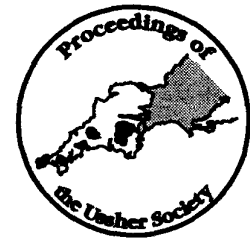


GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION IN DEVON

R.T. TAYLOR AND P. GRAINGER



Earth Resources Centre, University of Exeter

Considerable progress has been made since the Devon RIGS Group last reported to the Society in 1992. The request for site nominations produced a final list of 120 sites. In 1994 through the support of the County Ecologist Peter Chamberlain, Devon County Council provided funds for assessing a selection of the proposed sites for notification as Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites, six in each local district. (In Devon RIGS are called County Geological Sites in parallel with County Wildlife Sites which have the same status.)

Teignbridge District Council provided funding in 1994 for the detailed assessment of County Geological Sites in Teignbridge District. Further funding followed from South Hams District Council, and East Devon District Council. Currently The Dartmoor National Park Committee has provided funding for assessment of sites in the park area to commence early in 1997. Interest in the RIGS initiative is also being expressed by Exeter City Council and Mid Devon District Council.

In total 153 County Geological Sites have so far been identified. English Nature has provided a grant towards the purchase of hardware and software for the compilation of a database for the sites.

Assessment of the whole of the Exmoor National Park, both in Devon and Somerset, was undertaken by Mr Hugh Prudden of Somerset RIGS Group aided by funding from the Exmoor National Park Committee. There are 24 County Geological Sites in the Devon area of the park including some coastal sites.

Teignbridge: sixteen sites have been selected outside the Dartmoor National Park including some de-registered SSSI's.

South Hams: The original decision to exclude coastal areas from the current work of the Group has been followed except in the South Hams where, at the request of the Heritage Coast Service, six coastal sites were selected which were independently funded. About 100 old quarries and other exposures were examined and 46 sites identified. In addition as part of the project, proposals for six geological trails and special interpretation sites were presented to the District Council.

East Devon: Examination of proposed sites and the search for other sites is nearing completion. Most old quarries were found to be completely degraded. The once famous Tolcis Quarry, a former SSSI is in a very poor state, but it may prove possible to resurrect the only inland exposure of the Lias-Rhaetian boundary. So far 24 inland sites have been identified.

Other work: The group has also been able to provide geological input for two new road schemes in the county with a view to conserving the new exposures created. A proposed western bypass for Barnstaple, if it goes ahead, could provide a major new section through the Pilton Beds. The Buckfastleigh relief road will provide a section through Middle Devonian volcanics of the Ugbrook Unit, Upper Devonian, Kate Brook Slate and a roadside exposure of a

previously undescribed lamprophyre dyke. Folding, faulting and possibly one of the major thrusts of the district, will also be exposed.

With assistance from Devon County Council, an information leaflet for landowners has been prepared with art-work drafted by Mrs Pat Thorman, the Devon RIGS Group chairwoman. Mrs Thorman has also produced annotated line drawings of several of the viewpoint County Geological Sites. These have been included in the reports presented to the local authorities and will be used for site documentation.

Again with support from the County Council, work is in hand to bring the geological resources provided by County Geological Sites to the notice of Devon schools. The investigation of the provision of geological information for the sites tailored to the needs of teachers and the requirements of the national curriculum is being undertaken by Margaret Mackintosh of Rolle College, Exmouth.

Support for the Devon RIGS Group from the Earth Resources Centre, University of Exeter, the University of Plymouth, the British Geological Survey, Exeter, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter and Plymouth City Museum is also acknowledged.