

**Geologists'  
Association - South  
Wales Group**



**Cymdeithas y  
Daearegwyr - Grŵp  
De Cymru**

**Newsletter March 2022**

**Sixty third session**

<b>President</b>	Chris Lee chris.w.lee@outlook.com	<b>Vice- President</b>	John Nudds john.nudds@manchester.ac.uk
<b>Secretary</b>	Janet Hiscott secretary@swga.org.uk	<b>Ex-Officio Vice President</b>	Lesley Cherns cherns@cardiff.ac.uk
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Caroline Davies membership@swga.org.uk	<b>Programme Secretary</b>	Vacant
<b>Treasurer</b>	Hazel Trenbirth hazel.trenbirth@btinternet.com	<b>Programme Co-ordinator</b>	Nick Pollock programme@swga.org.uk
<b>Editor and newsletter</b>	Rhian Kendall webmaster@swga.org.uk	<b>Publicity</b>	Vacant
<b>Webmaster</b>	Rhian Kendall webmaster@swga.org.uk	<b>Other members of the committee:</b> Stephen Howe, Cindy Howells, Geraint Owen, Elen Statham, Kevin Privett.	

*I hope this newsletter finds you as well as you can be. I'm certainly feeling optimistic with the days getting longer (I'll ignore the hailstones at my window as I type!) and I can start to make fieldwork plans. This is a full Newsletter with information on meetings and events to come across the summer and autumn as well as some stories from our members. If you would like to contribute something to our next newsletter, please do email it through to me.*

*Looking forward to seeing you all in the near future! Rhian*



**Programme 2022**

**Howard Bartlett Prize winners**

This session's Howard Bartlett Prize winners for the best field work project by a second year student were **Emily Astins** from Swansea University and **Maxwell Porter** from Cardiff University. Maxwell is currently studying abroad for a year in Vancouver, Canada, but despite this gave us a short talk about his experiences working with a mineral exploration company in Pembrokeshire during the summer of 2020 at Holiday Geology. For those who are not aware, at the time Vancouver was 8 hours behind us so when we started the meeting at 11.00am it was 3.00am in Vancouver!

Emily Astins was unable to join us that day but will be giving us a short talk on her project, to re-analyse the Gabbro of St David's Head, before our AGM in March.

**2021-22 Winter Indoor Meetings**

There is only one meeting left of this session's indoor programme, which is our AGM and Presidential Address. This takes place on Saturday 19th March and will be via Zoom. The

meeting starts at 10.15am when we will have a short talk by Emily Astins, the Howard Bartlett Prize winner from Swansea University, about her prize winning project to re-analyse of the Gabbro of St David's Head. The AGM will follow at 10.30am, which in turn will be followed by Chris' Presidential Address on Bivalve Mounds and Reefs of the Middle Lias (Domerian) of the Central High Atlas Morocco at about 11.00am.

### **Summer Field Meeting Programme 2022**

The summer programme still has a couple of dates to be confirmed but is currently as follows:

- **Saturday 23rd April:** The Llanbadoc Geological Trail, Usk: Leader: Elen Statham  
Meet at 11.00am at the Llanbadoc Island Car Park behind Llanbadoc Church (NP15 1PS/SO 376 001). From Usk the turning to the car park is to the left, just before Llanbadoc Church. Bring a packed lunch. A hand lens would be useful.
- **Sunday 15th May:** Amroth to Wiseman's Bridge, Pembrokeshire: Leader: Sid Howells
- **Saturday 11th June:** Caswell Bay and Mumbles, Gower: Leader: Gareth George
- **July (tbc):** Structural geology on the South Wales coast (tbc): Leader; Tom Blenkinsop
- **Saturday 13th August:** Penarth Family Geology Day: Leaders: Cindy Howells & John Nudds
- **Saturday 17th September:** The North Somerset Coast: Leader: Lesley Cherns
- **October (tbc):** The Forest of Dean: Leader: Tom Cotterell

I am currently in conversation with the Teme Valley Geological Society about the possibility of arranging a joint field meeting to the Woolhope Dome, possibly in July, so watch this space. The full meeting details for each trip will be circulated in due course.

