

OBITUARY

JOHN WILLIAM NEALE (1926–2006)

With the death of Professor John Neale on 20 January 2006, our Society lost one of its staunchest supporters: President 1981–1982; author of several papers in our *Proceedings* and of chapters in two other YGS publications: *The Geology and Mineral Resources of Yorkshire* (1974) and *Yorkshire Rocks and Landscape* (1974, 1996, 2006); field meeting leader; and for more than 40 years one of the most regular attendees, with his wife, Patti, of our Annual Dinner in York. He received the Society's John Phillips medal in 1986 and was made an Honorary Member of our Society in 2000.

John was born in Burton-on-Trent in 1926, and educated mainly at the Charles I School, Kidderminster. After spending two terms at Manchester University, he volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1943 and was commissioned a year later. At the war's end he spent some time in HMS *Onyx*, minesweeping off Southern Ireland. Subsequently he studied Geology and Geography, with subsidiary Biology, at Manchester University, graduating in 1949 with First Class honours. He then joined the fledgling Sub-Department of Geology at Hull (in its second year) where he remained until it was closed as part of the 1988 Oxburgh review of Earth Sciences. For a long time the number of staff was tiny; John was initially one of two staff (the other being another past President, Lewis Penny), and was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in Mineralogy and Petrology! When the writer joined the department as an undergraduate in 1960, there were still only four academic staff. Teaching loads were, therefore, very high and it is remarkable that in such a situation John managed to embark on an illustrious research career by starting work for a Ph.D. too. Initially he was advised to map the Market Weighton area, but this proved to be an inappropriate choice because of poor exposure and he switched to working on the ostracod faunas of the Lower Cretaceous Speeton Clay. That proved to be a pivotal choice in his career, leading to John becoming an internationally renowned expert on both fossil and living ostracods. His major research contributions in that field are assessed by Lord & Horne (this part).

But John's initial work around Market Weighton also led to some publications, in two very different areas. With two other stalwarts of our Society, George de Boer and Lewis Penny, he published *A guide to the Geology of the area between Market Weighton and the Humber* in our *Proceedings* (1958). Then in 1962 he joined W. S. Bisat and Lewis Penny to produce a 'Geologists' Association' Guide to the area around Hull. One of the localities described in the latter guide, Kettlethorpe Quarry, yielded a fossil scallop which John described as a new species, *Chlamys (Radulopecten) drewtonensis* (Neale 1956). This short paper was an early illustration of his willingness to research on more than one fossil group, at a time when the literature had already expanded so much that most palaeontologists had become, of necessity, more narrowly focused.

By the late 1950s John had started his research on the Speeton ostracods, receiving his Ph.D. in 1961 – a remarkable achievement considering that he was self-supervised. And during that period he expanded his palaeontological interests further, this time to the ammonites. His interest was stimulated by the discovery in 1958 by Jack Doyle, then a student at Hull, of the first ammonite to be found in the lowest beds of the Speeton Clay. Subsequent collecting yielded a sparse fauna, which was very poorly-preserved – flattened impressions, often fragmentary – but was, importantly, the oldest ammonite fauna in the Speeton Clay. Aided by excellent photographs (produced from such unpromising material by Mike Holliday, chief technician at Hull) John described the fauna, assigning the material mainly to *Tollia*, *Subcraspedites* and *Paracraspedites* (Neale 1962). This was the first record of *Tollia* in Britain, while the other two genera were originally described from the Spilsby Sandstone in Lincolnshire and dated as Early Cretaceous (Swinerton 1935). However, while John's paper was going through the press, the first of several temporary excavations in Norfolk during the period 1961–1964 began yielding ammonites that were to lead to a critical reappraisal of his identifications by Casey (1973), who showed that *Paracraspedites* and *Subcraspedites* are of latest Jurassic age and that most of the Speeton ammonites belonged to a new Early Cretaceous genus, *Peregrinoceras*. But John's dating of the Speeton forms as Berriasian was upheld and his paper remains an important resource in conjunction with Casey's revised interpretations. It is also the source of the first detailed description of the lithostratigraphical subdivision of the lower D beds; two years earlier he had published a similarly detailed description of the upper D beds (Neale 1960), and these two papers remain the standard reference for this part of the Speeton succession.

This was John's only foray into the ammonite world, though he maintained an interest through taking the writer on as a research student in 1963, to work on the Speeton ammonites. In those earlier years of his career he also supervised research students on foraminifera, graptolites, trilobites and even sedimentology. Later he focused more exclusively on ostracod research and, as his reputation spread, he began to receive more and more visitors and invitations from overseas. He organized an international meeting at Hull in 1967, from which arose the International Research Group on Ostracoda (IRGO), and travelled widely, spending a sabbatical year in the University of Kansas and several months in Brazil – where he set up a course in palaeontology at the University of Rio Grande do Sol. In his later career, he spent time in both the USSR and China, and received the Gold Medal of Beijing University.

When the last students graduated from the closing Geology department in 1991, John retired. He was then able to spend more time on the acre garden attached to his magnificent Georgian house on Beverley Road and with the three operatic societies that he was associated with. But he retained contact with fellow researchers and continued to support our Society and the Hull Geological Society, of which he was also an honorary member. It was a shock to many of us who attended

the October 2005 meeting of the two societies in Hull to find John missing, his absence marking the start of his final illness.

I am grateful to John's family for providing some of the information for this obituary.

SWINNERTON, H. H. 1935. The rocks below the red chalk of Lincolnshire, and their Cephalopod faunas. *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London*, **91**, 1–46.

Peter F. Rawson

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CASEY, R. 1973. The ammonite succession at the Jurassic-Cretaceous boundary in eastern England. *In*: CASEY, R. & RAWSON, P. F. (eds) *The Boreal Lower Cretaceous. Geological Journal Special Issue*, **5**, 193–266.