

UKRIGS NEWSLETTER



Spring 2005, Vol. 3, No. 1

By RIGS for RIGS: Keeping you up to date with RIGS nationally and in your area.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Editorial, PPS 9 & DEFRA, Request for RIGS numbers – p1
UKRIGS ASLF Education Project, European Manifesto on Earth Heritage and Geodiversity – p2
New RIGS site? Action Your Local Plans, Geoconservation Commission – p2
UNESCO Update, News, G'Day From Downunder – p3
Diary Dates, New Publications – p4

Editorial

Cynthia Burek

Hello. As the warm weather approaches I hope you will be able to get out into the field. We have several RIGS which are either regrouping or emerging. Good luck to Bedfordshire RIGS, Northumbria RIGS and to Greater Manchester, and to the work going on towards forming a NW regional group with Cheshire, Lancashire and the Isle of Man. We hope that the SE and East Anglia regions manage to secure their partnerships. Let's hope that Aberdeen, Ireland and Yorkshire Dales areas all manage to form new groups. There also seems to be much activity on both the LGAP front and Geoparks with 2 Welsh areas hoping to gain Geopark status, Brecon Beacons NP area and Anglesey spearheaded by Gwynedd & Mon RIGS. We congratulate Assynt on becoming Scotland's first Geopark. There is much happening at the national level in Geoconservation (See item on UNESCO) and the regional groupings mentioned above help to underpin this. They boost up the local level RIGS. Both Wales (AWRG) and the Geology Trusts have shown the way on this front. We also note the increased interest in geoconservation by local authorities. This will increase as PPS9 comes into force in the summer. A new venture this year is the STET joint UKRIGS conference with ESTA 2 national organisations joining up to give a really focused conference on education and geoconservation. Partnership is the way forward here, as with the LGAPs. Also a reminder that in 2006 there will be a conference on the History of Geoconservation hosted jointly by the History of Geology Group of the Geological Society, the Geoconservation Commission and the Black Country Geological Society to celebrate 50 years of Wren's Nest. Please keep all your local news coming. I will try to include it. All the best

Cynthia ■



PPS 9

& DEFRA Local Sites Guidance

John Reynolds

Consultation on Planning Policy Statement No 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation). Dr Colin Prosser at English Nature has asked for copies of RIGS Group responses to the PPS 9 consultation. This will not only be reference material for him, but hopefully give him bulk ammunition for the next stage of government re-drafting of the document. Please send to: colin.prosser@english-nature.org.uk If any RIGS groups have independently submitted evidence to support inclusion of geodiversity alongside biodiversity in the policy statement, please could they send copies to John Reynolds and Dr Colin Prosser. This is required to add weight to help English Nature keep the pressure up.

UKRIGS would also like a copy, for reference in the consultation on DEFRA's Local Sites Guidance - that document of advice which should have accompanied PPS 9! Many thanks to the several RIGS Groups who have been in contact with copies of their early drafts. Please send final versions to jr.reynolds@virgin.net Many thanks. ■

Request for RIGS Numbers

Cynthia Burek

Thanks to those who supplied info on RIGS numbers, the total so far is about 2000. We are still waiting for some further groups to respond. If you haven't already, please do so as soon as possible, to me at c.burek@chester.ac.uk. ■

UKRIGS ALSF Education Project

John R Reynolds (Project Manager)

Rick Ramdsdale (Education Officer)

Pauline Jones (Project Officer)

January 2005 - Work is progressing well, despite the very late start in the August holidays followed by the September Earth Science conference season. To the three initial sites of Park Hall (Triassic, Stoke-on-Trent), National Stone Centre (Carboniferous reef limestone, Derbyshire) and Apes Tor (folded Carboniferous muddy limestone, N Staffs), we have added Black Rock, an exposure of gritstone with adjacent mines and a view into Deane Quarry, near Matlock. A footpath links this site with the National Stone Centre. First drafts of four of the ten proposed field teaching activities have been completed, with work in progress on all the others. With the agreement of Jonathan Larwood it has been decided not to commence work on a fifth site as part of the pilot owing to pressures of writing, plus preparing and editing material for the other four sites to the high standard we want to set. Mid-March is the deadline! UKRIGS acknowledges the support of the Agregates Levy Sustainability Fund, administered through English Nature. ■

European Manifesto on Earth Heritage and Geodiversity

Tony Weighell (JNCC)

Adopted by Committee of Ministers on May 2004 the manifesto was presented in November 2004 at the Joint Conference of the Dutch EU Presidency and the European Commission for the Environment which was discussing the European soil strategy. The authors of the document hope to influence the strategy to include earth heritage. The idea of a European seminar has been proposed to discuss how different EU instruments (European Landscape Convention, Habitats Directive etc.) could each be used to recognise Earth Heritage. The Dutch are considering sponsoring this. ■

Letter to Editor – New RIGS Site?

