Dedication: Malcolm Clarke, his life and work

Malcolm Roy Clarke FRS\(^1\) died on 17th May, 2013, at the age of 82 years. Malcolm pioneered the use of cephalopod beaks from the stomachs of marine predators to identify the species of prey and quantify the consumption of cephalopods on a global scale. His scientific life began with fieldwork as a British Government Whaling Inspector in the Antarctic aboard the whale factory ship Southern Harvester, and his Ph.D. on the parasites of whales followed. While delving into the gut contents of sperm whales, Malcolm realised just how much information would be obtained if the thousands of cephalopod beaks present could be identified and related to the live biomass they represented. He consequently began what was to become the defining research of his career, which included developing new sampling methods for cephalopods to fill the many gaps in knowledge of the living animals.

In a paper in Nature (Clarke, 1962), Malcolm drew attention to the importance of squid beaks for research on cephalopods in marine ecosystems, and in due course he published his seminal work on the cephalopod diet of sperm whales in the southern hemisphere (Clarke, 1980). This was later followed by the editing of a handbook on the identification of squid beaks, which made the subject accessible to the marine science community at large (Clarke, 1986). Malcolm used his data to estimate the biomass of cephalopods consumed by sperm whales worldwide (Clarke, 1983) and went on to explore consumption by other marine predators including seals, seabirds and fish. He went on to edit a review of the role of cephalopods in the world’s oceans in a special issue of the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London (Clarke, 1996). In the course of his career he also made important contributions to knowledge about sperm whale anatomy, and cephalopod buoyancy, taxonomy and palaeontology.

Malcolm worked at the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences from 1958 to 1972, and then at the Marine Biological Association of the UK from 1972 to 1987. He was awarded a D.Sc. in 1978, and elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Society in 1981. He authored and co-authored over one hundred and fifty scientific papers and also edited and co-edited a number of books. After retirement, he and his wife Dorothy moved to Pico in the Azores where they opened a private whale museum at Lajes.

Malcolm was a truly inspirational figure; always a generous spirit, he was friend, teacher and colleague to marine biological scientists worldwide, who will remember him with great fondness. The insights his science has given us will be recalled with admiration. Fig. 1

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References


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