



*Tratty*

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It is with very deep regret that we record the death on 21st August 1978 of Dr. Tratman. With his passing, Britain has lost the doyen of spelaeologists and we in the Spelaeological Society have lost a cherished friend and counsellor.

Edgar Kingsley Tratman was born on or about 23rd February 1899 at the family home, Airdie House, Cotham Park, Bristol. His father J. F. W. Tratman was the grandson of James Tratman (1784-1846), one of three brothers who founded Tratman Bros., Ships Chandlers. E. K. Tratman, or Trat as he was affectionately known to all, was educated at Clifton College and University of Bristol. He had National Service training but was just too young to see active service during the First World War (in which two of his brothers were killed). He matriculated into the University as a dental student in 1918, obtaining L.D.S. in 1923 and B.D.S. in 1924. Trat was in dental practice 1924-26 and was dental tutor in the University of Bristol Dental School 1926-29, when at the early age of 30 he was appointed to the chair of Dental Surgery in King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore (later to become the University of Malaya). Professor Tratman built up the dental school from scratch, establishing it as the finest in southeast Asia; their degrees were recognised in Gt. Britain by the General Medical Council in 1947 (the Second World War had delayed recognition). Trat was responsible for the building of the new Dental School in Singapore, opened in 1938, and was for some years Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. When Singapore fell to the Japanese in February 1942, Trat was interned until the end of hostilities in 1945. On release he immediately set about re-equipping his dental school and within five years it was again a large and flourishing establishment. On leaving Malaya in 1950, Professor Tratman was awarded an honorary M.D. by the University and he was much looking forward to returning there in 1979 for the Golden Jubilee celebrations. The great esteem in which he was held is illustrated by the presence at his funeral of three Malayan dentists.

On his return to Gt. Britain Trat was for a year professor of Dental Surgery at University College Hospital in London, and then served ten years as a clinical teacher in the Dental School, University of Bristol. Trat published over 50 papers in dental journals mostly dealing with pathological phenomena he came across in the course of his surgeries. His eminence in dentistry was further marked by the awards *honoris causa* of F.D.S.R.C.S., London and Edinburgh. This is not the place to detail his dental career, but enough has been outlined to demonstrate that the contributions he made put him in the forefront of his profession.

Trat's interest in caving and prehistoric archaeology began as a dental student. While he claimed not to be a founder member of the Spelaeological Society, he became a member within a week of its inauguration on 19th March 1919; he joined the committee in the first year, was secretary 1921-23 and treasurer 1924-29, when he departed for



Singapore. Throughout that first decade he was extremely active, exploring caves with tireless energy, excavating archaeological sites and recording the findings. Among his contributions during that first decade were papers on Read's Cavern and Sun Hole, reports on excavations at King's Weston Hill, and accounts of human remains from Aveline's Hole. It was also during this period that the Spelaeos first began work in Ireland, and Trat published a paper on human remains from Kilgreany, Co. Waterford. During his home leaves in the 30's, Trat spent much of his time caving; prominent among his field studies were a series of excavations at Backwell Cave. In 1933 he was the first person to take ciné photographs in a cave and in 1937 a more ambitious film, some of it in colour, was made in Lamb Leer Cavern; 600 feet of film were shown at the 1938 B.S.A. conference.

Unhappily almost all of the archaeological material which had been collected in the first two decades of the Society's work was destroyed when the museum and library were bombed in 1940 during the Second World War. However, largely due to Trat's untiring energies and enthusiasm, the Society's museum was reopened in 1955. Trat was elected a vice-president in 1946, and became president on the death of Professor Dobson in 1948. During the succeeding three decades Trat made enormous contributions to caving, and prehistoric archaeology. Tratman and the Spelaeological Society are virtually synonymous, and the history of the Society, so ably recorded in the Jubilee Issue of 1969, is in large measure a history of Trat's contributions.

During the postwar period much of Trat's caving activities were concentrated on annual visits with the Society to Ireland. In County Clare the Spelaeos made their biggest contribution, with Poulmagollum, Coolagh River and Cullaun the major cave systems explored. Twenty years of work there are admirably recorded in the book *The Caves of Northwest Clare* which Trat "edited". He once said that even the most brilliant men are wasting their talents if they are unable to convey their ideas to others; Trat had the rare ability to fire the imagination of others and the patience to meticulously and lucidly record his discoveries. Cave surveying, cave formation, hydrology and solution of limestones were all subjects upon which Trat wrote with interest and instruction.

On the archaeological side we find among Trat's 200 odd publications\* papers on amber, flints, cave painting, palaeolithic calculators, Roman roads and of course human teeth. His interests spanned over a million years from mid-Pleistocene times to Romano-British. Major sites which Trat excavated include in the postwar years Brean Down, Hyaena Den, Picken's Hole, Westbury-sub-Mendip and Rhino Hole. Meticulously he excavated vast quantities of bones, painstakingly he recorded all the finds; for many years he spent every Thursday in the museum working on the collections. His approach was scientific and truly professional, and he was instrumental in seeing the results were published. For twenty years almost single handed he edited the *Proceedings*. Trat was saddened that the University of Bristol never established a chair in Prehistoric Archaeology; with his death we have lost the only man who,

\* A complete bibliography is planned for the Diamond Jubilee Number of Proceedings.

with a lifetime of experience, had an overall understanding of prehistory in the Bristol region, and now there is none to succeed him. Of his archaeological contributions ApSimon has written in the Jubilee Issue:-

'Our President, Dr. Tratman, has interested himself in every branch of archaeology, not least in field work. To this he has brought qualities of energy and enthusiasm, coupled with a capacity for hard work and remarkable generosity in encouraging the work of others, that have made him an excellent colleague and friend. It is probably no accident that the periods when the Society has been most active and successful have coincided with periods when he himself has been active. That this Society should be flourishing after 50 years is due in no small degree to his leadership.'

Of Trat the man, there can be few if any who knew him and did not fall under his charisma. He was kindly, friendly, courteous and considerate. He had an infectious enthusiasm for caving and digging. He was always ready to help students, though he could give the cold shoulder to slackers. He was extremely hospitable and generous. He took a deep interest in students, and always seemed to remember everybody who had ever caved with him. Dentistry was his profession, but spelaeology was his life. The Society is Trat's memorial, a living memorial. He was there at its inception and moulded its growth to maturity; he has been its driving force throughout its 59 years. Today it has international standing in spelaeology. Its library, with a world-wide exchange of publications, is an invaluable research tool; its museum is a unique storehouse of archaeological treasures; its publications are a fitting record of 59 years' labours, cheerfully and lovingly endured. There has never been a member of the Society who did not know and was not influenced by Trat. To the end, he was working with the same boyish enthusiasm for discovery which had fired him all his life. It was tragic that he should be struck down with a heart attack just short of his 80th birthday and just short of the 60th anniversary of the founding of his Society. We scattered his ashes in the wood behind the hut at Burrington, where, totally alone, he loved to stroll in peace and quiet.

R.J.G.S.