GeoConservationUK Newsletter

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Navigating to success?

On the same day in 1965 that this *Newsletter* is published cosmonaut Lt. Col. Alexei Leonov completed the first 'space walk'. Two years to the day in 1967, the 'Torrey Canyon' run aground on rocks off Land's End, leaking its cargo of crude oil into the sea; the oil got onto the beaches of Cornwall and Normandy causing major environmental damage. Humanity managed to demonstrate in them both its ingenuity and then its stupidity in the use of technology in pretty spectacular fashion. Well, we have now stopped manned spaceflight but are still managing to run oil tankers and other ships (such as luxury cruise liners and submarines) aground even with the most modern of navigation systems; of course such systems now rely heavily on satellites as does a lot of geological field mapping; for professional purposes the digital approach has overtaken the analogue.

However, as most GPS training emphasises, the technology is no substitute for the ability to use map/chart and compass, and of course that most invaluable tool - the 'mark 1 eyeball'! It is our ability to see both the physical world and to understand the cultural constructs that inform our vision that are central to an appreciation of the significance of the Earth sciences to modern society, especially in strategies to protect the natural environment whilst also sustainably exploiting its biological and physical resources. Perhaps, following all of the communications that a certain minister and a couple of the Government's agencies have received over the publication of a strategy document and a White Paper, geoconservation and its underlying sciences are now on their radar and they are all able to navigate to the appropriate experts in 2012.

E D I T O R I A L

Welcome to the first of this year's *Newsletters* and a grateful 'thank you' to all contributors with a plea for items for the next issue. It seems to be a year of conferences that include geococonservation and geotourism (incidentally the theme of a set of paper's in the latest issue of Geoheritage). Just a pity that many (despite protestations to the organisers) are a tad expensive and in remote or far off places, unlike the 'Appreciating Physical Landscapes' conference in October — well, I would make that point! However, it is important that are far as is practicable we in the geoconservation community grasp every opportunity to espouse our cause. We might also draw some comfort from the Local Nature Partnerships once we ignore the £1.7 million set aside for the pilot schemes when compared with the additional £41 million for the Olympic Games ceremonies; I'm sure the fireworks will be spectacular way to burn money!

TOM HOSE

ISSUE CONTENTS

ENGLAND — *DIGS*

Spring Cleaning in Dorset

The DIGS group has already been active during the spring with several visits. Conservation activities (see right top right for a 'before and after' view) have taken place at Red Lane, Abbotsbury clearing fallen trees following the gales before Christmas. There is now around 100 metres of cleared face through the Abbotsbury Ironstone (passage beds between the Corallian and Kimmeridge Clay). There are some fossils but they are not that common. However, the rock has excellent oolitic texture; the original carbonate composition was altered to iron silicates by diagenetic processes. The clearance in February followed a collaborative effort with Wessex OUGS in September and now the site, despite some fly-tipping , is in excellent condition.

Also in February, members visited Edmonsham, near Wimborne, to visit two DIGS sites on the Edmonsham estate and were shown round by the owner, Mrs Julia Smith. Mutton Hole, a swallow hole, was visited where the Palaeogene clay covers Chalk. With the dry spring little water was flowing into the swallow hole. The estate is open to the public so do go and have a look! We also visited Castle Hill gravel pit where there are geological (Palaeogene gravels) and historical (motte and bailey) interests. There is also a lot of botanical interest in the semi-natural woodland.

Members of the group have also been working on our Hardown Hill site (Morecombelake, near Bridport) where Upper Greensand Chert Beds are exposed. The site was in poor condition with gorse, bracken and brambles covering the geology but it is now well exposed. Later in March further work is planned at Whitecliff in Poole Park where an information board (see bottom right) on the geology and industrial archaeology has just been erected.

Alan Holiday

ENGLAND — *Black Country Geological Society*

The BCGS is continuing to work alongside the Black Country Living Landscapes Project (BCLLP) to clear up sites of both geological and ecological interest. Recent staff changes have seen Mr Paul Stephenson taking over the reins of BCLLP from Julia Morris.

