



# The Black Country Geological Society

NEWSLETTER No. 70 - August, 1988: No.70 - August 1988

## Forthcoming Meetings:

Indoor meetings are held at the Saracen's Head, Stone Street, Dudley. 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m. start.

Those wanting help with transport for field meetings, please contact Paul Shilston on 021 459 3603.

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

Sunday: 18th September: Field meeting to South Wales carboniferous limestone led by Sue Gibson (joint meeting with Shropshire Geological Society). This will be a walk of about 4½ miles in some of the best scenery in South Wales, all inside the Brecon Beacons National Park, finishing at Pont-Ne-dd-Fechan in the Vale of Neath. The walk follows the River Mellte which disappears underground where it crosses the carboniferous limestone and reappears, flowing through a gorge and over several waterfalls. The features are a result of the geological structure and lithologies together with the effects of river capture and rejuvenation in late Tertiary times. Meet at the Port-yr-Ogof cave car park (927122), Ystradfellte, about 8 miles North of Aberdare at 10.30 a.m. NB: Although in South Wales, journey time from the W. Midlands is 1½-2 hours by the M5, M50 and Heads of Valleys road (A465) to Hirwaun.

Monday: 17th October: Lecture "Those incredible limestone mountains of South China" by A. C. Waltham of Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham. Limestones often form Karst scenery with surface and underground features - gorges, potholes, sink holes and caverns but in South China they are developed to a spectacular degree. There are fantastic limestone pillars in one area known as the stone forest as well as the river gorges and pillars often seen in Chinese paintings.

Tony Waltham is a lively and interesting speaker. As well as a geologist, he is an expert on caving in limestone areas, particularly in Yorkshire, and has written several caving guides.

He has travelled to study limestone regions all over the world, and has taken part in expeditions to China, the Himalayas and Papua New Guinea (or was it Borneo?) with this last featured in a BBC TV programme. THIS WILL BE AN EVENING TO REMEMBER.

Sunday: 13th November: Field meeting to Clee Hills, visiting Brown Clee and Titterstone Clee. These are of Devonian and Carboniferous age with cappings of basalt generally thought to be Carboniferous. There is also a small coalfield.

The leader, Tim Pearce, comes from a local village and knows the area well. He is at present studying for a PhD on the geology of Madeira.

Meet: 10.30 a.m. at Victoria Pub in Clee Hill village, on the A4117 road between Bewdley and Ludlow.

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Monday: 5th December: Lecture "The Racecourse colliery mine" by Nigel Chapman of the Black Country Museum (Mining Group).

The mining group have been researching on the history of coalmining in the Black Country, and are reconstructing a small mine on the Museum site. Nigel's talk will describe their activities, and update members on their progress.

Monday: 16th January, 1989; Lecture on "Geology in Ireland" by Colin Reid, Keeper of Geology at the Dudley Museum.

Monday: 13th Feb: AGM at 7.45 p.m. followed at 8 p.m. by a talk by Paul Shilston "Yellowstone and Yosemite - two great national parks." Yellowstone and Yosemite are probably the two most attractive national parks in the USA, and they offer interesting geological contrasts as well as breath-taking scenery.

Yellowstone has a great range of geothermal features - geysers, hot springs, fumaroles, mud pots - whilst Yosemite is a large granitic area showing ice-age glaciation effects.

Monday: 13th March: Lecture "The Channel Tunnel" by R.G. Rainford of Tarmac Construction.

Tarmac Construction are one of the partners in the Euro-tunnel consortium, and this lecture will describe some of the geological and civil engineering aspects of the tunnel project.

28th March-10th April - MURCHISON SYMPOSIUM - an international symposium of the Silurian system, held at Keele University.

It is planned to arrange a special event on Friday 31st March when the symposium has a historical outing to Dudley.

Sunday: 16th April: Field meeting - Tertiary dykes in South Staffs, led by Dr. David Thompson of Keele University  
Joint meeting with Shropshire Geological Society.

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Graham Hickman:

Many members will remember Graham Hickman, a long-standing society member who has spent the last 3½ years

in Egypt looking for oil.

In that time he has got married - his wife Kerry is Welsh not Egyptian! - and they have now returned to England. We send them our congratulations and best wishes.

Graham has written an account of his time in Egypt, which we publish in this newsletter:-

My Time in Egypt:

In the summer of 1984, I was asked if I would like to go and work in Egypt. My enthusiasm for the posting must have been obvious because by October 31st I was sat on a plane travelling to Cairo for what was supposed to be a two year posting. (It turned out to be a three and a half year posting! but that's a different story). My arrival in Egypt was heralded by a multitude of people clamouring over the rails to be the first in the family to hug the long awaited relative. For me, a work colleague saw to my safe arrival and booked me into a hotel for a short period that turned out to be six months as my flat was not ready. One thing I learned in Cairo was patience. Never did I once get anything done 'today' - it was always 'tomorrow'. Still they did teach me a word 'Maleesh' (that enabled me to put up with the delays) meaning anything from, 'I'm sorry I backed into your car', to, 'I'm upset for you that your mother has passed away.' Needless to say it is a very well-used word!

