

OBITUARY – CLIVE NICHOLAS (1941–2022)

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Dr Clive Nicholas passed away on 25th February 2022, in his 81st year. He had a long and active history with the Ussher Society, spanning five decades, including roles as Chair (1988–1989), Vice-Chair (1987, 1990), Secretary (2002–2006), Conference Secretary (1999/2000) and as a Committee Member (2000–2008).

Clive was born in Cockermouth, Cumbria on 21st June 1941, and he attended Fairfield junior school from 1946 to 1953 and Cockermouth Grammar School from 1953 to 1959. Fortunately, partly because of the varied and interesting local geology, the school offered lessons in geology where Clive gained ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels in the subject. In 1959 he went up to study at London University, Queen Mary College (QMC) where he gained a First Class BSc (Hons) degree, followed by a PhD on the sedimentology of the Carboniferous Limestone in the Furness area. As the leading student of his year, Clive was a member of the Students’ Instructional Tour in 1961, which covered Devonian and Carboniferous geology in SW England and Ireland. He was Secretary of the Geological Society of QMC in 1961–62 and President in 1964–65.

In September 1965, Clive took up the role of geologist with United Steel Companies Ltd in the Geology Section of the Research and Development Department in Rotherham. He worked on underground mine planning for iron ore reserves and mineral resources for refractories and fluxes. This role included return visits to west Cumberland to the Beckermeth iron ore mines one week in every three. It was after re-nationalisation of the steel industry in 1967 that the Beckermeth work expanded to cover fluorspar mining in the Northern Pennines, site investigations for new steel works and spoil tip stability. Some of Clive’s work there resulted in him becoming the first recipient of the Cumberland Geological Society’s ‘Charles Edmonds Prize’ in 1967. The citation says that it “is awarded to member candidates who have furthered geological knowledge of the North of England”.

Clive married Anne in 1966 and they later had 2 sons and a daughter. In 1970 Clive left what had then become the Mineral Resources Department of the British Steel Corporation Research Organisation to take up a post as a geologist with English China Clays in St Austell, working internationally and in the UK on new deposits of china clay, ball clay and calcium carbonates. In May 1973 he transferred within the ECC group to the role of Chief Geologist with ECC Quarries (ECCQ) based in Exeter. Here he renewed contact with some of his QMC cohort in the Exeter Office of the BGS.

In 1994 ECC decided to float their aggregates business, which by then was trading as ECC Construction Materials Ltd, on the London Stock Exchange (LSE) as CAMAS UK Ltd. Clive’s work on the classification of the company’s mineral resources and reserves came to prominence, in line with

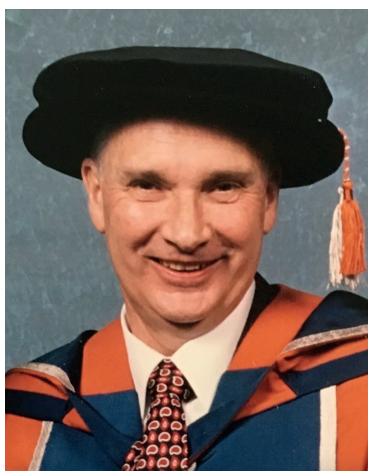


Figure 1. *Dr Clive Nicholas was awarded an honorary DSc by the University of Plymouth in 1998 in recognition of his work on the establishment of professional standards for geologists.*



Figure 2. *Dr Clive Nicholas in the field talking about the geology at Moorcroft Quarry, Plymstock on a field excursion by the Devonshire Association in April 2006.*

stringent conditions of the LSE listing rules. CAMAS ultimately merged with Bardon to form Aggregate Industries in 1997.

Throughout the transition from its ECCQ origins Clive was head of the ‘Geology and Survey Department’ and remained so until his retirement in June 1998. The department had responsibility for the mineral exploration, resources and reserves, quarry design, geotechnical assessments and statutory reports, hydrogeological work, quarry surveys and stock evaluations. It varied in size over the years with twelve geologists and nine surveyors passing through, along with support staff. Most came into the department at early stages of their careers and were tutored and mentored by Clive. As head of the department, he was a part of the company Senior Management team. In 1998 Clive was awarded an honorary DSc by the University of Plymouth, in recognition of his work on the establishment of professional standards for geologists (Fig. 1).

After retiring from industry, Clive continued working as an independent consultant geologist. A major contribution was developing and leading the Geodiversity Audits of Active Aggregate Quarries research project for the Minerals Industry Research Organisation and funded by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, which he masterminded and led for David Roche GeoConsulting. Initially, sixteen active quarries in Devon were audited, followed by seven in Somerset (Mendips).

Outside of the workplace Clive took a very active role in the geological community nationally. He served on the British Geological Survey (BGS) Programme Board and on the QMC Geomaterials Unit Advisory Panel. Clive lectured on mineral resources to students at the University of Plymouth and was External Examiner at Camborne School of Mines. He co-authored Chapter 12 Industrial Minerals in the *Geology of Devon* book published by the University of Exeter Press in 1982. Clive also served

on the Council of the Geological Society of London, having been Chair of its Library Committee, and on the committee of the South-West Regional Group. He received the Group’s Frederick Sherrell Career Recognition Award at the 2004 AGM for ‘his services to the Earth science community in the South-West of England’.

Clive regularly attended meetings and conferences of the South-West Regional Group of the Geological Society, the Ussher Society for geoscience in South-West England, the Devonshire Association (Fig. 2) and Extractive Industry Geology (EIG), having presented papers and been involved in the organisation of several of them.

Clive Nicholas

Clive was a founder member of AIPG (Association for the Promotion of an Institution of Professional Geologists). AIPG was set up in 1975 following a Geological Society of London Working Party recommendation to develop a professional body for geologists. The AIPG created the Institution of Geologists, which was incorporated on 22nd August 1977 and then inaugurated at a ceremony in Birmingham on 24th February 1978. Clive Nicholas was one of 23 Subscribers cited in its Memorandum & Articles of Association as being “desirous of being formed into a Company in pursuance of this Memorandum of Association”. He and the other 22 were also cited as ‘the First Council and Officers of the Institution’. It is no coincidence that the origin of Extractive Industry Geology (EIG) Conferences lay in the hands of Clive and his associates with the first one being held in March 1978 at

Burlington House, London. One of their prime objectives was achieved when the Institution of Geologists unified with the Geological Society of London in 1990 and corporate members of the Institution became the first Chartered Geologists.

Dr Clive Nicholas was not only academically gifted he was one of the UK’s foremost and most respected extractive industry geologists and a pioneer in advancing the professional status of geology. He was an original and most influential friend and colleague to the many who knew him.

David Roche
*(with contributions by Brian Simpson,
Colin Comberbach and Anne Nicholas)*
Exeter, Devon