

Skiddaw U3A News 9th October 2019

Geology Group – goodbye and hello

Last month members attended two field meetings. The first one had been postponed because of atrocious weather in August and was to Pets Quarry at the southern end of the Kirkstone Pass. The quarry displays features produced when, about 450 million years ago, hot molten rock with a temperature of around 1000 degrees C was intruded into wet volcanic sediments. The second meeting was the final event for the current cohort as a new course starts later this month (a few places are still available). We visited the southern part of the Vale of Eden to examine fossiliferous Carboniferous limestones that accumulated in a shallow tropical sea about 340 million years ago. At lunchtime the group presented convener Chris Wilson with a card and gift and Lyn Midgley read a poem *An Apology to Geology* (see below) that she and her husband John had written to mark the occasion. The afternoon was devoted to examining desert sediments that were deposited about 290 million years ago when the area was at a similar latitude to that occupied by the Sahara today. The grand finale to the two years the group had spent studying geology was performed in an old quarry in Appleby that exposes fossil desert sand dunes. Here Chris Wilson unrolled his *Toilet Roll of Time*. Each sheet on the 230-sheet roll represent 20 million years. One end of the roll marks the origin of the Earth and the Solar System and the other the present day. Anatomically modern humans appeared about 200 000 years ago, just over one millimetre from the end of the last sheet. But only during the present warm inter-glacial period did human culture advance from hunter-gathering and stone tool making. Evidence of agriculture appears in the Middle East from around 10 000 years ago – within the perforations along the edge of the last sheet! During this incredibly short period of time in terms of the history of our planet humans have drastically changed it many ways – including its climate.

An Apology to Geology *By John and Lyn Midgley*

Looking for something for the brain to hone
we heard Chris Wilson was a wow with stone.
We joined the group that made us think,
And introduced us to Shap Blue and Pink.

First meeting was fine and dandy,
We met each other and all got friendly.
Moraines and drumlins that first week
Down by the lake we had a peek.

Over the winter in the village hall,
spyglass in hand we did enthrall.
We learnt the Lakes had many a feature,
And we enjoyed an excellent teacher.

When spring finally came around,
Field trips aplenty Chris had found.
Sedimentary rocks are the very thing
To encourage the heart to sing.

From Threlkeld, Honister and Mosedale,
Shap, St Bees and Borrowdale,
All these trips were great fun,
But not always in the sun.

Winter saw us back in Portinscale,
Continuation of a geological tale,
Magma, land drift and earthquakes
Filled our minds, giving headaches.

However, soon we were back to the sites
Finding examples of so many 'ites.
Joe* had a name, did we hear right?
Did he really call it Bollockite!

Sadly, the course comes to an end,
New things for third Fridays we must tend.
Finally we can give our brains a rest,
The good news is there is no test!

PS Nothing seemed to rhyme with blobs!

*Joe Wier, co-owner of the Honister Slate Mine, joined us in Hopper Quarry and told us what the quarrymen's term is for features that Chris referred to as 'blobs'.

Forthcoming events and activities

The next monthly meeting will be on Wednesday 16th October, at Crosthwaite Parish Rooms, where Doug Thompson will give a talk on 'The Artist as Pioneer – the European Tradition in Australian Art'. There will be an extra event in November, on Thursday 7th, when chocolatier Andrew Thwaite will give an insight into his profession. This is a ticket-only event, and tickets will be on sale at the October monthly meeting. For more information on Skiddaw U3A go to www.skiddawu3a.co.uk