

Kenneth Graham Sutton

A short biography 1922-1986

Compiled by Peter Lloyd and Rob Simson

Ken Sutton came to Geography relatively late in life, but he made a significant impact on the discipline in Australia, particularly in the field of geographical education.

Ken was born in Brisbane on 29 January 1922 and attended several local schools, matriculating at the Church of England Grammar School (CEGS) in 1939. In 1941 he joined the 2nd AIF and served in Australia and overseas during World War 2. After the war Ken studied medicine but left it in 1949 to take up a teaching career.

A Teacher: He joined the staff of CEGS and taught science subjects in a temporary capacity. After six months Ken moved to All Souls School in Charters Towers before returning to CEGS in 1956. In 1960 Ken assisted in drawing up laboratory plans for a new school, St Pauls in Bald Hills, just north of Brisbane, and joined the foundation staff there in 1961. He was appointed senior master in 1964 and acting headmaster in 1970. While at St Pauls Ken was awarded a Bachelor of Education from the University of Queensland. He retired from teaching in 1982.

In the GTAQ and RGS (London): It appears that Ken came to Geography in about 1960. He was elected fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (London) in 1962. He had been a member of the Science Teachers Association of Queensland and became a foundation member of the new Geography Teachers Association of Queensland (GTAQ) in 1960. He was an active member of GTAQ and conducted field weekends for senior geography students from schools in south-east Queensland. Ken served as President of GTAQ from 1972 to 1974 and was awarded an honorary life membership. He was the first Queenslander to become President of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA) and served in that capacity from 1974 to 1976. Ken married Ilma Roslyn Tozer in Brisbane in 1957. Roslyn was a war widow with one child. She and Ken had no other children.

In the Anglican Church: As well as his love for Geography, Ken was an active member of the Anglican Church, serving as a Parish Councillor and Synod representative, and in many other, mainly educational, positions in the Church over 26 years. Ken was a Warden at St Andrews South Brisbane and on 18 October 1987 a stained glass memorial window was dedicated to his memory by Bishop Ralph Wicks.

In RGSQ: Ken joined the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland) (RGSA(Q)), now the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland (RGSQ), in 1969. He was elected fellow of the Society in 1977 and President in 1982. His term as President was extended to include the Society's centenary celebrations in 1985 and Ken took the opportunity to elevate both the profile of the Society and the discipline of geography to the wider community. During his fourteen years as Councillor, Vice-President and President of the Society Ken's qualities and leadership had a powerful influence on the activities of the Society and its administration. The Society grew, became more vital and began to play a significant role in geographical education.

The Ken Sutton Trust: Ken died suddenly aged 64 years on 5 October 1986, barely twenty-four hours after returning from a long trek by bus through Queensland to Lawn Hill Gorge, only the second major trek organised by his reinvigorated Society. In the following year the

Society named its library the Ken Sutton Memorial Library in his honour. The Ken Sutton Trust was set up in 1988 with a bequest from Ken's estate. Ken's legacy was designed to provide a platform for the best Geographical or Geographical Education work in Australia to be promoted through an endowed lecture mini-series and publication. The prize is awarded for the most exciting new research in a geographical field (or geographical education) by an Australian geographer. The Society views this award as a pinnacle for Australian geographers.

Sources and further reading are held in the Ken Sutton Presidential Papers file in the RGSQ archives