THE RECORD

The level of membership of the Society is being maintained and we extend a warm welcome to members who have joined in 2005. We also mark the passing of those members no longer with us, and to their families we send our condolences. Among those were Dr Ron Firman and Mr Jack Fryer. Their many years of contribution to the Society are remembered.

Field Meetings

The first visit of the season was a full day in May, led by Keith Ambrose, to study changes in the Marlstone Rock Formation across Leicestershire and Rutland.

The visit to Southwell Minster and Bishops Palace led by Ian Thomas in June was very popular. The history of this well known building was told through the story of the stone of its buildings and the memorials within.

Later in the month a review of dry stone walling across Britain was possible during a detailed look at the nineteen sections of the Millennium wall built at the National Stone Centre, which show styles and materials from Caithness to the South Wales Valleys.

In July it was back to the Jurassic with Albert Horton but this time to look at the changing architectural style and use of stone, from Norman times to the present, employed in building the churches found on the borders of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

Good weather blessed the weekend excursion in September to see some of the geology and mineral deposits North Wales and Anglesey, under the leadership of Alan Brandon.

Indoor Meetings

The annual joint meeting with the Yorkshire Geological Society, at the BGS in Keyworth in March 2005, reviewed recent research undertaken there into geology and climate. A short guided tour of the BGS rock and fossil collection was enjoyed so much that it led to a more extensive visit in February of this year.

The winter programme of lectures began in October when Daryl Garton of Nottingham University spoke about Trent Valley geo-archaeology. She focused on the prehistoric log boat (now on display at the Derby Museum & Art Gallery) discovered in the Aston gravel quarry, Derbyshire, where quarrying had been monitored by Dr Chris Salisbury.

In November Dr John Rees, from the Keyworth BGS, gave a chilling account of why the world should be concerned about gas hydrates, their potential part in climate change and how it might be managed.

The annual buffet was preceded in December with the opportunity to go underground with Paul Deakin a well-known cave and mine photographer. He presented a pictorial history of working mines in the British Isles using photographs from his extensive library gathered over a period of nearly 40 years. He shared visits to sites all over Britain, many of which are no longer accessible.

It was underground once more in January thanks to Dr Andy Farrant, from BGS, who demonstrated that caves were not dark dank holes in the ground but could be treasure troves containing geological data that can help unravel past climates and the evolution of the landscape.

The February meeting was held at two venues with a tour of the BGS Collections given by Dr Mike Howe, the Chief Curator, in the afternoon, followed by the President's Lecture in the evening, but regrettably no Annual Dinner this year due to catering difficulties. A large group of members enjoyed the opportunity to view examples from the important and extensive fossil and core sample collections held at Keyworth. The President's Lecture discussed Derbyshire's varied contribution to British mineral production over time, and its impact on the population and landscape.

Council

The plan to help preserve the carvings in the finest of Nottingham's caves has been very successful. The Society has paid for weatherproof doors to be fitted, and they are now in place. Internal conditions are being monitored, but no means have yet been found to restore the damage already done by weathering.

After obtaining more stock from the GA the successful East Midlands Field Guide continues to sell well and the Guide to the Building Stones of Leicester project is nearing publication.

Older editions of The Mercian, now out of print, are occasionally requested for research purposes. Although the secretary holds the archive and can offer photocopies of particular articles, any back copies being disposed of by members could usefully be recycled to those interested.

During the year a start has been made on producing Rock Boxes. These will contain samples of a variety of rocks typical of Britain, and will be available to schools. The cost and quality of commercially available specimens can be limiting so it is hoped that distributing our own will fulfil in some small part one of the objectives of the Society, that is to educate the next generation. Members are asked to bear this project in mind when they visit appropriate localities.

We thank those who have made the Society's programme possible, including all the guest speakers and leaders of field excursions, Beris Cox for organising the indoor programme, Ian Sutton for organising the field programme, Sue Miles for producing the Circular (now largely distributed by email), Rob Townsend for maintaining the website, and many others unnamed for their contributions.

Janet Slatter, Secretary