On 11th February 2012 BCGS members helped to clear vegetation (see next page) from the dolerite and Etruria Marl outcrops in East Quarry, Barrow Hill. Associated with Dudley's own volcano, the Barrow Hill dolerite was intruded into Etruria Marl country rock during the Late Carboniferous, around 300 million years ago. On 25th February 2012 BCGS members helped to clear vegetation and expose layers of another Carboniferous feature at Springvale Park, Wolverhampton. This was formerly an opencast pit, but it is was backfilled and grassed over; exposures of Middle Coal Measures strata

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ENGLAND — *Black Country Geological Society* (cont.)

comprised of sandstones and shales are visible in the western part of the site.

Pleased with the results of recent clearance work, Paul is keen to introduce an annual programme of on-going maintenance at these and other sites across the Black Country. Paul would also like to hear about other Black Country sites that could be added to this programme. The BCLLP is also planning to organise several guided walks around these sites, led by Alan Cutler, later in the year.

Andrew Harrison

ENGLAND — *GeoSuffolk*

Coprolite Street

The Festival of Geology on November 5th 2011 was hosted by the Geologists' Association at University College London. GeoSuffolk's stand *Coprolite Street* t (see top right) took a look at an almost forgotten industry of Victorian Suffolk. 'Coprolite' stones, discovered at the base of the Red Crag by John Stevens Henslow whilst on holiday at Felixstowe in 1843, were found to be rich in phosphate and became the basis of the local fertiliser industry. Our stand featured old photographs e.g. of Edward Packard's fertiliser factory in Ipswich; a reproduction of the 'Coprolite Window' in Waldringfield Church (which was restored using money from the coprolite quarrying industry in the parish). We also had a 'pick your own' coprolite pile from a contemporary Red Crag pit. Of course, we still have the real Coprolite Street in Ipswich (see bottom right) where the factory stood, now the address of University Campus Suffolk.

An important physical record of this industry is found in the fabric of some of the small churches on the Bawdsey peninsula which were restored in the mid-19th century with waste products from the 'coprolite' pits in the local Red Crag. All Saints Church in Sutton is the best of these and has been designated by GeoSuffolk as a County Geodiversity Site (RIGS- equivalent). Building materials are mostly dressed flint, some containing fossil belemnites and sponges, and many showing Red Crag provenance, being encrusted with Red Crag barnacles. Also, Red Crag shells are used like 'galletting' between some of the flints. There is also a large number of Boxstones, rounded green/brown sandstone pebbles of Miocene age, which are found at the base of the Red Crag alongside the 'coprolites'.

Caroline Markham

ENGLAND — *Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group*

' Saxons and stones ' - Reading town centre walk

An enthusiastic group of 16 people took part in the 'Saxons and stones', Reading town centre walk led by Jill Eyers on Sunday, 15th January 2012. The starting point was at St Mary's church, St Mary's Butts, Reading. The church has a characteristic chequerboard finish, well seen in its tower (see top right); this is achieved by the use of dark coloured local flint and light coloured limestone blocks. The flints come from the Cretaceous aged Chalk which has been heavily mined and quarried around Reading, whilst the limestone comes from Taynton in Oxfordshire and is of a Jurassic age.

The church is one of the most ancient buildings in the area and is mentioned in the Doomsday book. Extensive repairs are historically recorded in 1549, when materials taken from the Abbey, which Henry VIII had demolished, were reused. This would imply that the Taynton Limestone was being quarried in the Norman period - from the early 1100s. This part of Berkshire, like many parts of Buckinghamshire, has few local building materials. Local stones include flint, sarsen and occasional hard grounds within the Chalk and, of course, bricks made from local clays. As a result many far travelled rock types can be seen throughout the town's Broad Street area. The nave columns of the church are made of white Portland Limestone, probably from Dorset, and the column bases of red Peterhead Granite from Scotland, show just how far some of the rocks used in its construction were transported (see centre right). The group was able to identify many of the fossil impressions left in the Portland Limestone and learned to identify the many different rock types used to make town centre buildings attractive. The group found plenty things of geological interest along the route and the walk took a lot longer than originally planned. Geological discussions continued in a nice café by the river at the conclusion of the event.

