

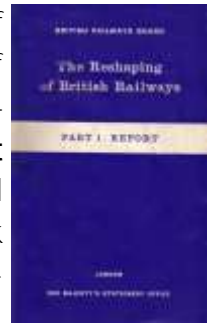
# GeoConservationUK Newsletter

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27<sup>th</sup> March 2013



## In this year we commemorate . . . 'railway cuttings'

This year commemorates several major, but not necessarily geological, events of 50 years ago. Top of these for steam heritage buffs must be the publication of *The Reshaping of British Railways* (see upper right) - the (in)famous Beeching Report. Dr Beeching was hired by the then Conservative Government's Transport Minister, who incidentally was a road construction businessman, to turn around the nation's 'Victorian' railways from a loss-making relic into a gleaming network ready for the present century; it led to the loss of 5,500 miles of track, 67,000 redundancies and the closure of over 2,360 stations - a third of the track network and over half of its stations! It subsequently, and by default, led to the burgeoning railway and industrial heritage movements and the revival of steam railways. The abandoned track beds have over time literally been capped by new roads (such as the M25) and cycleways; the latter have been particularly beneficial for those involved in promoting geoconservation interpretation and geotourism - just think of all those tunnels (see lower right) and cuttings! However, with the pressure on transport infrastructure, and seemingly our passenger railways have never busier, the strategic decisions of yesterday might yet come back to haunt the present-day; surely it is incumbent on national politicians, in and out of Government, to think and plan strategically for national infrastructure and conservation beyond the next election or so?



## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the year's first issue. As usual I'm happy to say a big "thank you" to its regional contributors. Last year was particularly busy for me, especially with the organisation of the APL conference and this year already sees me leading a field trip for the 24<sup>th</sup> International Congress on History of Science, Technology, and Medicine (Manchester, 21<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July), such that holidays are . . . Now I only mention this personal matter to remind myself and us all that it can be a very good idea - sometimes to just stand back and take stock of what we are doing and whether it's achieving any appropriate outcome(s). Now, if only we could convince the Government to do likewise and to ponder anew about the merits(?) of constant changes in the national planning and conservation management systems; the JNCC triennial review with less than a month to respond has the cynical assuming it's to avoid too many submissions - perish the thought! [TOM HOSE](#)

## ISSUE CONTENTS

|                                                                                              |              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>ENGLAND:-</b>                                                                             | <b>pages</b> |
| <i>Berkshire Geoconservation Group</i>                                                       | 2 - 5        |
| <i>Dorset's Important Geological Sites Group</i>                                             |              |
| <i>GeSuffolk</i>                                                                             |              |
| <i>Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group</i>                                                  |              |
| <i>Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership</i>                                                      |              |
| <b>SCOTLAND:-</b>                                                                            | 7 - 9        |
| <i>Geopark Shetland</i>                                                                      |              |
| <i>Scottish Geodiversity Forum</i>                                                           |              |
| <b>NEWS ITEM:-</b>                                                                           | 6, 9 & 10    |
| <i>English National Curriculum (Earth science)</i>                                           |              |
| <i>JNCC Triennial Review</i>                                                                 |              |
| <i>Closure of Birkhill Mine</i>                                                              |              |
| <i>Third Dunbar SciFest</i>                                                                  |              |
| <b>MEETINGS and CONFERENCES:-</b>                                                            | 11 - 14      |
| <i>HOGG Appreciating Physical Landscapes - A Report</i>                                      |              |
| <i>24<sup>th</sup> International Congress on History of Science, technology and Medicine</i> |              |



## GeoConservationUK Newsletter

### ENGLAND — *Berkshire Geoconservation Group*

#### Five Year SSSI Management Agreement

Berkshire Geoconservation Group has recently entered into a five year agreement with Natural England (NE) and a Berkshire geological SSSI's landowners to maintain and conserve its interest. The funding for the project has been obtained from the NE Conservation Enhancement Scheme, often referred to as CES.

The site is close to Hamstead Marshall and is a former gravel pit. The significance of the site is that it contains gravels from the Hamstead Marshall terrace of the River Kennet and was deposited in a braided river system about 450,000 years ago at about the same time that the River Thames, to the east, was diverted south through Goring Gap. Flint hand axes have been found in the gravels and it is thought that these are older than the gravel indicating early humans in the area before 450,000 years ago.

