



Geologists' Association - South Wales Group
Cymdeithas Y Daearegwyr - Grŵp De Cymru

Registered Charity Number 1054303

50 YEAR ARCHIVES 1960-2010 - MEMORIAL LECTURES

This section includes memorial lectures given between 1960 and 2010.

The listing has been taken from various records.

The first memorial lecture was held in memory of Trevor M. Thomas.

The second, the first of a series of memorial lectures, was held in memory of T.R. Owen.

No other members were commemorated between 1960 and 2010, however after the death of founder Chairman Douglas A Bassett in November 2009 the first of a series of memorial lectures to Doug was held in 2013.

TREVOR M. THOMAS MEMORIAL LECTURE

Trevor Morgan Thomas M.Sc. F.G.S was the 6th Chairman of the Group, 1970-1972, and Field Excursions Secretary, 1960-1968.

He delivered 6 lectures and led 10 field excursions (including the first to Ogmere - Southerndown on 9 April 1960).

He delivered his Chairman's address on 18 March 1972 (13th AGM), on *Western USA – a geological and geomorphological showhouse, an arena of physical fantasy*

A geologist with the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in Cardiff, he died on 16 October 1974.

The *T.M. Thomas Memorial Lecture* was delivered by Dr Trevor D. Ford (University of Leicester) on 12 February 1977, at the University of Wales College Cardiff, on the subject *Limestone caves and mineralisation*.

T. R. OWEN MEMORIAL LECTURES

Thomas Richard (Dick) Owen was the 4th Chairman of the Group, 1966-1968, and its first Honorary Member in 1984.

He delivered 7 lectures and led 10 field excursions (including the second to the Vale of Neath on 23 April 1960).

He delivered his Chairman's address on 6 April 1968 (9th AGM), on *Problems associated with the Evolution of Surface and Drainage in South Wales*.

A member of staff in the Department of Geology at University College of Swansea from 1947, he was awarded a personal chair in 1979. He died on the 30th April 1990.

He was popular throughout South Wales and beyond for his work with the public, particularly through extra-mural activities; he gave lectures to clubs and societies all over Wales and wrote text-books and semi-popular books on geology which attracted many people to the subject. His death was a great loss to Welsh geology.

Above all, however, he was an outstanding teacher and he inspired and excited all who heard him. He put into it the Welsh fervour or *hwyl* that went with his other occupation as a lay preacher (*see obituary in section J*).

An annual *T.R. Owen Memorial Lecture* was inaugurated on the evening of Thursday 4 July 1991 in the Reardon Smith Lecture Theatre at the National Museum of Wales Cardiff.

It was delivered by Professor Frank H.T. Rhodes, President of Cornell University, U.S.A. (formerly Professor of Geology at University College of Swansea 1956-1968), entitled *Charles Darwin, Geologist*; it was prefaced by a tribute to T.R. Owen the text of which is given below. The lecture by Brian Williams in 1995 was also prefaced by a tribute.

The lectures were organised in turn by the Group [SWGA], the Department of Adult Education University College at the University of Wales Swansea [DACE] and the Department of Geology University of Wales College Cardiff [UWC]. However, around 2006/7, there was some confusion as whose turn it was to organise the lecture, and no more were held after 2007 (the next one was held in December 2013 organised by the SWGA).

