

## Obituary

### ROBIN CLAYTON 1960–2005



Robin Clayton was in the middle of his career as a geochemist when he died suddenly at home on 1st October 2005. He had research interests in the application of heavy metal isotopes in environmental geochemistry and archaeology, and was also an accomplished field geologist. At the time of his death, he held a post-doctoral position in the UCL-Birkbeck Thermochronology research group working on the development of U-Th/He measurement procedures for thermochronometry and applying the method to construct a time framework for the early stages of Himalayan formation.

Robin was born in Mitcham, South London, to Marian and Ted Clayton and a brother to Lesley. Educated locally at Lonesome Primary School and then at Pollards Hill High School, he enjoyed fishing as a teenager and inherited an interest in classic motorbikes and cars but rocks were his first love, leaving little time for other hobbies, although he developed a love of cooking. After finishing school, Robin worked with BT as a draughtsman, but found that office life was not for him so he returned to studying, choosing geology as his subject, and obtained a HND at Dulwich College.

While working as a geological technician in West London College, his interest in geology led him to become a mature student at Birkbeck College, University of London. He impressed his lecturers with his quiet determination to succeed in science. He was an excellent student, producing a superb map of his field area (Carrock Fell in the Lake District) for his BSc dissertation, and getting the highest mark in his Geochemistry class. It was a tribute to his organisational ability that he was able to study so intently in the evening while holding down a full-time job during the day. He also won a bursary to attend a summer field course run by the Geological Survey and funded by NERC. He achieved a First Class Honours Degree in 1987, proving that geology and earth science were his forte. In the era before computer graphics, his family were always on hand to decipher his handwriting, type his reports, and to take and develop photographs.

From London, Robin moved to Exeter to become a field geologist with the British Geological Survey, based at the University of Exeter but working in north Cornwall. This led him

to undertake a PhD degree on the mineralization of the Wadebridge-Camelford district under his supervisor Richard Scrivener, for which he produced an excellent thesis. During this time he extended his understanding of Earth Sciences by working on various geochemistry consultancy projects in Exeter for such organisations as Greenpeace, BP and Associated Roadstone Quarries. As is typical for a postdoctoral scientist, the next few years saw Robin in a range of posts. He went to the University of Manchester where he expanded his portfolio of analytical techniques to include mass spectrometry and the use of lasers. At Oxford University he had supervised and managed the archaeological isotope laboratories, extending his interests into analytical archaeology. Robin always worked with determination, quiet good humour and an even temper – essential tools for any laboratory-based geochemist. Finally he came back to London where he completed the full circle of academic life by lecturing for a year at Birkbeck College in igneous and metamorphic petrology and leading field classes. He also secured prestigious research grants from the Royal Society and the European Union, to continue his isotope geochemistry research, and worked with colleagues at the Natural History Museum in London, in Stockholm and Freiburg. His research interests included the development of measurement protocols for Sn, Cu and Zn isotopes, redox-dependent fractionation of transition metal isotopes, the application of heavy element isotope systems to environmental science, and the application of isotope geochemistry in archaeometry. His recent papers included discussions on Fe isotope fractionation in low temperature processes (published in collaboration with colleagues in Birkbeck and Stockholm), a method for determining the isotopic composition of Sn (with colleagues in Oxford and Stockholm) and the use of Pb isotopes in archaeology. He was an excellent colleague who is greatly missed by his friends, colleagues and students in Birkbeck and UCL.

### Selected References

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HILARY DOWNES