ROBIN ALBERT CULLINGFORD (1940-2026)

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Robin Cullingford died on June 25th 2026. He was born on September 15th 1940. Robin attended Barnstaple Grammar School before becoming an undergraduate at Edinburgh University in 1958, reading Geography. In 1962, he graduated with First Class Honours. He had long expressed an interest in geomorphology and on graduating was awarded a scholarship to read for a PhD on sea level change with Brian Sissons. At the time, Sissons was developing a radical approach to understanding sea level change in Scotland. Inspired by Sissons' work, Robin began work on displaced shorelines in the Tay estuary and Fife. His PhD, awarded in 1972: "Lateglacial and Postglacial Shoreline Displacement in the Earn-Tay area and Eastern Fife" is a highly regarded and often quoted study, which set a benchmark for such studies in Scotland.

Robin was appointed to a Lectureship in Geography at Exeter University in 1965, later becoming Senior Lecturer, and his teaching career there continued up to his retirement in 2002. However, his research and writing continued both during his time at Exeter and afterwards. He produced chapters on the Quaternary of Devon and the Quaternary of Cornwall, and contributed to work on the glaciation of Northern Iceland; but arguably his most significant research contributions were on the Quaternary of Scotland. Here, his work followed his PhD in focusing initially on Late Devensian and Holocene relative sea level change on the South-East coast, but later his interests covered wider areas. A paper on Lateglacial shorelines in eastern Fife was followed later by major papers on the Earn-Tay area and on Angus and Kincardineshire. A paper on Holocene relative sea level change in the Tay estuary, which appeared in *Nature*, was followed by papers on Flandrian (Holocene) shorelines in North East Scotland and by later papers on South West Scotland. Subsequently, he turned to statistical analysis of shoreline altitudes with papers on patterns of glacio-isostatic uplift in eastern Scotland and later for Scotland as a whole as determined by trend surface analysis.

During work on eastern Scotland, Robin Cullingford played a significant role in the discovery of evidence for the Holocene Storegga Slide Tsunami. He was involved in the discovery and excavation of a cliff exposure at Montrose in 1974 which would later be considered perhaps the clearest evidence for that event, both in Scotland and perhaps more widely. At the time, it was thought that the section Robin excavated showed evidence for a major Holocene storm surge and he was an author of a paper on this. Subsequently, Dawson et al. (1988) reinterpreted the evidence as that of a tsunami, later termed the Holocene Storegga Slide tsunami. The section at Montrose, painstakingly excavated by Robin, remained a "must" for many to visit in the years to come, and though now largely overgrown is still on the agenda for sea level scientists examining evidence for relative sea level change and

extreme flooding events in Scotland.

A characteristic of Robin Cullingford's research was his attention to accuracy, perhaps influenced by his interest in aviation, for he flew as a member of Edinburgh University Air Squadron during his time as an undergraduate – appropriately enough given that he was born on Battle of Britain Day. His mapping and surveying were of the highest order. He recognised at an early stage the value of new techniques of survey when many in his field were employing older, dated methods. He played a major role in the development of computer applications to sea level studies in Scotland. His reliable and accurate work will stand the test of time and bear comparison with much work on sea level change undertaken at the present day.

Robin Cullingford is survived by his wife, Ann, and sons John and Robert.

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