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Obituary: Stu Daultrey, 1947 – 2015

Arnold Horner

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Stu Daultrey

Born 26 June 1947

Died 14 December 2015



Stuart George Daultrey was a lecturer at the Department of Geography, University College Dublin, for twenty-four years between 1971 and 1995. Even though he had been a student in Wales, at University College Aberystwyth, Stu's home base was the Greater London region. He was born in Hackney, London in June 1947. Six years later, he and his family moved to a council house in Romford, Essex. While at Royal Liberty School in Romford, he won a prize for having one of the best GCE exam results in the whole of the UK.¹ In his teenage years too, he developed his lifelong interests in bird-watching and in Arsenal football club. At university, he continued with Geography, and in his postgraduate years, he was a member (1968-69) of a Royal Geographical Society expedition to the Mato Grosso of Brazil, at that time still a very exotic and jungly place. He married Carol, a girlfriend since the age of 15, in 1971.

Stu was very much a product of a liberalising, post-Beatles Britain where stuffiness was out. Stu and his guitar were stridently part of a new, dissident world that exulted in the songs of Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and the problems of getting satisfaction, and in the Animals reflecting on that house that led so many astray in New Orleans, the house of the Rising Sun. Stu carried that world forward and maintained that outlook throughout his years in UCD. He demanded honesty and substance. Whether they were staff or students, he did not suffer fools, and he could be easily roused. He declined to respect people for their rank alone. At times he growled, and sometimes he roared. He could be brutally frank and abrasive as he freely, and sometimes colourfully, offered his opinions.

If this approach meant that Stu became one of UCD's best-known individuals, it also took him into many scrapes, some of them self-inflicted. Stu stories are legion in UCD, and also further afield. One of the earliest I recall is when he posted photos of his new daughter to his parents in Britain. Writing 'Please do not bend' on the envelope would have been quite sensible, but what Stu had to write was 'Please do not bend – this packet contains explosives'. Not a good move, particularly when made in the tense months that followed Bloody Sunday. I think the British police destroyed the photos. He seemed genuinely surprised when, a few days later, detectives from Donnybrook came to his office to interview him about wasting police time. Many other comparably bizarre incidents can be recalled.

¹ *Geographical Journal*, 131 (4), 1965, p. 575.

My office was beside Stu's and at the end of our first week, we were both working late. I walked into his office and asked him if he'd like to come for a pint. I still remember the gleam that came into his eye. Important elements in Stu's character were his gregariousness and his love of beer and wines. In the UCD student bar, as well as in various other water-holes in south Dublin, Stu mixed widely, connecting with many far beyond his immediate academic discipline. Here he talked about his diverse interests: the football and cricket he then played, bridge and birds (all varieties), politics and people, and he could philosophise about radical and unlikely reforms to the university and other establishment systems.

Stu was a complex and contradictory person with multiple ideas, and this was evident in much that he did as an academic. Another characteristic was his capacity for very hard work. Being an insomniac helped. Sometimes he might have put in several hours while many of us were still adjusting. At UCD, Stu specialised in teaching climatology and in the use of computers and numerical methods in Geography. As an academic, he took pride in setting uncompromisingly demanding standards for both himself and his students. Not everyone liked this. Some could not take the rigour and forthrightness of his expectations, but for others both his teaching and his research were an inspiration. Those currently staff at Irish universities whom Stu supervised at undergraduate or postgraduate level, or with whom he was in some way closely associated, include Jim Walsh (NUIM), Mark Hennessy (TCD), Des McCafferty (Limerick), Colman Gallagher and Gerald Mills (both UCD). Many UCD staff and students were deeply indebted to him for his generous help with their statistical projects and for the computer programmes he devised and wrote.

