

# History of the dispersal of the British Geological Survey from London

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Aerial view of the Mary Ward College as it was offered for sale in 1975.



View along the main concourse at Keyworth to the chapel, now the De la Beche Conference Centre.



The Mary Ward College chapel.



Entrance to the chapel, Mary Ward College.



The Mary Ward College library which also served as the BGS library until the new library was in operation. The area was partly converted to office accommodation and is now shared between the library and Publications Services.



One of the college's principal lecture rooms. The building is now H Block.



Beaumont Hall, the college's principal hall.

This area of the campus is now occupied by the library.

## **Annex D A history of the dispersal of the British Geological Survey from London**

With additional information on the centralisation at Keyworth and the opening of Murchison House

### **Introduction**

It is almost 23 years since the first staff of the BGS arrived to occupy the newly-acquired offices at Keyworth. On 4 October 1976, about 30 staff of the Mineral Assessment Unit, with some administrative and cartographic support, moved from Knightsbridge, London and Leeds as the advance party. Initially, the site was shared with students and staff of the former Mary Ward College. The last group of students graduated in July 1977, the final academic year of the college. However, the history of dispersal from London and subsequent centralisation of the BGS at Keyworth commenced 13 years earlier, in March 1963, when the former Department of Education and Science (DES) proposed to a Treasury Dispersal Committee that the Geological Survey of Great Britain and Overseas Geological Surveys should disperse from London.

As the last member of the senior management team involved in the acquisition and development of the Keyworth Office, I feel that it is important to compile and archive a history of the key events leading to centralisation at Keyworth. This introduction provides a formal account of the background to a centralised office in the Midlands. Principal events and dates, covering 27 years from inception to final fruition, follow this introduction. Mr Harry Wilson's book, *Down to Earth*, published in 1985, is recommended for an insight to the reaction and attitude of staff who had to move their homes from London and Leeds to the new centralised office at Keyworth. Other reference sources are a set of files in the archives and a series of official Relocation Notices.

When the war ended in 1945, the Geological Survey had a small staff which was adequately housed in main offices at the Geological Museum in London and in Edinburgh, and in small offices in Manchester and

Newcastle, but there was virtually no room for staff growth. Over the 30 years up to 1975 staff numbers grew nearly tenfold - at first slowly, but from 1965 to 1975 dramatically. The result was a bit-by-bit acquisition of new accommodation, which led to increasing dispersal and separation of staff in both London and Edinburgh. The difficulties at Edinburgh were to some extent being solved by the construction of Murchison House. The Leeds Office, opened in 1959, was an attempt to relieve pressures in London by the removal from London of one field unit and some associated specialists, while bringing together at one location all the field staff for the whole of the north of England. The policy of providing small groups of geologists for regional fieldwork based on the main coalfields had not been a success. The offices in Whitehaven and York had already been withdrawn to London before the war, but those at Manchester, for north-western England, and Newcastle, for north-eastern England, remained. For various reasons, financial and domestic, it proved difficult to move staff from one office to another, and it was felt they spent far too long in one geological environment.

The Leeds office, while satisfactory in many ways, consisted of buildings erected for emergency purposes during the war. Their life from the start was clearly limited and they could not remain open without the cost of maintenance becoming prohibitive. Nonetheless, they clearly demonstrated the

advantage of a site where multidisciplinary staff could be housed together in an environment which did not have the commuting and other pressures of London.

In London, the accommodation problem had become steadily worse, particularly during the period 1965-1975. In an attempt to house a staff complement which had grown from just over 100 to 650 or more, six separate offices, spread over a distance of a dozen miles, had been acquired, at considerable and growing cost, while the Geological Museum building itself had been adapted in ways which were never foreseen and which could scarcely be justified.

