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Looking for stars and trekking in the Blue Mountains

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The Blue Mountains is probably the most picturesque region of Jamaica – high peaks, deeply incised valleys and a ruggedness that challenges all. They hold many geological secrets, and because of the nature of the terrain, they always will. Over the last few years, in conjunction with Ryan Ramsook's Ph.D. research, we studied the geology in the Back Rio Grande including the classic 'Back River' locality where Lucas Barrett discovered the rudist *Barrettia*.

The trek into this part of the Blue Mountains begins at Durham, a small community perched high up in the clouds, and reached by a long winding road with precipitous drops down steep-sided valleys. Our first trip was poorly planned with little idea of how to get to where we wanted. It involved a four hour hike and a final 10 m drop, literally for Ryan, down to the river. A brief twenty minutes searching revealed the limestone containing *Barrettia* together with a host of other rudists.

Following on from this early trip, we planned (yes planned this time) further trips – typically three days with two nights of camping on the river. Donkeys were hired to carry in provisions, but more importantly to carry



Rudist collecting in the Blue Mountains: field assistants and sample "bearers"; The load was more than two donkey could carry.

back our rock samples. But even such plans may have consequences – I recall reading about Matley's ill-fated trip to Blue Mountain Peak, where the donkey stumbled and his precious fossils disappeared down a ravine. Yes donkeys have their value, but apparently cannot carry heavy loads down very steep paths. That is, of course, where students come I – young fit (?), and capable of carrying 20 kg of rocks. Add a few field guides (older, much fitter and capable of carrying considerably more rocks), and a hotchpotch of other UWI explorers and our team is complete. I remember our second camping trip particularly. After a great start, the clouds built up and the heavens opened (a blessed little shower!). Mud! Have you ever seen so much, or had to put your foot in it? Squelch, squelch, squelch. Wet vegetation everywhere, rubbing against you and making you even wetter, if that were possible. And still 2 hours walking ahead. But the sun came out, camp was made, and the rest of the

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day belonged to geology. After a long day, a good meal was the order of the day. Cooked on an open fire by the river – yam, banana, and even the unlucky wild pig. With the sun long gone, the fire turning to embers, and an empty bottle or two of rum, it was time to reflect, talk with our guides, and watch the stars appear in a very dark sky.

Our study of the succession in the Back Rio Grande indicates that three different limestones are present separated by volcanicalstic sediments, and underlain and overlain by basalts or basaltic andesites. The lowest limestone contains the distinctive rudist *Barrettia monilifera* first discovered by Lucas Barrett and described by Samuel Thomas Woodward. The second limestone yields a rather impoverished fauna, whereas the third limestone contains both *Barrettia* and *Titanosarcolithes*. And, yes here we have found a secret. Our trips have lain to rest one of the great controversies of Jamaican geology. Chubb was convinced that *Barrettia* and *Titanosarcolithes* never occurred together, and maintained this view until his death.



Two fossil rudists contained in the same unit, previously thought to never occur together.

Trechmann initially regarded the two forms as having different ranges, but later recorded both forms together. It is clear from reading the correspondence in issues of *Geonotes* that this Trechmann- Chubb controversy created a great deal of animosity. Perhaps it is fitting then, that the area from which the first rudist from Jamaica was described by Woodward in 1862, and I believe never visited by either Chubb or Trechmann, should have a single outcrop with a specimen of *Titanosarcolithes* sitting side-by-side with a specimen of *Barrettia*. Yes the Blue Mountains have their secrets, and we have discovered one, but what else is out there to uncover?

THE JAMAICA OBSERVER Sunday, July 1, 2007

BOOKENDS page 2 THE SUNDAY OBSERVER, July 1, 2007

>>>BOOK FIND .

An interesting little book was recently launched at the Golf View Hotel in Mandeville by author Anthony Porter, a Jamaican-born exploration geologist. *Bricks and Stones from the Past: Jamaica's Geological Heritage* (UWI Press) is an informative gem of a book chronicling the island's geo-historical heritage. The book basically attempts, and achieves, to analyse the nature, origin and use of the materials used in the construction of Jamaica's varied historical sites and artefacts and link them to their points of origin. The result is a fascinating read, surprisingly not at all esoteric in its scope, and a better appreciation of the development of Jamaica up to the early part of the twentieth century.

