



THE BLACK COUNTRY GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER NO. 4 - MAY 1976

Editorial

As the first year of The Black Country Geological Society draws to a close it is perhaps important to reflect on one or two aspects of the period. Geologists of renown have graced our lecture theatre, local authorities and the press have sought our views, good working relationships have been developed with other bodies and there has been enthusiastic support of meetings by the members.

Taking the last point, it is, of course, the membership that is The Society and, therefore, must control the direction and development of the B.C.G.S. Without a doubt, the work that lies ahead in the form of site documentation and conservation is immense. The scope for developing the programme of meetings and for scientific research is considerable and with the possible acquisition of a permanent headquarters the future looks bright.

Next Meeting - May 20th

The Society is pleased to receive the internationally respected geologist and academic Dr George Bennison of The University of Birmingham. The title of the lecture is 'The Cretaceous Coal of New Mexico'

Dudley Museum 7.45 p.m.
Tea and biscuits 7.15 p.m.

The Journal

The Journal of The Black Country Geological Society will be available in August. There will be four or five articles covering a variety of topics.

It is anticipated that The Journal will be produced annually with a high standard of text and illustrations.

Site Documentation

The meeting on February 19th to discuss the documentation of geological sites was well attended and in spite of a hurried change of venue, the programme was completed. The card system favoured at the Sheffield meeting of the Geological Museum Curator's Group was discussed but it was thought to be inadequate for Black Country Geology. The form designed by the committee was then shown to the members and Dr. Oliver explained its purpose line by line. Several 35mm slides were shown, the structures illustrated being recorded on one of the new forms. Finally, a copy of the form was given to each member with a request that it be completed and returned to the Librarian.

The response to this request was very disappointing. Only one form was returned and that was from a member of the committee. It was pointed out in the last newsletter that the geological documentation of the Black Country was one of The Society's major roles. This is an enormous task and the help of every member of the Society is needed. So please, start recording now. If you require help or if there is anything you do not understand, please do not hesitate, get in touch with any committee member.

Book List

This month's book list is primarily for newcomers to earth sciences: all are budget priced paperbacks.

Geological Time - Foundation of Earth Science Series

Geology & Scenery in England & Wales - Pelican

Understanding the Earth - Pelican

Geology of the Area Around Birmingham - A Geologists Assoc Guide

Continued ..

Fossils - A Little Guide in Colour
Old Red Sandstone Fishes - Shropshire
County Museum
The Story of the Earth - Geological
Museum
Volcanoes - Geological Museum

FIELD MEETING - SUNDAY MARCH 14th

Margaret Oliver gives the following account

CLARE'S LANE & OLD PARK COLLIERIES TELFORD

A group of about twenty braved the cold and mist for the visit to Telford, ever hopeful that the sun or some other interesting specimen might expose itself during the course of the day.

We were met at Clare's Lane Colliery by two N.C.B. geologists who gave a concise talk about the site and the main purposes behind the operations here. The working of these Coal Measures has a dual purpose:-

a) Coal Extraction

There are five seams of up to 40 cms in thickness which are expected to yield about $\frac{1}{4}$ million tons. This amount is small compared with other sites but coal extraction is not the primary purpose.

b) Removal of Old Workings to a depth of about 50 (in) feet.

This primary objective is to ensure that the land will be safe for future building by Telford Corporation. We could see the marked contrast between the care taken over backfilling and compacting in the opencast methods and the laissez faire attitude of the 'old' miners who left behind them a maze of uncharted workings and shafts. A pit props were visible on the walls.

At the bottom of the quarry is the Little Flint seam which was being cleared for removal by mechanical shovels. Great care is taken to remove as much of the overlying rock as possible, to the extent of brushing the surface, to ensure a low ash content.

The massive sandstones overlying this basal seam provided a happy home for fossil hunters, yielding various plant remains.

At Old Park Colliery we were shown the wash-out in the Blackstone Seam which causes it to have an uneven surface and fade out. The overlying unconformable shales were very friable but rich in plant remains. A siderite nodule was brought to our attention

and on trying to acquire a sample we found out how hard it was, - this is also a problem faced by the drilling equipment and great care is taken to try and remove them since they can cause extensive damage.

BLISTS HILL OPEN AIR MUSEUM

Terry Bond helped our appreciation of the exhibits here by his short talks. This museum provided an ideal link between geology and economic history of the area. Coal, iron ore and fireclay were extracted from this site and the remains of blast furnaces and brick works can still be seen. The finished products and raw materials were transported on the Shropshire Canal in iron barges which could be moved on rails via the incline plane to the River Severn.

We had a superb demonstration of a steam engine winding a cage in one of the old shafts - in this modern age of plastics and fragility we felt very aware of the power of these old machines.

POUK HILL

The northern end of the site is to be filled with domestic refuse beginning in November and The County Council is now ready to build a roadway into the quarry. The Society has had a number of discussions with West Midlands and the latter have agreed to the recording and collection of specimens before November.

The visit to the site on Sunday 2nd May was to begin the recording of the parts of the quarry threatened by the roadway. Photographs were taken in this area, showing the excellent examples of spheroidal weathering and stages of extrusions with amygdaloidal layers.

The programme over the next few months is likely to be concerned with further photography, site descriptions, detailed sampling, structural data and the possibility of exposing new sections at the southern end of the quarry. It is highly likely that sufficient data will be produced over the next two years to enable publication of The Society's work.

