

## **BARRY READ (1 April 1956 – January 2024)**

Barry Read, PITA's longest-serving CEO (2008–2024), died unexpectedly after a short illness, in late January.

Barry studied Chemical Physics at university, before embarking on his career with a period at Bridgewater Paper Mill. Although he left there for a brief stint in the battery industry, he was obviously smitten by paper, and rejoined via the allied trades side, as Technical Manager at Stephenson Recycling Chemicals (PT&I, June 1988, p.168). Here he put his knowledge of deinking technology, learnt at Bridgewater, into practice, and travelled the world (business class, as he was always at pains to point out) running trials in several far-flung continents – during which he picked up a huge stock of anecdotes with which he would regale an audience at meetings.

Having got soap chemistry out of his system, his next position was with a testing laboratory (PT, Dec. 1993, p.43); as Geof Nutall recalls, "We first met when as a director of Cross & Bevan I interviewed him at my home for the job of General Manager on the departure of Trevor Dean. An early realisation of his priorities in life came when on my next visit to the company premises, I discovered that his occupation of the company flat came with three Yorkshire terriers."

"Unfortunately, in the familiar way of things in our industry, the distant owners of the company closed it up soon afterwards and as I then operated as a freelance consultant we teamed up as the Fibre Technology Association and went out looking for work. An early success was for many years helping the BioComposites Centre of Bangor University to expand their operations into the paper industry. But our primary successes lay in securing Government contracts, notably a major job developing the recycling of fibre, work which took us on a fact-finding tour to Finland."

It was also at this time that Barry led a project looking at recycling of paper cups; a grade that was considered unrecyclable by many in the early 'noughties.' His work showed what was needed, but nothing much happened for nigh-on a decade until a recycling line was installed at James Cropper. But Barry championed the cause well before it became fashionable.

Barry took over the role at PITA in 2008, at a very difficult time both for the Association and business in general: PITA was haemorrhaging money, and Lehman Brothers had just filed for bankruptcy, and with this action almost brought down the Western banking system. The situation at PITA needed some drastic changes which Barry enacted very successfully over a period of several years. In particular this saw major changes in the publication section of the Association: Daven Chamberlain was brought in to edit the Paper Technology journal (renamed Paper Technology International® in 2018), and in time new digital offerings were added alongside the paper journal, including a newsletter (PITA Affairs) and journal (PAPER*matters!*) and an improved website. Then Barry led a foray into the research arena, bringing in several government-funded contracts, the most successful of which was the digital-twinning project performed at Smurfit Kappa Townsend Hook which resulted in major reductions in drying energy costs. This also brought in awards, notably a Paper Industry Gold Sustainable Innovation

Award 2022 (PTI, Summer 2022, pp.22–25), second place at the Constantinus Awards in Austria 2023, and the Technologie Kring Award 2023 (PITA An. Rev. 2023, p.26).

Geof Nutall adds, "When Barry secured the job at PITA most of his other business associations effectively finished, but because of my background with the Association we kept in close touch, and Barry well repaid the early help I gave him by recruiting me at my advanced age to monitor the effectiveness of a third-generation computer project at Townsend Hook."

Barry was undoubtedly the driving force behind this highly successful project, keeping it going despite the restrictions that COVID-19 imposed. He certainly saw it as one of the highlights of his long and successful career.

Barry remained restless to the end, and had plans for future projects, including another government-funded one looking at the effect of different biopolymer coatings on paper recyclability (in particular, on wet-end chemistry), and just for a change, again with Geof Nutall, was in the early stages of investigating whether Pitt Mill in Somerset might be operated as a Charity demonstrating hand-made papermaking on a 400-year-old site.

A well-known and highly-respected personality in the paper industry, Barry was a tireless champion of all bio-fibre industries. In particular he worked hard to promote paper, board, moulded fibre and similar materials, both at home and abroad, and his passing has come as a huge shock to countless people across the world. Barry is already missed by a great many people in the industry; indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he would have been touched (and probably astounded) by the outpouring of condolences and best wishes from across the world, received by the PITA Office since the announcement of his death.

**Daven Chamberlain & Geof Nuttall**