

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 1991/1992

Recruitment to the Society has been maintained at a similar level to that of last year, and during the year 23 people have joined to give a total membership now of 394 individual members and 95 institutional. Against this, some longstanding members have had to resign due to inability to attend meetings, and it was with great sadness and shock that we learnt of the sudden death last June of one of our most active members, John Bush. John was until last March a member of Council but, having completed his three year period of office, he typically volunteered to take on another onerous task, that of producing the Society's Circular, and he remained on Council as a co-opted member. John's cheerful and willing contribution and his pleasant personality will be greatly missed. His death was a great loss to the Society, and our sincerest condolences are extended to his wife Joan who, following John's untimely death, immediately volunteered to carry on herself with the production of the Circular. Her help has been most warmly welcomed and her fortitude should be an example to all of us.

We have enjoyed the usual varied programme of events during the year, comprising eight indoor meetings commencing with last year's A.G.M., three whole day field excursions, two evening walks, a residential weekend excursion to the Sunderland area, and an underground experience to view the intricacies of Nottingham's cave system.

After we had disposed of the formal business at the A.G.M. last March, we were entertained to a liquid perambulation down the River Loire in the company of Dr. Frank Taylor, one of the founder members of the Society, and our only life member. Frank is, of course, an expert on wine and his vast experience was amply indicated, not only by the magnificent slides of the Loire Valley which he showed us, but more particularly by the superb choice of Loire Wines which were available afterwards for our delectation at a very modest fee!

For the April meeting, Dr. Mike Lovell, formerly of the Geology Department here at Nottingham but now of Leicester University, gave us a fascinating and entertaining insight into the work of the Deep Sea Drilling Project and the wealth of detail which their observations have been able to provide in interpreting the properties of the rocks of the ocean crust. The lecture was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

The first field meeting of the season, led by the President, took place on a somewhat blustery day in early June, in weather more reminiscent of April. The coach was full, 52 members attending, and the day was greatly enjoyed. Before lunch we visited the Roaches to view the gritstone escarpments on that side of the Derbyshire Dome at close quarters and, after a lunchtime sojourn in the pub at Earl Sterndale which was packed to the doors due to the torrential downpour outside, we climbed Chrome Hill to be rewarded by magnificent views from the summit.

The excursion was followed by two thoroughly enjoyable evening walks, the first on Wednesday 9th June led by John Marriott to the Carboniferous rocks of the Holymoorside area. The walk had clearly been meticulously prepared and we were also treated to a wealth of information about the sites of local industrial archaeology. The evening was such a success that we continued into the twilight, our cars not being regained until 10.30 p.m. The second evening visit was held on a lovely evening in early July to the Williamson Cliff Quarry near Stamford where Alan Dawn introduced us to the Jurassic rocks to be found there. These evening trips have proved an extremely popular feature over the last few years, and are now a firmly established part of our field programme.

On the 21st July John Rees of B.G.S. took us to the Stoke on Trent area for an excellent day's excursion which integrated the industrial area with its geology quite beautifully, the day ending with the discovery of some exquisitely preserved plant fossils in the Newcastle Formation, part of the so-called 'Barren Measures' deposited during the later Westphalian.

Then, 22 members spent the weekend of 23rd/25th August at Sunderland enjoying the knowledge imparted by our leader Tim Pettigrew of Sunderland Museum of the classical Permian sequence of rocks in the Sunderland and Durham area. All came away with a considerably increased knowledge of the Permian Period.

The last day excursion of the season was to the Charnwood area. The leader, Bill Moffat of Loughborough University, took us on a lively walk through Swithland Woods and Bradgate Park to Newton Linford where we partook of lunch. In the afternoon we travelled to Whitwick and walked along the Charnwood Lodge Geological Trail, taking in an overview of the vast Whitwick Quarry before ending at Mount St. Bernards Abbey. The day was greatly enhanced by the wealth of non-geological titbits which Bill imparted from his fund of knowledge of local people, places and buildings.

Our first Autumn lecture took place on Friday 11th October with an experimental starting-time of 6.30 p.m. This was to enable the speaker to be entertained to a meal after his 'performance', the perceived benefits being that he would thus enjoy it somewhat more and that members at the meeting would not be kept waiting beyond the appointed time, as had not infrequently happened. The experiment received a mixed reaction from those who did comment, the majority view seeming to be that the early start would be far more acceptable if the meetings were on Saturdays. The speaker at this meeting was Professor Bob Stoneley of Imperial College who spoke on what must be one of the most topical and often posed questions of the last twelve months "Why is the Middle East so rich in oil and gas?" We learnt not only of the geological structures and formations which have made the accumulation of oil and gas possible, but also many fascinating statistics relating to the oil industry generally. Did you know that oil had been exploited in the Middle East since Noah's time? I certainly didn't, but then that is probably a

reflection on my knowledge of the finer detail of the Book of Genesis. I should obviously have paid more attention in Sunday School.