A single complex, housing not only all interactive field staff (i.e. earth scientists engaged on geological field studies, mineral and geochemical reconnaissance, bulk mineral assessment and geophysical surveys), but also all those who provide that staff with essential laboratory backup support (palaeontologists, petrographers, mineralogists, chemists), was considered imperative. The development in the 1970s of major contracts and programmes which were essentially interdisciplinary, had highlighted difficulties that had already arisen in the more traditional areas of BGS work by the increasing dispersal of specialist staff in numerous scattered locations. It was considered that such interaction between the various divisions and units of BGS staff could increase in future decades as the applications of earth science became more complex and sophisticated. The problems foreseen in the development of customer-orientated research would require greater movements of staff from one area of work to another, and from one sub-discipline to another. It was felt that in this climate management and operational efficiency could best flourish if all the relevant staff were housed in one location.

The key events that follow this introduction show that the need to provide a new centralised office outside London was conceded in the 1960s, culminating in permission to develop a site on the Nottingham University campus (1973). Following changes in local planning regulations and a considerable growth in the BGS requirement, this site proved to be totally inadequate.

In February 1975, the Mary Ward College, Keyworth, came on the market. On his way to Washington, USA on 22 February, Sir Kingsley Dunham noticed an advertisement in *The Financial Times* and decided that it should be investigated. The Mary Ward College, which was to close in 1977, was completed in 1968 and stood on a 27 acre site on the outskirts of the village of Keyworth, six miles to the south of Nottingham. Accommodation comprised about 150 000 square feet of residential and teaching buildings, attractively designed and completed to a high standard. It seemed likely that the cost of acquisition, modifications and additional buildings would be considerably less than the purchase of an undeveloped site and the construction from scratch of a new building.

At the request of the Director, on 14 March 1975 my predecessor, Mr Eric Brown, visited the college and reported back that a possible acquisition should be investigated. This visit was followed by others in late March and early April involving the BGS Directorate and the Secretary, NERC when they met with the Head of the College, Sister Mary, Mother Provincial of the Loreto Order. The Director established a BGS Working Party under the chairmanship of Mr David Gray, Assistant Director, to report on the suitability of the college as the nucleus of a new central office. Visits were made on 8 and 9 May 1975 and a report recommended that with modification and extension, the college could provide suitable accommodation to meet the BGS's requirements. Once this conclusion had been reached it was possible to proceed with an application to Rushcliffe Borough Council for outline planning permission to modify the existing buildings and to add further buildings in a number of phases. On 9 June 1975 the DES was advised of the BGS's interests and a formal approach was made for funding. In January 1976 a formal offer to buy the site for £2.3 million was made. After thirteen years of discussion, planning and uncertainty a decision had finally been taken on a new centralised office for the BGS. The college became BGS/NERC property on 1 September

1976. There was a lease back arrangement to the Sisters of Loreto up to 31 December 1997 at £12 000 per month for 80 per cent occupancy. The purchase price of £2.3 million was a special allocation from Government outside the Science Budget and, in part, reflected the Government's acknowledgement that the scheme was in harmony with dispersal policy. The initial estimate for the cost of adaptations and new buildings was £2.5 million, replaced by a further estimate in March 1978 of £9.5 million which included staff transfer costs. In fact, the final sum spent on adapting the site to suit the BGS's requirements was £22 million (expenditure at June 1990). However, this included building work not allowed for in the initial proposals. The total expenditure of £24.3 million was revalued to £39.5 million at 1990/91 price levels, i.e. on completion of the final move. A guesstimate of the cost of staff transfers, removal of equipment/furniture to Keyworth and some minor works was £4 million (1990/91).

Mary Ward College was built during the period 1966 to 1968 by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with a 75 per cent grant from the DES who maintained an interest in the freehold. This purpose built teacher training college for up to 540 students was formally opened by HRH The Princess Anne on 23 June 1970. The group of buildings comprising the college was thoughtfully planned around piazza and landscaped areas. There were six linked residential blocks containing 225 study bedrooms, each with bed and study space, fitted wardrobe and wash basin. Four two-roomed staff flats were provided in the residential blocks and occupied by nuns. In addition to the study bedrooms, student common rooms with cooking facilities for snacks were provided in the links joining the blocks. These residential blocks were named after saints e.g. St Peter, St Paul, St Mary (they are now A-F blocks). Further staff accommodation containing two, two-bedroomed self-contained flats were available in a clinic/laundry block (now enlarged as G Block). A three-bedroomed Principal's House was designed as an integral part of the college (now T Block). A further three-bedroomed detached house was available for a resident caretaker (Hanlon House). Further residential accommodation was contained in a purpose-designed convent constructed around a cloister garth (now S Block).

