

**GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
TO FOSSIL MAN**

Recent research in the Gregory
Rift Valley, East Africa

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WALTER W. BISHOP

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In Memoriam

WALTER WILLIAM (BILL) BISHOP was born 4 May 1931 and died suddenly on 20 February 1977 in his forty-sixth year. His activities and achievements during this relatively short period of time were far greater than those of many who have survived a full life span. His potentialities and promise for the future were prodigious; it is a tragedy to geology that they were not to be fulfilled.

The Geological Society remembers him with gratitude, for he stepped in as Scientific Editor at a time (1969) when the situation regarding its publications was at a crisis; he not only cleared up an intolerable backlog, but by insight and imagination, widened the scope, improved the style of presentation and increased the number of issues of the *Journal*, thereby greatly enhancing its reputation. His advice and understanding were so extensive and valued that he continued as Secretary until 1975.

His career was varied, his experience wide, and for his age he had an almost unparalleled list of distinctions, credits and publications. A citation of his curriculum vitae would testify to the facts, but I shall confine attention to Bill as a scientist and as a person.

He obtained a B.Sc. Honours degree in Geography at Birmingham University in 1952, continuing to his Ph.D. in 1956. He served as a geologist on the Uganda Geological Survey from 1956 to 1959; it was here that I first met him, appropriately, at his camp near Napak, where he was making wonderful discoveries of fossil vertebrates in tuffs of the spectacular volcano that I had mapped in 1939. Thereafter, from 1959 to 1965 much of his work was concerned with museum curating, first in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University, and then as director of the Uganda National Museum, Kampala. Here he showed his supreme ability in organisation and acquiring enthusiastic support for his ventures and ideas. Bill had already, while in Uganda, gained a considerable reputation for his work in the field and on expeditions, concerned with Ugandan geomorphology, with Cenozoic geology in general and in vertebrate palaeontology. Teaching at Makerere University was associated with his museum activities; and he then, as subsequently, proved himself an inspiring lecturer and a person greatly concerned with the welfare of students.

Although his main interest was with Cenozoic geology, he pursued this in all its aspects, stratigraphical, sedimentational and palaeontological, using radiometric and palaeomagnetic methods of age determination and, as a keen observer of the behaviour and fate of existing vertebrates, he instituted comparative studies by his research workers of the patterns of dispersal of present day mammalian remains.

My concern to get him appointed to the staff at Bedford College was motivated not only because of his intrinsic merit, but also the great contribution that he could make to systematic and detailed sedimentological and palaeontological studies in the Kenya Rift Valley project. This, indeed, worked exceedingly well,



W. W. Bishop.

since, for almost the first time, such studies were conducted within an already well-established stratigraphical and radiometrically dated framework. These common interests continued with his appointment to the Chair and Headship of the Department of Geology at Queen Mary College, from where he initiated comparable studies in Pakistan.

The numerous symposia that he attended as an invited speaker, the many special lectures that he was invited to give and the colloquia of various kinds that he organised testify to his world-wide recognition in his field. All of these numerous commitments he took in his stride, giving the appearance of completely unruffled competence, enthusiasm and organisational ability. It is a clear reflection of the esteem with which he and his work were regarded internationally that he was invited to the Directorship of the Peabody Museum in the University of Yale, with a Chair in the Department of Geology, an appointment that he was due to take up in July 1977.

Perhaps, above all else he had a gift for acquiring the respect and affection from all of those with whom he came in contact. He was sympathetically approachable by everyone; indeed, his concern with student affairs stemmed from his Birmingham days where he was President of the Guild of Undergraduates. Despite his self-imposed, exacting schedule he had time for everyone, received and wrote individual letters to persons all over the world. He founded in Bedford College a Light Opera Group (BLOG), in which he initially participated, for he was an actor and singer of some merit; this has now become an institution in the College and he continued his operatic interests at Queen Mary College and indeed a week before his death, he sang an end to a lecture at Glasgow University in his usual effortless style.

Bill had a great concern for adult education in Glasgow and particularly for the training of young persons from all walks of life. After several years of serving in a voluntary capacity on the Advisory Committee of the Brathay Exploration Group, based on Ambleside, Cumbria, he was recently elected Chairman of the Committee. Indeed, he participated in organising expeditions in East Africa in which Brathay students actively took part. Above all else, he will be remembered for his wide sense of humanity and true social values.

This book is a most fitting and lasting tribute to the memory of Bill Bishop. Based on a major symposium which he organised and, from the breadth of his knowledge and acquaintance, selected the contributors, he has arranged, advised on, and edited all of the many articles contained in this volume. It is a monumental work and one of true devotion both on his part and that which he excited among others. It may appear invidious to cite particular persons, but I should like to record some of those who both inspired and were inspired by Bill: Louise, Mary and Richard Leakey, Bob and Shirley (Coryndon) Savage and Glynn Isaac.

And finally, let me say, that despite all his preoccupations he was a man with a family of which he was intensely proud and concerned; he bestowed on them his first consideration, but it is only fair to add that in his wife, Sheila, he received always the staunchest and most unstinting support that any man could ever have.

B. C. KING

Acknowledgements

It was with tragic suddenness that Bill Bishop died before his final revision of the proofs of this book was finished. The brief introductions he had planned to write for each of the parts of the book and the final summary were not completed before his death and have had to be omitted.

The publishers extend grateful thanks to his contributors, particularly to those who have assisted them—in one way or another—to complete the press revision, and to answer queries which appeared to be still unresolved.

But above all gratitude must be expressed to Mrs. G. W. Flinn of Liverpool, who has prepared the Index and has noted a number of inconsistencies of the spellings of proper names and geological terms. These have now been standardised as far as may be possible within individual articles, but without going to the further expense of redrawing several of the line illustrations. All concerned, both authors and readers, have cause to be grateful to Mrs. Flinn for her most careful and painstaking contribution to this work.

Finally, the Geological Society thanks and acknowledges the extraordinary time and effort expended by Mr. Douglas Grant and Mr. T. L. Jenkins of the Scottish Academic Press, without which the book could not have appeared.