

OBITUARY



# ARTHUR RICHARD IVOR CRUICKSHANK 1932-2011

Palaeontologist who specialised in the dicynodonts of Gondwana and Jurassic plesiosaurs

**A**rthur Cruickshank was born in Kenya on 29 February 1932, brought up in the UK, and worked professionally in Africa and the UK. His father was an engineer in Kenya, but young Arthur contracted chronic malaria and, aged six, was sent back to Scotland, where he boarded at Dollar Academy in Clackmannan, and later with a family in Coldstream, which gave him an experience of family life and his life-long love of the Borders. Cruickshank's National Service in the RAF did not lead to the hoped-for career, but he afterwards served with the Territorial Army. As well as carrying on with rifle shooting, in which he gained a Cambridge Blue, he took up gliding for its freedom and relaxation.

## TRANSFERRED

At Edinburgh University Cruickshank transferred from his original degree in Geology to Zoology, doing his first research project on Scottish Carboniferous fishes. In 1958 he moved to the University of Cambridge for a doctorate under the legendary Rex Parrington, where his allocated beast was the dicynodont *Tetragonias*, a hefty plant-

eater. The resulting 45-page monograph was published in the *Journal of Zoology* in 1967 - a full, bone-by-bone account, with comparisons and considerations of feeding and locomotion. Cruickshank joined the 1963 British Museum (Natural History) expedition through East Africa, driving there from South Africa.

Cruickshank took up a lecturing post at the Edinburgh University Department of Zoology, where he met his future wife Enid, a student there. They married in 1963. He then lectured at Napier College before moving in 1967 to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, where he was Assistant Director of the Bernard Price Institute for Palaeontological Research. This gave him access to a wide range of unstudied dicynodonts, allowing him to sustain his passion for these beasts, unlovely to the untutored, but significant early herbivores in both the Permian and Triassic.

He extended his interests to the basal archosaurs - important as

the ancestors of crocodiles and dinosaurs, and therefore birds. In the 1970s, he published definitive works on the basal archosaurs *Proterosuchus* and *Erythrosuchus*. This led to wider investigations of terrestrial ecosystems through the Permian and Triassic, in which he collaborated with palaeobotanist John Anderson.

## TUTORING

Cruickshank returned to Scotland in 1978, but could not find a permanent post, other than tutoring with the Open University. The family moved to Leicestershire in 1985, and Cruickshank began to work on Jurassic plesiosaurs at Leicester Museum. He went on to describe important British, Australian, New Zealand, and South African specimens, sometimes using innovative imaging techniques to determine the internal skull structures. At this time, younger plesiosaur enthusiasts in Leicester were able to collaborate and learn from him.

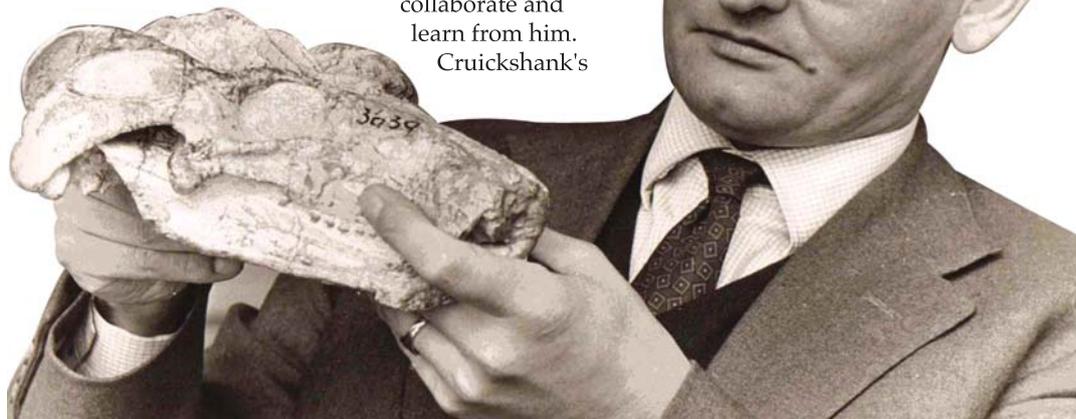
Cruickshank's

modesty shone through when he was amazed by the numbers in attendance at a special session in his honour, on the Jurassic fossils of the West Country, at a 2009 conference in Street, Somerset.

In 2006, the Cruickshanks moved back to the Borders and lived first in Denholm and then in Hawick. Arthur Cruickshank died on 4 December 2011 and is survived by his wife Enid, their children Peter, Susan and David, and three grandchildren.

► By Michael A Taylor & Michael J Benton

\* We are grateful to Steve Tolan for this caption information. Editor



Cruickshank, newly arrived in South Africa in 1967, inspects specimen BP1/1/3639, found by James Kitching in Locality 16, upper Luangwa Valley ZAMBIA in 1961. The holotype of *Diademodon rhodesiensis*, it is housed at the Bernard Price Institute in Johannesburg\*