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Midlands Ice Age Geoheritage and Birmingham's Remarkable Erratic Boulders

Professor Ian Fairchild
(University of Birmingham)

13th April 2021 | Zoom Video Conference | 6:30pm start

Abstract:

The Midlands were a key area in the development of ideas about the Ice Age in the late 19th century. At that time, the distribution of erratic boulders were mapped and two distinct dispersal trains identified which later were understood to reflect distinct Ice Ages. Whilst the younger, derived from the Lake District, is well developed in end moraines in the Wolverhampton District, Birmingham and northern Worcestershire were only covered by ice in one or more earlier glaciations.

The Birmingham erratics are predominantly tough siliceous tuffs derived from the Arenig area of North Wales, although there is also dispersal of the Rowley Regis dolerite. The Birmingham memoir extensively treated subsurface data on glacial deposits but scarcely mentioned the erratics. Given the lack of exposures today, the erratics are virtually the only opportunity in the City for the general public to engage with the geological past.



Knowledge about the boulders in Cotteridge Park (near Bournville) has been opened up to the public in a previous lottery project, but the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust are now seeking funding for a larger project that will bring the stones to the attention of a wider public and formalize seven trails (five for walking and two for cycling) in SW Birmingham and NE Worcestershire.

We also seek to engage with groups in New Frankley to develop a geotrail through the heart

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of their community. We will seek assistance from West Midlands geologists to respond to public enquiries about the origin of boulders in their area. Beyond the planned project, there is scope to expand the interest to the Black Country and beyond.

About the Speakers:

Professor Ian Fairchild is a geoscientist with broad interests in the geochemistry of the Earth's surface, climate change and Quaternary and Neoproterozoic earth history. He employs this breadth of knowledge in research, in public outreach, and professional activities such as examining and research assessment. He is equally at home in the field and the laboratory with a wealth of experience in glacial environments, caves, rock successions and at national and international geochemical research facilities.



Forthcoming Talks:

DATE	TITLE	SPEAKER	VENUE
Tuesday 13 th April 2021 6:30 Start	Midlands Ice Age Geoheritage and Birmingham's remarkable Erratic Boulders	Professor Ian Fairchild (<i>University of Birmingham</i>)	Zoom Video Conference
Tuesday 11 th May 2021 6:30 Start	What is a Geological Disposal Facility	Jonathan Turner (<i>Radioactive Waste Management</i>)	Zoom Video Conference
Tuesday 8 th June 2021 6:30 Start	Chartership Evening	Shaun Richardson (The Geological Society)	Zoom Video Conference

The WMRG is constantly on the lookout for fascinating talks. If you would like to present, know someone who is willing, or would like to request a subject please contact the WMRG committee (details below) and we will try our very best to accommodate your requests.

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