

Professor Alan Boura (1927 – 2015)

With the recent death of Alan Boura, the BPS has lost one of its most stalwart and supportive members. A true, “card-carrying” pharmacologist, Alan initially obtained a BSc degree in Physiology at University College London and developed an interest in drug discovery when working with Heinz Otto Schild on assays of histamine antagonists. Alan’s own success in discovery began in the Department of Pharmacology at the Wellcome Research Laboratories where, together with pharmacologist Alan Green and chemist Fred Copp, he discovered bretylium and showed that selective inhibition of sympathetic nerve traffic was possible. Bretylium was subsequently introduced as an antihypertensive agent and its study led to the development of guanethidine and to the principle of *adrenergic neurone blockade*.

As Head of Pharmacology in a newly-created department at Reckitt and Sons in Hull, Alan studied a series of potent morphine-like analgesics from which buprenorphine was introduced for the management of pain and drug abuse. It was at Reckitts - in the 1960s - that the three of us, all still undergraduates, first came under Alan’s inspiring mentorship. His infectious enthusiasm for drug discovery combined with his natural leadership qualities and effervescent personality were a daily inspiration and unquestionably responsible for our own life-long careers in pharmacology and active membership of the BPS.

In addition to ourselves, David Atkinson, Alan Cowan, John Doxey, Mike Drew, Tony Hilditch, Ivor Williams and others who all became members of the BPS, passed through his Department to become career pharmacologists.

Alan’s enthusiasm for research and teaching later took him to Melbourne, Australia and to the Foundation Chair of Pharmacology at Monash University. Following his retirement from Monash in 1991, he moved to Newcastle University in New South Wales where he continued as Research Professor until his 70th birthday when he retired completely.

As a personality, Alan was incomparable. As a drug-discoverer, he made huge contributions to the understanding of the autonomic nervous system and opioid pharmacology. As a scientific writer and speaker he will be remembered for his command of language, eloquence of

expression and iconoclastic wit. This was true not only in his scientific presentations but also on numerous informal occasions during which we listened to his many tales and anecdotes which always left us paralysed with laughter at the final punch-line.

Alan, we thank you not only for your immeasurable contribution to pharmacology in general but also for your incalculable influence on our own lives and careers. Our sympathies go to Jean and the rest of your family. Pharmacology is immeasurably poorer for your passing.

Mike Armstrong, Arthur Weston, Brian Woodward