### **Summer Events**

With the easing of the Covid pandemic the Fforest Fawr Geopark Festival will once again be taking place. This year it runs from 21st May – 5th June and as part of the festival the usual Family Day will be held at Craig-y-nos Country Park on Wednesday 1st June. The Group will be taking part in this event and are planning some hands-on activities as well as manning the usual information stall. Anybody who is interested in helping out during the day, even for an hour or so, would be very welcome. If you are willing to help in anyway please contact the Secretary.

### **Autumn Events**

Thursday 6th October has been designated UNESCO Global Geodiversity Day. The Group is currently thinking about what we could do to mark this occasion and if anybody has any suggestions please let us know. Once we know what we plan to do an appeal for volunteers to help will be issued.

Another date for your diary is the annual Festival of Geology run by the parent GA in London. For the previous two years this has been run as an on-line event but it is hoped that this year it may be able to hold the event in person. This will take place on Saturday 5th November with local field trips on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Prof. Brian Williams**



As those of you who were able to join us at the February talk by Brian Williams will know, Brian, one of our Honorary Members, was awarded the Grover E. Murray Memorial Medal by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) for Geological Education at its Annual Conference last September in Denver, USA. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, Brian was unable to attend the meeting in person to receive his award and so had to wait for it to arrive in the post.

On behalf of the Group we would like to congratulate him on winning this.

### **Stephen Howe**



### **Alun James Thomas 1928-2021**

Members were informed last December of the sad news of the death of its longest standing member, Alun James Thomas, on 23 September 2021 at his home in Barry. He died surrounded by his family. The funeral was on 15 October at the Cardiff and Vale Crematorium.

Alun was born in Ogmere Vale in January 1928, moving later to Nantymoel. He attended Ogmere Grammar School, then Aberystwyth University in 1945 to study Geography and Geology, followed by teacher training college. On a training placement in Llangollen, he met Anne Williams; Alan and Anne married in 1953, to be together until Anne's death in 2016. They had two children, Hugh and Rachel.

Alun took up posts elsewhere before returning to Wales, to Whitchurch Grammar School and in 1959 to Barry Boys Grammar School where he was head of Geography and Geology. In 1964 he took up the position of Museums Schools Service Officer for Geology in the Schools Service at the National Museum of Wales.

Alun was a member of the SWGA from its very first meeting on 23 January 1960. Indeed, he seconded the proposal for Doug Bassett to be the Group's first Chairman. He joined the Committee in 1963, continuing for 34 years until 1997, the longest serving committee member to date. In 1967 he became Secretary, continuing for 23 years, the longest serving Secretary to date.

He retired from his museum post after 25 years in 1989, age 61, at the same time stepping down as Secretary of the Group. In anticipation of this, he had been appointed Vice-Chairman in 1988, to become Chairman for 1990-1992, followed by five years as ex officio Vice-Chairman. On 10 March 1990 he was awarded the third Honorary Membership of the Group "in recognition of his services to the Group as Secretary for 23 years and for his contribution to geology in particular in education in Wales." The presentation included an Estwing geological hammer and an Address.

By the year 2000, Alun had contributed to twelve indoor events. The last was his retiring Chairman's address in 2002, "The South Wales Group 1959-1992: a Geological Perspective".

This was produced as a booklet in 1993. He also led eight field excursions, two to Barry Island. His other publications included four on the history of the Group and a leaflet on Barry Island.

Alun produced a prodigious output of information leaflets for schools, colleges and others as well as his vast contributions to the Group's Newsletter. When Alun wrote this it was packed with the latest information on geological events, recent research and publications as well as items of general geological interest.

