

EDMUND TAYLOR, 1894-1977

The East Midlands Geological Society was formally inaugurated at a meeting in Nottingham on 1st February 1964, at this meeting Edmund Taylor was elected as Treasurer, a post he held until 1967, when Mr. P.H. Speed succeeded him. Ted, as he was usually referred to, was not a geologist in the sense that the subject was his main interest, its attraction to him was a by-product of a general interest in natural history, which in its turn was generated by his passion for rambling in the country. A man of Edmund Taylor's inquiring disposition was not the type to look at the structure of the countryside and pass it by without question, hence his entry into geology.

Ted Taylor played an active role in the Society, although he never addressed it other than to make the formal presentation of the Treasurer's report, or led an excursion; however, members will recall that when he attended a meeting, which until a few years ago he did regularly, he always asked the speaker a question, or made an apt observation. He also exhibited items at Collectors' Evenings, which he drew from his small but interesting collection of unusual rocks.

Edmund Taylor was born in Nottingham, being the eldest of five sons of a Radford green-grocer. He left school at the age of 13, but because his parents, who were Roman Catholics, hoped their eldest boy would become a priest, he received extra tuition from his parish priest. When he was 18, he entered a Jesuit seminary outside Reading in Berkshire to commence formal training; but, this was not to be his vocation and far from becoming a priest the young Ted developed into a militant atheist, and remained one for the rest of his life. With the mutual consent of his parents and presumably the disappointed Jesuits, Ted left the seminary after about two years and returned to Nottingham, where he immediately plunged into active membership of the Labour and Co-operative movements, and these became central to his life, and remained so. Ted had no formal profession, and during his long life held many jobs, the last being a representative for the Nottingham Co-operative Society. During the inter-war period Ted, in common with many others, suffered from unemployment, and he became very active in the unemployed movement, being recognised as one of its leading local spokesmen. Many a man recalls Ted through his activity at this point in history.

I would take a book to fully describe all Ted Taylor's interests and activities. He was a member or associated with a great many organisations, indeed it is probable that only he knew the full extent of his involvement in various groups. Apart from the organisations already mentioned, including the E.M.G.S., these included the Nottingham Naturalists Society, the Youth Hostels Association, the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society, the Rationalist Press Association, the National Secular Society, the Leicester Secular Society, the Nottingham and Notts. Field Club, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, Nottingham Trades Council, the Workers Education Association and the Thomas Paine Society. In most he played an active role, and in several held office, for example he was President of the Cosmopolitan Debating Society.

Ted Taylor had a happy domestic life, being married twice, having a daughter by his first marriage, and a son and daughter by his second. He was a great one for correspondence, and he must have averaged, according to his son, at least one letter a day. He knew many famous people and has the odd distinction of being mentioned in a poem written by an eminent Japanese poet, Dr. Hiroshi Takamine. Ted's interest in the work of John Dewey took him in 1958 to the United States as guest of the Dewey family. In contrast to this visit to the centre of capitalism, Ted in 1936, visited the Soviet Union as a member of a trade union and co-operative delegation and there met Joseph Stalin, who impressed him greatly. Apart from walking, another passion Ted had was for swimming, and until a few weeks before his final illness regularly paid a weekly visit to the swimming baths.

Those who knew Ted Taylor will be aware that he enjoyed a good debate, particularly if his opponent was a clergyman, indeed it has been said by a member of his family that one

of his interests was "parson baiting," and the present writer recalls Ted going out of his way to engage a passing clergyman in a heated argument. This brings us, and it would be wrong to avoid it, to that aspect of Ted's character which many found offensive, the vitriolic and frequently vicious oral attacks he would make on those with whom he differed. Ted, I fear, looked upon diplomacy as either a sign of weakness or a sacrifice of principles.

Ted Taylor was one of that now rare breed, an articulate self-taught working man. He had the potential for intellectual brilliance, but unfortunately the circumstances and conditions of his education never permitted its full development. Had he been born later he may well have become one of the academics against which he often poured scorn. As an individual he had a commanding personality, although old age robbed him, as it does others, of much of his vigour. The long illness of his wife, who died on 4th March 1977, clearly affected him and on 13th January 1977, he suffered a heart attack, to be followed by a second some days later, and he passed away on 9th August. Ted was known by a host of people in Nottingham, and will be missed by many of them. The East Midlands Geological Society can be grateful for his work on its behalf during the important years of its formative stage.

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