Jill Eyers

Burnham Beeches Geological Walk

As part of the Burnham Beeches public walks programme around 20 people, a mixture of BEHG members and interested locals, after a brief introduction visited the old quarry which exposes a good section of the Winter Hill gravels (see bottom right). The gravels are extracted at a small scale to maintain the paths within Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common. This helps to keep the management costs down and is more environmentally friendly- using local materials to maintain the acidic ecology. In addition it maintains access to fresh quarry faces without investing a large amount of time in clean-up efforts. After walking along the Nile stream (Egypt common is located close by), to examine the Lambeth Group Reading Formation clays, the group continued to where the stream disappears a large sinkhole. Chris Morris, the Burnham Beeches Ranger, described how he has observed the sink-holes changing over a number of years; at one time the current sink hole was a well established pond during the winter months. Despite the rain, which started soon after the walk began, the group maintained a high level of interest and enthusiasm throughout. The afternoon was topped in a traditional manner with tea and cake at the Burnham Beeches café.

Graham Hickman

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ENGLAND — *London Geodiversity Partnership*

The London Geodiversity Partnership, set up in 2008, results from an initiative by the Greater London Assembly (GLA) and Natural England (NE). It aims to promote and protect London's geodiversity. Its membership includes the British Geological Survey, NE, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, GLA, and a number of London Borough Councils, the Geologists' Association and local geological (including RIGS) groups, as well as academic institutions and museums.

In 2009 the Partnership, working with the GLA, published *'London's foundations, a London Plan Implementation Report'*; this reviewed the available geodiversity documentation for London and assessed geological sites for their geodiversity importance and 36 sites, including the 7 SSSIs in London were field audited by the BGS, South London RIGS Group and Harrow and Hillingdon Geological Society. Fourteen sites were recommended for designation as Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and fifteen as Locally Important Geological sites (LIGS) – for these Local geological sites, the distinction between RIGS and LIGS is maintained for consistency with the separation of Sites of Metropolitan Importance (i,e. London-wide) and Sites of Borough and Local Importance for Nature Conservation. This document was launched (see top right), at Maryon Park and Gilbert's Pit SSSI, by Natural England with Professor Iain Stewart (see middle right); children from the local primary school sieved material from the nearby Abbey Wood SSSI for shark's teeth and other fossils.

On behalf of the Partnership, Capita Symonds was commissioned by NE to prepare an Action Plan to assist in implementing the geodiversity policy within the London Plan; this resulted in the publication in October 2010 of the London Geodiversity Action Plan, launched at Kenwood House. The Action Plan provides the framework for understanding, conserving and using the unique wealth of geodiversity resources found in London, so that social, economic and environmental benefits are provided to its urban communities and visitors. Its objectives are to: 1. Increase our understanding of the geodiversity of London

2. Manage and conserve the geodiversity of London;
3. Deliver sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits for London;
4. Promote and care for London's geodiversity;
5. Sustain geodiversity activities; and
6. Influence London-wide and London Borough planning and environmental policies.

Targets are set for each objective and the actions necessary are prioritised. In April 2010, the Partnership produced a summary report on Building London, a brief guide to resources on building stone and geological walks in London. Following the success of the South London RIGS Group and its Thames Path Geotrail, the Partnership has worked with the Green Chain Walk organisation to produce a Geotrail highlighting features of geological interest. The Partnership has recently become involved in bids for Heritage Lottery funding for projects by Groundwork Thames Valley to recognise the importance of the West London brickfields and by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Corporation of the City of London and English Heritage on Hampstead heath and its wildlife. Further details of the Partnership are on the website www.Londongeopartnership.org.uk although this is still under development.

