



## EDITORIAL

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# Reflections

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## Headlines

This issue of *Reflections* celebrates the contribution of Professor Emeritus Sir Geoff Palmer who died in June aged 85. His academic and applied studies on barley and other grains generated important physiological insights and associated process developments with innumerable publications in journals, industry magazines and books. In all, he published 53 papers in the *Journal of the Institute of Brewing* and, in appreciation, his 'top 10' papers by citation are listed here.

## Technology is science that works ...\*

In a break from the usual format, *Reflections* celebrates the contribution to the *Journal of the Institute of Brewing* of one man, Professor Sir Geoff Palmer who passed away on 11th June 2025, aged 85. Geoff was an icon of the brewing, distilling and malting industries who made a difference through his work, teaching and relationships. He was a wonderful communicator, had an infectious smile, sense of humour and was always the snappiest dresser in the room.

Between 1966 and 2013, working at the Brewing Industry Research Foundation in Surrey and Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, he published 53 papers in the Journal. As a small tribute, his 'top 10' publications by citation are listed here. Pleasingly, the list includes publications with his frequent collaborators Professor Anna McLeod, Dr George Bathgate and Dr Reg Agu. His excellent biographical review 'Jamaica, Modification, Justice, and Industry' published in 2017 is recommending reading (*Journal of the American Society of Brewing Chemists* 75:59-84). It includes the wonderful line, 'I started my Ph.D. in January 1965, and by June 1966 I published my first paper with Anna in the *Journal of the Institute of Brewing*. In 1967 I published my second paper with Anna in *Nature*'. This is not the usual trajectory for publications by brewing scientists! Further, his contribution to the BBC Radio 4 series, *The Life Scientific*, is very much worth a listen (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0640j59>).

\* *Cereal Science and Technology*, 1989. Palmer GH (Ed), Aberdeen University Press

## Community work and awards

Sir Geoff had a storied life ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoff\\_Palmer\\_\(scientist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoff_Palmer_(scientist))). In his biographical review he refers with typical understatement to his 'community work'. This included books on race relations - *Mr. White and the Ravens* and on slavery - *The Enlightenment Abolished: Citizens of Britishness*. As a renowned human rights activist he explored and communicated the links between Scotland and slavery in the Caribbean in the first half of the 19th century.

Amongst numerous awards, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2003. He was knighted in 2014 for services to human rights, science, and charity. In 2021, he was appointed Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University and in 2023 Sir Geoff was named one of ten pioneering members of the Windrush generation honoured by His Majesty The King with a specially commissioned portrait. Most recently, in 2024, he was appointed a knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle (KT), the highest order of chivalry in Scotland by King Charles III.

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