



Editorial

The  
Black  
Country  
Geological  
Society

"From the Papers"

Alan Cutler meticulously keeps a society scrapbook of local news items with a geological flavour, and has asked if we would all like a regular selection of news items for our newsletter. The feature begins in this issue.

I have been delighted to receive letters and other items of general interest from members. They will all be used - please don't stop! There are also two contributions relating to last January, the writers having at last removed the enormous sediment of snow from their boots, inspired by the re-emergence of an old landscape including bright red post boxes.

A very happy Christmas to them, and to all of you. Please do not forget the quality and value of the society cards, and the journal for presents. It is all good for helping the society funds.

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Next Meeting

Dec.6th "Glacial Deposits" - Lecture by Mr. Edward Francis of Keele University.

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Meetings are held in the Allied Centre, Green Man Entry, Tower Street, Dudley, behind the Malt Shovel pub. Indoor meetings commence at 8 pm. with coffee and biscuits from 7.15 pm. Field meetings will commence from outside the Allied Centre unless otherwise arranged. Those who would like lifts, please contact Anne Harrison.

Non-members welcome.

The society does not provide personal accident cover for members and visitors on field trips. You are strongly advised to take out your own personal insurance cover 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.C.A.M.,  
Dip.M., M.Inst.M.

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

*Hon. Treasurer*  
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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.

January 10th. "From the Petrified Forest to Death Valley and Yosemite". Lecture about the geology and scenery of south west U.S.A. by Mr.W.G. Hardie, senior lecturer at Birmingham University. Slides taken on the Geologists' Association excursion 1981.

February. To be arranged.

March 14th. Annual General Meeting and Horizon film "When Polar Bears Swam in the Thames". About the British Ice Age.

April. Weekend field trip being arranged.

May 9th. "Palaeomagnetism applied to Sedimentology". Lecture by Dr.P.Turner of Aston University.

June. There will be two evening field trips.

July. A field trip to be arranged.

September. Lecture.

October 23rd. Joint field trip with the Shropshire Geological Society to Black Country sites.

December. "The Biology of Trilobites". Lecture by Dr.P.D. Lane of Keele University.

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The Development of Geology in Staffordshire. 1680-1820.

Lecture by Dr.H.Torrens of Keele University. January 11th 1982.

In a skilful, entertaining and fact-packed lecture Hugh Torrens demonstrated that geological enquiry in Staffordshire can be traced back as far as 1661, following the publication of Joshua Childrey's "Britannia Baconia". Childrey influenced Robert Plot to write in the Natural History of Oxfordshire quickly followed by Staffordshire in response to local demand.

The main force behind geological enquiry was economic pressures. The development of the steam engine, first seen in the Black Country at Tipton in 1712, and which consumed coal at an unprecedented rate started the search for and exploitation of our coal reserves. We heard too of appalling ignorance displayed even as late as 1900 in the speculative search for coal in the most unlikely places by get-rich-quick investors.

Knowledge within the coalfields seems to have accumulated surprisingly quickly. James Kier of West Bromwich contributed the geological section of Stubbings and Shaw's History of Staffordshire in 1798. Kier accurately knew the arrangement of the coalseams and limestones of the Dudley area and his work is referred to in Geological Survey memoirs.

It seems incredible now but it was not until 1750 that Trilobites were recognised in Britain as a new group of animals directly as a result of mining activities.

Rowley Rag, the local name for dolerites and basalts, seems to have attracted much attention. Withery conducted one of the first analyses of the rock and tells us that it was used among other things for paving stones. James Kier, a keen experimenter, found that the dolerites needed less than half the fuel to melt than the equivalent weight of pig-iron. He was also able to verify that columnar jointing was a cooling feature.

Education also played its part in the development of 18th century geology. Dr.Torrens identified several touring lecturers who get little or no recognition today. The first public museum was established at Lichfield in 1740 by a Mr.Green. Initially it was private but anyone with interest could visit it. The collection passed eventually to Richard Wright who

published a paper on a fossil crocodile (pleisiosaur) in 1810 in Anatomica, well before Mary Anning achieved fame. Eventually the collection was bought by Sedgwick in 1821 for the museum at Cambridge.