David Brook

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SCOTLAND — *Strathclyde Geoconservation Group*

Visit to Hynndford Quarry, Lanark

The owners of Hyndford sand and gravel quarry are seeking to extend the quarry and have brought in Dr Andrew Highton of Borders Geo-Science, as Environmental Consultant on the associated restoration and enhancement works. His main involvement has been to provide a specialist chapter for the EIA on the geology and geodiversity of the area and proposed extension site. CEMEX specifically wanted people with specialist knowledge to write the chapters. The site is also close to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of New Lanark. Although the landforms at Hyndford are not of the same quality as at Carstairs, SNH have suggested that the area be restored to a similar topography as at present. CEMEX are keen to involve the geological community in this future restoration and this is where Strathclyde Geoconservation Group come in.

The quarry is within an area of extensive fluvio-glacial deposits with numerous kettle holes and evidence of periodic glacial lake. The nearby Carstairs Kames SSSI is a classic site, long renowned for its glacial landforms. These comprise a series of esker ridges, kames and kettle holes, one of the best such assemblages in Britain. It is thought that the landforms in this area could be related to more than one period of glaciation and also the convergence of different ice streams with that had their sources in the Highlands and Southern Uplands.

From Lanark Auction Market car park just south of the town of Lanark we walked northward towards Lanark before taking the unclassified road to the farms of Bonnington Mains and Robiesland . After crossing the disused railway, the land on our right opened out to a large field with kettle holes (see right), kames and eskers – this is owned by the Auction Market but is a very good example of post glacial landforms and would be an ideal site for some type of information board explaining the effects of glaciation, and how kettle holes form.

We then came to an abandoned quarry on the left which had been worked out 10 years ago. The quarries in this area have a very high proportion of sand (69%) and the sandy sides of the abandoned quarry show many cross-bedded and ripple structures (see bottom right) as well as differentiate layers of muddy layers from glacial lake beds and more sandy, lacustrine sediments – the later are interbedded with lignite – some in the way of fine particles and some coarser small pebbles. a clear indication of the ice picking up Carboniferous sediments as it moved over the countryside. It was discussed as to how these bedding features could best be demonstrated to the general public – the consensus was in the form of annotated photographs. It was also discussed as to whether any of this could be preserved but that does not seem feasible; the present faces are already receding with vegetation taking hold on the more stable slopes.

Margaret Greene

SCOTLAND — *Strathclyde Geoconservation Group* (cont.)

We proceeded along the road beyond this and Andrew took us up above the existing working quarry to the area which the proposed extension will cover.
On the other side of the quarry is a featureless field which was the previous restoration at the hands of a landscape designer, which is why there is such a keen interest in the next phase being restored to a semblance of the present topography. We agreed on restoring the area with kame and esker features after tons of sand and gravel have been extracted is maybe someway a bit false, but we welcome the quarry owners willingness to participate in a sympathetic restoration and hope some form of interpretation will accompany this.

The sand and gravel of the main quarry is the result of outwash fans and is to be restored to replicate glacial outwash channels; a pre glacial channel discovered in the underlying bedrock may have been the original course of the nearby Douglas Water. The proposed site for development would extend the life of the quarry by about nine years with present extraction.

WALES — *GeoMon*

GeoMon moved into its new visitor centre, The Watch House in Amlwch Port (see top rightand bottom), in April 2011. This has been a great success with many visitors until it closed for the winter in October. There are very few visitors over the winter, though it can be expected that this might change once the other port facilities are completed in May 2012. The visitor centre is also open in the winter by appointment to groups for guided walks or teaching purposes. So far during this winter we three large school groups and several smaller university groups have visited the centre. An excellent booklet on the history of the building was written by Terry Beggs with a note on the geology by Margaret Wood.

