



*Jean Gaudant on a Cofrhigéo field trip, in September 2010*

### **Jean Gaudant (1939–2015)**

Jean Gaudant (1939–2015), Secretary of the French *Comité français d'Histoire de la Géologie* (COFRHIGEO) and paleoichthyologist, passed away abruptly on December 6, 2015. He will be greatly missed by his friends and those working in both paleoichthyology and history of geology.

Jean Gaudant, a former professor of palaeontology at Paris-Diderot University, was a specialist of fossil fishes and a highly esteemed paleoichthyologist. His international reputation in this community is primarily due to his original and innovative research on the faunas of Europe freshwater fish, a topic once considered as trivial, but that has enjoyed a revival of interest because of its concern with the impact of the global environmental change on continental faunas.

After early work on marine Jurassic and Cretaceous actinopterygian fish between 1968 and 1978, Jean quickly reoriented his research to Tertiary freshwater teleost fish, especially those from Western Europe, abundant but formerly mentioned only occasionally. He therefore had to proceed with a thorough inventory (ca. 125 publications!) of these faunas in France and many other countries in Europe. These studies have gradually allowed the evolutionary history of European freshwater fish faunas during the Tertiary to be understood, as well as their dynamics during climate evolution or major environmental crises, such as the Messinian crisis. Moreover, Jean has always been interested in the paleoecological aspect of fossil fish faunas and in their significance as markers of paleobathymetry. For all paleoichthyologists, he was a great explorer of neglected or forgotten sites that bear crucial information on past freshwater ecosystems. He managed to make them talk again, with discoveries that are feeding the current research on the evolution of continental ecosystems through geological time.

Jean's death leaves a great void in COFRHIGEO, of which he had been Secretary for 40 years, from its inception in June 1976, by François Ellenberger (1915–2000). He was the linchpin of our committee, combining during the last six years the positions of editor, secretary and treasurer. He organized many activities, scheduled meetings, and dealt with the edition of the annual periodical (*Travaux du Cofrhigéo*:

[//annales.org/archives/cofrhigeo/travaux.html](http://annales.org/archives/cofrhigeo/travaux.html)). He even organized the session of December 16, informing us a few days before the meeting that his health did not allow him to attend it. Jean was also very active within the *Société géologique de France*, where he acted as the

archivist in 2003 and 2004, and for which he devised several special issues of the periodical *Géochronique*.

His work as an historian of geology is important: He wrote tributes to Franck Bourdier, Jacques Roger and, of course, François Ellenberger, as well as to some prominent palaeontologists of the past. We may also recall his papers at the occasion of the 150-year anniversary of the geological map of France, on the pioneers of the geology of the Paris Basin, his remarkable investigations on the history of the continental drift theory and on the short-lived uprising crater theory... In addition to these works, he organized meetings and edited tributes to Wegmann (*SGF*, 1995), Dolomieu for the bicentenary of his death (*ENSM*, 2005), and François Ellenberger for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration (*CTHS*, 1997). In recent years, while he felt the need to leave a more personal mark, he undertook the edition of a book series published by *Presses des Mines*, editing compendia on geologists and palaeontologists (2008), on the development of geology (2009), as well as a translation by G. Bouillet of Scheuchzer's "*Piscium querelae et vindiciae*" and "*Homo diluvii testis*" (2008), and a superb book by Michel Durand-Delga on Marcel Bertrand (2010). Finally, he brought out a history of the French geological survey, editing volumes devoted to the Franco-Italian Alps (2011), Provence (2012), Armorican Massif (2014) and Rhodanian Corridor (2014); the volume on the Jura will be released shortly.

For these achievements, Jean Gaudant would have widely deserved to receive the Wegmann prize of the *Société géologique de France*, the highest French award in the field of the history of geology. However, he always declined honours that he knew how to seek for others, thereby showing his independence of mind. COFRHIGEO believes that the best way to honour his memory is to keep going on the path he showed us.

**Gabriel Gohau, Philippe Janvier and Gaston Godard.**

### **Remembering Jean Gaudant**

The death of Jean Gaudant in December of 2015 marks the end of an era for everyone connected with the history of geology in France. Jean was a mainstay of the Comité Français d'Histoire de la Géologie (COFRHIGÉO). From the Comité's founding (1976), under the leadership of François Ellenberger, he played crucial roles in its direction. For a very long time he was its Secretary, and in addition he took on the duties of Treasurer upon the death of Goulven Laurent (2008). He labored tirelessly over a great many years in producing the annual volumes of COFRHIGÉO's *Travaux*.

In addition to his research in paleoichthyology, conducted through posts with the University of Paris and the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Jean was a prodigiously active researcher over a wide range of topics in the history of geological science. And he served as editor, not only of the annual *Travaux*, but also of many other important and useful historical volumes and collections.

I am personally indebted to Jean Gaudant for his friendly and judicious editorial assistance on several occasions. For his kind willingness to spend many hours patiently helping to correct the most egregious errors in my efforts at historical writing in his native language—while wisely not attempting to purge altogether the milder and less offensive proofs of my imperfect understanding—I am deeply grateful. We shall all miss this passionately dedicated and hard-working colleague, who was an animating spirit in the French community of historians of geology.

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