MUCKLOW HILL

Constructional work on the north side of Mucklow Hill, Halesowen, has resulted in an excellent exposure of Upper Coal Measures. The Halesowen Beds and Etruria

Marl are represented, with an unconformity readily observed between them. Lithologies are variable and faulting is present. The site has been surveyed by a few members and it appears that this exposure is the only one of its kind in the Black Country. The importance of the site is obvious and further visits are necessary. Dudley Metropolitan District Council are aware of The Society's interest in this exposure.

Membership

Readers are reminded that membership fees are now overdue. An application form was included in the February Newsletter. The Honorary Secretary can be contacted at Bilston 46717

for further information.

Forthcoming Events

June 26th/27th (including the evening of 25th). 'The Geology of the Mendips Area'. A weekend field meeting to a number of localities in the Mendips. Local geologists will lead some of the excursions. Accommodation can be arranged if required or alternatively the Hon. Sec. has copies of a hotel list. Please book before or at the May 20th meeting.

July 18th Field meeting. 'The Geology of the Eastern Boundary Fault'. Leader Peter Whitehead. Meet at The Royal Oak Inn, corner of Winterley Lane and Bosty Lane, Daw End (Rushall) G.R. SK034005. Time 10.00 a.m. Bring a packed lunch.

August 22nd. Field meeting. Dudley Canal Tunnel by narrowboat (cost 50p) and Wrens Nest. Please book early, everyone welcome. Bring a packed lunch. Meeting point will be announced in the August Newsletter.

September 23rd. Dr. P. Toghill will talk about 'Conserving Shropshire's Geology'. No doubt The Society will benefit considerably from this meeting.

October 16th. A day trip by coach to London's Geological Museum. Time and place to be announced later. Please book early.

Mid-November. Social evening. The form of this has not yet been decided but it is hoped that a well supported and informal 'get-together' can be arranged.

Any Ideas?

December 9th. 'The History of Tectonics' by Doug Bedson.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 29th April 1976

20 members attended the first A.G.M. of The Society at Dudley Museum. The minutes of the Inaugural Meeting were a very full account, since it was one way in which the formation of The Society could be documented.

The statement of accounts was presented by Eileen Bakewell who referred to various parts of the statement including the cost of stationery, postage and the Christmas Social. Eileen also referred to the 'Liquid Assets' amounting to £17.10 left over from the Christmas Social and now slowly maturing in the Chairman's house.

The Annual Report, prepared by the Committee and read by the Chairman, Alan Cutler, gave a summary of the year's work and activities with particular reference to aspects of conservation and recording at Pouk Hill, Mucklow Hill and the Traffic Island at Halesowen. The possibility of helping the Nature Conservancy with restorative work at Wrens Nest was also mentioned and further information about this will become available at a later date.

In his report, the Secretary mentioned the work undertaken by the Committee during the year. This included monthly Committee meetings, deciding on the forthcoming programme and discussion about the various sites with a view to recording and conservation.

During the meeting the Officers and Committee were all re-elected to their present positions.

- Chairman - A. Cutler, B.Sc.
- Vice-Chairman - P.G. Oliver, Ph.D., F.G.S.
- Hon. Secretary - D.J. Wraight
- Hon. Treasurer - Mrs. E. Bakewell
- Committee Members - Mrs. M. Oliver, B.A.
- T. Bond
- D. Bedson

Book Review (The Terry Bond Spot)

It may be expressing a rather narrow point of view but my idea of a Geological disaster is no one turning up to one of our

field trips. However, Messrs. BOLT, HORN, MACDONALD & SCOTT have taken a comprehensive look at GEOLOGICAL HAZARDS in their new book recently published by Springer-Verlag at £11.50.

Well, if you have been shocked by the price that is only for starters, because the text sets out to describe and explain a whole series of disasters involving earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and avalanches of many sorts, landslides and floods, all of them having spectacular, awe-inspiring, frightening results. Included, as you might expect, are the well-known occurrences San-Fransisco 1906, Krakatau 1883, Peru 1970, Hurricane Agnes 1972 and many more old favourites.

If it were only a catalogue of disasters the book would be of little value to geologists, but its major function is in explaining the origins and mechanisms of the phenomena together with accounts of measures being undertaken in attempting to predict and control such occurrences.

The book is written in a simple, flowing style using metric units with which to report physical measurements; it may be a little confusing to read of the maximum flow of the Mississippi during the 1973 flood to be about 56,800,000 litres per second but I find that such a volume expressed in any units to be on the edge of comprehension, but in case you are more familiar than I with such things there is a 'Metric-Imperial' conversion table included.

Association of Teachers of Geology

This association, founded 1967, has just published Vo. 1 No. 1 of its new Journal 'GEOLOGY TEACHING', which will be a quarterly, of use to all teachers engaged in courses involving geological topics, even if they do not teach Geology as such. Non-teaching members will also find much of interest. Through the Journal, members of A.T.G. will be able to buy field equipment and specially prepared visual aids, at very low prices.

A.T.G. also holds an annual conference, during a weekend in September.

Membership £3.00 per annum

Details from: Alan J. Thomas (Secretary)
National Museum of Wales
CARDIFF

New Equipment

The Society has acquired its first piece of geological equipment - a Prinz converted petrological microscope. It features four objectives 30x - 800x, rotating stage, analyser and mains illumination. There are a number of slides as well. The microscope will be available to all members on loan but if demand is high we will have to operate a maximum loan period similar to a lending library. Anyone interested in borrowing the microscope should contact Eileen Bakewell - Kingswindford 79589.

Geological Hammers and Compass/Clinometers

The committee are trying to buy these at 'Bulk' prices. Anyone interested please contact Doug Bedson.

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