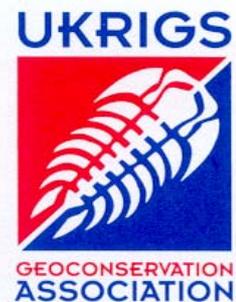


UKRIGS NEWSLETTER



Summer 2007, Vol.5, No.2

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

P1 – Editorial, GCSE Geology Under Threat

P2 – UKRIGS Groups Summer Outreach

P3 – National News – Planning White Paper, Scottish RIGS Groups

P4 – LGAPs, Conferences, Publications, Diary Dates, Credits

E D I T O R I A L

Hi Everyone,

This last week or so we have had tremendous floods and seen many people made homeless. Is it global warming and is this what we can expect in the future?

Asking these questions prompted me to think about how RIGS would fare under increased flooding conditions. Would access be affected for example and would we need to reassess the individual site situations? Would some sites have to be denotified as they became consistently flooded if not completely submerged? Would it be safe to assume the same conditions apply to submerged forests for example? At what point is it impracticable to call them RIGS? All questions that need thinking about for the future.

To end on a high note though it is good to see that Fossil Grove, Victoria Park, Glasgow, will now be opened in the summer months for visits. As this is one of the first geoconservation sites in UK I am glad UKRIGS managed to put a word in for protecting it.

Last but not least, congratulations to our co-opted UKRIGS secretary on the birth of her baby boy. Well done.

Cynthia



E D U C A T I O N

GCSE Geology Under Threat

In June this year, Chris King, Professor of Earth Science Education at Keele University, heard about the Welsh examining board's (WJEC), plan to 'withdraw provision' of GCSE Geology from 2010.

GCSE Geology is not offered by any other exam board in the UK. Since the WJEC runs the only remaining GCSE in Geology, it is vital for our future supply of geologists that this is kept running. If withdrawn, UK students would not be able to study or sit for

GCSE Geology at all! The profile of Geology in the under 18 age-group would dwindle, with serious consequences for the future of the discipline.

Chris emailed the Chief Executive of WJEC, as Chair of the Examination Committee of WJEC A-level Geology, asking for a consultation. The Earth Science Education Forum is also lending its weight to the discussion.

From early July, the suggestion to withdraw GCSE Geology from the WJEC curriculum is being reconsidered. We hope to bring a favourable update to this story soon.

UKRIGS SUMMER OUTREACH

Hamps & Manifold Open New Geotrail

Launched in February when Cynthia Burek cut the tape with a pair of tree loppers, this eight-mile trail attracted about 60 visitors to its route along the resurfaced old Leek and Manifold Valley Light Railway track. Visitors used a trail leaflet with full colour map and notes to describe the Lower Carboniferous reefs and muddy limestone turbidites, the spectacular gorges and numerous caves. Modern dry riverbeds, swallets and resurgences were explained, together with periglacial dry valleys, screes and fans. Visitors also saw the remains of chalcopyrite mining and limestone quarrying. The trail was written by Patrick Cossey, John Reynolds and Richard Waller, with design by Rosie Duncan and funded by Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Grant. The guide should increase the public's understanding and enjoyment of the area. Geologists might like it too!



Anglesey Geopark Week

Anglesey, the largest of the Welsh islands, held it's Geopark week from 26th May to 3rd June this Summer. The wealth of the island's natural environment is demonstrated by its having 22,000 hectares classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 60 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 4 National Nature Reserves, 3 Local Nature Reserves, 3 Special Protection Areas and 5 candidate Special Areas of Conservation. Events included trails around South Stack, Breakwater Park, Rhoscolyn, Newborough Forest, and Llanddwyn Island and the buildings of Anglesey. There was fossil making and other activities for children, and a 'Rock Doctor' on hand to help identify any rock/mineral/fossils. Visitors were also invited to examine the geology along Anglesey's Coastal Path using the special information sheets.

GeolSoc Walks

In May and June this year, famous London Landmarks attracted budding geologists and seasoned professionals to tour their geological treasures. Mayfair and Westminster were two sites of study for the guided geological walks led by Eric Robinson as part of the Geological Society's Bicentennial celebrations. Kensal Green Cemetery was another site on the tour, important because a number of founding members of the Geological Society are buried there. The celebrations continue throughout 2007 with more walks, field trips and conferences. For further details of events and activities go to www.geolsoc.org.uk to the Events pages.

Cheshire RIGS Group in Science Festival

The University of Chester's annual Science Festival featured three walks by Cheshire RIGS, highlighting the geodiversity of Chester town centre and the University campus. Cheshire RIGS also gave talks on biodiversity and climate change to a varied and appreciative audience.

Fossil Grove Open for Visitors

Thanks to Strathclyde RIGS, Glasgow University, and the Geological Society of Glasgow, Glasgow City Council have agreed to allow public access to Fossil Grove for the rest of the Summer. Glasgow's most ancient attraction, the remains of an ancient forest of giant clubmoss from the Carboniferous era, is preserved in Victoria Park by Glasgow Museums. Plans are also underway to form a closer partnership between the groups above, with an aim to develop and promote this important site more widely and effectively so that many more visitors will be able to learn about it and appreciate it. (Photograph – Glasgow City Council Museums)



NATIONAL NEWS

Planning White Paper Still Time To Be Heard

On 21st May 2007, the government published the Westminster Parliament's Planning White Paper for England – "Planning for a Sustainable Future". ISBN: 978 0 10 170942 2, Price: £32.50 (free to download at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1510503) The White Paper sets out an ambitious programme of proposed reforms to the planning system to be taken forward in the next three years. These reforms will, for the first time, embrace all development consent regimes, including those for major energy, water, transport and waste development, as well as the town and country planning system.

