Obituary: William (Bill) Carlyle 1927–2019

Bill Carlyle was born in Belfast in 1927 to a family of civil engineers. His father, George, was a Senior Engineer in the Ministry of Health and one grandfather was Chief Engineer of the Belfast Water Commissioners. The other grandfather was a contractor building dams and tunnels in Northern Ireland's Mourne Mountains for Belfast's water supply.

Bill's early years were spent in Surrey, but he moved to Northern Ireland and continued his education at Campbell College, Belfast at the outbreak of World War 2. He went on to study at Queen's University, Belfast and graduated in Civil Engineering, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, both of whom did the same degree at the same university.

After graduating in 1951, Bill joined Binnie Deacon & Gourley (subsequently Binnie & Partners), where he went on to spend over 40 enjoyable and sometimes challenging years. Early days as a graduate engineer were spent as a site engineer on the Usk dam near Brecon, where he apparently made a name for himself by establishing the record run from the bar of

the Wellington Hotel in Brecon to the top of Pen-y-Fan and back in just under two hours!

He subsequently joined a team surveying for the Cameron Highlands hydro-electric scheme, where he had the opportunity to live in a relatively unspoilt jungle surrounded by (fortunately) friendly insurgents, snakes and huge insects.

On his return from Malaysia in 1954, Bill's work took him to many countries including Greece, Turkey and Northern Ireland, before he moved to Hong Kong as resident engineer on the Shek Pik dam on Lantau Island in 1961. There he was able to pursue his passion for sailing, a highlight being the South China Sea Race from Hong Kong to Manila.

Returning to London in 1964, Bill was responsible for the Towry Project to supply water to industrial south Wales. The main regulating reservoir was Llyn Brianne, impounded by the first large rock-fill dam in the UK and still the tallest dam in Britain. The dam was opened by Princess Alexandra in 1972.

At this time, Bill joined the Binnie partnership, becoming Senior Partner in 1990. Under his leadership, Binnie & Partners were responsible for many projects in the UK and overseas, particularly in Malaysia, and became established in Saudi Arabia, Greece, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. Binnie's branch in Iraq closed after the Revolution, and Bill regarded the re-establishment of the office there and completion of the 455Ml/d Mid-Karkh water scheme for Baghdad as one of his most significant contributions.

Bill retired from Binnies in 1994 but continued to work as an independent consultant until his early 80s, as well as being retained by Severn Trent Water on its dam safety panel. He continued to enjoy sailing, golf and hill walking right up until he fell ill at the age of 90.

He was the Chairman of the British Dam Society between 1989 and 1991 and served on the committee in three spells between 1975 and 1992. He was a member of Panel 1 under the 1930 Act and subsequently the All Reservoirs Panel under the 1975 Act. He gave the Binnie Lecture at the Warwick conference in 2008.

Bill is survived by his wife, Sue, three children, Harriet, James and Lizzy, and four grandchildren. A thanksgiving service held at Boldre Church in the New Forest and afterwards at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club was attended by over 200 family, friends and former colleagues.

Dr Harriet Carlyle