The work on the site involves some clearance of the faces but leaving them partially protected by vegetation as being uncemented gravel they will deteriorate. Tree and scrub roots do pose a significant threat to the preservation of the structures within the gravel. One section will be cleared as much as possible and the rest of the face and the area in front will become a conservation area.

At the first clearance session ten very keen volunteers arrived and within a short space of time had cleared the scrub and saplings from about 20 metres of the face and area in front of it.

Within the Group were several ecol-

ogists keen to advise on management plans for the future. We all agreed that this is an excellent opportunity to both preserve the geodiversity of the site and at the same time enhance its biodiversity. Future conservation sessions are planned for later in the year.

*Lesley Dunlop*



*The clean up gang (and pleasing to see a younger member involved) proudly showing off their work!*

### ENGLAND — *Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership*

#### Mousehold Heath Earth Heritage Trail

Mousehold Heath is as much a part of Norwich life as the city streets – in fact cartloads of its sand and gravel have gone into making them. Mousehold Heath has been a valued resource for the people of Norwich for over a thousand years. The Heath has provided: turf and timber, land for grazing animals, and huge quantities of brickearth, chalk, sand and gravel. In fact, much of Mousehold Heath, as a former mineral extraction site, could be described as 'brownfield' land. It could also be described as a precious example of heathland habitat in Norwich.

*(continues on page 5)*

**ENGLAND — Dorset's Important Geological Sites Group**

Despite the Wintery Weather . . .

Despite the wintery weather continuing into spring the DIGS group has been active with two conservation sessions, one in February and one in March. In February we worked on two Chalk pits, one at Bincombe N.E. of Weymouth and the second at Kingston Maurward, east of Dorchester. Further details on both these sites can be found on the DIGS website which has undergone a revamp in the last couple of weeks and is now fully up to date.; see our website at: <http://www.dorsetrigs.org.uk/>

In March we returned to work on Red Lane at Abbotsbury. The work was facilitated by the acquisition of new equipment with a brush cutter and a chain saw for use by the group. These have been purchased using funds from our sales of educational materials and site survey funding through Alan Cutler at GCUK. Again information is on the website.

Also in February a field trip was organised for the Dorset Group of the **Geologists' Association to study the building stones of Bridport and Symondsburry**. Symondsburry has three of our registered DIGS sites. Again see the website for details.

A report has been written up for the next edition of *Earth Heritage* concerning the supply of stone from close to the DIGS site at Poxwell for conservation work on the Wolfeton Riding House at Charminster near Dorchester; this followed careful study of stone from two of our sites (Portesham Rocket Quarry and Poxwell) to find the best possible match.

At our 26<sup>th</sup> **March members' meeting we will be planning events for the next two months; so, do watch this space for future news and announcements!**

Alan Holiday



*The late February clean up gang proudly showing off their sartorial elegance, not to mention their conservation work!*





## GeoConservationUK Newsletter

### ENGLAND — *GeoSuffolk*

#### Condition Monitoring and Site Conservation

GeoSuffolk has condition monitored three of the public County Geodiversity Sites designated last year. The well at Leiston Longshop Museum and the St James Church complex at Dunwich both achieved Good Improving status. Both the well at Leiston and the Leper Chapel in the Dunwich churchyard have undergone remedial work recently, making them sound for some time to come. The **Norwich Crag gravel pit at St Helena's Walks Dunwich received a Good Steady rating. It has recently** been deepened by the Forestry Commission, with the faces mainly graded for safety. This information has been passed to Suffolk County Council and Natural England. Thank you to the landowners for maintaining them so well.

On 23rd November, with the permission of the landowner and Natural England, GeoSuffolk carried out remedial work at the important Coralline Crag SSSI at Sutton Knoll. The site is, like the majority of SSSIs, on private land but the north face is visible from the nearby public footpath where GeoSuffolk has erected an interpretation panel. So work started here, with the digger clearing talus from the base of the exposure to make it more visible. Then, in the bullockyard pit on the east side of the Knoll the excavations were refreshed to more clearly show the stratigraphy of the Coralline Crag.

*Caroline Markham*

### ENGLAND — *Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group*

#### Conserving Geodiversity and Biodiversity

Over the last two years the Group has achieved a huge amount of conservation work (both geological and biological) through the hard work of volunteers and financial support from the HLF. The conservation work investigated several aspects of **Buckinghamshire geology from a 'pure' professional and research basis** through to education of locals and schools, including aspects of geology linked to our historical and archaeological past. The work also included ecological survey work (with a training programme for) by volunteers at sites such as the Buckingham Sandpit (*see right*) and Whiteleaf Hill near Princess Risborough.



