

GeoConservationUK Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 1

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GEOCONSERVATIONUK

Oiling the wheels of GeoConservation . . . ?

On the same day that this issue of the *Newsletter* is published the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867; the purchase price of \$7.2 million meant it paid at the time about two cents per acre. Given the value of 20th Century exploited oil reservoirs alone, in hindsight, a rather canny purchase! Of course, the United Kingdom's Government has the revenue of the admittedly dwindling oil and gas reserves from the North Sea; these are seemingly still valuable enough to warrant a windfall tax and perhaps the same wind should bring some of the monies acquired into geological education and maintaining the collections and sites that underpinned the training of its discoverers.

Geology underpins the very physical fabric and technology of modern society and perhaps, as well as the extractive industry, we should use some of the tax from those who process its raw materials as a means to fund geological education and geoconservation in the 21st Century. **TOM HOSE**



EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first *Newsletter* of this year, largely made possible by the excellent response to my recent request for news items. So, a big 'thank you' to everyone who sent in articles, newsletters and photographs; I hope you are pleased with their editing. It was especially good to hear of so much activity and progress in Scotland. Hopefully, we'll be able to demonstrate the same for Wales in the next issue with a couple of feature articles; I'm certainly looking forward to visiting several localities and projects in Wales in the coming months.

Meanwhile, in England we are coming to terms with the loss of the ALSF, although not without comment to the Government; many thanks to all of you who sent me information about how you had previously used its monies to good effect and news of projects, particularly LGAPs, now delayed or unlikely to be completed. As a body we need to better emphasise the true worth (and indeed, monetary value!) to the Government of the contributions we make to education, local communities and the planning process, largely as unwaged ('Big Society' ?) but professional, volunteers with an internationally recognised expertise. **TOM HOSE**

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ENGLAND — *Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group*

Dr. Clive Rodgers led a small band of members around Bryant 's Quarry on 12th March to look at



Lower Greensand sediments. Amongst the spectacular features in the quarry are the various cross-stratified sands, such as those within the Silver Sand Group (see left). Some fine specimens of fossil wood were found (see right). The site resembles a desert in places and has been used as a back drop to recent movies including the "Mummy" series and the "Da Vinci Code". *Tom Hose*



ENGLAND — *DIGS*

Since our AGM in January we have had two site review days and a third one is planned for the end of March. These days are designed to progressively review our designated sites to determine what conservation work is required and in some cases their viability as a continuing DIGS sites. One of our sites we have decided is not viable due to access issues (Grexy Cross) while the other five reviewed so far are viable and in need of small amounts of conservation which will be carried out in the next few months.

We have been helping Dorset Wildlife Trust at Kingbarrow Quarry clearing the 'fossil forest' horizon of *Cotoneaster horizontalis* over the past few



months (see left) and this site is now looking in good shape. On-going maintenance will be needed however due to the aggressive nature of the *Cotoneaster*. Although this is not a DIGS site we recognise its geological importance.

The Group has been preparing new information material and an information board is to be placed at our Whitecliff site in Poole and the next few weeks in cooperation with Poole District Council. Last summer the site was improved with the clearance of gorse and brambles.

The Group has also been preparing information boards for up and coming displays e.g. at a Dorset Wildlife Trust day over Easter and the Fossil Festival at Lyme Regis (Bank Holiday weekend April 29th- May 1st. These will also be used in displays at local venues e.g. libraries (if they remain open!!!). The Group is also planning to be involved in the Dorset Beach Clean on April 17th and the venue chosen to help at is Worbarrow Bay near Tyneham. Again, this is not a DIGS site but is geologically important on the Jurassic Coast. *Alan Holiday*

ENGLAND — *Black Country Geological Society*



*The
Black
Country
Geological
Society*

As always, the Society's spring schedule is filled with a range of activities meeting a wide range of geological and geoconservation interests:

Sunday 20th February: (Geoconservation field work) Helping with vegetation clearance work at Moorcroft Wood. Meet at the Warden's office, Moorcroft Environment Centre, Hawkswood Drive, Moxley, Walsall, WS10 8GB (GR: SO 968951) at 10:30am.

Monday 21st February: (Indoor meeting) 'An introduction to Glaciers, Ice Ages and the British Landscape.' Speaker: Dr. Richard Waller, Keele University. This will be a modern review of glacial science and our current understanding of Ice Ages, illustrated with some classic British Landforms.

Sunday 27th February: - Visit to Barrow Hill Volcano led by Alan Cutler and Julia Morris. Meet at St Mark's Church, Vicarage Lane, Pensnett, DY5 4JH (GR: SO 915 894) at 10:00am.

