

EAST HERTS GEOLOGY CLUB

Newsletter No.14

December 2009

Alan White

Alan had been suffering from cancer for the last five years. He died in October and several of us were at his memorial service in Hertford in late November.

He joined Ware College introductory geology evening classes in the early eighties, and continued in evening geology classes until they ended 3 years ago. He was a regular member of the associated field trips, when he took numerous photographs, which he afterwards donated for general college use. A high proportion of the slides of geological structures, fossils in situ and other phenomena that I have used in the last 25 years has been his. And he had a knack of catching events which, although not strictly geological, made interesting minor digressions in classes. A slide of myself being about to step out of our Morris Traveller into a huge puddle comes to mind. It told a story of just retribution because, I had got lost and arrived about an hour late.

Unfortunately many of Alan's slides have darkened, and are past their best. There are not many slides in the college collection with him in them, anyway, because so many of them are ones of his. But we are going to have a display of photographs in which he features at the Annual General Meeting on January 19th. If you've got anything which you can contribute, please tell me, or a member of the committee. If there are things on slides which would merit conversion to prints, I'll get them done.

Steve Perkins

Field trips in 2010,

The committee has discussed these. Trips which are planned or contemplated are

1. Walton-on-the-Naze. Day trip to be run by Jane Tubb.
2. Visit to the Geological Survey at Keyworth, Notts
3. Northumberland Coast Weekend in September

I shall be arranging the following trips in connexion with the college Saturday Schools, which I shall arrange via the college. People who have not been on the Saturday courses will be welcome, but I shall keep the numbers down to 15, and course members will need to have priority. Hangers-on will be welcome.

4. Northeast Norfolk Coast, Sheringham to Cromer. One day visit.

5. Scottish Highlands. I contemplate running this on coastal localities near Aberdeen and Stonehaven, and having it on the end of May bank holiday week-end, but the choice of date and venue will depend on the course members.

Vaguer ideas are

6. NE Spain. Andy Jeffries has given me a great deal of detail about a Volcanoes Park NW of Girona where he and some friends had a short walking holiday. The area is similar to the Auvergne and the Eifel, with basaltic material producing cones and calderas, and eruptions which continued until 12,000 years ago. Nearby, on the coast, there is an area of intense folding associated with the development of the Pyrenees.

Diana and I would be interested in having a club visit over a long weekend here, to coincide with what would be for us the start or the end of a Spanish holiday. We should want to go in late September (earlier than that things are too hot), and the 24th - 25th weekend would suit us. Please let us know if you are interested. Girona, laughingly called Barcelona by Ryanair, has flights from Stanstead. The train journey, via Eurostar, would really need a stop for the night in France somewhere.

7. Isle of Man. This only occurred to me when Inspector Dover, Joyce Porter's anti-hero, was dragged protestingly to the island by his subordinate Detective Sergeant, and, of course, stumbled over the vital clue.

The island has slates, two small granites, metamorphic aureoles, an unconformity, Carboniferous Limestone and Tertiary dykes, with details in a (fairly) recent G.A. Guide.

Please consider these ideas and discuss them, or any others, at the Annual General Meeting.

Field trips run by the Geologists Association

1. Chalk at Newhaven. Saturday 27th March 2010. G.A. trip
Some of us went here two years ago. There are some structural features to be seen here, including inclined joints-cum-faults, but the main idea seems to be to collect fossils. Register with Sarah Stafford, 0207 434 9298. She will want a £5 registration fee plus a non-members fee (unless you are a member), which also, I think will be £5
2. Gault Clay of Folkestone, Saturday 5th June 2010
3. Geology along the Mimram Valley and ... around Hitchin. Leader Mike Howgate. Sunday 13th June 2010.
4. Yorkshire Coast weekend based in Scarborough and led by John Hudson (who did our charity lecture two years ago). Date in April 2010 to be decided.
5. Copenhagen. A behind-the-scenes visit to their geology museum and a field visit to a classic K-T boundary locality. Saturday to Wednesday, 23rd to 27th October 2010.
Book Nos. 2 and 3 in the same way as No. 1. For Nos. 4 and 5 please ask Diana for details.

West Sussex Geological Society field trip

They will be visiting Bracklesham and Selsey, with Upper Eocene carditas, turritellas, nummulites and fish remains, on Sunday 28th March 2010. David Bone, who will be leading, has specialised on that bit of coast and has written booklets about the fossils. To get details about this trip or join it, phone Betty Steel on 01903 209140. These details have come from the G.A Circular.

Future events planned for 2010

AGM – Tuesday 19th January at Ware Museum
Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge - visit in February or March
Di Clements – Thursday 13th May -
Geology of London
Scott's Grotto – Wednesday 16th June (tbc) followed by refreshments at Perkins' Towers
Hertford Fun Day – early June (hope not to be rained off this time)

The Annual Charity Lecture

This was by Mark Hows, on 29th October. and had the title “ *Hillfigures: past present and future*”. Mark is by profession a chemist, but he became interested in these features, which apparently are called geoglyphs, and for the last twenty years he has been involved in researching them and discovering new ones.

