

# THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## HISTORY OF GEOLOGY GROUP NEWSLETTER

No.1

January 1995

### WHY.....?

It has often been noted in the past how odd it was that the oldest geological society in the world had no group outlet to study its own history. It was because of this that Council approved the formation of a specialist group in 1993 and an inaugural meeting was duly held in the autumn of 1994. The meeting was well attended, with some 60 interested persons arriving to listen to some most interesting papers and then to discuss the setting up of a group. A vote was taken in principle to set up the group and honorary officers elected, including myself as editor of this newsletter. There was some discussion about starting a full journal but on balance it was felt that that was too adventurous to start with, but that a newsletter would be essential to keep members informed. It is against this background that we set out on this field trip through history.....

### WHO.....?

Those who were elected at that meeting in 1994 to represent the group were John Thackray, John Martin, John Fuller, Richard Howarth, Jim Secord, Hugh Torrens and myself, Peter Tandy. At the first committee meeting held in the Natural History Museum, London in November 1994, we sorted out who would fill which post. It was felt that we had a very able Chairman in John Thackray, and equally able Secretary & Treasurer in John Martin and John Fuller respectively, so there was no argument here! Richard Howarth was specifically there to act as the Geological Society Council representative, which left Jim Secord, Hugh Torrens and myself. I had already volunteered (there's rashness for you) at the inaugural meeting to be newsletter editor and this was endorsed, again without argument! Jim and Hugh would then fill the other two 'non-portfolio' posts. It was all considerably less painful than a visit to the dentist.....

### WHEN.....?

The committee decided after some discussion that it would propose a programme for the members of two meetings a year NOT all of which would be held in London. However, London is where the Geological Society is, and London is where it was decided the first meeting would be. This will be held on **FRIDAY MAY 12th 1995** under the title

### " WATERHOUSE HAWKINS AND THE CRYSTAL PALACE DINOSAURS".

The programme is as follows:

Morning at the Natural History Museum

- 10.30. Coffee in the staff restaurant
- 11.00 Assemble in the rare Books Room of the General Library for short talks by Jim Secord, Martin Rudwick and Hugh Torrens, followed by a chance to see a display of items from the Waterhouse Hawkins collection of drawings
- 12.30 Lunch in the staff restaurant
- 1.30 Board a coach in Cromwell Road

Afternoon at Crystal Palace

- 2.30 Arrive at Crystal Palace, where Steve McCarthy will be our guide  
5.00 Meeting ends

Numbers are limited to 25 for this meeting, so please send in the attached form to secure a place. A fee of £5 covers coffee, biscuits and the coach trip to the Palace. Please note that transport back from Sydenham is not provided. Please return your form and cheque to:  
John Thackray, Archivist, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD

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### **HISTORICAL STUDIES IN EARTH SCIENCE MAPPING**

This is the title of an afternoon meeting based on the University Museum and Earth Sciences Department, Oxford, focusing on the development of geological (terrestrial and submarine) and thematic mapping. It is to be held on Wednesday 4th October 1995. Offers of papers on this theme would be gratefully received. Items from the William Smith Collection will be on display at the meeting. A booking form will be distributed with the July Newsletter.

Contact: John Thackray, Archivist, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

This meeting will also include the 1995 AGM.

For 1996 it was proposed to hold a joint meeting with the S.H.N.H.S on the theme of "**COLLECTORS & COLLECTING**", on Friday 16 February ; this would probably be held in London. A little later, in April, the group may hold a meeting , possibly as a repeat of the February meeting at the Geological Society's own meeting at Warwick. More news of this nearer the time.

### **IS THAT ALL.....?**

No it is not! The group also felt there were other worthy projects which it could look into supporting with members' help. The erection of blue plaques (blue in London at least!) to commemorate some of our most famous geologists would be a good and long overdue achievement ; this will be examined in greater detail and a possible joint operation with the Geologists' Association formulated. The provision of teaching material and the production of a handbook on carrying out research in the history of geology have also been suggested, as well as a list of workers in the field of the history of geology.

### **IN THE MEANTIME.....**

While you prepare for the first HOGG meeting you might also consider attending the following meetings:

### **"T.H.HUXLEY: VICTORIAN SCIENCE & CULTURE"**

This is being held at Imperial College, London and is organised by the British Society for the History of Science to commemorate the centenary of his death. It will be held from Thursday 20 April - Friday 21 April 1995, with an informal assembly on the evening before the conference. Speakers will include Sir Andrew Huxley and our own Jim Secord. Estimated costs are £15 for registration, £7/day for buffet lunch, £30 for a conference dinner and £20/night for accommodation at IC if required. For more details contact Dr David Egerton , Sheffield Building, Imperial College, London SW7 2AZ (tel: 0171 594-9354; fax 0171 594-9353). Provisional registration is required AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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### **"HISTORY of VOLCANOLOGY from the 18th to the 20th CENTURY"**

This is the XXth INHIGEO Symposium and will be held in Italy from the 19 (or 20) to 25 (or 26) September 1995. It will take place in Naples, The Aeolian islands and Catania (Sicily) and will comprise both technical sessions and field excursions. The fee for participation is

L.1.100.000 which covers all sessions, meals, transport and accommodation. For more information contact:

Prof. Nicoletta Morello, Dipartimento di Storia moderna e Contemporanea,  
Via Balbi 6, 16126 Genova, Italy (fax: (39) 10-352169).

