

Press release: 100 year old retired scientist makes an emotional return to Porton Down

During the week of his 100th birthday, a former Porton Down scientist returned for a surprise and emotional visit – almost 40 years after his retirement. The visit was arranged by his son John and staff at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

As a specialist scientist, Gilbert spent his entire working life at the site spanning the Second World War through to the Cold War between 1940 and 1978. His work at the time was cutting edge and involved working mainly in chemical warfare developing respirators to protect troops as well as the civilian population.

He also worked on shark repellents and dispersion involving several sea-going trials in the 1960s. Gilbert's son, John, says he was a brave man who would often put himself forward for the most dangerous of missions and studies – all in a bid to protect the United Kingdom, its population and its Armed Forces.

As one of Porton's oldest surviving retired scientists, Gilbert met with the newest Porton Down recruit, engineering apprentice Christopher King, who said:

It was a real honour to meet Gilbert and incredible to hear about the history of Dstl. I love history, engineering and science, so it's a big deal to meet someone who's been working on previous technology, systems and science. It's also amazing to see how much technology has progressed. I only started my apprenticeship in September and who knows – my career could span as long as Gilbert's.

Gilbert was given the VIP treatment, visiting some of the most innovating parts of the Dstl site, including [Porton Man](#), a robot mannequin that helps test the next generation of chemical and biological protective suits for the UK Armed Forces.

On witnessing how technology has advanced since his time at Porton Down, Gilbert said:

Oh, it's unbelievable. I never expected so much fuss. I was surprised that my son John had actually approached the station, because I knew it was extremely difficult to come in here – I was really surprised and I've had such a marvellous time. It's tremendously different now from when I was here – I'm amazed to see

how much has changed. The work that is done now to protect the UK is incredible – there is no question about its importance.

[Gilbert speaks about his visit to Porton Down](#)

Many of the scientists were extremely excited by the visit and were keen to hear about the legacy work that Gilbert was involved in.

Colin Willis, a Principal Adviser in Chemical Protection and Detection at Dstl, said:

It was an absolute pleasure to meet Gilbert and to have spoken to him, and particularly to hear some of his stories. We shouldn't forget that without a lot of the research done by Gilbert and his generation we would not be able to do much of the work we do today. The work he did was essential and we are using the results of that to help provide better defence for the UK Armed Forces.

Gilbert was presented with a framed certificate of appreciation for his contribution to science, as well as a signed book about the history of Porton Down. It was indeed a special day for Gilbert, who was visibly moved at the end of his visit.

[**Press release: Give safely to charities helping people fleeing Myanmar, Charity Commission urges**](#)

The Charity Commission is encouraging the public to donate generously and safely to charities delivering humanitarian aid to help the people who have fled violence in Myanmar. The safer giving advice issued by the Commission follows the launch of the emergency appeal by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) on Wednesday.

The Commission wants to ensure that donations are reaching genuine charities during this critical time where humanitarian aid is needed to provide shelter, medical care, water and food for hundreds of thousands of people.

Most fundraising is genuine, but the Commission stresses that fraudsters and criminals do take advantage of public generosity during times of increased fundraising; methods can include fake appeal websites, email appeals that falsely use the name of genuine charities, or appeals from fake charities.

The regulator says that falling victim to false appeals is avoidable if a few

simple steps are taken before giving, including checking a charity's name and registration number against its [check charity](#) tool and being careful when responding to emails or clicking links within them.

Helen Stephenson, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said:

It is truly chilling to hear about the plight of people fleeing violence in Myanmar, and the terrible conditions they are currently facing. We want people to continue donating generously and confidently to charities delivering essential humanitarian aid, to ensure that funds are reaching the end cause safely.

It is unfortunate that times of crisis and need can trigger fraudsters to take advantage of people's generosity, but by following a few simple steps, you can make sure your donation goes to the registered charities doing vital work, including the DEC member charities.

The DEC brings together 13 registered UK aid charities who are experts in humanitarian aid and deliver efficient disaster responses to those affected by the appealed crises. There are also other registered charities doing critical work to offer or support humanitarian aid during this time.

The Commission is advising people to take a few simple steps to avoid fraudulent fundraising:

- before giving, check the charity's name and registration number on the [check charity](#) tool. This will help you make an informed decision before donating by providing information about each charity, including its charitable purposes and activities, registered contact details, and its compliance and financial history and accounts.
- take care when responding to emails or clicking links to a charity's website to ensure that they are genuine. Instead, search online for your preferred charity to ensure you have the right web address.
- if you have any concerns about the legitimacy of a request for donations that appears to come from a charity, don't hesitate to contact that charity directly to request further information.
- when approached by collectors on the street, check whether they are wearing a proper ID badge and that any collection tin is sealed.

If you think that a collection or appeal is not legitimate, you can report it as a crime online to [Action Fraud](#) or call them on 0300 123 2040 or online.

You can also [complain about a charity](#) on GOV.UK

Any concerns about fundraising standards should be sent to the [Fundraising Regulator](#).

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales
 2. Search for charities on our online [check charity tool](#).
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News story: Government sets out plans for ivory ban

The UK will impose a ban on ivory sales to help bring an end to the poaching of elephants, under plans announced by Environment Secretary Michael Gove today.

