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## Preface

# Professor Jeffrey Barry Harborne, FRS (1928–2002)

The two memorial issues of *Phytochemistry* are dedicated to Professor Jeffrey B. Harborne, a father figure in the fields of phytochemistry, chemosystematics and ecological biochemistry alike, as well as an inspiration to its scientists, young and old. We believe that the papers, including their scope and diversity, help impart the overall tribute to, and respect of, Prof. Harborne by the scientific community. Indeed, it would be remiss not to mention that for every memorial issue paper, the Editors received numerous kind letters from many other scientists—often old friends—who were unable to contribute, but warmly and passionately remembered their past interactions with Jeffrey as well as reflecting upon what impact this had on their own professional aspirations and lives. Many reflected on his enormous energy and enthusiasm, his keen sense of humour, and the enjoyable times spent together in places often far flung throughout the corners of the earth. While his obituary in the *Times* described Jeffrey as “a quiet unassuming man without any ostentation”, we continue to be inspired, in many different ways, by Jeffrey’s leadership in, and vision for, the plant sciences. We, therefore, thank all for this remarkable response to a remarkable man, who will live on in our memories and in those of future generations.

A tribute would be lacking without some brief description of his remarkable achievements. In this context, Professor Harborne was born in 1928 in Bristol, growing up there and being educated at Wycliffe College and the University of Bristol, where he obtained all three of his degrees (BSc, PhD and DSc). Following completion of his doctoral work, Jeffrey then joined the University of California (Los Angeles) for postdoctoral study with T.A. Geissman, after which he took up a position at the John Innes Institute, then located in Bayfordbury in Hertford, England. Together with Tony Swain and E.C. Bate-Smith, Jeffrey founded the “Plant Phenolics Group”, the forerunner of the Phytochemical Society of Europe. Following a short sojourn thereafter at the University of Liverpool (1965–1968), he joined the faculty of the University of Reading in 1968, as well as at the same time assuming much of the editorial duties (from Tony Swain) for *Phytochemistry*. From 1972 to 1986, he served as the journal’s Executive Editor, becoming Editor-in-Chief from 1986 until 1999, when

he retired. At the same time, he had his own personal chair at Reading from 1976, then became Chair of Botany in 1988, as well as serving as Head of the Department from 1987 to 1993. Following his retirement from the department in 1993, he nevertheless remained very active as Emeritus Professor from 1993 onward until about a year before his passing away.

During his professional life, his research interests quickly became devoted to three main areas, flavonoids, chemosystematics (which he developed with Drs. E.C. Bate-Smith and T. Swain) as well as in the emerging field of ecological biochemistry, particularly as is related to the complex chemical language between plants, microbes and animals. Of the many remarkable contributions made during his scientific career, involving more than 40 books and 270 research papers and review articles, several have achieved classic status. These include “Comparative Biochemistry of the Flavonoids” and his highly popular undergraduate text, “Introduction to Ecological Biochemistry”. Ever industrious, Jeffrey has an article in the memorial issue, together with his long-term scientific collaborator, Christine A. Williams.

His remarkable contributions to science could not, and did not, go unnoticed. Of the many forms of recognition and appreciation given, these included being awarded the Gold Medal in Botany (1985) from the Linnean Society (London), the first Silver Medal (1986) from the Phytochemical Society of Europe, an award from the Phytochemical Society of North America and the Phytochemical Society of Europe (1992) for “outstanding lifelong contributions to the discipline of phytochemistry throughout the world”, and the Silver Medal (1993) from the International Society of Chemical Ecology. In the same year, he also received the Pergamon Phytochemistry Prize (1993) and two years later was elected to the Royal Society as Fellow in 1995. In 1999, Elsevier sponsored a symposium in his honour at Kew (see [photograph](#)) and in 2001, *Phytochemistry* dedicated a special issue in honour of his retirement from the journal.

Jeffrey served tirelessly in many other capacities, of which some examples will suffice—only for illustrative purposes—in terms of both his editorial roles, and his contributing to various other book series and journals:



Jeffrey Harborne (third from left, front row) with friends and colleagues, Kew, 22nd July 1999.

he was founder of *Phytochemical Analysis*, a co-editor of “Plant Biochemistry”, a co-editor of “Dictionary of Plant Toxins”, “Phytochemical Dictionary”, “Methods in Plant Biochemistry”, “Plant Flavonoids in Biology and Medicine”, “Flavonoids, Advances in Research”, “Phytochemical Methods”, as well as contributing to other areas such as “Phytoalexins”, “Chemical Dictionary of Economic Plants”, “Wine and Health”, and “Dietary Effects of Tannins”.

Lastly, Jeffrey is survived by his wife Jean, their two sons and seven grandchildren. As with the molecules he

studied, Jeffrey also gave much colour to all of our lives. Indeed, his own vision survives throughout the plant science community which he had nurtured all of his life.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Editors and Publisher of *Phytochemistry*.

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