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## In Memoriam

## Sidney Henry Haughton, BA, DSc, Hon LLD, Hon DSc, FRS, FGS, Hon FRSSAfr (1888–1982)

On May 24th, 1982, seventeen days after his 94th birthday, Dr. Sidney H. Haughton died in Johannesburg after a short illness. In his younger days he was himself a cricketing man, and his was an innings of which he could deservedly be proud. His career in geology and palaeontology was remarkable; his long life of service to his profession was distinguished in every way.

He was born in Bethnal Green, London, on May 7th, 1888, the oldest child of Henry Charles Haughton and his wife Alice. All of his schooling took place in the London suburb of Walthamstow, where he matriculated from the Technical Institute at the age of 14. While at this school he was taught by two men whom he credited with laying the foundations of his interest in geology, namely Dr. J.S. Bridges (Headmaster) and Mr. A.W. Upton (Physics teacher). Encouraged by his teachers he sat several examinations of the City and Guilds Institute, ultimately passing the Intermediate B.Sc. of London University, and later earning election to an Exhibition tenable at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. After a year at Cambridge his Exhibition was converted to a scholarship. He read the Natural Sciences Tripos, specialising in geology in Part II under Woods and Harker, and graduated B.A. in 1909.

After a two-year spell of teaching at Clayesmore School in Berkshire, during which he played first-class cricket for Reading, Haughton was informed by the Cambridge University Appointments Board that it had recommended him for the vacant post of Assistant in Geology and Palaeontology at the South African Museum in Cape Town. He was offered the post and accepted it. He sailed for South Africa and landed in Table Bay on September 15, 1911.



Dr. S.H. Haughton, at the age of 93 (1981). (Photo courtesy *South African Panorama*)

During his early service in the museum under the directorship of Dr. L. Peringuey, Haughton was in close daily touch with two members of the Cape Geological Commission, which had not yet been incorporated into the Geological Survey of the fledgling Union of South Africa. These two giants of South African geology, A.W. Rogers and A.L. du Toit, took the young Haughton under their wing and introduced him to the rich geology of his new home. During his life he frequently paid tribute to these two for their guidance, friendship and kindness to him in those early years and afterwards. Both men have their own names deeply graven in the chronicles of South Africa's scientific history, and Haughton's now goes to join theirs.

Largely through the early influence of Robert Broom, another of the giants of early South African science who was then still associated with the South African Museum, Haughton's research initially focussed on the fossils of the Karoo Sequence. He concentrated on what were then known simply as the *Tapinocephalus* and *Cistecephalus* zones of the Beaufort Group, and on the "Stormberg Series", but his general interests ranged very widely across the whole spectrum of geology and palaeobiology. In due course he submitted a thesis on the fauna and stratigraphy of the Stormberg Series to the University of Cape Town which resulted in the award of a Doctorate in Science in 1921.

It was published in 1924, and it was soon to establish itself as a seminal pioneering work in South African palaeontology. This one paper has inspired a great deal of research down the years, including several of the papers that make up this commemorative volume.

In 1920 he resigned from the South African Museum, where he had in the meantime been promoted to Assistant Director, to join the Cape Town staff of the Geological Survey as Senior Geologist, under the directorship of one of his earlier mentors, Dr. A.W. Rogers. As he was placed in charge of the Cape Town office, which was located within the grounds of the South African Museum, he was able to maintain his close links with the museum and its growing fossil collections which he continued to help build up as Honorary Palaeontologist.

In January 1934 Haughton was appointed Director of the Geological Survey of South Africa and moved to Pretoria where he was to live, with minor interruptions, for little less than the next half century. He remained Director until his official retirement at 60 years of age in 1948. During his term of office the complement of trained geologists on the staff increased from ten to about 70, and several major innovations were introduced in the work of the survey. One such was the initiation of a large countrywide programme of aerial photography to speed up the geological mapping of the country. During the war years (1939–45) the Geological Survey and he as its Director became involved in a number of activities of considerable strategic importance.

He was appointed by the Prime Minister, General J.C. Smuts, to a body known as the Industrial and Agricultural Requirements Commission, and he was appointed Controller of Non-ferrous Metals to regulate the use of these resources under war conditions. In 1943 he was appointed to lead a South African Scientific Mission to the United States, where it was attached to the South African Embassy in Washington – a parallel to similar scientific missions from other allied countries established in the U.S. capital during the war. This appointment lasted until the end of the war, and it later had a number of important consequences. One of them was the instigation of a renewed and intensified search for uranium ores in South Africa, a task assigned to a specially formed unit of the Geological Survey. Haughton was so personally involved in this assignment that on his retirement from the directorship of the Survey in 1948 he was immediately re-employed as Officer-in-charge of the Uranium Sub-unit. Later a Uranium Research Committee was formed, to be replaced ultimately by the Atomic Energy Board (now the Nuclear Development Corporation). The Fuel Research Institute and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R.) were two other major statutory bodies with which he had close ties as a member of their Boards of Control. Indeed, the very establishment of the C.S.I.R. was at least partly attributable to Haughton, following discussion which he and Sir Basil Schonland had on the matter at the time with the Prime Minister, General Smuts.

