## BIENVENIDA A LA SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DE MINERALOGÍA

With this issue of Elements, we welcome the 230 members of the Sociedad Española de Mineralogía (Mineralogical Society of Spain), the 14th society to join *Elements*. President Manuel Prieto states on page 51, in his word of introduction, "We inaugurate a new stage in the history of our Society."

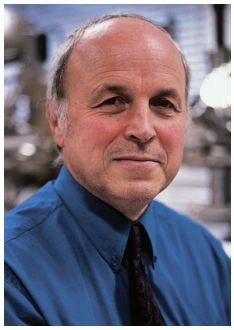
## SUPERISSUE ON SUPERVOLCANOES

Even though we have been blessed with wonderful guest editors since day one, David Wark and Calvin Miller made our job a breeze: they had a clear vision of the level at which they wanted to aim the articles—a level that corresponded exactly with ours— and they scrupulously followed instructions and deadlines. We thank them and the authors they assembled.

## SUPER-ERUPTION VERSUS SUPERERUPTION

Every issue has its own little story. In this issue, whether to hyphenate supereruption was hotly debated. Supervolcano was natural, but supereruption seemed hard to read. In the end, Colin Wilson's arguments prevailed. He wrote: "I note with interest that the hyphenated versus non-hyphenated usage of prefixes like over- and super- are wholly inconsistent… I take the point about tongue-tied ex-colonials having the 'erer' problem, but in my dictionary there is superego (and the meaning is not quite what one would expect), supereminent, supererogation ('the performance of more than duty requires' – seems an appropriate description of everyone's efforts in the journal and this issue) and superexcellent, for example. My preference is still to have the two terms treated the same; otherwise their juxtaposition seems odd."

## WELCOME TO DAVID VAUGHAN



With this issue, David Vaughan joins *Elements* as a principal editor, as Ian Parsons bows out. David is a distinguished mineralogist and geochemist, who is known to many readers. His research interests center on fundamental studies of minerals, particularly metal sulfides and oxides, using advanced analytical, spectroscopic, and imaging techniques, molecular-scale studies of mineral surfaces including interactions with microbial species, and applications of such studies to problems of Earth resources and the environment. The sulfide mineral vaughanite, from Hemlo, Canada, was named for David in recognition of his contributions to ore mineralogy.

David is Professor of Mineralogy and Director of the Williamson Research Centre for Molecular Environmental Science at the University of Manchester, UK, and was educated at the University of London and at Oxford. He has worked at the Canada Centre for Minerals and Energy Technology in Ottawa (1970), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1971–1974), and the University of Aston in Birmingham (1974–1988). He is past-president of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland, former vice-president of the Société Française de Minéralogie et Cristallographie, and past-president of the European Mineralogical Union. He chairs the IMA Working Group on Environmental Mineralogy and has served as a distinguished lecturer for the Mineralogical Society of America and the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland. He has received the Royal Society of Chemistry Award in Geochemistry and the Schlumberger Medal of the Mineralogical Society, and has been elected a Geochemical Fellow of the Geochemical Society and of the European Association for Geochemistry. Welcome aboard, David!

**Ian Parsons**, **Bruce Watson**, **Susan Stipp** and **Pierrette Tremblay**

## EDITORIAL *(cont'd from page 3)*

ogy and geochemistry, the NERC, continues to undervalue our work. I searched for some keywords (or part words) in the pdf of their *2006-2007 Annual Report and Accounts* (47 pages in full colour). A table of hits paints a grim picture:

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| environment... | 125 | atmospher... | 17 | seism... | 6 | mantle | 2 |
| ocean... | 107 | earthquake | 10 | mineral... | 5 | rock... | 2 |
| climat... | 94 | volcan... | 10 | mining | 4 | petrolog... | 1 |
| marine | 60 | tsunami | 9 | earth science... | 3 | soil... | 1 |
| geolog... | 55 | insect... | 7 | geology | 3 | mineralogy | 0 |
| ecolog... | 30 | crust... | 6 | geochemi... | 2 | petrology | 0 |
| biolog... | 22 | geophysic... | 6 | geoscience... | 2 | geochemistry | 0 |

The good showing of words beginning with 'geolog...' is due mainly to references to the British Geological Survey, which is part of NERC. Authors of the present *Elements* issue will be pleased that 'volcan...' did so well. It's there because it reflects NERC's preoccupation with the many facets of Doom. In universities, in response to what the Doomsters sell as a paradigm shift, many well-regarded departments of geology (or Earth science) have been subsumed into woolly units with names like 'School of Geoscience' (whatever that means). These are dominated by academics who have no understanding of the importance of MPG in the making of *every* artefact they own.

The British Isles, on the wet and windswept feather-edge of Europe, were discovered by the civilised world in about 325 BC, by a Greek called Pytheas. He travelled from Massilia (today's Marseille, in France) seeking the Cassiterides, the tin islands, where barbaric people with painted faces extracted minerals for the bustling Mediterranean. Although there is little mining in modern Britain, the UK is still a world player in the extractive industries: BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Anglo American, three of the world's largest and most profitable mining companies, all have British roots. It is home to the world's second largest oil company (BP) and the third largest, the Anglo-Dutch firm Shell, has just posted the largest annual profit ever (US$ 23 billion after tax) for a British listed company. North Sea oil has passed its peak but has many years left, and the oil price recently passed $100 a barrel. By virtue of spear-heading the industrial revolution and being the largest economy of the 19th century, the UK has inherited industrial pollution on an epic scale. The contaminated land remediation industry is buoyant. Radwaste disposal and $CO_2$ storage are hot issues. How can it be that branches of science to which a country owes so much of its wealth are so flagrantly undervalued by its research council and universities?

Lack of appreciation of the societal importance of MPG is not by any means specific to the UK. It is a worldwide problem. Recognizing the possibility of anthropogenic climate change, and responding to the climate of fear surrounding it, funding agencies have transferred money into climate science at the expense of work on the deeper Earth and its resources. This transfer of funding has had an insidious effect. As MPG research programmes have been cut back, we can no longer provide enough trained manpower at the PhD level for the petroleum, mining and remediation industries. Because of the growth of the economies of China and India, demand for trained geologists in the oil and minerals industries is extremely strong. Wiser research managers would have appreciated that solutions to the problem of climate change will be technological, very probably involving large demand for unusual raw materials, and negotiated overall increases in funding for the Earth sciences, rather than the damaging internal redistribution that we have seen. There will not be a better time to push MPG into the political spotlight, so wherever you live, why not take out an *Elements* subscription on behalf of a policy maker or opinion former of your choice?

**Ian Parsons**