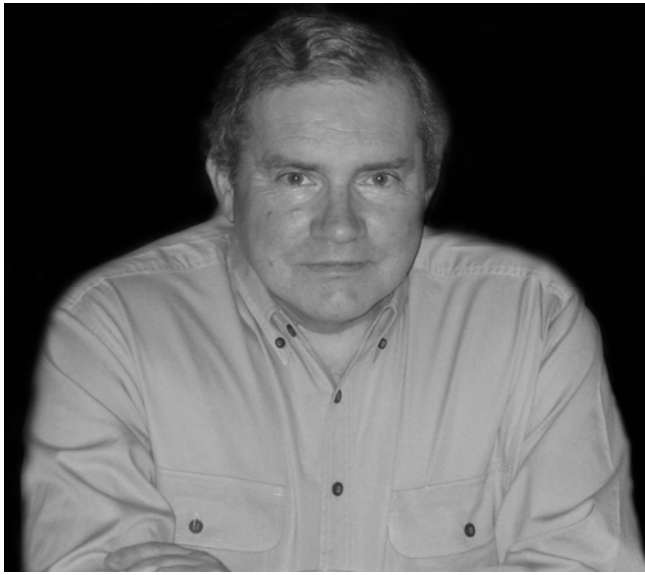


# A TRIBUTE TO CHRIS WELFORD



On 11 June 2007, Australia lost one of its greatest avicultural minds and thinkers of the past 30 years when Chris Welford passed away at the age of just 53. Chris had shown great courage over the past decade and a half battling cancer and then heart problems and was enjoying life to the fullest with his soul mate and wife of 22 years, Pam, and his two treasured sons, Simon (aged 16) and Toby (13) when he was cruelly taken from us.

Chris was a quiet and reserved person to most people he met; but I was fortunate to know Chris better than most – and beneath that quiet, considered exterior was a kind and gentle man with a brilliantly incisive mind and an insatiable quest for knowledge, facts, figures and statistics for the things in life he felt most passionate about.

On top of the list of Chris's passions were aviculture and avicultural books, but also current affairs, gardening (especially roses), tropical fish and sport. Chris had always been interested in birds and the history of the Avicultural Society of South Australia. Chris's Grandfather Frederick Welford was prominent in the early years of the Society and had won many prizes at the bird shows the Society ran in the late 1940s and early 50s. Chris told me many times how proud he was of his Grandfather's achievements and how this drove him to become involved in the Society and try to make his own mark in the Society's history. As can be seen by the accompanying list of Chris's achievements, Chris made an outstanding contribution to the Society and I believe his name ranks high among, and sits comfortably with, the icons of the Society over the past 30 years, names like Chilton, Evans, Hannant, Hutchins, Hocking, Williams and Wurst.

My long-time friendship with Chris began in 1984, when we were appointed co-editors of the Society's magazine *Bird Keeping in Australia*. We made the conscious decision to try to carefully plan the magazine and obtain as many original articles as possible for publication. We spent many treasured nights together at both Chris's house in Glenside and my own house trying to plot the course of the magazine for many months ahead. There were many packets of smarties consumed during these meetings! We both delighted in visiting people's collections and conducting avicultural interviews with the people concerned. One such occasion sticks in my mind. We went to Ian Wurst's house at Plympton, armed with a series of questions for Ian. We sat down at an outside table right next to Ian's magnificent aviary setup. Ian went inside for a short while and Chris and I got our notes together

at the table. When Ian came out and sat down at the table, he was armed with a rifle. I'll never forget the look on Chris's face! We both looked at each other as if to say: We better make sure we ask Ian the right questions! Much to our relief, Ian explained that he had just seen a rat running around on the aviary floor and wanted to 'blast it' if he saw it while we were talking. Nonetheless Chris and I never took our eyes off that rifle during the interview. We laughed about this episode many times over the years.

During our period as co-editors, Chris and I had the privilege of editing the book *The Avicultural Writings of Eric Baxter* who was the patriarch of our Society. Being such a keen student of avicultural history, I know Chris was extremely (and justifiably) proud of his contribution to this book. At Chris's funeral, Pam had organised a table which displayed some of the items that Chris treasured. Eric Baxter's book sat humbly on this table. Chris and I also jointly produced a two-part series on the history of the Society from 1928 to 1988, entitled 'Celebrating 60 Years of the Society', which was published in the March and November issues of the 1988 magazine.

I spent 5 years co-editing the magazine with Chris; but Chris had much more stamina than I did, and he continued to edit the magazine on his own until December 1995. Thus, from 1984 to 1995, Chris was responsible for producing 142 issues of *Bird Keeping in Australia* over 12 years making him the second longest serving editor in the history of the Society.

Chris's status and contribution to the Society continued to grow through the 1990s when he was so deservedly awarded with Life Membership of the Society in June 1993. This was very special to Chris as he was battling cancer at the time and worried how he looked. He later became President of the Society for one year – 1995. In remission from his cancer scare, Chris's main aim was to achieve the status of President and he felt happy to step down after a year because he humbly believed his more private nature was not the best personality type to head the Society. He was very proud to achieve his aim and knew that his Grandfather and his Father would have been proud of him too.

