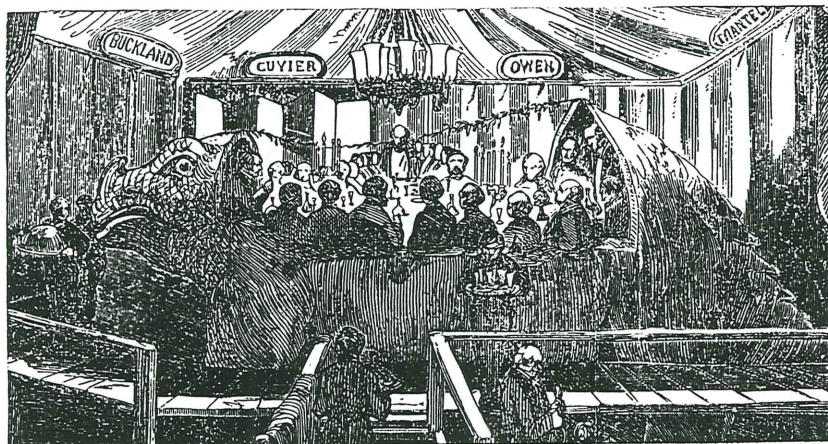


# CHARNIA



LEICESTER

LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL  
SOCIETY

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
SECTION C (GEOLOGY)

SPRING 1997 EDITION

## The Field Trip Questionnaire and this season's programme

Sincere thanks to all who returned the Questionnaire, which was around half the membership (47). This represents what might be considered the 'hard-core' of members who would, and are intending to, support field trips. The response was very encouraging and leaves no doubt that a field excursion programme is still popular. The traditional one day/local excursion remains the favourite with most people, so Pete Blake and myself have arranged three one day outings to localities within reasonable driving distances. These are: Griff No. 4 and Judkins quarries near Nuneaton on Saturday May 3rd, lead by John Crossling; quarries near Whittlesea on Sunday August 24th with Alan Dawn, and Blockley Quarry with Pete Blake on Sunday September 7th. We were pleased to find there was also interest in evening and weekend excursions. As a result we are offering an evening trip to Ives Head in Charnwood on June 26th, lead by Helen Boynton. Maybe next year, if support is good this season, we will try for a weekend trip to somewhere a little more 'exotic', like south-west England (vice-chairman's bias - sorry!). Interest was expressed in a more ambitious programme and so we have pencilled in a visit to the famous Sedgwick Museum in Cambridge for September 21st (this date is subject to confirmation). We may hire a bus for this one so that other people can come who just wish to visit Cambridge.

Transport was not a problem for most of you, but a small number of people indicated difficulties. We would like to help and can arrange for lifts if folks would like to phone Andrew Swift on 0116 2523646 sometime before the trip, or contact any other member of the committee. We also thought it might be an idea to have a central meeting place before setting off for those uncertain of the way or for car pooling, and propose that those who wish to can meet in the Geology Department car park off University Road prior to travelling. It will be up to you whether you want to do this, you can still go direct to the locality if you prefer.

The major innovation we are introducing is an advance booking and reminder system which will also incorporate information on the locality to be visited. A handout will be dispatched to each member approximately one month before each excursion. We would ask interested parties to complete the form on the handout to indicate their intention to attend. This is a response to your clear support for this proposal and will enable us to cancel a poorly supported trip in reasonable time. We are aware that some people won't be able to give advance notice of their intentions and can simply turn up as before on the day, but we will only be able to inform those who have returned forms that a trip has been cancelled.

Finally, we have resolved as a committee to try harder with the programme, keep you informed and encourage your support, but the success of the excursions ultimately rests with you. Let's be seeing you!

## Programme 1997

### Day Trips

May 3rd Griff No. 4 and Judkins quarries, Nuneaton. Leader, John Crossling.

August 24th Quarries around Whittlesea, including Star Pit. Leader, Alan Dawn.

September 7th Blockley Quarry. Leader, Pete Blake.

### Evening Trip

June 26th Ives Head, Charnwood. Leader Helen Boynton.

### Museum Visit

September 21st (provisional) Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge.

Further information, a booking form and geological background will be sent to all members approximately one month before each trip.

Andrew Swift, on behalf of the Committee, 19/9/97

GEOLOGY (SECTION C) - LEICESTER LITERARY & PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

SECRETARY'S REPORT

12th. MARCH, 1997.

This has been another successful year of Winter Meetings with an enjoyable series of talks on a broad spectrum of topics. Our first meeting opened with a talk from our President, Bob King. Most meetings had attendances of over thirty and it was both pleasing and encouraging to be joined by a number of University students and staff on many occasions. Our thanks must go Rob Blakeman for his hard work in generating support and enthusiasm and we wish him well in his future as a geology graduate.