Sunday 13th March: - Visit to Erasmus Darwin House, Lichfield for 12:00. Meet at Erasmus Darwin House, Beacon Street, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 7AD (GR:SK 114 097). We will be given a brief talk and allowed to view the house and exhibits using their audio guide. There is a £2.00 entry fee that the Society will pay for members.

Monday 21st March: (Indoor meeting, 7.00 for 7.30 start) AGM followed by 'Problematic plesiosaurs - a unique group of extinct marine reptiles'. Speaker: Dr. Adam Smith, Natural Science Curator, Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum. This talk will bring us cutting edge findings about these majestic creatures of the Jurassic Seas.

Sunday 3rd April: - Visit to the Saltwells Nature Reserve led by Graham Worton and Julia Morris. Meet at the car park off Coppice Lane, SO933 868, 10:00am. (Adjacent to the Saltwells Inn, DY5 1AX).

Monday 11th April: (Indoor meeting) 'The Geology of Lundy'. Speaker: Dr. Clive Roberts, University of Wolverhampton. This little granitic island in the Bristol channel is in many ways enigmatic. This talk will outline the geology and examine new radiometric dating suggesting that it may be the last volcanic episode of the tertiary volcanics associated with the opening of the Atlantic Ocean, although it is so far from the more familiar Tertiary volcanics of the Scottish north-western islands.

The Society's regular Newsletter is packed with useful information and feature articles for members. Details of the Society are available from Barbara Russell, the Honorary Secretary [barbara-russell@blueyonder.co.uk].

Julie Schröder



GeoConservationUK Newsletter

ENGLAND — *Somerset Geology Group*

Up until very recently we had no data set of the County's Local Geological Sites (LGS). However, even Somerset must keep up with its more advanced neighbours, and we now have a spreadsheet for our LGS. It took a week to fill in the infernal thing. Natural England wanted to have a full list of the nation's LGS and in return we are promised recompense. The subsequent report will be widely available with suitable safeguards for copyright, sensitivity etc. Thanks must go to the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) for the work involved.

What use has been made of the list? It is a tripwire when development threatens a site but offers non statutory protection. SERC also holds a list of most of Somerset's geological sites below LGS status. It is a kind of Domesday record of sites in existence in 1995. No survey has been carried out to judge their state since then. But developers, via SERC, come back to DIGS if, for example, a pipeline is planned near one. Recently a developer's agent contacted us about Hansdown Cottage Quarry east of Wells. The developer is hoping to take advantage of a Government scheme (you have guessed it!) to support the installation of solar panels. Our records said there was a fault, lead-zinc vein and a fissure. This a case of conservation versus wealth creation. Desmond Donovan kindly visited the site and contacted Mendip Council.

On a more practical geoconservation note, Gill Odolphie, Martin Whitely and the Mendip Quarry Producers have done a stunning job recently at Tedbury Camp Quarry providing access steps, removing rubbish and generally cleaning up the popular site; all very timely, with spring approaching, as it is on the internet and is one of the top inland geology sites for individuals and field-parties. *Hugh Prudden*

ENGLAND — *GeoConservation Staffordshire*

Staffordshire RIGS Group has now, in common with other RIGS groups, 're-branded' itself to *GeoConservation Staffordshire*; It is, of course, carrying on with the good and long-standing work of both promoting and actively undertaking geoconservation work in the county. Its volunteers recently undertook some site clearance work at the Sparrowlea Cutting on the 'Hamps and Manifold Geotrail'. Their number and efforts can be judged from the photograph of the working party in action.



GeoConservation Staffordshire volunteers working on the Sparrowlea Cutting and clearly following health and safety guidelines!

The work attracted the attention and comment of some passers-by. *Jan Stimpson*

ENGLAND — *Tees Valley RIGS Group*

Tees Valley RIGS Group are pleased to announce the production of their new revised Geodiversity Action Plan (GAP). The original plan was produced in 2003 and covered the four borough councils of Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool. The Geodiversity Action Plan 2011 has extended its scope and now covers Darlington Borough as well.



With funding from Natural England we have been able to start surveying Darlington and to review the existing GAP. The GAP 2011 has been produced to sit alongside the already successful Tees Valley Biodiversity Action

Plan and covers the same area.

The new Plan highlights the work that Tees Valley RIGS Group hopes to achieve over the next 5 years, and although we are only a small Group we are already working on some of the tasks and looking forward to new challenges. For more details on the GAP 2011 and the work of Tees Valley RIGS Group please visit our website at www.tvrigs.org.uk. or contact tvrigs@gmail.com.

