

**Trevor Ford, 1925-2017**

Trevor was born in Essex but brought up in Sheffield, where he began a lifelong friendship with Peter Harrison and an association with Speedwell Cavern. During the early years of the war, he used to cycle the 20 km out to Castleton on weekends, where he guided tourists through the cave, contributed to the cave's re-survey, and even explored new passages in his spare time. It was appropriate that a much later discovery, by others, was named Ford's Cavern.

He served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1946. Mainly land-based in various parts of Asia, he was always happy to recall that he did not *go doolally* when he was stationed for some time at Deolali (the notoriously dreadful place outside Mumbai). After demobilisation, he obtained a place at Sheffield University, where he studied geology for his BSc, and then stayed on to earn a PhD in 1953 for his fieldwork and thesis on *The Upper Carboniferous rocks of the Ingleton and Stainmore Coalfields*.

In 1952 Trevor was appointed Assistant Lecturer in the Geology Department at Leicester University, and was successively Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Associate Dean, before being made an Honorary Research Fellow on his retirement. For his 38 years at the university he was an inspirational teacher, hugely respected and always fondly remembered by his legions of students.



*A sprightly Trevor, at the age of 53, in the far reaches of Speedwell Cavern, Derbyshire.*



*Trevor perhaps helping one of his caving colleagues in the limestone karst of the Derbyshire Peak District.*

During that time he became established as a leading authority on the geology, mineral deposits, lead mines and caves of the Derbyshire Peak District. He produced more than 500 research papers, reviews, reports, guides and books, as well as contributing to and editing various compendium volumes. He also edited the journals of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, the British Cave Research Association and the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society for a grand total of 82 years.

Besides his roles at Leicester, he was Visiting Professor at four universities in the USA, and for 13 years was Chairman of the Board of Studies in Earth Science at Nene College (later the University) in Northampton). For some 30 years he served as a jurymen for the Great Barmote Court, with its traditional powers to settle disputes within the lead mining districts of Derbyshire. He also served terms as president of the East Midlands Geological Society, the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, the British Cave Research Association and the Peak District Mines Historical Society.

Trevor was widely read and had a remarkable memory for detail in so very many aspects of geology. He was regarded by many as a font of geological knowledge, was always ready to help others, and was also an impressive speaker on aspects of Derbyshire geology and many other topics besides. His lectures, publications and other outreach activities greatly enhanced public awareness of the relevance of geology and of cave science, particularly in relation to Derbyshire and the Peak District National Park. He was awarded an OBE in 1997 for services to geology and to cave science, and a well-deserved honorary doctorate from the University of Derby in 2015.. Though his research focussed mainly on the geology of the Peak District and Charnwood Forest, Trevor's activities also extended elsewhere, and included geological mapping on the Isle of Man and along the floor of the Grand Canyon of Arizona.

Lying close to Leicester, Charnwood Forest fell to Trevor's researches. In 1957, a Leicester schoolboy, Roger Mason, saw a fossil exposed in the Precambrian rocks of Charnwood, and went to the university to report it, where Trevor happened to be the only lecturer in the department at the time. Sceptical but always helpful and alert, Trevor drove out to Charnwood with Roger, and instantly recognised the fossil for what it was. *Charnia masoni* Ford, 1958 (to give it the full scientific name) was the first Precambrian fossil to be discovered, and is still one of the finest specimens known. Trevor's published description of *Charnia* remains a milestone in palaeontology, and was recently described as representing "a clear threshold for the study of early life on Earth". His subsequent pursuance of Precambrian fossils took him to Arizona, South Australia, Sweden, the Canadian Rockies and Newfoundland.

Then in December 1965, a meteorite descended on the village of Barwell, just outside Leicester. The university department organised a grand search for fragments in the fields around the village. Trevor went to the wrong meeting place, so he walked on his own into an adjacent field, and found the largest single chunk of the meteorite, some 5 kg of it, lying in a crater half a metre deep. It is still among the largest fragments known from any recent meteorite that fell on Britain.

Trevor's wide knowledge of the local geology combined with his editorial skills to make him a co-editor of *The Geology of the East Midlands*, a massive tome that was published in 1968 and is still a primary source for the region.

The Derbyshire Peak District was always Trevor's first love, and his weekend home in Castleton was frequently a meeting place for geologists young and old. The minerals, mines, caves and karst were the main themes of his extensive research and many publications on Peak District geology. His edited volume, *Limestones and Caves of the Peak District* (1977), is the standard reference on the karst and he was subsequently involved in the first absolute dating of Quaternary cave sediments. His own book, *Derbyshire Blue John* (2000), is regarded as the definitive description of Derbyshire's distinctive variety of fluorite. His guidebook *Castleton area, Derbyshire* (1996), and his *Lead Mining in the Peak District* (2000, with Jim Rieuwerts) are also definitive resources. He wrote many papers on the genesis of the Derbyshire minerals, and one of his last contributions was a major review of mineralization in the South Pennine orefield, co-authored with Noel Worley and published by the Yorkshire Geological Society in 2016.

In March 2013, the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society organised an all-day seminar and reception to pay tribute to Trevor's achievements. Officially entitled "From Bradgate Park to the Grand Canyon: celebrating the geological achievements of Dr Trevor Ford OBE", the event was widely known as the Ford Fiesta, and was a fitting compliment to his widespread popularity and multiple achievements.

Trevor Ford was a great geologist and a great character. His departure is our loss, but he will be remembered by many, and his published works will support future generations of geologists.

*These notes are based largely on the eulogy presented by Jan Baxter, Trevor's daughter, at his funeral service on 9th March 2017.*



*Trevor Ford: clockwise from lower left: deep in contemplation on the salt flats of California's Death Valley; as he will be remembered by many, explaining the local geology on a Society excursion; in lecturing mode at the university; and at home in his quieter years.*



A polymath is defined as a great scholar who knows everything, and Trevor had a hugely wide knowledge of geology; so perhaps we should remember him as a polygeolimat.