

Obituary: Arthur Tarrant (1929-2015)

Colour Group (Great Britain)

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Dr. Arthur Tarrant passed away peacefully on 19 November 2015 at home, aged 86 years.

Arthur was a keen and practical supporter of the Colour Group, always contributing to AGMs, having been Chairman (1975-77) and he was given Honorary Membership in 2006.

Born in Battersea in 1929, Arthur's family were Unitarians and although not particularly religious in later life, he had a respect for education, hard work and a fundamental sense of kindness, fair play with a distain for ostentation and extravagance. After his prep school years he was educated at Latymer Grammar School Hammersmith where, with friends, his elaborate tricks on teachers included filling classroom lampshades with water of different colours to cast odd glows - an effect increased by the addition to one lampshade of two live fish.



Graduating with a BSc in physics from the University of London (Chelsea College), Arthur joined the National Physical Laboratory in Teddington in 1950 as Assistant Experimental Officer (Experimental Officer in 1956) working in spectroradiometry and spectrophotometry.

In 1958 he joined the Spectroscopy Section of Battersea College of Technology (later to become part of the University of Surrey). In 1967 he successfully defended his PhD on the spectral composition of daylight, using results from many instruments in the form of miles of paper hole punched tape. His main research topics were the spectroscopy of daylight, scattered light in optical instruments, lighting in the home, the names people give to colours and visual colour measuring instruments. His teaching included optics, instrumentation, spectroscopy and lighting, and he became head of the Home Economics department at the University of Surrey. In various capacities he lectured to students of every university faculty until his (nominal) retirement on 1993. He was a Visiting Scholar of the University of Derby where he helped build a novel visual colorimeter and Visiting Research Fellow of the University of Leeds.

Few who saw them, could forget his colour lectures – which he must have done several hundred times - yet always managed to keep fresh and inspiring, involving a series of spectacular demonstrations (such as jellies with mismatched flavours and colours).

At various times he worked at the Scientific Instrument Research Association and in professional theatre. For many years he was a governor of the Wimbledon College of Art. He was both a Fellow of the Institute of Physics and a Chartered Engineer.

In 1997 he was awarded 'Lighting Personality of the Year' by CIBSE (Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers) particularly recognising his work in chairing several groups tasked with publishing Lighting Guides for lecture theatres, offices, hospitals and pubs.

For over 20 years he was an ardent supporter of London International Youth Science Forum. He lectured at the Royal Institution, continuing to lecture on colour, railways and model engineering until very recently.

He had an active interest in sailing, a passion for ballet, but his principle hobby was the building and driving of steam engines of various sizes. For many years he was a driver on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway and Wells & Walsingham Light Railway. His engineering skills enabled him to build two fine 5" gauge steam locomotives: an electric blue 0-6-0 named Christopher Tarrant and a yellow 0-4-4-0 Garratt named Roy Francis. Both ran at the Harlington Model Engineering Club of which he was an enthusiastic member.

He is survived by his wife Kathleen, three children and one grandson.

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