The educational and social areas offered two main academic blocks (now H & J blocks) comprising music rooms, craft and science areas, language laboratory, art department, physics and biology laboratories, domestic science rooms, tutorial rooms, english, mathematics, geography and history departments. One of the music rooms had a superb minstrel's gallery as a feature. The social and recreational facilities included dining and communal accommodation comprising kitchen, restaurant, student common room, senior common room, study spaces and games room (now restaurant, meeting rooms and M Block). The restaurant served three meals per day for approximately 600 students and staff. There was an attractive assembly room, the Beaumont Hall (now the Library and M Block) with a stage, lighting and balcony (now Accounts). A fully fitted gymnasium was provided with extensive shower facilities (now part of the Library) and a locker area (now the Post Room). The chapel was a main feature of the college with a splendid stained glass window that was illuminated on certain occasions during the year. This chapel was not only the place of worship for the college, but for about 250 Roman Catholics in the surrounding area. The chapel was deconsecrated in early 1978 when the alter and tabernacle plinth were removed. The building became a BGS store before it was converted to become the De la Beche Conference Centre in 1985.

The building and relocation programme spanned a period of 13 years from 1976 to 1989 with funding provided for two distinct phases. The completion of the geochemistry laboratory and office building (U Block) as phase two saw the final staff move from London some 26 years after the initial proposal. The modification of existing buildings, completion of the Reception Building and the De la Beche Lecture Theatre, construction of new offices, library, laboratories, workshops, stores and infrastructure facilities together with the movement of staff from London, Leeds and Harwell was a complex and demanding operation, which required substantial planning and commitment. In the

initial stages staff occupied whatever accommodation was available, and multiple office moves were not uncommon as contractors progressed from the rear of the site towards Nicker Hill. For several years many BGS staff operated 'in the middle of a building site' and this led to inevitable tensions and frustrations. The consolidation of the borehole, petrological and palaeontological collections in the new National Geosciences Data Centre from London and Leeds was a major project as were the transfers of the library and the national collection of strati-graphical fossils from the Geological Museum. The transfer of the library alone involved the transport of 10 000 crates of books, 500 map presses and 50 cupboards. The movement of staff and equipment to Keyworth was in parallel with transfers of units between the four remaining London offices. These were disruptive and costly, as the units were earmarked to transfer to Keyworth in later building stages, but were necessary in order to surrender leases on buildings.

Many staff contributed to this building and relocation programme which was probably unmatched by any UK public sector research organisation during the 1970s and 1980s. Sir Kingsley Dunham and his Directorate colleagues had the vision and powers of persuasion to initiate the original plan to relocate to a site in the Midlands. Sir Kingsley was instrumental in identifying and acquiring Mary Ward College. Successive Directors, assisted by Directorate members and other senior managers, contributed to the successful programme of centralisation, including Dr Reg Thurrell and Mr Harry Wilson, who were the senior officers on site during the period October 1976 - early 1982. Mr Derek Gipps of the Swindon office and my predecessor, Mr Eric Brown, (1976-1983), were responsible for much of the operational planning. Mr Gipps, in particular, was involved for the entire life of the project. Mr Michael Heslop, Head of BGS Buildings and Technical Services, was heavily involved in the implementation stages over the period 1984-1990. Finally, Mr Peter Bartlett and Mr Richard Ward of Bartlett Gray & Partners (Nottingham) were the architects for the building work. For my own part, I was the only BGS person to have direct involvement for the duration of the programme, as Personnel Officer (1976-1982), Personnel/Relocation Officer (1981-1983), Secretary (1983 up to completion in 1990) and member of the 1975 working group. It was gratifying to receive the following tribute in a letter dated 13 June 1990 from Sir Malcolm Brown to Dr Peter Cook, a month before the naming ceremony:

