

GEOLOGICAL SECTION OF THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

INFORMATION CIRCULAR 1 JANUARY, 1968

At its last liaison meeting with the Nature Conservancy the Geological Conservation Council recommended that, since many of the items brought to their attention were of general interest to geologists, such items should be circulated in the form of a news-letter. Developments of interest in geological education and research in which the Conservancy have been involved are reported and attention drawn to problems arising from a variety of causes and affecting localities used by geologists and students. It is hoped that, by the provision of such information on the current work of the Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy, liaison and co-operation with geologists will be fostered. The list of geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Britain containing over a thousand entries, requires continual revision to keep abreast of current developments in research and the proper surveillance of these sites needs the support of geologists throughout the country.

NEW AND IMPROVED FACILITIES FOR
GEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve, Dudley, Worcs.

On 6th November, the Mayor of Dudley officially opened the two geological nature trails at the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve, and the Guide to the trails, published by the Conservancy, became generally available. At the opening ceremony Professor F. W. Shotton F.R.S. addressed a large audience on the geological values of the Wren's Nest and the event received widespread press and television coverage. Since publication 1,430 copies of the Guide have been sold; further copies can be obtained from the Central Library, St. James Road, Dudley, or from the Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy, price 4s. Od. post free.

Okus Quarry, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Swindon, Wilts.

This classic locality, now largely infilled with rubbish, was recently acquired by Wiltshire County Council primarily as playing fields for the nearby Grammar School. During the levelling of the area the Council generously excavated an educational exposure along part of the old quarry face through the Portlandian sequence as far down as the Lyddite Bed. Intending visitors should contact the Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy or Mr. E. Maguire of Commonweal Grammar School, The Mall, Swindon. It should be noted that collection from the new exposure is permitted only on special request.

Town Gardens Quarries Site of Special Scientific Interest, Swindon, Wilts.

This locality contains several important exposures of Purbeckian strata, all of which pose different conservation problems. On the initiative of Mr. E. Maguire, a party of his pupils from the local Grammar School have dug out an improved section at the Tennis Courts exposure, off Quarry Road, where domestic and horticultural debris from the property above had partially obscured the geology.

If similar groups up and down the country were to offer to improve one or two sections a year, the net result would be a considerable improvement in field facilities.

Bugle Quarry, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Aylesbury, Bucks.

This well-known locality was filled with builder's waste some years ago. An excavation along part of the old face made by students of Queen Mary College, was eventually obscured through trampling by cattle. Recently, when further builder's waste was being thrown into the quarry, an opportunity arose to arrange for the Conservation Corps of the Council for Nature to excavate a permanent exposure in the Purbeckian Beds in the south eastern corner of the quarry and this is now available.

Pengelly Cave Studies Association, Buckfastleigh, Devon.

The William Pengelly Cave Studies Association has set up a Demonstration Centre close to the A.38 on the outskirts of Buckfastleigh. The Centre possesses a demonstration bone cave showing the remains of an Interglacial vertebrate fauna - perhaps the richest bone cave in England and an excellent example of a naturally formed Karstic pitfall. There are also a number of other caves showing a wide variety of scientific features and a museum, still under construction, which already contains exhibits relating to the geology, mineralogy, palaeontology and biology of the caves and surrounding area. Some facilities are available for scientists wishing to work at the Centre and educational parties are welcome. Prior arrangements must be made with the Secretary of the Management Committee - Mrs. Avril Longman, 4 Heath Rise, Brixham, Devon.

ACCESS FOR EDUCATIONAL PARTIES

Skellow Clough Site of Special Scientific Interest, Nr. Ormskirk, Lancs.

The owner of this site, Mr. J. Fair, Eccles House, Bispham Green, Nr. Ormskirk, Lancs. has written to the North Regional Office of the Nature Conservancy complaining of the behaviour of visiting parties. In particular he complains that parties have trampled over his land without asking his permission, even though his house lies on the normal access to the site. He has also complained that visitors' cars have blocked his farm road and gates. Mr. Fair writes that he will readily grant permission to visit Skellow Clough on application and it is requested that all intending visitors reciprocate his courtesy.

