

the rock types in the Railway Cutting (see Darragh 1974) we walked back across the area adjoining the Zoo. Our group had three or four nuns in it and they always seemed to follow closely on the leader. However Prof Skeats bent down suddenly to pick up a rock specimen and one of the nuns fell over his bending body, much to the amusement and dismay of the group. However the Prof regained his composure and the group continued back to the spot to be returned to the Geology School.

Prof Skeats' lectures covered nearly all facets of Geology and whilst discussing stratigraphy maintained that the graptolites must have followed the motto 'a short life but a gay one' because they could be useful index fossils almost world wide.

Geology students (1st year) had practical sessions on Saturday mornings, during which time we had to draw cross sections of geological maps, handle wooden models of various crystal systems and handle different types of rocks, minerals and fossils. Spencer Mann and Henry Hauser were demonstrators but also looked after the museum collections and the library and ably helped to run the department for the benefit of staff and students alike.

During the war years students were encouraged to help the war effort by occupying any spare time in such work as using the Engineering School's lathes to make the 'nose' pieces of armour-piercing bullets prior to fitting to their detonation device. In 1941–42 Prof E.S. Hills, who had followed Prof H.S. Summers, together with the Army began to construct a large scale model of the Australian topography, a plaster cast of which now can be seen on the eastern wall of the new Earth Sciences Building on the corner of Swanston and Elgin Streets.

The base of the model was made from many different maps (mostly National Survey maps). H.B. Hauser copied the contours shown on individual maps chosen for the model and then produced cut-out pieces of plywood which followed the chosen contour interval (I think 50ft was chosen). These individual cut-out sheets were assembled one on top of the next lower contour and glued together to form a sandwich of sheets of plywood all oriented to depict the profile of the land. Students and others were then asked to sculpt in the step between each contour line with a plastic wood material (called NEICAL I think – it was mixed with acetone to make it more fluid to mould it). An Army Sergeant (Orlando Dutton - see Joyce 2006) who was employed made any obvious adjustments to the final model before the final casting was produced.

Excursions too were occasions and highlights of student life, particularly extended ones involving two or three-day duration. The Buxton excursion involved camping out for 3 or 4 days. This excursion actually helped Prof Hills to make his map of the area: several groups actually paced along the boundary between sedimentary rocks and intrusive granitic rocks and recorded the compass direction of the contact.

The Castlemaine excursion taught us that all geologists did not agree entirely with each other in their own back yards! Even some of the boundaries shown on parish or county plans were not quite right. The use of aerial photographs many years later made identification much easier for those of us doing field surveys.

Possibly the thing that led me to becoming a geologist was the excursion to Wonthaggi in 1942 when a group of about ten senior students accompanied Dr. A.B. Edwards and George Baker visited Wonthaggi by Steam Train to see how black coal was won. During the train trip I recall being taught how to play the card games 500 and euchre. We were taken firstly to the Technical School where we met Mr. R.B. Pretty who had trained in geology and we lunched at the school with the Surveyor and officials from the State Mine Office before being taken underground at the most recent workings of the area. There were still only four working mines of the former 22 shafts and two major tunnels which comprised about 12 separate mining areas at Wonthaggi.

Dr. Edwards and George Baker continued to study this extensively faulted area and finding that the mine's Assistant Surveyor had been appointed to a position in the Bowen basin in Queensland, mentioned my name as a possible replacement and I was accepted.

And so it was that I spent the next four years as Assistant Surveyor at the State Coal Mine until it became more obvious that the working life of a very expensive coal mine would surely end before any expected retirement date for me. In 1947, when the Geological Survey began recruiting under Dr. D.E. Thomas, I became the second appointment Post-War and stayed there until 1982.

References

Darragh, T.A., 1974 (ed.): *Geology of Royal Park* by G.B. Pritchard. Victorian Naturalist 91(8) pp223-235.

Joyce, E.B. 2006: *Professor E. S. Hills' Great Relief Model of Australia*. Earth Science History Group Newsletter No. 36 June 2005 pp.23-25.