

Obituaries

Written by Graham Hickman

Lothar Respondek Remembered

It is with sadness that we have to report the death of one of our longstanding members. Lothar Respondek who died earlier this year aged 95. Lothar, originally from Germany, was a member of the Bath Geological Society from at least 1981 through to 2015.

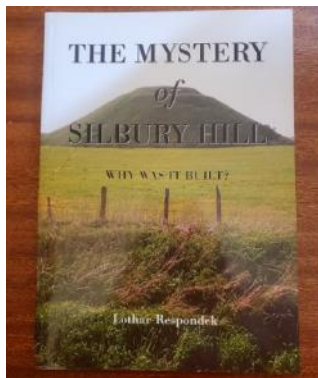
The photo taken on the BGS 25th anniversary walk in 1995 shows Lothar Respondek (left) with Bob Whitaker (right).



Between 1992 and 1995 Lothar Respondek was the Secretary of our Society, working alongside Charles Hiscock (chairman) and Sonia Chant (treasurer). Charles remembers "He was a very efficient secretary and I enjoyed working with him. One thing which struck me was his politeness, always shaking hands when we met. He was a good geologist and his interests extended into archaeology."

Lothar made a significant contribution to our Journal submitting many articles between 1997 and 2006. Some of these have been digitized and are available on our website. For instance, his article on the Chalk and Flints of Wiltshire: https://bathgeolsoc.org.uk/journal/articles/2001/2001_Chalk_Flints.pdf

His longest article (12 pages) on Silbury Hill, Water and Geology has yet to be added to our website. Lothar wrote this article for our Journal in 2002 and later went on to publish a book entitled the Mystery of Silbury Hill in 2005. The Wiltshire Gazette and Herald interviewed Lothar and asked him about his book. <https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/7268302.geologist-believes-hill-was-an-accident/> Lothar's theory tied the creation of the hill to trenches dug to reach a sunken water table during a climatic warming 3,000 BC. Perhaps one of our members has a copy you can read? We are grateful to Lothar for his long support of the Bath Geological Society, he will be missed.



About his Book...

Silbury Hill is an enigma. For centuries people have wondered why such a hill in the bottom of a waterlogged hollow was built. In spite of many investigations the largest man-made hill in Europe remains a mystery. The author has tried to redress the imbalance by researching climate, the landscape and the natural environment of the Neolithic people some 4500 years ago. The results of his study are rather surprising.

Lothar Respondek lives in Wiltshire and is a well-travelled amateur geologist. He has thoroughly researched the origin of the Sarsen stones on the Marlborough Downs and their use in the construction of Stonehenge and Avebury monuments. His work also embraced the effect of springs, rivers and streams on the local chalk scenery and the formation of coombes and asymmetrical valleys. His other geological main interest are volcanism and plate tectonics

Lt. Cmdr. A.T.F Comer Remembered

We were saddened by the news that Allan Comer had died on 27th February 2021 at the age of 97.

Allan was a Founder and Honorary member of the Bath Geological Society. He served as the Treasurer for six years from 1978 -1983. Continuing to serve on the committee from 1984-6 and then took on the role of Deputy Chairman in 1988 and Chairman in 1989.



Allan Comer. Photo from 1995

Allan Theo Frank Comer (A.T.F for short) was born in July 1923 in West Ham.

Allan joined the Royal Navy and rose through the ranks initially as a commissioned Electrical Officer but quickly reaching the rank of Engineering Lieutenant Commander. In June 1975 Allan was awarded the MBE.

In 2005 he was granted Honorary Membership in recognition for his long service. His son John Comer writes "Although he wasn't able to participate in the Society affairs during the last few years, he did have a framed certificate hanging in his home acknowledging his Honorary Membership, which the Society granted in April 2005. My father had a deep and abiding interest in geology and his membership of the society meant a lot to him."

His other son Tony Comer writes "While I'm sure he would have liked to have been remembered for his enthusiasm and organisational skills in the world of geology and as a founder member of the Bath Geological Society, perhaps he should also be remembered as a rebel! He derived so much satisfaction lampooning conventional geological axioms and presenting alternative explanations. His chosen victims included ice-age and glaciation modelling, tectonic theory and climate change. He would write at great lengths on these subjects, not because he was qualified to do so, but because he wasn't. His contributions to the science he would say, were not written to gain a certificate but were to present well-conceived alternatives to accepted theory based on sound scientific and engineering principles, and, of course, to get people thinking!"

Allan was a prolific writer for the Bath Geological Society Journal and between 1983 and 2004 he wrote around twenty articles. Some of his longer pieces were on Montserrat and the geology of Crete. These older journals are being scanned and will be made available on our website soon.

Allan will be sadly missed, but hopefully his writing will continue to get people thinking. The Bath Geological Society is truly grateful to his commitment and organisational skills in the early years of our Society.

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