

GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

NEWSFLASH No 55

12th December 2006

GEOSCIENCES06: THE MASSEY EXPERIENCE

Jérôme Lecointre and his team made the 2006 conference a thoroughly rewarding and pleasant experience for both geologists and the geophysicists. Despite it being a joint meeting, it was relatively small (187 registered); but with many Wellingtonians only visiting for the day. There was a good proportion of geophysical papers merged into inter-disciplinary themes. There was something different and topical for the mid conference field trip - the engineering geology of a windfarm. There was an even more unusual and entertaining barbeque at the Turakina Maori Girls College at Marton. The dinner featured some imaginative interpretations of "Cannes et can-can", with the President of the Geophysical Soc. appearing in a little number inspired by Heitz-Watties. Everything went very smoothly. Thank you, Massey.

NATIONAL AWARDS

The society's main awards, presented at the conference dinner, were:

The McKay Hammer, the Society's premier award, went to Dr Tim Naish of GNS Science for his preface and two first-authored papers on the Plio-Pleistocene marine record of the Wanganui Basin published in a benchmark issue of J. Roy. Soc. NZ in 2005. The papers were noteworthy for their carefully thought-out projects, meticulous attention to detail and insightful interpretations. Tim could not collect his hammer because, as the evening news told us, he was making amazing discoveries drilling holes in Antarctica.

The Hochstetter Lecturer for 2007 is Professor Paul Williams of the School of Geography and Environmental Sciences, Auckland University. A long-time member of the society, he will speak at all branches on his pioneer work in deciphering the high resolution palaeotemperature records of stalactites and stalagmites in Nelson and Fiordland caves. This is a refreshing new look at Quaternary palaeoclimate and landscape evolution in New Zealand. The provisional title is "Environmental Change; a view from down-under" (ground and planet). The supporting lecture is likely to be "New Zealand cave archives: palaeohydrology, tectonics, seismicity and climate".

The Kingma Award for the outstanding science technician of 2006 went to Dr Ritchie Sims, of Dept of Geology, Auckland University for exceptional initiative and technical ability in development of an internationally used electron microprobe facility, as well as being a fount of technical advice for staff and students.

The Pullar Prize for meritorious contributions to tephrochronology was awarded to Professor Brad Pillans of ANU, Canberra for his masterly work on, and synthesis of, the tephra record in the Wanganui Basin.

Incredibly, the Wellman Research Award, a generous and prestigious scholarship of about \$4,000, was not awarded this year because there were no applicants!!!! (despite adds in the Newsletter, newsflash, info on the web, and letters to Universities). The award is for a research project in either geology or geophysics, which may already have partial funding. Although there is a “preference for younger applicants”, and the award has always been to students, the rules do not preclude retirees if they need the money to pursue a good idea. The only requirement is that you must report your results in the Newsletter!

Last, but not least this year, was the Harold Wellman Prize for the most significant recent fossil find, which went to the Hamilton Junior Naturalist Club for their discovery and incredibly careful retrieval of a giant Oligocene penguin skeleton from Kawhia Harbour. Two van loads of the club’s youngsters arrived from Hamilton to collect their prize, which was presented by a sleaze-ball with a mascara moustache. Asked if they would like anything else, they asked if they could also have their photo taken with the hairy bloke in the bikini.

STUDENT AWARDS

The Hastie Scholarships are awarded to one person from each university each year to support their research on the recommendation of their HOD.

Auckland: Alison Kirkby (Kaimai Ranges structure from gravity/mag)
Waikato: Alison Graettinger (Pre-1995 Ruapehu lahar deposits)
Massey: Anja Moebis (Pyroclastic eruptions from Tongariro)
Victoria: Aidan Allan (Miocene-Recent tephras in ODP cores)
Canterbury: Brendan Duffy (Internal structure of fault zones)
Otago: Bridgette Lewis (Tephra provenance in the Wanganui Basin)

Student Conference Presentations are for the best oral and poster presentations at the annual conference.

This year the judging panel was impressed with the enthusiasm of the student’s talks and felt that, in general, they were more highly polished than those of their supervisors. However, they thought that many posters had far too much text and didn’t clearly present the reason for their work.