It was fascinating to hear about Ryan, a close friend of William Smith, who invented a boring machine with recoverable bores, and later came to work for Lord Dudley. He became an authority on ventilating mine shafts. He died in 1845 and was buried in St. Thomas' churchyard Dudley, but today is largely unknown and unrecognised. We heard of many more pioneering achievements in Staffordshire too numerous to mention but it can be safely said that Staffordshire was in the forefront of the development of the science of geology.

Our grateful thanks go to Dr. Torrens who came from Keele in such appalling weather. It is a pity that so few members had the benefit of this fascinating lecture.

Alan Cutler.

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Centenary of Geological Sciences  
at Birmingham University.  
January 8th and 9th 1982.

Just over 100 years ago Mason College, now Birmingham University, purchased the Ketley collection of 1650 Silurian fossils extracted from the Wrens Nest. Perhaps this was in anticipation of the founding of a geology course at the College because in 1881 a department of geology and mineralogy was inaugurated and the most famous geologist of his day, Charles Lapworth appointed to the chair. A few years before the appointment Lapworth, by using parts of Murchison's Silurian System and Sedgwick's Cambrian,

had established the Ordovician, a system now recognised by all but a few European authorities. The acquisition of such a man to fill the new chair was quite a coup for Mason College. Lapworth divided his Ordovician into horizons marked by significant graptolites, and the original type specimens can be seen at the University.

To celebrate the Centenary of Geological Sciences at the University, the Department arranged a special exhibition showing work there since 1880. Many of Lapworth's maps, specimens and implements were displayed together with exhibits and materials gathered from all parts of the globe by eminent geologists carrying out research from the Department. The displays from the Greenland and Antarctic Surveys were particularly interesting. The celebrations lasted two days and all past and present members of the Department were invited, together with representatives of organisations contributing to the study of Midlands geology, including two invitations to members of the B.C.G.S.

After being welcomed by the Head of the Department, Professor Griffiths, the guests were invited to a talk on the "History of Geological Sciences" by Dr. Strachan. This was followed by a lecture by Professor Shotton on the development of the Department. The day finished with a Centenary dinner at Ridge Hall. By Friday the blizzard was at its height, but even so over 100 managed to attend the dinner, although many roads were quite impassable.

Saturday was occupied before lunch with lectures by Sir Peter Kent on deep geology, Professor Blundell on thirty years of geophysics, and Dr. Boulton on the department's quaternary research. The chairman was the Lapworth Professor of Geology, Professor A. Hallam. The celebrations concluded with tours of the Department to see current research. Everyone seemed

to enjoy the occasion, and the organisers are to be congratulated on entertaining so many visitors so successfully, despite the severe weather.

The Ketley collection and the Holcroft collection can be seen in part at the Geological Sciences Museum at the University between 9 am. and 5 pm. on weekdays, but other arrangements can be made to view the whole collections.

Douglas Bedson.

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Letters to the Editor.

1)

Dear Sheila,

On 18th October I took a party of 15 people to the museum of the Geological Department at Birmingham University where we were met by Mr. Osborne, the Curator.

The two hours we spent there allowed us only to touch the surface of the many splendid specimens housed there. The fossils are a delight, particularly those of the Holcroft collection, which is accompanied by his original fossil register. It is possible to look up a particular fossil in the register and then locate it in the collection. The information also includes details of where the specimen was found, who found it, and how much was paid for it.

Some of the fossils displayed in Holcroft's original display cabinets were rescued from disposal (Sacrilege!) because of lack of response from potential buyers.

Dinosaurs certainly roamed the Earth around Great Barr, as their fossil footprints were found during the building of the station, and ancient rainfall is preserved as rainpits in the same display.

The minerals are of course beautiful and interesting, and there are many drawers and cabinets awaiting enthusiastic visitors.