The November lecture was given by Andy Chadwick of B.G.S. on the crustal dynamics of extensional sedimentary basins, and we learnt how important seismic evidence is in discovering the extent and depth of sedimentary basins. Some of the statistics were quite dramatic indicating huge throws of 2 to 3 kilometres on some of the large basin margin faults, and terrific depth of deposition such as in the Northumberland Trough where 45,000 feet of sediments have been estimated. I for one learnt a new word "rheology" which I now know means "the behaviour of rocks under stress".

On a Sunday morning in late November there was a large gathering of Society members and assorted family and friends for a visit to the underground spectacular of some of Nottingham's myriad cave systems led by the acknowledged expert in this field, Tony Waltham of Nottingham Polytechnic. All the scheduled caves were visited and, so far as we know, all those who went in also came out — at least we have received no complaints as yet. Tony Waltham was on duty again for our pre-Christmas party lecture on the mega-geological features seen by him on a recent trip to the Himalayas. Tony's talks are always entertaining and this one was an excellent preamble to the enjoyable social evening which followed.

1992 commenced with a totally up to the minute talk by Dick Aldridge (now of Leicester University, but formerly, like last April's lecturer Mike Lovell, of Nottingham) on his specialist topic, the microscopic conodont fossils. Amazingly, by the end of his lecture, he had convinced us that the evidence now available from detailed study of early Ordovician specimens all points to their having a structure identical to cellular vertebrate bone, and that they are indeed the "microscopic forerunners of the vertebrates" as the title to his lecture so incredibly suggested.

The last event of the Society year was, as ever, the Presidential Lecture, given by our President, Neil Aitkenhead. He chose Antarctica as his topic, a continent which he first visited in 1959, but it was clear from the title "Geologising by boat, ski and dog sledge in Antarctica" that we were going to hear of much more than pure geology. The talk was both entertaining and very informative as one might expect of Neil, and talking of statistics again, I think the most memorable statistic of this particular talk was the vast intake of calories considered to be essential on the wellbeing of the Survey's geologists in that forbidding terrain, namely four or five thousand a day! The lecture was, of course, followed by our Annual Dinner, which we held this year in Derby Hall at the University. Approximately 40 members attended, and greatly enjoyed the excellent buffet meal.

Seven council meetings have been held during the course of the year to discuss Society matters and to plan the programme of events. One of the items under discussion has been the timing of indoor meetings, and members comments have been heeded. For the future

whenever possible we shall be holding the indoor meetings on Saturday evenings, as has historically been the case, with a starting time of 6.30 p.m. Friday meetings will be held if this is necessary because of a lecturer's availability, commencing at 7.45 p.m. It is impossible to accommodate all individual needs, but we hope that these times will meet with the approval of the majority.

A total of six circulars have been produced during the year, and I am deeply indebted to Joan Bush for all her help in producing these. There has not been an issue of the Journal since last March when Volume 12(2) was produced. There have been various reasons for this unfortunate gap in production, not least of which was our lack of an Editor until Dick Aldridge thankfully agreed to take on the leadership of an Editorial Board which presently comprises himself, Judy Small, Judy Rigby and Bob Brown (from whom you will be hearing in a few minutes). I do not wish to pre-empt the Editor's Report, but I can assure members that Volume 12 parts 3 and 4, comprising the Index to the whole of the first 12 volumes and compiled by Dorothy Morrow and Frank Taylor will be published in the very near future, to be followed closely by the new look *Mercian Geologist* Volume 13(1).

As ever, the Society could not possibly function as successfully as it does without the continued commitment of the members who regularly deliver copies of the Circular and Journal in their local areas; their help is very much appreciated and, needless to say, any new volunteers would be welcomed. Others who deserve particular thanks on my part are Jack Fryer and Ian Sutton who respectively take responsibility for organising the Indoor Lectures and Field Meetings. And, at this stage, I think it is also appropriate to mention the major input the Society enjoys from staff at the B.G.S. We are indeed fortunate to have them situated so close to Nottingham, and that they take such an interest in promoting and participating in the Society.

There are undoubtedly many other members whom I could and should mention as having voluntarily given of their time and efforts in making the Society the success it undoubtedly is, such as the members who have led excursions or given lectures for us and those who contributed to the Christmas Party. We are extremely grateful to them all. I must also, on behalf of the Society, acknowledge with gratitude the kindness of the University of Nottingham in permitting us to use this lecture hall for our indoor meetings; the use of these facilities is very much appreciated. I should finish this Report by a particular personal "thank you" to my own secretary, Celia Morris, who does all my typing and quite a lot of thinking for me, too; I could not possibly fulfil this job without her invaluable assistance.

Susan M. Miles