As a point of interest, Porter explains that the sleek glossy cover features a photo of a partially carved block of white limestone that was uncovered at Seville Heritage Park in St Ann, during an archaeological dig in 2002.

"This and other carved stone items found at this particular site are examples of the Plateresque style of the Spanish Renaissance," Porter informs. "They were left behind when Seville was abandoned in 1534 (but could have been manufactured before that date), were subsequently covered over by layers of sediment

(largely silt and mud), and remained hidden from view for at least 468 years. And, it took a Canadian, Robyn Woodward, all the way from British Columbia, doing her doctoral thesis on the first sugar mill site in Jamaica at Seville to make this discovery. It's a fascinating story but I could only mention it briefly in the book."

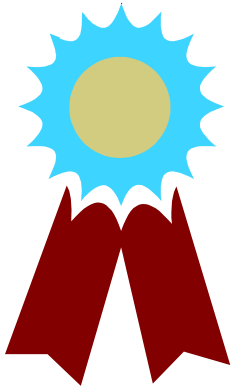
Still, the book is an important one and packs a wallop with the material it does expand on in seven easy-to-read chapters (complete with glossary) and should prove useful to collectors, museums, libraries, researchers and schools.

Bricks and Stones from the Past: Jamaica's Geological Heritage retails for about \$1,500. Copies are available at the UWI bookstore, the UWI Press, and are making their way into other local bookstores.

Get your copy Today!!!



Tremors



CONGRATULATIONS!!

The GSJ would like to extend our heartiest Congratulations to our President, Parris A. Lyew-Ayee, on being confirmed the Order of Distinction (Commander Class) in the 2007 National Honors. He received this honor for service to the Bauxite and Alumina industry.

The MonaGeoInformatix Institute was officially launched on Friday September 28th 2007 at the Terra Nova Hotel. The launch was led by the Governor General and the new Principal of the UWI Mona Campus, with special guest speaker G. Raymond Chang the chairman of C.I. Funds and chancellor of Ryson University.

The Function was well attended by the business sector, Mainly the financial areas, as well as public sector and university people.

This launch brought into sharp focus the powerful role GIS and the Geosciences bring to development in Jamaica, and tangible application to be used by a broad spectrum of business and development areas.



The Society would like to wish Professor Trevor Jackson and Mr. Rafi Ahmad a speedy recovery. Both are recuperating from recent operations and we wish them all his best and hope to see them back to normal soon.





Tremors

Upcoming Earth Science Meetings

Lithostratigraphy of Jamaica Resolving Nomenclature Issues

The lithostratigraphic nomenclature for Jamaica has developed in 'ad hoc' fashion and numerous nomenclature problems exist. In order to develop a sound lithostratigraphic nomenclature for Jamaica, it is necessary to have a meeting of interested parties to discuss and vote on these issues. It is therefore proposed to hold a meeting of the **Jamaican Lithostratigraphic Committee** which is run under the auspices of the **Geological Society of Jamaica** to consider and resolve outstanding lithostratigraphic problems. A meeting is proposed for early November 2007 to be held in the **Department of Geography and Geology**. Pre-meeting registration is required, for dissemination of the document "**Problems with the lithostratigraphic nomenclature of Jamaica: courses of action and proposals**". The results will be published in the **Caribbean Journal of Earth Science**.

Geological Society of Jamaica's Presents

Geoscience for Development Week

Geohazards and risk

November 26th –30th 2007

The Society will host several events during this week including seminars and a field trip.

Check our web site for updates <http://gsj.monainformatixltd.com/>

The Eighth Research Conference of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Mona

26th-28th February 2008

The Eighth Research Conference of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Mona will be held during the mid-Semester II break (February 26-28, 2008). The Conference will highlight research undertaken by staff and graduate students primarily in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, UWI, Mona Campus. Additionally, researchers in other Faculties of The University, and investigators at other tertiary level institutions are warmly invited to present original, scientific findings. Time-slots have been allocated to two addresses by a guest speaker: Dr. Kenneth Goodman (Director of the Bioethics Program, University of Miami, USA). A Conference Website will be established in the coming days to facilitate on-line registration, submission of abstracts, and provide additional information for participants.