In December 2012, GeoMôn was granted Charitable status, in addition to the existing 'company limited by guarantee'; this means GeoMon can now receive gift aid, and claim back tax on members' subscriptions, as well as being eligible to apply for a much greater range of funding opportunities and grants. Anglesey County Council has become more interested and involved in GeoMon's activities and have provided a three-year grant for various projects; the good news is that they organise and carry out all the work using our ideas and geological interpretation. They are currently working on installing additional signage (adding to our existing network of brown tourist signs GeoMon is creating a five-mile long interpretive trail from Wylfa to Llanbadrig church — the 'Melange and Heritage trail'; this consists of a rock walk, interpretation en-route and access to see St Patrick's Cave and Well. This involves some of GeoMon's other partners such as Wylfa Power Station, the Countryside Council for Wales, the AONB, and the Coastal Footpath Project.

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WALES — *GeoMon*

Work continues on the INTERREG project 'Metal Links' together with the lead Partner, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales (RCAHMW), the other Welsh partner Pentir Pumlumon (Mid-Wales Orefield) and the two Irish partners, Copper Coast Geopark in Waterford and Glendalough in the Wicklow Mountains. One partner meeting has been held in GeoMôn and another in the Copper Coast; their outdoor interpretation and signage were impressive and a really good example and inspiration for the new signage for GeoMon due to be introduced this summer.

GeoMon has ten people working on this project in Anglesey and they have been doing genealogical studies and research into miners " families and their occupations, deaths, Court cases etc. GeoMon is also making interpretive material for the project and working on links between the four areas. The next meeting in early March will be in Pentir Pumlumon. John Conway gave a paper on GeoMon's work at the European Geopark Network conference at Gea Norvegica Geopark in southern Norway (home to larvikite, the rock used as cladding on so many shop fronts, tombstones, etc. in the UK), which is to be published in full in the conference proceedings. There will be an up-date/discussion session with our partners at the EGN coordination committee meeting in Portugal this spring, and again in Spain in September during the next coordination committee. We are planning a further conference paper. John Conway also presented a paper on the potential for a Geopark at Victoria Falls, possibly the first Geopark in Africa, which he and Percy Mabvuto-Ngwira, an MSc student at the Royal Agricultural College, where John is based, have been working on all year.

Work has also commenced on creating a 'Rock clock' that will depict all the rocks of Anglesey in a 24 hour clock divided up into geological periods. Grants have been secured to cover the cost of this project and the Aber Quarry is in the middle of constructing this 2m diameter clock that will lie on the slope up from the visitor centre. GeoMon has had an 'artist in residence' for a year, John Hedley. He's a modern artist and print maker from Llandrillo College who was on a sabbatical year. John is creating interpretive art based on the geology and rock patterns on Anglesey and is doing similar work for the Greek geopark on Lesvos. Meanwhile, the Young Geology Club has had some very interesting events this year with thanks to our organiser, Jackie Far-rall and Mike from the Ocean Science Dept, University of Bangor. Negotiations are inhand with the Director of Oriel Ynys Mon to combine the group with the Young Archaeologists to form a new group called Young Explorers; this will widen the scope of the group to include other disciplines and heritage as well as the geology and archaeology. So, all in all a very successful 2011 should herald much for the coming season.

NEWS ITEM — *Geoconservation matters*

One of the consequences of the not-so-recent Government cutbacks at the Joint Nature Conservancy Council was the cessation of publication of the Geoconservation Review. Publication of this internationally important set of volumes has been rescued, largely funded by the Geologists' Association, and issued as parts of its Proceedings. The Marine Devonian of Great Britain is the first volume under the GA, as PGA Vol 122, Issue 4 (October 2011). PGA Vol 122, Issue 5 (November 2011) is a Special Issue on the Geological History of the Isle of Wight, arising from the British Geological Survey's Isle of Wight Integrated Project; a new 1:50,000 scale Geological Special Sheet and Explanation booklet are due later. *Earth Heritage* magazine is now all-electronic; go to www.earthheritage.org.uk to download recent issues and also to sign up for future mailings.