Plans are in hand to get further and rather more regular assistance from government conservation bodies such as Natural England. Membership fees, of course, help to support the on-going expenses incurred by the Group in providing insurance for site work, displays, and educational outreach and also to maintain the website - our window to the wider world. A few more active members would therefore be very helpful. The activities planned for 2013 should appeal to people with geological and wider interests such as nature, archaeology, history and architecture, as well as walkers and many others. **The Group has just started a Building Stones Survey to document the geology in the county's building heritage. The project will highlight where some of the county's poorly exposed rocks can be seen at the surface, albeit not in their natural position, but incorporated within buildings.**

*Jill Eyers & Tom Hose*

## ENGLAND — Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership (cont.)

Mousehold Heath Earth Heritage Trail is an interpretive project which began life as a Geological Society of Norfolk idea to commemorate the late Prof Brian Funnell. Drawing on Brian's work on local glacial geology, the Trail focuses on the links between geology, landscape and biodiversity. It aims to capture the interest of casual visitors to the Heath as well as specialists, and will hopefully promote future research. Eighteen points of interest have been chosen, and an introductory leaflet and 25 supporting web pages have been published. Geological exposures have been excavated to provide windows into the inside story of the Heath, which is thought to be the remnant of a Middle Pleistocene glacial outwash plain, with deposits dating from more than one glacial episode. The exposures will also benefit wildlife, by supporting work by the Wardens and Conservators to remove encroaching vegetation, and to justify this to members of the public who use the Heath for recreation, some of whom are convinced it has always been wooded land. The Trail will have spin-offs for archaeology as well as geological research, and will hopefully make people more aware of the physical aspects of the natural world around them, and how today's landscape has evolved over many hundreds of thousands of years.



*St James' Hollow Chalk Pit SSSI (above) is designated for its marine reptile fossils, notably Mosasaurus (below) [Artwork © DM Waterhouse]*



Key interpretive stories on Mousehold Heath include: evidence of a range of glaciofluvial environments, ranging from standing water to meltwater torrents; a section through the Norwich Crag seabed at **St James' Hollow SSSI, showing a wave-cut platform in Chalk bedrock**; the historic brickearth extraction industry, which yielded raw material for the 'mussel bricks' of Norwich; the site of the last working (1968) lime kiln in Norwich, now preserved below ground at Gilman Road; Long Valley, a fine example of a dry valley landform with a tributary valley system; the findspot of a distinctive bout coupé hand-axe, evidence of local Neanderthal human settlement.

As a follow-up, we are planning an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project investigating the brick-making industry of Mousehold, through archives research, oral history, archaeological excavation and experimental kiln firing. There would be spin-offs for geology, as we shall need to understand more about the brickearth deposits of Mousehold.

The Trail is being delivered in partnership with Norwich City Council, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership (NGP). It would not be possible without funding and other support from the Norfolk Biodiversity Project Fund, the Geological Society of Norfolk and the Mousehold Heath Conservators. To find out more, go to: the NGP website <https://sites.google.com/site/norfolkgeodiversity/news/mheht>, to download a copy of the introductory Trail leaflet; or the Norwich City Council's web pages at <http://www.norwich.gov.uk/mouseholdheathtrail> for in-depth information about Trail features.

Tim Holt-Wilson



# GeoConservationUK Newsletter

## NEWS ITEM — *English National Curriculum (Earth science)*

### Some Observations

The 'Earth science' included in the chemistry curriculum at KS3 and KS4 is not really material recognised as core Earth science by most Earth scientists! Specifically:

- \* The rock cycle (and metamorphism) are not included.
- \* **Fossils, igneous and sedimentary rocks are only covered in 'simple' terms in Year 3.**
- \* Plate tectonics is only covered in Geography at KS3 – **and the 'key processes' only are covered.**

In comparison with the previous National Curriculum overall the:

- \* KS1 Earth science content has remained the same.
- \* KS2 Earth science content has shown a slight increase.
- \* KS3 and KS4 Earth science content have been cut dramatically to something not actually recognisable as Earth science.

The considered recommendations of the Earth science education community for the Earth science content of the national science curriculum at KS3/4 have been comprehensively ignored. It would be very good if everyone interested in this diminution of Earth science content in the new National Curriculum commented upon the consultation associated with the curriculum document - go to <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/n/national%20curriculum%20consultation%20document%20070213.pdf> (DfE, 2013) and for the response document go to [www.education.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations).