A visit has been made by the society in the past, but I am sure that recent members would get much enjoyment and interest if a further visit should be planned in the future. Mr. Osborne is very keen for the museum to be seen by as many visitors as possible and is only too willing to stay in the evening for a party or to make arrangements for them during the day. He can be contacted on 472-1301 ext. 3154 during the daytime. Photographs may be taken.

Hilary Logan.

Kate Ashcroft, who went with Hilary's party, also said how much everyone had enjoyed it.

Sheila.

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2) 15, St. Thomas Road,  
Erdington,  
Birmingham B23 7RQ.

Dear Sheila,

I was very pleased to read the news that a decision had been reached not to enforce a restriction on collecting at the Charmouth cliffs and foreshore. Such a restriction would have been virtually impossible to enforce anyway, for how do you discern between the professional collectors, who do most of the damage, the amateur, and the casual tourist who collects something off the shore at random.

The cliffs are composed of clays and marls and thus their very nature will result in ever continuing cliff falls and erosion on a quicker scale than the average limestone or igneous cliff. I do not think that the great majority of collectors

accelerate this erosion in any but the smallest degree. Most collectors and teachers who bring groups know that most of the fossils will be found on the beach and amongst the screens.

Over the past eight years I have made several trips to this area of the coast and on only two occasions have I seen horrific large scale drilling and hammering by professionals. These people seek the elusive larger calcitised ammonites for sale in their fossil shops. Once again it is the story of the selfish few giving the many honest collectors a bad name. If Dorset is to remain the stratigrapher's and palaeontologist's Mecca that it still is, then all who go there must care for, and not abuse her beauty and charm.

Peter Knight.

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From the Papers.

Items of a geological nature often appear in local and national newspapers. We hope to publish extracts from the more interesting and topical pieces as a regular newsletter feature. Complete cuttings will be kept in the book box for members to inspect. If you come across any suitable items in newspapers, magazines or whatever, please send them to the editor or Alan Cutler so that they may be included.

Limestone Caves may be reopened to the Public.  
(Express and Star 19.1.82.)

Dudley Canal Trust submitted a report to Dudley Council proposing the opening of the

Singer Cavern for added interest and to improve the route for narrow boat trips.

French Want Facts on Bug.  
(Express and Star 17.2.82.)

Students in Salon Provence, wrote to the Dudley Mayor for information about the famous trilobite Calymene, once so prolific at Wrens Nest that it was incorporated into the Dudley coat of arms. In return they offered to send information about their own bug called "Roses de Saliles". (It is not known what correspondence ensued.)

Decision on Black Country Museum Entrance.  
(Express and Star 14.6.82 & 18.6.82.)

The Black Country Museum is having difficulty in siting its new headquarters building because of ground instability caused by former mining. New test bores have been ordered.

Earl anxious to keep link with town. (Express and Star 22.6.82.)

So said the Earl of Dudley when opening an exhibition for the Friends of the Black Country Museum at their new Wolverhampton Street, Dudley headquarters. Basil Poole, President of the Friends, exhibited his collection of miner's lamps.

No to Dinosaurs. (Express & Star 3.12.81.)

A plan to open a plastic dinosaur park on the hillside above Cheddar Gorge has been turned down by the government. No further information is available.

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Dudley Evening Class.

Please note that this has been changed. It is now ten meetings, on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm. at the

Museum and Art Gallery,  
St. James Road, commencing  
January 25th. R.J. Kennedy,  
B.A. will give a course on  
"Introduction to  
Palaeontology and Geology."

The Nature Conservancy would  
appreciate comments from  
Geologists who know the area.  
Dr. K.L. Duff, Foxhold House,  
Thornford Road, Crookham  
Common, Newbury, Berks.  
RG15 8EL.

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Geology of the Shetland Isles.  
July 2 - 9, 1983.

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64, Highfield Road,  
Ewell, Epsom,  
Surrey.