John Reynolds

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OPINION PIECE — *Local Geological Sites*

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES (RIGS) - WAS IT WORTH THE EFFORT?

It is time to take stock of the surveys, started in the 1990s, of Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) now known as Local Geological Sites (LGS). Was the effort worth while?

There is no formal protection of LGA from development but notification acts as tripwire to alert the planning officers. It is well known that archaeology and biodiversity have a higher priority in legislative protection and public perception but we are slowly getting there! Meanwhile, there does not seem to be a level playing field especially when it comes to sites with, for example, crested newts and bats. Nothing wrong with that but I doubt LGS have the same value in the eyes of the conservation community at large.

It is interesting to ask who seeks details of sites. Most enquiries come from developers who are increasingly required to make environmental surveys. I can think of not more than half a dozen enquiries that I know about that have come from individuals, least of all the research community. Perhaps they do not know the lists exist or whom to approach

In Somerset we took a broad approach in selecting sites: e.g. the meanders of the Axe near Chard, the double escarpment at Corton Denham. Also building stones and old walls were deemed important, e.g. in Yeovil and Ilminster, which are the best places to see the Junction Bed limestones and the Marlstone respectively. Some sensitive sites we keep quiet about. However, one function of LGS is to draw attention to interesting features which ought to be better known e.g. the coast at Greenaleigh west of Minehead. We do not include features in working quarries. We should have included more sites which show good soil profiles. One must keep in mind in selecting sites that one never knows what will be useful as the future unfolds.

There has been a continuous process of discarding sites for various reasons and making additional recommendations. It has been impossible to monitor the changing condition of sites, or maintain sites, except in exceptional circumstances sites e.g. Ham Hill in south Somerset, and Tedbury Camp Quarry near Frome where we had valuable help.

It was apparent from the start that LGS formed too narrow a basis for a conservation body; LGS are surely just one part of the wider geoconservation movement. This includes compilation of county bibliographies, informing the public, two-way flows with academics, naturalists and archaeologists. Perhaps above all raising the profile of local geology. UKConservation is a welcome move.

The last thirty years has seen extensive road works, excavations and miles of gas and water main trenches. We have recorded some 180 miles in Somerset and BGS has made a lot of use of these observations. It is sad that many opportunities have been lost up and down the land to gain useful information. Recording these temporary exposures is just as, if not more, important that recording LGS. It is sad that more effort has not been forthcoming to support the lone soul who tramps the trenches after work, in their own time and at their own cost. There has never been, to my knowledge, any system of forewarning when excavations are to start or where. The archaeologists and wildlife people get such warnings and are paid. Maybe it is not too late to organise a passport system for accredited individuals or groups. It can be rewarding; one never knows what may turn up e.g. a fossil, dip, fault, unrecorded outcrop. The geological map is never perfect! Most BGS officers have not the time or opportunity to divert to recording temporary exposures. The field is open to the enthusiastic amateur.

OPINION PIECE — *Local Geological Sites*

My experience has been that there has been no great enthusiasm to get involved with LGS. One can understand this reluctance. Whilst It can be interesting to visit sites, the bureaucratic side is off-putting: writing up, contacting landowners, discussions with the planners, drawing up site plans, arranging and labelling photographs, literature search, site logs, assessments for H&S access, education, culture, plus the case for designation. I have long maintained it is a job best done by paid officers. We operate on a day-to-day basis in Somerset. As amateurs we have neither the time, money nor manpower to bother with LGAPS and the rest. Yet I venture to say we keep the flag flying in Somerset and do a useful service. Was the effort worthwhile? I sincerely hope so.

Hugh Prudden

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

Securing the Future of Our Natural Environment (15th March 2012)

This event, supported by DEFRA, was focused on the details and outcomes of the 2011 White Paper, *'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature'*, published last June. It was held in central London at the Strand Palace Hotel. It brought together almost 60 delegates (representing the Government and its statutory agencies, local government, the not-for-profit conservation agencies, universities) from across England. GCUK was represented by Tom Hose and also notable in attendance from the geoconservation community was Murray Gray who represented the Norfolk Geodiversity Project. The speaker line up ranged from Dr. Alan Whitehead MP (Member, Environmental Audit Committee) to Chris Lee (Director, Environment and Regeneration Department, Merton Council).