'When I first saw Keyworth as Director (1979) it was Mary Ward College plus one BGS unit. When I left (1985) it was all it is now, except for Geochemistry. So it is very dear to my heart - though 'the man who made it all happen' in terms of buildings, equipment, and staff transfers from London, Leeds and Harwell was not a Director, but Dennis Hackett. I say this, because one day a Keyworth history may be written, and he is the least likely person to figure large in it. But now you know'.

## **Key dates leading to centralisation at Keyworth**

### **May 1962**

The Secretary for Technical Co-operation, established a Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Frederick Brundrett, to consider and make a report to the Department of Technical Co-operation. The subject was to be the type of technical assistance which the United Kingdom should be in a position to provide to overseas governments in the geological and mining fields, and on the functions of the Overseas Geological Surveys (OGS), and the Atomic Energy Division of the Geological Survey and Museum, in relation to technical assistance in these fields.

### **November 1962**

The Cabinet Committee on Population and Employment endorsed a new drive on dispersal of Government staffs from London. Sir Gilbert Flemming undertook a new survey.

## **March 1963**

The DES proposed to the Treasury Dispersal Committee the move of the OGS and the Geological Survey of Great Britain (GSGB) from London.

## **May 1963**

The Flemming Report recommended the move of 70 members of the Geological Survey field staff from London. The Geological Surveys Board reported:

'We have given preliminary thought to this recommendation and have considered, amongst other ways of effecting it, the possibility of recommending the transfer of the headquarters of the Geological Survey, but not of the Museum, from London to a place in southern England, preferably in or near the Home Counties. We referred last year to the appointment by the Secretary for Technical Cooperation of a Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir Frederick Brundrett, to consider the future role and organisation of technical assistance to overseas governments in the geological and mining fields. The report of this committee has yet to be published. We await its findings and recommendations with interest'.

## **May 1964**

The Government published as a White Paper (Cmnd. 2351) the Report of the Committee on Technical Assistance for Overseas Geology and Mining [the Brundrett Report] with an accompanying White Paper (Cmnd. 2352). The Government intended, in general, to give effect to the Brundrett Committee's recommendations and it accepted, in principle, the basic recommendation that the functions of the GSGB should be expanded to cover overseas work and that the OGS and the Atomic Energy Division of the GSGB should be amalgamated within the expanded organisation. The White Paper stated, moreover, that the administrative and financial measures necessary to bring about these changes had been considered by the Department of Technical Co-operation and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and would be pursued in the reorganisation following the report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Organisation of Civil Science [The Trend Report]. The Trend Report, which was published in 1963 (Cmnd. 2171), recommended that the Geological Survey and Museum should become the responsibility of a new research council to be concerned with natural resources; in July, this council was named the Natural Environment Research Council. On 29 October, the Prime Minister of the new administration announced that this new council would be created under the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and that the Secretary of State would appoint a new Council for Scientific Policy which would advise him on his general responsibilities for the civil science programmes of the research councils including the Natural Environment Research Council. The Science and Technology Bill to give effect to these changes was introduced in November and received Royal Assent on 28 March 1965. This resulted in the disappearance of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, of which the Geological Survey and Museum had been a part for the previous 45 years of its 129 years' life. The setting up of the Natural Environment Research Council on 1 June enabled effect to be given to the implementation of the recommendations of the Brundrett Committee that the functions of the GSGB should be expanded to cover overseas work and that overseas geological surveys should be incorporated within this expanded organisation.

The new headquarters body was advised that the problem of accommodation for the London-based staff had become more and more acute during the previous ten years. The Research Council had recommended that steps be taken as soon as possible to rehouse the Edinburgh staff.

