

Chairman's Report for the Annual General Meeting 2015

The Bath Geological Society continues to flourish with a dynamic lecture programme and a range of well-attended fieldtrips around the region. The membership is holding up at around 80 with, in general, about half that number attending the talks in Queen's Square. We are always pleased to see non-members coming to our events and hope that they will join the society in due course.

This year has been the 200th anniversary of the publication of the William Smith Map and we held several special events to commemorate that – very appropriate since many of Smith's ideas on the order of strata and fossils in biostratigraphy were derived from the geology around Bath. His distinctive circular map of Bath published in 1799 was the first to show local geology and disposition of sedimentary strata. In June, Professor Hugh Torrens gave us a lecture on William Smith's life in Bath, and his financial affairs in particular; it does seem Smith had bad luck on many occasions in his life, poor fellow, although he was fortunate to have John Carey, the map publisher, as a close friend, who bailed him out several times. Later in June, David Workman, from our Society, took members on an excellent walk from Combe Down to Tucking Mill, then Midford and along the Somerset Coal Canal to the Combe Hay lock flight. There are many interesting geological and historical-engineering features to see in this area.

There have also been lectures and fieldtrips run by other societies around the country where William Smith was active. The Geological Society of London held a 2-day research conference on his life and various careers (canal builder, land drainer, mineral surveyor), but also on geological mapping, the ways in which it has advanced over the centuries, particularly in the last decade in the digital age, with the use of satellite imagery, Lidar, photogrammetry and now drones.

With donations from sponsors of the William Smith conference in London, the Geological Society has provided funds to local societies to

enable activities associated with the Smith map bicentenary. We have been fortunate to be awarded a contribution towards the cost of producing a leaflet for a William Smith trail in the Combe Down to Tucking Mill area, south of Bath. This leaflet will be designed and published in collaboration with the Combe Down Heritage Society, who have already produced a leaflet for the general public on Bath Stone mining around Combe Down.

Apart from William Smith, our lectures have provided a wide range of topics: earthquakes in Asia (Richard Walker); new data on the Moon (Ian Crawford); nanoparticles in groundwater (John Tellam); modelling sedimentary systems (Pete Burgess); the Palaeocene-Eocene thermal maximum (Stephen Grimes); the geology of western USA (Doug Robinson—to whom we are grateful for stepping in at short notice for a speaker who had to cancel), micropalaeontology in industrial problem solving (Malcolm Hart), building stones at Kingston Lacy (Peter Bath); the geology of Anglesey (Dave Green). We are grateful to all our speakers for giving excellent, entertaining and well-illustrated talks.

The Society had its annual clean-up and tour of Brown's Folly in February and a trip to the Jurassic in Oxfordshire in March; many thanks to Elizabeth Devon for this. Our July excursion was to the Black Mountain, a traverse from Brynamman to Llangadog, under the guidance of Geraint Owen from Swansea. We were lucky with the weather, and saw some great rocks. In September, Dave Green kindly took the Society to Aust Cliff – a classic site in British geology.

The earth science community in our region is extremely fortunate to be well provided with information and what's on by the West Country Geology Blog; we are very grateful to Elizabeth Devon for running this.

The Bath Geological Society is in great shape and for all the efforts behind the scenes thanks must go to the editor of this journal, Jane Browning, members of the committee for the lecture and fieldtrip programme, and looking after the finances, to the BRLSI at Queen's Square and Bob Draper (et al.) there.

Maurice Tucker