

THE

HISTORY OF GEOLOGY

DIVISION Newsletter

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Editor's Table.....

Yes, we all know that famous man who was born on 2/12/1809. That's right, Abraham Lincoln. Oh, right, a gentleman named Charles Darwin was also born on that day. The *Origin of Species*, of course, was published in 1859. Harry Govier Seeley, who is remembered for his study on pterosaurs, *Dragons of the Air*, died on 1/8/1909. Seeley's pioneering book suggested that these reptiles may have had a furry integument. In this same year, 1909, Charles Doolittle Walcott found and first began to study the fabulous fossil fauna (how's that for alliteration?) of what became known as the Burgess Shale. Drilling commenced in Kern County, California, on what became known as the "Lakeview Gusher #1" on 1/1/1909. And, on 1/15/1759, the British Museum opened to the public.

– Jane P. Davidson, HoGD Secretary-Treasurer, Newsletter Editor jdhexen@unr.edu

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► Lyme Regis Museum

From the Friends of the Lyme Regis Museum Development Appeal, here is an information leaflet on what they are doing, which may interest you:

The Project


Lyme Regis Museum records the history and geology of an extraordinarily interesting small town on the Dorset and East Devon world heritage coast. The Museum serves both the local community and the town's many visitors. It was recognised in 1999 by winning the Gulbenkian prize.

The Trustees intend to build on this success and make it an outstanding example of a small museum dedicated to providing enjoyment, information and education.

To do this they need to:

- extend the Museum so as to add an education room, more exhibition space, a Lyme Regis Study Centre, and full access for people with disabilities;
- conserve the Museum's existing grade 2 listed historic building.

The Extension



The elevation facing the sea. The building to the left of the tall window is not part of the Museum. The new extension is to the right.

The existing building is 297 sq m. The extension of 396 sq m will provide:

- An education space for school children and lifelong learning, usable outside normal museum hours for meetings and community use. At present the Museum has no such space, and teaching takes place in cramped conditions.
- A publicly accessible IT equipped study centre for information resources, linked to the education space and open to all.
- A lift and new main staircase, cloakroom and toilets; providing full DDA compliance.
- Temporary exhibition spaces for the geology and fossils of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, and historical and art exhibitions. The Museum has maintained a programme of four temporary exhibitions each year related to Lyme's history, geology and art. However, the material that can be included is limited as the present spaces are very small and not designed for the purpose.
- Accessible study collections and curatorial areas.

The Museum

Lyme Regis Museum sets out to 'present the town as a changing and often precarious community' (John Fowles, Honorary Curator 1978-88). It records the history and geology of an extraordinarily interesting place on the Jurassic Coast exemplified in literature palaeontology, history, science, shipping and culture. The Museum serves both the local community and the town's many visitors. The Museum is registered with the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council and holds around 16,000 items.

We need your help to make provision in the Museum for teaching children and for proper access for the less mobile and people with disabilities.

This leaflet gives an idea of what we have in mind and how we hope to realise the proposals.

The Museum Trustees are handling the major grant applications and are optimistic these grants will be awarded. For us to be successful the awarding bodies need to be convinced that our supporters are also making efforts to raise funds.

The Museum Friends are aiming to raise at least £50,000 as part of a total target of £3 million. We plan to hold a select art exhibition and sale of twelve paintings by Royal Academicians and members of the New English Art Club; we will be holding a charity lunch at which the eminent actor Oliver Ford Davies will read Milton's poetry to commemorate his birth; three special lectures have been arranged on the theme *Our Natural World*; and the 2008 Calendar *Secret Lyme* is now on sale at £3.95 and obtainable at the Museum.

As a supporter of the Museum we urge you to hold a coffee morning, a drinks party or any other event which will enable us to reach our target. Please would you send your donation including a complete Gift Aid Form from the back of this leaflet to: - *The Financial Appeal, Lyme Regis Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3LB*



Section through the extended building from west to east showing basement stores and services, ground floor temporary exhibition gallery and education room and first floor geology gallery (centre) and offices.