Winners of the awards for student oral papers were:

1st: Verne Pere (Canterbury) – Antiscarp formation modeling
Merit: Vasso Mouslopoulou (Victoria) – North Is Fault System
Merit: Kate Wilson (Victoria) – Raukumara Coast Uplift

Winners of the awards for poster presentation were:

1st: Anke Zernack (Massey) – K2O enrichment at Mt Taranaki
Merit: Naomi Matthews (Canterbury) Okataina Calera Complex
Merit: Rose Turnbull (Canterbury) Magma mingling, Stewart Is

AGM – SUBS INCREASE REJECTED

AGMs are few people's idea of a fun time but 32 members turned out (good on ya) for this necessary part of running a society like ours. After the treasurer's report indicating that expenditure was likely to exceed income in the coming year, David proposed a modest increase of \$5 in the annual subs for ordinary and retired membership only (no increase for students). If paid on time, ordinary subs would go from \$70 to \$75 and retired from \$40 to \$45 with students remaining at \$30. The proposed increase would have been the first in 2 (?3) years, the last increase being required when the society had to begin paying GST. In effect, there had been no real increase in operating revenue for a long time. The proposed increase was considered modest and in line with (actually much less than) inflation. However, many at the meeting considered that, although they might be willing to pay \$5 a year more, it would deter those marginally interested. As a cost saving measure, it was suggested that the Newsletter could be sent electronically – at least for members who requested it. The committee had discussed the option earlier in the year and found that a significant proportion of members (93, including 13 library subscriptions) didn't have email and thought that many more would have only dial-up connections, so would not easily receive a large (64-128 page) online publication. For many of them, the Newsletter is all they get for their subs. We also found that cost savings for a partial printing were minimal. Maybe we didn't present the case clearly enough. Anyway, the motion to increase subscriptions was lost. Clearly, we will need to revisit the options for economy next year. We may need to survey members to see how many prefer the present style of printed newsletter 3 times per year and whether some other variation of electronic and printed is possible.

COMMITTEE FOR 2007

President:	Keith Lewis
Vice-President:	Nick Mortimer
Treasurer:	David Skinner
Secretary:	Helen Neil
Committee:	Ursula Cochran (publications) Kari Bassett Richard Smith Alan Palmer Jan Lindsay

Scott Nodder volunteered to act as Secretary until Helen returns from maternity leave. Kari Bassett is expected back from maternity leave at the first committee meeting of the year.

THANKS TO HUGH AND BETH

The committee really regrets the retirement of its longest serving member, Hugh Grenfell who was first voted on in 1998. We will miss his long experience and particularly his unfailing willingness to volunteer for the jobs that really needed doing. Most recently, at very short notice, he drafted submissions on behalf of the Society regarding the inadequacies of the new draft Earth Sciences curriculum for schools. And even now, although not on the committee, he has offered to take over management of the Society's website from Nick Mortimer. Thank you, Hugh

Also retiring is Society's Administrative Officer Beth Wallace. She was appointed soon after Hugh and has been absolutely invaluable in the day to day running of the

society - membership files (chasing you for your subs), taking minutes and sending out publications. It was a job that had become impossibly demanding for a volunteer. Beth is now 70 and, despite a recent hip replacement, feels that it time to play more golf. We will miss her willing cheerfulness and exuberance. I think, over the years, she has put in a lot of extra time that we didn't pay her for. Thank you, Beth

EARTH SCIENCES EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

At the last committee meeting, Glenn Vallender, a teacher from Ashburton, gave us his "coal-face" impressions of the demise of Earth Science education in schools. We aren't talking here about training the next generation of geologists (that starts at Uni), but about basic understanding that the next generation will need to make decisions on everyday risks and on the future of the planet. Daphne Lee, who has ably led the Geoeducation Special Interest Group for many years, recently expressed a wish to stand down. Jan Lindsay, who replaces Hugh on the committee, has already volunteered to round up a "ginger group" of people interested and qualified on this vital issue. If you are one, please contact Jan or anyone on the committee.

ANTARCTIC GRANTS AVAILABLE

The company that owns the journal "Antarctic Science" is a charity dedicated to providing small grants to young Antarctic scientists from anywhere in the world. The applications for next year are now open and will close on 31st March 2007. The grants can be up to UK£5000 and are competitive. Full details and the application form can be found at <<http://www.antarcticssciencebursary.org.uk/apps.php>>

BUSH YARNS FOR TE ARA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF NZ

The next theme for Te Ara is "The Bush", covering the landscape and fauna/flora of New Zealand. The encyclopedia is seeking personal stories from New Zealanders about their experience and recollections of what we call The Bush. Details are at: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/ENZ-Utility/News/Item17/en>. Besides the usual old bushmen's yarns, they are keen to get stories about discoveries and experiences from field scientists and technicians who have worked in the bush.

TAURANGA 2007

The 2007 annual conference, organized by the Waikato Branch, will be at Tauranga – a first. This will be a magnificent opportunity for members to see a fascinating spectrum of forearc, arc and backarc geology within a short journey of the conference centre. Keep the last week in November (26th – 29th) 2007 free for a classic conference – again with the geophysicists. This will almost coincide with the start of the International Year of Planet Earth. Put your thinking caps on for how we can commemorate this and let any member of the committee know.

Keith Lewis
President Geological Society of New Zealand