Our Christmas meeting also saw a high turnout and - as usual - a good time was had by all, with a good selection of presentations, some edible, others for our investigation. Our members' slide evening saw a good number and variety of slide collections. Many thanks for sharing them with us.

The joint meeting with the Yorks. and East Midlands Geol. Socs. was well attended with a good number of our members present. Thank you Roy Clements for the organisation. Our thanks also go to Jan Zalasiewicz for organising the Saturday School at Vaughan College.

The production of 'Charnia' continued as our main medium of communication - thanks to Graham Stocks for putting it together - and Doug Lazenbury for addressing the envelopes.

We have missed the convivial company of Roger Newman recently, both at talks and committee meetings, due to employment which takes in Wednesday evenings. He is hopeful of making it to some of the Summer meetings.

May we wish you all a pleasant Summer, enjoyable field trips and to assemble again for our next Winter series on Wednesday, October 8th., 1997.

Eliz Bellamy

Pauline Dawn, from Stamford, writes: 'December's 'Charnia' says "any offers of articles for 'Charnia' will be gratefully received" so I am submitting this about our tremendous find on a field trip last year. Perhaps it will encourage people to go on field outings...

THE DEEPING ELEPHANT

One warm July evening last year, members of the Stamford & District Geological Society had a field outing to a gravel pit near Market Deeping, some eight miles from Peterborough. This was one of a series of regular annual meetings at this location, as Pleistocene fossils are regularly turned up and - with twenty-four pairs of eyes searching (one pair only nine years old) - we hoped to find more. Elephant remains had been found in the vicinity by a local amateur collector and by Harry Langford, who is researching the area as part of his Ph.D thesis.

During the visit, Pauline Dawn unearthed some interesting bone material which proved to be part of a shattered tusk of an elephant. Frantic excavation over a two-week period produced a considerable quantity of an elephant skeleton and it was when part of the skull and mandible were found, both with teeth in situ, that Alan Dawn was able to identify the beast as the Straight-tusked Elephant, Palaeoloxodon antiquus.

The remains have been placed in Peterborough City Museum, which is the nearest and geologically most appropriate depository. Peterborough has the facilities and expertise to carry out the urgent conservation work necessary for the preservation of the remains. Around a quarter of the skeleton was unearthed and in spite of further searching during the Autumn of 1996, nothing else was revealed when overlying gravels were removed. The area has been worked out as far as gravel extraction is concerned and flooding has subsequently taken place following the cessation of commercial activity.

With the Upnor elephant (1928) and the Aveley skeletons (1964) the Deeping elephant is one of the three most complete Straight-tusked Elephant skeletons found in Britain. Dr. Anthony Stuart, of Norwich Castle Museum, confirmed the identification and has offered advice on further work. Dr. Stuart's opinion is that the animal was not quite full-grown, being around thirty to forty years of age at its demise. Some epiphyses were not fused and its size indicates that the individual was female. The bones were embedded in a silt and clay bed, being part of a river bed in which we speculate the animal became trapped. Work on the mollusc and insect fauna, and the palaeobotany and palynology is in hand and there is the possibility of dating associated sediments by thermoluminescence.

The Stamford Society is fortunate in having so many helping hands, as well as the expertise of Peter Green, a civil engineer, and the lifting and transporting facilities provided by David Wells. The digging season was rounded-off with an 'Elephant Dinner' for all who had worked on the excavation, as well as workers at the quarry who were involved in the work. This was held at the local inn where parched diggers slaked their thirst in the long, hot Summer days and evenings, but never arrived before the kitchen closed. A post-script was provided in February when Stamford Society member and 'Rockwatch' enthusiast nine-year-old Robert Siddaway appeared on 'Blue Peter' with some of the elephant bones. Sadly, he was given little opportunity to elaborate about the find.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO LEICESTER MUSEUM?

"Watch this space...."

...the last words in the last "Charnia" about the problems at the museum.. The good news is that, from April 1st when Leicester City Council became a Unitary Authority, the geology collections will stay at New Walk Museum where they have been for the whole 148 years of museum geology in Leicester. John Martin becomes Curator of New Walk Museum (including the Art Gallery); there are no other paid geologists at the museum at the time of writing but this will be remedied with new specialist appointments in the spring.. Meanwhile geological services and exhibitions will continue - phone 0116 255 4100 for details - with the valuable help of Arthur Cruickshank (Research Associate) and volunteers.

The complete geological sites service will be provided by Leicestershire County Council's museums section, based for the present at Holly Hayes, Birstall - Gill Weightman is in charge and can be contacted on 0116 267 1950. The County Museums natural history section has exciting plans to develop a new wildlife/geology centre somewhere out in the county.

The last 18 months have been hard for museum staff. No doubt readers have their own opinions about the sense of splitting a comprehensive, integrated service - not least because of the loss of efficiency and economy that results. But it's all over now, and both new museum services really do have opportunities to expand and improve.

