

Institute of Metals has performed a great service to the growing number of students of the history of technology in making available this valuable document at a very reasonable price. Despite any reservations, it tells the evolving story of the activities of one of the towering figures of Victorian times — one of the most important of “that line of tinkerers that had made the Industrial Revolution”, as one eminent writer put it in recent years.

K C Barraclough,

## Obituary

*Professor David Gordon Tucker* died at his home at Barnt Green, near Birmingham, on March 8th 1990 aged 75. Dogged by ill health for several years Gordon Tucker had not been seen at HMS meetings for some time but nevertheless had continued to write and publish on industrial history particularly on the subject of water-powered engineering. His studies on the derivation and manufacture of millstones will remain standard references for many years to come.

*‘It is our purpose here to examine this evidence and by relating it to known developments in technology elsewhere, to speculate on what processes were used . . .’* These words, written in a JHMS article in 1976 sum up his approach to the history of technology and it was this systematic manner which made his writings so much appreciated in publications ranging from *Bulletins of local industrial archaeological societies* to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Gordon Tucker was a very eminent electrical and communications engineer. Indeed he was *Professor and Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering* at the *University of Birmingham* from 1955 until he retired in 1973. But he was also a very inquisitive man. Once his interest had been aroused, in almost any subject, a finely honed investigative mechanism slipped into action resulting in extensive examination of the physical remains (assisted by gum-boots and a billhook wielded in a very determined manner) followed by meticulous assessment of all the documentary evidence. This would be followed as a matter of course by an extremely scholarly ‘learned paper’ the publication of which would without exception, add to the accumulated store of knowledge.

We first met Gordon and Mary at a Newcomen Society Summer Meeting in Glasgow in 1969. We were already members of the Historical Metallurgy Group (as it then was) and the Tuckers quickly shared our enthusiasm. Afterwards we met regularly at Aberystwyth Summer Schools, in mid-Wales and in the Forest of Dean where we scrambled amongst the ruins of lead mines and iron smelting sites. Gordon and Mary had a cottage in the Wye Valley and glorious days in the summer sunshine led to extensive joint examinations of the metallurgical remains of the area around Tintern and Monmouth.

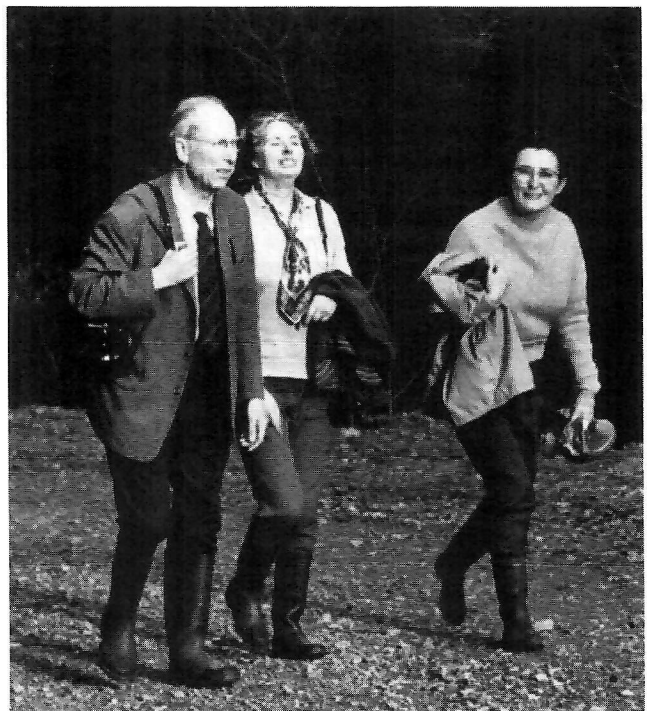
Papers appearing in *Historical Metallurgy* between 1975 and 1981 testify to Gordon’s devotion to copper smelting, brass-making and wire-drawing activities in the district.

Apart from his specialist interests Gordon Tucker was always prepared to take an active part in the administration of organisations involved. He served as a Council Member of HMS and was a Council Member and Vice-President of Newcomen until 1984. From 1979 until 1984 he was a Commissioner with the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Buildings in Wales and from its inception until his death was a prime mover in the work of the Midland Wind and Water Mills Group.

Born in Walthamstow he graduated at the University of London (BSc 1936, PhD 1943 and DSc 1948) and joined the GPO at Dollis Hill Research Station in 1934 moving to the Royal Navy Scientific Service in 1950 and to Birmingham in 1955. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1984.

These then are a very few milestones in a long and distinguished academic career. But to those fortunate enough to form lasting friendships there are countless happy memories. Measuring an extremely involved water mill at Longtown on the River Monnow, scrambling along a nettle infested leat above Penalt in the Wye Valley and for relaxation? taking part in a gradually accelerating game of Monopoly in a cosy cottage parlour. This was Gordon Tucker the family man, the fellow enthusiast for so many things which we hold precious and who will be sadly missed.

Joan and Roy Day



*Professor Gordon Tucker, Mary Tucker and Joan Day. Wye Valley c1970.*