

# The first truly global grammarian



Sidney Greenbaum died in Moscow on the 29th May, aged 66. He had just completed a lecture. He had also just published *The Oxford English Grammar* (see pp. 24 and 62), and was rightly enjoying the critical and public response to this seminal work.

He was also the prime mover of ICE, the International Corpus of English – one of the most fertile studies of English ever undertaken – and had just attended a conference in Norway linked with ICE. He died therefore at the height of an outstanding career.

He lived for his work, in a wonderfully variegated career, mainly in London. A first degree in Hebrew and Aramaic. A teaching diploma from the Institute of Education. A school teacher. A part-time second degree in English from Birkbeck College. A research assistant to Randolph Quirk at University College London. A member of the formidable quadrumvirate which produced *The Longman Grammar of Contemporary English* – widely known (unavoidably, I suppose, but unfortunately) as ‘Quirk *et al*’, when the *et al* were such pre-eminent scholars as Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik. Professor at the University of Oregon. Professor at the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee). Professor at University College, and head of the Survey of English Usage, which he inherited from Randolph Quirk. And author of many accessible works written in precise, diamond-hard prose.

Sidney was my colleague and friend: a great supporter of – and contributor to – *English Today*. He was also a quiet and constant pillar of strength during recent tragedies in my own life, and in the making of *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, of which he was an associate editor.

Sid will be remembered for many things, in the Jewish world, in the world of London University, and in linguistics. But I suspect it will be for his work as the first truly global grammarian of English that he will be primarily remembered. His focus was the standard language, but more than most he acknowledged its regional identities and appreciated its crucial interplay with innumerable other varieties worldwide.

I miss him.

Tom McArthur

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