Beth Andrews

ENGLAND — *Oxfordshire Geology Trust*

The Trust has recently been funded by the Chilterns Conservation Board to complete the 'Livelihoods from Chalk in the Oxfordshire Chilterns' project. We have researched the link between past and present livelihoods and the underlying geology to demonstrate that the Chilterns area is distinctive, not only in terms of its Natural Beauty, but also for its heritage of regional-specific livelihoods. We organised two successful public talks in the area to share our findings. We are now applying for further funding to research this topic, in partnership with three other county geology groups (including the Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group), across the entire Chilterns AONB.



We have researched how agriculture and land use are related to geology and landscape. We have seen how milling, trout fisheries and watercress cultivation are located along chalk streams. Also, how the small outcrops of clays and sand overlying the chalk historically provided the raw materials for brick, tile and pottery manufacturing. Chalk and flints have been used as building materials and the chalk has been used for the production of lime mortar, plaster, lime wash and cement.

The Trust organised a range of 'hands-on' activities for families including searching for fossils in the sand and making dino-masks (see left). Experts were on hand to identify fossils and minerals brought

A fearsome junior dinosaur and his handler!

Denise Dane



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SCOTLAND— Strathclyde GeoConservation Group



There has not been a lot of outdoor activity for the Group over the past few months due to the weather, but last week a small party of us took a look at a couple of sites at Dumbarton. The first stop was at a location locally called Havoc Hole (see top left). This sandstone cliff at the back of a raised beach has a small cave that in local legend is where Robert the Bruce was inspired by a spider to carry on his fight. The sandstone is of Devonian

age with impressive cross bedding. The cliff is behind a large park area which leads down to the Clyde estuary and is an ideal location for interpretation; the group will discuss this provision at their next meeting.

The next stop was at Dumbarton Rock to trial a proposed leaflet for that area, specifically of the



shoreline at the back of the rock. Large blocks of basalt have been ripped off the side of the rock due to activity of the last ice age. One of which can be seen to be an ideal place for training rock climbers (see bottom left). The volcano, of which the rock is a core, caused considerable upheaval in the country rock and these disturbed sandstones and mudstones can be seen on this shoreline.

Margaret Greene

SCOTLAND — Scottish GeoDiversity Forum

On Saturday, 19th March the Scottish GeoDiversity Forum met at BGS Edinburgh, agreed its constitution and also held its first AGM. Angus Miller (GeoWalks) was elected as chair, with Mihaela Trelea-Newton as Secretary and Linda McKee as Treasurer, along with five confirmed members of the Executive Committee, including Margaret Greene (Strathclyde GeoConservation) as Membership Secretary and Mike Browne (Lothian and Borders GeoConservation) as Vice Chair. The Forum's aim is to promote the geodiversity of Scotland by establishing better communication with common interest societies, landowners, industry, government, etc. in order to attract membership and increase geographical coverage around Scotland of individuals and organisations committed to enhancement of geodiversity. The pre-existing GeoConservation Scotland is incorporated into the new association at the wish of GCUK's Scottish members. The Forum will take on the organisation of the Scottish Geology Festival and purchase to develop the existing Scottishgeology.com website. Membership is currently on an individual basis and no subscription was set for the immediate future.

Mike Browne

SCOTLAND — *Lothian and Borders GeoConservation Group*

Lothian and Borders GeoConservation Group has obtained funding to publish two more leaflets, hopefully by the end of this May. One leaflet is on the beautiful Stockbridge area of Edinburgh in the deep wooded Water of Leith valley. The other leaflet is the Canongate Wall, that is part of the Scottish Parliament Building; this leaflet will describe the basic geology of the rock tablets inset in the wall on which quotations from many famous authors have been inscribed. The Group would usually print 10,000 copies of a leaflet, so it is of interest that 20,000 copies of our first leaflet (Corstorphine Hill) have already been distributed.

Mike Browne

SCOTLAND — *GeoHeritage Fife (incorporating Fife LGS)*



GeoHeritage Fife was set up in 2000 to extol the virtues of Fife's geological heritage, to produce educational resources in geology, and to promote geotourism. In December 2005, it incorporated Fife RIGS Group, whose remit is to identify, describe and notify to Fife Council Planning authorities, sites of local geological and geomorphological importance. The acronym RIGS has recently been replaced by LGS (Local Geodiversity Sites). GeoHeritage Fife is a registered Scottish Charity.

