



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Proceedings of the Geologists' Association

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/pgeola



Norman Berry Peake, 1921–2010, a chalk revolutionary

Andy Gale

School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Portsmouth, Burnaby Building, Burnaby Road, Portsmouth PO13QL, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 March 2017
Received in revised form 16 July 2017
Accepted 26 July 2017
Available online xxx

Keywords:

Norman Peake
Chalk stratigraphy
Southern England
Echinocorys

ABSTRACT

A brief biography of the Cretaceous geologist and bookseller Norman Peake is provided, as a late obituary, and to place his work in context. Norman's work on the stratigraphy of the English chalk was truly groundbreaking, in that he pioneered the publication of accurately drawn graphical logs of chalk, which led eventually to the widespread use of chalk lithostratigraphy in correlation and mapping. His important work on the echinoid *Echinocorys*, mostly never published, is also reviewed and extended.

© 2017 Published by Elsevier Ltd on behalf of The Geologists' Association.

1. Introduction

In our modern, information-rich world, few significant events pass without some online comment, readily accessible through the internet, and the death of people who have contributed to culture and knowledge is nowadays marked by a host of tributes, obituaries and comments. However, a few older people slip through the net, whose passing is missed by all but close friends and relatives who have attended the funeral or read a note in a local newspaper. Norman Berry Peake is one such individual, an eccentric geologist, chemist, bookseller, airship expert and political activist, whose death in 2010 was not marked by any obituary, even though he contributed considerably to the study of Cretaceous chalk and its fossils. He was also a Geological Society medalist (W.H. Worth Medal, 1971, awarded to an amateur geologist). The broader significance of one of his publications, the *Upper Cretaceous of Norfolk* (Peake and Hancock 1961) has been missed almost completely. This article sets out to provide a short biography and discussion of his contributions to geology and palaeontology.

2. Biography

Norman was born in 1921 to well-to-do parents, who could “afford a maid”, and who lived at 27 Christchurch Road, Southend on Sea, Essex. His father worked as a local government officer, and Norman's interest in geology started at school. When he left school,

he started work as an assistant chemist for the research department of May and Baker Ltd. (1940–43), and then as a researcher for Cellon Ltd., in Kingston-upon-Thames. Cellon specialized in producing dopes for aeroplanes, and Norman's lifelong interest in airships dates back to this period. He wrote many articles on airships and was regarded as an authority (see e.g. www.Norman%20Peake/The%20Greasy%20Black%20Cloud%2020%20NS11.html). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemists in 1944, whilst studying for a degree in chemistry, presumably part time. There is no record of his having completed the degree, or where he was studying.

For the next 20 years, Norman continued to work for Cellon, and during this time developed an exceptional knowledge of the chalk of southern England, with a particular interest in the irregular echinoid genus *Echinocorys*, of which he amassed a large collection. He met and talked with C.T.A. Gaster in Sussex, and later worked extensively with Jake Hancock, with whom he shared an interest in the chalk of Norfolk in particular, and with whom he published the *Upper Cretaceous of Norfolk* (1961, 1970). They made numerous visits to the Norfolk coast, often catching the early milk train in order to get there for low spring tides. He also worked with Richard Bromley on the subject of the large flints called paramoudras (Bromley et al. 1975), and he is depicted standing by one at Weybourne on the Norfolk coast (Fig. 1). He was a founding member of the Paramoudra Club, later to become the Geological Society of Norfolk. He also became a founding member of CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) in 1957 and was an active member of the British Communist Party. Norman became disillusioned by takeover of Cellon by an American company (this

E-mail address: andy.gale@port.ac.uk (A. Gale).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pgeola.2017.07.008>

0016-7878/© 2017 Published by Elsevier Ltd on behalf of The Geologists' Association.



Fig. 1. Norman standing next to a paramoudra flint column at Weybourne on the north Norfolk coast, early 1970s. From Bromley et al. 1975, pl. 1D.

was the era of McCarthyism, after all), and decided to set up a bookshop in Norwich, encouraged by the presence of the newly established University of East Anglia, which he believed would teach courses in geology, agriculture and chemistry. He therefore



Fig. 2. The Scientific Anglian, 30–30a St Benedict's Street, Norwich, unfortunately in its most dilapidated state, boarded up, after Norman had left in 2003. Photo about 2005. Photo by Ian “Harry” Harris, with permission.



Fig. 3. Norman inspecting an old underground chalk kiln, at Glikman Road, Norwich. He was fascinated by Norwich's historical legacy of chalk mining and burning for lime.

named the shop the “Scientific Anglian”, at 30 and 30a St Benedict's Street, Norwich (Fig. 2), in a former butcher's shop. The specialist name was also designed to appease other booksellers who probably resented the added competition. He also undertook scientific consultancies around Norwich, which suffered a lot from subsidence as a result of underground chalk mines, and he is shown visiting a subterranean chalk kiln (Fig. 3). There is quite an extensive online literature describing Norman, the shop, and his views (e.g. www.newwriting.net Scientific Anglian), not all entirely complementary, but entertaining nonetheless. Norman was also involved in the conservation of old chalkpits for scientific studies, and was instrumental in saving the section in Catton Grove as an SSSI. He also monitored extreme right-wing activities in Norfolk, and told me that his phone was continually tapped by Mi5. I suspect that he was correct.

The bookshop in St Benedict's Street was a remarkable place. Originally on three floors, but the low basement ceiling resulted in its early closure. It contained an enigmatic section entitled “O'Brienology”; apparently he bought books from a Mr O'Brien which were so diverse and obscure that they defied classification in the normal way. Norman had a huge stock of books, and rented various premises around Norwich to store them in. Although originally rather well-ordered, the Scientific Anglian deteriorated over time due to dry rot and lack of attention, and was eventually closed by the Council in 2002 as a fire hazard.

Norman remained at the Scientific Anglian until 2003, when he developed Alzheimer's Disease, and was placed in a care home in Sidestrand on the Norfolk coast. He died there on the 24th January 2010 at the age of 89. His collection was recovered from the Scientific Anglian in 2005 in an archaeological-type dig, because the fossil collection was hidden under a cover of up to 3 feet of mouldy books and papers, cat food tins, dead rats, clothing and bedding which completely covered the first floor (Tony Irwin pers comm). The patient work of Nigel Larkin and Tony Irwin ensured that all the material was recovered. The late Paul Whittlesea was employed to catalogue the collection, and a conservator cleaned and repaired specimens. The collection is now in the Norwich Castle Museum outpost at Dereham, and is well curated and cared for.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8914628>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8914628>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)