Patrons:
Sir Crispin Tickell, Sir David Wilson, Sir Ghilleain Prance, Sir Neil Chalmers.

Trustees:
John Marriage (Chairman), Ken Gollop, Max Hebditch CBE (Curator), Stephen Locke OBE, Professor Chris Paul, Imogen Thomas, Revd Keith Vivian.

Friends of the Museum:
John Lello (Chairman).

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GIFT AID DECLARATION
FRIENDS OF LYME REGIS PHILPOT MUSEUM
- REGISTERED CHARITY NO 278774

Details of Friend
Title..... Forenames.....
Surname.....
Address.....
..... Post Code.....


I want the Charity to treat all donations and subscriptions that I have made since 6 April 2000, and all donations and subscriptions I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations.

Signed..... Date.....

LYME REGIS MUSEUM



Friends of Lyme Regis Museum Development Appeal



► More on Darwin

Martin J. S. Rudwick and Peter Worsley have organized two historical field meetings, re: Darwin's post-Beagle fieldwork. Both meetings have the backing of the Geological Society of London and its History of Geology Group. If you are interested, please see the information below:

Re-treading Darwin's geological fieldwork.

(1) N.W. Midlands and North Wales, 19-24 June. Organizer: Peter Worsley p.worsley@reading.ac.uk. (2) Glen Roy, Scotland, 26-29 June. Organizers: Martin Rudwick; Adrian Palmer a.palmer@rhul.ac.uk. Details follow:

Two related historical field meetings in June 2009 will mark the Darwin bicentenary by evaluating his most important post-*Beagle* fieldwork projects on the ground, in the light of other 19th-century research. The meetings are organized separately, but it will be possible to participate in both in succession; the number of participants in both will be strictly limited. (1) **N. W. Midlands and North Wales**, 19-24 June, led by Peter Worsley (Reading). Shrewsbury and Maer, for Darwin's and his wife's family homes; Snowdonia, for his 1842 fieldwork, and evidence relevant to early glacial theories. For further information, e-mail p.worsley@reading.ac.uk. (2) **Glen Roy, Scotland**, 26-29 June, led by Martin Rudwick (Cambridge) and Adrian Palmer (Royal Holloway, London). Glen Roy and the surrounding area of the Highlands, for Darwin's 1838 fieldwork, and his interpretation of the famous "Parallel Roads" as marine beaches, in conflict with earlier lake-beach and later glacial-lake interpretations. For further information, e-mail a.palmer@rhul.ac.uk.

First circular

Charles Darwin bicentenary, 2009
**RE-TREADING DARWIN'S GEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK:
THE PARALLEL ROADS OF GLEN ROY**
Lochaber, Scotland, 26-29 June 2009

organised and led by
Martin Rudwick (University of Cambridge), and
Adrian Palmer (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Darwin returned from the *Beagle* voyage identifying himself *as a geologist*, and he was accepted as such by the leaders of the Geological Society in London. His papers to the Society interpreted what he had seen in terms of a global tectonic theory modelled on that of his older mentor Charles Lyell. The most substantial piece of *fieldwork* that Darwin undertook (in 1838) after his return was designed to strengthen this theory by harnessing in its support a well-known but extremely puzzling geological feature, the "Parallel Roads" or horizontal terraces high up in Glen Roy and adjacent valleys in the Lochaber area of the Scottish Highlands. This fieldwork led to Darwin's first substantial published scientific paper (1839) and earned him his FRS. But soon afterwards Louis Agassiz (1840) proposed an alternative explanation of the "Roads", in terms of vanished glaciers, which implied

that Darwin's might be radically mistaken. Yet Darwin clung to his interpretation for about twenty years, in the face of mounting evidence in favour of the glacial alternative, and only abandoned it with extreme reluctance, calling it in retrospect "a great failure" and even "one long gigantic blunder". However, even a "blunder" by such an outstanding scientist can throw instructive light on the relation between observations and scientific reasoning, and also - in Darwin's case - between his public theorising about global tectonics and his concurrent private theorising about speciation.

