

## Chairman's Report

When I took on the role of Chairman at the February AGM I had great hopes for a full and active programme during 2020. The year had begun like any other year; our first two lecture meetings were held as normal in BRLSI, Queen square. However, during March the UK became increasingly concerned by the spread of the new coronavirus (COVID-19). BRLSI closed their building to the public on March 17th 2020 and by March 23<sup>rd</sup> the government lock down began. This was an unprecedented event, something nobody had anticipated or planned for. With people being asked to stay home and only go out for essential grocery shopping or medical needs the country ground to a halt.

The Committee sprang into action informing members, and speakers, of the cancellation of the immediate upcoming programme. As the realization dawned that this was going to be more than just a few days or weeks, the Committee met via a phone conference call on April 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss a way ahead. After testing the Zoom video application it was decided to continue the lecture programme using this virtual technology, a monthly Zoom licence was purchased and our speakers were approached to see if they would deliver their lectures remotely. Unfortunately all field meeting had to be cancelled. A monthly newsletter was started to inform members of developments and encourage member engagement. As I write this, in October 2020, the Society has issued 7 newsletters. We are very grateful to all the authors who made time to contribute articles enabling us to issue newsletters almost every month since the March lockdown.

### Zoom lectures

In order to hold our lectures virtually we needed to ensure as many of our members as possible were able to use the technology. Therefore, on May 28<sup>th</sup> a Zoom test meeting was held with members to check setting and to familiarise everyone with the technology. The Zoom test proved a great success with many people seeing one another for the first time since March, the social aspects of this reunion cannot be emphasised enough. As the lockdown dragged on through April, May and June emotions fluctuated, it was nice to communicate with neighbours and see less traffic on the roads, but there was also frustration at seeing shops closed and holiday plans cancelled.

Simon Kay, our June speaker, was approached and agreed to present his talk over Zoom. After a trial run with just the Committee present, on June 4<sup>th</sup> our first ever Virtual lecture was given by Simon Kay. Simon presented his talk on the history of oil exploration in Southern England from the comfort of his home in Bradford-on-Avon. The feedback from members was positive and we have continued to deliver the lecture programme virtually for the remainder of the year.

In July, Dr Mick Oates presented his talk on Ammonites from his home in Barton upon Humber, North

Lincolnshire. As members became more familiar with the workings of Zoom questions and answer sessions the end of the talks became livelier. During the part of the lock down a national 'clap for the NHS' was instigated every Thursday at 8pm and we had scheduled our Zoom calls to finish by 8pm allowing participation. However by mid-summer this ceased and following the talks some members stayed online to chat. Updates from Dr. Sam Medworth as an NHS insider were particularly interesting.

During normal times the Society takes a summer recess in August, but with a summer holiday season blighted by the pandemic and with most people home, the Committee decided to add a zoom lecture meeting on August 6th. Stuart Blake gave us a 'geological talk-tour' around the Isle of Arran from his home in Lochranza on the northern part of Arran. Talks of future holidays or field trips to Arran resulted.

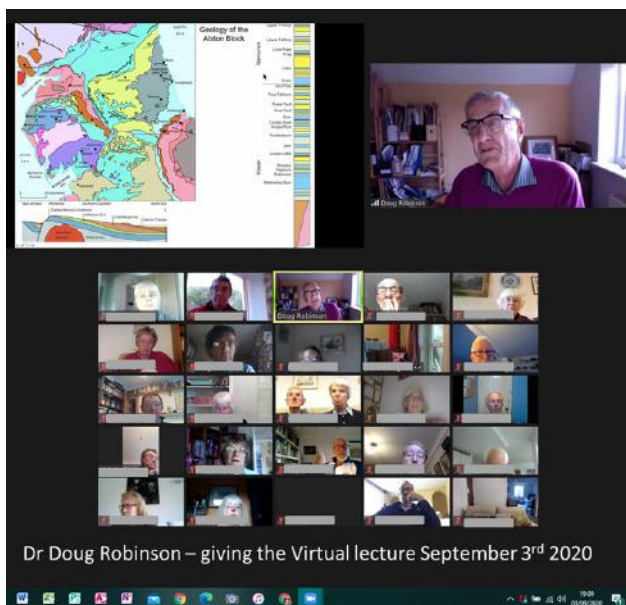
On September 3rd our lecture was given by Dr Doug Robinson on the Whin Sill and the geology of the Alston Block, in the northern Pennines. Doug's work has now been published in the Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society. The contact metamorphism showed that heat flow in Teesdale area lasted much longer than other areas and points to the source of the Whin Sill magma.

In October Jonathan Turner gave us a very thought provoking lecture about radioactive waste disposal and the design of deep geological disposal sites. The issue has as many social aspects to overcome as it has technical geological ones and Jonathan described the requirements for undisturbed burial design for 1 million years and to militate against future glaciations and earthquakes.