Chris's insatiable passion for collecting rare avicultural books, and in fact *any* bird book he could find, led him to a long-term association and friendship with Andrew Isles (and Andrew's natural history book shop in Melbourne). In fact I'm certain Chris must have been one of Andrew's best customers! Chris had a 'special arrangement' with Andrew whereby all orders and accounts and all phone calls regarding books were not to be directed to home, but rather specifically to Chris's work!! Chris kept his books in meticulous, pristine condition (mainly behind glass cabinets), and took great pride in his collection.

The Royal Adelaide Show will also be poorer for Chris's passing. One of the Show's most avid supporters over the years, Chris would religiously attend the Show to view the poultry and bird sections and would go back for repeated visits

many times during the same show. Pam has told me that she and her boys will go back again this year and walk up and down the aisles of chickens, bantams and ducks one more time for Chris.

Away from birds, Chris was highly regarded in his professional career as evidenced by a letter written by the State Minister for Planning being read out at his private funeral. Chris held a Bachelor of Economics and a Master of Urban and Town Planning. He played football, cricket and table tennis for Scotch College as a boy and loved following sport in his adult life. As you could imagine, Chris knew every fact, figure and statistic about his Aussie Rules teams Norwood in the SANFL and the Adelaide Crows in the AFL. However Chris would probably say that his greatest achievement in sport was being involved in both his son's basketball teams, coaching his son Toby's team to a premiership earlier this year. As with other sports, Chris could reel off all the facts and figures about the basketball world.

In summary, every person who knew Chris absolutely respected his knowledge and opinions about aviculture, because we all knew they were based on considered judgement, deep thought and accurate and precise information. I have lost a great friend. I admired Chris for his great wisdom. I will greatly miss his companionship, where we talked for hours about birds and life. I respected his great writing skills and his sense not only of avicultural history but also his perceptive thoughts on the future directions of our hobby. The entire avicultural industry in Australia should remember Chris as one of its greatest contributors. To Pam, Toby and Simon and to Chris's extended family, we can only offer our sincerest condolences as we know you have lost a kind and gentle husband and father. From all your avicultural friends Australia-wide, please be sure that Chris's invaluable contribution to aviculture has greatly enriched our love and understanding of Australian birds.

*Chris, from your friend Mark Shephard*

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## **SELECTED MILESTONES IN CHRIS WELFORD'S AVICULTURAL CAREER**

- Elected as member of the Avicultural Society of SA, January 1981
- Member of Society's Management Committee for 15 years from February 1982 - February 1996 and March 1998 - March 1999
- Life Member, awarded June 1993
- President for one year, February 1995 - February 1996
- Vice President for 3 years, February 1992 - February 1995
- Secretary, March 1990 - August 1991; March 1998 - March 1999
- Co-editor, *Bird Keeping in Australia*, January 1984 - January 1989 and Editor, *Bird Keeping in Australia*, February 1989 - December 1995, covering 12 years and 142 issues of the magazine

- Writer/co-writer of 38 articles for *Bird Keeping in Australia* from 1982 to 1999
- Librarian, March 1982 - February 1990
- Invited speaker 6<sup>th</sup> National Avicultural Convention, Hobart, April 1991, presenting talk entitled 'How much do we know about the finches we keep?'

A more detailed of Chris's work for the Society and a complete list of articles written by Chris for *Bird Keeping in Australia* are provided in the tables below.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Milestone / Position Held</b>   |
|-------------|--|
| 1980        | Applied for Membership of Society, November 1980   |
| 1981        | Elected as member of the Society, January 1981   |
| 1982        | First elected to Society's Committee February 1982;<br>Assistant Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian March 1982   |
| 1983        | Assistant Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian and Committee Member  |
| 1984        | Co-editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian and Committee Member   |
| 1985        | Co-editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian and Committee Member<br>Co-editor, <i>The Avicultural Writings of Eric Baxter</i>  |
| 1986        | Co-editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian and Committee Member   |
| 1987        | Co-editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian and Committee Member   |
| 1988        | Co-editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> ; Librarian and Committee Member<br>Co-editor, Special Editions of <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> (Feb. and Nov. issues)<br>- Celebrating 60 years of the Society Part 1 1928-1957 (February issue)<br>- Celebrating 60 years of the Society Part 2 1958-1988 (November issue) |
| 1989        | Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> from February 1989 issue;<br>Librarian and Committee Member   |
| 1990        | Secretary; Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i>  |
| 1991        | Secretary until August 1991; Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i>  |
| 1992        | Vice President; Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i>   |
| 1993        | Awarded Life Membership at the June 1993 Meeting (see July 1993 mag. p102)<br>Vice President; Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i>   |
| 1994        | Vice President; Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i>   |
| 1995        | Elected President of the Society, commencing February 1995<br>Editor, <i>Bird Keeping in Australia</i> , finishing editorship in December 1995   |
| 1996        | Retired as President at the February 1996 AGM  |
| 1998        | Secretary  |
| 1999        | Completed term as Secretary, March 1999  |

