Obituaries

Dennis Dickins

Dennis died on 3 June 2020 in the West Cumberland Hospital. He was 73.

Dennis was interested in the military from an early age and joined the Royal Hampshire Regiment just after his sixteenth birthday. He was part of the UN peace keeping force in Cyprus. He volunteered for the Special Air Services and went all over the world, including Africa and South America. Dennis remained in army until his late 20s and then went to Aberystwyth University to do a geology degree. His first geological job was in Hawaii but his second brought him to West Cumbria with the National Coal Board Opencast Executive (later British Coal Open Cast).

Dennis joined the Society in the 1970s (along with Fred Lawton, in September 1977 he joined a Newcastle University extra mural evening class in Cockermouth on the geology of the Lake District, taught by Tom Shipp).

Outside of his work Dennis led a very active life. He loved the outdoors and, as a boy, he spent lots of time in the Brecon Beacons, camping, orienteering and climbing. He received the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award at Buckingham Palace. At the end of his last year at Aberystwyth, along with friends, he made an attempt to climb the then un-conquered, 1000+ foot Breach Wall on Kilimanjaro. After moving to Cumbria he became a National Park volunteer warden. He lived at Watch Hill near Aspatria with his wife Jan and their large family. He and Jan were friends at university and married in 1987. Despite his work, family and National Park commitments he still found time to run up Binsey three times a week.

Dennis worked at various open cast sites in West Cumbria in the 1980s and 1990s. When open cast working ceased he formed his own consultancy, Cumbria Environmental and Geological Services. During this period he was involved as a consultant in the remediation of mine shaft collapses in residential areas in the Egremont/Cleator Moor area and at Sellafield undertaking a variety of tasks including wildlife surveys. Dennis brought his Coal Measures knowledge and expertise to Society activities, leading several field trips (sometimes accompanied by his dog Floss) and delivering several lectures in the 1990s. He also wrote an appreciation of the pioneering geologist Henry Alleyne Nicholson.

Dennis served as a Council member throughout the 1990s and was President in 1999 and 2000. Following this he served as General Secretary between 2001 and 2003, then a significant rôle in the Society. Dennis took on the presidency of the Society with enthusiasm. He was keen to foster geological interest in young people and to provide support to those who wished to follow geological careers. He was instrumental in establishing the Society Small Award for Students. Dennis also gave freely of his time to help young people and provided work experience for geology students at Cumbria Environmental and Geological Services.

Although not Cumbrian by birth, he took the area to his heart and always had time for a crack. We will miss his friendly, gentle manner.

David Kelly, Fred Lawton and Dai Powell

Iver Gray

Iver died on 16 June 2020 at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle aged 81.

Iver was born in Longtown and spent most of his life in the town. His mother's maiden name was McIver, hence the unusual spelling of his name.

He went from Longtown County Council School to Carlisle Grammar School, having been entered for the 11 plus a year early. In 1956 he did well in his A Levels and two years later went to Manchester University where he gained his degree.

It was Iver's aim to go Australia to work as a geologist for a mining company. At his medical examination he was diagnosed with type one diabetes and so he was unable to fulfil his ambition. His career path then took a radical turn. He returned to the family house in Albert Street, Longtown where he lived for the rest of his life and began a career as a geography teacher. He taught at both Annan and at Langholm Academies where he was very popular and well liked by his students.

Iver was a member in the early days of the Society, joining in 1963. In those days the developing Society was very much West Cumbria-based and, as a long-time resident of Longtown, Iver had some distance to travel to Society activities. He was particularly interested in the geology of the Langholm, Bewcastle and border area.

Iver was particularly active in the Society in the 1980s when he led several fieldtrips to the border country. He was elected to the Society Council in 1984 and served as President in 1990 and 1991. He continued to be a regular attender at Society lectures and dinners in the period which followed.

Iver was very knowledgeable about the history of Longtown. He also had a keen interest in the Bewcastle area and in the subject of the border reivers. He copied various reiver crests which are still on display in the small heritage museum at Bewcastle church. He gave a number of lectures on the subject. Iver always remained cheerful and interesting despite, in recent years, his diabetes having an increasingly adverse impact on his life; latterly his failing eyesight caused him difficulties.

We remember him as a cheerful, friendly, witty, kind man who was always good company. He will be greatly missed.

David Kelly, Fred Lawton and Dai Powell

Kath Smith

Kath died on 19 January 2021, in the Cumberland Infirmary aged 84.

She was a popular member of Society activities and events for over 25 years. Her husband Alan, a previous President and long-serving Council Officer, continues to be a prominent member of the Society and the local geological community.

In 1997, she and Alan wrote an article in the Proceedings on the Building Stones of Keswick.

Alan Wise

Alan Wise died at home in February 2021 age 67.

Alan was born in Keswick, his father worked at the Keswick School of Industrial Art. Alan attended Lairthwaite School before joining the 6th form at Keswick School. He trained as a teacher at a college in Liverpool and taught sciences at Kelso High School.

On moving to Kelso Alan joined Border Search and Rescue and was a member of the team on a continual basis until 2011. He took part in a wide range of call-outs over the years including the Lockerbie disaster and several high-profile missing person searches. As well as being a dedicated team member with an exceptional callout attendance over the years, Alan served as the team's Chairman for 16 years between 1991 and 2007. Alan received the Scottish Mountain Rescue Distinguished Service Award for his long service

Alan returned to Keswick in 2011 after taking early retirement, but soon began working again, first helping his uncle on an estate near Bassenthwaite, and more recently at the Lakes Distillery, enjoying both the work and the camaraderie there.

Alan was very musical, being a talented self-taught guitar player, entertaining people in several pubs in the Keswick area.

Alan became a CGS Council member in 2015 and led field trips for the Society including to Carrock Fell and along the River Greta, inspecting the damage caused by Storm Desmond.

Chris Thompson