

## In remembrance of Dr Peter Cross

Michael Rosenbaum<sup>1</sup> and Mike Hodgson<sup>2</sup>

ROSENBAUM, M.S. & HODGSON, J.M. (2008). In remembrance of Dr Peter Cross. *Proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society*, **13**, 83–85. Delegates at the Marches Festival of Geology Symposium reflected on the life of Dr Peter Cross, who died peacefully at his home on Bircher Common, Leominster, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2007 at the age of 85. He had been hoping to attend the Symposium in person and his daughter, Stella, told us that he was actually browsing through the programme for the day when he collapsed in his chair.

Peter revolutionised our understanding of the landscape in the Teme Valley and the Devensian history of the North Herefordshire area.

<sup>1</sup>Ludlow, UK. E-mail: msr@waitrose.com

<sup>2</sup>Welwyn Garden City, UK. E-mail: jmhodgson@tesco.net

### BACKGROUND

Delegates at the Symposium reflected on the life of Dr Peter Cross (Figure 1), who died peacefully at his home on Bircher Common, Leominster, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2007 at the age of 85. He had been hoping to have been able to come to the Marches Festival of Geology Symposium and his daughter, Stella, told us that he was actually browsing through the programme for the day when he collapsed in his chair.

Peter revolutionised our understanding of the landscape in the Teme Valley and the Devensian history of the North Herefordshire area. His lasting legacy will be the work he did with Mike Hodgson arising from their collaboration during the mapping by the Soil Survey in the 1960s, culminating with publication in the *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association* (Cross & Hodgson, 1975).

In the early sixties Mike Hodgson was posted by the Soil Survey of England Wales to their Wolverhampton office and as part of their regional programme was assigned to a survey of the Ludlow area (Hodgson, 1972). On arrival in the office there was a note on his desk from the colleague he was replacing briefing him about various aspects of the proposed project. The main text of the note included a lot of good advice. At the end, however, in a hurried postscript, was scribbled "There are extensive gravels at Woofferton; P. Cross of Spout House knows all about these."

It was some months before work was started in the Woofferton area and from time to time Mike Hodgson wondered who "P. Cross" was, and where was "Spout House"? Of all Hodgson's colleague's advice, this afterthought proved the most valuable.

Peter Cross did indeed know a lot about the Superficial Deposits ("Drift") of the area as he had been working on this material for some years. On first meeting this modest man, Hodgson and Cross joked about the remark that "P. Cross knows all about these"; this was the start of their co-operation on the glacial diversion of the River Teme.

Peter spent many of his spare evenings and weekends in the field recording numerous temporary sections that became exposed at that time. He combined this with his job as Head of Geography and Head of Maths at a local secondary school, his family life and his garden. He was a clear thinker and an assiduous, painstaking field worker. His work resulted in the award of an MSc (1966) and, later, a PhD (1971) from the University of London. This was not an easy thing to do part-time in those days.

It was clear on first contact that there was almost a complete overlap between their activities and so Hodgson and Cross agreed from the start to combine their knowledge. Peter was the most delightful colleague and friend and couldn't have been easier to work with. Peter continued to maintain his interest in the local Quaternary geology long after Hodgson left the region.



Figure 1. Photograph of Peter Cross ca. 1954

## RECORDING THE COUNTY'S GEOLOGY

Peter Cross also contributed much to the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, based in Hereford. He was the County Recorder of Geology for the Woolhope Club for ten years, and published several geological papers (*see bibliography below*).

The Geology Recorder publishes about a page annually in the Transactions, reporting on current research and publications pertaining to Herefordshire. Peter's accounts began in 1986 by describing the investigations for a new road planned to cut through Whitcliffe and thus the denuded Ludlow Anticline, which stretches west into Herefordshire. [*Ed.: what happened to Mr M.G. Snape's study of the rock cores for the proposed Ludlow by-pass, referred to by Peter? Google reveals that Snape was later to become a professional palynologist working for Robertson Simon Tech. Ltd. (Exploration Services), Llandudno.*]. Peter also reported the discovery of a mammoth and two (*sic*) babies at Norton Farm near Condover (although this is near the middle of Shropshire rather than within Herefordshire!).

