Introduction

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It is a great pleasure to dedicate this special issue of *Inflammopharmacology* as a *Festschrift* in honour of the outstanding contributions to science, medicine and academic life of Professor Dennis Parke in celebration his 80th birthday. Sadly Dennis passed away after a long illness a few days after his 80th birthday. He was, however, able to see some of the contributions dedicated to him in this issue of the journal. Dennis has been a much valued friend to the Journal and was a founder Editorial Consultant to the journal. He was the first contributor to the journal with his daughter Ann and David Lewis (who are also contributors to this special issue). Their review article, “Molecular Pathology of Drug Disease Interactions in Chronic Autoimmune Inflammatory Diseases” (*Inflammopharmacology* 1, 3–36, 1991), in many ways encompasses one of the many central themes which Dennis has developed with his colleagues about the role of drug metabolism and oxyradical generation in the development of iatrogenic diseases. Looking back on this article (which I have used frequently in courses in biomedical sciences and medicine) I realize how Dennis has recognised the importance of molecular aspects of drug metabolism and oxyradical mediated disease interactions that underlie a wide variety of conditions, including cancer, auto-immune and inflammatory diseases as well as acute and chronic drug toxicity.

First, let me give you a brief outline of Dennis’ personal history. I had many fascinating and stimulating discussions over 30 or more years of much valued and privileged personal friendship I have had with Dennis and his family.

Dennis had a remarkable career as a biochemist and toxicologist. He was born in London and has spent most of his personal and academic life in London and Surrey. He was the eldest son of a serving soldier, William Thomas Parke, and (Florence) Daisy Wyles. He went to West Ham Municipal School. At the age of seventeen, he proceeded to University College, London (UCL). He had an early meteoric rise into academe. However, this was not without the impact of the Second World War.

He was commissioned in the Royal Artillery. In February 1943 he married his childhood sweetheart, Doreen, and in the Spring of 1943 he was posted to a field
artillery regiment. Unfortunately, Dennis injured his back during parachute training and after being discharged from the Royal Artillery, medically unfit, he was sent to India to be posted to Ahmadnagar. Then followed a series of short postings where he worked doing pathology in the British General Hospitals of Bangalore, Madras, Bombay and other southern Indian cities.

After the War, the British Army gave Dennis 18 months pay and allowances he studied BSc Chemistry and undertook postgraduate research he went to Glaxo to join Dr. Lester Smith who put Dennis to work with a Dr. Cuthbertson, a biochemist from UCL, to biosynthesise cyanocobalamin (vitamin B$_{12}$) labelled with radio-cobalt, for X-ray crystallography at Oxford for determination of its molecular structure.

In 1947 Dennis was appointed to a Lectureship in Biochemistry at St. Mary’s Hospital Medical School to work with the drug metabolism pioneer, Professor R. Tecwyn Williams. Staff teaching being a small proportion of time there