UKRIGS joined the 'Planning Coalition' and has been campaigning for some months against the damaging proposals included in the Planning White Paper. Some other members of the Planning Coalition include The Wildlife Trusts, CPRE, FoE, Ramblers Association, RTPI, and the RSPB.

The Planning White Paper is still open for consultation until 17th August 2007, so please add your voice. One key area of the White Paper to oppose is 'National Policy Statements on Major Infrastructure' which would prejudice any democratic attempts to contest in the local planning procedures, the siting of nuclear facilities. There are many other such areas that we would be wise to oppose.

The consultation document is available free at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1510731 and responses are invited to be emailed to planningreformconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Scottish RIGS Groups working together

David McCulloch

On 28th April, members of Scotland's RIGS groups gathered together in Edinburgh for a Local Geodiversity Workshop. The event was attended by thirty one people and we were pleased to welcome delegates from as far afield as Tees-side and Northern Ireland. The wider geoconservation community was represented by Lochaber Geopark, Aberdeenshire Council Planning, Greenspace, Scottish Resources Group, HSO Earth Science Belfast, geoHeritage Fife, the Ranger Service and Friends of Glasgow Necropolis.

Mike Browne, Chair of UKRIGS, introduced speakers from SNH, BGS, and Midlothian Biodiversity Partnership. Introductory short talks set the scene and were followed by workshops highlighting good practice in setting up, promoting and funding RIGS work. Delegates viewed a range of good practice leaflets and posters and, very importantly, discussed and learned from each others' experiences.



(Photograph from Scottish Geology)

Speakers encouraged RIGS groups to respond to consultations as a way of demonstrating to national bodies the groundswell of local public interest in geoconservation. Also, due to the Scottish planning system favouring biodiversity, efforts to promote geodiversity may be more effective if clearer links are made to biodiversity.

Local voluntary geoconservation presence varies considerably across Scotland's 40 RIGS sites. To help, SNH is willing to part-fund a RIGS Development Officer post in Scotland. The funding bid is being completed in June.

Everyone agreed that the event had been very worthwhile. The next workshop will be held in 6-12 months time.



LGAPS

Lancashire LGAP

Steve Suggitt

Currently Lancashire RIGS Group is engaged in a number of activities related to the Lancashire LGAP. Working with United Utilities we are providing information for a viewing platform overlooking a fossil tree of Carboniferous age located within the old quarry wall at the northern end of Jumbles Reservoir, near Bolton. A geological trail guide based around this part of Jumbles reservoir and its environs is in an advanced stage of planning with the group applying for funding to produce the guide at the present time. Further LGAP activities of the group include ongoing work on the compilation of a Landscape Units map and information of the Lancashire region, to be made available via the Lancashire RIGS website. A recent site visit has led to the group providing initial information on aspects of the geology and geomorphology of the Brockholes Nature Reserve site recently acquired by the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside.

DIARY DATES

September 3rd to 9th – Field Trip to North West Highland's Geopark. Further details of this and other field trips from www.geolsoc.org - events pages.

September 13th – Marches Festival of Geology Symposium, Ludlow. (See below left)

September 24th – Global warming, should we worry? Talk by BCGS at Dudley Museum. See www.bcgs.info for more information.

November 3rd - UKRIGS AGM. Nominations sought for Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and members.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Marches Festival of Geology Symposium

Thursday 13th September, Ludlow

Registration is now open. Deadline for the reduced rate (and with lunch included) is 31st August. Advance registration should be made with the Shropshire Geological Society Treasurer: David Smith - david@thursfieldsmith.co.uk

All the speakers have a special interest in the geology of the Marches and their contributions will provide authoritative and up-to-the minute accounts of their specific fields. They include Ludlow resident, Michael Rosenbaum, Emeritus Professor of Engineering Geology, and Old Ludlovian, Dr David Lloyd MBE, Former Chair of the Ludlow Historical Research Group. The programme will appeal to members of the public as well as the committed geologist. Further details are available at www.shropshiregeology.org.uk/festival

CREDITS

UKRIGS Geoconservation Association
National Stone Centre. Porter Lane,
Middleton by Wirksworth,
Derbyshire, DE4 4LS, Tel 01384-443644

info@ukrigs.org.uk
www.ukrigs.org.uk

Executive Committee

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PUBLICATIONS

Scottish Natural Heritage

Scotland's Geodiversity

This full colour leaflet, with many beautiful photographs, illustrates the diversity of Scotland's Earth heritage, the pressures upon it, the steps being taken to conserve it and promote its wider understanding. There is a very useful "what can I do to help" section. Order your copy from www.snh.org/pubs



University of
Chester

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It is always interesting and enjoyable to read about RIGS groups and their work. To share your news and events in this quarterly newsletter, please contact Prof Cynthia Burek, RIGS Newsletter Editor, c.burek@chester.ac.uk or Vic Page, Assistant RIGS Newsletter Editor, v.page@chester.ac.uk 250 words max, pictures if you can.

NEXT COPY-DATE is SEPTEMBER 10th 2007.

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