The Zoom lectures have been regularly attended by 25 to 35 people; this has enabled the Society to continue meeting and connecting with our members. Distant members have been able to join in and we were able to welcomed Elizabeth Devon, a former Chair and Committee member of the Society, who now lives in Northumberland. Other members such as Peter Larkin were able to listen to the lectures from the geotechnical vessel Omalius in the North Sea.

Whilst the lack of social interaction on virtual meetings is certainly a disadvantage, we have been given lectures by people who, ordinarily, would be too far away from Bath for this to be possible. Our lecture programme has been delivered at much lower cost than physical meetings and BRLSI have agreed to credit and carry forward the money we have spent on renting lecture rooms we have been unable to use during 2020. It is worth saying however that the speakers have a somewhat different experience presenting over Zoom. With the audience on mute there are none of the usual feedback signs such as laughter at the jokes or snoring to suggest the speaker needs to cough, or move on quickly! The speakers have also missed out on the customary pizza before the evening lecture, the warm welcome by

Polly Sternbauer and the tea and biscuits faithfully provided by Jan Williams.



### The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

At the onset of 2020 the Committee was preparing to organise a weekend event to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society. A date in October had been chosen and enquiries were being made for a venue and a line-up of mini talks. A grant of £350 was obtained from the Geologists' Association and local groups in the South-West were to be invited to celebrate our anniversary achievement. Unfortunately this has had to be postponed and we will endeavour to hold this event in 2021.

### Field Trips

The only field trip we were able to run was to Brown's Folly on February 29<sup>th</sup>. All other trips in 2020 were unfortunately cancelled. A number of organisations have begun running field trips again and we are looking to run some trips in 2021 with social distancing measures in place.

### The 2020 Committee

Chairman: Graham Hickman
Treasurer: Phil Burge
Membership Secretary: Polly Sternbauer
Meetings Secretary: Anne Hunt
Journal Editor & Zoom: Mellissa Freeman
Field Trip Secretary: Sue Harvey
Field Trip Safety: Bob Mustow
Webmaster: James McVeigh
Linda Drummond-Harris
Professor Maurice Tucker

I have been very grateful to the hard work and commitment of the Committee during this difficult time. Their efforts have resulted in the continued the

programme of Zoom lectures, updating the website and producing the newsletter/journal. The Committee has worked hard communicating news and re-building the membership. The financial implications have been analysed and Zoom technologies grappled with. Under normal conditions the committee meets 3 or 4 times per year but under these situations we have met virtually about 6-7 times. The strength of a Society like ours is measured by those who volunteer their time and I am indebted by those on the committee.

The saying 'hindsight is 20/20' can certainly be applied to the year 2020. It's incredibly hard to predict the future, we are all in this together, if you have any comments or suggestions we would love to hear from you. On behalf of your committee thank you again for your support.

Graham P Hickman  
[chairman@bathgeolsoc.org.uk](mailto:chairman@bathgeolsoc.org.uk)

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## Arbroath to Auchmithie – Old Red Sandstone Extravaganza

By Charles Hiscock

Arbroath, a town about the same size as Chippenham, is situated on the north shore of the Firth of Tay 16 miles east of the city of Dundee. It is the largest town in the county of Angus and is famous for 'Arbroath Smokies', salted haddock which are then dried and smoked over a hardwood fire. They have been produced in the Arbroath area since the 18th century, having been started in the village of Auchmithie, 3 miles east of Arbroath and now, under EU rules, have to be made within 4 kilometres of Arbroath. Indeed, as one walks around the harbour area the smell of smoke mixed with fish is quite noticeable.

In the middle of the old part of Arbroath, on the highest point and dominating the sky line is the ruined abbey. Built from the local stone, it was founded in 1178 and dedicated to St Thomas Becket. It was not completed until 1233 and, in 1214 the founder, King William the Lion, was buried in the chancel. His tomb is marked by a tombstone in front of the high altar in the quire. As with all monastic establishments, the abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII, fell into ruin and was 'quarried' by the local inhabitants for buildings in the town. The abbey came to national attention in 1951 when, early one morning, the caretaker was surprised by four young men who told him that they had deposited the 'Stone of Scone' in front of the altar. The 'Stone' had been stolen from the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey earlier that year. The four men departed as quickly as they had appeared, leaving the surprised caretaker to report to the authorities. The 'Stone' was returned to Westminster but later repatriated to Edinburgh while a copy of the stone was made and can be seen in Arbroath Abbey.

The abbey has substantial remains of which the most obvious feature is the bright red sandstone and conglomerate, imparting an impressive presence to the