## **26 March 1965**

The DES submitted proposals to HM Treasury Dispersal Committee proposing that:\*

The Geological Museum and Reference Collection should stay in London

- a new office for the combined surveys to be established in some town (possibly Reading), within easy travelling distance of, but outside, the metropolitan area.

## **June 1965**

Dispersal proposals were considered at the first Council Meeting of the NERC and agreed.

## **15 July 1965**

This decision was passed to the DES and Treasury Dispersal Committee.

## **August 1965**

The Dispersal Committee reported to ministers its recommendation that the headquarters of the new combined geological surveys i.e. the new Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS) should be moved from London (265 staff).

## **1 September 1965**

The Secretary of State for Education wrote to the Treasury saying that costs should be outside the Science Budget.

## **28 September 1965**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury rejected the proposal out of hand.

## **28 September 1965**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury reported that all ministers concerned agreed with the Treasury Dispersal Committee's recommendation regarding the IGS.

During the period September 1965 to mid 1966 there was a search with the aid of the Ministry of Public Building and Works for possible sites in the Reading, Oxford, Newbury triangle. Two possible sites were explored, (Shinfield Park, Reading and Howbery Park, Wallingford) but both were abandoned because of objection from the Ministry of Technology and County Councils. At this time Union Side were asked to consult members as to which of these locations was preferable; they issued a questionnaire including their own preference for the Bristol/Bath area and this location was strongly favoured by staff.

On 25 October 1966 a memo was sent to the Director from the four district geologists based at the Leeds office stating that consideration should be given to creating a single office for England and Wales in the Midlands. Until then, the Leeds office had not been considered as part of the dispersal from London.

Sir James Stubblefield retired as Director on 31 December 1966 and Sir Kingsley Dunham took office. The first ever Directorate Meeting of the IGS/BGS was held on 4 January 1967. The Director, Sir Kingsley Dunham, had taken up his appointment on 1st January and he opened the meeting by stating that 'he wished to establish a directorial board to assist him in running the IGS'. The

dispersal from London was to feature at subsequent meetings.

#### **4 January 1967**

The Director proposed that as tenure of Princes Gate had been obtained there should be a thorough reorganisation of accommodation which would allow dispersal to be reexamined. Director stated that the headquarters should remain in London. It was announced at this meeting that Young Street, London would be closed (actually closed April 1971) and an occupancy plan for the premises in Grays Inn Road, London was discussed to allow for expanded geochemistry activities.

#### **1 March 1967**

A Directorate Meeting was held at which the Director announced that the Reading-Newbury-Oxford triangle proposal should be abandoned in favour of a location in central England. He would ask for permission from NERC HQ to look at sites in the Midlands for London and Leeds staff. He reiterated that the headquarters should remain in London.

#### **21 March 1967**

A proposal was put to Council on the Director's advice that the search for a site should be extended to the south Midlands, on a university site (Birmingham, Loughborough, Warwick, Nottingham, Leicester).

#### **22 March 1967**

A Directorate meeting discussed the report of a NERC Council meeting held the previous day at which dispersal had been discussed. The following was reported:\*

Reorganisation of the London offices as agreed by the Directorate.

- Headquarters of the IGS to stay in London. Although this was a reversal of Council policy, the Director pleaded his case at some length and most members agreed this was the best policy.
- The Director then put the case for dispersal to the Midlands. This had a very good reception especially from the financial point of view.
- Thus his plans were all well received.

The Mary Ward College library which also served as the BGS library until the new library was in operation. The area was partly converted to office accommodation and is now shared between the library and Publications Services.

#### **1 June 1967**

It was reported at a Directorate meeting that NERC Council had agreed that the Director should make enquiries of Midland universities. The Directorate had visited Nottingham in May where they 'had been offered a very good site'.

#### **31 July 1967**

The Director advised at a Directorate meeting that Birmingham University had made an offer of a site at £2700 per annum. The universities at Warwick, Nottingham and Loughborough had also advised that the IGS would be welcome.

During August and September a small number of staff from London and Leeds visited these four universities with Directorate members. Through the Whitley process staff had been asked to complete a questionnaire on their preference for a centralised office in the Midlands (copy available in official archives).

