

PROFILE

A brief autobiography by Dr Richard Hamblin, new President of the EMGS

Unlike Sue Miles, my predecessor as President, I cannot claim an East Midlands origin, nor to have been born post-war! However, I am from the Midlands, having been born in south Birmingham. At King Edward's School I gravitated into science, but by the time I had passed the traditional three A-levels of maths, physics and chemistry I had become rather bored with 'indoor' science so I stayed on an extra year to add A-level geology. My interest in geology stemmed partly from a fascination for maps (and the discovery that geological maps were the most colourful) and partly from my experiences with the boy scouts. Whilst I never quite mastered the difference between a reef knot and a fisherman's bend (or a triangular bandage, come to think of it), the scouts did take me to lots of interesting places such as the Isle of Arran and the Bavarian Alps, which back in the 'fifties would otherwise have been out of reach.

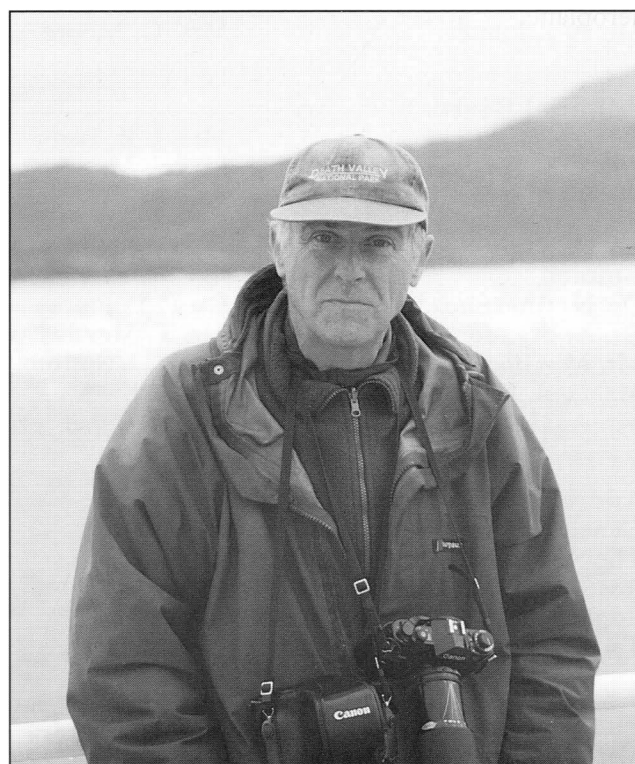
I did a degree in geology at Durham University, and although I had left school with the intention of becoming an airline pilot, I found that I could not resist carrying on in geology, so I took up a three-year post as a research assistant at Exeter University. This was to work on a NERC contract to re-map the Teignmouth 1:50,000 sheet for the then Institute of Geological Sciences (now the British Geological Survey). This work led to a PhD on the geology of the Haldon Hills, which was mainly concerned with early Tertiary Haldon Gravels. I had met my wife Sue at Durham and we married a year after I moved to Exeter. I had also learned to fly at Durham, courtesy of the University Air Squadron, and I continued flying with the Plymouth Aero Club: my aerial photographs of the Haldon Hills are generally accepted as the most boring slides ever produced . . .

Since my professor from Durham, Kingsley Dunham, had in the meantime become Director of IGS, I had always been hopeful of a post with the Survey, and thus in 1969 I found myself joining the Central and South Midlands Field Unit, and attempting to 'join up' my maps with those of Albert Horton! After a brief season on the Abingdon sheet I moved to Telford and embarked upon three years of continuous field work in the new town. We rented a house from the New Town Corporation and our son David was born while we were living there.

I had hoped that, by the end of this period, the IGS would have completed its move to Nottingham, but in 1972 I was finally obliged to return to the London office, and we lived for seven years in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. This was the right side of London for travelling to the field in the Midlands and also to my in-laws in Essex. Our daughter Elizabeth was born in Hitchin in 1974. Finally, the geological mapping units of the IGS started to move

to Keyworth, and we were in the first group to move, in October 1979.

After writing up Telford I found myself mapping on the Redditch and Birmingham sheets, and having become a geologist partly to get away from Birmingham I decided that it was time to request a move. This led to a brief and rather incomprehensible period in which I was in charge of the Keyworth branch of the Highlands and Islands Unit, mapping the Dalradian around Aberdeen, after which I settled into the Marine Geology Unit for seven years. The unit was short of staff with experience of producing maps, and I was mostly involved in the 1:250,000 solid and sea bed sediments maps of the English Channel and Thames Estuary, followed by the English Channel regional guide. However the offshore surveys were by now concentrated off Scotland, and I had some fascinating visits to such remote outposts of the empire as St Kilda, Lerwick, Stornaway and Cardiff. I thoroughly enjoyed working at sea, involving driving winches and drilling equipment as well as logging cores, but I did wish I could remember the difference between a reef knot and a fisherman's bend . . .



In 1990 the Keyworth section of the Marine Geology Unit became the Coastal Geology Unit, and I produced a 1:50,000 map of the inner Bristol Channel. Tracing the course of the Hercynian Front through Palaeozoic rocks proved an interesting but brief return to hard rock geology. However I still felt in my heart that I belonged in onshore mapping, and in 1991 I transferred to what is now the South and East England survey unit. Since then I have been concerned with surveys of north-eastern Suffolk and north Norfolk, involving around 16 weeks fieldwork

each year. I have been very successful at avoiding being transferred or promoted into an administrative position, and hope to continue doing fieldwork until I drop!

I joined EMGS as soon as I moved to Keyworth, and served for a year on Council in the early eighties, although I have not been as active as I would have liked because of long periods in the field or at sea. However my spare-time geological interests have broadened now that the children have grown up and we can take more interesting holidays, and in recent years we have paid several visits to the western states of the USA and Alaska, looking at glaciers, volcanoes and deserts — unlike anything I have found in Norfolk! Sue still does not admit to an interest in geology, but she does admit that my geological friends are more interesting than my aeronautical friends.

I have always maintained my pilot's licence and have recently bought my first share in an aeroplane, a small two-seater based at the Rolls-Royce airfield at Hucknall. I also represent the East Midlands on the national council of the Popular Flying Association, and my ambition is to build my own aeroplane, although this will clearly have to wait until I retire. We have now lived in Keyworth for eighteen years and have no plans to move since it has taken us this long to get the garden under control. Gardening on Oadby Till is very much harder than on the Upper Chalk of Hertfordshire, but we have at last produced a reasonable show of roses!