
Carboniferous and Permian igneous rocks of Great Britain North of the Variscan Front

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GCR Editor: D. Palmer

Published by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1JY, UK

First edition 2003

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Typeset in 10/12pt Garamond ITC by JNCC

Printed in Great Britain by CLE Print Limited on Huntsman Velvet 100 gsm.

ISBN 1 86107 497 2

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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Recommended example citations

Stephenson, D., Loughlin, S.C., Millward, D., Waters, C.N. and Williamson, I.T. (2003) *Carboniferous and Permian Igneous Rocks of Great Britain North of the Variscan Front*, Geological Conservation Review Series, No. 27, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Upton, B.G.J. (2003) Arthur's Seat Volcano, City of Edinburgh. In *Carboniferous and Permian Igneous Rocks of Great Britain North of the Variscan Front* (D. Stephenson, S.C. Loughlin, D. Millward, C.N. Waters and I.T. Williamson), Geological Conservation Review Series, No. 27, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, pp. 64–74.

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Acknowledgements

This volume is the combined work of the 13 authors listed on page xi. Individual chapters have been compiled by the authors of the relevant chapter introductions and have been edited by D. Stephenson (chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6), K.M. Goodenough (Chapter 1 and introduction to Chapter 2), D. Millward (Chapter 3, introductions to chapters 4 and 5) and C.N. Waters (Chapter 7). Overall compilation and editing is by D. Stephenson and K.M. Goodenough. The GCR editor was D. Palmer and the referee was C.H. Emeleus, whose perceptive comments were responsible for much improvement during the later stages of preparation. The project was cofunded by JNCC and BGS and has been managed by N.V. Ellis for JNCC and D.J. Fettes and M. Smith for BGS.

The initial site selection and site documentation for this volume was by C.H. Emeleus, R. Macdonald, D. O'Halloran and I.T. Williamson and subsequent information and assistance has been provided by M. Murphy (for English Nature) and R. Threadgould, K.M. Goodenough and C. Bond (for Scottish Natural Heritage). Diagrams were drafted by S.C. White and C.F. Pamplin Q S Publications, Newmarket), the references were compiled by A. Muir and L.B. Gray, and the index was prepared by B.J. Amos. The production editor was E. Durham (JNCC). Photographs were scanned and prepared by T. Bain (BGS, Edinburgh). Photographs from the BGS collection are reproduced by kind permission of the Director, BGS NERC; all rights reserved (PR/23–27).

Several people have helped with advice on the stratigraphical framework to the magmatism, notably M.A.E. Browne on the Midland Valley of Scotland, A.A. McMillan on the Solway Basin and B. Young on northern England. WA. Read and M.A.E. Browne are also thanked for allowing sight of their text being prepared for the forthcoming fourth edition of *The Geology of Scotland*, which has been particularly useful for its summary of current ideas on palaeogeography and tectonic development. Several studies of radiometric ages were in progress at the time of compilation of this volume and the following are thanked for their permission to quote extensively from their unpublished work: M.A. Hamilton, A.A. Monaghan, D.G. Pearson, M.S. Pringle and M. Timmerman. D.T. Moffat allowed unpublished work on the diatrema at Golden Hill Quarry to be incorporated in that site report. B. Young provided information on mineralization associated with the Whin Sill-complex and contributed much helpful discussion on various aspects of the complex. Particular thanks are

also due to B.G.J. Upton for his advice and inspiration over many years and for much discussion during the joint compilation (with D.S.) of a contribution to *The Geology of Scotland*, some results of which will be inevitably duplicated in this volume.

Finally, on behalf of all of the site report authors, we would like to record our thanks to the owners and managers of land and quarries who have allowed access to the sites, either during previous work or specifically for the GCR exercise.

Access to the countryside

This volume is not intended for use as a field guide. The description or mention of any site should not be taken as an indication that access to a site is open. Most sites described are in private ownership, and their inclusion herein is solely for the purpose of justifying their conservation. Their description or appearance on a map in this work should not be construed as an invitation to visit. Prior consent for visits should always be obtained from the landowner and/or occupier.

Information on conservation matters, including site ownership, relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in particular counties or districts may be obtained from the relevant country conservation agency headquarters listed below:

Countryside Council for Wales, Plas Penrhos, Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2LQ.

English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

Scottish Natural Heritage, 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 2AS.

Preface

There is such a diversity of rocks, minerals, fossils and landforms packed into the piece of the Earth's crust we call 'Britain' that it is difficult not to be impressed by the long, complex history of geological change to which they are testimony. But if we are to improve our understanding of the nature of the geological forces that have shaped our islands, further unravel their history in 'deep time' and learn more of the history of life on Earth, we must ensure that the most scientifically important of Britain's geological localities are conserved for future generations to study, research and enjoy. Moreover, as an educational field resource and as training grounds for new generations of geologists on which to hone their skills, it is essential that such sites continue to remain available for study. The first step in achieving this goal is to identify the key sites, both at national and local levels.

The GCR, launched in 1977, is a world-first in the systematic selection and documentation of a country's best Earth science sites. No other country has attempted such a comprehensive and systematic review of its Earth science sites on anything near the same scale. After over two decades of site evaluation and documentation, we now have an inventory of over 3000 GCR sites, selected for 100 categories covering the entire range of the geological and geomorphological features of Britain.

This volume, describing the Carboniferous and Permian igneous rocks of Great Britain, is the 27th to be published in the intended 42-volume GCR series. Not only does it contain the descriptions of key localities that will be conserved for their contribution to our understanding of the igneous rocks of this age, but also provides an excellent summary of the petrological features and palaeogeographical significance to be found in them, and it outlines the research that has been undertaken on them. The book will be invaluable as an essential reference book to those engaged in the study of these rocks and will provide a stimulus for further investigation. It will also be helpful to teachers and lecturers and for those people who, in one way or another, have a vested interest in the GCR sites: owners, occupiers, planners, those concerned with the practicalities of site conservation and indeed the local people for whom such sites are an environmental asset. The conservation value of the sites is mostly based on a specialist understanding of the stratigraphical, palaeontological and sedimentological features present and is therefore, of a technical nature. The account of each site in this book ends, however, with a brief summary of the geological interest, framed in less technical language, in order to help the non-specialist. The first chapter of the volume, used in conjunction with the glossary, is

also aimed at a less specialized audience. This volume is not intended to be a field guide to the sites, nor does it cover the practical problems of their ongoing conservation. Its remit is to put on record the scientific justification for conserving the sites.

This volume deals with the state of knowledge of the sites available at the time of writing, in 1998–2001, and must be seen in this context. Geology, like any other science, is an ever-developing pursuit with new discoveries being made, and existing models are subject to continual testing and modification as new data come to light. Increased or hitherto unrecognized significance may be seen in new sites, and it is possible that further sites worthy of conservation will be identified in future years.

There is still much more to learn and the sites described in this volume are as important today as they have ever been in increasing our knowledge and understanding of the geological history of Britain. This account clearly demonstrates the value of these sites for research, and their important place in Britain's scientific and natural heritage. This, after all, is the *raison d'être* of the GCR Series of publications.

N.V. Ellis, GCR Publications Manager May 2002

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