Any response made might find it helpful to refer to the following:

- \* Earth science has formed part of the National Curriculum for Science in England since its inception in 1989.
- \* **This was part of the move to equip all pupils with 'scientific literacy' and to prepare future scientists by teaching 'broad, balanced science for all'.**
- \* **Key elements always included have been 'the rock cycle' and 'plate tectonics' – as important to the teaching of Earth science as 'particle theory' is to physical scientists and 'evolution' is to biologists.**

Furthermore, Earth science has been identified in a relatively recent DfE report commissioned as part of the national curriculum review, as a particular area for improvement on the basis of international comparisons. The majority of countries ahead of England in international comparisons have a substantial Earth science component within their science curricula. The English national curriculum proposals currently under consultation, severely downgrade the Earth science content in comparison with **the current curriculum, particularly at KS3/4. Much of the 'Earth science' content of the English proposals at KS3/4 is not Earth science, as recognised by Earth scientists!**

### Useful Sources of Information

Department for Education (DfE) (2011) What can we learn from the English, mathematics and science curricula of high-performing jurisdictions? <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR178.pdf>

Department for Education (DfE), (2013) Reform of the National Curriculum in England. <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/n/national%20curriculum%20consultation%20document%20070213.pdf>

*Chris King & Tom Hose*

## **SCOTLAND — Geopark Shetland**

### How are we doing?

Shetland has been a member of the European Geoparks Network – part of the wider Global Network of Geoparks supported by UNESCO – for four years. The rigorous EGN application process evaluates **each applicant's capacity to exist and develop sustainably as a fully functioning Geopark within the Network**, and each member is assessed every four years to ensure that standards are maintained. **With Geopark Shetland due to receive its first 'revalidation' visit later this summer it is a good time to reflect on what has been achieved so far.**

The Geopark is managed by Shetland Amenity Trust - a highly successful charitable trust dedicated to **the preservation of Shetland's heritage and culture. For thirty years the Trust has improved access**, both physical and intellectual to the natural and cultural heritage of Shetland. Supported by trust staff, **and the 'Geopark Shetland Working Group'** - representatives from the local community, relevant agencies, business and the fields of education and tourism - it has been possible to develop extensive **geological interpretation to help visitors and residents to discover and explore Shetland's world class earth heritage.**

Projects have included 17 on-site interpretive panels, three geowalls, three museum displays, several geo-art exhibits, two self guide trails and most recently a Geopark Shetland app for Android - the **iPhone version will be released in June. The app was part of the transnational 'HINT' project led by Geopark Shetland to explore the use of new technologies in heritage interpretation with Geoparks and aspiring Geoparks in England, France and the Netherlands ([www.hintproject.eu](http://www.hintproject.eu)).**

**As well as enhancing Shetland's tourist infrastructure the Geopark has engaged closely with many local primary and secondary schools to help teachers deliver the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence in collaboration with members of 'ShEEP'** – the Shetland Environmental Education Partnership – which includes the RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage. This month the Geopark Project Officer led workshop activities at a conference for Scottish Geology Higher students in Perth, organised by Perth High School, the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, St. Andrews University Geobus project and the Scottish Geodiversity Forum.

Shetland has been a member of the Scottish Geodiversity Forum since its inception in 2010 and **helped to frame Scotland's Geodiversity Charter, which was launched in June of last year. The Geopark aims align closely with the Charter – in particular, raising awareness of geodiversity and its importance, supporting lifelong learning, and conserving and enhancing our geoheritage and its special character through policy integration and site designation.**

Over the past 12 months Geopark Shetland has made great strides to achieve this particular aspiration through close liaison with Shetland Islands Council. In 2012 the Geopark employed a geologist to **develop the register of Shetland's 107 geosites, (many lacking SSSI or even GCR status), establish appropriate boundaries where lacking, and produce detailed site reports with a referenced image library.** The register is almost complete and all the information is now being used by Shetland Islands Council Planning Department to help them to make better informed decisions about possible developments and potential impacts on geodiversity.

The current draft Local Development Plan for Shetland highlights geodiversity, citing the Geopark, the **Scottish Geodiversity Forum and Scotland's Geodiversity Charter. Nine geosites without SSSI status** are in the process of being recognised as Local Nature Conservation Sites within the Plan.



