

## **Dennis Ward: a tribute**

Dennis died on 10 February 2018, aged 83, following a heart attack. He was a founder member of the Club and had supported it with regular attendance at lectures and social events for 40 years. In the early years he took part in the camping trips and all those founder members know about Dennis and the 'tent'.

We all knew little snippets of Dennis' life but I don't think any of us had a full picture. From comments received from many of you it is clear that we all thought there was more to Dennis than met the eye. We all had a soft spot for him.

Dennis was brought to Horsham with his younger brother at the outbreak of the Second World War. They had lived in London. Horsham was his mother's home town. They lived in Swindon Road and then the Ridgeway. In the early 80s Dennis bought his little terraced house in Trafalgar Road, opposite the Nelson Pub where he remained until his death.

On arrival in Horsham he was sent to the Council School but he was very unhappy there and his parents paid for him to go to private schools. He certainly spent some happy years at Gaveston Hall in Nuthurst.

On leaving school he had a succession of odd jobs such as painting and decorating (He did some work at Jan Clayden's). He was then taken on at the engineering firm Emcel Filters Ltd. in Redkirk Way; probably in the early 1960's. He worked on a machine that produced rubber flanges or 'O' rings. He and his machine were together until his retirement in the late 90s. By this time he was the only person who, with constant care and attention, could keep it running. He was very proud of this. He once said that he had no idea how many components he had made but laid end to end they surely would have reached the moon.

His fortnight's holiday each year was spent travelling all over Europe and he also went to Africa. From each place he brought back a mineral, rock or fossil sample. He also frequented many of the rock and fossil fairs. When his brother had to clear his house he found geological samples everywhere, packed away in match boxes and cigarette packets.

He continued to attend the Christmas Parties at Emcel up to his death. The old family firm always presented him with a turkey at Christmas which he would share with friends and neighbours providing one of them cooked it. For many years he also helped a friend with the care of her elderly mother and would take over care completely to allow the daughter to go away on holiday. Apart from geology, ballroom dancing was also one of his lifelong hobbies.

Although he was not overly articulate, on many occasions at the Club lectures he displayed a wide knowledge of geology which often surprised us all. Gordon Judge recalls: "I particularly remember him being the only one to correctly identify as tektites the "stones from outer space" that our September 2007 speaker, Mrs Ann Fereday, wore as a necklace. She almost ran to where he was sitting, embraced him and gave him a small prize!" At meetings he always offered to help and was always happy to carry things up and down the stairs. Bill Luck remembers that when he and Chris first joined it was Dennis who introduced himself and chatted about the Club.

We are sad that he has gone but he led a very contented life. On the day he collapsed he had driven himself out to one of his favourite pubs for lunch – 'The White Horse' near Maplehurst – close to Gaveston Hall.