

OBITUARIES

WILLIAM IREDALE STANTON 1930-2010



Willie, as he was universally known, was born in Bristol to Quaker parents, living in Street, Somerset. It was thanks to his Quaker background that he went to Sidcot School, in Somerset where he first began caving in 1941. His other interests included rugby, singing in the school choir, archaeology and natural science. In 1951 he went up to Imperial College, London to study geology, gaining his Bsc in 1953 and his PhD in 1953. It was also at Imperial College that he met his wife, Angela, a secretary there. They married in 1957. For the next 23 years Willie's worked as a mining geologist, in Angola and later in Portugal, but in 1970 he and Angela returned to Somerset, taking up residence in Westbury sub Mendip, where they then stayed, with Willie working as a consultant geologist for the Bristol Avon River Authority and then fulltime for the National Rivers Authority until his retirement in 1995.

To us, however, Willie is known principally for his involvement with the Mendip caves, as a surveyor, digger and as a geomorphologist. Despite his long absences abroad, he contributed greatly to the remarkable increase in our understanding of Mendip and its caves made during the 1960s and 70s. His many papers on Mendip caves when added to his prodigious output as a cave surveyor are testament to his dedication. Amongst his published cave surveys are Swildon's Hole, Manor Farm Swallet, Reservoir Hole, Gough's Cave, Grebe Swallet and Waterwheel Swallet. His biography of pioneer Mendip caver Herbert Balch is essential reading.

An original thinker, many of his ideas are outstanding for the depth and clarity of thought behind them, but not all of them made it into the mainstream. His "hosepipe hypothesis", for example, developed to explain why one or two leucopodium spores could travel at astonishing speeds from sink to rising under northern Mendip was one example, it was, however, later agreed that contamination had played a larger part than unusual water

conditions. Another controversial idea was that certain features in Twin T's swallet could only be explained by being the work of snails boring up into the limestone. This idea, again, did not stand the test of time, but shows that his thinking was always backed up by meticulous field-work, in this case raising a limestone boulder above the ground in his garden and containing snails around it, to observe what went on.

His cave survey work was meticulously documented in his clear handwriting in hardbound notebooks. I borrowed these for copying a couple of years ago and he also lent me his annotated set of field maps of Mendip, containing much detailed observational data. Thanks to his generosity, these were scanned by the British Geological Survey and are now available to all via their library archive.

In later years, his attention moved somewhat from the world of caves and geology to other environmental concerns. This work culminated in a book *The Rapid Growth of Human Populations, 1750-2000* published in 2003. This is well worth a read and even if you disagree with his conclusions, you'll have a hard job arguing with the depth of his research and the vast quantity of data that he assembled.

That was Willie, hard working, methodical and an original thinker worthy of admiration. He was uncompromising in his views but difficult to argue with, as he probably had thought longer and more deeply about the subject than you had. For his enormous contributions to the study of Mendip and its caves, the UBSS made him an honorary member in 1983. But as our President, Arthur ApSimon said "the honour was to the Society".

ROGER MICHAEL JACOBI
1947-2009



Roger was born in February 1947 of mixed German and English parentage, his father having come to this country shortly before the Second World War. An only child, he attended Merchant Taylor's School in Middlesex, where there was an archaeology society and a school museum. This clearly had some effect as he is recorded as being an associate member of the