



THE OPEN UNIVERSITY GEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY GOGLEDD CYMRU (NORTH  
WALES) BRANCH NEWSLETTER



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**Branch Organisers Bit (April 2004)**

We are at the start of the programme of field trips planned for this year. I am looking forward to getting to as many as I can, and hope you will find them interesting and educational. For those of you who are new to the GCy OUGS branch, either through study or interest, you will be very welcome at any of the field trips.

The trips are arranged such that people at all levels of geological knowledge can understand something of what is going on. Don't feel that you will be completely lost because you have no background in geology. The leaders are very willing to discuss the geological features at whatever level best suits you.

My main aim this year is to ensure that all those wishing to go on field trips get information in a timely fashion prior to the event. There are occasions where the best laid plans go awry at short notice. To avoid being disappointed it is worth while noting the following:

We will do our best to keep information in the newsletter up to date. Therefore it is best to look at the latest version of the newsletter.

If you wish to have an e-mailed reminder contact Frank Buxton who will add you to the branch list of contacts. His e-mail address is on the contacts page. This will ensure that if there are any changes to the date, time, venue etc. then you will find out quickly. If there are any changes you will be given at least two days warning (and probably more).

If you think you might be interested in an event coming up later in the year, get in touch with the contact for that trip. The contact can then make sure you know if there are any problems. It also helps to give an idea of potential numbers.

The above suggestions do not prevent you deciding to come at a later stage. I suggest, the closer to the event you get the better it would be to use the phone and talk to myself of the contact. There is a very good reason for this. Last year, there were a couple of disappointed people who contacted me on the morning of the field trip. As I have a long drive to get to most of the events, I often leave the house early and therefore do not have time to read my e-mails.

We are aiming to give you as much information as we can about what we will see at each destination, what terrain is covered, length of trip, whether lunch is required etc.

As mentioned in the last newsletter if you would like to attend, but have no transport, let me know and I will see if there is a lift available for you.

The new OUGS Newsletter has a message from the Society Treasurer asking as many people as possible to set up a Standing Order for payment. This helps the Society keep costs down and maximises interest. It also reduces the need to keep reminding people when they mislay the renewal form, or intended to post the form tomorrow and forgot.

I have noticed that so far this year there are a number of people who have as yet not renewed. I hope you will fill in your renewal form and consider paying by standing order. If you are in doubt as to whether you have paid or not, the postage label for this newsletter contains 04 in one of the bottom corners if you have not paid. The Standing Order Form is on OUGS web site [www.ougs.org.uk](http://www.ougs.org.uk) or you can contact Chris Arkwright, Membership secretary

Finally I would like to send condolences on behalf the Gogledd Cymru Branch to Brian Scholes, a branch member who lost his wife Carol earlier this year. Carol was also a member of the branch.

I look forward to meeting branch members at the field trips.

Best Wishes,

Rachel



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Your new committee for 2004 is

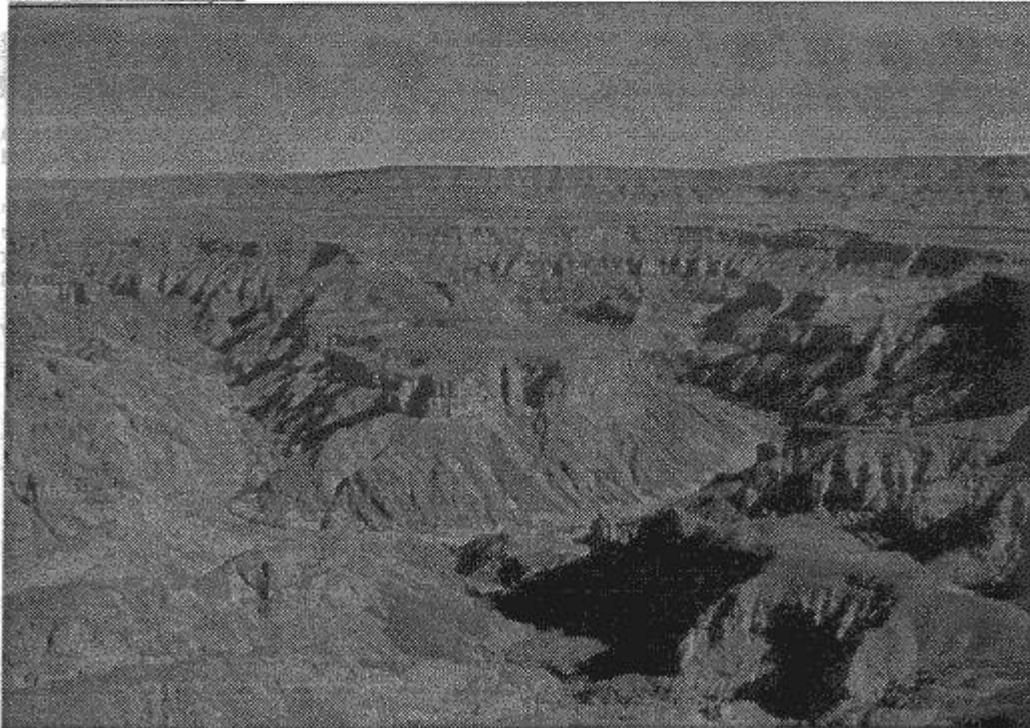
Branch Organiser	Rachel Atherton
Treasurer	Elaine Tilson
Newsletter editor	Tony James
Webmaster	Wendy Owens
Committee Member	Frank Buxton
Committee Member	David Decker

