Chancellor Dharker,

It's become almost commonplace to see shocking images in the news highlighting the pervasive and escalating impact of climate change. Rising sea levels, excessive rainfall, soaring temperatures – all of which have a significant impact on the flora, fauna and people of our planet. Professor Phil Jones, whom we honour today, is, in the words of Professor Hayley Fowler, "a giant in the climate world". Over the last forty-five years, he has made an outstanding contribution to meteorology, climatology, and the earth sciences, particularly in the collection and analysis of records of global temperature. His pioneering work has helped transform climate studies from a relatively niche academic discipline into a significant area of research.

Phil was born in Redhill, Surrey in 1952 and was the first in his family to go to university. As a child, he was interested in geography, science, and maths, but had no specific career path in mind before deciding to read Environmental Studies at Lancaster University. However, this proved to be a turning point in his life because that's where he first met his wife, Ruth. One night, she was playing darts in a shared kitchen. Unfortunately, the dartboard was on the other side of the wall from Phil's bed, so he sleepily emerged in his pyjamas and asked her to stop. Despite this potentially spiky start to their relationship,

they became engaged at the start of their second year and were married by the end of their third.

Having become interested in hydrology, in 1974, Phil came to Newcastle University, with Ruth, to study for his MSc and later PhD. At the time, the Computing Lab at Newcastle was famous for its powerful IBM mainframe computer, a machine so large, it had to be lowered into the basement of the Claremont Tower by crane!. Phil spent many late nights programming it, developing skills and experience that were to prove invaluable in his later work. He also enjoyed attending the football at St James' Park, and particularly recalls a notorious match that Newcastle won 4-3, only for the result to be voided because of a pitch invasion. Phil assures me that he remained safely in the stands.

After completing his PhD in 1977, Phil had no firm plans for the future, so signed on for unemployment benefit while he worked out what to do next. Fortunately, later in the year, he secured a three-year research post at the Climatic Research Unit (or CRU), at the University of East Anglia, under the leadership of its founding director, Professor Hubert Lamb. This new job brought together Phil's interests in hydrology and the environment, and he found those early years at the CRU very exciting. He recalls the small team

meeting regularly in the local pub to discuss their latest findings and hatch plans to bid for the research funding opportunities that were gradually beginning to emerge.

Professor Tom Wigley took over as Director of CRU in 1979 and it was when he and Phil wrote a paper for Nature in 1981 entitled "*Detecting CO2-induced climatic change*" that Phil felt "something was building". It was around this time that Phil's work on the Global Temperature Record began to take shape. It was to be his crowning achievement. The work involved travelling the world, trying to fill in gaps in temperature records, making contact with sometimes resistant governments to encourage them to dig out weather data and historic sea surface temperatures. In addition, he worked on extending the temperature record still further by using climate reconstructions from proxies such as trees, ice cores and corals.

As this work progressed, Phil's highly cited articles became more numerous, he rapidly expanded his global contacts, and his reputation grew accordingly. Phil himself sensed that something had changed when a colleague – also named Jones – drew an unexpectedly large audience at a conference. It turned out to

be a case of mistaken identity – the audience was there for Phil – who was by now essentially a rock star in climate study circles. In 1994, after 18 years on soft research money, Phil finally became a Reader at the CRU. At around the same time, the unit introduced a Master's course and he began to supervise students, which he greatly enjoyed. He is very proud of his students, many of whom have gone on to impressive academic careers. Indeed, some of them are now based here at Newcastle, adding to the strength of our climate change initiatives and our innovative Centre for Climate and Environmental Resilience.

Phil's reputation led to him becoming a significant figure in climate science; a field that was evolving and looming larger in society and the political sphere. It's a measure of his prominence that he was one of the key scientists targeted by climate change sceptics and deniers, which ultimately culminated in the hacking of UEA's servers, an event which resulted in ClimateGate, the ramifications of which were later dramatized by the BBC in a 2021 film called *The Trick*. Phil's emails were taken out of context and bad faith accusations were made about scientific integrity within the CRU. This was a terrible time for Phil and Ruth as they were suddenly at the centre of a media storm, but after several inquiries, Phil was fully exonerated and carried on with his work. In the end, the science was proved to be correct. Global temperature WAS still rising.

In the years since ClimateGate, the underlying science is questioned less, and the discourse has moved on to prioritise *how* to tackle climate change. As Phil has said: "Scientists shouldn't be prescribing policy. We've presented governments with the evidence, they have the future projections, a rise of global temperatures of 1.5 or more, or 2 degrees, is going to have a real influence on the climate." What they do with this data is up to them.

Although he has slowed down a little now, Phil is still an honorary professorial fellow at CRU, and while he says that "you don't retire from this kind of high-profile science", he is spending a little more time gardening – under Ruth's careful supervision – and continues to indulge in his passion for bridge. He is proud not only of his own achievements at the CRU, particularly the Global Temperature Record, but also those of his children Hannah and Matthew, who have both pursued successful careers in science.

Phil has had a much-garlanded career – he is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society, Fellow of both the American Meteorological Society and the American Geophysical Union, holds several honorary doctorates and multiple medals, all of which reflect the high esteem in which he is held by his peers. I'll leave the final words to his longstanding collaborator Professor Chris Kilsby who told me that "Thirty years ago, nobody had done this stuff. Phil knew everything – meteorology, hydrology, computing, and statistics. He was

like an encyclopaedia I could talk to. But he had a life outside of the work, and he would never let you set up meetings for Thursday, because that was bridge night."

Chancellor Dharker, in recognition of his outstanding and pioneering contributions to climate science, particularly in the field of instrumental climate change, I present to you Professor Phil Jones for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa.*

Citation by John Williams, July 2024