

The history of geoconservation, edited by C.V. Burek & C.D. Prosser, 2008. GSL Special Publication 300. The Geological Society of London, The Geological Society Publishing House, Unit 7, Brassmill Enterprise Centre, Brassmill Lane, Bath, BA1 3JN, United Kingdom. Hardback, 320 pages. Price GBP 60.00 (fellow price GBP 30.00; corporate affiliates price GBP 48.00; other societies' price GBP 36.00. ISBN 978-1-86239-254-0.

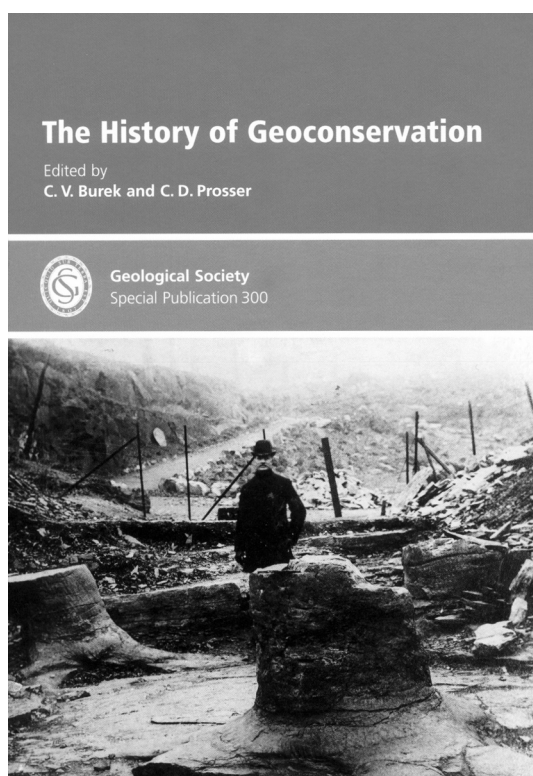
This book is a result of the conference 'History of Geoconservation', held in the Dudley Museum (West Midlands, England) on 24-25 November 2006. The conference raised much interest and its presentations form the basis of this volume, in which also some new contributions have been included. Before starting to review the book, it seems most appropriate to congratulate the editors, C.V Burek from the University of Chester and C.D. Prosser of Natural England, and the publisher, the Geological Society of London, as they helped to open a new, multi-sided gate to the earth sciences. Geoconservation will now become recognized as a separate earth-science discipline, now that its long and rich history has been brought to light.

The book includes 21 papers in addition to a preface and an introductory chapter. At first sight, the reader might think that it covers the entire history of geoconservation all over the world, but all contributions, except three, deal only with the UK. Nevertheless the contents provide, thanks to a skilful order of the chap-

ters (from local to regional and from ancient to recent) a wide perspective.

In the first, introductory, chapter the editors describe how the volume came into being, but also the meaning of the term 'geoconservation' as "an action taken with the intent of conserving and enhancing geological and geomorphological features, process, sites and specimens". This differs from 'preservation', an action that is commonly meant to keep something in the same state as it is, preventing any change. The differences between 'geoconservation' and 'geodiversity' are not made really clear, however, and it seems that the editors consider these terms here - and elsewhere in the book - as more or less synonymous.

In the next contribution, P. Doughty emphasizes that the year 1740 should be regarded as the initiation date of geoconservation history, as drawings of the Giants' Causeway were ordered by the Dublin Society and made by S. Drury. These drawings are so realistic that one can count the basalt columns, and even rec-



ognize young and old visitors. Doughty was sure that the aim of the pictures was solely to present nature and emphasize its importance. Therefore, it has an historical importance for geoconservation.

