



AGA Newsletter No.3

October 1999

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AGA Ends First Year on High Note

Chairman Mair addresses packed AGM

The Basin Studies Lab at Aberdeen University Geology Dept played host to the first AGA Annual General Meeting. The seething crowd, conservatively estimated at 15, sat spellbound whilst Chairman Bruce Mair reviewed the year's successes and laid out the AGA's plans for further penetration into the Nation's hearts & minds.

AGM at a glance

- Membership up to 77
- Net income on year £1845
- £450 donated to Aberdeen Geology Dept already, with a further £1200 pledged for 1999/2000
- 5 social events completed in 98/99, turning a combined profit of £969
- JTC Hay accepted position of Honorary President
- New AGA logo produced
- First steps taken to assume organisation of Granite City Ball
- More volunteers needed to run the committee
- AGM pitifully underattended

Despite the bright picture painted by the Chairman, once the mutual backslapping was finished it was stressed that AGA needs to build upon the success of its first year and improve its profile, membership and profitability. Only by widening the scope of the association and improving membership numbers, especially corporate members, can AGA hope to make any impact on the funding shortfall that students are suffering. Fortunately, the signs for the coming year are good so far. The wine tasting held on the 30th September was again

Hits, misses and lessons learnt – is AGA meeting its targets?

The initial aims of AGA were roughly these:

- To get graduates, students and "friends" of AU Geology dept talking to one another
- To promote links between industry & the dept
- To help alumni to maintain links with one another
- To raise money to help students of AU Geology dept, especially with the costs of fieldwork

So far, the social events have managed to get everyone talking to everyone else, usually at fairly high volume and with alcohol-fuelled candour. The social events have also realised most of the money raised in the past year.

Less successful have been the links between the dept & industry and between alumni. With any luck, the provision of the long-awaited AGA website will help alumni to track one another down. As far as industry is concerned, the production of some decent headed paper with the new AGA logo and the added gravitas of Jimmy Hay's name will help in the battle to be taken seriously by potential donors.

Main lessons learnt? Charge more for the events we promote, with a bigger discount for members; always have a raffle at each function, and boy are quizzes popular!

sold out, and despite holding the ticket price from last year and paying for the services of the superb Carol Whitehead, the event turned a £145 profit compared to last year's £54. This was due to the excellent uptake of raffle tickets by an audience suitably softened up by the South American reds on offer. If you missed this event and are still confusing your Pinot Noir with your Cabernet Sauvignon, be warned that next year we will be staging a Wine Appreciation Evening, and ticket prices will be hiked appreciably to suit.

Annual Subs Demand

If it is October, it must be time to ask AU Geological Alumni for money. Subscriptions have been held for this year (99/00) only at £10 for full membership. Please send cheques made out to "Aberdeen Geoalumnus" to Rachel Charnock at the address given at the foot of page 1.

If you have an eye to a bargain, you can hedge your subscriptions against future rises by filling in the standing order form provided on page 4. If you don't want to chop up your newsletter, photocopy the form, complete it and send it to Rachel as above.

Ideally, you will have sufficient swing to get your employer to stump up £50 on your behalf. The only company to have done so last year was Total Oil Marine, who have since gone from strength to strength. I am sure that there are many Fina and Elf employees sitting wishing that they had used the opportunity to safeguard their

companies against takeover, sorry, merger for a mere £50.

Forthcoming Events



30th October – AGA Ceilidh.

Aberdeen Boat Club, 8pm onwards. An informal ceilidh at an intimate (!) venue. Highly recommended. Stovies included in the knock down price of £9, £8 for AGA members.

24th March – AGA Quiz.

A rip-roaring success last year, raising £600 and really raising the AGA profile. Venue to be announced.

1st April – Granite City Ball.

This is the big one. Expensive tickets, corporate tables, full bib and tucker required. Aberdeen's Beach Ballroom will host this world famous event once again this year. This will be the first GCB to have any AGA input into the planning and execution.

For further details of all AGA events, contact Rachel Charnock.

Newsletter Supply

If you are reading this in glorious Technicolor, congratulations. You must be a fully paid-up member of AGA. If you have resisted the temptation to shell out a paltry £10 to help the hard-pressed students of 1999, shame on you. Not only will you be squinting at an almost impossible to read monochrome newsletter, but this will be the last newsletter you will receive. From now on only AGA members will be kept in touch with all of the departmental and alumni news. Think about it. Isn't it time to reach for the cheque book & pen?

