

## Obituary: Judith Ann Lawson, née Turner (1937-2022)



Judith Lawson was a Kentish Maid born at Gravesend, the only child of her parents Stuart and Enid Turner. She survived the war years at home and with a period of evacuation to Pembrokeshire. She enjoyed physical geology at school, and encouraged by her chemistry teacher, applied to study geology at Bedford College in the University of London, which in those days was only open to female students. Judith graduated with a degree in geology in 1959. It may be difficult for younger people to appreciate, but in those days women in geology were a rarity so Judith was a pioneer in the discipline, and even more so when she undertook a PhD based in Grenoble in the French Alps. She was awarded a NATO studentship, the main source of finance for overseas study at that time, as once again she was a pioneer for British students studying abroad. Her PhD project involved mapping Jurassic and Cretaceous rocks in the region of Bochainne (Beauchêne), a part of the subalpine chains, with complex structures and lots of fossils. Her supervisors were Prof. B.C. King in London and M.J. Debelmas in Grenoble. Judith had to learn to speak French on the hoof, and remained in contact with the many French friends she met at this time. She submitted for the Diplôme d'Études Supérieures in Grenoble in 1962 (in French) and for her PhD in London in 1963 (see publication list below).

In 1962 she moved to the University of Glasgow, where she worked as an assistant lecturer for three years under Professor T.N. George. During this time, she published papers on the Oxford Clay of Skye, Scalpay, and Eigg (1966) and the ammonites of the Oxford Clay of Skye (1970). This was when she also met her future husband Jim Lawson, but then fell foul of university regulations which in those days did not permit married spouses to work in the same department. During this period, she and Prof King led a Geological Society of London Student's Instructional tour to France in 1964.

For a few years she taught geology classes in the Adult and Extramural Department at Glasgow University (now known as Short Courses), which then ran courses over a large area of western Scotland. In 1976 she and Jim published the guidebook "Geology Explained around Glasgow and South-West Scotland, including Arran", which they dedicated to "our extra-mural students". This book grew out of the many extramural classes given by Judith and Jim.

Her next career move was to work in the Civil Engineering Department at Paisley College of Technology, now part of the University of the West of Scotland at Paisley. Here she undertook regular consultancy work on natural stone masonry and developed a long-standing interest in the building stones of Glasgow, and in particular finding the quarries from which the stone was produced. The day release students working in Glasgow provided many samples of the facing stones being used. She published a guide to Building Stones of Glasgow in 1981, with descriptions of the rocks used and where they came from. It described three walks in the centre of Glasgow, and a fourth around the University of Glasgow. A further guide was published as Excursion 1 in the Geological Society of Glasgow's Geological Excursions around Glasgow and Girvan, which can be found in the BGS Earthwise online series ([Building stones of Glasgow - an excursion - Earthwise \(bgs.ac.uk\)](http://bgs.ac.uk)). Judith also published an article on the sandstone quarries of Glasgow (1983), which showed the position of numerous ancient quarries, which have now totally disappeared, including several along what is now Byres Road. Judith was also a fabulous teacher, inspiring students of all ages and retaining her love of palaeontology. She carefully built up the fossil teaching collections at Paisley as well as her own personal collection. Judith joined the Geological Society of Glasgow in 1962 and served as president from 1985 to 1988.

For many years Judith and Jim had a cottage at Ellenabeich (island of Seil) where they spent many holidays with their children Anne and David. Judith loved travelling and explored many parts of the world on busman holidays (and real holidays) with Jim, and after his death on her own or with her many friends. Madeira was a favourite destination and Japan was a particular highlight for her.

After Jim's death in 2005, Judith moved to Beetham in the South Lakes District of Cumbria where she lived for 16 years. Jokingly she said that this was equidistant from Anne in Oxford and David in Glasgow. David promptly left for Australia, and Anne is now living back in Scotland. She joined the Westmorland Geological Society, becoming Field Meetings Secretary 2009-2012 and Lecture Secretary 2009-2014, and also became a member of the local Women's Rural Institute. One of us (MK) had many pleasant weekends at Beetham visiting local geological sites and tourist attractions. Even after retirement, Judith maintained her love of field geology. In May 2008, together with Mike Keen, she led a field trip to the French Alps, centred around her old stamping grounds of Grenoble and Briançon, for the University of Glasgow Department of Adult and Continuing Education. This was the first of three university overseas trips she led with Mike; the others were to the Western Pyrenees in June 2012 and Provence in May 2014.

Judith had a love of theatre and music, and during her stay in Beetham kept in touch with Glasgow life by regularly attending Scottish Chamber Orchestra concerts with her friends Evelyn Lennie and Peter and Helena Barton, and attending Glasgow Geological Society events. She was a keen gardener, with green fingers, especially with growing vegetables; the nearby garden centre at Beetham came in quite handy. She had many interests, and travelling with her, especially in France, meant visiting lots of Romanesque churches, examining architecture, bird watching, and looking for wild flowers amongst other activities.

Judith will be missed by many. She was a pioneering academic, an inspirational teacher, a loyal and generous friend, a dedicated wife, and a very proud mother.

## **THESES**

The geology of the southern Bochainne and north-western Céüse (Hautes Alpes) in south east France, French Alps. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1963.

Étude tectonique des plis subalpins entre Lus-la-Croix-Haute et Veynes (Hautes-Alps). Diplome d'Études Supérieures, University of Grenoble, 1962.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **As J.A. Turner**

Upper Jurassic and Lower Cretaceous microfossils from the Hautes-Alps, 1965, *Palaeontology*, **8**, 391-6.

Landslips near La Faurie and Veynes, Hautes-Alpes, France, 1966, *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, **76**, 435-442.

The Oxford Clay of Skye, Scalpay and Eigg, 1966, *Scottish Journal of Geology*, **2**, 243-252,

The ammonites of the Bukowskii Subzone of the Oxfordian of Skye, 1970, *Scottish Journal of Geology*, **6**, 371-378.

### **As Judith Lawson**

Geology Explained around Glasgow and South-West Scotland, including Arran, with Jim (James Lawson and Judith Lawson), 1976, *David and Charles*, 171pp.

The Building Stones of Glasgow, 1981, *Geological Society of Glasgow*, 29pp.

Excursion 1: Building Stones of Glasgow. In: Geological Excursions around Glasgow and Girvan, ed. J.D. Lawson and D.S Weedon, 1982, *Geological Society of Glasgow*, 56-62..

Sandstone Quarries in Glasgow, 1982, *Proceedings of the Geological Society of Glasgow*, 18-26.

### **Mike Keen**

### **Simon Cuthbert**

### **Ruth Watkins**