Kilmersdon Road Quarry, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Nr. Radstock, Somerset.

The owners of this quarry, which still provides excellent exposures of the littoral facies of the Lower Lias, have attempted to have it removed from the list of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and to have it filled up. They base their case on the fact that they have not been approached by any parties wishing to visit the site and that the locality is consequently not used for any scientific purpose. The Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy would be glad to hear of any parties who have visited this site in the last five years and it would be much appreciated if any intending visitors would formally approach the owner - Messrs. E. A. Stephens & Sons, Manor Farm, Radstock for permission.

PROJECTED NEW EXPOSURES OF RESEARCH INTEREST

Mundesley Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest, Norfolk.

Work has now commenced on the construction of the natural gas terminal at the southerly end of Mundesley Cliffs just north of Bacton. The work involves the cutting of a number of trenches several feet below beach level and these

trenches are expected to provide excellent opportunities for studying and collecting from the Cromer Forest Bed Series. Dr. R. G. West of the Botany School, Downing Street, Cambridge, is maintaining liaison with the contractors and can give up to date information on what exposures are available. By agreement with the Conservancy, the Gas Council have agreed in principle that bona fide scientists should be allowed to visit the excavations; the initial approach should be made through Dr. West.

M.4. South of Swindon, Wilts.

The projected M.4 motorway is to pass through cuttings which will expose almost the entire Lower Chalk succession in a part of the country where this sequence has never been adequately seen. Dr. C. V. Jeans of Cambridge University has approached the Geological Section of the Conservancy with the request that permanent sections should be allowed for in the design of the cuttings. Negotiations are at present in progress with the Ministry of Transport and the Consulting Engineers towards meeting these research requirements. The Nature Conservancy is willing to pursue similar negotiations for other motorway sections but can only do so if advised of potential scientific interest at an early stage - as soon as the route is authorised.

Manchester Waterworks (Ullswater and Windermere)

In implementing the Manchester (Ullswater and Windermere) Waterworks Scheme, considerable excavations will be required. Further information about this work can be obtained from Dr. R. J. Firman, Department of Geology, The University, Nottingham.

COASTAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Pegwell Bay, Nr. Ramsgate, Kent

A Public Inquiry was held in January, 1967 into an application to develop the Bay as a hoverport. The Nature Conservancy opposed the development on both biological and geological grounds but the Ministry of Housing and Local Government has recently authorised the construction of the hoverport. However, the Minister has noted the geological objections and requires that no development shall take place within 20 ft. of the cliff face so that access to exposures can be maintained.

Highcliffe to Milford Cliffs, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Barton, Hatns.

Owing to a breakdown in liaison the coast defence scheme under construction along this site was authorised before the Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy were consulted. When this was discovered the Section entered into negotiation with the Consulting Engineers with a view to preserving as much as possible of the geological interest. These negotiations are still in progress but it is envisaged that open type sections will be maintained through the entire succession.

These works were under construction for two years before geologists drew our attention to the situation. In all cases when adverse development of any type is found on a site of high interest the Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy should be notified immediately.

CURRENT SURVEYS OF ADDITIONAL GEOLOGICAL SITES

Three surveys are at present in hand for the revision of the national coverage of geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the registering of localities of lesser interest. Your co-operation, by supplying information on sites of educational and research value personally known to you, will be much appreciated. In this way you can ensure that sites in which you are particularly interested are considered for the protection the Conservancy can offer.

(a) Revision of distribution of geological SSSI's within the Jurassic System (including the Rhaetic). This revision is currently in progress and new proposals are requested for consideration by a panel of experts.

(b) Derelict Land. The reclamation of derelict land is at present receiving much attention both officially and from the public as a whole. From the general point of view, many geological exposures of interest, e.g. disused quarries and pits, are considered to be derelict land as their value in education and research is not generally known; there is considerable danger that many such localities of geological significance will be lost. In an attempt to prevent this the Geological Section of the Nature Conservancy is preparing a register of localities. Information is particularly urgently needed for coalfield areas.

(c) Devon and Cornwall Revision of geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest. It is intended that the distribution of geological sites in Devon and Cornwall will be revised in 1968/9. Suggestions of localities which should be considered for protection would be appreciated.