In March 1976 Alun was elected to the council of the Geologists' Association. In 1980 he received the Foulerton Award of the GA for "his work for the South Wales Group...." and "for services to Geology in Wales". This was the first time it was presented to a member outside of the main GA body.

From 1995 on he was interested in the RIGS movement, attending annual All Wales RIGS Forum weekends, sometimes with Anne. Anne was herself a member of the Group over many years.

In 2009 the Group received two boxes of material from Alun from his time as Secretary. This was all slowly digitised, and with later material from others, was compiled into the SWGA Archives. Around 2010 Alun also gave a number of old photos which are the only known records of Group field trips for the years from the 1960s to the 1980s.

In 2009, in advance of the Group's 50th anniversary, research to find those who had been involved in the early days of the Group showed that Alun Thomas was the only member who had been in continuous membership for all of this time. In acknowledgement of this and his many contributions to the Group, he was awarded a Special 50th Anniversary Award, for "50 years of service to the Group", announced at the 50th celebrations on 23rd January and presented at the 51st AGM on 13 March 2010. Alun accepted his award "with humility". His membership continued until his death.

His daughter Rachel, in her moving eulogy, said "dad was one of those lucky people who loved his job and it shone through in everything that he did and the impact he had on many generations of people learning about geology....dad was a highly intelligent man; a man of great and liberal principles, a quiet, gentle man, a loving and caring man....who made a difference not only to his family but to his community."

"The South Wales GA had a very special place in his heart, and he loved his time working at the Museum, which he never thought of as a "job"."

Alun was an exceptional member. We thank him for his contribution of over 61 years.

The Group offers its sincerest condolences to Rachel, Hugh and their families.

*Compiled by Lynda Garfield, with thanks to Rachel Connor and Steve Howe*

Alun Thomas being presented with his Special 50th Anniversary Award, on the 13 March 2010, by incoming President Malcolm Shaw

*(photo Dave Wellings)*



### **Geological Events at a computer near you!**

Many geological organisations have moved their events on line which means that there are raft of lectures and workshops to get involved with.

- The Geologists' Association have their Geology from your Sofa section on their website which is packed full of information about free lectures to attend or download. There are even online workshops to get involved with:  
<https://geologistsassociation.org.uk/sofageology/>
- **Earth Heritage Magazine** This is now only available as an electronic copy. Here is the link: [http://www.earthheritage.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/EH-53\\_final.pdf](http://www.earthheritage.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/EH-53_final.pdf)
- If you are a regular visitor to our website: [www.swga.org.uk](http://www.swga.org.uk) you may have noticed that we have been putting recordings of our own lectures on line, just for a few months after they are recorded. If you need help getting up and running with Zoom, we've also put a guide on our website or you are welcome to email me and I'll try and help.
- You might also be interested to learn that we now have a YouTube channel and we also maintain Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/179899022064977>) and Twitter accounts (@swgeologists). With Facebook and Twitter, anyone can join in and the more that do, the better it is!



### **Join the committee!**

Stephen Howe has been our programme secretary for many years (18) and now wants to stand down (after quite a few years of only saying just one more year...) also, Caroline, our Membership Secretary, would like to step down next year so we will be looking for someone to step forward to replace her. If joining the committee is something you think you could do, please get in touch to find out more about the roles. Your help would be very much appreciated.



### Other Geological Organisations

- Russell Society, Wales and West Branch: Tom Cotterell. Tel: 01594 845935 before 9 pm
- Welsh Stone Forum (Fforwm Cerrig Cymru): Tim Palmer tjp@aber.ac.uk or [www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/welshstoneforum](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/welshstoneforum)
- Open University Geological Society: Andy Mitchell [ougs.org/severnsideWest](http://ougs.org/severnsideWest) Wales Geology Society: [www.westwalesgeolsoc.org.uk](http://www.westwalesgeolsoc.org.uk)
- South East Wales RIGS : <http://sewrigs.wordpress.com/>



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