If he thought their project worthwhile, Stu was unstinting in giving his time to others. This in turn limited the time he had for his own projects, some of which were never published. When he had identified a trend or solved something to his own satisfaction, he could lose momentum. Nevertheless, the originality and range of his beautifully-clear, meticulously-phrased publications is striking. His environmental studies included his first major article (1970) on links between soil moisture, topography and vegetation, for which he drew on his *Mato Grosso* experience. Ten years later, appropriately enough in *Antipode*, a 'journal of radical geography', he reviewed the possible impact of nuclear power on Ireland. His early years at UCD focused especially on a monograph (1976) on the statistical procedure known as principal components analysis. At the end of 2016, this study had been cited 212 times, a very high number. Moreover, long before it became widely studied, Stu was into climate change. It was from Stu that most of us first heard about the climate phenomenon known as El Niño. His contributions on climatology included a review (1984) of that field of study in relation to Ireland and subsequent assessments of the significance for Ireland of climate variability (1994) and of El Niño and the North Atlantic oscillations for winter precipitation (1996). He also ventured into historical meteorology, with an exploration (1990) of the weather conditions that affected the Spanish Armada in 1588, conditions

which, among other consequences, resulted in a series of shipwrecks along the west coast of Ireland. Very different again is another widely-cited work that Stu jointly undertook involving the most comprehensive statistical analysis ever attempted on the population of eighteenth-century Ireland. This study (1981, 1982) has been called ‘magisterial’ by the doyen of Irish historians, Professor Roy Foster.²

Around 1990, Stu’s work became limited by several disconnected events. A motor-cycle accident in 1988 had left him with a redundant arm, and he bravely put himself through the task of learning to write with a hand that had never previously held a pen. Also, he was hospitalised with a significant illness for a period. Even so, he continued in active sport as a hockey goalkeeper and, rather incredibly, he travelled widely. He visited Peru, he participated in student field trips to Spain and Morocco, and he managed to travel to Tibet to attend and speak at a major climate change conference. At the same time, however, UCD was changing, with a premium increasingly being placed on various forms of ‘correctness’. Yet Stu remained an independent spirit, and in 1995, he chose to take early retirement. Ironically, this was at just about the time when his early work in climate change was beginning to be more widely appreciated.

In later years, Stu maintained his academic interest in environmental change, and for a period from 1998 he was a corresponding member of the IGU study group on Environmental Change and Extreme Hydrological Events. He was also for a time a member of the Green Party, and an active participant in the UCD retired staff association. But much of his energy went to the cricket field, first as an umpire to international level, then as a very distinctive writer about Dublin-area matches.³ He also doggedly fought two prolonged bouts of serious illness that necessitated him receiving dialysis treatment three times a week. I last saw Stu when we had coffee two weeks before his death. Typically, our chat covered a multiplicity of topics from cricket and Geography to the throttling of universities, the problems of the hospital system and the destructive social impact of neoliberalism. He brought me copies of the *London Review of Books* and the *New York Review of Books* (to both of which he subscribed) that he thought I might like. We will each have our own memories of Stu. Beyond his many escapades I feel he deserves to be remembered for his intellectual integrity and as a talented, many-sided and incisive personality with many interests, a proud battler, a warm-hearted generous person for whom, and with whom, life was never dull.

Following a short celebration of his life, Stu Daultrey was cremated at Mount Jerome, Dublin, on 18 December 2015. He is survived by his wife, Carol, his two daughters, Bethan and Kate, and a grand-daughter, Johan.

Arnold Horner
Glenageary, Co. Dublin
arnold.horner@ucd.ie

² R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1982) p. 649.

³ In a death notice published on 18 December 2015, ‘CricketEurope Ireland’ referred to Stu as having been ‘one of the top and most respected umpires in the country’, and as ‘a colourful and entertaining writer’.

Publications of Stu Daultrey – a select list

The list below focuses on Stu's principal publications relating to Geography. It includes three articles published in Baile, the magazine of the UCD Student Geographical Society. Some short book reviews and some short pieces written anonymously are not included. Also excluded are his many cricket writings in such outlets as CricketEurope and Cover Point.