# GeoConservationUK Newsletter

## SCOTLAND — Geopark Shetland

Amongst the nine selected geosites are:

- \* Haggriester Quarry — *a disused granite quarry with a large and incredibly well exposed scapolite vein.*



- \* The Wick of Skaw — *where one of Shetland's oldest and most striking intrusions, the 430 million year old Skaw granite can be seen in contact with Dalradian rocks.*



- \* Scatness — *where there are clear sequences of sand, pebbles and cobbles that were eroded from the Caledonian Mountains and laid down by fast flowing braided rivers within a Devonian rift basin.*



Work is now underway to develop an Action Plan for the next four years to ensure the Geopark continues to go from strength to strength. More information can be found at [www.geoparkshetland.org.uk](http://www.geoparkshetland.org.uk) and you can follow Geopark Shetland on Facebook and Twitter.

*Robina Barton*



## SCOTLAND — Scottish Geodiversity Forum

### A Second Birthday . . .

The Forum celebrated our second birthday with a lively AGM on Saturday 8th March which celebrated recent progress, including the recent launch of Scotland's Geodiversity Charter, and confirmed Iain Stewart as our Patron. Iain kicked off a discussion on the future priorities of the Forum, which was very useful in highlighting issues to consider over the next few months and years. We actually only got around to discussing 2 out of the 5 or 6 potential topics, but with much enthusiasm!

One key issue at the moment in Scotland is the imminent demise of Geology qualifications in Scottish schools. Despite many attempts to persuade the government of the importance of the subject, and efforts to engage with development of new course content, geology will effectively disappear in 2015 and the promise of earth science content being included in new courses has not materialised. We have worked with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society to raise awareness of this, including helping to organise an extremely successful and highly regarded two-day conference for the current batch of Higher Geology students. One mother wrote afterwards to say "[my son] had an absolutely brilliant time ... it is the most enthusiastic I have seen him for a long time! He talked non-stop (very unusual for him) all the way home from Perth yesterday about how much he had enjoyed it and how much he had learned."

Another hot topic for us is the status of Geological Conservation Review sites, some of which have not been given SSSI status (unlike in the rest of the UK). So we have some sites that have been recognised for their immense value in illustrating key parts of our geological development, but currently have no legal protection. The Forum remains a small, volunteer-led organisation with limited resources but much enthusiasm and increasing recognition of the role we can play. There are many challenges ahead, but we look forward to tackling them supported by a growing membership base and strong links with other organisations.

*Angus Miller*

## NEWS ITEM — JNCC Triennial Review

A triennial review of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) started on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013. **The JNCC provides evidence and advice to underpin the Government's environmental policies.** The aim of the review is to look at how JNCC carries out its functions and how it might achieve better quality sustainable outcomes for the environment, the economy and for society. The review is being taken forward as a joint review with the Devolved Administrations. Defra has been working closely with JNCC and their stakeholders since December 2012 to help prepare for and inform the review. Richard Benyon, Environment Minister, has said that: *"The evidence and advice provided by the JNCC is important in helping us achieve our nature conservation priorities both in the UK and internationally. Preserving nature for future generations is one of the greatest challenges we face as a society and we need good evidence and advice to inform how we do this. This review gives us a chance to look at how this evidence and advice is currently provided and whether there is scope for improvement. I want to gather ideas from people and organisations who really understand the importance of nature, its value to our economy and society."*

Defra and the Devolved Administrations are seemingly committed to conducting it in a timely and focused way with views and supporting evidence requested by 11 April 2013. Copies of the relevant Discussion Paper, with the 7 questions to be answered by respondents, can be downloaded from:

[www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2013/03/21/triennial-review-jncc-1303/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2013/03/21/triennial-review-jncc-1303/)

Comments must be submitted to: [JNCCreview@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:JNCCreview@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and preliminary conclusions will be published in the early summer; so get downloading and responding!

*Tom Hose*



## GeoConservationUK Newsletter

### NEWS ITEM — *Closure of Birkhill Clay Mine*

#### A Perverse Closure . . .

Falkirk Council has seemingly decided to close the Birkhill Clay Mine, which has been mothballed since 2011 following health and safety concerns and following consultation with a number of interested parties; however, none of the latter were specifically geological! It seems that the Edinburgh and Glasgow Geological Societies, Scottish Geodiversity Forum, GeoConservation Commission of the Geological Society of London, or local groups such as Lothian and Borders GeoConservation who have tried in the past to stimulate interest in geodiversity in the area were consulted. It is possible that Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland might have been contacted but they probably showed little interest in a non-national asset like Birkhill.

