



Breeder of barley fleet

David Hereward Burnaby Sparrow

SOUTH Australia is one of the world's leading suppliers of malt and malting barley, and that is in no small measure due to the work of David Sparrow.

After training in agricultural botany, David worked for the National Institute of Agricultural

Botany and as a plant breeder at the Plant Breeding Institute in Cambridge, helping develop Maris Otter, a barley variety famous for its malting qualities.

Keith Finlay, then senior plant breeder at the Waite Institute in Adelaide, met David at Cambridge and set about raising funds from barley growers, maltsters and brewers and the Federal Government.

In 1960 he was able to recruit David as Australia's first full-time barley breeder.

Finlay had accumulated and studied a vast collection of barley types from around the world, and David was able to use these to begin producing new commercial varieties from 1968 until his retirement in 1992.

Clipper was the first significant new Australian barley variety since Prior, discovered by an Adelaide Plains farmer in the early 1900s.

It was soon grown all over

Australia, and was followed by the nematode-resistant Galleon, the premium malting quality Schooner, and the high-yield semi-dwarf variety, Skiff.

There was also Barque, Sloop, Keel and Dhow.

The names reflected David's great love of sailing.

He was a long-time member of the Brighton and Seaclyff Yacht Club.

When he wasn't breeding, David was busy developing new, faster and more effective ways of breeding and assessing his selections.

He was also able to investigate shortcomings of existing varieties and adapt to the changing needs of the brewing industry.

His duties included teaching both undergraduate and post-graduate students and he was made an associate professor in 1984.

David's barley varieties are also widely grown in South Africa, India and Greece.

Milestones

David Hereward Burnaby Sparrow

Barley breeder

Born: December 11, 1927; Bournemouth, UK

Died: March 22, 2012; Adelaide

Education: Honours science degree, University of Reading, UK, 1952. PhD, University of Adelaide, 1972.

Achievements: Associate

professor. Australia's greatest barley breeder. His barley varieties became dominant in Australia and were also widely grown around the world. Urrbrae Award, 1979, Farrer Memorial Medal, 1990, and fellow of industry institutes.

Family: Survived by wife Gwyneth, children Karen and Duncan, and a granddaughter.