

# Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland

[www.minersoc.org](http://www.minersoc.org)

## SPOTLIGHT ON SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Over the next several issues of *Elements*, these pages will focus on the work of each of the Mineralogical Society's Special Interest Groups (SIGs). The SIGs lead the charge in many aspects of the society's operation and so it is appropriate to profile them here.

### The Clay Minerals Group – Past and Present

I was very pleased to be asked to write a spotlight article on the Clay Minerals Group (CMG), the first and oldest of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland. I thought it might be interesting to compare our present activities with those from our past.

The CMG was formed in 1947 and had its inaugural meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January in the rooms of the Geological Society of London at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London (UK). More than 100 members and visitors attended (some from overseas) and listened to an opening address which was followed by the presentation of 15 scientific papers. Dr. G.W. Brindley was elected first Chairman and Dr. D.M.C. MacEwan – and, later, Dr. R.C. Mackenzie – as Honorary Secretary (combined with that of Treasurer, and also de facto Editor). Membership of the CMG was open only to members of the Mineralogical Society, although such membership was available merely on request and entailed no additional subscription. The same arrangement continues today.

Reassuringly, the main aims of the group have also remained the same since its inception – to stimulate interest in clay mineralogy, to facilitate an exchange of information between members by providing facilities for reading and discussing papers on research on clay minerals (and allied topics), and to expedite their publication. Significantly, considerable importance has always been attached to encouraging the practical applications of such research.

### Logo



The CMG's logo was first introduced in 1973 and incorporated the CMG letters on a hexagonal network of three contiguous plates of an (unspecified) clay mineral. For 2019, the logo has been refreshed, utilizing the previous brown and parent Mineralogical Society colour schemes and now proudly includes our formation date.

### Bursaries

Throughout its history, the CMG has generously assisted many researchers and postgraduate students in attending and presenting research on clay minerals (*sensu lato*) at conferences, workshops and related activities.



Dr. D.M.C.  
MacEwan



Dr. R.C.  
Mackenzie

In 2019, the group will launch an additional, annual, prestigious bursary: the Mackenzie–MacEwan Award, named after two of our most eminent and founding members (see above). Details are still being finalized, but the award will enable recipients to orally present their research at a prominent international conference.

Details of our bursary application process are shown on <https://www.minersoc.org/clay-minerals-group-bursary.html>.

## Journal

Proceedings and abstracts of papers were initially circulated to members as a cyclostyled bulletin, but it was quickly realised that this means of communication was sufficiently important to warrant formal printing as a typeset journal. The *Clay Minerals Bulletin* was produced from 1947, later evolving into *Clay Minerals* which then became the common journal of the European Clay Groups Association (ECGA) from 1976. In order to achieve continuity and effective control of the operation, management and copyright was left in the hands of the Mineralogical Society, with the CMG responsible for appointing the Principal Editor.

Last year, a 'new era' for the journal was heralded by the successful implementation of electronic submission and handling of manuscripts, a new structure of subject-specialist associate editors, further involvement of the ECGA, and moving publication to Cambridge University Press. Because of these and other measures, *Clay Minerals* continues to thrive and enjoys an increasing impact factor.

## Meetings

For many years, the group's annual programme included both Spring and late Autumn scientific meetings, which were held at various localities in Britain and Ireland. Early meetings were commonly reported in the scientific journal *Nature* and included field trips, industrial visits, or conducted tours of research laboratories. In those early days, the council of the Mineralogical Society limited the total annual expenditure for such meetings to a maximum of £20. Thankfully, the budget is now a little more generous.

More recently, joint meetings with other Special Interest Groups and societies, and supporting sessions at major conferences, have proved particularly popular and attracted a wider audience.

