

OBITUARIES

OLIVER CROMWELL LLOYD (1911-1985)

Dr Oliver Lloyd, pathologist, caver, and musician, died in his sleep on May 20, having spent the previous three days taking an active part in a Cave Rescue Conference.

Oliver was born in Rye on 4 August 1911, the second child of five and a descendant, on his mother's side, of Oliver Cromwell. Educated at Rugby and King's College Cambridge, where he qualified in medicine in 1937, he specialized in pathology and in 1940 took up an appointment at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. Immediately after the war he spent two years in India doing research on malaria and as a consequence of this work he was made M.D. in 1948. In the same year he came to Bristol, joining the pathology department of Professor Tom Hewer who had himself been an active member of the U.B.S.S. in the 1920s and secretary from 1924 to 1927. Oliver was an international authority on malignant melanomas (skin tumours). As senior lecturer and then Reader in Morbid Anatomy, he was regarded as an inspiring and brilliant teacher, despite or perhaps because of his eccentricities which endeared him to his students. The cavers called him a 'dead man's doctor'.

It was in the early 1950s that Oliver's caving on Mendip began, but it was by no means a new experience for him. In August and September 1941 he had spent a fortnight walking and cycling in the Craven district of Yorkshire, visiting many cave entrances and easy caves. It may have been on this occasion that he descended Calf Holes, his first vertical cave. His diary records that at Malham, on 1 September 1941, he met a Dr Blomfield and 'talked pot-holes'.

Then in 1952 he went down GB Cave, Stoke Lane, Eastwater, and Swildons (to Sump II), as well as to Ogof Ffynnon Ddu. He took part in the exploration of the St. Paul's Series in Swildons the day after it was first entered on 25 January 1953; indeed it was Oliver who pointed out that the day was the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, thus initiating the series of names including Damascus and Paradise Regained in that part of the cave. Swildons remained one of his favourite caves; he recorded every visit he made there, and there are said to have been over 250 of them. It was in the Old Grotto that Oliver and innumerable friends used to celebrate his birthday every ten years, beginning with his 50th. In 1963 he contracted, and survived, Weil's disease, caught from the contaminated water of Stoke Lane.

In Ireland it was Doolin that was particularly 'his' cave, and it was on Doolin that he persuaded the Society to publish its only 'monograph'. He was equally active elsewhere in Co. Clare and used to commemorate the Society's visits, at least from 1957 to 1962, in calypsos composed on the spot and sung to the accompaniment of his own guitar:

Papa Sweeting came and brought his daughter,
 We tried to take her caving but the caves were full of water.
 So we all decided our jobs to shirk,
 And we went to help Tratty with his surface work.
 The clouds came up and the sun was hid,
 But we swam in the sea – at least some of us did!
 And the only things that disturbed our sleep
 Were the crying of the baby and the bleating of the sheep.

Oliver was the Society's treasurer from 1959 until his death – more than a quarter of a century – and he edited Proceedings ever since Tratty's death in 1978. But he was not just a U.B.S.S. man. His caving was with people in all clubs and his supra-club position was exemplified by his influence in the Council for Southern Caving Clubs and particularly in the Mendip Rescue Organization and the Cave Diving Group. For many years he was the controller of the dives in Wookey Hole and elsewhere. Since 1970 he edited and produced 60 issues of the *CDG Newsletter* – a thickness of 15 cm – cajoling divers to send him prompt and accurate reports, so that British cave diving became probably the best documented in the world. Some of his articles appeared in the *Wessex Cave Club Journal*, and from 1955 to 1958 and again from 1961 to 1967 he was the 'Cheramodytes' who contributed a characteristically witty news and gossip column to it.

