George Russell ‘Brim’ Brimacombe 5 June 1939–27 July 2017

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Obituary

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Brim was born in Falmouth, Cornwall and studied geography at the University of Reading, graduating in 1963. He followed this by taking the diploma course in Land Surveying at the School of Military Survey between 1964 and 1965 before joining the Directorate of Overseas Surveys (DOS). The survey work in DOS was mainly control surveys for photogrammetric mapping. This involved living in tents and walking long distances, building trig points, sitting on top of ancient volcanoes for days on end to make theodolite and tellurometer observations. Although the technology has now been superseded by GNSS, the resultant maps can still be useful, and some are really beautiful examples of the map-maker’s art.

In 1969, Brim joined the Jamaican Survey Department, working there until 1981 at a time when, in conjunction with DOS, the post-war 1:50,000 map was being replaced by a new map. In 1973 also became a Principal Lecturer at the College of Arts Science and Technology (CAST) in Kingston. His work in CAST involved establishing a training programme for professional and technician surveyors. It also involved coordinating private firms, government departments, recruiting staff and obtaining money from Canada and other Commonwealth countries to help pay for the infrastructure at a time when money from the government was frequently in short supply. It is to Brims great credit that the course became a success, attracting students from across the Caribbean. As CAST could not award degrees, the best students had to go on to complete their studies for the RICS at North East London Polytechnic (NELP). CAST is now the Technical University, Jamaica and has had degree awarding powers since 1986.

In 1981, Brim returned to Britain and joined the staff at NELP as a lecturer and special course organiser, working there until 1992, when he moved to Oaklands College. Here Brim joined the successful team at Oaklands College teaching Maths and Surveying on the BTEC National Land Surveying and Cartography course and the Higher National Engineering Surveying course in conjunction with the University of Hertfordshire. He made a very important contribution to the courses by making maths accessible to the students and showing its relevance and importance to surveying. The students all benefitted from his enthusiasm and encouragement in developing the skills needed for their progression to university and the surveying profession.

After leaving Oaklands, Brim worked for British Gas in Harlow in their mapping department, before taking retirement and moving to Northern Brittany. He felt very much at home there, as it was very similar to the Cornwall of his childhood. Mary, his wife, and he threw themselves into the local community, joining various sports groups (table-tennis and kayaking in particular), and leading many rambling and school groups walking around the coastal paths encouraging others to learn more about the history and flora and fauna of the area.

There are many of his former students, in the UK, Africa and the West Indies who owe Brim an awful lot, and will be saddened to hear of his passing. He is survived by his wife, Mary, and his two children.

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