**GCUK, in the person of Mike Brown, wrote to Falkirk Council to express GCUK's concern and displeasure** about the loss of this unique piece of publicly accessible mining and geological heritage. He indicated that GCUK appreciated that perhaps £100k was needed for Health and Safety work to re-open the mine - a significant sum in hard times. However, this was only 1% of the year's Leisure Trust budget. Mike indicated that the Upper Forth Landscape Partnership could have bid for up to £3 m from the HLF and perhaps might have been able to contribute in some way; there was also the possibility of funding from the Scottish Land Fund, with recent announcements of grants in the region of £100k to £300k to heritage projects. He pointed out that Birkhill would have been the number one Local Geodiversity Site in Falkirk, if they had their level of interest in geodiversity had not been so low that had not yet identified any such sites.

Birkhill was a visitor attraction fitting more than the geotourism niche market and strongly linked to the railway heritage. This decision, by closing Birkhill, to degrade the Falkirk visitor experience and provide one less attraction seems perverse when the Scottish Government is actually helping the Scottish Geodiversity Forum to promote the Scottish Geodiversity Strategy to encourage local authorities to engage more with Geodiversity.

*Mike Browne & Tom Hose*

### NEWS ITEM — *Third Dunbar SciFest (16<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> March 2013)*

Lothian and Borders GeoConservation Group again grasped the opportunity to set up a stall at the **Dunbar SciFest. The event has been recognised as an "Outstanding contribution to National Science & Engineering Week 2013" by the British Science Association for the Advancement of Science.** There were over 34 contributing organisations including the Natural History Museum, British Geological Survey, Our Dynamic Earth, Scottish Seabird Centre, Glasgow Science Centre, Lafarge Tarmac, Mensa, EDF, Community Windpower, Viridor, Edinburgh University, and Heriot Watt University.

The Group displayed large specimens of the local fossiliferous Carboniferous coral limestone, fossil arborescent trunks and small samples of sedimentary and igneous rocks found in East Lothian, the latter much augmented by samples from Iceland collected by our Outreach students from Edinburgh University. Posters about local geology were on display along with published geological trail leaflets. Many young visitors especially enjoyed the plate tectonic jigsaws, fossil rubbing table and earthquake-shaking table (provided by Brian Cameron MBE). Over 2400 visitors were attracted to the local Primary School venue; in the afternoons, it really seemed as if many of them visited the Group's stall!

*Mike Browne*

## NEWS ITEM — *An English Geodiversity Forum?*

There have been two 'steering group' meetings to discuss the possibility of forming an English Geodiversity Forum. GCUK has been represented and information has already been forwarded to member groups. A summary of the pros and cons of such a body is given below:

| Negative                                                                                                                                                                       | Positive                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Challenging to reach agreement between all parties                                                                                                                             | Needs to be a centre / focus for action                                                                     |
| Resources – this will depend upon what it will look like (i.e. how often to meet, time & costs).                                                                               | Meeting that included looking at good practice / training event would be good – could be through the forum. |
| Duplication of other meetings?                                                                                                                                                 | Focus for English matters                                                                                   |
| Meeting face to face 4 times a year would be costly – might a virtual forum be better?                                                                                         | Coming together and sharing information and experiences                                                     |
| An executive board may exclude some people / groups – but an executive can undertake some tasks that others would be reluctant to do (but it needs to be fully representative) | Increase profile of geodiversity / Earth sciences in England                                                |
| Could end up being the same group(s) of people as always!                                                                                                                      | Could actually bring in new people! (e.g. in Scotland, new academics)                                       |
| Does it overlap too much with other groups?                                                                                                                                    | "Bottom-up" / Grassroots / community / "Big Society" – in line with Government priorities?!!                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                | Influence government? Defra representation                                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                | Single voice for political arena – eg natural capital committee                                             |

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

### *HOGG's Appreciating Physical Landscapes (22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012) - A Report*

A most convivial gathering of some fifty plus enjoyed a full day of presentations at Burlington House. Poster presentations were also displayed, together with a small display prepared by the Library staff of early geology books, in the Lower Library. After introductory remarks by the conference's convenor, Tom Hose (University of Bristol), David Norman's (University of Cambridge) opening keynote address was about the development of public awareness and understanding of Earth history. His wide ranging coverage of fossil finds and interpretations from ancient Greece to the nineteenth century was peppered with fine illustrated examples.



