

# Dr. Raymond Casey F.R.S.

## “The Boy From Folkestone”

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I have known of Dr. R. Casey F.R.S. for well over twenty years. I began to notice his name in various geological papers during my early years as a fossil collector. As my interest in palaeontology grew, I became more and more involved in local Cretaceous geology, especially the Gault Clay and Lower Greensand sediments, so I purchased more and more books and papers. Everywhere I saw the name, Casey.

I, like most people, drew a mental picture of what this person might look like, I wondered what got him started investigating this amazing world of Geology. Would I meet him one frosty morning on the foreshore of Folkestone, or perhaps at the Natural History Museum when I was there trying to get some of my finds identified. Would he want to know someone like me, with no formal qualifications, other than City and Guilds in plumbing ?

Time would, as usual in life, tell.

Some three years ago or so, a mutual friend who had come to know Dr. Casey, asked if I would like to meet him and perhaps take him out on the odd field trip. This seemed a great opportunity and one I should not miss. A date and time was duly agreed, and with slight trepidation I set off to his home in Orpington.

I was greeted at the door by an elderly, friendly gentleman, tall of stature, a person one could tell in his earlier years, had physical strength and energy. In a deep, well bred and educated voice he invited me in, we made our way into the front lounge and sat down. My first impression was that Dr. Casey reminded me a little of the wonderful Badger in Kenneth Grahame's 'The Wind In The Willows', not quite the picture I had carried around for many years. This person was someone I wanted to know more about. I looked forward to hearing his tales, and hopefully to learn more about the world of palaeontology from someone who was obviously a great authority and leader in his field. How should I address this eminent gentleman. I inquired what he liked to be called. He thought for a brief moment and then said, "My Mother always called me Raymond", "Then if that's OK with you, that is what I will call you", I said confidently. "And I am happy to be called Mick". The ice was broken.

Since that first meeting with Raymond I am pleased to say we have become good friends, been out in the field together on a good few occasions and spent many hours talking fossils and reminiscing old times. His life, like most of us, has not been all straightforward and easy, however, now in his early eighties, despite the problems that increasing age brings, as well as some lack of facilities and funding, Raymond retains an energetic thirst to pursue his lifelong geological work and continues to produce important papers for publication.

Raymond Casey was born in Dover Street, Folkestone on 10<sup>th</sup>. October 1917, as he says, 'Just on the Gault and Lower Greensand junction'. From a geological point of view, Raymond's attention was first focused by concretions of *mammillatum* beds in his back garden. Sadly his father died when Raymond was only 1 year old, and he lived until the age of 21 with his grandparents. By the age of 4 he was collecting fossils from the Warren and foreshore at Folkestone. About this time Raymond met a little girl called Nora, also aged 4, she was to become his great friend and later, his wife. Also at the age of 4 Raymond started his education at St. Mary's Higher Grade Boys School Folkestone, where he was encouraged by his science master, Norman Butcher, to pursue geology. By the age of 12 Raymond, further encouraged by the then curator of Folkestone Museum, John Walton, was voluntarily working on the museum collection and was given access to the museum's library. Also during this time he was invited to exhibit fossils, at the Folkestone Natural History Society.

Leaving school with no qualifications at the age of 14, Raymond started work at a local newsagent as News Boy, but soon climbed the dizzy heights of promotion to Shop Assistant. Nora also worked at the news agents and she was able to save and supply stationary boxes for Raymond to store his fossils in.

At 15 Raymond was to meet his greatest scientific influence, L. F. Spath who he impressed with his knowledge of fossils and with many notable finds he had made which at that time had not been included in Spath's monograph, *Ammonoidea Of The Gault*. It was indeed Spath who further encouraged Raymond and named him 'The Boy From Folkestone'. Also at 15 Raymond took possession of his first means of transport, a bike. This opened up a whole new territory, and he was now able to collect from Hastings to Herne Bay, concentrating mostly on inland quarries, especially those working in the Hythe Beds.

At 17 years of age Raymond won a scholarship from the Kent Education Committee but, unfortunately, a lack of money made it impossible for him to take up the opportunity. By the age of 18 he had published his first paper in the 1936 *Geological Magazine*, 'New Finds From The Gault Of Folkestone' and in 1939 joined the Geological Survey as an assistant. By 1940, with war raging in Europe, Raymond volunteered for the RAF where he was to spend his time as air crew including training as a pilot. Sadly during this time Raymond's house in Folkestone was shelled and the majority of his fossil collection was destroyed. Fortunately, some of the rare material was with Spath at the British Museum. War came to an end and Raymond was discharged in 1945. He returned to the Geological Survey where he researched Palaeozoic stratigraphy, but his lunch breaks and any spare time were spent on his own specific interest, Mesozoic stratigraphy.

In the mid 1950's Raymond was accepted at Reading University for his PHD course on the Lower Greensand and in 1964 took his D.Sc. In 1970 he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society. During his time at the Geological Survey, Raymond was seconded to the Overseas Geological Survey which led to visits to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey as part of the S. E. N. T. O. team working on geology. A special merit promotion with S. P. S. O. to work on the Jurassic - Cretaceous boundary worldwide led to collaboration with Russian scientists.

Sadly in 1974 a serious car crash put Raymond out of action for a year and much sadder led to the death of his beloved Nora. In 1979 he retired from the Survey but continued his association with the Russians well into the 1980s. In 1994 he was invited to work at the British Museum as Honorary Research Fellow, continuing his lifelong investigations into the Lower Greensand, a work he pursues today with the greatest enthusiasm.

Over his long and distinguished career Raymond has served on the Geological Council, the Geologist Association Council, has been chairman of The Jurassic - Cretaceous Boundary International Working Party, and chairman of the Cretaceous Working Party. He has published many extremely important works, too numerous to mention them all here. However anyone remotely interested in Cretaceous stratigraphy and palaeontology should, if unable to purchase the following list of works, try to gain access to them and study the wealth of information this amazing scientist has contributed to the world of Geology. It is my continuing pleasure to know,

'The Boy From Folkestone'.

Mick Cuddeford

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