The third contribution, "Geological conservation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries", by B.A. Thomas & L.M. Warren, forms a good continuation. The next two chapters, "Geodiversity: the origin and evolution of paradigm" by M. Gray and "Towards a history of geotourism: definitions, antecedents and the future" by A.T. Hose contribute significantly to the diversity of the book. These authors emphasize the role of geotourism as complementary to geoconservation. As a matter of fact, this role is not only important but even essential for the sustainability of geoconservation; otherwise local people would neglect taking care of geosites. The interest from both groups of volunteers and professionals is required to strengthen and sustain the conservation.

In three contributions ("The role of voluntary sectors in the evolving geoconservation movement" by C.V. Burek, "The Geologists' Association and geoconservation: history and achievements" by C.P. Green, and "The role of

the British Geological Survey in the history of geoconservation" by A.A. McMillan) numerous examples are provided of the positive effects of NGOs to nature protection.

Together with education and public awareness, the creation of energetic fans and the founding of fan clubs for the topic may sometimes give good results, but the best policy is without doubt to prepare a solid legal base and good institutions, as described by C.D. Prosser in the chapter "The history geoconservation in England: legislative and policy milestones" and by N.A. Ellis in the chapter "A history of geological conservation review". They both agree that the year 1949, just after World War II, was a fruitful time since a lot of regulations on nature- and geoconservation could be realized in England.

The next eight chapters are about the history of earth scientific activities and geoconservation achievements in various regions of the UK. They are (Chapter 11) "A historical perspective on local communities and geological conservation in England" by G.J. Worton, (12) "History of RIGS in Wales" by C.V. Burek, (13) "A history of geoconservation on the Isle of Wight" by M. Munt, (14) "Context and history of geoconservation in Warwickshire" by J.D. Radley, (15) "The geological illustrations of Crystal Palace Park in London" by P. Doyle, (16) "History of cave exploration in the Yorkshire Dale" by P.J. Murphy & A.T. Chamberlain, (17) "History of geoconservation on the Wren's Nest Nature Reserve in Dudley" by C.D. Prosser & J.G. Larwood, and (18) "A history of geoconservation in the Republic of Ireland" by M.A. Parkes. In spite of many repetitions, these papers jointly show clearly that local and national museums, scientific surveying and publications are the most important tools for geoconservation. The rest, i.e. preservations and restrictions, are secondary. For example, the setting of Wren's Nest Nature Reserve – which was a kind of geoconservation – could be realized thanks to public awareness in addition to endless patient and realistic planning since 1924.

L. Erikstad has summarized the past and present case in Europe in his chapter "History of geoconservation in Europe". To him, the beginning of geoconservation might be taken as

the protection of a cave in Germany in 1565, although the setting of national parks based on geological features and site protection during the last century should be considered as the major steps on the way of geoconservation. ProGEO, The European Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage founded in 1995, and its journal "GeoHeritage" are working for the future of the geoconservation.

In their contribution "Geodiversity in the wilderness; a brief history of geoconservation in Tasmania", I. Houshold & C. Sharples describe the efforts and success regarding the protection of nature and wildlife in the last four decades. Combining geo- and biodiversity, local culture and wilderness was the main strategy, and thus Tasmania is a useful case study for beginners. However, the combination of a low population density and much scientific experience seems to have played a main role in the success.

"History of geoparks" by C. Jones is a good contribution to the volume as geoparks and geoconservation are twin concepts in nature

protection. Jones describes briefly the Unesco Geopark initiative, the European Geopark Network and the Global Networks of National Geoparks. The last chapter of the book, "Geological site designation under the 1972 Unesco World Heritage Convention" by P.J. Boylan, is a thorough, comparative study on the convention, showing how much geology, geological heritage and geoconservation are still ignored. It includes an appendix of the World Heritage Sites with geological inscriptions.

The book is a well-illustrated, easily readable volume. The lack of colour photos can be well defended for a book with this title. The only point to be criticized is that information is not rarely duplicated in successive papers. It is nevertheless clear that the volume is an excellent benchmark in the field of geoconservation. I recommend it strongly for every individual and institutional library.

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