PROFILE

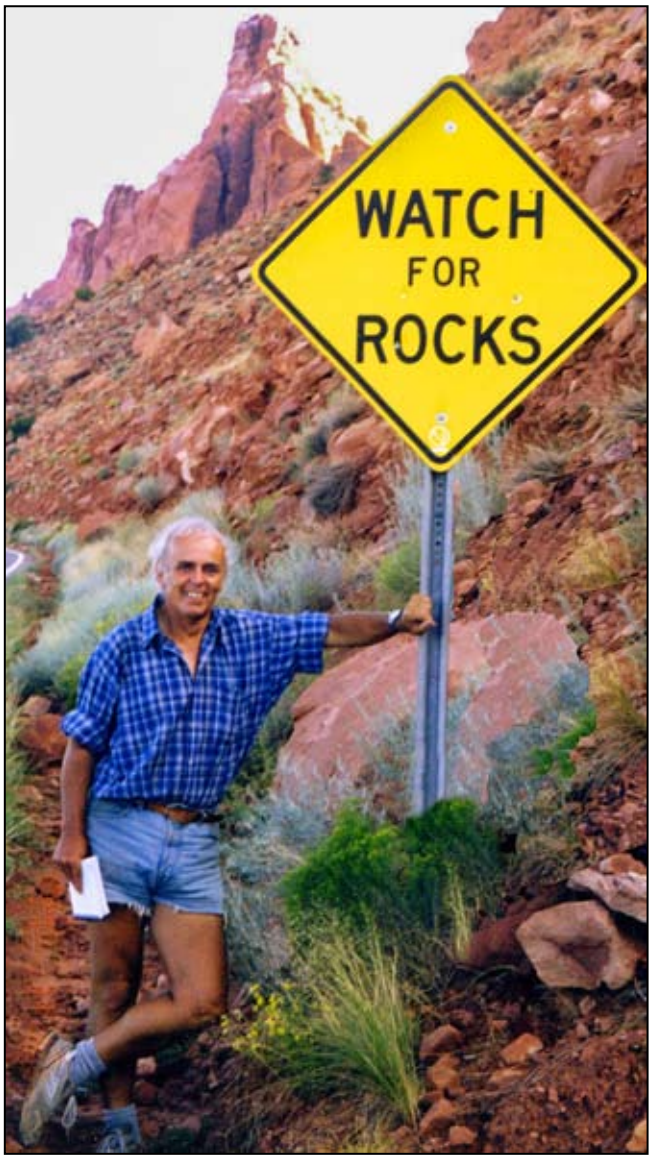
Tony Waltham

Our new president studied at Imperial College, London for a degree in geology and then a doctorate in hard-rock mining geology (with two summers of fieldwork in Norway's mines extracting massive sulphide ores), during which time he took to the gentle sport of caving. Plans for a career in exploration geology were therefore abandoned because long summers were required for caving expeditions to distant limestone regions. But fortuitously, Tony had found that he could teach, when he had to resort to part-time lecturing while completing his PhD thesis in London. A lecturing post at Trent Polytechnic (under its various names) was then the farthest north available that year, though it did concern the geology of coal mining, when he could barely recognise a sedimentary rock.

Cave exploration and mapping continued mainly in the Yorkshire Dales, with summer jaunts that included Greece, Iran, the Himalayas, Mulu in Borneo, and the first-ever expedition to the caves of China. Meanwhile Trent's mining department closed, so Tony was moved into civil engineering. Trent was a great teaching institution where research was minimal, but he dabbled in studies of caves, sinkholes and ground subsidence in a progression into engineering geology; and was later awarded the prestigious Glossop Medal by the Engineering Group of the Geological Society. Student projects at Trent also drew him into involvement with the sandstone caves of Nottingham, especially related to their stability. Later, he ventured into consultancy in engineering geology, but restricted himself to problems with karst and sinkholes as the themes he understood well. These included searching for water supplies by exploring caves in Java, and also multiple visits to the new oil pipelines being built across Turkey and across large chunks of spectacular gypsum karst.

While still at Trent in the 1990s, he became too old for serious caving expeditions each summer, so took to running grand field excursions for mature students and amateur geologists, going to faraway destinations with exciting geology. The first were to the western USA, and then to the volcanoes of Italy, to the deserts of Syria and Jordan, to the wilds of Alaska, and the last was a magnificent finale, to the volcanoes of Kamchatka in the far east of Russia.

Travel to unusual and interesting far-off places was almost a lifelong obsession, and was always with his wife Jan (essential scale for geological photographs), once caving expeditions were in the past. Together they have visited most of the countries in Asia, including Burma, Tibet, North Korea and many parts of China. India is their favourite, travelling light on the trains and local buses, rarely booking ahead and just enjoying that great country, its delightful people and even various bits of its geology.



A photograph from an excursion to the USA during the 1990s, because Tony considers that more recent photos of an old person would not be welcome.

Backpacking, and even trekking in the Himalayas, became less appropriate with maturing years, but Tony maintained the travelling by taking to lecturing on the cruise ships. A huge collection of photographs that had been gathered over the years, along with all the first-hand experience of independent travel, now enables him to lecture on the landscapes and fun bits of the geology on cruise itineraries all over the world.

Writing and editing books and journals has long been an enjoyable sideline. This included a stint of 20 years with the *Mercian Geologist*, though even that has now ended, and he has been switched into a shorter stint with the grand title of Hon. Pres. of your Society. During the recent period of pandemic travel restrictions, Tony took the time to develop his website, at www.geophotos.co.uk, as an accessible archive of academic papers, photographs and records of travels. So, for further information on your new president, take a look online.