My work was fine once I had got used to the idea that many of the local staff needed to be taught how to help before they could do anything well.

During my first year in Egypt I was responsible for organising several seismic surveys in the Gulf of Suez and the Western Mediterranean. I later became involved in interpretation of seismic data and monitored progress of several exploration wells.

Egypt possesses many different geological settings. The Gulf of Suez being a natural extension of the Red Sea rift is a classical rift basin. In the North of the Sinai Peninsula, thrust tectonics are seen and relate to the collision of the African Plate with Europe. The Nile Delta is a classical example of a long established delta.

During my first two weeks I did all the usual tourist sights and decided that once was quite enough when you are being hassled to death to buy a ticket to see a pyramid that just happens to be immediately

in front of you and the man that you have employed as your guide tells you that they were built by the Romans for the Pharaohs! Even my sparse knowledge of history told me it must be wrong.

But the excitement really began after I had bought myself a four wheel drive vehicle. Although I had to wait almost a year before it became legal, the wait was worth it. Many times I travelled into unspoilt desert and discovered so many wonders that there are too many to share with you. However, on a particular trip that my wife and I (yes, I also found a wife whilst in Cairo!) did regularly, was to a place in the desert called Dima (pronounced Deemay).

The site was a Roman/Greek site that had been left alone by humanity for several hundred years. Lying around on the ground were pot shards too innumerable to mention, accompanied by Roman glass, bricks, and the occasional copper ring, fish hook, or glass bead. The walls of the town still stand about 30 feet high and the granary is still intact. It's a fascinating place to see.

But for me the most wonderful thing had to be the nearby escarpment. The escarpment exposes an Oligocene and Miocene section of deltaic through to shallow marine sediments. At almost every horizon numerous fossils can be found. Bone beds (which put the Ludlow Bone Bed to shame) contain large fist sized fragments of reptile and mammal bones. Sharks teeth can also be found up to three inches long. On one trip a five year old girl found a huge sharks tooth that made all the geologists on the trip green with envy, but try as we might ours were miniscule in comparison.

Over the whole escarpment, fossil remains abound. I have found such things as crocodile skin and bones, turtle shell and other parts of the animal. On one very memorable stroll in the desert I was delighted, to put it mildly, to discover an almost intact fish backbone. Such were the riches of the desert that we never came away from a trip without something remarkable. Back at home my 'small' collection takes pride of place. It includes sharks teeth, crocodile skin, fish bones, numerous species of gastropod, ray teeth and of course fossilized wood. Which brings me onto the final part of this short piece .....

Just on the outskirts of Cairo lies a massive forest of fossilized wood. The trees all seem to be lying in the same direction and have no leaf fossil remains around, as far as I was able to make out. The fossils ranged in size from about 5 to 30 foot. It was the finest specimen of fossilized wood that I have ever seen. I have several pieces of wood in my collection one of them even has all the detail of a knot hole.

So now I'm back at home. I miss my desert trips; I went to Whitby Bay to try to solve my longing but the one ammonite that I found didn't seem to hold the same kind of magic. I also miss my four wheel drive, I have a bicycle now! But I do have my reminders, as my wife often tells me as she dusts them!

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Committee News:

At the AGM held on 12th March, 1988 it was agreed that as there was a shortage of two ordinary committee members, the committee could co-opt two members, when occasion arose during the year.

At the committee meeting on 12th July, two members, Mrs. Janet Meakin and Peter Smith, were co-opted, and we would like to welcome them on to the committee.

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Publications:

'Fossil Forum' - the international magazine for fossil collectors, by fossil collectors. Gives the latest developments and discoveries in palaeontology. Published in a handy A5 format with strong card cover on a quarterly basis.

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From the Papers:-

**DINOSAUR II  
EXHIBITION  
- A ROARING  
SUCCESS!!**

The popular Dinosaur 2 Exhibition featuring models and murals made by local schools and colleges continues this month at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery. The event runs through until 1 October, but some exhibits featured, including the two films 'Discovering Dinosaurs' and Dinosaurs - the age of the Terrible Lizards' will finish on 13 August. These are presently shown each weekday at 11am and 3pm.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a dinosaur jungle world, with large 3-D models and audio-visual effects. Later in the month 'Dud' the giant stegosaurus, to be seen in this year's Dudley Show, will be joining his friends at the Art Gallery.

The Geology Gallery - which now boasts new displays including one of spectacular minerals, will also be on view and the museum shop will be selling dinosaur models, posters, t-shirts and books. All the family welcome! For further details contact Colin Reid on Dudley 456000 ext 5574.