

Michael Roy BOARDER

Professor Mike Boarder sadly passed away in July 2012, only a year after retiring from the Leicester School of Pharmacy at De Montfort University where he had spent the last ten years of a distinguished career.

Mike gained his PhD under the supervision of the neurochemist Richard Rodnight at the Institute of Psychiatry, University of London (1974-1978). He next moved to Oxford to undertake post-doctoral research with Marianne Fillenz (Physiological Laboratory) and then to Stanford University to work with Jack Barchas (Department of Psychiatry). While in America, Mike developed his interests in opioid peptides, their complex processing from protein precursors and co-release with neurotransmitters. In 1984 Mike returned to the UK and took up a Lecturership in the Department of Pharmacology & Therapeutics at the University of Leicester. He quickly established his lab and continued his exploration of pro-enkephalin processing using chromaffin cells isolated from bovine adrenal glands as a key model cell-type. Little by little Mike was influenced by some of the other research going on within the department, in particular, in the labs of Stefan Nahorski and John Challiss and began to explore the signal transduction processes regulating stimulus-secretion coupling in chromaffin cells, initially with Robin Plevin, a post-doctoral associate at the time. Mike's research also began to expand beyond chromaffin cells to encompass both endothelial and smooth muscle cell-types. In addition, with excellent doctoral and post-doctoral co-workers, including Graeme Wilkinson, Steven Charlton and John Purkiss, Mike began the research that he is perhaps best known for, on metabotropic (P2Y) purinoceptors.

In addition to running a thriving and highly productive research lab, Mike had a well-earned reputation for being an excellent and entertaining lecturer, both to students within the Medical School and the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Leicester. Mike was much appreciated as a wonderful colleague, willing to take a leading responsibility for developing the teaching of pharmacology at Leicester. His research lab was also a centre for the social life of the Department with pub lunches and evening get-togethers a regular feature. Mike was promoted to Senior Lecturer (in 1994) and to Reader (in 1997).

In 1999 Mike took up a Chair in Molecular Pharmacology and the Headship of the Department of Biology at De Montfort University. He also set up the Cell Signalling Laboratory, which was to be at the heart of his research activities at DMU. While continuing to focus on P2Y receptors and their role in vascular smooth muscle, Mike, together with Jane Dixon, also developed an interest in the roles of this GPCR family in hepatic function. This research developed further, through involvement with the UK Human Tissue Bank (based within DMU) and collaborations with several major European liver transplant units, to develop methods for culturing human hepatocytes and to explore alternatives to organ transplant surgery. At retirement, Mike had published over 80 original research papers, a number of influential reviews and was working (with co-authors David Newby and Phyllis Navti) on a second edition of his textbook "Pharmacology for Pharmacy and the Health Sciences a Patient-centred Approach", which encapsulated the innovative approach Mike had instigated at DMU for the teaching of pharmacology to pharmacy students.

Mike was a strong advocate and enthusiastic contributor to the activities of the British Pharmacological Society, most notably through his attendance and many presentations by group members at meetings. He acted as an editor of a number of learned journals, including the British Journal of Pharmacology. His enthusiasm for both research and teaching and his larger-than-life personality will be greatly missed by his colleagues in Leicester and by friends around the world.

Compiled by: Larry Goodyer, Martin Elliott, Geoff Smith, Geoff Hall (De Montfort University) and John Challiss (University of Leicester)