



**International Society for
Soil Mechanics and
Geotechnical Engineering**

Time Capsule



Dr Leonard Cooling

Dr Leonard Cooling is widely regarded as the 'Father of British Soil Mechanics' after he set up the first proper soil mechanics laboratory at the Building Research Station (BRS) in 1934. His role as pioneer is clear when it is remembered he was the sole British representative at the 1st ISSMFE conference in 1936 at Harvard University, presenting three papers, compared to the 2nd ISSMFE conference in Rotterdam in 1947, where there were 74 British delegates with 57 papers. During this period of growth in soil mechanics the BRS played a key role, led by Cooling.

He was also an important figure in early geotechnical practice in the UK. In 1940 he started an informal discussion group at the ICE which later became the British Geotechnical Society (BGS, now the BGA) and was BGS Chair from 1955–9. He served on the editorial panel of *Géotechnique* from its inception for 20 years, and was chair for 3 years. In 1962 he was the first British Rankine Lecturer.

Cooling was invariably unpretentious, good humoured and approachable, and was enthusiastic in his support and encouragement of young geotechnical professionals. Undoubtedly a hard worker, and possessing a sharp intellect, Cooling found time to be a keen sportsman, and played football for England and West Bromwich Albion at amateur level and was a Midland Counties Champion runner.



Dr Leonard Cooling (photograph courtesy of Christine Cooling)