

Professor John Cooke

Professor Harold John Cooke, FRGS and long serving Fellow, passed away in May 2019 at the age of 92. Professor Cooke pursued a successful career in Geographic academia.

He attended Manchester University on a scholarship and graduated with a Geography degree in 1948. Following a year's National Service in the Intelligence Corps in Egypt he was accepted for training at Christ Church College, Cambridge and posted to Tanganyika as a District Officer (cadet) in 1951. There followed a series of postings, mostly in the districts surrounding Lake Victoria, and culminating in appointment as District Commissioner in the Bukoba District in 1960.

John enjoyed the life of an administrator, and was deeply interested in the links between people and the land, a topic which he was to pursue later as an academic. An accomplished mountaineer, he used his leave to climb the mountains of East Africa. He made three ascents of Mt Kilimanjaro, including, in 1957, the first recorded ascent of the Heim Glacier, and the first west-east transect across the entire massif. In 1956 he married Sylvia Kaufmann, who became his partner and support in his many adventures. From these experiences in 1971 Professor Cooke took an opportunity to start up the Department of Environmental Science at the new Botswana campus of the University of Botswana, Lesotho.

Out in the field, John set out to redefine the geomorphology and Quaternary history of the region, starting with the karst of the Gcwihahe Caves in Ngamiland, and moving onto the massive palaeolakes of northern Botswana, in particular the Makgadikgadi Basin. He published nearly fifty papers in all. He also revived his interest in resource issues, and helped to organise several symposia on behalf of the Botswana Society and the Kalahari Conservation Society on critical topics such as the cattle industry and wildlife management.

John and Sylvia moved to the Brecon Beacons in 1991 for a quiet retirement. He is survived by a daughter, two sons and three grandchildren.

Selected publications

Cooke, H.J. 1975 The paleoclimatic significance of caves and adjacent landforms in the Kalahari of western Ngamiland, Botswana. *Geographical Journal* 141: 430-44.

Cooke, H.J. 1980 Landform evolution in the context of climatic change and neo-tectonism in the Middle Kalahari of northern central Botswana. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 5: 80-99

Cooke, H.J. 1985 The Kalahari today: a case of conflict over resource use. *Geographical Journal* 151:75-85.