



NEWSLETTER NO. 31 - FEBRUARY 1982.

The  
Black  
Country  
Geological  
Society

Editorial.

In the recent unusually severe weather, probably not even local people fancied being on the side of a Welsh mountain. Now that the snow has cleared and the bulbs are shooting in the gardens - well, mine are - it is time to remind members of the annual weekend field trip to Dolgellau in the Spring. Anne Harrison would like to know any other names by February 14th if possible. Details are given in the programme.

There were quite a few new members in 1981, and I would particularly like these as well as others to help with writing up events. These can be in any way from the modest to the technical, and I like it as varied as possible. I try to match people with their particular interest, if only I have the chance. So will you please tell me, and remember that editors can be shy too.

---

Next Meeting.

Feb.1st. Informal meeting.

Feb.7th. Field trip to the Abberley Hills.  
Leader, Dr. P. Oliver.

---

Meetings are held at the Allied Centre, Green Man Entry, Tower Street, Dudley, behind the Malt Shovel pub. Indoor meetings will commence at 8 pm. with coffee and biscuits from 7.15 pm. Field meetings will commence from outside the Allied Centre.

Non-members welcome.

The society does not provide personal accident cover for members or visitors on field trips. You are strongly urged to take out your own personal insurance to the level which you feel appropriate. Schools and other bodies attending field trips should arrange their own insurance as a matter of course.

*Chairman*  
A. Cutler B.Sc., M.CAM.,  
Dip.M., M.Inst.M.

*Vice Chairman*  
P. G. Oliver B.Sc., Ph.D.,  
F.G.S.

*Hon. Treasurer*  
M. J. Woods B.Sc., M.Sc.,  
M.I.Geol., F.G.S.

*Hon. Secretary*  
P. D. Shilston M.A., C.Eng.,  
F.I.E.E., M.I. Mech.E.

*Field Secretary*  
Anne Harrison B.Sc., M.B.,  
Ch.B., F.F.A.R.C.S.

Programme.

Feb. 1st. Informal meeting. Don't forget to bring your specimens to show other members. Discussion on the Abberley Hills.

Feb. 7th. Abberley Hills field trip. Leader Peter Oliver. Meet in the car park of the Hundred House at Great Whitley at 10.30 am. We can offer lifts if required from the Allied Centre at 9.30. Please telephone Anne on 021/454/6416 beforehand so that enough seats are available.

Mar. 22nd. Annual General Meeting, and the Horizon film "The Drifting Continents". Suggestions for the committee will be welcomed.

April 5th. Informal meeting, two weeks before field trip. This includes a discussion about the field trip, led by John Easter.

April 18th. Field trip to Whitwell Dolomite Plant and Cresswell Crags. Leader Mr. G. Plant. Take M1 to junction 30. At the roundabout there, take  $\frac{3}{4}$  turn onto Worksop road, signposted Balborough. Wait in the first layby on the left. Meet at 11 am. Please take your own lunch on this trip.

April 23-25th. Weekend trip to Dolgellau. Leader Mr. Graham Hall. Accommodation available at Dolgellau Youth Hostel for less than £15 including meals. Friday evening, meal at 7pm. followed by lecture and slides. Mr. Hall will make the final decision but hopes to include his recent research into the relationship between volcanic centres and plate tectonics, Caledonian mineralisation, a visit to a slate mine to see various cleavage structures, and Cambrian sediments to see decompositional structures.

May 10th. The Evolution of the Landscape of the West Midlands. Lecture by Dr. G. T. Warwick.

June 7th. Evening field trip.

June 21st. Evening field trip.

July 12th. Informal meeting.

July 18th. Field trip to Derbyshire to see the Central Pennine Basin. Leader Peter Whitehead.

Sept. 13th. Meteorites; building blocks for planets. Lecture by Dr. John Ashworth of Aston University.

Oct. 4th. Informal meeting.

Oct. 10th. Joint field trip with Shropshire Geological Society to sites of interest in Shropshire.

Nov. To be arranged.

Dec. 6th. Glacial deposits. Lecture by Mr. Edward Francis of Keele University.

---

August 7th 1981.

Fossils are Fun. Dudley Museum and Art Gallery.

In early February we were approached by Kate Haywood of the Leisure and Recreation Dept. Dudley, who persuaded us what a great idea it would be to organise a half day session for children in Dudley Art Gallery during the summer holidays. "Think of a nice title", she said. "Fossils are Fun", said I confidently, but then August was a long way off.

A little serious thought soon produced an interesting list of activities which could be organised from within the society, from recognising fossils in a box

of rocks, making plaster casts, to following the adventures of Rocky Rex (You've never heard of Rocky Rex?)

