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Obituaries

David John Bartholomew, 1931–2017

David Bartholomew, who died in October 2017, inhabited many worlds. To his neighbours he was a respected Lay Preacher, to his family and friends a walker, gardener and railway enthusiast, to administrative colleagues a shrewd and reliable guide in many aspects of institutional life, to fellow academics, someone who had pushed forward the ideas of what makes up the discipline of social statistics and, to the Royal Statistical Society, a former President and Editor over many years who had played a major role in its move to Errol Street in 1995.

‘DJB’, as he was universally known, was born in Oakley, Bedfordshire, the eldest of three children, to Albert and Joyce Bartholomew. Albert worked in a local laundry whereas Joyce was one of the organists at the local Methodist church. There was a strong sense of continuity in his upbringing, based on school, family and church. He attended the same two-room village school as his mother had earlier, and had the same teachers. His first act as a statistician came very young when, on his visits to his grandma, whose garden backed onto the railway line, he spotted train numbers and worked out the average speed of trains.

At 11 years of age, he sat the scholarship examination without much expectation of being offered a grammar school place (one person from his school had done so in the last quarter century) but he gained a place at Bedford Modern School. He remained grateful to his parents that they, as well as his teachers, encouraged him to stay on at school beyond the statutory school leaving age. A master at the school, Mr Brookes, introduced him to statistics, which then was not part of the school certificate mathematics syllabus, and he carried out a survey which he reported in the school magazine.

He matriculated and enrolled as a student at University College London where he took both a Bachelor of Science and a doctoral degree in statistics, leaving in 1955. While there he met his wife to be, Marion, at the University Methodist Society. They enjoyed 62 years of marriage and the family treasures memories of their diamond anniversary party.

DJB’s first employment was with the Field Investigation Group (later the Operational Research Branch) of the National Coal Board where he continued to work on the subjects that were raised in his doctoral work as well as *ad hoc* problem solving. Two years on, in 1957, he accepted a lectureship at the University of Keele in their Statistics Department. While there, he began work on what was to be his first sole authored book, *Stochastic Models for Social Processes* (1967), and continued to work on this and his more detailed research on ordered alternatives after he moved to join Dennis Lindley at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where, first as Lecturer and then as Senior Lecturer, he helped to set up the new Statistics Department (1960–1967).

His next move was to the University of Kent (1967–1973) as Professor where he continued to build on his academic links with other institutions both in the university sector (Harvard, Berkeley and Jerusalem) and the civil service, where he acted as consultant to the Civil Service Department. At Kent, as at their earlier homes, he and his family (he and Marion had now been joined by Ann and Ruth) continued their involvement with the local church.

His final university move came with an invitation to take over as Professor of Social Statistics at the London School of Economics (LSE), following the departure of Claus Moser to the Central Statistical Office. Up to this point, social statistics had been regarded as a useful, mainly descriptive tool best used with other disciplines to help to focus ideas. As Moser pointed out in the guidelines for a future appointment

‘In early years . . . its core was the study of social conditions in a fairly unsophisticated way. Then came the development of sample survey techniques. . . . The subject has reached a new phase of sophistication with emphasis on model building.’

This pointed to the need for a theoretical statistician and one with the good communication skills which DJB had already demonstrated.

DJB spent the rest of his working life, and beyond, at the LSE Statistics Department where, apart from taking his turn as Convenor of the Department, running the Social Statistics Group and encouraging colleagues in their own research, he fulfilled several administrative functions in the School as a whole, notably as Pro Director (1988–1991). He was also instrumental in the setting up of the LSE’s Methodology Institute in 1992 under the chairmanship of Colm O’Muircheartaigh and was Chair of its steering committee in its early days.

At the LSE, he continued his consultancy work for the Civil Service Department, Department of Health and Social Security and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (later Universities UK) and incorporated many of the ideas that were used there in his academic publications. He became a Fellow of the British Academy in the 1990s.

David joined the Royal Statistical Society in 1955, and edited Series B of the journal in 1966–1969. Later he was awarded the Guy Medal in Bronze in 1971. He was elected as the Society’s Honorary Treasurer in 1989 and so was deeply involved in the period of delicate negotiations leading up to the successful merger of the Society with the Institute of Statisticians in 1993. His part in this was recognized by his nomination as President, 1993–1995, which was also the time that the plans were developed for the Society’s move to its current premises in Errol Street and the refurbishment of the building. Previously he had been one of the advocates of the move from the rented accommodation in Bentinck Street and the acquisition of the offices nearby in Enford Street.

He carried on with his interests in religious ideas generally, by acting as Treasurer to the Information Network on Religious Movements, which is the group for the study of sects that was founded and chaired by Professor Eileen Barker and, more recently, edited a periodical for the UK Forum of Science and Religion. His three books on *Probability and Theology; God of Chance* (1984), *Uncertain Belief* (1996) and *God, Chance and Purpose* (2008) drew statisticians into his wider ideas and were favourably reviewed. He also advised successive secretaries of the Methodist Assembly over many years on their manpower strategy (1979–1996).

DJB put on record his view:

‘I think that research done and not published is wasted and therefore that a record of publications indicates research achievement’.

For this reason also, he continued to accept invitations to speak on his areas of interest.

A list of his publications is in the public domain, and the following main strands can be identified:

- (a) *manpower planning*, books and articles over the period 1968–1991 several coauthored which combine theory and the data with which he was working at the time in his consultancy work;
- (b) *latent variable models and factor analysis*, shown in books and articles published over

1987–2011 which he regarded as his most important work intellectually though he felt that his colleagues both in the statistical and in the psychological worlds did not appreciate it!; these led to a series of works on

(c) *social measurement* (1987–2010).

In December 2011 a tribute 2-day conference was held at the LSE to honour his scientific contribution to the field of social statistics and an edited collection of the papers that were presented were published in *Applied Statistics* in 2014. Subjects covered included a variety of topics in all of which DJB had had some involvement and make a good summary of his statistical contribution.

DJB continued to work. He published a book for non-statisticians, *Statistics without Mathematics* (2015), which demonstrated his continuing wish to communicate his subject. In 2016, he had written an appreciation of Sir Claus Moser, his predecessor both as LSE Professor and Society President, for the British Academy. He continued to come to the LSE for the occasional lunch with colleagues. We all enjoyed these meetings.

In the last few days of his life, he continued as usual, writing to colleagues and friends and going to look at trains with his grandson. His daughter Ruth told us, at the packed memorial service at their home church in Sudbury, that preparation work for that Sunday's service, which he was to have led, was there, prepared, in his study.