He referred briefly to geoglyphs world-wide, but otherwise confined himself to Great Britain. 60 are known, and a further 57 lost. Mostly they are on Chalk, but the Kilburn White Horse in N. Yorkshire is on Upper Jurassic limestone and is made of Chalk transported in from elsewhere, and there is one in Aberdeenshire of quartz or quartzite.

There are some very old ones, such as the one at Uffington, Berks., which has a stylised Celtic symbol. Mark described a number of these. Later, he dealt with the problems of maintaining them. I was horrified to learn that the Westbury White Horse is now made of concrete. Surely this ought to be against the Trades Descriptions Act or something? I also learnt that if I want to make a new White Horse, I need to make it unnaturally tall, otherwise, to viewers below, it will appear flattened.

In conclusion he considered the possibilities of further discoveries and of reconstruction.

The lecture was a polished one. Very well illustrated, and would have been of great interest to a wide variety of people. It is a pity we did not manage to attract more non-geological people.

We did in fact have an audience of between 40 and 50. £290 was made for Macmillian Cancer Support, Mark's named charity.

His website is www.hows.org.uk/personal/hillfigs and well worth looking at.

Steve Perkins

The G.A. Festival of Geology, 31st October 2009

We exhibited photographs of the three weekend field trips made by the club during the year, Exeter, Wülfrath and Filey, with accompanying explanations and some specimens. They were put together by Mike Goodyear and me. Photographs were by various people, including Mike, who used his own for Filey, Vic and Janice Jenkins and Diana.

In addition Jane produced a Puddingstone exhibit and took charge of it, and I produced an article, with illustrative specimens, about banded flint and its evident relationship to the Liesegang Ring phenomenon. I made several contacts with members of S.E. England clubs and societies, who all find these flints from time to time and don't know what they are.

Mike drove the five of us, Jane, Diana and I, and himself and his daughter Rachel, into London. During the day Mary Bite came and minded the shop for quite a long time, and there were enough of us there for us to be able to wander around as much as we wanted. Mike and Rachel were able to go to Iain Stewart's lecture "How the Earth made us"

London streets get very crowded on late Saturday afternoons, and we had a journey back which entailed some slight digressions, including a visit to a supermarket car park.

Steve Perkins

Chris Darmon's Talk on Iceland, Tuesday 24th November

There were about 30 of us at the talk, which was in the Hertford Heath Mission Hall.

Chris produces the geological free paper "Down to Earth" (the club actually pays for it for you), runs Geosupplies, lectures part-time for Sheffield University, and runs field visits to such places as Iceland and Shetland. I forgot to ask him what he does with all his spare time.

He began his talk with an outline of Iceland's history, for which he referred to coloured hand-out geological maps. The oldest Iceland rocks are 18 Ma old, and are at the W end of the island. Here basalt lavas overlie sediments, which contain Sequoia. Basalts of all later ages are present, with the earliest glaciation being at 2.8 Ma. This is a lot earlier than the first glaciations further south, as might be expected, but subsequently there are cold and warm periods, as elsewhere. A major volcanic product of the cold periods is móberg, a basaltic tuff with a glassy matrix, produced by under-ice fissure eruptions. There are sediments, and with basalt being the source material the sands contain no quartz, and can be 100% feldspar, with the ferromagnesian minerals having been broken down and removed during weathering and erosion. Chris circulated specimens produced from a capacious haversack to illustrate the first part of his talk. The later part was a very comprehensive power-point photograph show, with a lot of detail on Heimaey, the island S of Iceland where an eruption in 1973 nearly engulfed the town, and on numerous mainland features.

Chris was entertaining and not excessively technical, hitting the level of his audience very well. Questions had to be limited because he had a train to catch, but we had an interesting and enjoyable evening.

Steve Perkins

British Geological Survey Website

You may have seen in the news that geological maps of an area can now be viewed online. So far I have not had much success, as it has obviously been very busy. There is also an extensive photo gallery from which items can be downloaded if you register (I have done so). It is a very informative site and one can waste a lot of time. I'm not too sure about the trilobite to be found at Loch Awe, Sutherland, but then we all make mistakes.

Diana Perkins

Down to Earth Magazine

I have copies of the December edition I will leave them inside our porch, 6 Scotts Road opposite Ware College (HRC) and members are welcome to come and help themselves.

Diana Perkins

Saturday Schools at Hertford Regional College

Enrol by phoning 01992 411411 during office hours or on line at www.hrc.ac.uk

Geology: The Norfolk Coast – 13th March 2010 – Code KWR550X - £20

Chalk fossils, moving ice sheets, mammoths and early man.

Geology: The Scottish Highlands – 24th April 2010 – Code KWR606X - £20

Volcanoes, exposed roots of mountain chains and recent glaciers.

Associated field trips are planned for both these courses.

Steve Perkins

Steve Perkins will give a talk on Thursday 25th February

"**How Hot, How Deep, When and How Long For?**

(working out metamorphic conditions)

7.30pm at Christ Church Centre (Small Hall on right)

Contact Numbers: Jane Tubb 01920 822405

Diana and Steve Perkins 01920 463755

See also the website www.ehgc.org.uk

