

William Daniel Gill, DSC, MRIA (1916–1992)

Professor of Oil Technology 1961–1974 and Petroleum Geology 1974–1978

Dan Gill graduated with distinction in Geology in 1938 from the University of Leeds. His mentor at Leeds, Professor R.G.S. Hudson, often referred to Gill as his most distinguished student. Gill then joined the Attock Oil Company and was posted to Pakistan where he played a key role in the discovery of a number of oil fields in the Himalayan foothills. He was also involved in some exploration work in Burma during the Second World War. By the late 1940s Gill had become an acknowledged leading authority on Himalayan geology.

In 1948 he resigned from Attock and took up a lectureship at Nottingham. While at Nottingham, he completed a thesis on his Himalayan work and submitted it in 1950, together with a number of articles he had already published, to the then Professor of Geology at Leeds W.Q. Kennedy. Kennedy became so impressed with the quality and scope of the work that he recommended Gill for a DSc. In the following year, Gill was appointed to the Chair of Geology and Mineralogy at Trinity College, Dublin, becoming the youngest professor and holder of the DSc degree in Britain and Ireland, at the age of 35. Over the next 10 years Gill carried out pioneering work on Irish geology and established himself as an expert in this field.

Together with Professor P.H. Kuenen of Groningen University in the Netherlands, he conducted experiments on subaqueous slumping and introduced the term ‘sand volcano’. His paper *Sand volcanoes on slumps in the Carboniferous of County Clare, Ireland (1957)*, is a milestone in the subject. As recognition of these contributions, he was elected Member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1958, an honour conferred on few English geologists.

Gill joined the RSM as Professor of Oil Technology in 1961, filling the chair left vacant by Illing’s retirement in 1955. In 1969 he established an organic geochemistry laboratory, one of the first of its kind in a UK academic institution dedicated specifically to the study of petroleum source rocks. First and foremost, however, Gill’s heart was in field geology, a discipline in which he excelled and was able to inspire others. He emphasised the importance of both geology and related engineering and anticipated the division of the MSc course into petroleum geology and petroleum engineering 12 years before the split actually occurred.

Dan Gill was a charismatic, larger than life character in both the metaphorical and figurative senses who made an indelible impression on those who came into contact with him. With his 6ft 4in frame, he projected an impressive figure and a commanding presence wherever he made an appearance.



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fact file

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