

## **The Former Aberystwyth Micropalaeontological Collection**

Geology (as a single honours subject) was taught at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth for 124 years, until it was removed from the programme in 2000. With the retirement of Professors John Haynes and Robin Whatley, the world famous school of micropalaeontology also ceased to exist, though both professors remained active as researchers.

The extensive Aberystwyth Micropalaeontology Collections were presented to the Department of Earth Sciences at the Natural History Museum, London.

John Haynes (who obtained his Ph.D. in 1955) came back to Aberystwyth in 1959 after a spell in the oil industry, mainly to start a diploma course in micropalaeontology under Professor Alan Wood. Wood saw this as a logical step for the small research school, which he had been developing since his arrival in 1947.

Early doctorates included Terry Adams, Tom Harris, Deryck Bayliss, Graham Jenkins and Ron Walters, many of whom went on to succeed in the commercial world. Robin Whatley joined the staff in 1965, having completed his Ph.D. at the University of Hull. After this the diploma course was expanded to a formal, taught MSc.

John and Robin built up a formidable research collection over the years, into which was also incorporated material worked on by their diploma, MSc., and Ph.D. students. In fact each student was required to leave behind a written-up and well curated collection, on which he/she had based their research, as well as a copy of the thesis.

A special micropalaeontology museum was set aside on the top floor of the Llandinam Building to hold these collections, and a (part-time) curator was appointed. By the time John Haynes took early retirement in 1993 (but with a part-time contract until 1996) he had supervised over 80 M.Sc. dissertations and over 30 M.Phil and Ph.D. research students. Robin must have supervised a very similar number in a 35 year period, a remarkable feat.

Following agreement between the Natural History Museum and Professor Robert Dodgshon (Director of the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth), the collections were brought to London in two batches in May and September, on both occasions necessitating the hire of a 7.5 ton truck!

The majority of the collection consists of foraminiferal and ostracod material, with some small collections of coccoliths and conodonts. There are 62 microslide cabinets, associated residues, samples and in most cases a record file and/or a copy of the thesis. The collection is associated with 229 researchers or students, and includes material from almost 100 countries or oceans.

Thanks to good curation practises at Aberystwyth, specimens are well labelled and card-indexed. All the slide cabinets, theses, and record files are now safely stored in South Kensington, and are available to visitors. Students' residues and associated rocks,

together with Haynes and Whatley's own extensive research and rock collections, are housed at our out-station in Wandsworth, London.

Thanks mainly to the endeavours of Giles Miller and Mike Lowndes (Musuem Web Manager), the Aberystwyth Micropalaeontology Collection has been electronically databased and is accessible on the Internet.

Part of the research collection remains in Aberystwyth for the time being as Professor Whatley requires it for writing-up purposes. The associated publications section for each collection is not complete and will be updated in future versions of this electronic database. The old Aberystwyth Microfossil M.Sc. Teaching Collection is also now housed in the Natural History Museum but is not included in the database.

For assistance with the curation, removal and subsequent rehousing and databasing of the collection thanks are due to many people, especially: John Haynes, Robin Whatley, Alicia Moguilevsky, Ian Laidlaw (Aberystwyth); and Clive Jones, Giles Miller, Andy Henderson, Aysim Batur, Glen Payne and Joel Whittaker (London).

**John E. Whittaker, Natural History Museum, London.**