The untimely death of Nick Davey, who was tragically killed in a car accident on his way to work in February, is being felt not only by his family, friends and colleagues but also by the many volunteers among the spinal cord injured fraternity who had come to trust and respect Nick’s efforts to improve their prospects through his scientific research.

Nick graduated from Bedford College London in 1980 with a BSc in Zoology. He then spent 3 years at Imperial College researching the neural control of breathing, work that led to his PhD and Diploma of Imperial College in 1983. In 1983 he came to work with me in the Department of Physiology at University College. We continued a close collaboration for the ensuing 22 years. That first project revolved around the need to understand more exactly the role of the muscle spindle and its efferent innervation, the gamma motoneurone supply, in the control of movement. While engaged on this work, we spent some time trying to figure out why the discharges of gamma motoneurones became synchronised following acute spinal cord section in animals. This study led directly to Nick’s major contributions in scientific research and spinal cord injury. Realising that the finding would have implications for human spinal cord injury if it applied to alpha motoneurones in man, Nick suggested that we expand our research into the clinical field. By coincidence, Nick lived within a few miles of the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC) at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. He approached the staff of the Centre and quickly satisfied them that an electrophysiological examination of the discharge characteristics of motor units in spinal cord injury would be of value in obtaining a better understanding of the impact of such devastating injury on the execution and control of movement and on spasticity. Nick’s enthusiasm for his research and his consideration for the well-being of research volunteers soon convinced staff and patients at Stoke Mandeville that the work should be treated seriously. The upshot was that he established a laboratory on site so that volunteers could participate in the research along-side their treatment and physiotherapy. In 1986 he was awarded the position of Honorary Research Physiologist in the NSIC.

In 1988, Nick moved to the Department of Physiology at Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School, based at the Charing Cross Hospital where we continued our research collaboration. Nick’s initial appointment as temporary lecturer, then post-doctoral research assistant and Clinical Scientist reflected more the exigencies of the Medical School as it moved towards merger with Imperial College than it did his research achievements. Full recognition of his research standing came with appointment as lecturer in 1995, initially at the Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School and then within Imperial College. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in the Division of Neuroscience and Psychological Medicine in 2002.

Research in a particular field often receives a boost with the emergence of a new technique. Nick realised the potential of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) of the brain soon after its inception in the mid 1980s. Here was a way to test the integrity of the corticospinal tract, the pathway from brain to muscle that, when damaged in spinal cord injury, results in loss of voluntary control of movement. Over a number of years, Nick’s use of TMS led to a detailed understanding of how the surviving connections from brain to muscle adapt to spinal cord injury and how this plasticity of central nervous system function impacts on any residual ability to move. It was a field that intrigued Nick and engaged his research efforts with the expectation that a certain amount of recovery from spinal cord injury might be possible if this plasticity could be manipulated. His most recent research showed that magnetic stimuli repeated at low rates and with a specific pattern can have a therapeutic effect. Clinical assessments and functional tests improved and these were accompanied by physiological changes in the pathway from the motor cortex to motoneurones. Nick was also a key player in the first stage of a Clinical Initiative funded by the International Spinal Research Trust to develop improved physiological tools for the assessment of the level and completeness of spinal cord injury. Nick’s finding with repetitive magnetic stimulation is now set to have a major role in the next stage of this Clinical Initiative. Repetitive TMS will be used as a therapy in spinal cord injury against which the efficacy of the physiological tools designed in stage one can be evaluated.

Nick Davey will be remembered by many colleagues and students as the man with the magnet, and quite rightly. For several years he organised a seminar series, the Magnetic Stimulation Club, at Charing Cross with national and international speakers. He was a co-editor of a definitive Handbook of Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation in 2002 and contributed elsewhere to many book chapters and original journal articles on the technique and its application. Although spinal cord injury came to dominate his research, he made contributions to the understanding of Parkinson’s disease, arthritis, chronic fatigue, back pain and schizophrenia. Among his more eclectic
activities with magnetic stimulation was collaboration with a dancer and choreographer that led to an investigation of motor control under weightless conditions above the Bay of Biscay in parabolic flight aboard an Airbus A300!

Nick was recognised as an accomplished teacher as well as a scientist. He was always ready to share his knowledge and many medical and science undergraduate and postgraduate students have benefited from his knowledgeable and enthusiastic instruction. He was likewise conscious of the need for scientists to relate to the public. He organised demonstrations at the Science Museum as part of Brain Awareness Week and appeared on several BBC television programmes concerned with popularising science.

Nick is survived by his wife Cicely and two year old daughter Tilly.

