

## In remembrance of Dr John Gabriel Christopher Luke Olsson

*June Luchjenbroers*

It is with deep regret that I announce the passing of Dr John Olsson, BSc (Psych), MA, MPhil, PhD (Linguistics), LLB (Hons), BPTC (the Bar) who passed away on 9 June 2021, aged 69. His long string of academic and professional achievements is well known in the field of forensic linguistics as well as the law, for which he had been called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in October 2016.

John's status, as one of the world's most experienced authorship specialists, began with his choice to freelance as a forensic linguist in 1994. This was at a time when practically all UK forensic linguistic work was carried out by the police and possibly university faculty. So, in the last 26 years his reputation grew, working in forensic authorship cases in over 450 criminal and civil cases, and instructed by both defence and prosecution counsel in courts around the world, including in the USA, Australia, Canada and Singapore, in addition to the UK.

His testimonies dealt with hoax letters, threats, kidnap and other ransom demands, but, despite this diversity of cases from all over the globe, he chose to branch out further into the law. First with a Bachelor of Law degree (H1), then as law faculty teaching forensic linguistics (at Bangor University), and then to study for the Bar at the University of Law where he gained the Bar Professional Training Certificate (BPTC). Amazingly, he had also recently completed solicitor training. I asked him once why he chose to go into the law, and he told me that it was because he wanted to know how they (lawyers) think. He had found it challenging to work with lawyers as a linguist because their thought processes seemed so very different. He later also told me, 'Never the twain shall meet'.

I first met John when he was working on his first book, *Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction to Language, Crime and the Law*, in 2003. Given my forensic lin-

---

### Contact

email: [junel21@gmx.co.uk](mailto:junel21@gmx.co.uk)

---

guistics past, he had asked me for my views on what he had written. I had recommended some radical changes but was still amazed by the breadth of changes he had subsequently made. He had started again from scratch, and that was the manuscript he submitted. It was released in 2004. On top of his freelance work as a forensic linguist, John taught at Bangor University in both the law school as well as linguistics. He designed and taught courses for a couple of North American universities, as well as the University of Trinidad. And he had studied psychology, linguistics, forensic linguistics and then the law. All of this at the same time as his freelance work as well as his publications. He wrote a total of six books, but it was only for the third edition of his first book that we actually collaborated. He showed remarkable energy and drive to keep all his projects going in the set time, but he also found the time to talk to students and colleagues to help unravel problems or to find or develop new projects and online courses, such as the MSc in forensic linguistics that we had co-written. When I was working at Bangor University, I could always rely on him to fit in a lecture in my courses. John would always find the time to come and talk to students, and during our MSc degree in forensic linguistics he organised an opportunity for our students to make a presentation to his lawyer contacts regarding a specific, current case.

I could go on about John's academic and professional achievements, but John was also a very creative person, enjoying art (several of his paintings are on display in his home) and music (his brother played the piano during the funeral service as well as piece after piece at John's wake). Apparently, John played the piano as well as his very gifted brother. John also had a pilot's licence and a helicopter licence, and he produced and sold an aviation magazine called *Pilots International* for several years in the eighties and nineties. If that were not enough, he also wrote other non-academic pieces for which he started up a small-scale publishing firm to release such pieces publicly. It is hard to imagine any one person having so much energy and drive without something suffering, and yet John did.

John leaves behind a loving partner in Angie (short for Angela) and her children, as well as two brothers and other members of his family. His health had declined over the past year, losing a lot of weight but not his drive. His typical day would involve working through the night and going to bed to sleep when most of us get up (ca. 6.00 am), to then start the day just after noon. And that is where he was found ... in his bed, seemingly asleep. Apparently, his heart had given up. You are sorely missed by so many, John. Rest in peace.