-geriatric label certainly did not imply timidity, as those who failed to follow his advice rapidly discovered. However, a stern rebuke was invariably followed up, after a carefully judged interval, with a generous reconciliation. Undoubtedly he was a key contributor to the remarkably friendly staff/student relationship that was a hallmark of the UCH of old. Another, less positive, characteristic of UCH was that it always 'exported' its most talented alumni staff members to other dental schools and when opportunity beckoned at the Royal, Ian grasped it. He continued to make welcome returns to the UCL campus for some years to complete his research. An accomplished researcher, he nevertheless retained to the end a healthy cynicism regarding the true value of much dental research, which he used to refer to as 'the big R'. An intensely practical man, his care of patients was wisely guided by his own clinical observations at least as much as by nebulous data or statistics.

It was probably in surgical endodontics, and the apical seal that Ian developed his greatest national and

international profile, authoring a benchmark colour atlas of surgical endodontics, serving the British Endodontic Society as President, patenting the 'Barnes' apicectomy amalgam gun and taking a Chair in Restorative Dentistry at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1983. None of his admirable qualities were tempered by senior appointment, and he remained both an active and able clinician, and a truly committed, available and pastoral teacher in the undergraduate clinics. The core duties of a clinical academic in maintaining standards, preparing students for safe and effective practice and creating an environment in which students can flourish remained his central focus. He was a firm leader with clear expectations of his students and staff, but with an astute, paternalistic outlook, and always with huge charm, untamed wit and a sense of the ironic. He was a modest man who would take no personal credit for the team of young academic Restorative Dentists he established in Newcastle, but credit should be given where it is due. He was a remarkable man whose positive influence lives on in those he cared for so well. In the mid-1990s, he responded to the invitation of new challenges, first in Hong Kong and then in Malaysia before retiring in 2002.

Upon retirement, Ian returned to Northumberland, trained to drive a mini-bus for the local accessibility

service and became an adult literacy tutor. His voice became familiar to the visually impaired as a regular reader for the Talking Newspaper Service. He was a member of local walking and photography groups and also took elderly residents on day-trips. Shortly before his death Ian completed the final draft of 'The Camp Dentist', a typically tongue in cheek and wry memoir of his Falkland Island years.

As observed by his daughter Catherine, Ian was a firm believer that true reward comes from what you put into life. This was reflected not just in his professional career but by the kindness and generosity of the friends Ian had made, especially in the weeks leading up to his death.

When UCH Dental School ultimately closed, he shared with its alumni everywhere a deep sadness at the passing of an old friend to whom much was owed. UCH alumni continue to meet for an annual reunion each November and this year the announcement of Ian's loss will be greeted with similar, but far more personal, emotions in the hearts of all who knew him. Their emotions and kindly memories will be echoed around the world.

Ian is survived by his wife, Jan, daughters Catherine and Judith, granddaughter Tilly (11), son-in-law, Paul and dog, Olive.

*KB/DS/RW/JW*

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