

## BOOK REVIEWS

AGER, D.V. *The Geology of Europe*, McGraw-Hill, 1980, i-xix, + 1-535 pp. illustrated with text-figs. and tables. Bound in boards, £16.00

Not many people are prepared to write a synthesis of large regions so that initial thanks must be given to the author for providing an up to date account of the European Region for those of us unable or unwilling so to do. The book is divided into four unequal parts based on orogenic criteria, or rather, the subsequent lack of it.

Eu-europa is geographically largely the Fenno-Scandian Shield, Hebridean Province and the East European Platform. Whilst mainly concerned with Precambrian rocks details of the younger unfolded 'cover' rocks will be found in this section.

Palaeo-europa consists of the Caledonides and the Danish triangle consisting of the Baltic Plain, the North Sea basin and the central British block. It includes those areas not greatly affected by major orogenies at the end of the early Palaeozoic. Meso-europa are the various Variscide areas and the Urals. Neo-europa is made up of the most recently active areas, those involved in the Alpine earth movements, making up the outer arcs of the continent.

Thus the synthesis is not based on political divisions and if one is interested in the geology of a particular country it might be easier to turn to a compilation from, say, the resident Geological Survey, Institute or Society, but the book reviewed here is written in English.

However, if one can accept the author's intentions and restriction of contents, then one can certainly follow him from the obscure beginnings of Europe and its apparent simplicity (lack of knowledge?) to the complexity of the latest orogeny (lots of information, not necessarily completely understood?).

The book is well written and edited. So far I have only found one print error (p.53). Not everyone will appreciate Ager's style of prose; the comments and asides get a bit tedious after only 53 pages - "Permian is for the most part hidden by Quaternary rubbish..." Not rubbish for the Quaternary Geologist. "...volume of Russian literature thankfully small for those of us that concentrate of (sic) the Lias." Parochialism is also evident, despite the claim to the contrary (p.xiv) with references to the University College of Swansea (p.5) or to S. Johnson (p.11).

In conclusion, I must say that comments apart, I have enjoyed reading this book and have learnt a lot from it. What other recommendations does one need to go ahead and purchase it?

D.H. RAYNER, *The stratigraphy of the British Isles*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, 460pp., 84 figs., appendix, bibliography, index. Hard cover edition at £32.50; paper back edition, £12.50. *2nd Edition*.

In contrast to Ager's, *Geology of Europe*, reviewed above, your reviewer now turns to the description of the geology of a much more restricted area, the British Isles. The first edition of this book was reviewed in the *Mercian Geologist*, Vol.3, No.1, pp.104-105.

Dr. Rayner states in the introduction to the second edition that extensive revision has been possible with greater reference to countries away from the British Isles, inclusion of the wealth of information being made available from the study of the surrounding seas, with incorporation of plate tectonic theory and by the intensive study of British stratigraphy sponsored by the Geological Society of London and published in their Special Report Series. Such is the amount of material now available that nothing less than a new edition was possible.

Reading the new edition it is quite clear that much new information has been included and errors in the first edition corrected. However I must remark upon initial disappointment. The book looks essentially the same as the 1st edition, with 460 pages (453) 84 figs. (80) and the format of the print, tables and figs. Was this strait-jacket imposed by the publisher? Closer examination lifts the gloom, for the early text and figs. do include reference to plate tectonic theory. But must the outline of the British Isles still be so dominant? The early Iapetus Ocean or Sea crossing Great Britain is restricted to a small paragraph on p.44. The later Tethys Ocean or Sea (but older concept) although well outside the British Isles area gets much more prominent treatment. I could find no reference to Pangea, and the relevance of the British Isles area within this supercontinent. What influence does the land area, west of the British Isles have on the geography of the area before the formation of the Atlantic Ocean? What was the latitude and longitude position of the British Isles prior to the Mesozoic? None of these questions are really touched upon and yet are essential for the understanding of the sedimentology of the British Isles area at various times. As with the first edition, fauna of the time is relegated strictly to its stratigraphical possibilities and is not used for palaeogeographical reconstructions. Certainly there is the outline of a new edition here but there is still much that could be revised.

Whilst most of the text figures are clear and self explanatory, I find some very difficult to interpret, usually because of the amount of information on them, their size or a combination of both. The three figures comprising fig. 1, the geology of the British Isles, should include some colour. Fig. 55, Permian palaeogeography of much of the British Isles, in two parts, is reduced to such an extent that both figs. occupy less than a quarter page. In comparison fig. 56 has extra large lettering and open spaces.

Considerable attention has been paid in modernising terminology. The Special Reports of the Geological Society of London are the most recent summaries and are listed in Dr. Rayner's bibliography. How far was Dr. Rayner able to incorporate the new terms under the constraints of a new edition? For the Trias only the three major group terms are used - Penarth, Mercia Mudstones and Sherwood Sandstone Groups, - and then only in one table (36). The terms are used here alongside Rhaetic, Keuper & Bunter. This is precisely what the authors of the Trias Special Report wished people to avoid. The latter terms are to be suppressed as far as British stratigraphy is concerned. Can future text-book writers please try to follow the recommendations? As for Dr. Rayner's book, the new terms appear to be used merely as an after-thought. The speed with which new changes takes place these days is also beyond the efforts of writers and publishers. If we accept the advice of Holland *et al.* (1980) the terms listed for the Upper part of the Silurian are already out of date.

In 1967 I thought the book was a little over priced at £3.10s. (£3.50). The price of the 2nd edition is £32.50p. and for this one would have the right to expect a completely modern format, new presentation and content.

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