

Professor Sir J. Eric Smith, who died on 3 September 1990 aged 81, first came to the MBA as a student probationer in 1930. Between 1932 and 1950 he was successively lecturer at Manchester, Sheffield and Cambridge. He was appointed Professor of Zoology at Queen Mary College London in 1950 and was Vice-Principal of the College from 1963 until 1965. In 1965 he was appointed Director of the Plymouth Laboratory. Sir Eric was Director at a period when the laboratory was undergoing considerable expansion and it was during this period that the MBA became involved in the Torrey Canyon oil spill. It was because of his involvement in this that in the 1970s Sir Eric was appointed to the Royal Commission on Petroleum Drilling on the Great Barrier Reef. His early research had been on the structure and function of the nervous system of starfish but he was also a taxonomist at heart and the neglect of this field of science in the 1970s and 1980s greatly concerned him. As well as being an eminent scientist and being made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1958, he was a very able committee member and was much sought after for committees and boards. After his retirement as Director in 1974 he continued to visit the Laboratory but became more and more involved in the Society for the History of Natural History rather than the more practical side of marine biology. He was also involved in the development of the Cornish Biological Records Unit. Eric Smith was a kind and courteous man and could always find time to offer a few words of encouragement to students and colleagues alike. Many marine scientists are grateful to him for careful guidance at some point in their careers.