John Atherton Young
1936 - 2004

John Young, who died on 10 February 2004 after a long illness, was a towering figure in Australian physiology and in global exocrine physiology. After studies in medicine in Brisbane, John travelled to Sydney for doctoral training in renal physiology, followed by post-doctoral studies in Berlin, before returning to Australia in 1966 to a Senior Lectureship in Physiology at Sydney University. Subsequently he was promoted to Professor and Head of Department (in rotation with Liam Burke), before becoming Dean of Medicine in 1989 and then Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Health Sciences in 1996, a post he held until his retirement in April 2003.

Despite the increasing pressure of these demanding posts, he remained committed to physiology research throughout his 40 illustrious years at Sydney University and until the day he finally succumbed to acute myeloid leukaemia. He had continuous NHMRC support from 1962 until retirement, and never had a grant application turned down.

John had a true appreciation of the finer things in life. Given the choice of post-doctoral studies in Berlin and Chapel Hill (and remember this was 1965) he chose Berlin, to study with Karl Ulrich. I suspect the choice was heavily influenced by the presence in West Berlin alone of two opera houses, seven symphony orchestras, 30 theatres and numerous museums (John was not afraid to state that he had never kicked a football in his life). He arrived in Berlin with the expectation of studying urea transport in the loop of Henle, but Karl persuaded him to apply micropuncture techniques to salivary glands. This was a pivotal decision. In December 1965 John presented his data at a Meeting of the Physiological Society held at the London Zoo, where they caught the attention of Arnold Burgen, who sought John’s permission to include the data in his keynote paper at an international conference on exocrine secretion in Birmingham, Alabama and also arranged for John to be invited as a plenary speaker. Thus, John’s career was launched. Thereafter, he quickly became recognised as an authority on exocrine secretion and the undoubted authority on salivary secretion, which he remained until his dying day, as evidenced by nine ISI-defined citation classics and nearly 5,000 citations in all.

John’s original studies on salivary duct function (in Berlin) and micropuncture studies (in Sydney), laid the foundation for understanding salivary glands, while whole gland perfusion studies (some through collaborations with myself and Martin Steward) and electrophysiological and microfluorometric studies (chiefly with David Cook) added greatly to our knowledge of salivary secretory processes.

John also strayed in other secretory organs, including the pancreas where we also enjoyed a fruitful collaboration. The Sydney-Manchester connection led to more than a dozen joint publications, including four papers in The Journal of Physiology and many communications to the Society, some given by John during his sabbatical in Manchester (in 1981) and subsequent visits, and these led to his election to the Society in 1982.

John was not only an excellent scientist but a true scholar who enjoyed synthesising work into carefully crafted review articles and a superb monograph on the morphology of salivary glands, written with his anatomical colleague Ernst van Lennep. He was also one of the most generous people I know, someone who gave unsparingly to the countless students he trained and counted it a real pleasure to host wonderful dinners for colleagues around the world.

Maynard Case
University of Manchester

Graham Francis Baker
1947 – 2004

Graham Francis Baker passed away at the beginning of March at the early age of 56, having succumbed to a pancreatic tumour after several months of illness.

Graham was born in 1947 and went to Christ’s College, a grammar school in Finchley, and then to Bedford College where, in 1969, he was one of the first men to graduate from this erstwhile women’s college in physiology in spite of his severe hearing deficit, which rather cut him off from the cut and thrust of normal conversation. He then went on to work with Wilfred Widdas for a PhD, the completion of which was delayed by the untimely death of his father in 1972, also of pancreatic disease. He completed his PhD in 1974 and worked with me for a period of time at St Thomas’s and then with Richard Naftalin at King’s College London. In 1981 he was appointed lecturer at Bedford College and after the merger with Royal Holloway he moved to Egham.

A popular and excellent teacher, Graham had a good rapport with the students and was well liked by all. Everyone who knew him remarked on his exceptional kindness and helpfulness to those who asked for his advice. He always dressed elegantly and was well known for wearing either an orchid or rose in his buttonhole.