

# Decorating the top of the table

**T**HE National Honours Group (NHG) is a committee of the Board of Trustees and is chaired by the President Elect. Members include a number of senior psychologists who have made a substantial contribution to the discipline, and who may have themselves received a national honour.

The aim of the NHG is to submit the names of psychologists to the Ceremonial Secretariat of the Cabinet Office for consideration for an honour in recognition of outstanding service to British psychology.

The process is confidential, and we receive no feedback other than an acknowledgement of receipt of a nomination. When making nominations the NHG considers the breadth and impact of a potential nominee's contribution to psychology. We believe that nominations that have support from a number of different sources have the highest likelihood of success, and the group seeks support from other organisations for all nominations.

Nominations are for an honour *per se* – we are not able to specify grade of honour. Nominees must not be retired when nominated. The only other criterion is the demonstration of service; it is therefore crucial that nominations are for individuals who have made significant contributions. The group carefully considers suggested names and identifies the strongest.

□ *The NHG would be pleased to hear of any individuals who are thought to have made outstanding contributions to psychology in the UK. These should be marked private and confidential and sent to Barry Brooking (Chief Executive), The British Psychological Society, St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR. Potential nominees should not be consulted.*



**STEVE COOPER**, *Chair of the Society's National Honours Group, introduces some personal reflections on what those letters can do for you – and for psychology.*

## **Professor John Morton, OBE 'For services to psychology and cognitive development'**

One never knows exactly what the honour is for because you don't know who said what, but I expect it was mostly for the work of the MRC Cognitive Development Unit (CDU), which I was Director of, and the work the Society's Press Committee did when I was chair. It is well known that OBE stands for Other Buggers' Efforts.

At the CDU we all felt that it was acceptance of the body of work we had put out in the previous 16 years, but it has done nothing for me otherwise. No seats on the board, alas! But I think that it helps for the rest of the academic world and for government to realise that our discipline is far-reaching and effective, as well as being a science.

## **Professor Cary L. Cooper, CBE 'For services to health and safety at work'**

I was awarded the CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2001. I suspect, although you are never told specifically, that it was for my work in the field of occupational psychology and health in the workplace, particularly in the areas of occupational stress, work-life balance, hours of work, work overload and the health issues associated with women at work. From my personal point of view, I was very proud to have been awarded this honour. As an American who has lived and worked in the UK for over 30 years (although over the last 10 years I have been a dual citizen), I felt this honour as the ultimate acceptance of me and my academic contribution to Britain (my adopted home). It has enriched me as a person, not monetarily, and made me feel more valued for the contribution I was making.

For my field of study, mental well-being in the workplace, it was also an acknowledgement of its arrival as a serious area of psychological concern to industry and the economy. Psychology as a whole rarely gets the kind of recognition it deserves in terms of its contribution to society, the economy and health and safety in general. As a profession, we need to recognise our leading scholars and practitioners alike, to raise the profile and significance of what we do.

**Professor Vicki Bruce, OBE 'For services to psychology'**

The letter from the Prime Minister (a thrilling experience in itself) came about a year after I had been busy doing various national committee work – for the ESRC, for the MRC, for the BPS and for the HEFCE – so it might have been any or all of those sources which nominated me. But I was delighted it said 'for...psychology', and at the time I think we (at the BPS) thought it might be the first time that phrase had been used. I was very pleased it said 'psychology' rather than 'social science' (which the ESRC might have used).

For me, the pleasure was professional but also profoundly personal. Both my parents were (and are) still alive, and it was just wonderful to be able to phone them up the day the lists appeared in the newspaper, and tell them to turn to page whatever in *The Daily Telegraph*. And my Dad was able to come to the Palace for the ceremony, which he enjoyed hugely.

I am sure such honours are good for the discipline if the discipline gets a mention. If it doesn't, then I'm not sure how much difference it makes that psychologists get honoured in lists such as mine – though I'm sure more major distinctions matter a great deal. But whenever the discipline itself gets a mention it underlines the fact that we have come of age. I certainly think with the range of professional contributions made by psychologists to health, well-being and the economy, psychologists merit many more honours in the future.

**Professor Tim Miles, OBE 'For services to dyslexia'**

To be of help it seems to me that psychologists need to have *both* the technical scientific knowledge *and* the humanity to get across what they have to say in sympathetic way. It seems to me no accident that psychology departments are normally amphibious, living in both the science and arts faculties.

**Professor Barbara Wilson, OBE 'For services to medical rehabilitation'**

The news of my OBE came on 1 January 1998 when I was on holiday in Jordan with my elder daughter, Sarah. We telephoned home on New Year's Day and heard that I was on the New Year's Honours List. The tour leader organised a party for me in Wadi Rum. Of course I had an idea that this was coming when I received a letter from the Prime Minister's secretary in November. I was asked then if I would be happy to receive the award for 'services to medical rehabilitation'. In retrospect I realise that I could have changed this to 'services to neuropsychological rehabilitation', but when the letter arrived I was so stunned I agreed to its wording. I now feel uncomfortable with the word 'medical' and wish I had had the foresight to include the word 'psychology'. I had little hesitation in accepting the honour, believing it would be good for the reputation of brain injury rehabilitation, and it was also a boost to my ego! I was given the award because of letters sent from families of people with brain injury with whom I have worked for the past 24 years. Although I am employed by the Medical Research Council, and they do propose people each year, this had not been so in my case.

What effect has the OBE had? I feel pleased that families of brain-injured people cared enough to make this happen. My boss had not realised I was in line for an honour, so I think he saw me in a different light afterwards. I doubt it has influenced my life, as most of the time I don't think about it. In certain circumstances it may have some clout, and while awards are on offer then psychologists, being influential members of clinical and academic life, should get them. Clearly, such an award from outside the discipline of psychology is of less importance than a major contribution to the discipline itself, say for exceptional research, or an influential book, or a breakthrough in the development of theory. Nevertheless, psychologists are an important part of society as a whole, and this is one way of recognising their efforts to help individuals manage their lives more successfully.