



PAUL BJERKAN  
(1874 - 1968)

**W**hen Paul BJERKAN passed away, 94 years old, he was a somewhat distant figure for most of those who are now following in his foot-steps. They know him through his papers, which they frequently use and refer to. What counts for them is what he saw, what ideas he had, what he has reported.

For those of us who have been his friends and have worked with him, it is the person we remember. We remember events shared with him, talks and discussions through many years in work and pleasure.

From the first day I met Paul BJERKAN, more than 40 years ago, it was clear that he was a person to whom one could talk about everything. I am not only referring to his friendliness and helpfulness, there are also other qualities which come to one's mind: humanity,

common-sense and experience were what BJERKAN offered to those who sought him.

When he passed away, one of the very last links connecting us with the distant golden age of Norwegian fisheries research was broken.

That golden age ended in a catastrophe. The institution which had been built up under the leadership of Johan HJORT was crushed to pieces by the first World War.

Paul BJERKAN was one of the very few who remained in the institution during the years when the overwhelming task was to save Norwegian fisheries science from being completely wiped out. Struggling with great difficulties, BJERKAN and his few colleagues carried the institution through into a future they could only hope for. This is his greatest achievement, and it is only too easy to forget it in the prosperous time which the fisheries sciences are now enjoying.

When Paul BJERKAN left the Institute at retirement age in 1947, he told his colleagues about the hard times that had passed, but added: "I have been lucky enough to have had a look into the bright future".

The Institution that he, more than any other, carried through these difficult years, his old friends and colleagues, and also the younger ones who, thanks to him, are now in a position to carry the rich traditions of Norwegian marine science further forward, thank him and shall keep his memory high.

Paul BJERKAN was a student at the first international course in marine sciences in Bergen in 1903. Immediately after he joined a Russian expedition to Turkestan. From 1904 to 1908 he was curator (zoology) at Tromsø Museum, and from 1908 to 1912 he held a corresponding post at Bergen's Museum. During these years he published several papers on Ascidia, and was a recognized specialist on that difficult group. In 1913 he joined Johan HJORT's staff at the Directorate of Fisheries in Bergen, and remained at the Institute until he resigned in 1947. In periods, including the difficult time during and immediately after the second World War, he acted as Director of the Institute.

Together with Johan HJORT, he took part in fishery investigations in Canada in 1915.

It is characteristic of BJERKAN, that after he resigned from the Directorate of Fisheries, at an age of 73, he was offered and accepted a post as regional adviser on freshwater fisheries in western Norway for two years (1948–1950).

He took part in many of the Council's meetings between 1921 and 1952, and he was a Norwegian Delegate in 1933. He has published several papers in the Council's publications. His main subject was sprat biology and sprat fisheries. He was, however, anything but specialist, and his publications include papers on validity of race characters, herring spawning areas, plaice migrations, prawns, oysters and sharks.

Paul BJERKAN married twice, in the last marriage there were two daughters, who survive him.

*G. Rollefson.*