Haughton disliked narrow parochialism and nationalism in science. His own outlook was thoroughly international, and much of his active life was spent in promoting international contacts among scientists. It began in 1929, when the 15th International Geological Congress was held in South Africa. He was a member of the organizing committee for that meeting, and during the course of the congress he was appointed Secretary of the newly formed Sub-commission on the Gondwana System. Later he was to serve a ten-year term (1957–67) as its President under the IUGS, and he chaired the organizing committee of the memorable Second Gondwana Symposium which was held in South Africa in 1970.

Another very productive international phase of his career began in 1954, when he was appointed Inter-African Geological Correspondent of the Scientific Committee of Africa South of the Sahara (CSA), a body set up by the inter-governmental Council for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA) to co-ordinate scientific research throughout this vast area. Haughton and his sole assistant, Mrs. A.L. Gové, set up their offices in Pretoria and for the next eight years rendered signal service to the science of geology through their dissemination of new knowledge on African geology. His duties enabled him to travel very widely in sub-Saharan Africa, and as a direct result of his firsthand experiences in the field in many African countries he was able to compile his

major book, *The Stratigraphic History of Africa South of the Sahara,* which was published in 1963.

In the most complete bibliography of Haughton available at the time of writing (one compiled in about 1975 by Susan Alexander) he has seven books, 209 substantive papers and 339 abstracts to his credit, as well as 13 geological maps. In anybody's language these are impressive statistics. Furthermore, his work is of enduring quality: his 1924 paper on the Stormberg remains fundamentally valid and widely referred to today; his 1954 edition of du Toit's *Geology of South Africa,* his own 1963 book on sub-Saharan geology and his *Geological History of Southern Africa* (1969), remain standard texts; in 1931 he wrote a paper on fossil frogs from Namaqualand – no less than fifty years later these same specimens were re-investigated by a prominent palaeoherpetologist, Dr. R. Estes who expressed his admiration of Haughton's astute observations and accurate identification. These are just a few examples that testify to the long-term currency of his work.

Haughton had a long and close association with the University of the Witwatersrand. He was appointed Honorary Scientific Director of the Bernard Price Institute for Palaeontological Research at the University in 1951, in which post he served until 1973, and he remained intimately associated with the BPI as Honorary Editor of this journal and Consultant to the Director until his death. He received honorary degrees from three South African Universities – Cape Town, Hon. L.L.D. (1947); Witwatersrand, Hon. D.Sc. (1964); and Natal, Hon. D.Sc. (1967).

Apart from the award of these honorary degrees, he was also honoured by a number of other organisations in South Africa and abroad. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, the Royal Society of South Africa (Honorary Fellow) the Geological Societies of London, America and Belgium; he was an honorary member of the Mountain Club of South Africa and of the Geological Society of South Africa. At one time or another he had served as President or as member of the governing bodies of most of these organisations as well as of the South African Geographical Society, and the Associated Scientific and Technical Societies (AS & TS).

His life was indeed one of unstinting service to his profession, country and community. He saw a clear distinction between the mere acquisition of knowledge, which he regarded simply as a personal phenomenon, and the gift of wisdom, which he perceived as the use of knowledge for the benefit of mankind as a whole. In his application of acquired knowledge Sidney Haughton clearly demonstrated that he possessed profound wisdom. This, combined with his great personal integrity, earned him the deep respect and admiration of all who knew him and worked with him. Physically he was tall, slim and upright in bearing. In later life his silver, wavy hair added considerably to the air of stateliness and dignity that always surrounded him. Unhurried, meticulous, and always conservatively immaculate in a formal dark business suit, he was regarded by some as slightly aloof and the epitome of the "unflappable" English gentleman. Those privileged to know him as a friend knew the warmth of personality and depth of human feeling within him.

He met his wife, Edith, not long after his arrival in Cape Town. They both had a deep love of music – he had a fine bass-baritone voice, and she was an accomplished pianist. They married in December 1914 (he always said that this was the most important event in his life), and throughout their long and fulfilling life together music played an important role in the Haughton family circle. Many an entertaining musical evening was spent at their home over the years in the company of their friends. Haughton himself was especially fond of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and he was often to be seen, even late in life, marching along with a spring in his step to some rousing chorus from 'G & S' which he sang to himself.

With his passing has closed an important chapter in South Africa's scientific history. He was one of the last of the scientific pioneers in South Africa, and one of the greatest. His career spanned the transition into the modern technological age, and he himself made the transition easily and enthusiastically. Yet he firmly maintained right to the end that "the three main requirements of a good geologist are : to observe, observe and observe." The durable quality of his own work clearly indicates the quality of his own observations. A remarkable feature of his life is that the greater part of his scientific contribution was made after his retirement!

He is survived by Edith – his wife and life-long companion – and by his daughter Joan, and son, Leslie. To them go the sympathies of admirers of S.H. Haughton the world over.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Having myself had the privilege of knowing Haughton for only a relatively short time, I am grateful to a number of my colleagues for sharing with me their memories of this Grand Old Man. In particular I thank Drs. James Kitching and Judy Maguire. The main portrait that illustrates this note is published with the kind permission of the Editor, *South African Panorama.*

Notwithstanding all of this help, this memorial could not have been written were it not for a detailed autobiographical note which Haughton wrote in about 1976, of which a copy is housed in the library named after him here in the Bernard Price Institute. His son, Leslie, permitted me to use it freely in preparing this note, and for this I am grateful.

This memorial is adapted from one prepared by me for the S.H. Haughton Memorial Lecture.

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