

TRIBUTE TO COLIN BURNS

Professor Colin Burns, the founding Honorary President of the Émile Zola Society, died on 16 January 2002 in hospital in Southampton after a period of painful illness.

Colin grew up in London and was educated at University College London where he completed his doctoral thesis on Henri Céard. After posts in Southampton and Nottingham where he spent ten years (1952-1962). He was appointed to the Chair of French at the University of Strathclyde and proved to be a popular Head of Department. In 1973 he moved to a chair of French in Birmingham and eventually assumed the role of Head of Department until his retirement in 1988. He was acknowledged as a natural administrator and served as treasurer to the Society of French Studies. He was an authority of Céard and, in addition to his major work *Henri Céard et le Naturalisme* (Birmingham: Goodman and Sons, 1982), he edited a collection of the writer's short stories in *Henry Céard: visages du naturalisme* (London, Canada: Mestengo, 1989) and published important annotated accounts of his correspondence with literary figures, notably Zola and the Goncourt brothers. His last contribution to Céard scholarship 'Les apprentissages d'un petit naturaliste: Henri Céard' appeared in 2000. As well as his work on Céard, Colin was interested in all aspects of the Naturalist movement and articles on Huysmans, Thyébaud, Vizetelly, Zola and in particular the Dreyfus affair appeared regularly in leading journals such as *Les Cahiers naturalistes*, *French Studies*, *Nottingham French Studies*, *Studi francesi*. since its inception, he was a regular contributor to *The Émile Zola Society Bulletin*. Among his positions as editorial advisor were those he held for *Les Cahiers naturalistes* and *Excavatio*. His arrival in Birmingham led to the publication of a notable volume of essays in honour of his colleague R.J. North: *Literature and Society* (1980) and throughout his tenure he encouraged his junior colleagues to emulate his enviable record of meticulous scholarship and publication.

Colin will be remembered as a scholar of international standing who was unduly modest about his achievements, as a generous companion and as an engaging communicator who introduced generations of students to Zola and the Naturalist movement in general.