Last month GeoHeritage Fife held its AGM when the year's activities were reviewed. The most notable of these events was the commissioning of plaster casts from a set of fossilised footprints made by a giant scorpion (*Hibbertopterus*) in local Carboniferous sandstones. As the casts were considered vulnerable to erosion and vandalism, funding was obtained from Scottish Natural Heritage and from the Curry Fund of the Geologists' Association. Part of the plaster cast now resides in the University of St. Andrews museum that is open to the public for free.

Another venture was the organisation of a photographic competition, sponsored by the Local Authority, that encouraged the public to capture the artistic elements of local geological formations: their colour; textures; forms and shapes. Fifty-five people submitted 150 prints, from which three were selected for prizes and twenty others will be exhibited in local venues over the coming year.

Three areas of Fife were registered as LGS with the local authority: Wormit shore; Kingsbarns; and Elie. The production of interpretative geological trail leaflets continues with a new one due for printing for the stretch of coastline between Kirkcaldy and Kinghorn. Another four are in preparation, covering: Kingsbarns; Crail; Elie; and Wormit. The variety of rocks in Fife is such that the public can be exposed to lavas, volcanic ashes, sedimentary sequences which include coal and limestone, and a variety of Carboniferous fossils.

Richard A Batchelor



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WALES — NEWRIGS

NEWRIGS continues to flourish with five new members in recent months. Work progresses with monitoring of RIGS and the investigation of new sites. NEWRIGS meets on alternate months and has recently started a programme of summer field visits. The May, July and September meetings will visit interesting sites including working and dis-used limestone quarries and Garn Prys, organised by our new field officer. We have previously visited stunning fossil and Carboniferous sites.

The NEWRIGS 'Walking through the Past' series of leaflets continue to be in demand with a new leaflet being developed for Hawarden, our first village trail, and reprints of Denbigh and Flint town trails.

NEWRIGS is an active member of the Association of Welsh RIGS Groups (AWRG) which co-ordinates the All-Wales RIGS audit that is due for completion this year. This will be a first for the UK with a Pan-Wales dataset of RIGS.

Jacqui Malpas

NEWS ITEM — A New Scottish Geodiversity Report



British Geological Survey
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

COMMISSIONED REPORT

Commissioned Report No. 417

Scotland's Geodiversity: Development of the Basis for a National Framework

A new report, prepared by J.E. Gordon and H.F. Barron, was released in January 2011 by Scottish Natural Heritage. It is an assessment of the value and status of Scotland's geodiversity. It has been prepared in order to develop the basis for a national framework to enable the better integration of geodiversity within relevant national policy areas, including helping to deliver the Scottish Government's Strategic Objectives.

NEWS ITEM — Free Earth Science Activities for the Classroom

Free Earth science activities for the classroom are now available from Earth Learning Idea (ELI) on-line from: <http://www.earthlearningidea.com>. ELI published its 100th activity in March this year. The ELI activities, published one per fortnight, have been accessed in 162 countries across the globe; all are available in English, most in Spanish, Italian and Norwegian, some in Chinese (Mandarin) and one in Tamil; translations into Portuguese and German are being prepared. There were over 38,000 downloads across the world in February alone this year. The early ELI activities were aimed at classrooms with minimal resources, requiring only readily available materials; many of the later activities (designated ELI+) require apparatus available in a normal school laboratory, or have more abstract ideas. The ELI Idea website and translations are all developed on a voluntary basis, so please do 'volunteer' to tell your friends and spread the ELI news!

Elizabeth Devon

M E E T I N G S and C O N F E R E N C E S

'Geotourism - An Opportunity for Sustainable Development' - 7th March 2011

This conference was held at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. Dr. John Conway opened the conference with an indication of the variety of geotourism offerings available in GeoMon, Anglesey ranging from books and leaflets to on-site interpretation boards across a wide range of themes, including soils. Julian Atkins outlined the direct community links and training schemes in the Fforest Fawr Geopark. Nicola Greaves explained the policies for sustainable tourism in the Cotswolds AONB, supported by Dave Owen (of the Gloucestershire Geology Trust) who outlined the geology of the area where the underlying limestone accounts for the overall appearance of the landscape and the built environment. Dr. Tom Hose explained the origins of the geotourism concept and its importance in geoconservation; this was reinforced by Professor Malcolm Hart who expanded on marine conservation zones, the use of the term 'geopark', and the influence of current government policy on the management of geological sites. Professor Errami, representing the newly established African Geopark Network via a pre-recorded video, outlined some of the issues and potential for Africa in advance of the forthcoming African Geoparks Conference. Percy Mabvuto-Ngwira, a current MSc student at the Royal Agricultural College, presented the possibilities of developing the Victoria Falls as a geopark. The afternoon was rounded off with a talk from Jarrod Kyte, from Steppes Travel, discussing issues surrounding sustainable overseas tourism.

