

Obituary

Jason Ditton, Professor of Criminology 1949 – 2015



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Jason Ditton studied sociology at Durham. He went on to Glasgow University as lecturer and then senior lecturer from 1991. He founded the Criminology Research Unit in 1988 at Glasgow University and in 1994 the first Scottish Centre for Criminology. He became Professor of Criminology at Sheffield University in 1997, a post he held until retirement in 2006. He remained Director of the Scottish Centre for Criminology. He conducted his empirical research in Scotland, about Scotland and for Scotland.

Jason's first book was *Part-Time Crime: An Ethnography of Fiddling and Pilferage* (1977). He subsequently researched topics ranging from crime depiction in Scottish media to the rise of heroin addiction in Glasgow. A series of stimulating and lucidly written books and papers followed up to *Ecstasy: The Rise of the Chemical Generation* in 2002.

Jason was one of the few voices in Scotland to argue for a thoroughly moral, rational and knowledge-based approach to understanding crime and justice. Nowhere was this more evident than in his research on the rapid escalation of heroin use in some of Glasgow's bleak public housing estates. He had the vision to identify what would become an immense and enduring social problem if the policy recommendations flowing from his research report to the then Scottish Office were not urgently addressed. His graph of the rapid escalation of heroin use in Glasgow formed the frontispiece to Lord Rothschild's Report, *An Enquiry into the Social Science Research Council*, published in May 1982.

There are generations of students and colleagues who testify to his superb qualities as a teacher and mentor, and who remember his modesty, warmth, wit, generosity and humour. He was blessed with a genuinely original mind, and was a loyal, generous, charming, attentive and kind friend. He made a remarkable series of videos in his last months in which he addresses the major issues of social science. His widow Furzana intends to make them widely available in due course.

Ken Pease