Peter's 1987 report, during construction of the Leominster by-pass, draws attention to a little cutting in glacial till which yielded a small boulder

of distinctive gabbro from Hanter Hill near Kington, indicating glacial movement from the west. The cut was 0.9 km south of Ford Bridge [Grid 512 542].

Then, in 1991, the report mentioned Andrew Jenkinson's guide to the geology of Mortimer Forest, based on Jim Lawson's 1977 trail written for the Nature Conservancy Council. The latter had, in turn, been based on Jim's Geological Journal article four years earlier (1973), describing the new exposures along the forest tracks. Another major publication in preparation at this time was the Geological Conservation Review Series volume on Fossil Fishes, in which Peter referred to the fieldwork by Maggie Rowlands. However, it was some time before this work was published, awaiting the intervention of David Dineley (1999a; 1999b), engaged for the purpose by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

In his annual reports, Peter Cross took the opportunity to emphasise the great value of geological observations recorded in the Transactions since their inception in 1852. Recording of ephemeral exposures is particularly useful and important; these are often only visible for just a short period during construction of roads, sewers and building foundations.

Peter was succeeded in 1996 by Peter Thomson, in the centenary year of the Hereford

Earthquake. This had taken place at 5.32 am on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1886, somewhere near the Woolhope Dome but deep within the crust along the northeast extension of the Vale of Neath Disturbance, now considered part of the Welsh Borderland Fault System.

Peter Thomson picked up where Peter Cross left off, helping focus the recording and conservation of geologically important exposures within the County of Hereford, especially through Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS). This baton has since been taken up by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust.

We have fond memories of a kind and generous man. Peter will be greatly missed.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is an online memorial web site for Peter at [www.gonetoosoon.org](http://www.gonetoosoon.org) (type in Peter Cross, Bircher) where you can read tributes to Peter and see photos, and add your own if you wish.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cross, P. (1966). *The glacial geomorphology of the Wigmore and Presteigne basins and some adjacent areas*. MSc thesis (unpublished), University of London (Birkbeck/University College).
- Cross, P. (1968). Aspects of the glacial geomorphology of the Wigmore and Presteigne Districts. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **39**(2), 198–220.
- Cross, P. (1971). *Glacial and proglacial deposits, landforms and river diversions in the Teme Valley near Ludlow, Shropshire*. PhD thesis (unpublished), University of London (University College), 407 pp..
- Cross, P. & Hodgson, J.M. (1975). New evidence for the glacial diversion of the River Teme near Ludlow, Salop. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, **86**, 313–331.
- Cross, P. (1986). Geology, 1986. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **45**(2), 525.
- Cross, P. (1987). Geology, 1987. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **45**(3), 786.
- Cross, P. (1988). Geology, 1988. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **46**(1), 99.
- Cross, P. (1989). Geology, 1989. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **46**(2), 339.
- Cross, P. (1990). Geology, 1990. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **46**(3), 524.
- Cross, P. (1991). Geology, 1991. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **47**(1), 104.
- Cross, P. (1992). Geology, 1992. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **47**(2), 252–253.
- Cross, P. (1993). Geology, 1993. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **47**(3), 363.
- Cross, P. (1994). Geology, 1994. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **48**(1), 153.
- Cross, P. (1995). Geology, 1995. *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, **48**(2), 363.
- Dineley, D.L. (1999a). *Late Silurian fossil fish sites of the Welsh Borders*. Chapter 3 in: Dineley, D.L. & Metcalf, S.J. (eds.) *Fossil Fishes of Great Britain*. Geological Conservation Review Series, No. 16. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, 63–106.
- Dineley, D.L. (1999b). *Early Devonian fossil fish sites of the Welsh Borders*. Chapter 4 in: Dineley, D.L. & Metcalf, S.J. (eds.) *Fossil Fishes of Great Britain*. Geological Conservation Review Series, No. 16. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, 107–144.
- Hodgson, J.M. (1972). *Memoir for one-inch Soil Survey Sheet 181 (Ludlow)*. HMSO, London, 139pp..
- Jenkinson, A. (1991). *The Mortimer Forest geology trail*. Scenesters and the Forestry Commission, 25 pp..
- Lawson, J.D. (1973). New exposures on forestry roads near Ludlow. *Geological Journal*, **8**(2), 279–284.

Copyright Shropshire Geological Society © 2008.

ISSN 1750-855x