David Cooper (Head, Natural Environment Strategic Unit, Defra) ably set the background (see bottom right) to the White Paper, but without a single mention of the Earth sciences or geoconservation; however, his response to a question from on this seeming neglect was positive but only if it actually leads to paradigm shift within his Unit. Jim Smyllie, (Executive Director, Delivering with Communities, Natural England) notably went out of his way to mention both, but was then picked up by a delegate's question for not including archaeology! Both David and Jim were unsurprisingly closely questioned on geoconservation issues by Tom Hose and Murray Gray.

Good case study material on environmental management was provided by Chis Lee with a particularly interesting account of managing a river valley park and its landfill site; likewise Dr. Tony Whitbread (Director, Sussex Wildlife Trust) gave an overview of the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership and its engagement with the new Sussex Local Nature Partnership. Stephen Tate (Assistant Director of Transport and Environment, GLA) gave an overview, with several references to Boris Johnson, of urban planning and the natural environment; he

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MEETINGS and CONFERENCES

Securing the Future of Our Natural Environment (15th March 2012) (cont.)

made the point, often forgotten, that urban areas are major reservoirs of wildlife interest with the potential to conserve a range of species and habitats.

Prof. Andrew Watkinson (Director, Living with Environment Change Programme, NERC) covered aspects of the necessary research agenda and, perhaps belatedly in terms of supporting academics involved in conservation matters, the need for greater public engagement in the nature and dissemination of the outcomes, of publicly funded research; many academics are still required to publish journal papers read by very few (and pay a career penalty if they do not) rather than book chapters and magazine articles read by many and much more influential in driving forward conservation initiatives. Andrew usefully drew attention to actual gap in what we know about conservation management to what we actually need to know to influence and develop the political agenda for the natural environment. Hugh Ellis (Chief Planner, Town and Country Planning Association) gave a seemingly off the cuff (see top right), but with plenty of useful insights, overview of how the Government's localism agenda and the White Paper have generated imminent major challenges, with seemingly few immediate solutions, for the protection and management of the natural environment; his advice was eagerly sought on the issues he raise.

The speakers, following questions from the floor, were left in no doubt that the geoconservation community was deeply concerned about the lack of overt reference to its interests in the White Paper. The conference overall provide a succinct overview of the diverse interested parties, issues and detail of the emerging Government approach to managing the natural environment; it is to be hoped that the detailed questioning from the floor will have impacted upon the thinking of those speakers with any influence on that approach!

Tom Hose

Volcandpark Congress (21st - 25th May 2012)

The First International Congress on Management and Awareness in Protected Volcanic Landscapes (VOLCANDPARK) is to be held in Olot, Spain; this is in an area of outstanding volcanic interest that deserves to be more widely known. The proceedings of the Congress will centre on the following themes:

1. The management of protected volcanic landscapes;
2. Scientific values and research in protected volcanic landscapes;
3. The transmission of heritage values via education and interpretation;
4. Geotourism as a motor of sustainable economic development in communities in protected volcanic landscapes.

The Congress aims to promote interdisciplinary discussion forums in each of the four main thematic areas. Poster presentations and discussion forums will be given priority to avoid an excess of short presentations. Further information is available from the Congress web-site: www.volcandpark1.com

