Christopher James Caunt (1976–2017)

We are sad to report the untimely death of Dr Christopher James (Jim) Caunt on the 6th of January 2017. Jim obtained his BSc in Cellular and Molecular Pathology at the University of Bristol in 1997. He then completed his PhD in Molecular Immunology at the University of Sheffield before returning to Bristol in 2002 as a postdoctoral research fellow in the laboratory of Professor Craig McArdle. Initially working on signalling downstream of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone receptors, it was during this time that Jim developed a keen interest in the spatiotemporal regulation of mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) signalling. In 2010, Jim accepted a lectureship in the Department of Biology & Biochemistry at the University of Bath, where he continued to work on the regulation of the Ras-MAPK pathway and, in particular, the role of protein phosphatases in shaping the biological outcome of signalling.

Jim was an excellent laboratory scientist with a creative and rigorous approach to problems. He rapidly developed a portfolio of molecular genetic tools and combined these with the use of high content microscopy in order to visualise and quantitate changes in MAPK signalling activity. This allowed Jim to make important predictions as to biological outcome, particularly in cancer cells where MAPK signalling is abnormally activated. Jim published over 40 papers spanning original research and including several highly influential and highly cited reviews. In Bath, Jim threw himself wholeheartedly into building his laboratory. He was a passionate and highly committed undergraduate lecturer and a patient and thoughtful PhD supervisor. Several of us have benefited from Jim's skill as an undergraduate mentor and research talent spotter, with students passing through Jim's lab going on to complete successful PhDs. Jim was also an enthusiastic and dedicated chair of Biochemical Society Research Area V (Signalling), where he helped to broaden and diversify its membership whilst actively nurturing the development of a large number of scientific meetings. In particular, Jim organised a very successful conference on "Phosphatases and Signalling in Health and Disease" which was held in Bath in the summer of 2016 and was a scientific contributor to "Pseudoenzymes" in Liverpool later that year. Jim's work at the society was typically generous, supportive and caring and members will remember the tireless hard work that Jim put into various (often unrewarding) roles. The work of Research Area V will continue in his memory and Jim will be missed by all at the Biochemical Society who were lucky enough to spend time with him.

Those of us who worked and collaborated with Jim will remember a boundless and joyful enthusiasm for science, coupled with an easy charm, sharp wit, good humour and grace that profoundly affected all of those who knew him. Conversations, which started around matters scientific, would invariably digress into other areas of mutual interest such as music, food, the great outdoors, film, politics and the wider world outside the lab, often driven by his slightly mischievous sense of humour. Jim had huge generosity of spirit and consideration for others and these qualities will ensure that Jim's legacy is wider than the many scientific achievements and publications in his sadly all too short academic career.

Lastly, Jim was married only last year to his long-term partner Lindsay and our thoughts are with her, Jim's parents, brothers and sister at this most difficult of times. ■

Stephen M. Keyse (University of Dundee)
Craig A. McArdle (University of Bristol)
David Tosh (University of Bath)
Simon J. Cook (Babraham Institute, Cambridge)
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