Preparation and co-ordination were very time consuming, and even on the day Dave Wraight and I spent three hours just setting up the room. John Garrick joined us at 2 o'clock when 32 children of all ages between 4 and 11 descended upon us. Dave took charge and divided them up into small groups so that they each had a turn at most of the activities throughout the session. We and they hardly stopped talking all afternoon. Kate and the museum staff came to look and brought a welcome cup of tea. But almost before we knew it, it was time to show the final film. One or two mums crept in to watch as well, while we started to clear up.

Thanks are due to Doug Bedson for 35mm. slides, to Peter Whitehead for slides and games, to Mick Coles for moulds, and especially to Dave Wraight and John Garrick without whose help on the day none of it would have been possible. It was hard work but very rewarding. If we have a few more volunteers we might even manage a morning session as well next time. You don't have to be a teacher to help out, and just think, you might discover the secret of Rocky Rex!

Alan Cutler.

---

November 7th 1981.

Coach trip to London.

The coach trip was arranged to visit the Geological Museum in London, as well as other museums nearby, but as it was near to Christmas some members took the opportunity to make a few purchases in Oxford Street on

the way. The party of society members included a group from Ellowes Hall School. The coach dropped us off in South Kensington around lunch time.

The Geological Museum has several completely new and up to date displays on the ground floor, showing the latest scientific knowledge and using modern display techniques.

"Story of the Earth" showed the latest thinking on plate tectonics, mountain building, volcanism, etc. and included many interesting rock specimens. The brave, or foolhardy, could test out their nerve on the "earthquake machine", which had a floor shaker to simulate earthquake movement, accompanied by realistic (?) earthquake sounds.

Other displays showed the best of British fossils including some mouth-watering specimens from Dudley, and a magnificent collection of gems and ornamental stones.

As well as the Geological Museum there is so much to tempt the visitor, including the Natural History Museum in its centenary year, the Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. A day is not enough, you need a week at least!

Paul Shilston.

---

November 21st 1981.

Social evening.

For the annual social this year a trip by boat was made into Dudley Canal Tunnel. It was intended to pass through the whole length of the tunnel but a few days before the event, British Waterways engineers

discovered major cracks in the roof at the Parkhead end and forbade navigation through that part of the tunnel until it was repaired. We were therefore able only to enter the tunnel from the Tipton end, and to proceed as far as possible before turning back to Tipton. Fortunately the boats used by the Dudley Canal Trust are double ended, so reversing out is no problem.

We joined the electrically powered boat "George" at the entrance to the tunnel close to the Black Country Museum site. The boat is open, with striplights along the centre line and a Spotlight on a moveable mount. We could therefore examine the inside of the tunnel, some of which is brick lined, but much is unlined and cut through the limestone and other Silurian rocks below the town of Dudley.

Soon after entering the tunnel we passed through Shirt's Mill Basin, where boats used to be loaded with nearby limestone, and soon afterwards Castle Mill Basin, which is open to the stars, and from the right of which runs the branch tunnel below Wrens Nest. This section is no longer navigable. Proceeding further, we passed another branch tunnel on the left known as "Little Tess", which is now blocked by roof falls. On the return journey we entered this section for one boat's length and were told that it is the only navigable junction in a canal tunnel in the country.

We reached a cavern with the remains of former wharves, where the Trust now holds theatre shows in the summer time. There is no other entrance, and apparently the audience is not brought out until all the beer has gone!

On the way back some intrepid volunteers "legged" the boat through brick lined sections, encouraged in their labours by a

song rather like a sea shanty - or should one say a canal shanty? - the key words of which were "Push, boys, push!" frequently repeated. Legging was of course the main means of propulsion in narrow tunnels such as Dudley, where there was no towpath. One can just imagine the effort required to shift a boat loaded with perhaps 20 tons of limestone, when bearing in mind that the main line of the tunnel is nearly two miles long.

When the boat entered "Little Tess" as far as the first roof fall, the party walked down one side of the narrow vessel to see the fall, and then back down the other rather like musical chairs.

When we emerged from the tunnel we made our way to the Park Inn, where the rest of the evening was spent in a more conventional "Social Evening" manner. The very good turn out made the private room quite crowded and convivial, and there was a splendid array of refreshments awaiting us. Everyone especially the leggers did this full justice, and we all had a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Neil Pitts.

---

#### Blackbrook Valley Project.

This scheme organised as part of the European campaign for urban renaissance was first reported in the October newsletter. Saltwells Wood and Doulton's Claypit which lie within the area have now been declared a local nature reserve. Some work has already started and members may have noticed the path clearing at the tramway section, and the new fences and limestone paths in and around the woods.

A field centre is being established at Saltwells House for the benefit of schools and visiting groups. The society has been asked to help with the provision of geological material. Any member with experience of geological model making is asked to contact Alan Cutler (Brierley Hill 77865)

We have been specially requested to publicise the damage that is being caused to the wetland areas in the bottom of the claypit. Although school parties are the main culprits, we do not wish visiting geologists who may not appreciate the wildlife aspects to trample anywhere. All BCGS members can help in this respect by ensuring that friends and associates are made aware of these additional features, which enhance the overall value of the site.