The group's firmly established annual Research in Progress (RiP) meeting continues to gain in popularity, particularly for PhD students and early career researchers. The 2019 meeting 'Clay Minerals in the Natural and Built Environment: Formation, Chemistry and Applications' will be held on Friday, 17 May, 2019 at Newcastle University (UK) in collaboration with the Royal Society of Chemistry. Professor Susan Stipp has been confirmed as one of the keynote speakers (<https://www.minersoc.org/cm-g-rip.html>).

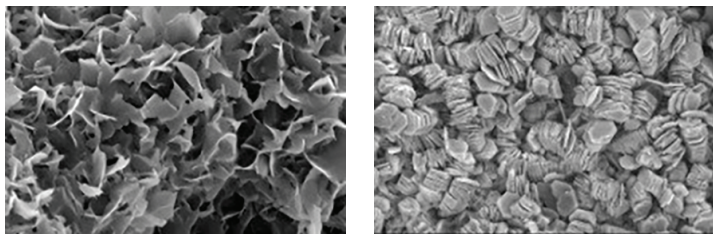
The CMG also has a successful history of organising major international conferences. In 1978, we acted as host to the 6<sup>th</sup> International Clay Conference, enticing participants to the University of Oxford (UK) with an impressive scientific programme augmented by a sherry party at Rhodes House, a concert in the Sheldonian Theatre, a banquet at Woburn Abbey, and a visit to Blenheim Palace. In 2015, the CMG hosted the 13<sup>th</sup> ECGA Euroclay Conference in Edinburgh (Scotland) which attracted >520 delegates, with whiskey tasting and a *ceilidh* dinner at the stunning Dynamic Earth centre. Plans are already underway to celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, so please note the date in your diaries!

## Images of Clay



The CMG, along with The Clay Minerals Society (USA), maintains the ongoing archive 'Images of Clay' (<https://www.minersoc.org/images-of-clay.html>) at the James Hutton Institute.

The project aims to build a collection of high-quality images that will be freely available to all to download for non-profit purposes, such as the teaching of clay mineralogy. Suitable images include electron micrographs of clay minerals, or, indeed, any image associated with the study of clay mineralogy. The group recently launched a competition to add the 100<sup>th</sup> image; the winner being announced in the next issue of *Elements*.



Scanning electron photomicrographs of (LEFT) corrensite and (RIGHT) kaolinite crystals. Images reproduced from the 'Images of Clay Archive' of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain & Ireland and the Clay Minerals Society (<https://www.minersoc.org/images-of-clay.html>).

### Communication

Originally, members were kept informed of activities and forthcoming meetings by the issue of two circulars each year, later superseded by a *Mineralogical Society Bulletin* which included information on all the SIGs. Specific inserts and booking forms for CMG events were reproduced on 'colour-coded' pink paper.

Today's requirement for more immediate communication is fulfilled by the group's active Twitter feed (@CMG\_miner), MinSoc Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/Mineralogical-Society-of-Great-Britain-Ireland-346007840592/>) and webpages (<https://www.minersoc.org/cmig.html>). Regular surveys of members' interests and views have helped to guide the CMG programme of events and involvement.

However, we are always open to new ideas and input – so, if you wish to become more involved with the CMG, please do not hesitate to contact myself or one of the committee (<https://www.minersoc.org/personnel.html>).

**Simon J. Kemp**

Chairman, Clay Minerals Group, January 2019

Note: this spotlight article relied heavily on a history of the CMG compiled by J.A. Bain in February 1997.

### BRIAN UPTON AWARDED COLLINS MEDAL FOR 2019



At the MinSoc's November 2018 meeting of council, the award of the 2019 Collins Medal to Prof. Brian Upton of Edinburgh University (Scotland) was approved. The award ceremony took place at the conference banquet during the annual Volcanic and Magmatic Studies Group meeting. Bruce Yardley officiated, and his words, and those of Brian Upton, on receipt of the medal, are given below.