Peter Kennett

A novel geological feature has recently been added to the former General Cemetery in Sheffield. Around 30 one tonne blocks of stone have been arranged to form a Stone Spiral, to allow public access to stone in the 'raw' state. Visitors may then proceed to the rest of the Victorian Cemetery to see the same rock types in use as gravestones, and to carry out investigations into weathering etc. A guide book to the gravestones themselves was published a few years ago and is on sale at the Gatehouse. To accompany the new Stone Spiral, two display boards and a free leaflet have been

produced, thanks to funding from the Curry Fund and the Quarry Products Association. The leaflet is also available from the Gatehouse (s.a.e. if requested by post). The Cemetery is a Listed Landscape, by virtue of its classic layout and structures. I understand that some similar cemeteries up and down the country are also being nominated as RIGS sites. Can anyone suggest how we should go about getting the Sheffield General Cemetery on the list too please? Yours sincerely, email: peter.kennett@tiscali.co.uk ■

Action Your Local Plans Before it's Too Late!

John R Reynolds

As part of the changes to local planning procedures, all local authorities must involve the local community in drawing up local plans. If your RIGS Group is not already on the mailing list of local authority stakeholders you should contact them now. Check their website for details or telephone the civic office. Terms like: Local Development Framework (LDF), Core Spatial Strategy and Development Control Policies sit alongside more familiar Waste and Minerals Development Plan Documents. Community involvement and stakeholder have been terms mentioned in previous editions of the newsletter, and groups are urged to seize the opportunity to get geoconservation into their Local Plans. It will be ten years before the next chance!

e-mail: jr.reynolds@virgin.net ■

Geoconservation Commission

Cynthia Burek

UNESCO pulls out of Earth Science. JNCC notified the Geoconservation Commission that Geology and Ecology are to be merged. The new head is coming to the position from outside UNESCO from the World Heritage Centre and is a biologist. IGCP will have its budget cut to half in 2006 and then 0 by 2007. It is hoped that Geoparks will carry on. JNCC informed GCC that the GCR books should be completed by 2006. They will then be made available electronically. If RIGS groups use the information from this audit, could they let Tony Weighell from JNCC know on email: tony.weighell@jncc.gov.uk ? This information will help to justify the cost of disseminating electronically the information. UK has not yet signed the long awaited European Landscape Convention. We watch this with interest. English Nature are producing State of Nature 4 - Geodiversity. This has been out for consultation been revised and will be available after Easter. UKRIGS has given feedback. The new website for the Geoconservation Commission is www.geoconservation.com ■

UNESCO Update

Tony Weighell (JNCC)

The post of Director of the Division of Earth Sciences and another professional post (dealing with Remote Sensing, Capacity Building, Training, Geological Maps) have been abolished. There is now one Division of Ecology and Earth Sciences (headed by Natarajan Ishwaran, formerly with the World Heritage Centre in Paris) including a section of Earth Sciences (headed by Robert Missotten) that continues the projects related to IGCP, Geoparks, Earth Observation, etc. The abolition of the Earth Sciences Division was triggered by financial constraints and the wish of UNESCO's Member States for integration of programmes where possible. This will not result in a total loss of Earth Science work. The budget for 2005 is untouched, but in 2006/2007 there will be significant changes with the likelihood of a severe cut in funding to Earth Sciences. Those working on Earth Sciences within UNESCO would appreciate support from outside (through the diplomatic channels of the Executive Board and the General Conference)

underlining the importance of UNESCO remaining involved in Earth Sciences for cultural, scientific and conservation reasons. ■

News

- Sustainability Fund will be administered jointly by English Nature and Countryside Agency for the next 2 years.
- Scottish Natural Heritage has decided to appoint a UKRIGS development officer for 3 years.
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Bill has now become an Act. It gives protection to SSSIs and has included a duty to have a Scottish fossil code.
- West Lothian, with the help of their RIGS group, is to produce an LGAP. We wish them well.
- Assynt in Highlands of Scotland has received Geopark Status the first in Scotland. UKRIGS wish them all the best.
- Rockwatch is to have a Spring weekend event in the Marble Arch Caves Geopark in Ireland. Good Luck from UKRIGS.
- English Heritage have produced their ALSF 2nd annual report.

G'Day From Downunder!

