

In Memoriam

Professor Michael (Mike) Bonell

It is with deep regret the Dundee Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee learned of the passing of Professor Michael (Mike) Bonell on 11th July 2014 in Paris.

Born in 1943 in Sheffield, England, he obtained a BSc (Hons) in Geography and Mathematics in 1966 and a PhD in shallow groundwater hydrology from the University of Hull, United Kingdom, in 1972.

In 1973, he joined the James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, Australia as a Lecturer in Physical Geography specialising in hydrology and climatology, and was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1980 and then Reader in Physical Geography in 1986.

In 1987, he became the inaugural Director of the Institute for Tropical Rainforest Studies in Australia.

He was a recipient of the Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole awarded by the French Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt in 1991 for his contribution to forest hydrology, his contributions to hydrologic sciences included over one hundred publications on hillslope and forest hydrology in the tropics, synoptic and rainfall climatology, and the hydrological impacts of climatic variability.

In November 2007, Mike joined our Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science in Scotland as a Professor of Catchment Science. He had previously been instrumental and a key figure in obtaining UNESCO Category II status for our Centre in 2005, and his expertise in hydrology and catchment science provided a vital contribution to the Centre's multidisciplinary focus. The Centre remains the only Category II Centre in the UK to this day.

Mike worked on numerous different projects during his time at the Centre, in India and China, and in Australia, as well as closer to home. He maintained a keen interest in the HELP programme and held a small grant from the Carnegie Trust to visit the UK HELP basins and see how they were implementing the EU Water Framework Directive. His co-investigator, a lawyer from the Centre, was privileged to travel with him and learn much about rivers and catchments from (literally) an expert in the field.



Professor Bonell pictured centre in Nepal in 2009 when he joined a Dutch-led project entitled "Hydrological Impact of reforestation degraded lands in the Middle Hills of Nepal".

Mike was a strong believer in passing on knowledge. He supervised and examined many students and, though not a supervisor, the PhD students in the Centre all benefited from his extensive knowledge and willingness to share this.

Mike also gave generously of his time to his post-doctoral research assistants and other young scientists.

In the time he was at the Centre he worked closely with Dr Jagdish Krishnaswamy on Hydrologic and Carbon Services in the Western Ghats (India), a project jointly funded by NERC and the Indian Government. He was working actively on this project until shortly before his death.



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In this project, as in many others during his lifetime, he combined scientific rigour with an enthusiasm to train a new generation of catchment scientists. Two post-doctoral research assistants were appointed at the Centre to work with him on different projects, Dr Nicole Archer and Dr Naresh Vissa. Dr Archer is now working with the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh, continuing work begun by her and Mike, whilst Naresh is continuing his post-doc at the University of Lancaster.

Mike was also involved the Centre's work within the Tweed which had three strands - that of the promoter of the UNESCO HELP Basin ethos; that of the catchment researcher; and that of the ground water research specialist. In all three, he worked with other scientists, whether they were local or international, depending on the topic and opportunity.

As someone who understood the need to translate good science in to policy and practice, one of his favourite themes was that of the 'paradigm lock' as he called it between the two divergent worlds occupied by the policy-maker and that occupied by the research scientist.

He recognised the inherent need to try to bridge the knowledge gap, and the UNESCO HELP Basins (Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy) which he promoted and developed were at the centre of efforts to do so, leading by example.

The lawyers in the Centre, in particular, appreciated Mike's drive to push them across disciplinary boundaries, and he always made himself available to clarify scientific concepts and comment on research proposals.



Professor Bonell pictured front left in India in February 2013 during his work on the Western Ghats project. This was taken following the Project Review Group Meeting. Dr Naresh Vissa, Mike's post-doctoral research assistant is pictured front right



Professor Bonell pictured again during his time in India in 2013. This time during a meeting with the Indian Meteorological Department, Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai

As a catchment scientist, Mike understood the requirement to look at the management of water holistically, from source to sea, and not forgetting the importance of the role of groundwater and sub-surface hydrology.

His view was predominantly a process one - where and how and when flows occurred fascinated him.

He was keen to understand the linkages between surface water flows and groundwater, and the Eddleston Water, a sub-catchment of the Tweed was such a location where this might be explored in great detail.

Mike was above all a groundwater specialist and again the Eddleston project provided him with a research platform to explore the role of ground water as a source of flooding, and as a potential temporary storage area for 'excess' flood waters.

He worked closely with the British Geological Survey here, as he did elsewhere, but also extended this to work with colleagues in Western Australia.

His passion for science, as the potential evidence base for policy was clear, and in all cases he was forever looking to improve and expand the science.

Mike will be sadly missed but fondly remembered. He is survived by his wife Daphne and his three daughters, Catherine, Emma and Sarah.