

OBITUARY

ALAN GODFREY CROCKER, DSc, FInstP, CEng, FSA (1935–2018)

Alan Crocker, who died in June aged 82, was a Professor of Physics at the University of Surrey. He was one of the team who had first worked at Battersea College of Technology, its precursor, and was keen to use archaeology and history to leaven the inevitably scientific bias of the new university.

Alan was born in Pontypridd in South Wales. He graduated in Mathematics from Imperial College London in 1956 and obtained his PhD in Theoretical Metallurgy from the University of Sheffield in 1959, when he joined the staff of the Physics Department of Battersea College of Technology as a Lecturer. He became Head of the Theoretical Solid State Physics Group and was promoted to become a Reader and then in 1981 a Professor, and his own research resulted in about 150 research papers in leading scientific journals. He served on two occasions as Head of Department. For many years he was Chairman of the University Delegacy that validated the degrees awarded to students in Associated Institutions and for three years he was Chairman of the national Council of Validating Universities.

In the 1970s he excavated at the moated site in the royal park at Guildford and encouraged the writer to set up a series of lectures on archaeological subjects at the university, which later became focused on industrial archaeology and still continues (although no longer at the University). These talks served to provide a suitable environment for the creation of the Surrey Industrial History Group (SIHG) under the umbrella of the Surrey Archaeological Society (SyAS), where it remains. Alan encouraged other archaeological activity at the university that included working with the late Tony Clark on the development of geophysical survey methods.



Alan Crocker giving one of his award-winning demonstrations of paper-making.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, served for four years as President of the Surrey Archaeological Society and chaired several national industrial archaeology societies. He was a key founder member and long-time chairman of SIHG as well as a chairman of the Surrey Local History Committee and most recently an Honorary Vice-President of SyAS. With Glenys, his wife, he put Surrey's industrial history on the map and carried out nationally important research into paper-making and gunpowder production, both well-represented in the county. This led also to a passion for watermills and the eventual preservation of the water turbine from Catteshall Mill near Godalming, the largest and best-preserved of its type in the country, now at the Ironbridge Museum. He published about 100 research papers in this field and, with Glenys, several books.

Alan instituted SIHG's annual presentation of a plaque for the best industrial heritage project that continues to this day. There is a great deal more to Surrey's industrial heritage than might be expected, reflected in one of Alan's favourite quotations about the valley of the Tillingbourne, with its many mill sites, which he studied in some detail. It figures in one of William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*:

This valley, which seems to have been created by a bountiful providence, as one of the choicest retreats of man, which seems formed for a scene of innocence and happiness, has been, by ungrateful man, so perverted as to make it instrumental in effecting two of the most damnable of purposes; in carrying into execution two of the most damnable inventions that ever sprang from the minds of man under the influence of the devil! Namely, the making of gunpowder and of banknotes!

Alan was a genial and well-liked presence at a wide range of SyAS activities. Even recently he could be found demonstrating the art of making paper from rags at a Society symposium where he and Glenys were jointly awarded first prize on behalf of SIHG: Alan for the demonstration and Glenys for the accompanying display. He will be greatly missed.

DAVID BIRD