We hope you will support your City and County museums services by visiting exhibitions and using the collections. "Watch this space" again, but this time it's an optimistic message.

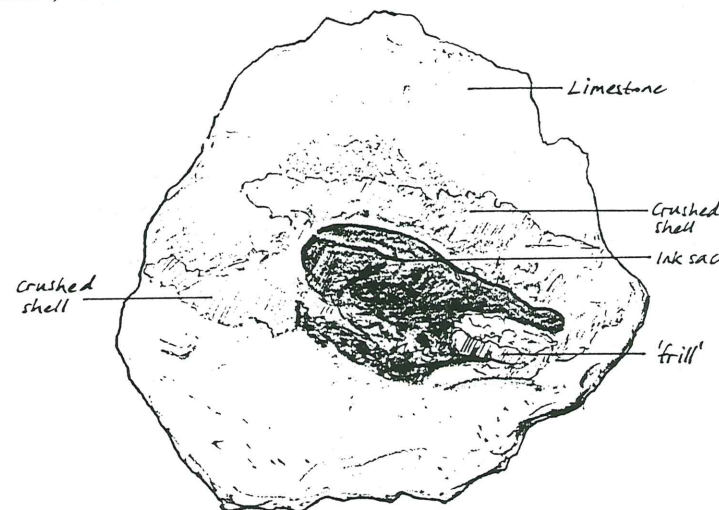
## NEW AT LEICESTER MUSEUM

Many of you will remember Ralph Tajpowski, who was a member of Section C in the 1970s and 80s. Ralph is an active collector - of all that interests him - but especially of fossils. He has "the eye" for finding the finest specimens.

Leicester Museum has now been honoured to receive a major donation from Ralph. Two collections are involved: about a hundred upper Liassic (Jurassic) fish from the "fish and insect limestone" of NE Leicestershire, collected in the early 70s when Ralph was in the Holwell Research Group (who remembers that?); and an equal number of nodules from the North Yorkshire Lias containing a whole fauna of fossil arthropods - very early "prawns".

Both collections are of considerable research potential, and the intention is to set up two projects with the University to have the specimens catalogued, described and published.

The other exciting recent acquisition came to the museum as an identification enquiry. This only happens once or twice in a curator's career - a specimen picked up in a field by a non-geologist turns out to be of considerable importance. This one is a fossil "cuttlefish" (strictly speaking an early dibrancliate mollusc) from the same "fish and insect limestone" of NE Leicestershire as Ralph's fish. Fossil cuttlefish are rare enough in any case, but this one goes into the record books as the first from the Lias to have the ink sac, and other soft tissues, preserved. It has been generously donated to the museum by its finder, Mr Bob Smith of Melton Mowbray, and can now be identified, described and published. The only other significant British locality for ink sacs is the Callovian (Oxford Clay) of Christian Malford, Wiltshire.



Fossil 'CUTTLEFISH' WITH INK-SAC  
UPPER LIAS ('FISH & INSECT LIMESTONE')  
JURASSIC. BRANSTON, LECS..

**YOUR HELP IS REQUESTED!**

Going to Italy in the not too distant future? Including a visit to Rome on your agenda? Perhaps you could help me...

During my recent travels around Italy I did the usual touristy things - looking at the art, sculpture, buildings, etc. When in Rome I went slightly off the beaten circuit, just down the line from the Colosseum and came across the Basilica di S. Paolo (St. Paul's Basilica). This is a rather different and unusual church, made even more so by the windows. They were not stained glass, or even plain glass. From what I could see they appeared to be 'thin sections' of rock. I only had a small 'Instamatic' camera with me, so I felt it was a pointless exercise trying to photograph the windows. If you are down that way, you may think it worth a visit to get a decent photograph and possibly ascertain the nature of the windows.

Eliz Bellamy

**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS: LEICESTER LITERARY & PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY SECTION 'C' - GEOLOGY**

RECEIPTS	1996-7	1995-6
Cash in hand (£6.33)		
Building society (£540.97)	547.30	461.98
Subscriptions	312.50	314.50
Donation	5.00	4.00
Buildg. Soc. interest	11.47	16.82
Sales of coffee	22.54	18.74
	898.81	816.04
EXPENSES	1996-7	1995-6
Insurance	68.33	68.33
Speakers' expenses	107.75	54.75
Stationery	10.83	24.84
Photocopies	3.15	17.41
Postage	95.80	23.52
Printing of 'Charnia'	83.65	78.80
Jnt. Mtg. S. Yorks.	22.23	-
Telephone	-	1.09
Cash in hand (£15.51)		
Building Society (£491.56)		
	507.07	547.30
	898.81	816.04

Audited on March 23rd., 1997, by M.J.East.