



**Circular 366  
November 2006**

Registered Charity No: 503617

President: John Travis

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## **INDOOR PROGRAMME** **AUTUMN/WINTER 2006**

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2006 - 6.00 pm *Please note earlier time!***

**The artful jobber: Henry De la Beche and the early years of the Geological Survey**

**Speaker: David Bate (British Geological Survey)**

***Followed by the Christmas Wine & Cheese - PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING A GLASS***

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2007 - 6.30 pm**

**The United Arab Emirates: a geological tour**

**Speaker: Richard Ellison (British Geological Survey)**

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2007 - 6.00 pm**

**Foundation Lecture - Trilobites!**

**Speaker: Professor Richard Fortey FRS**

***To be followed by the Annual Dinner - BOOKING FORM IN NEXT CIRCULAR***

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007 - 6.30 pm (following AGM at 6.00 pm)**

**Members Evening** - details later

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2007 - 6.30 pm**

**Geology and disease**

**Speaker: Professor Gerard Slavin**

## LECTURE VENUE

Indoor meetings will take place in lecture theatre B3 of the Biology building at the University of Nottingham. If you require to use the lift to B3, please speak to the security attendant who will assist you. B3 is equipped with induction loop hearing assistance. If you are attending meetings or joining a coach at the University of Nottingham, enter from the South Entrance on University Boulevard. Cars should be parked in the car park on the bend in the road just beyond the security point after Science Road. The entrance to the Biology building is at the right hand side of the rear of this car park.

## AUTUMN/WINTER 2006 INDOOR MEETINGS

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2006 - 6.00 pm (not 6.30 pm as previously advertised)**

### The artful jobber: Henry de la Beche and the early years of the Geological Survey

**Speaker: Dave Bate (British Geological Survey)**

The founding of the Geological Survey by Henry De la Beche in 1835 is a key event in the history of British geology. But the Survey's initiation actually began in 1832 when De la Beche was contracted by the Ordnance Survey to map the geology of Devon. It was not long, however, before De la Beche became embroiled in a fierce debate that very nearly toppled the Survey in its infancy. His chief antagonist was the forceful and haughty Roderick Murchison. What came to be known as the 'Great Devonian Controversy' evolved around the significance or otherwise of fossils in correlating geological formations. De la Beche's interpretation of the difficult Culm strata of north Devon, based on lithology and field relations, was vociferously criticized by Murchison who believed implicitly (and rightly as it happened) in the apparently contradictory evidence presented by the discovery of fossil plants in the Culm. Murchison was in any case no friend of the Geological Survey and saw it as a threat to his own quest for geological glory. Indeed, he referred to De la Beche as 'a dirty dog.....a thorough jobber and a great intriguer'. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that Murchison was later to succeed De la Beche as Director of the Survey! Another contemporary described De la Beche as 'an artful dodger, for ever working for his own interest, heedless of that of others'. Whatever his motives, we must be thankful that De la Beche's single-minded determination succeeded in placing the Geological Survey on a more permanent footing than earlier but short-lived geological surveys in France and the United States. We must not forget also that De la Beche established a Museum of Economic Geology in 1835. Its first curator, Richard Phillips, undertook some curiously un-geological enquires on behalf of various government departments. One of his major lines of enquiry, which lasted about a year, sealed the fate of that most famous postage stamp - the Penny Black!

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2007 - 6.30 pm**

### The United Arab Emirates: a geological tour

**Speaker: Richard Ellison (British Geological Survey)**

Until recently the United Arab Emirates, with the fourth largest oil reserves in the world, had no large scale geological maps. The rock outcrops, in the east of the country, occupy less than 10% of its area but hold the key to the geological history of much of the Arabian peninsula and thus provide a 'laboratory' for oil production research. Recent mapping at 1:25 000 scale has revealed that these outcrops are a fantastic geological treasure trove. The lecture will give a tour of the treasures on offer including classic carbonate platform sediments, slumped slope deposits and contemporary deep water sediments. Squeezed on to the carbonates in Cretaceous times, is the Semail Ophiolite, a slice of the oceanic crust including the Moho. Spectacular folds, formed during the arrival (obduction) of the ophiolite, and the effects of the later (Miocene) compression will be illustrated. Quaternary events,

including the development of enormous alluvial fans, dune systems and the type sabkhas provide further stunning scenery.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2007 - 6.00 pm**

**Foundation Lecture**

**Trilobites!**

**Speaker: Professor Richard Fortey FRS**

“Come and see the world as it once was through the crystal eyes of the trilobite. We shall find out how trilobites tell us the pattern of evolution, and how it can be read from the rocks. We shall discover how faith in trilobites not merely moves mountains but shifts whole continents. We shall see how cast-off shells can be re-animated into living animals. We shall understand something of the origins of the richness of the animal kingdom. Through trilobites, we shall take possession of the geological past”.  
*Extract from the book ‘Trilobite! By Richard Fortey (Harper Collins 2000).*

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2007 - 6.30 pm (following AGM at 6.00 pm)**

**Members Evening**

*Details later.*

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2007 - 6.30 pm**

**Geology and disease**

**Speaker: Professor Gerard Slavin (Barts & The London Hospitals Medical College)**

Human sickness and death are clearly seen in association with geological catastrophes such as earthquakes or volcanism, but these overt effects may also be felt at great distances from the event and the cause is not immediately apparent to those affected. More covert, but of major significance, persistent health effects occur reflecting geochemical environments with, for example, anomalies in the availability of essential biological trace elements or the presence of toxic elements in the food chain or groundwater supply. Such effects, in isolated communities, are often geographically localised and may be overcome in part by improved communications with a food supply drawn from a wider area. However, anthropogenic major distortions of the environment have occurred especially through industrialisation of manufacturing processes which amplify geochemical anomalies and these have resulted in public health disasters on epidemic scales in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The English Midlands provide historical examples of geochemically induced diseases because of the isolation of small hamlet communities as well as diseases related to the rapid changes in work practice which followed the industrial revolution. These provide some insight into mechanisms of much sickness presently experienced in other parts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

**New Members**

Dr Cathal Dillon, Lincoln

Mr Robert Sheppard, Beckingham, Lincoln

Dr R J Bailey, Southwell, Notts.

## **Mercian Geologist**

If any members have back issues of the Mercian which are now surplus to requirements, please could you contact our Secretary Janet Slatter as we frequently get requests for back issues which we are now unable to supply. Any help would be appreciated.

## **e-mail addresses**

We would very much like to send you your Circular by e-mail. If you have not already done so, please send your e-mail address to the Circular Editor, [sue.miles@freethcartwright.co.uk](mailto:sue.miles@freethcartwright.co.uk).

**Please can you also confirm your name and address when sending your e-mail** so we can correlate these details with our membership listing.

**The next Circular will be published in early January.**

**The next Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007.**

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