Resident at Janet Courtney Hostel,  
Lerwick. Cost £99-109.  
Excluding transport to Shetland.  
Deposit £15 and application to  
G.A. Metcalfe, 42, Aberdour Road,  
Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 4PE.

Dear Mr. Cutler,

Dolgellau Youth Hostel,  
Kings, Dolgellau, Gwynedd.

Short courses on geology,  
geomorphology, ecology, soil  
science and industrial  
archaeology.  
Details from the warden,  
Graham Hall.

I have for many  
years been a keen fossil  
collector, in the course of  
which I have amassed many  
duplicate specimens. I hope  
that you may be able to put me  
in touch with any of your  
members who are interested in  
exchanging specimens.

I have over 1000 species of  
all major invertebrate groups,  
and also fish, reptiles and  
mammals. My particular  
research field is Trilobites,  
and I am particularly  
interested in Dudley material  
for exchange.

Camping barns in the Peak District.

Cheap accommodation, £1.25 per  
night, camping in a barn. Details  
from Peak National Park Study  
Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton,  
Derbyshire, S30 2WB.

I look forward to hearing  
from your members and wish  
your society every success.

Lost Worlds. Leicestershire  
Museum and Art Gallery, New Walk,  
Leicester.

Geological reconstructions of  
past landscapes, with volcanoes,  
coastal swamps, Triassic deserts  
and Quaternary.

Yours sincerely,

P.J. Lawrence, B.Sc. A.M.A.

Nature Conservancy Council.  
Barton on Sea cliffs, SSSI  
Hampshire.

Planning permission for coastal  
protection of this important  
type section of the Bartonian  
stage of the Eocene has been  
applied for by New Forest  
District Council.

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Tewksbury, G120 8RG.

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Nicolas Gardens, Kings Norton,  
Birmingham, B38 8TW. Tel.  
021-549-3603.

Field Sec. Anne Harrison,  
15 Duncombe Court, Harborne,  
Birmingham, B16.  
Tel. 021-429-1818.

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

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BLACK COUNTRY GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

GUIDED WALKS 1982.

NUMBERS ATTENDING

JUNE			JULY			AUG			SEPT		
6	13	20	4	11	18	1	8	15	5	12	19
DOULTON'S CLAYPIT	COTWALL END	WRENS NEST	DOULTON'S CLAYPIT	COTWALL END	WRENS NEST	DOULTON'S CLAYPIT	COTWALL END	WRENS NEST	DOULTON'S CLAYPIT	COTWALL END	WRENS NEST
A 2 C 0	A 14 C 4	A 29 C 6	A 5	A 19 C 3	A 18 C 4	A 18 C 1	A 15 C 3	A 21 C 4	A 19 C 2	A 8	A 20 C 4

A = ADULTS  
C = CHILDREN

Additional guided walks  
will be arranged for  
next summer.

P.D. SHILSTON  
HON. SEC.

BLACK COUNTRY GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
1982 CHRISTMAS CARDS.

The 1982 Christmas Card depicts a contemporary print of the Dudley Gathering - the visit of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, to Cresswell's Open Works in the Thick Coal at Dudley in 1894.

The illustration is reproduced in its original black and white form on top quality board, size 8" x 6".

The price for a dozen including envelopes is £2.50.

Single cards may be purchased at 25p. each. Discounts available for quantities of 50 or more; details on request.

We still have some of the 1981 cards available which depict the British Association visit to Dudley Caverns. Prices as for the 1982 cards.

The cards will be available from mid-November and will be on sale at the Social and the December meeting. Alternatively, they may be obtained by post from:

Alan Cutler,  
21, Primrose Hill,  
WORDSLEY,  
Stourbridge,  
West Midlands.

Telephone : Brierley Hill 77865.

Please add 50p. towards postage.

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B.C.G.S.Christmas Cards.

Order Form.

Please send me.....1982 Christmas Cards.

.....1981 Christmas Cards.

NAME : .....

ADDRESS : .....

.....

Cheque enclosed for £.....including 50p. postage.