

News

Obituary: Johan Du Preez, 1957–2025

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Johan Du Preez (born 18 December 1957) died peacefully at his home in Farnham after a battle with cancer. Johan was a mature PhD student at UCL with feet equally in the Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment and the Institute of Archaeology (Figure 1). At school Johan excelled in maths, science and history. Following his first stint at university, where he studied chemical engineering in South Africa, he followed a career in the chemical industry. But he never lost his fascination for the past, and made sure that whenever he visited a new country for his work, he found out as much about that country's history as he could. His holidays too were always centred around visiting historical sites.

Johan's enthusiasm for archaeology in particular was piqued during a trip to Ephesus when he visited some ruins and realised that he could read some of the engravings on ancient columns because of the Greek he knew from his maths and science studies.

Following his passions, Johan took early retirement from his position as Executive Vice President, US Mega Projects Sasol and applied to become an archaeology undergraduate at UCL, where he graduated with a BSc in Archaeology in 2018 and stayed on to pursue his master's with equal vigour, gaining a distinction in the MSc Palaeoanthropology and



Figure 1 Johan Du Preez enjoying a glass of fizz (Source: Belinda Du Preez)

Palaeolithic Archaeology 2020. He developed a strong interest in the early middle ages, particularly the Migration Period. Johan then registered for a PhD at UCL with Andrew Reynolds and Mark Thomas, working on using DNA, archaeological data and computer modelling to better understand the Anglo-Saxon transition, and developing new research directions, including the identification and definition of enclaves and border regions.

An ever-present figure and lively debater at archaeology seminars, Johan found every aspect of his time at UCL engrossing, and he was devastated at being unable to complete his PhD due to his illness. He proudly told anyone who enquired that apart from his family, his study of archaeology at UCL was the highlight of his life. Johan is survived by his beloved wife Belinda and his sons, Daniel, John and Christopher.