For those who missed the AGM, David Maddocks has kindly sent me a modified transcript of his talk on Namibia, here it is to enjoy a second time:-

### **Namibia**

Namibia is a southern African country that has very special attractions for the geologist. It is mostly desert or semi desert which has restricted its population to about 1.8 million, despite it being some four times the size of Britain. This means that almost all of the country is 'untouched by man' and with so little rainfall there is a minimum of soil or plant cover, leaving the geology exposed, like an open book. No need for quarries or road cuttings! With no man made pollution adding to the very dry air you can see 80km or more from elevated locations.

The Fish River Canyon



Since the relevant part of the break up of Gondwana, about 120 million years ago, this part of southern Africa has been tectonically quiet so most of the exposed geology is a story of weathering and deposition of resultant sediments.

In the southern part of Namibia is the Fish River canyon, second in size only to the Grand Canyon, but with few visitors. It is 550m deep in places and more than 100km long, exposing sediments, metamorphic rocks, unconformities, dykes, etc., right down to the basement gneiss, more than 1000 million years old. A huge area of the Namib desert, at 100Ma the oldest in the world, is covered by the largest dunes in the world, up to 400m high. They are formed of very well travelled sand – thousands of km being washed down the Yellow river, hundreds of km of longshore drift courtesy of the Benguela current and hundreds of km of aeolian transport. No wonder these grains are amongst the most texturally mature and mineralogically pure that you will find anywhere. These dunes are also magic to the eye as the iron oxide coating of each grain produces such wonderful hues in the first rays of the sun.

The richness of that cold Benguela current becomes apparent when you count the top predators, seals and cormorants, in their millions, even though only metres inland the desert reveals so little sign of life.

Interesting flat bedding planes on huge slabs of Etjo sandstone are covered in equally interesting engravings made by bushmen thousands of years ago. They are mainly of the animals they hunted and are thought to have been teaching aids.

To the north is the Etosha salt pan, interesting geologically, but with the magic of water. Permeable dolomite with extensive karst systems comes up against impermeable pan sediments and waterholes and springs are the result. The whole spectrum of African wildlife is evident – elephants, rhino, lions, zebra, oryx, springbok, etc., abound.

Add in endemic trees over 1000 years old, problem warthogs(!), petrified forests, and so much more, and you can see why Namibia makes such a spectacular field trip. Each group I take there is oversubscribed, all are humbly impressed, some are in tears with nature's splendours. Many want to return. It is easy to acquire good pictures and make an interesting talk.

David Maddocks

#### The Wrexham Science Festival

As usual at this time of year we helped out at the festival. The turnout was very good again, even though the stand was in a cold marquee (which had been vandalised the night before). Frank and David braved the cold weather, putting in a tremendous amount of work, to make it a success.

#### **EVENTS DIARY**

April 17th Nanerch Quarry - This trip has been postponed.... stay tuned for an update. We are also hoping to arrange a walk round Loggerheads in the afternoon.

May 16th Conwy Mountain - Gladys Dinnacombe - Contact Ann, the expected plan is to meet at 10.00 for 10.30 Town Square Conwy by Town Hall to observe The Conwy volcanic group; Rhyolite flow banding; Conwy Grits; greywacke shales. Sturdy boots and wet weather gear are required; some areas are steep and exposed, packed lunch advisable (a really wet weather programme would look at the Castle and a Town Trail where most of the above can be seen). Estimated time of finish 3/3.30

June 19th Cadair Idris Glaciation This will be led by Prof. Mike Hambrey, more information e.g. what & where will follow.

Sept. Derek France. How to examine a peat core. This was planned last year but rain stopped play. Hopeful. There are plans afoot to obtain a portable peat-corer, it should prove an interesting trip.

Sept. 26th Revision Day This is of interest to S260/S269 students Queens Park High School Chester your help will be appreciated - Sue Hughes

T.B.A. Working Day at Minera Quarry Uncovering unconformities to die for, more news will be forthcoming soon.

#### Announcements.

Please note that the Gogledd Cymru website address is [www.gcougs.org.uk](http://www.gcougs.org.uk). We are also attempting to put a copy of each newsletter on this web site, any photos can then be viewed in full colour.

We have had a request to remind members that the Oxford Branch are planning a weekend field trip to Anglesey. Anyone interested should contact Sally Munnings The trip will view precambrian rocks and will be led by Dr. Jana Horak. (June 25-27).

**PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO THE "JURASSIC COAST"  
THE GEOLOGY OF DORSET AND EAST DEVON'S  
WORLD HERITAGE SITE.**

Leader: Professor Chris Wilson.

*- Having whetted your appetites with the Dorset Symposium July 2004!*

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> evening to Sunday 26th September 2004

Based in Bridport, West Dorset

Cost includes half board and coach travel to Field Trips - in the region of £420 for 8 days.  
(Relevant to S260 and S369)

Organiser: Sheila Alderman  
For further details or to book a place:

Sorry NO day-trippers due to limits on size of group.