Jimmy Who?

The gracious acceptance of position of honorary president by JTC Hay, glorious alumnus, former Britoil big cheese and currently main man at Scottish Enterprise, means that we feel obliged to thank him for his assistance for our cause and also to put out a request for stories or photos concerning the big man during his student days. Appropriate material can be forwarded to Rachel Charnock in complete confidence.

Ways to help AGA

Subscribe

Send us a cheque. £10 buys a year's membership, which buys two newsletters a year and gives nominal discounts on AGA social events. Add a little extra as a donation. Better still, fill in the standing order mandate on page 4 and sit back, knowing that you will never again be pestered to send money.

Send stories, photos, e-mail addresses

Most people reading this will have humorous photos or anecdotes that could cheer up other alumni. Although we do not intend to fill the newsletters up with stories or photos, once the AGA website is finally commissioned it will be an ideal platform for alumni to swap stories and gory photos (see page 3). If you are already wired up, sending us an e-mail means that we can inform you of meetings or events quickly and cheaply. Address e-mails to r.arnock@abdn.ac.uk.

Join the committee

Although the AGA gives the impression of being a well-oiled machine that effortlessly pushes out thoroughly professional events and newsletters, we do need extra volunteers to come to committee meetings in order to shoulder the ever-increasing workload and responsibility. Committee meetings are held at members' houses in Aberdeen every couple of months, and you get your dinner, a glass of wine and a sense of achievement. Get in touch with Rachel if you think you can help.



Back to the Halcyon days when money was no object – mid seventies students relax in front of their 5 star accommodation.

Rogues' Gallery

We have scoured the archives ceaselessly to bring you a couple of scary photos from the distant past.

Both of these featured photos have been included courtesy of Bruce Mair. They highlight the fact that, although today's students certainly lack resources for carrying out fieldwork, they may not realise that in days gone by the de rigueur accommodation for Helmsdale trips was a leaky caravan in a donkey field. Eagle-eyed viewers will have noticed that the chap taking the photo has cast a good long shadow – not only were students richer in these far-off days, but the sun always shone on field workers too!



Class of '74 celebrates cornering the world sailcloth market.

The lower photo harks back to the days when Scottish public houses boasted criminally short licensing hours, longer only than those in New Zealand. This group has fallen foul of the lunchtime chucky out and will now have to wait until 8.30 to get another drink, before being sent home again at 9.30. Perhaps it is no wonder that they seemed well off, with so few opportunities to spend their grant money on beer.

As a way of encouraging newsletter readers to rummage through their old shoe boxes full of photos, AGA are offering a bottle of wine to any reader who can come up with a genuinely funny class photo. Send photocopies, not originals, to Rachel (address on page 1). If you can name names or give a "where are they now" that is even better, with extra points being scored if the photo shows staff members in compromising situations. The oldest photo we receive will get a special mention too.

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To...*.....Bank

Postal Address...*.....

Please pay	Bank	Branch Title		Sort Code No
	Bank of Scotland	University		80 – 12 – 15
For the credit of	Beneficiary's name		Account number	Reference
	Aberdeen Geolumnus		0 0 2 8 7 0 5 3	
The sum of	Amount	Amount in words		
	£10.00	Ten pounds only		
commencing	Date of first payment (preferably 1 st Nov 1999) *		And thereafter every	Due date & frequency Ψ 1 st November Annually
				Until further notice in writing and debit my/our account accordingly

Account to be debited	Account number								
.....*	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 20px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> </tr> </table>								

Signature(s)*

..... Date...*.....



Banks may decline to accept instructions to charge standing orders to certain types of account other than current accounts. Subscribing member to fill in blanks marked *. Please return completed mandates to Rachel Charnock, address on page 1, rather than to your bank.

Committee Members following elections at 1999 AGM:

Honorary President	JTC Hay
Chairman	Bruce Mair
Vice Chairman	Roger Hinton
Treasurer	George Downie
Membership Secretary	Rachel Charnock
Newsletter Editor	John Sands
Departmental rep	Alan Crane
Student rep	Mark Douglas

Regular committee helping hands: Nicky Tessen, Rachel O'Brien, Gordon Holm, Cameron Hercus, Amanda Cowley. Volunteers are always welcome. Organising the social calendar and newsletters requires a certain amount of time and effort – why not show some interest and help to oil the wheels. The newsletter editor doesn't even need to live in Britain, with the wonders of modern communication.
Special thanks to Bruce Mair for his enthusiastic chivvying, and to Roger Hinton for his organising skills & AGA logo.



DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW

WEB PAGES

The Department of Geology & Petroleum Geology is continuing with its moves to become increasingly accessible to everyone. This has not been more evident than in the last year with the launch of new departmental web pages. The web page can be found at:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/geology>

The web pages feature information on all aspects of the Department from undergraduate studies & fieldwork to research giving a broad overview of the department as a whole. It is hoped the web page in addition to helping future students will be of use in funding further research and also provide an interface for the Geological Alumni Association with the possible addition of a page for the society.

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The department opened its doors even further and on the 14th & 15th of June held a departmental research symposium in Kings College Conference Centre. Key aspects of the department's research were covered. The symposium was well attended by industry. No less than 56 companies and representatives from the DTI attended. The highlight of this event was undoubtedly the after dinner speech by Marlan Downey of Sarkeys Institute, Oklahoma who pointed out the advantages and cost savings to be made by carrying out research through the university rather than by in house R&D. It is hoped to hold a further symposium in the future. Information on the department's research interests can be obtained from the web page or from the address below.

OPEN DAY

In association with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Tourist Board the Department held an Open Day on the 1st September 1999 as part of Scottish Geology Week. This event was very well attended by people of all ages. On offer were a wide variety of events including gold panning and a chance to win a prize by drilling for oil at the "fit like oil field". Oil was struck

by many but after some reservoir appraisal it was found to be non-economic to keep drilling. The star of the show was however the department's latest invention - an earthquake machine which proved to be exceedingly popular with the visitors and even attracted the attention of the engineering department.

DINOSAUR FOOTPRINTS FOUND ON FOURTH YEAR FIELD TRIP

Claws indicate a meat-eating dinosaur



Fossil footprints from what may be a previously unknown species of dinosaur have been discovered in Yorkshire, England.

They appeared after a section of sandstone cliff collapsed on a beach near Scarborough.

The scientists who found the tracks say they are about 175 million years old. Geologists Dr Gordon Walkden and Dr Mike Simmons noticed the tracks during a field trip they were running for fourth-year students at the University of Aberdeen.

They have recorded several sizes of print which range up to 25cm across. In most cases, the creature that made them is known. However, there is one set of impressions that are proving hard to identify. They have something like a 10cm spread of the foot and what has been left behind is a very clear impression of claws," said Dr Walkden. From the print we can work out the shape of the foot and can go back to what is known of the fossils and try to match it up," he

said. "We can't do that at the moment - which means we are possibly looking at a species of dinosaur we haven't seen before.

"The presence of sharp claws on the ends of the toes is a clear indication that they ate meat. And that puts them in the same batch of dinosaurs as velociraptor."

The geologist said the "loose conclusions" that had been drawn from the prints now needed to be tested by the wider scientific community. The discovery will be written up, photographed and published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Fossil footprints are not common in Britain, said Dr Walkden. "There are only a few places we can get them. We have to search very hard."

The blocks containing the fossils are on display at the Department of Geology, University of Aberdeen.



This article can also be viewed on the BBC web site.

DEPARTMENTAL FUNDING

The department is always looking for additional research funding and funding as provided by the Geological Alumni Association for undergraduate fieldwork (Thanks again) is always welcome.

The department currently has 24 PhD students and numbers are set to increase again with the start of the new term.

The MSc class number 26 students.

Junior Honours currently stands at 38.

Senior Honours at 32.

Should you wish more information on any aspect of the department, or are in a position to fund research, or donate money, do not hesitate to contact Dr Mike Simmons at the department on

geology@abdn.ac.uk

or write to

The Department of Geology & Petroleum Geology, Meston Walk, Old Aberdeen, Aberdeen. AB24 3UE

NEW STAFF

The Department of Geology & Petroleum Geology are pleased to announce the addition of the following staff to the department and would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to the members of the Geological Alumni Association.

Professor David Macdonald has recently joined the department from CASP Cambridge Arctic Shelf Program where he was director of the successful research program.

Dr John Parnell also joined the department and brought with him a large list of recent research publications and several students.

Replacements within the department for Bill Ashcroft and Tim Reston are currently being sought, following the retirement of Bill and Tim's departure to Germany.

MD.