Peter H Ellaway
Department of Movement and Balance, Imperial College School of Medicine, London, UK

Deceased Members
The Society reports, with regret, the death of G Hugh Begbie (Edinburgh) since the last issue of the magazine. Hugh was elected as a Member in 1964 and served as a Press Editor for the Quarterly Journal of Experimental Physiology.

Experimental Physiology
CALL FOR PAPERS
Neural control of the circulation during exercise

Original papers should be submitted by 1 September for inclusion, subject to review, in a themed issue of Experimental Physiology focusing on Neural control of the circulation during exercise, with a special emphasis on health and disease.

Please contacteward@physoc.org for further details.

http://ep.physoc.org

The Society’s journals

The Editorial Boards of The Journal of Physiology and Experimental Physiology took the opportunity of the IUPS meeting in San Diego in April to hold meetings in the USA. Unsurprisingly, given the venue, a record 41 Editors were present at The Journal of Physiology Board meeting, nearly half being our North American Editors. This was Stewart Sage’s last meeting as Chair of the Board. During his term of office Stewart restructured the Board to reflect developments in the content of The Journal. His role in maintaining The Journal as a successful, dynamic publication through a time of upheaval, with a change of publisher to Blackwell Publishing and the reorganisation of the Publications Office, was recognised by Deputy Chair Prem Kumar on behalf of the Board. Experimental Physiology’s Board meeting was more informal and underlined EP’s intention to raise its profile in the US and bring the newly appointed US Deputy Chair, Nanduri Prabhakar, up to date on current strategy.

How have the journals fared during their first year with Blackwell Publishing? In both cases there has been a high rate of subscription renewal and every effort has been made to secure lapsed subscriptions. In addition, the inclusion of both journals in Blackwell’s consortial deals has meant that they are now in many more libraries than before. Our marketing manager at Blackwell, Alison Brown, has worked hard to generate interest in the journals, promoting them widely at conferences and meetings. Alison is always pleased to hear about meetings at which it would be appropriate to publicise the journals and can be contacted via the Publications Office (journals@physoc.org). Like everyone else, publishers are interested in the enormous potential of the Chinese market and Blackwell will be opening a Shanghai office. They suggested that the Editorial Boards should consider appointing a Chinese Editor to encourage scientists in the region to publish in our journals.

The 2003 impact factors were down slightly for both journals, which was disappointing and the Boards are taking measures to reverse the decline. One aspect on which both Boards have focused is the time taken to review papers, and times to first report have been reduced for both journals. Both journals also continue to exploit the popularity of themed issues containing invited reviews by acknowledged experts in emerging and dynamic fields. During 2005 The Journal of Physiology will publish two themed issues and two issues based on Journal-sponsored symposia. All Experimental Physiology issues will contain either symposium reports or themed sets of invited papers which reflect the journal’s focus on translation and integration. Experimental Physiology is also introducing ‘Exchange of Views’ – ‘back-to-back’ reviews with commentaries and responses on controversial topics. The Journal of Physiology Board has introduced Letters to the Editor on a trial basis and has revised guidelines for Topical Reviews to make them a less onerous proposition for invited authors. Sectionalisation of the JP table of contents continues to be debated and will be fine-tuned to make it as flexible as possible. Continuous monitoring of the acceptance rate has ensured that only the highest quality papers are accepted for publication.

‘Open access’ publishing, discussed in detail on p. 25 of this issue, has been in the news for the past year as proponents have lobbied for a change in the way journals are published. Blackwell has announced a year-long ‘author pays’ trial, Online Open, which will allow authors to request immediate open access to their papers on payment of a fee of £1,250/US$2,500. Both Boards agreed that the journals should take part in this, though neither realistically expects much of an uptake until authors can include full publication costs in their grant applications. Grant providers are also influencing the policies of the journals. The National Institutes of Health archiving policy comes into force in May and requests NIH grantees to archive their accepted papers in PubMed Central within 12 months of acceptance. The Wellcome Trust is likely to request that papers produced by their grantees are archived in ‘open access’ archives within 6 months of publication. Upwards of 40% of papers in The Journal of Physiology and 18% of papers in Experimental Physiology emanate from labs funded by NIH or Wellcome, so these policies are defining and curtailing the periods when the journals can be sold to subscribers. This poses a particular threat to Experimental Physiology and the EP Board have asked Blackwell to investigate the option of publishing more frequently online and less frequently in print. The Society’s funds, and hence its activities, depend to a large extent at present on income from publishing. Opinions are divided on how seriously open access will affect societies and publishers, but at the moment it seems that we are likely to see some effect. The shifting landscape of publishing will keep those of us charged with nurturing the Society’s publications on our toes.

Carol Huxley
Managing Editor