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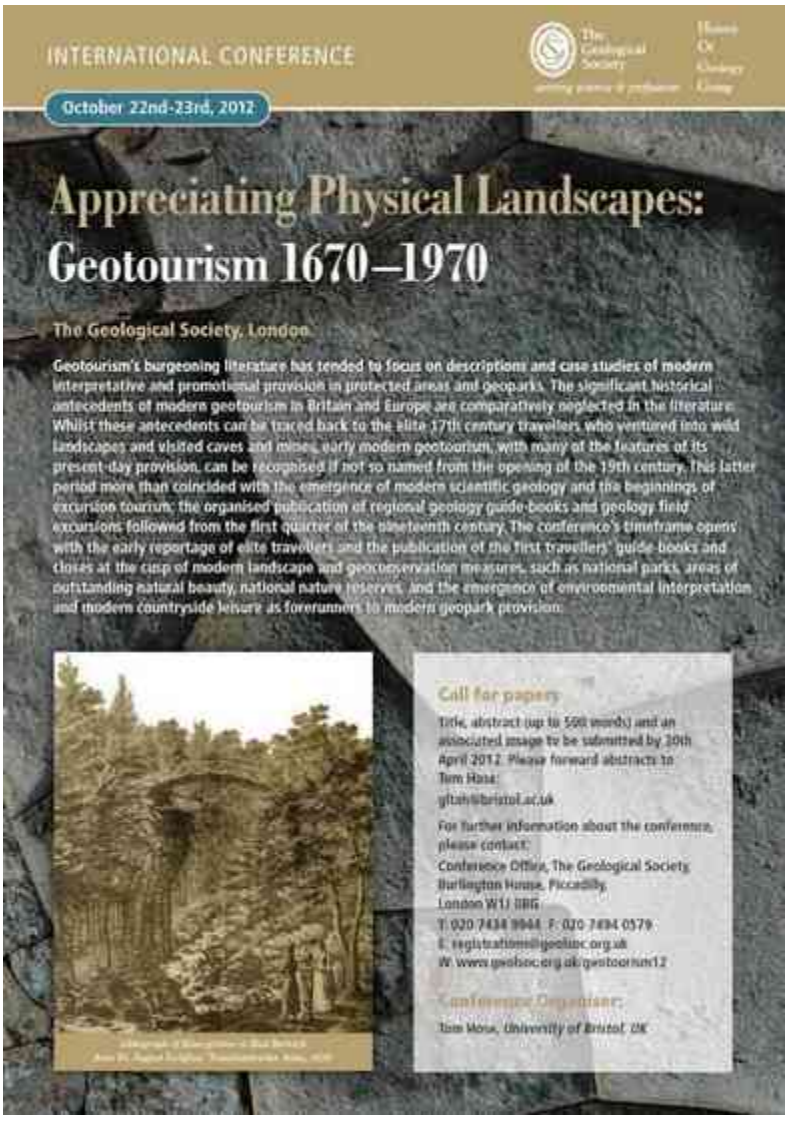
GeoConservationUK acknowledges the support of ***Rockhounds Welcome!*** in the production of this *Newsletter*

Geological Society — *Appreciating Physical Landscapes* (22-23 October 2012)



This international conference on the history of geotourism is organised under the auspices of the Geological Society and its History of Geology Group. Its purpose is to bring together anyone interested in landscape, geology, and tourism whether geoscientist, geographer, artist, poet or writer to explore how the countryside in particular, as well as industrial sites, have been seen and promoted over the past three-hundred or so years to travellers and tourists. Whilst there will be the inevitable focus on Britain and Europe, it is hoped that experiences from much farther afield will be explored. Similarly, a broad range of topics from dinosaurs to waterfalls will be considered by speakers drawn from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. Confirmed keynote speakers include Prof. David Norman and Dr. John Gordon. Expressions of interest and abstracts have already been received from as far away as Australia and, more locally, Italy and Serbia. Offers of presentations will still still warmly welcomed by the convener, Tom Hose. The closing date for the submission of presentation abstracts is now 30th April 2012. Meanwhile, planning is well in hand for the post-conference field trip to the Kent coast, based on a nineteenth century Geologists ' Association field excursion, that will look at some classic geotourism localities; it will be entirely railway-based. Further details on the conference can be found on the Geological Society 's website at:

www.geolsoc.org.uk/geotourism12