large-scale maps; members of the party also learnt how to record the various geological sections seen. The rocks exposed are all of Jurassic age and range upwards from the Hackness Rock to the Corallian grits and oolites; they dip gently north-eastwards and only minor faults are present except in the north. Members soon mastered the mysteries of measuring dips, strikes and thicknesses and progressed to tracing the various cliff-forming and intervening slope-forming rocks northwards around the headland. Lunch was taken in a promenade shelter in company with a large assembly of beleaguered holidaymakers and the class subsequently continued northward along Castle Cliff before turning south-westward across the Holms; here members were able to see some of the characteristics of landslips and learnt how to interpret and plot the evidence of substantial faulting.

The class ended near the Castle with a vote of thanks to the leader by Mr. L. B. Eagle, and members duly dispersed fondly clutching a wide variety of cartographic masterpieces.

OBITUARY

Percy Edward Kent 1913-1986

Percy Edward Kent (Sir Peter Kent) died at Chesterfield on 9th July 1986, following a heart attack. He was 73, and was working the day before he died.

Sir Peter was born on 18th March, 1913 in West Bridgford, Nottingham, and he remained firmly based there all his life, notwithstanding many years working overseas and as many more in London.

He was educated at West Bridgford Grammar School and Nottingham University, which at that time was a College of London University. His degrees — B.Sc. 1934, Ph.D. 1941 and D.Sc. 1959 — were therefore all from London. At Nottingham Sir Peter studied under H. H. Swinnerton, whom he always regarded as among the finest and least recognized of British geologists. From Swinnerton Kent gained two of his greatest strengths: the conviction that precise stratigraphy must remain the basis of all sound geology, and that a geologist is never better employed than when looking very carefully at rocks. These simple precepts — so obvious but so often forgotten — guided and illuminate all his best work, however far-ranging it might be.

After taking his first degree, Kent spent two years in East Africa as Geologist to L. S. B. Leakey’s Archaeological Expedition, work which led to publication of several papers on the Tertiary and Quaternary of Kenya and Tanganyika. However, in the autumn of 1936 he changed course and joined the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. (now British Petroleum) to participate in the search for oil in Britain under its Chief Geologist G. M. Lees.

In Anglo-Iranian Sir Peter encountered the immediacy of industry and the zest of a treasure-hunt. His work led directly to the discovery of Britain’s first important oil field at Eakring, Nottinghamshire, in the summer of 1939. He was then 26.

Sir Peter was in the R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve, and from 1941 to 1946 served in RAF Intelligence on photo-interpretation work, ending as a Flight Lieutenant. He became the principal Allied expert on the German synthetic oil industry, with a view to its destruction by bombing. He was Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the (U.S.) medal of Legion of Merit.

Returning to BP, Sir Peter held a series of geological and managerial posts overseas — three years in Iran, four in East Africa, two in Papua and three in Canada — before returning to Britain in December 1960 as Deputy Chief Geologist and then Chief Geologist, 1966-71. His final post before retirement in 1973 was Assistant General Manager, Exploration. He remained a Consultant to the BP Group until 1984.

From 1973 to 1977 Sir Peter was Chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council, a happy choice for this important position. From 1977 to 1983 he was on the Board of London and Scottish Marine Oil (LASMO) and at his death was Chairman of two small mineral companies. These latter demonstrate the breadth of Kent’s geological expertise, but it was his work for BP for which he will be most remembered. He influenced or directed much of BP’s exploration for a generation in every continent. Ceaseless travel made him among the best-informed and best-known oil men of his time, at one moment discussing pratical problems with drillers and at the next moment, faunal zones with palaeontologists.

Sir Peter’s work-load in BP was large, but only a part of his activities. He belonged to a dozen scientific societies and played an active part in most of them. He joined our Society in 1947 and became President in 1964-66, and subsequently President of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union (1969-70) and of the Geological Society of London (1974-76), in addition to which he gave years of service on the Councils of each. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society from 1966, and served on its Council (1967-69) and on many of its committees till
1981. Again, while working full-time for BP, Kent was Adrian Visiting Fellow at Leicester University 1967-70 and was appointed to a host of other bodies, both British and International. Not all employers would have been content to see one of their key men thus occupied.

Sir Peter wrote scores of internal reports for BP and well over a hundred original publications in addition to numerous ‘review’ papers. The earliest publication we can trace is ‘The formation of the Hydraulic Limestones of the Lower Lias’ (Geological Magazine 1936) and one of the latest ‘The Somali ocean basin and the continental margin of East Africa’ in ‘The Ocean Basins and Margins’ (1982), with other work still in press at his death. Many of Sir Peter’s publications resulted from his field work in the East Midlands and are required reading in that area, but the papers and memoirs derived from his oil industry work may be even more important. Lees, N. L. Falcon and Sir Peter persuaded BP and other companies to allow publication of a vast mass of private and otherwise inaccessible data that literally added a new dimension to geological studies in Britain. Our ‘Proceedings’ benefited notably. Kent also continued the tradition of publishing important work on the Middle East. He was especially fond of Persian salt plugs.

It is hard today to realize how wide was the gulf between academic and industrial geologists in Britain up to about 1950, when Lees bridged it on becoming President of the Geological Society. For Kent there was no such gulf; he moved easily on both sides where it used to be, accepted as a colleague by all. Equally at home with global concepts and with painstaking detail, he was also blessed with the gift of saying nothing when he had nothing to say.

Sir Peter’s work was widely recognised. Six English Universities awarded him honorary degrees of D.Sc. and two Scottish of L.L.D. Eminent Societies, British, American, Canadian and Bulgarian, made him Honorary Member. His awards and medals included the MacRobert Award (1970, Committee of Engineering Institutions), with A. N. Thomas and H. R. Warman, and the Royal Medal (1971, Royal Society). In the Birthday Honours of June 1973, Sir Peter was created a Knight Bachelor ‘in recognition of his services to petroleum exploration and long and distinguished career as a geologist’.

Though much of Sir Peter’s writing was done between 04.00 hours and breakfast, it is still unclear how he managed to have any leisure time. But he did, and filled it as full as his working life. He was a cheerful man, who liked people and parties. He enjoyed the theatre and good restaurants. He liked choral singing, and formed his own choir in Port Moresby, Papua, which had lacked one till he arrived. He was a keen ornithologist and naturalist, and at his death was President of the Nottinghamshire Trust for Nature Conservation. But his main hobby was . . . geological field work. His daughters report that on every family outing the car would stop at each trench in a field or hole in the road while Father got out and recorded the exposed succession. The workmen always took him for someone in authority, and cooperated. After a busy week in London Office, possibly including a flying visit to Calgary or Teheran, he would be found on Saturday following a gas pipe-line trench across a clay vale in the East Midlands, looking for the Rhaetic, which was his first and lasting geological love. This kept his feet firmly on the ground.

All this activity was built around a happy family life. He achieved so much that three lines of Kipling come to mind, with an aptness which might have surprised the poet:

If you can fill each unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run  
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it

In 1940 Kent married Betty Hood, who died in 1974. In 1976 he married Lorna Scott. The Society’s deepest sympathy goes to Lady Kent and to Judith and Helen, the daughters of his first marriage.

R. G. W. B.