



# Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



I am honoured to be the President of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and I find the Society in excellent health, with a committed group of professional and academic officers doing a wonderful job. The Society's two journals are flourishing, and we thank Adrian Finch for his six years as steward of the publications committee. It is, however, a challenging time for one of the Society's constituencies, the UK's research-funded academics.

The global economic problems have put government-supported science budgets at risk. After years of comparative growth, cuts are already with us as the UK research councils tighten their belts, making difficult decisions, for instance, about which facilities and major projects to support. What is clear is that in the future there will be even more focus on near-market research and knowledge-transfer activities, aimed at stimulating economic development. How will this affect mineralogical research and how much (more) will fundamental research suffer? Traditional applied mineralogy research areas, such as environmental mineralogy covering pollution and remediation, will continue to be supported. But where should mineralogists be turning their attention for new funding? The need for more and more imaginative ways to extract raw materials will require people who understand the nature, structures and properties of minerals. The field of novel materials, such as bio-minerals and nano-materials, is fertile ground for applied research, and mineralogists can provide a perspective that materials chemists may be missing. One area where mineralogy will play a pivotal role is in the development of a repository for the safe geological disposal of radioactive wastes – this is now policy in the UK, although several other countries, such as Belgium, France and the USA, have longer track records in this area. Geological disposal is saturated with mineralogical challenges. The performance of high-level waste forms such as glasses and Zr-resistates is being well researched, but there remains a plethora of issues relating to the range of complex legacy waste forms. The evolution and interactions of clays and cements in intermediate-level waste containers, backfills and construction materials are of critical importance. And an understanding of a large number of mineral interactions involving actinides in the host lithology will be needed if the safety case is to be accepted. Some of these topics remain on hold as the UK has yet to decide 'where' and in what lithology the repository will go. However, we can hope, at this time of fiscal austerity, that the necessity for high-quality research in this area will lead the government to provide mineralogists with some optimism for their research futures.

**R. A. D. Pattrick**, President

## IAGC *Cont'd from page 190*

a lifelong interest in semi-arid regions, where his research has focused on recharge assessment, groundwater acidification and salinization, and palaeohydrology.

Mike has been one of the pioneers in the use of the vadose zone to investigate recharge estimation, climate history and water-rock interaction. He has some 230 scientific publications to his credit. Most recently his research has included an investigation of baseline geochemistry in relation to the Water Framework Directive and another European consortium

study on palaeohydrology of aquifers across Europe. His arid- and semi-arid-zone studies continue to expand in Africa and most recently China.

In 1999 Mike received the Whitaker Medal of the Geological Society of London and in 2009 the Meinzer Award of the Geological Society of America for his achievements in these areas. Additionally, he was a founding member of IAGC's Working Group on Water-Rock Interaction and its chairman from 1986 to 1997. His international career includes work with

## NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT: RESEARCH CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

28–29 September 2010

Venue: Cambridge

Following on from Richard Pattrick's comments, online registration for this exciting meeting is now open. Go to [www.minersoc.org/pages/meetings/nuclear/nuclear.html](http://www.minersoc.org/pages/meetings/nuclear/nuclear.html) for information.

Management of the UK's nuclear waste presents a major challenge to current and future generations of scientists and technologists, and to existing infrastructure and institutional arrangements. Young researchers entering the field now and over the next four decades will need to build and communicate an integrated understanding of the multi-scale processes involved in the processing, packaging, disposal and regulation of a wide variety of materials designated as nuclear waste. The context of this work is evolving rapidly – the Radioactive Waste Management Directorate of the NDA (Nuclear Decommissioning Authority) has now published its R&D strategy, and CoRWM (the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management) has issued its reports to the UK government on R&D and on the geological disposal programme.

This conference will address key questions for the next generation of nuclear waste researchers. What are the emerging research priorities, and what progress is being made? How are those in historically distinct disciplines to work together to address new challenges? What skills are required for research and delivery of a geological disposal programme, and how can funding and implementation bodies be configured to encourage talented scientists to build long-term careers in this area?

The dual focus – on cutting-edge research and the need to build communities to meet new skills needs – is intended to attract a diverse audience, especially those in the early stages of their careers, not only from universities and research institutes, but also from industry, government, regulatory bodies and other institutions.

The Hallimond Lecturer will be Rod Ewing of the University of Michigan. Other invited speakers include Andy Felmy, Pacific Northwest National Labs, USA; Francis Livens, Manchester; B. Kienzler, Karlsruhe; and Scott Painter, Los Alamos National Laboratory, New Mexico.

### Facebook

Have you joined the Mineralogical Society fan page on Facebook yet? Please do so now to receive regular updates on Society activities.

### And Finally

In March of this year, the Society held its Annual General Meeting, the meeting where the Society's Annual Report is presented and where other formalities, such as the recording of new members' names, are observed. Dr Peter Sabine was present this year and noted that the last time he had attended an AGM was in 1953! He joined the Society in 1945. It was a firm reminder that we, the current crew, merely carry the torch.

IAEA, UNESCO and NGOs in the promotion of geochemical studies for groundwater improvement in developing countries.

Mike is currently Visiting Professor in Hydrogeology at the Oxford University Centre for the Environment, where he teaches and continues research in groundwater quality and water management and, as Research Director of the centre, promotes links between science and policy.