This field meeting in Lochaber, which has been endorsed by the Geological Society of London and its History of Geology Group, will be strictly *historical* (like the meeting on the Isle of Wight during the Society's bicentenary in 2007). It will focus not on current modern interpretations but on what Darwin and his 19th-century predecessors and successors saw, or thought they saw, on the spot, and how they reasoned about their observations. It will be based on Martin Rudwick's detailed study (1974/2005) of Darwin's (and others') work on Glen Roy, updated and related to Sandra Herbert's important book (2005) on Darwin's geology as a whole.

The meeting will be based at Spean Bridge (9mi/15km NE of Fort William), which can be reached by a scenic rail journey from Glasgow, or by road. It will begin on the evening of Friday 26 June and end after breakfast on Monday 29 June. The two full days in the field will be spent (1) in Glen Roy itself, and (2) in Glens Spean, Treig and Gloy. Even around midsummer Highland weather on the hills can be harsh, and there will be some steep climbing and rough walking, so the meeting is not suitable for those who are not reasonably fit. Transport in the field will be by minibus or equivalent; the roads up some of the valleys are very narrow and parking is limited, so independent transport by private cars will not be possible. For the same reason, the number of participants will be strictly limited.

To register interest at this stage, e-mail Adrian Palmer at a.palmer@rhul.ac.uk. Further details, with a registration form, will be sent to those who have expressed interest, probably in March. Meanwhile, please address queries about the practical arrangements to Adrian, and queries about the scientific programme to Martin Rudwick at mjsr100@cam.ac.uk.

A closely related, but separately organised, historical field meeting will be led by Peter Worsley (University of Reading) on 19-24 June, visiting (1) Shrewsbury and Maer, and (2) North Wales, to re-tread Darwin's 1842 fieldwork, during which he accepted a glacial interpretation of the topography of Snowdonia. For further information e-mail p.worsley@reading.ac.uk. It should be feasible to take part in both meetings.

References:

Martin Rudwick, "Darwin and Glen Roy: A 'great failure' in scientific method?", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 5, pp. 97-185, 1974; reprinted in Rudwick, *Lyell and Darwin, Geologists*, Aldershot (Ashgate), 2005, art. X.

Sandra Herbert, *Charles Darwin, Geologist*, Ithaca (Cornell), 2005.

► **Geological Society of London Transactions**

The *Transactions of the Geological Society of London* are being made available online. Some papers were put up in pdf format at the end of last year. The *Transactions* will be available as part of the Society's Lyell Collection. For more information, please visit <http://www.geolsoc.org.uk>.

► **History of Geology Division Student Award for Portland 2009 GSA Annual Meeting**

Don't forget! Submittal deadline is May 1, 2009.

Materials should be submitted to HoGD Secretary-Treasurer Jane P. Davidson at jdhexen@unr.edu.

The History of Geology **Student Award** was established in 2004 and is made possible by a bequest from the estate of Mary C. Rabbitt. The award:

- Includes a cash award in the amount of \$500;
- Requires the development of a paper to be presented at the GSA Annual Meeting in October;
- Is considered for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Both oral and poster presentations are accepted, but oral presentations are preferred. Faculty advisors may be listed as second author, but not as the lead author of the paper.

The proposed paper may be: (1) in the history of geology; (2) a literature review of ideas for a technical work or thesis/dissertation; or (3) some imaginative aspect of the history of geology not previously considered. The award is open to all students, provided the proposed paper is related to the historical development of a particular geological idea or concept in the geological sciences.

The winner will present his or her paper at the History of Geology Division disciplinary session at the GSA 2009 Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon. The \$500 award will be given at the time the paper is presented, and the student will also be recognized at the History of Geology annual luncheon, for which a complimentary ticket is provided. If there are multiple authors, the cash award will be presented to the senior author, and further distribution is up to that person.

Proposal guidelines and application forms are available online at <http://gsahist.org/HoGaward/awards.htm>. All communications regarding the student award are to be by e-mail. Applications, proposed abstracts, and requests for information should be directed to HoGD Secretary-Treasurer Jane P. Davidson at jdhexen@unr.edu.