*Tom Hose (left) and David Norman pause during the morning's coffee break.*

Ruth Pullin (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia) then discussed the work of Eugene von Guérard, one of Australia's greatest landscape painters of the 19th century in whom there has been a resurgence of interest since the 1980s. He undertook many expeditions across the volcanic plains of south-west Victoria and South Australia recording his observations in pocket sketchbooks which later formed the basis of his paintings. His 1855 painting Tower Hill was used as the basis for the restoration of a young volcanic landscape and the Kanawinka Geopark (Australia's first geopark). The meeting of art and science, particularly geology, was a central theme of the National Gallery of Victoria's 2011/2012 touring exhibition of von Guérard's paintings of which Ruth was guest curator.

After the coffee break, Jonathan Larwood (Natural England) spoke about the geological excursions, which started in 1860, of the Geologists' Association (GA) as recorded in its archives. By 1870, there



# GeoConservationUK Newsletter

## MEETINGS and CONFERENCES

### HOGG's Appreciating Physical Landscapes (22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012) - A Report

were at least three, and up to ten, excursions per year. By 1910, over 1,000 excursions had been recorded. Originally focussing on the London area and south-east England, the trips later ventured further afield, including Europe. The excursions were written up in the **Proceedings of the Geologists' Association**. The archive mainly covers from 1880 to the present-day, although the oldest photograph dates from 1860.

Cynthia Burek (University of Chester) then spoke (also on behalf of Tom Hose) about the role of local societies, in particular the **Chester Society of Natural Science (founded in 1871) and the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club (founded in 1851)**, in early geotourism. Both these bodies had accommodation in prominent buildings in county towns, their aims were to provide practical study and lectures, and their second presidents were both geologists. Both societies sought to show people the holistic nature of the countryside through field excursions, and both had members who were not experts.



Ros Westwood (Derbyshire Museums) then spoke about Dovedale and J.W. Jackson; its river, first **mentioned by Robert Plot in 1686, has carved 'a typical American canyon in miniature'**. **By the 18th century**, its many visitors included the scientifically inclined, the curious and those in search of the picturesque; they all contributed to a huge market in travelogues and affordable prints. Ros, in pursuing **their origins, had come upon Jackson's archive at Buxton Museum. In 1930, he submitted evidence before the National Parks Commission on Dovedale's geological importance, after which much came into National Trust (NT) management. Buxton Museum has worked with the NT to uphold the legacy of Jackson's work.**

After the provided luncheon in the Lower Library, with its opportunity to admire the poster presentations (*see top right*), John Gordon (University of St Andrews) gave the second keynote presentation (*see bottom right*) in which he explored the human experience of the physical landscape in Scotland as a source of inspiration, creativity and wonder from the mid 18th century to the present-day.

Northern Norway was next spotlighted when Brian Whalley (University of Sheffield) outlined some of the visits of tourists and mountaineers from the early 1800s to the 1960s. Their writings and illustrations have sometimes proved scientifically important in the reconstruction of glaciated landscapes and the position of glaciers in the so-called **'Little Ice Age', of the spectacular scenery. The region** has, historically, been difficult to access but the road network was much improved in the 1970s opening it up for walking, fishing, climbing, and skiing. However, the suggestion to make it a national park did not get local support! The speaker ended by pressing the need to digitise all records and images as metadata.



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

### *HOGG's Appreciating Physical Landscapes (22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012) - A Report*

Nathalie Cayla (Université de Savoie) then considered the French Northern Alps where sites in the Chamonix valley and Mont Blanc Massif have been international tourist destinations, with associated publications, since the 18th century. During the 19th century, the Sierroz Gorge was an excursion site from the spa town of Aix-les Bains; it has recently been included in a geopark. Other sites considered were the Rhone Gorge, the Sardières monolith, and the Vanoise National Park where recreational climbing followed the first ascent of the Grande Casse summit in 1861. The significance of visits by royalty, major politicians, and geologists (from the Écoles des Mines from 1802) were also considered.

After a short break, Djordjije Vasiljevic (University of Novi Sad, Serbia) recounted the history of investigation of the Pleistocene loess of the Vojvodina region of northern Serbia (*see right*). The region covers the confluences of the rivers Danube, Sava and Tisa and has featured in academic and artistic works for the past 300 years. The first scientific description of the loess was by Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658-1730) and many of his localities and descriptions are still recognisable. Djordjije then reviewed some of the geo-historical aspects of loess research through the works of some travel writers of the 19th century. Djordjije then looked at the impact of 20th century research, including Austrian and Hungarian geologists, up to present-day geotourism with his university's Loess Research Group.