Registration fees are due by 1 February 1995 .....SO ACT NOW!!

All publications, news, activities reports for the UK Report to INHIGEO should be sent to Dr Hugh Torrens, Lower Mill Cottage, Furnace Lane, Madeley, Crewe, CW3 9EU by 1 March 1995

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### LYELL-HUTTON BICENTENARY CONFERENCE, 30th July-9 August 1997

A major conference to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Sir Charles Lyell, and the death of Dr James Hutton MD will be held in London from 30th July - 4th August 1997, and in Edinburgh from the 4-9th August 1997. Further details will be available later in 1995.

### **...AND THE RETURN OF PRINCIPLES**

During 1997, the bicentenary year of Charles Lyell's birth, Penguin Books plans to issue a substantial paperback abridgement of the Principles of Geology (1830-1833) in a single volume (the entire three-volume original has been beautifully reproduced by the University of Chicago Press with an introduction by Martin Rudwick). The aim of the Penguin edition is to make the Principles as widely available as possible, especially for use in undergraduate courses and by those who might not be initially tempted to plunge directly into the 1500-page original. With luck you will soon be able to buy the Principles at airport bookshops as relaxing reading for a transatlantic flight.

As part of the introductory material for the volume, I hope to include a list of all the known reviews of the early editions of the Principles in the periodical press. Reviews in the major quarterlies, such as those by William Whewell in the British Critic and George Poulett Scrope in the Quarterly Review, are well known as are notices in the presidential addresses to the Geological Society, and by William Daniel Conybeare in the Philosophical Magazine.

Less well known is the fact that the Principles, like most other books of the time, received substantial attention in the daily, weekly, and monthly press. For example, I have found important notices in the Athenaeum, Literary Gazette, Metropolitan Magazine, monthly Magazine, Monthly Review, and New Monthly Magazine. The periodical press was developing extremely rapidly around this time, in the excitement surrounding the debates about political reform. The reviews are especially helpful in revealing attitudes towards Lyell's work among different segments of the general public.

Any information about other little known periodical reviews of Lyell's Principles, including notices of the early American, French & German editions, would be much appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

Dr Jim Secord, Dept. of History & Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge, Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3RH (Fax: 01223-334554)

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### AUSTRALIAN CONNECTIONS & BEST WISHES

We were very happy to welcome Alan Day to the inaugural meeting of the Group on 4th October. Alan is a leading light in the Earth Sciences History Group (ESHG) of the Geological Society of Australia (GSAus), and provided the following useful notes for us:

*"The ESHG was formally constituted as a 'Specialist Group' of the GSAus in 1984. Membership is open to any member of the GSAus upon payment of a small supplement to the annual dues. Membership is about 90, with 5 'subscribers' who are not GSAus members. It is run by a committee of Chairman, Treasurer, and one or two others. Audited accounts have to be*

*presented annually to the GSAus executive.*

*The Group holds a session within the GSAus Convention, which is held every eighteen months or so. Other meetings are only rarely held, although a very successful Field Conference was organised in 1992 to commemorate Sir Richard Owen and Major Mitchell. The ESHG Committee organised the 19th INHIGEO Symposium in Sydney last July. This was highly successful but involved a large amount of work for five people. The Group will receive the surplus of £450 when the finances are wound up.*

*The principal mode of communication is the 'Newsletter', which the ESHG Committee tries to issue in June & December. The contents are largely news items and book notices. Occasionally someone will write an article. A Special Publication was organised to record the reminiscences of Professor Alan Voisey. The 200 copies that were printed sold slowly, and the project, although not regretted by anyone, was costly.*

*With best wishes for the success of your group,*

*Alan Day  
Sydney, 6.9.1994"*

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#### **WHAT ELSE CAN YOU EXPECT.....?**

Well nothing much if you do not become a member! The initial annual subscription was set at £7 and is due now. Please send cheques to the treasurer (John Fuller) c/o Conference Office, The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0JU and make them payable to HISTORY OF GEOLOGY GROUP.

#### **WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO.....?**

AFTER sending in your subscription, you can assist by keeping the committee informed of news, meetings, events, research & discoveries. Items for the next newsletter should be submitted by the end of June for inclusion in the July newsletter. They can be supplied in written (but readable, please), or typed format, or on a 3 1/2" disc (but please note that I am not as computer literate as today's young whippersnappers and if you send it in some alien language I may not be able to use it; after all I can't hold a disc up to the light and expect to be able to read its contents!) . I will probably have to re-type them anyway to fit pages, so don't waste time in making things look too fancy; better to get the information in. I also reserve the right to make any alterations I deem necessary, though in most cases I expect and will endeavour to use items as received. My address is:

Department of Mineralogy, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5 BD  
(Tel: 071-938-8778; fax 071-938 9268)

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To: J C Thackray, Archivist, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7  
5BD

I wish to attend the CRYSTAL PALACE DINOSAURS meeting on 12 May 1995

I enclose a cheque for £5 made out to 'History of Geology Group'

Name .....

Address .....

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I am / am not a paid-up member of the group.

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