

Some words of welcome by the organising societies

Chris Rayner¹ and Adrian Collings²

RAYNER, C. & COLLINGS, A. (2008). Some words of welcome by the organising societies. *Proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society*, **13**, 5–7. Welcoming addresses by the Chairs of the Shropshire Geological Society and the West Midlands Regional Group of the Geological Society of London, the national society for geoscience in the United Kingdom.

A reception following the symposium was kindly hosted by the Friends of Ludlow Museum in the Castle Square site, and the votes of thanks were given beneath the very drawing that Murchison had prepared for his own lecture in the town, in 1854 to the Ludlow Natural History Society.

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SHROPSHIRE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

On behalf of the Shropshire Geological Society, Chris Rayner (Chair) said that it was humbling and yet a great delight that a mere 28 year old would be hosting this symposium celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Geological Society of London and also the 150th of the Geologists' Association. She referred, of course, not to the age of the Chair but to the Shropshire Geological Society which was formed in 1979, growing out of an evening class in Shrewsbury led by Dr. Peter Toghill. The Society, with Dr Toghill (one of the contributors to this symposium) as its first chairman, had been established to bring together people with a common interest in geology, with particular reference to the varied and stimulating rocks and landscapes of our beautiful county.

Throughout the 28 years, Society members had enjoyed lectures and field excursions as well as being involved in a range of specific projects, appealing to both amateur and professional geologists alike. Today the Society had about 75 members and, since moving into the new century, had undergone an evolutionary leap forward!

The first major undertaking was to identify, designate and record our Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS), an exciting yet lengthy task in Shropshire where there are so many potentially important sites (Figure 1). These vary from small stream exposures containing obscure but very important stratigraphic markers, to large quarries with obvious fossils or structures, to 'in your face geology' that can be seen for miles

around. While recording is an ongoing process, over 300 RIGS have been designated so far.

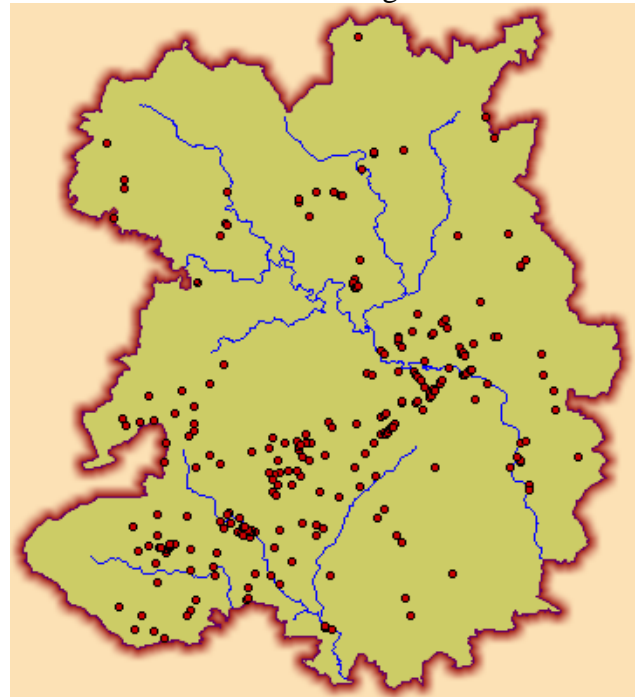


Figure 1. An outline map of Shropshire showing the distribution of RIGS localities that may be viewed or accessed from public rights of way. Greater detail may be obtained using ShropMap (see Annex for details).

Next came a joint project with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust called 'the Shaping of Shropshire'. Since then successful bidding for grants has enabled the Society to carry out a variety of projects including a South Shropshire stone roofs survey in partnership with English Heritage, and Geodiversity Management Plans for four key sites supported by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. The latter provided the basis for a new series of Geological Trails specifically to increase awareness of how rocks make the landscape..

Eight have been prepared to date, some of which are supported by detailed field guides published in the Society's Proceedings.

The year 2007 has seen the Society's website flourish and even greater efforts to promote wider interest in geology amongst the general public. Conscious that our subject, although fascinating to 'insiders,' could be perceived as specialised, difficult and even boring to those who don't speak the language, the Society is trying at events throughout the county to increase awareness and improve appreciation with display material and user-friendly activities for adults as well as children.