**Bruce Yardley [Citation]:** It is a pleasure and an honour for me to make this evening's presentation. Brian Upton needs no introduction to the VMSG, not least because he helped organise its first meeting. He has been a leading figure in volcanic and magmatic studies in the UK and internationally for more than half a century. Indeed, his research career began with Wager in Oxford in the 1950s. He has worked for the Greenland Geological Survey and had spells at Cal Tech and the Geophysical Lab, but has been the face of igneous petrology at Edinburgh University since before most of you were born. Brian Upton has developed a holistic approach to understanding past igneous activity which has been enormously influential as well as leading to major advances in our understanding of alkaline rocks in particular. Long after the papers from "grab and analyse" excursions have been forgotten, new generations of petrologists are

still going back to the work of Brian and his students in which painstaking field mapping has been followed up with careful sampling and meticulous petrography and geochemistry.

The Collins Medal is a lifetime achievement award recognising outstanding contributions across publication, teaching and outreach that have promoted the mineral sciences in the broadest sense. Brian Upton ticks all the boxes big time. He has had an outstanding career at Edinburgh, enthusing many generations of students with a love of igneous rocks; he has served the international community, most notably with a 10-year stint as Executive Editor of the *Journal of Petrology*; and he has reached out to a much wider audience with his popular writings on Scottish geology. His book *Ancient Volcanoes of Scotland* has run to two editions.

For much of his career, Brian has been involved in Greenland geology, beginning at a time when working there was closer to Arctic exploration than geological fieldwork as we know it today. It involved a very special blend of both physical and personal attributes to make a success of it. One word I have heard used about Brian is "unflappable". Adrian Finch told me that when a tent he was sharing with Brian was torn apart in a gale, and the flysheet blew away like something out of *Mary Poppins*, all he wanted to do was bail out into the nearest adjacent tent. However, Brian decided that since their tent had been the cook tent it would be sensible to make everyone a cup of tea before more damage was done, and he only moved out after all had had a hot drink.

I have never worked with Brian Upton – I was particularly bad at identifying alkaline rocks as an undergraduate and wisely went elsewhere – but what all his past students and colleagues tell me is that he is fun to be around. I am delighted that this year's Collins Medallist is not just an outstanding scientist and communicator, he also enthuses the people around him because they enjoy his company.

Brian Upton, on behalf of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland, I am delighted to present you with the Collins Medal for 2019.

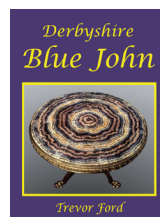
**Bruce Yardley**, President of the Mineralogical Society

**Brian Upton [Response]:** To say that I was surprised when I opened the letter saying that I was being offered the Collins Medal by the Mineralogical Society understates the situation. I was positively gob-smacked! I feel extremely honoured and give my sincerest thanks to the society. Further thanks go to Sally (Gibson) and Sami (Mikhail) for arranging this ceremony at the VMSG banquet.

I look at the list of previous recipients of the medal and feel humbled. 'No man is an island' and I am acutely aware that nothing I have accomplished in my scientific career could have been achieved without the help and encouragement from so many others in Edinburgh and an assortment of geoscience institutes across the western world. I have just finished writing an obituary for my dear friend of 64 years, Henry Emeleus, who was awarded the first Collins Medal in 2010 and died in 2017. Henry, if you are up there looking down, I am particularly proud to join you on this list, along with the other medal holders, all worthier than me.

I am, of course, also deeply indebted to help from my family, not least to my wife who has patiently stood by me despite my continuous globe-trotting over the decades in search of volcanoes and magmatic rocks. And, once again, my heartfelt thanks to the Mineralogical Society for this handsome medal.

### NEW EDITION OF TREVOR FORD'S BLUE JOHN BOOK



The third edition of Trevor Ford's book on 'Blue John' – a variety of banded fluorite – from Derbyshire (UK) has been published, revised and updated by Tony Waltham and Noel Worley. The first edition appeared in 2000.

Copies are available from [www.moorebooks.co.uk](http://www.moorebooks.co.uk) @ £6.50 each. ISBN 978-095197-179-6