<i>date, venue, speaker, title</i>	<i>host</i>
1. Thursday evening 4 July 1991 - Cardiff (National Museum of Wales) Prof Frank HT Rhodes (President, Cornell University, New York) <i>Charles Darwin: geologist</i>	[UWC]
[The meeting of 4 July also formed part of the programme of the First Welsh Geology Week 4-14 July 1991]	
2. Thursday 16 July 1992 - UC Swansea Prof G Kelling (Keele University) <i>Sixty years of Welsh Lower Palaeozoic geology</i>	[SWGA]
3. Thursday evening 1 July 1993 - Ystradgynlais Welfare Hall Prof EH Francis (Leeds University) <i>The miner and the geologist: a history of alliance and alienation</i>	[DACE]
4. Tuesday evening 7 June 1994 - UWC Cardiff Dr R Bradshaw (Bristol University) <i>Geological perspectives of a Bristolian in Wales</i>	[UWC]
5. Friday evening 9 June 1995 - UW Swansea Prof Brian PJ Williams (Aberdeen University) <i>TR Owen: a fond remembrance of South Wales fieldwork and Old Red Sandstone basins: Wales and beyond</i>	[SWGA]
6. Wednesday evening 5 June 1996 - Banwen Community Centre Dr DA Bassett (past Director, National Museum of Wales) <i>South Wales geologists</i>	[DACE]
7. Tuesday 7 June 1997 - UW Cardiff Dr Nigel Woodcock (Cambridge University) <i>Old Faults Never Die: Palaeozoic Tectonics and Sedimentation in South and Central Wales</i>	[UWC]
8. Tuesday evening 9 June 1998 - UW Swansea Dr Tony Ramsay (Cardiff University) <i>Ocean deep, mountain high - a story of global climatic change</i>	[SWGA]
9. Thursday evening 17 June 1999 - Brecon Beacons Mountain Centre Dr John Cope (Cardiff University)	[DACE]

The last 65 million years of Wales

10. Wednesday evening 17 May 2000 - Cardiff University [UWC]
Prof PA Allen (Trinity College, Dublin)
Behind the veil: the post-Palaeozoic history of Ireland
11. Wednesday evening 11 April 2001 - UW Swansea [SWGA]
Tom Sharpe (National Museum of Wales, Cardiff)
Geologists, slaves and a scarlet woman: pioneering geology in Swansea
12. Thursday evening 13 June 2002 - Cwmaman Institute [DACE]
Prof Peter Styles (Keele University)
Earthquakes in Wales and the Welsh Borders: friend or foe?
13. Wednesday evening 21 May 2003 - Cardiff University [UWC]
Prof Paul Wright (Cardiff University)
Lower Carboniferous rocks in South Wales and in Kazakhstan!
14. Wednesday evening 26th May 2004 - UW Swansea [SWGA]
Dr Tim Palmer (University of Wales Aberystwyth)
Good and bad limestone in architecture
15. Thursday 20th October 2005 - Swansea Museum [DACE]
Prof Richard Lisle (Cardiff University)
South Wales: a natural laboratory for structural geology
16. Saturday 19 November 2006 - UW Swansea [UWC]
extra 16th TR Owen Memorial Lecture
Dr Geraint Owen (University of Wales Swansea)
Perilous Planet
17. Saturday 17 November 2007 - UW Swansea [SWGA]
David Unwin (University of Leicester)
Pterosaurs: Dragons of the air

Text of the tribute to the late Professor Thomas Richard Owen given by Professor Frank H.T. Rhodes, President of Cornell University, U.S.A. and formerly Professor of Geology at University College of Swansea as part of the 1st T.R. Owen MEMORIAL LECTURE on 4 July 1991 at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

"Dick Owen was born on the 28th of July, 1918. He was educated at Merthyr Tydfil Grammar School and graduated with 1st class honours from the Geology Department of University College of Swansea in 1939. He stayed on another 2 years as a postgraduate student and undertook research on the structure of the Vale of Neath for which he was awarded the degree of M.Sc. in 1941. He was then called up and from 1941 to 1946 he served as a meteorological officer in the R.A.F., rising to the rank of flight lieutenant. He was proud of those years and he talked with enthusiasm of his posting to the Azores for part of the period. Dick returned to Swansea in 1946 to enrol in a Diploma in Education course. Then in 1947 he was appointed a temporary demonstrator in the Department of Geology. For the next 35 years Dick Owen in one capacity or another was associated with the Swansea Geology Department. He provided dedicated teaching, devoted service and thoughtful leadership in every aspect of the life of the Department.