1969

'Race, Colour and Class in Central America and the Andes Julian Pitt-Rivers', University of Chicago, *Interstate*, (2)

1970

'Geographical Research on the Royal Society/ Royal Geographical Society's Expedition to North-eastern Mato Grosso, Brazil; a Symposium'. *Geographical Journal*, 136 (9), pp. 365-409. (with Brown, Eric H.; Askew, G.; Thornes, John B.; Young, Anthony; and Townshend, J.R.G.), including 'An Analysis of the Relation between Soil Moisture, Topography, and Vegetation Types in a Savanna Area', pp. 399-406.

1976

Principal components analysis, Concepts and techniques in modern geography series, No. 8, Norwich: Geo Abstracts Limited.

1978

Review: in *Weather*, 33(10), pp. 402-3.

1980

'The political ecology of nuclear power in Ireland... or how Nuclear wastes', *Antipode*, 12(1), pp. 108-111.

'Recent population changes in the Republic of Ireland', *Area*, 12, pp. 129-135 [with A.A. Horner].

Review: *Ireland's wetlands and their birds*, by Clive Hutchinson, 1979, in *Irish Geography*, 13, pp. 107-8.

1981

'Eighteenth-century Irish population: new perspectives from old sources', *Journal of Economic History*, 41(3), pp. 601-628.

Review: *Irish nature*, by Norman Hickin, 1981, in *Irish Geography*, 14, p.128.

1982

'Hearth tax, household size, and Irish population change 1672-1821', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 82C, 1982, 125-160, pp. 162-181.

Review: *Areas of scientific interest in Ireland*, by An Foras Forbartha, 1981, in *Irish Geography*, 15, p. 130.

1983

Review: *The climate of Dublin*, by the Meteorological Service, 1983, In *Irish Geography*, 16, pp. 151-152.

1984

‘Climatology’, pp. 117-128 in G.L. Herries Davies (ed), *Irish Geography – the Golden Jubilee Volume 1934-1984*, Dublin: Geographical Society of Ireland.

1985

Review: *The development of small-scale hydro-schemes: Part 2, Guide to development*, by Department of Industry and Energy, no date, in *Irish Geography*, 18, 1985, p. 82.

1987

Review: *The Irish Meteorological Service: the first fifty years*, edited by Lisa Shields, 1987, in *Irish Geography*, 20(2) pp. xxx.

1989

Review: in *Weather*, 44(11) 1989, pp. 453-454.

1990

‘The weather of northwest Europe during the summer and autumn of 1588’, pp. 113-151 in P. Gallagher and D.W. Cruickshank, (eds) *God’s obvious design*, Tamesis, London.

‘Throwing stones at the Greenhouse’, *Baile ’91*, pp. 27-48.

Review: *Computers in Geography*, by D.J. Maguire, 1989, in *Applied Geography*, 10(1), pp. 80-81.

1992

‘Greenhouse gases and global warming’, pp. 39-51 in J. Feehan, (ed). *Environment and development in Ireland*, Dublin: UCD Environmental Institute.

1993

Review: *Water quality in Ireland 1987-1990*, by Environmental Research Unit, 1992, in *Irish Geography*, 26(2) p. 173.

1994

‘Climate variability in Ireland: Are there signals amongst the noise?’ pp. 26-40 in J. Feehan. (ed) *Climate variation and Climate Change in Ireland*, Dublin: UCD Environmental Institute.

‘Controls of winter precipitation over Ireland: a tale of connections’, *Baile ’94*, pp. 36-41.

1996

‘The influences of the North Atlantic Oscillation, the El Nino/Southern Oscillation and the quasi-biennial oscillation on winter precipitation in Ireland’, pp. 213-236 in J.A.A. Jones, C.M. Liu, M-K. Woo, and H-T. Kung. (eds) *Regional hydrological response to climate change*, The GeoJournal Library, 38, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

‘Luck or judgement: or, why weather forecasts are not very good’, *Baile ’96*, pp. 9-17.