| Article # | Volume | No. | Month     | Year | Pages   | Title of Article Written by Chris Welford                                      |
|-----------|--------|-----|-----------|------|---------|--|
| 1         | 25     | 2   | February  | 1982 | 22-24   | Bird Books - an aviculturists guide (Part 1)                                   |
| 2         | 25     | 3   | March     | 1982 | 44-46   | Bird Books - an aviculturists guide (Part 2)                                   |
| 3         | 25     | 5   | May       | 1982 | 73-75   | Bird Books - an aviculturists guide (Part 3)                                   |
| 4         | 25     | 3   | February  | 1982 | 31-32   | The Regent Parrot  |
| 5         | 26     | 6   | June      | 1983 | 83-88   | The 2nd National Avicultural Convention (report)                               |
| 6         | 27     | 3   | March     | 1984 | 33-36   | Birds at the Gorge Wildlife Park - jointly with Mark Shephard                  |
| 7         | 27     | 9   | September | 1984 | 137-139 | The Vanishing Australian Finches (Part 1) - jointly with John Williams         |
| 8         | 27     | 10  | October   | 1984 | 156-157 | The Vanishing Australian Finches (Part 2) - jointly with John Williams         |
| 9         | 28     | 7   | July      | 1985 | 97-100  | My trip to the Third National Avicultural Convention                           |
| 10        | 29     | 6   | June      | 1986 | 96-97   | Bird Books - an aviculturists guide (Part 1) - revised from 1982               |
| 11        | 29     | 7   | July      | 1986 | 119-121 | Bird Books - an aviculturists guide (Part 2) - revised and expanded from 1982  |
| 12        | 29     | 10  | October   | 1986 | 160-162 | Bird Books - an aviculturists guide (Part 3) - revised and expanded from 1982  |
| 13        | 29     | 8   | August    | 1986 | 125-135 | The status of Australian Parrots in SA aviaries - jointly with Mark Shephard   |
| 14        | 29     | 10  | October   | 1986 | 164-167 | The Cuban Finch  |
| 15        | 30     | 4   | April     | 1987 | 49-52   | Breeding Pictorellas   |
| 16        | 30     | 11  | November  | 1987 | 169-171 | The status of Australian Finches in SA aviaries - jointly with Mark Shephard   |
| 17        | 33     | 1   | January   | 1990 | 1-6     | Bird Gardens and Parks of England  |
| 17        | 33     | 3   | March     | 1990 | 33-37   | Bird Gardens and Parks of England Part 2                                       |
| 18        | 33     | 12  | December  | 1990 | 179-180 | The Java Sparrow   |
| 19        | 34     | 1   | January   | 1991 | 7-9     | The most elegant aviary in the world   |
| 20        | 34     | 4   | April     | 1991 | 49-51   | Sixth National Avicultural Convention  |
| 21        | 34     | 4   | April     | 1991 | 55-57   | The Cuban Finch - reprinted from October 1986                                  |
| 22        | 34     | 9   | September | 1991 | 129-130 | Conventional Wisdom on Finch Keeping   |
| 23        | 35     | 4   | April     | 1992 | 49-51   | Calling birds by name  |
| 24        | 35     | 4   | April     | 1992 | 57-62   | Looking closely at your birds  |
| 25        | 35     | 6   | June      | 1992 | 81-83   | Suburban aviculture at risk  |
| 26        | 35     | 10  | October   | 1992 | 156-157 | Bird Books for Aviculturists - reprinted from 1986                             |
| 27        | 36     | 1   | January   | 1993 | 1-3     | My Double-Bars   |
| 28        | 36     | 12  | December  | 1993 | 177-181 | What price a bird? A ten year comparison of bird prices in Australia 1983-1993 |
| 29        | 37     | 8   | August    | 1994 | 120-121 | A General Meeting to Remember  |
| 30        | 37     | 10  | October   | 1994 | 147-154 | A stellar performance (the Star Finch)   |
| 31        | 37     | 11  | November  | 1994 | 168-171 | Making a case for aviculture (Part 1)  |
| 32        | 37     | 12  | December  | 1994 | 183-188 | Making a case for aviculture (Part 2)  |
| 33        | 38     | 2   | February  | 1995 | 17-19   | The benefits of aviculture   |
| 34        | 38     | 3   | March     | 1995 | 33-34   | Quality vs quantity  |
| 35        | 38     | 9   | September | 1995 | 133-136 | Repackaging our Society  |
| 36        | 38     | 12  | December  | 1995 | 185     | Message from the Editor  |
| 37        | 41     | 12  | December  | 1998 | 195-197 | Zebra Finch quiz   |
| 38        | 42     | 1   | January   | 1999 | 7-8     | Zebra Finch quiz -answers  |