

In Memoriam: Professor Lewis Bernard (“Bunny”) Birch

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IN MEMORIAM

PROFESSOR LEWIS BERNARD (“BUNNY”) BIRCH, BSC., MA, FBPSS

24 February 1913 – 7 January 2008



Professor Lewis Bernard (“Bunny”) Birch died at his home in Montreal on January 7th, 2008, at the age of 94.

He was born in Burton-on-Trent, on February 24, 1913 and attended Burton Grammar School and later the University of Birmingham where he studied zoology. He met his future wife Mary when she was only 16, and they married just three days after war was declared in 1939. Bunny was sent overseas to India and Burma where he served as an officer, latterly major, in the Indian Army. He served in Burma and at the lifting of the siege of the Indian city of Imphal, and was responsible for the air evacuation of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war for the entire Burma theatre. He eventually became a Brevet Lt. Col. and developed a system of air evacuation that became standard for that theatre of war. On one flight, his own plane crashed in the jungle and Birch was seriously injured. He was rescued by local tribesmen and carried for several days through the jungle and over the hills back to base.

After his return, he completed a master’s degree at the University of Birmingham and worked in Burton-on-Trent as an educational psychologist. He moved to the Institute of Education at the University of Sheffield in 1952. Much involved in the British Psychological Society, he succeeded

Philip Vernon as the editor of the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, a post he held from 1962-67 when he was invited to McGill University in Montreal.

At McGill he was appointed Professor of Education and named Chairman of the Division of Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Education. As Director of Graduate Studies from 1969 to 1975, he supervised the rapid expansion of the Faculty's graduate program, established new administrative procedures and academic admission standards, and became the chief liaison between the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. He was named 5th Sir William C. Macdonald Professor in 1970 and from 1971-1972 was Chairman of the Department of Methods of Research. Tenured in 1972, he became Chairman of the Department of Educational Research from 1973 to 1975 and for many years was Chairman of the Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) of the University.

He was Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge, in 1975-76. As Professor at McGill in what is now known as the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, he remained Director of Graduate Studies until his retirement in 1979 and continued post-retirement as Professor until 1983.

Academia was only one part of his life. A veritable polymath, he was extraordinarily interested in everything. He was an outstanding cabinet-maker and had a passion for gardening. In England he was known for his fabulous rose garden and in Montreal he quickly developed expertise in local flora and had a wonderful garden of indigenous flowers, often "rescued" from building sites just ahead of the bulldozers!

He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Mary, and daughters Katherine and Patricia.

GLENN F. CARTWRIGHT, *McGill University*