Alan Cutler.

---

Clearwell Caves.

In late Septmeber we went to the Forest of Dean, staying near Coleford. While pottering about among forest footpaths, old Tramways and quarries, we came across a signpost to Clearwell Caves and decided to explore.

The caves have been open to the public for the last five years, and include eight churns (caverns) and linking passageways. They are now well lit and signposted as a trail, and there are waggons, mining equipment and geological specimens on display along the route. Even in this one mining system, there are three different tramway gauges of 14, 18 and 24 inches, and the engine house contains restored 20 and 30 horse power engines.

The caves trail extends down to 100 feet below the surface, out of the total 600 feet depth of workings in the Crease limestone, which dips at 35 degrees east. All around is the lovely haematite red, and the remaining various black iron ore crystals.

The caves were dry nearly everywhere despite recent storms, but they were once used as a local supply of drinking water. The temperature is a pleasant 10 degrees centigrade all the year round. The best stalacmite is the "Frozen Waterfall" and although stalactites are not an obvious feature such as they are at Cheddar, to us the cave system was much more interesting and purposeful in its history and geology.

Above, the ground was pitted and full of channels where ore had been removed, like any other scowles or tin mining landscape. It even provided lunch off the blackberry bushes, although the fattest fruit was always in the middle of something that looked suspiciously bottomless.

The caves cost 60 pence to enter, and a booklet is also 60 pence. They are open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday and Bank Holidays from Easter to the end of September and are still being improved. The site is south from Coleford, off the B4228, along the road which forks right at Lambsquay Hotel towards Clearwell Castle.

Sheila Pitts.

---

Committee Dates

<u>General</u>	<u>Conservation.</u>
Jan. 18th.	Jan. 25th.
Mar. 8th.	Mar. 29th.
Apr. 19th.	May 17th.
Jun. 28th.	Jul. 19th.
Sep. 6th.	Sep. 27th.
Nov. 8th.	Nov. 22nd.

---

Welcome to new member:-

Sally Purnell of Dudley.

---

Black Country Geologist.

The agent for the four Legal Deposit Libraries - Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Dublin, has requested copies of the society's journal "Black Country Geologist" for each library, and these have been despatched. A copy has already gone to the British Library. Future generations will therefore be able to consult our journal.

P.S.

Doulton's Claypit.

The warden appointed to Saltwells House field centre is -

Mr. A. W. H. Post,  
7, Barrows Road,  
Kingswinford,  
Brierley Hill, DY6 8LS.  
Tel. Brierley Hill 270705.

See Alan Cutler's item on Blackbrook Valley.

Geology Courses.

1. University of Aberdeen.

- a) Faroe Islands, 5-12 July. (Torshavn)
- b) North West Highlands, (Ullapool) 24-30 July.
- c) Grampian Region (Aberdeen) 31st July - 7th Aug.

Details from Dr. C. Gillen,  
Dept. of Adult Education,  
Aberdeen University, AB9 2UB.

2. University of Liverpool.

One day meeting, "Evolution and the Fossil Record".  
Feb. 20th. £2.00.  
Details from Jaquie Williams,  
Dept. of Geology, University  
of Liverpool, PO Box 147,  
Liverpool L69 3BX.

3. University of Bristol.

- a) At Salisbury. Mesozoic Geology of Central Southern England. May 8th £5.00 including coffee and lunch.
- b) Building Stones of Wells. Feb. 27th. S81 D04 SJ. £6.50 including coffee and lunch.
- c) Geology in Dorset, field study. June 5-12. B81 977 RH1. £100 approx. inc. accom.
- d) Mapping techniques in Ebbor Gorge, Somerset. S81 C09 SJ. March 13. £2.40.
- e) Transgressions at Chipping Sodbury Quarry. May 9 £2.40. A81 C03 SJ.
- f) Geology of Weymouth Anticline. March 5-7 £5.60. D81 G02 SJ.
- g) At Frome. Mapping in the Mendips. March 29-31. £6.40. plus accom.

Hon. Secretary:- Paul Shilston,  
15 St. Nicolas Gardens, Kings  
Norton, Birmingham B38 8TW.  
Tel. 021-459-3603.

Field Secretary:- Anne Harrison,  
15 Duncombe Grove, Harborne,  
Birmingham 16.  
Tel. 021-454-6416.

John Easter, 27 Fairlawn Drive,  
Kingswinford, DY6 9PE.  
Tel. Kingswinford 4916.

All will be pleased to answer questions.

Editor, Sheila Pitts, 4 Siskin  
Road, Pedmore, Stourbridge,  
DY9 7HU.