There were also a range of posters and displays, especially by the two African countries sharing Victoria Falls that exhibited tourist brochures and a range of souvenirs; both countries are keen to see sustainable community development based on their natural and cultural heritage. Seventy attendees



Delegates enjoying a break amongst the poster and display area.

from seven universities, three countries and several national organisations attended the conference. In addition, the Deputy High Commissioner for Zambia and the First Secretary (Tourism) from the Zimbabwean High Commission attended to support the presentation on Victoria Falls. For anyone interested in the topics covered by the conference, a blog has been set up on <http://geosustainabletourism.wordpress.com/about/>. So do feel free to join the discussion!

Claire-Louise Radford-Hancock



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MEETINGS and CONFERENCES



GeoConservationUK acknowledges the support of **Rockhounds Welcome!** in the production of this Newsletter



HOGG

Conference on Geological Collectors and Collecting
April 4 - 5, 2011
Flett Theatre, Natural History Museum, London

The History of Geology Group (HOGG), a group affiliated with the Geological Society of London, will be holding a conference about Geological Collectors and Collecting. The conference is timed coincide with the Christies sale of Travel, Science and Natural History artefacts and is open to all.

This two day event will include talks, exhibitions, workshops and behind the scenes tours on topics of interest to collectors of geological material of all kinds, including books, maps, minerals, and fossils.

A full programme and a registration form are available for download from the HOGG website (www.geolsoc.org.uk/hogg) or from Nina Morgan on ninamorgan@lineone.net

GeoConservationUK Executive Committee

Chair: Mike Browne - Lothian & Borders

GeoConservation Group

Treasurer: Alan Cutler - Black Country Geological Society

Committee Members:

Dr. Ken Addison - Gwynedd & Monmouthshire RIGS

Keith Ambrose - Leicester & Rutland RIGS

Prof. Cynthia Burek - NEWRIGS

Dr. Kevin Crawford - Cheshire RIGS

Dr. Tom Hose - Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group

Rick Ramsdale - Sheffield Area Geology Trust

John Reynolds - GeoConservation Staffordshire

Co-opted:

Secretary: Dr. Cheryl Jones

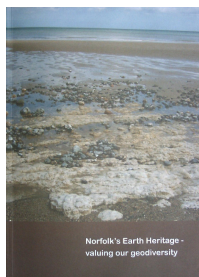
Webmaster: Craig Slawson

Newsletter Editor:

Dr. Tom Hose

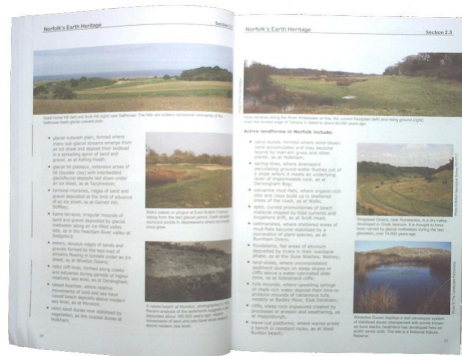
[correspondence to: **14 Forge Close, Chalton, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU4 9UT** or email: those123@btinternet.com]

PUBLICATIONS - *Norfolk's Earth Heritage - valuing our geodiversity*



The Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership released in November 2011 an A4, 74-page publication about the county's geology and geomorphology; priced at £12-00 (+ £2-00 p&p) it is available from Jenny Gladstone [01603-619387 or jennygladstone@aol.com]. It is split into four sections, with the second and major one competently covering geology and landforms with brief descriptions and colour illustrations (see bottom

left), although a location map would have been a welcome addition for those unfamiliar with Norfolk's geography. It is good to see that the Earth heritage cultural resource is covered; museum collections and their collectors are too easily overlooked but provide a useful link for non-specialists to sometimes complex subject matter; likewise the links with archaeology. Geoconservation is fairly comprehensively covered and the role of the LGAP is highlighted in the third section. The Appendices provide an excel-



lent route to a quite comprehensive list of the key literature and on-line resources. Generally it is a well and simply written publication with much visual appeal. My only concern is that at the combined p&p price it might seem a little expensive in these hard times. I would suggest that copies are placed in Norfolk's libraries. It is also a useful guide for GeoConservation groups across England. *Tom Hose*