18TH CARIBBEAN GEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

March 25th—28th, 2008

Dates and Location: March 25th—28th, 2008, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Deadline for abstracts: Dec 31st 2007.

For details, see the website: http://www.sodogeo.org/detalle_noticias.asp?codid=135



Upcoming Earth Science Meetings

8th International Congress on Rudists, Izmir, Turkey

23rd-25th June 2008.

The 8th International Congress on Rudists, Izmir, Turkey 23-25 June, 2008. The meeting will be held at the Dokuz Eylul University and dedicated to a Turkish rudist specialist Necdet Karacabey-Öztemür. The theme of the congress is "Cretaceous Rudists and Carbonate Platforms". Deadlines for registration is 15 March 2008. For more information, please consult the meeting's web site: <http://web.deu.edu.tr/>

1st Circular

FOUNDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS: CELEBRATING GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

Conference to be held on Mona Campus, Jamaica, 7th - 11th July, 2008

The conference will be an integral part of the university's 60th anniversary celebrations, The conference will focus on the following themes:

1. The contribution of The University of the West Indies to the development of Caribbean geography and geology.
2. The contribution of the Department to applied research.
3. Current themes and future directions in geography and geology in the region.

The three-day meeting will feature two days of selected papers, with a mid-session field trip (urban geography or coastal vulnerability). An optional post-conference overnight fieldtrip to Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory, which will explore north coast tourism, and Cockpit Country geology and karst, is also planned.

For further information, please contact the conference chairman, Dr. David J. Miller (email: david.miller@uwimona.edu.jm), or Professor David Barker (email: david.barker@uwimona.edu.jm) at the Department of Geography and Geology, The University of the West Indies, Mona (tel: (876) 927-2129 / 927-2728).





Colourscapes

Dr. Gavin Gunter, a member of the GSJ and fellow geologist, will be mounting his second solo art exhibition next month at the Hilton Hotel Lobby. The title of this show is "Colourscapes". The exhibit will showcase around 20 pieces many of which are abstract and figurative.

This show is composed exclusively of 'smaller works' on paper and canvas in contrast to my much larger commissioned pieces (some as large as 30' by 40').

The series of paintings in "Colourscapes" makes special use of Jamaican South Coast Black Sand which has become somewhat of a signature for me.

Turn out in your numbers to support a fellow member of our fraternity in this Endeavour.

Don't forget to sign the guest book!!



Farewell to Ian Brown

Ian has served the Society for many years, starting as a student working for the Secretariat, then Treasurer and President. He was very instrumental in the Society's hosting of Earth Science Week, now Geoscience for Development Week. He joined the Society as a student member in 1993. He ran the Secretariat from 1997 to 1999, served as Treasurer from 1999 to 2002, was elected President in 2002 and served until 2004, after which he again served as Treasurer from 2004 to 2005.

He and his family have recently relocated to Florida; we will miss him but wish him and his family the very best for the future.





*Field Trip to St. Ann & Trelawny
June 30th 2007*



Above: Field leader Dr. Tom Stemann explains to the chemist, Dr. Tony Greenaway, that this limestone outcrop is more than just a lump of CaCO_3



The section of the North Coast belt visited consist of 3 mappable limestone units of Neogene age. The rocks in these terraces have been affected by dissolution and later re-precipitation of carbonate by groundwater and show karstic features. The area is riddled with caves and sinkholes are common both on land and offshore. Coarsely crystalline calcite dripstone coats many outcrops with some new exposures showing impressive stalagmite deposits.



It's lonely at the top!





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***The Geode would like to report the news on
geology and geologists at your organization!
Please contact us with details of
achievements, appointments and special
projects at
your agency.***

GSJ COUNCIL 2007—2008

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MEMBERSHIP FEES (Indicate your status with an asterisk “*”)

STATUS	ANNUAL FEE (J\$)
Institutional	3,000.00
Professional	1,000.00
Associate	200.00
Student	100.00

Areas of Interest: _____

Membership in the Society is open to all persons with an interest in Geology and all related earth sciences. Application for Membership may be submitted to the Secretary/Treasurer, Geological Society of Jamaica. c/o Department of Geography & Geology, University of the West Indies, Mona, Kingston 7, Jamaica.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING EACH YEAR OR BY THE 31ST OF JANUARY.