

## From colleagues in the Geography Department, Loughborough University

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It is with great sadness that we learned of Denis' death. As a contribution to the many appreciations of his life and influence, this brings together something of our collective memory of the thirteen years he spent here from 1980 to 1993.

Denis flourished academically at Loughborough University. He joined the Geography Department as a lecturer in 1980, having already begun to make a significant impact at Oxford Polytechnic, which became Oxford Brookes University in the last year of his appointment. At Loughborough, he was promoted rapidly: he gained a Senior Lectureship in 1984 and became Reader in Cultural Geography in 1988. On being conferred with the title, Denis noted that he was pleased and proud that British academe had espoused Cultural Geography and particularly pleased that this had occurred at Loughborough, a University with a strong tradition in engineering and sports science and a lesser involvement in the humanities. In 1993, he was appointed to a professorship of Human Geography at Royal Holloway & Bedford New College in the University of London. From there, he moved to the newly-founded Alexander von Humboldt Chair of Geography at UCLA in 2000.

Denis was appointed to a lectureship at Loughborough by Robin Butlin, the founding Professor of Geography. He brought to the Department fresh and original ideas and produced his early landmark publications at Loughborough: *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* in 1984 and *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (co-edited with Steve Daniels) in 1988. That same year he received the Royal Geographical Society's Back Award for contributions to Human Geography. In 1993, he published *The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and its Cultural Representations in Sixteenth Century Italy*.

Denis' international reputation was immensely important in raising the profile of a relatively young Geography Department. He was committed to his colleagues and influenced significantly the Department's early research direction. He established cultural geography and, with others – Robin Butlin, Morag Bell and Mike Heffernan - formed a distinctive historical and cultural geography research group. Postgraduate students were keen to work under Denis' supervision and he built his first research community here, including Trevor Pringle, Pyrs Gruffudd (University of Wales, Swansea) and David Atkinson (Hull University). Research funds from the British Academy and the Royal Society supported his work. So too did a major grant from the ESRC and the Commission of the European Communities Environmental Programme, which enabled Denis to appoint his first research associates. This powerful legacy of research leadership and support for new career researchers lives on in the current! immense strength of social and cultural geography at Loughborough.

Denis brought qualities to the Department that helped shape its broader ethos and values. He was an innovative teacher and, from the time of his appointment, he instigated major reviews of the curriculum from which a series of imaginative courses emerged. For Denis, scholarship in research and teaching were interrelated and a field class, which he took to the Veneto, enabled undergraduates to gain at first hand his rich knowledge of the region. Also passionate about the role of geography in embracing social and environmental issues, Denis had that rare capacity to cross the boundaries between disciplines and

did this superbly at Loughborough through his work with colleagues in the humanities and the natural sciences. In 1990, he brought together a series of essays by staff and students in the Department, which examined from different perspectives the complex interactions between Water, Engineering and Landscape: Water Control and Landscape Transformation in the Modern Period (co-edited with Geoff Petts). Many appreciations of Denis' influence remark on this breadth of scholarship. For the Department, in its formative years, this influence was profound.

We on the staff knew Denis as a lively, stimulating, inspiring colleague and as a friend. We have been deeply affected by news of his untimely death.

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