Most recently the Shropshire Geological Society in co-operation with the County Council, Museums Service, and the Wildlife Trust has compiled a Geodiversity Action Plan to help protect, promote, enhance and explain Shropshire's wonderful geological heritage. The Society hopes this will further enlarge its vision, make it more aware of the treasures of the past and shape its future efforts to conserve, to encourage research, and also to enlighten, to educate and to excite. The Plan was first announced publicly and made available at this symposium (French, this volume). All this and more has been master-minded by the Society's Projects Officer, Andrew Jenkinson, with the help of a group of hard-working member-volunteers.

In addition, within the West Midlands and the Welsh Marches, the Society has been working with the Geology Trusts, UKRIGS and the Geologists' Association to promote the geodiversity agenda regionally.

There is another important geological anniversary this year! It is just over 175 years since Murchison first visited the Marches and used his observations here as the basis for subsequently publishing his classic work, *The Silurian System*, thereby laying the foundations for our current understanding of Lower Palaeozoic earth history. So it is appropriate that the various geological organisations within the region have come together to promote the Marches Festival of Geology and the Symposium taking place in Ludlow.

On behalf of all those involved in the planning and organising of the Symposium and Festival as a whole, the Chair extended a warm welcome to all who attended and hoped the day would be memorable and enjoyable as well as of lasting benefit to the local community.

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL GROUP OF THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

On behalf of the West Midlands Regional Group of the Geological Society of London, Adrian Collings (Chair) said that the Geological Society of London (established in 1807) is the national society for geoscience in the United Kingdom.

The West Midlands Regional Group (WMRG) is one of thirteen Regional Groups inherited from the former Institution of Geologists, each of which represents the Society in its respective region, organises meetings of geoscientific and professional interest, and deals with matters related to professional training for Geologists. The first meeting of the WMRG took place on the 24th March 1977.

The Group continues to provide a local forum where professional geologists, academics and interested amateurs, can consider and discuss scientific and technical issues, and also meet outside the workplace. This currently focuses on a programme of evening talks between September and April, covering a broad spread of subjects ranging from the local, such as Landslips in Telford, through policy, such as the Landfill Directive, to global, such as a review of the geohazards related to the Asian Tsunami.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chairs, on behalf of their respective organisations, expressed their appreciation to the Steering Group which had brought together the programme for the Marches Festival of Geology and the organising committee for the symposium itself. This had involved a large number of volunteer members, registering delegates, ushering, setting up the poster displays and the sales stands, facilitating the information technology elements and liaising with the venue, the Ludlow Assembly Rooms, and its caterers.

A reception following the symposium was kindly hosted by the Friends of Ludlow Museum in the Castle Square site, and the votes of thanks were given beneath the very drawing that Murchison had prepared for his own lecture in the town, in 1854 to the Ludlow Natural History Society.

ANNEX: HOW TO DISPLAY RIGS


The RIGS information for Shropshire is hosted by the County Council's corporate GIS on behalf of the Shropshire Geological Society. This may be accessed by the general public using ShropMap, as shown below.

Please be aware that the display of a site on these maps does not necessarily indicate public access.

ShropMap currently displays all those RIGS sites where there is public access or the landowners have given their permission for visits. However, prior permission should always be sought when wishing to visit private land. Be aware that Shropshire is a rural county and that a landowner's livelihood often depends on successful farming. This may mean that permission to visit may be withheld at particular times of the year, for instance when animals are about to give birth or crops are at a sensitive stage of development. You must respect the landowners' wishes and at all times follow the Countryside Code.

To view RIGS localities on ShropMap, enter the URL:

<http://193.132.103.52/website/shropmap/viewer.htm?Service=Environment>

- Wait for the County map to be displayed and then click the label <Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites> on the right hand side of the screen; its tick-box should then be activated and the background will turn yellow.
- Unclick the other options, like <Household Recycling>.
- Next click the  symbol for <Show Details> at the bottom, turning its background yellow, and then click the site of interest on the map.
- You can <Zoom In> to see localities at whatever level of detail you wish.
- Once 'in focus', the details of each RIGS can be viewed by clicking on the desired location on the map.

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