Maria Tsinkoburova (St Petersburg Mining University, Russia) then spoke about geotourism's history as exemplified in the St Petersburg region. Geological excursions began in the 18th century in Catherine the Great's reign. **At the beginning of the 19th century students from St Petersburg's schools were taken on local geological excursions.** In 1818, William Fox-Strangways made the area's first geological map; his description of the geology was published (1830) in the Transactions of the Geological Society of London; a Russian translation was in the first issue of the Proceedings of the Russian Mineralogical Society. It specified noteworthy geosites but many of these disappeared under 20th century buildings. **St Petersburg's geosites are now protected due to conservation laws of the 1970s and 1980s.**

Piotr Migoń (University of Wrocław, Poland) then gave a presentation on geotourism in the Sudetes. Since the end of the 18th century, its geosites have attracted interest, in particular the granite massif of the Karkonosze Mountains (made a geopark in 2010), and the central stepped sandstone plateau renowned. Nearby spa resorts, popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, also brought visitors to these areas including, in 1790, Johann Wolfgang Goethe who is considered a pioneer of geotourism in the Sudetes and for whom there are commemorative plaques. As early as the late 18th century, there were way-marked trails for tourists. In 1880, a society was established to promote a more meaningful understanding of the geological features for tourists; it published scholarly accounts on different aspects of the geological history. **In 1914, a catalogue of geological 'monuments' was published.** Current geotourism is at sites which first attracted tourists several centuries ago.

Keith Nicholls (University of Chester) then spoke (also on behalf of Cynthia Burek) on Thomas Compton who travelled throughout North Wales in the early 19th century drawing the landscapes then being



# GeoConservationUK Newsletter

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



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

## **HOGG's Appreciating Physical Landscapes (22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012) - A Report**

investigated by "the vanguard of empirical geologists". He drew well known scenes such as Snowdon, Cader Idris, Harlech Castle and the Vale of Llangollen, but it was his paintings of Aberconwy and Bwlch y Groes (in which the underlying geology comprises the Hirnantian Stage - terminal Ordovician) that were considered in detail; his pictures show that he had a good eye for noting geological features.

We returned to continental Europe when Libera Arena (Università degli studi di Bari, Italy) spoke about Carlo Amoretti (1741-1816), a 'curious' of nature rather than a true geologist. In 2010, Libera had retraced Amoretti's 1797 and 1798 trips in the Pre-Alps. She suggested, using Google Earth interactive, virtual tours could be made for tourists tracing the routes followed by early scientist-travellers; the HistGeoAlp project could create a network of between different geo-sites and geo-historical routes.

The final talk came from Julian Ashbourn who took us to the geological and natural treasures that are **Canada's National Parks, the first of which was established (1883) at Banff in Alberta; there are now 43 with an increasing preservation and conservation emphasis.** Special attention was given to the Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan straddling the Canadian Shield and Western Sedimentary Basin and the transition from the grasslands of the Great Plains to the northern boreal forest; its **aboriginal history dates back about 8000 years.** Julian introduced us to Archie 'Grey Owl' Belaney who spent his life in saving the beaver and writing for Country Life as well as books for children.

HOGG chair John Henry, who chaired the final session, brought the formal day's proceedings to a close. Delegates then adjourned to the Lower Library for a wine reception and final viewing of the poster presentations. Later, a select gathering enjoyed the Conference Dinner. *Tom Hose & Beris Cox*

## **24<sup>th</sup> International Congress on History of Science, Technology & Medicine**

HOGG is supporting the INHIGEO engagement with this week long Manchester University based conference; the following symposia have been scheduled:

**S112, *Geology in art and literature*** : all day Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July + the first session on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> July;

**S113, *Geologists in the field*** : all day Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July + the first two sessions on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July.

There are three geo-history field trips; details at:

[http://inhigeo2013.historyofgeologygroup.co.uk/?page\\_id=225](http://inhigeo2013.historyofgeologygroup.co.uk/?page_id=225)

Tom Hose of HOGG/GCUK is leading the "**Buxton Spa and Spar**" trip on Thursday 25th July (£50 with rail/entrance tickets & luncheon included in the price).

Registration details (at £205 before 14 April and then £280) can be found at:

<http://www.ichstm2013.com/registration/index.html>

### **GeoConservationUK Executive Committee**

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