The proposals will protect elephants and help combat poaching by removing opportunities for criminals to trade illegally-poached ivory. Today's plans will be subject to a 12 week consultation and cover items of all ages, not only those created after a certain date.

The number of elephants has declined by almost a third in the last decade and around 20,000 a year are still being slaughtered due to the global demand for ivory. If current rates of poaching continue, elephants could become extinct within decades in some African countries, meaning that future generations of children may only see these majestic creatures alive in zoos.

The decline of elephants would also deprive some of the poorest countries in the world of their valuable natural capital, affecting economic growth and sustainable development.

As profits become ever greater, the illegal wildlife trade has become a transnational organised enterprise, estimated to be worth up to £17 billion a year.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

The decline in the elephant population fuelled by poaching for ivory shames our generation. The need for radical and robust action to protect one of the world's most iconic and treasured species is beyond dispute.

Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol – so we want to ban its sale.

These plans will put the UK front and centre of global efforts to end the insidious trade in ivory.

Stop Ivory's chief executive, John Stephenson, said:

Stop Ivory and its partners welcome today's action by the UK Government. By starting the process to bring in a total ban on ivory sales in the UK, the Government continues to work with the African countries leading the Elephant Protection Initiative to secure a meaningful future for elephants across Africa – the initiative the Government helped launch at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014.

The unprecedented crisis we face – with Africa's natural heritage being destroyed and communities put at risk due to poaching by illegal armed gangs – will only stop when people stop buying ivory. Along with our partners, we congratulate the Government on this important step and look forward to working with it and our colleagues to ensure the ban is implemented robustly and without delay.

In line with the approach taken by other countries, the Government is proposing certain narrowly-defined and carefully-targeted exemptions for items which do not contribute to the poaching of elephants and where a ban would be unwarranted.

The consultation proposes four categories of exemptions:

- musical instruments;
- items containing only a small proportion of ivory, a de minimis exemption;
- items of significant historic, artistic or cultural value;
- and sales to and between museums

The Government will work with conservationists, the arts and antiques sectors and other interested parties through the consultation period on exactly how these exemptions can be defined, implemented and enforced so as to ensure there is no room for loopholes which continue to fuel the poaching of elephants.

Current rules allow worked ivory items produced after 3 March 1947 to be sold with a certificate, with no restrictions at all on worked ivory produced before that date. The trade of raw ivory of any age is already prohibited. The existing regulations will be considerably strengthened through the new proposals.

This new ban will build on Government work both at home and overseas to tackle poaching and the illegal ivory trade. The UK military trains an elite

force of anti-poachers in African countries, and Border Force officers share their expertise in identifying smuggled ivory with counterparts worldwide to stop wildlife trafficking.

In October 2018, the UK will host a fourth international conference on the illegal wildlife, bringing global leaders to London to tackle the strategic challenges of the trade. This follows the ground breaking London 2014 conference on the illegal wildlife trade, and subsequent conferences in Botswana and Vietnam.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, closing on 29 December.

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Speech: The 12+ Adolescent Girls Empowerment Programme (2013-2017)

12+ girls are agents of change, picked as representatives in local and national fora to speak up for girls' rights at school and at community events.

12+ is an innovative and ambitious mentorship and safe-space programme, which aims to empower vulnerable 11 year old girls across Rwanda to become informed decision makers and to have more voice, choice and control over their lives. In a context where girls spend up to 12 hours per week on domestic work, including collection of water and firewood, in addition to their school work, and have few positive female role models to follow, the 12+ programme provides them with an opportunity to develop friendships, play games, learn new skills and build their self-esteem. The programme also teaches girls about safety, prevention of GBV and provides them with knowledge on sexual and reproductive health.

Over a ten month period, groups of 25 girls meet every weekend in safe spaces within their community, where they are guided by two mentors (female role models aged between 18-25) to take part in fun learning activities to cover a diverse curriculum of life skills. These include issues around sexual and reproductive health, financial literacy, gender based violence, nutrition and education, with learning in the safe spaces complemented by 'learning journeys' and visits to local banks, health centres, secondary schools and kitchen gardens.

The program has been managed by the Rwandan Ministry of Health and delivered by three implementing agencies (Imbutu Foundation, World Relief Rwanda and Caritas) across 133 sectors in all 30 districts of Rwanda. With funds from DFID (£6.36m), and with support from the Girl Effect and the Nike Foundation

in quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation, the 12+ programme reached 12,000 girls during its initial year (2014-5); scaled up to 40,000 girls in this second year (2015-6), and reached a further 40,000 girls in this third and final year (2016-7). Plans are now underway to develop a second (five year) phase of the programme from 2018-2023, management of which will shift from Ministry of Health to Rwanda's Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion for this second phase.

Results so far are showing positive impacts on girls' self-esteem, confidence, knowledge and behavior. 12+ girls already acting as agents of change, are being picked as representatives in local and national fora, are speaking up for girls' rights at Umuganda, at school, at community events. Out-of-school girls are also seen to be returning to full time education. There is also evidence that parents are changing, participating in learning journeys, supporting 12+ graduates, forming parents' committees, savings groups and friendship circles of their own. A two year evaluation is underway, which is gathering data from a control group as well as girls in the 12+ programme, and is measuring the extent to which the programme affects girls social, health and economic assets.