

Dr Jevan Pierres Berrangé (1931-2018)

Dr Jevan Pierres Berrangé, who died 21 November 2018 at the age of 87, was a Long Serving Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) and a committee member of the RGS-IBG South West Region.

Born on 2 September 1931 in Johannesburg South Africa, Dr Berrangé was awarded the Busk Medal in 1984 'for scientific discovery and research' and 'for leadership of Proyecto Precámbrico and other scientific expeditions', the latter referring to his work in Guyana and Bolivia. He contributed a chapter 'Expedition fieldwork techniques; geological mapping' to the 'Expedition Planners' Handbook and Directory, 1993-1994'.

He gained his BSc in 1954 at the University of Cape Town (Hons Geology and Geography), and an MSc in 1958 at McGill University Montreal (Applied Geochemistry) where he spent the summer months as Party Leader on geological mapping and mineral exploration projects in the wilds of Newfoundland, Ontario and Quebec. His mapping of part of the Lake St John anorthosite complex formed the basis of his PhD in 1962 at University of London, King's College.

From 1955-63 Jevan was Party Chief in charge of reconnaissance and detailed geological mapping, geochemical and mineral exploration surveys of mainly Precambrian terrains in Canada, the USA and Greenland. Jevan joined the Greenland Geological Survey and spent two summers on primary geological mapping and mineral exploration in south west Greenland. From 1964-65 he took up a lectureship at the University of Nigeria in Enugu teaching mineralogy-petrology, structural geology, photogeology and geological mapping, until the start of the Nigerian civil war caused him to return to the UK.

In 1966 he joined the British Institute of Geological Sciences (later renamed the British Geological Survey (BGS)). Working in the Overseas Division, Jevan had its acronym (BIGSOD) printed on t-shirts for himself and all team members. For the remainder of his career Jevan was involved in Technical Assistance projects in better-developing countries on behalf of the British Government. He worked on projects in Guyana, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Jordan. His duties included project identification for BGS, research, consultancy, training, editing reports and maps for publication, regional and detailed geological mapping, and mineral exploration variously oriented towards precious metals, base metals, gemstones and industrial minerals.

In 1968 while attending the International Geological Congress (IGC) in Prague, Jevan stepped out of his hotel to find himself facing two tanks with soldiers on top of them. The Russians had invaded and the 'Prague Spring' and IGC both came to an abrupt end. He dashed back to his hotel room to fetch his camera and then spent the next 24 hours prowling the streets taking photographs of the Soviet occupation of Prague. The following day, having run out of film Jevan left Prague and travelled back to the UK independently. On the first leg to Vienna, Russian troops boarded the train to examine passengers' luggage, but they did not find the rolls of film hidden by Jevan in his umbrella. Back in London he sold the photographs to Camera Press and they were subsequently printed in national newspapers around the world and in Time magazine.

He considered the highlight of his career was documented in 'Operation El Dorado - A geological mapping project in southern Guyana 1966-71, reminiscences of a geologist.' This involved the first

ever systematic topographic and geological mapping south of latitude 4° N, a largely unmapped region of 78,000sq kms. The project involved aerial photo interpretation in the UK and four expeditions, each lasting approximately 100 days, into tropical forest with two canoes and five Amerindian assistants, travelling circa 3,700km in aggregate. Jevan was a great admirer of the Amerindians, in particular the Wai-wai people, an ethnic group in southern Guyana and Brazil. He paid tribute to the Amerindians in his acceptance speech for the Busk Medal, saying that their expertise as canoeists and bushmen made the expeditions possible and that he knew of “no better travelling companions”. He was a life long term member of Survival International, the global movement for tribal people’s rights, having joined shortly after it was founded.

He subsequently wrote a paper, ‘A guide to the Essequibo River’ published by the Royal Geographical Society. In 1971, on secondment from BGS to the BBC, he was logistics consultant and navigator on a circa 1,200km hovercraft expedition from Manaus, Brazil, to Georgetown, Guyana. The trip was to promote the British Cushioncraft CC7 hovercraft and to produce a feature film ‘The Forbidden Route’ for ‘The World About Us’ series.

From 1979-83, Jevan was Team Leader of the second phase of Anglo-Bolivian Proyecto Precámbrico, at that time the largest and longest technical cooperation project mounted by BGS in terms of budget, personnel and area surveyed. It was the first ever scientific topographic and geological mapping and mineral exploration of 220,000sq kms of an inaccessible region largely covered by tropical forest of the lowlands of eastern Bolivia.

Jevan’s publications included 26 geological and topographic maps, 40 substantial scientific papers, survey reports and memoirs and 20 preliminary reports, newspaper articles and discussion papers and for over 40 years, had extensive worldwide field experience. Jevan's travels resulted in a large collection of artefacts many of which he donated to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, in Exeter, in particular an Amerindian headdress which is on display.

In retirement, he continued canoeing leading a team of four on his 1996 ‘Okavango over 50’ expedition, the first unsupported open canoe expedition to navigate 450km of the Okavango Delta, Botswana. In 1999, he led a team of six on an unsupported open canoe expedition travelling 740km down the Yukon River tracing part of the notorious Klondike Trail of the 1898 Alaskan gold rush. He continued to canoe on the rivers and estuaries in Devon and Cornwall until ill-health intervened.

Jevan is survived by his wife, two daughters, son, and four grandchildren, who will greatly miss him.