



In Memoriam: Carteret “Cark” Maunsell

Waverley Root, a famous American author, said, *“The oat is the Horatio Alger of cereals, which progressed, if not from rags to riches, at least from weed to health food”*. Through his inquisitiveness and entrepreneurship, Cark Maunsell took the humble oat into high value global cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and nutraceutical markets.

Cark was part of a group including Richard Mason and Mike Jeffery from GB Seeds and Chris Green of Semundo (now Senova) that saw the potential opportunities for naked oats. Cark and his colleagues identified specialised value-added markets for performance horses, companion animals (mainly dog food), pig weaner diets, and wild and domesticated bird food. It is probably true to say that, without this encouragement, the breeding of naked oats at the Welsh Plant Breeding Station (now IBERS) in Aberystwyth would have long ceased.

Captivated by the unique properties of oats, Cark realised that detailed research was needed to demonstrate the value and functionality of oats for major markets. He pioneered two projects on the use of oats for the poultry industry. These were AFENO – “Avian Feed Efficiency from Naked Oats” and ALP – “The Performance and Egg Quality in Laying Hens Fed on Naked Oats”. Cark attracted significant commercial partners to be involved and take naked oats into the market.

Cark’s investigative and enquiring mind lead him to explore advanced fractionation techniques. He developed a close association with the Canadian biotechnology company Ceapro, Inc., and with VTT in Finland, both specialising in the production of high value oat fractions. Eager to take this forward, Cark led a public funded project, ABIPO – “Antioxidant-based Industrial Products from Oats”, which he chaired. The project research demonstrated opportunities for unique and underexploited oat fractions which had application for the personal care and health market.

Given Cark’s breadth of oat knowledge, he was appointed Chairman of “OatLink: Breeding Oats for the 21st Century”, a five-year project aimed at coupling breeding research with the agronomy and markets for oats. He carried out this role with rigour, fairness, and humour. His frequent visits to Wales were coupled with nights out, which invariably meant a few pints and an oat-related thirst for knowledge. He was a much loved and valued colleague.

The culmination of Cark’s enthusiasm for oats came with his setting up of Oat Services in 2001. Initially, this centred on extraction methods for oat oil. The problem facing any oil extraction company is the interdependence of the economics of the target oil on the value of the remaining co-products. Oat Services was able to balance this equation through further re-processing of the defatted matrix to produce an oat bran with elevated levels of beta-glucan (above 13%), together with sub-100-micron oat flours. Later work concentrated on developing more specialised oils for the nutraceutical markets, particularly those that exploit the high antioxidant activity and emulsifying properties of oat oil, which is very attractive to the chocolate industry. Most importantly, Oat Services recognised that different varieties having different amounts of phytochemicals could have a significant impact on production economics.



Oat Services' research work revealed the wider application for oats in the body care market, which led Cark to create Oat Cosmetics, Ltd., which is now a significant global player in that market.

Through his engagement, oats have a sustained future in the high-value cosmetic and pharmaceutical markets. Our lives have been enriched by being part of Cark's enterprising life.

Cark Maunsell sadly passed away on the 10th September, 2023, after a long and courageous fight against myeloma. He leaves behind his wife Miranda, daughters Hannah and Cara, and son Mark.

As remembered by Dr. John Valentine, retired leader of oat breeding at Aberystwyth; Chris Green, retired MD of Senova; and Richard Mason, retired MD of GB Seeds.

Tributes to Cark may be posted on <https://carterethuntermaunsell.muchloved.com>.