It was not only pathology and caves that absorbed Oliver's energy. He had been a member of the Royal Life Saving Society for 20 years or so and latterly was one of their Grade I examiners. He was a botanist of considerable skill and even more enthusiasm. The ferns in his garden competed successfully with the profusion of weeds, and he recognized the maidenhair fern growing in the 8th Chamber of Wookey Hole – one of very few sites for it in Somerset. Amateur dramatics was another field where he was quite widely known, working sometimes as a producer and writing music for productions of the University Dramatic Society. In his Cambridge days he produced a script for a medical students' pantomime which was censored by the Vice-Chancellor's office.

Opera was even more of a passion with him. Glyndebourne is near his family home, Great Dixter at Northiam, and for the last 33 years he used to invite colleagues and students to stay there and go to Glyndebourne performances. Oliver had himself been writing music since 1936 and after retirement from his pathology post he became a part-time student of music in the University, specializing in composition and writing chamber music, songs, and music for brass band. The composition he wrote for the 600th anniversary of Bodiam Castle in Sussex was first performed there on 17 August 1985, amid fireworks and champagne.

So much for Oliver's achievements. He is remembered at least as much for his studied eccentricities. The living room at Withey House was perhaps characteristic of all his attributes. Sharing space with a spinet and a piano, bookshelves and piles of papers, were diving air bottles and a compressor. Under the ceiling a canopy of cobwebs reached nearly to head level and outside the window was sometimes a wall of vegetation run wild. His habit of not normally wearing socks extended once to walking up Park Street, Bristol, in bare feet, 'to harden them for a walk'.

A perhaps less well-known aspect of Oliver was his generosity – little known because it was unobtrusive. It was he who bought the air

compressor used by the Cave Diving Group; he paid for the colour plates in recent issues of *Proceedings*; he founded (and largely funded) the Paul Esser Memorial Trust that provides an annual major lecture on a sporting topic in memory of a cave diver who lost his life in Porth yr Ogof.

How then can we summarize Oliver's contribution in the world of caves? He did not himself achieve a lot in the way of cave research, nor did he publish many papers of significance in cave science. What he did do, and do well, was to catalyse others. Sometimes it was Oliver who first aroused their enthusiasm for caves; more often it was he who kept their interest going over the years by personal contact and constant reminders of what needed doing. He had strong views on the way in which things should be done, too, and he could be exasperating at times. Particularly as he got older, he did so many of the thankless tasks such as editing and administration that enabled other people to do the more exciting active work and that channelled their findings towards systematic recording and publication. Above all he enjoyed life and his enjoyment was infectious. I would say that we miss him, except that he seems to be still with us – in spirit.

T. R. Shaw

PROFESSOR R. F. E. W. PEEL (1912-1985)

The death occurred in Cambridge on 21 September 1985 of the Society's Fourth President, Emeritus Professor Peel.

Ronald Peel was born in 1912 and studied Geography and Anthropology at Cambridge, becoming a lecturer in Geography at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1935. Three years later he joined R. A. Bagnold (later to become Brigadier Bagnold, founder of the Long Range Desert Group in the Sahara and author of the standard work on movement in sand) as a surveyor on the first motorized expedition into the Sahara. They travelled west from Cairo to the Gilf Kebir on the Libyan frontier. This expedition fired Peel's enthusiasm for arid zone geomorphology, a subject on which he was to become a world authority. In subsequent years he journeyed to virtually all the world's deserts and wrote extensively about them.

After military service during the Second World War, Ron Peel was successively Lecturer in Cambridge, Professor in Sheffield and then in 1957 came to Bristol as Professor of Physical Geography. He retired in 1977.

Until 1982 the Society was housed in the basement of the Geography Department and Ron Peel took a fatherly interest in our activities. He was a close friend and great admirer of Tratman, so it was no surprise when he accepted the Presidency of the Society in March 1972 when Trat stepped down. Prof. Peel held the office for five years until March 1977. He was diligent in looking after our interest in the University; his friendly voice in high places smoothed out many a difficulty.

R. J. G. Savage



OLIVER LLOYD IN 1981