Elaine Tilson, International Correspondent

I hope you all had a wonderful and safe Festive Season. As I write this, in a hammock in Brisbane, the temperature is 36° and the humidity is in the 80s! Now that I have recovered from my illness (thank you all for your support) I have started readjusting to the industry here in Queensland, Australia. I thought you might be interested in what is happening here, in comparison to the UK. I thought it would be best to 'set the environmental scene' so you can understand the differences in context, before I embark on issues specific to geodiversity and geoconservation. Queensland has been an environmentally aware State for many years, but there was still an element of apathy, based on ignorance, before I left three years ago. People recycled daily, participated in big annual environmental clean-ups and ecological projects in their local communities and so forth. This was obviously encouraging. I have returned to find this has changed significantly—for the better. Shortly after my arrival home, the Queensland Government released the Draft South East Queensland Regional Plan (covers a larger area than the UK). This plan tries to balance urban growth with environmentally sustainable development. The reaction from the community has been astounding! It was a leading news item on all commercial television news and radio and spent days as the leading story on the State's broadsheet newspaper. It created enormous debate about the density of urban communities, and the uniqueness of the environment, giving Queenslanders the quality of life they have. This is not the only dramatic change. In my absence, there has also been a change in shopping practices. Now, as I walk towards any

shopping centre in Brisbane, I see a sea of bright 'Green Bags'. Without imposing any charges on using plastic bags, without banning plastic bags, the vast majority of shoppers have bought these environmentally friendly green bags. I stopped to ask a few people why they have spent their own money on this, and was met with a surprised reaction, as if it was obvious, of 'well, disposable bags end up in the waterways, kill the wildlife and don't degrade in refuse tips!' I guess industry agreed to be involved as it saves money all round and are 'seen to be green!' The media is another area of significant change. In my local newspaper, in the Redland Shire of Brisbane, there are weekly environmental articles. The one called 'Waterwise' tells the community their water consumption that week, with graphs showing annual and monthly comparisons. It reminds people why water consumption is an important environmental issue and gives tips on how to save water. The second article discusses a different environmental issue each week. Related comments from the community are often printed in the 'Letters to the Editor'. There is a major Government advertising campaign on commercial television and radio too. It uses Queensland celebrities to give environmentally friendly tips such as 'know what you want before you open the fridge' and 'turn off the tap while brushing your teeth'. Not only does it encourage people to do it for themselves, but suggests people spread the word. The wonder of it is that they are clearly doing so! These are just some of the wonderful advances I have found on my return, and I hope they have painted a picture of the atmosphere here in Queensland at the moment. Next month, I will write more about Geoconservation and Geodiversity issues. ■

Dates For Your Diary

■ March 15th - 17th 2005.

England's Heritage in Stone Conference. At Tempest Anderson Hall Yorkshire Museum, York. Organised by the Geoconservation Commission, supported by English Nature, English Heritage, Stone Federation of Great Britain, British Geological Survey, the Geological Society and the English Stone Liaison Group. For anyone with an interest in indigenous English Stone including providers, planners, architects and the building industry. Sessions include England's Heritage in Stone, English Stone, Planning, Training, Stone in Building, and The Future. Visit www.geoconservation.com or www.geolsoc.org.uk for further information. Posters acceptable. Contact mick.stanley1@btinternet.com or 01765 609479 for poster details.

■ September 2005.

Scottish Geology Festival this month.

■ September 16th - 18th 2005.

8th Annual RIGS Conference at the University of Derby, alongside the ESTA conference. Details to follow. Displays welcome from RIGS groups.

■ October 17th – 30th 2005

Tunisia Field Trip: David and Shirley Stephens and Prof Richard Moody are planning a field trip to Tunisia. Cost around £1600, using 4 wheel drive vehicles with 3 nights under canvas. Interested in joining us? Tel 01252 680215 Email dandsestephens@lineone.net

■ November 2006.

The History of Geoconservation Conference, co-sponsored by the Geoconservation Commission, HOGG (History of Geology Group) of the Geological Society of London. Hosted by the Black Country Geological Society. Details to follow.

■ 2006 coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the designation of Wren's Nest in Dudley as the first Geological NNR (National Nature Reserve) in the UK.

New Publications

■ **International Year of Planet Earth 2005-2007.** IUGS and UNESCO.

■ **Beneath your feet.**

DIGS - Dorset Important Geological Sites Group.

■ **Building with Scottish stone.**

National Stone Institute and the Scottish Executive.

■ **Geology of the Lincolnshire Wolds.**

Lincolnshire RIGS group and Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service.

■ **Safeguarding Cheshire's Geodiversity.**

Cheshire RIGS.

■ **The Story of Halkyn Mountain.**

Flintshire Countryside Service and partners.

■ **Geodiversity and The Cheshire LGAP**

Partnership. University College Chester.

■ **Local Geodiversity Action Plans – Sharing Good Practise Workshop Peterborough, Dec 2003.** English Nature Research Reports.

■ **Local Geodiversity Action Plans Sharing Good Practise.** English Nature.

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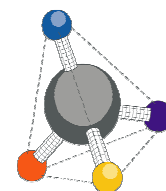
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UKRIGS wishes to acknowledge the financial support of English Nature, SciComm Centre for Science Communication's publications unit, and University College Chester's print unit.

It is always interesting and enjoyable to read about other RIGS groups and their work. To share your news and events in this quarterly newsletter, please contact Dr Cynthia Burek, RIGS Newsletter Editor, c.burek@chester.ac.uk,

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual authors and unless stated, do not represent the opinions of UKRIGS.