There are 2 Dick Owens that we celebrate tonight. The 1st is Dick Owen the geologist – a remarkable man. In an era if you had said to Dick "What is your own particular speciality?" I think he would have found it difficult to respond. I believe his real speciality was Wales in all its breadth and in all its complexities. He loved the whole Principality but he loved the Vale of Neath most of all and, after that in close order, the Gower Peninsula and the Pembrokeshire coast. But the whole of Welsh geology was his. Some of us can still see him, in our mind's eye, toiling up Carreg Cennen, standing beside a cascading waterfall in the Vale of Neath, looking out over Rhossili Down or demonstrating structure under the cliffs at Lavernock. Dick had a genius for bringing the past to life, whether it was a Liassic shoreline, an Avonian lagoon, a Westphalian coal swamp or Armorican earth movements. There was a magic about Dick Owen's presentation of geology. It wasn't simply a public performance. It was almost a personal encounter. Dick had time for everyone, for the visiting dignitary, for the international scholar, for the intermediate student, for the shopkeeper enrolled in a WEA course or for the members of a chapel at which he might be giving a popular lecture in geology. And there are people here tonight from the schools, from groups and societies, from the Swansea department, from several universities – all of whom were touched by the richness that was Dick Owen.

Of course his scholarly work stands in its own right. His work on the Vale of Neath was published by the Geological Society in 1954 and rapidly established itself as a classic. That was followed by a series of papers, growing in breadth as time went on, to take in the whole British Isles in his 3 books. His breadth was remarkable: regional stratigraphy, tectonics, sedimentation, geomorphology, marine geology. He was master of all these and more. He was a master expositor of them all.

But behind Dick Owen, master geologist, there was Dick Owen the extraordinary person, and we also celebrate tonight Dick Owen as a friend. I first met Dick almost exactly 35 years ago in September of 1956. When I joined him in the Swansea Geology Department there were 3 members of staff – Dick Owen, Vic Walmsley and Brian Simpson, 1 senior technician

Trevor Marchant – who had been there with A.E. Trueman – and 1 postgraduate student Ken Jones. That was the foundation on which together we rebuilt the Department – and Dick played a major role in this. For the next 12 years I was in almost daily contact with him. It was a rare privilege as together we sought to develop a new curriculum, to build up a comprehensive department, to plan a new building. We worked together at a very exciting time. We were next-door neighbours in the Department. Our offices were adjacent to one another. For a time we were neighbours in Killay where Dick lived a happy and contented domestic life for many years at 14 Wimmerfield Crescent. How do you explain to someone who didn't know him first-hand, Dick Owen the person? Gracious, enthusiastic, honest in a way that few other people could exemplify, modest almost to a fault; I never knew a more principled or a more modest man – with a wonderful gentle sense of humour; courageous, never more so than after that terrible car accident in which he was involved; proud, proud of Swansea, immensely proud of Wales, proud of his students, proud of his family; a devoted husband to Mary for so many years and to Phyllis who brought such companionship to the last part of his life and a proud father of Llynwyn and a proud grandfather.

I had hoped to have a slide of Dick that I could project tonight, but all my slides were field slides which didn't really show him to scale. But I do have 3 photographs that Phyllis, his widow, sent me just yesterday and 1 of those in particular captures Dick Owen in a way that so many of us will remember him in the field: dark raincoat, cap pulled down, tie and flannels, looking pensively into the distance. The last time I saw Dick was almost exactly 2 years ago. It was a sad occasion because in a quite literal sense it was a requiem; it was a wake for the Swansea Geology Department. A decision had been made that that great Department should be closed down. And yet as Dick gave the talk that reviewed the history of the Department his presentation was remarkably upbeat. He talked enthusiastically about the past, about A.E. Trueman, about Franklin Sibley, about Neville George, about Duncan Leitch, about Brian Simpson. He talked with great enthusiasm about the present, about Derek Ager, whom I am delighted to see here tonight and his other colleagues. He talked with excitement about a future that was then very obscure. And there was in all that no recrimination but rather a sense of celebration, a sense of satisfaction, a sense of thankfulness, a sense of expectation.

And it is in that sense that I believe we should honour Dick Owen tonight, recognising an outstanding geologist, celebrating a great life, cherishing a dear friend, remembering with a sense of gratitude somebody who touched us and enriched us all. Dylan Thomas was right:

Though lovers be lost, love shall not;

And death shall have no dominion.

And over a life of that nobility, death shall have no dominion."

[taken from **A GEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE 1960-1992 AJT**]