### **16 October 1967**

The Director reported at a Directorate meeting that the questionnaire 'pointed to an order of favour for Nottingham, Warwick, Loughborough and Birmingham'. After discussion, it was decided to put forward Nottingham and Warwick in that order of preference. It should be noted that the Director proposed that the Geomagnetism Unit should move to the Midland site as Nottingham University was strong in Physics. The Director advised that £0.9 million was to be allocated for the new building! In reply to the question of a staff restaurant, the Director thought that the IGS should not have one for its own use! The question of timing was discussed and it was thought that the move could not take place until 1972!

### **1 December 1967**

The Chairman, NERC wrote to Professor Frederick Dainton, Vice Chancellor of Nottingham University, asking for a site.

### **5 December 1967**

Professor Dainton wrote to the Chairman, NERC welcoming the proposal.

### **7 December 1967**

A paper was submitted by the DES to the Official Committee on Dispersal proposing a Midland site closely associated with a university, favouring Nottingham.

### **1 January 1968**

The minutes of the Dispersal Committee considering the paper of 7 December OP(67)40 recorded the asked for expansion of the Edinburgh office and the hope that it could be built up as much as possible by taking on projects with a nationwide application and possibly assuming responsibility for the north of England. The committee was not very happy about the choice of Nottingham, and would have preferred a university further north e.g. Durham.

### **3 January 1968**

The Director announced at a Directorate meeting that final agreement had been reached in principle on the IGS establishing an office on the campus of Nottingham University. However, it was reported that there could be objections from the Treasury Dispersal Committee which had intimated that dispersal should be to a development area -- Nottingham did not qualify. The Director advised at this meeting that 'he thought that the south-west unit would not be able to work advantageously from Nottingham and therefore he considered it would be necessary to establish an office of limited life in Exeter'.

At some time prior to this the Nottingham proposals were revealed by a question in the House of Lords probably inspired by Nottingham University.

### **5 February 1968**

The Secretary, NERC wrote agreeing to the proposal for a new Edinburgh office (Murchison House) and saying that there is no practicable alternative to Nottingham.

### **16 April 1968**

A paper by the DES was submitted to the Dispersal Committee arguing that there was no suitable university with space and facilities further north than Nottingham. Durham was out because it was too close to the area controlled from Edinburgh (down to the Tyne). The committee was asked to note the expansion of the Edinburgh office and endorse the choice of Nottingham.

### **May 1968**

The site at Nottingham University was viewed.

### **14 June 1968**

The Dispersal Committee approved the April proposal

### **August 1968**

A first schedule of accommodation was completed by BGS management for a new building on the Nottingham University campus. This allowed for 292 staff occupying 85 360 square feet of offices and laboratories with an additional 40 000 square feet of storage space. The tentative costings totalled £770 254!

### **14 December 1968**

The Director wrote to the Secretary, NERC with a far-reaching forward development plan for staff expansion. This showed staff totalling 635 in December 1968 rising to 888 by 1973/74 (including the Geological Museum) and increasing to 961 (including the GM) in the next quinquennium. A total of 291 staff were to be based at the new office in Nottingham, followed by a further 135 in a phase two. This was remarkable forecasting bearing in mind that the total figure of 426 took account of the headquarters remaining in London. Today's staffing level at Keyworth is similar to the forecasted figures by Sir Kingsley Dunham.

### **14 January 1969**

A Directorate Meeting was advised by the Director that there were difficulties with the Treasury in obtaining funding for the building programme at Nottingham.

Little happened between 1969 and 1972, the IGS continued to grow and with the growth the financing of dispersal became ever more of a problem (staffing increased from 501 to 979 between January 1967 and end of 1974). On 25 February 1971 the Director received a letter from NERC HQ stating that the DES had given 'limited approval' for a new office in Nottingham and that negotiations with the University plus a design study could commence. This led to further schedules of accommodation being prepared by the BGS, but a formal design study was not started.

### **1 February 1973**

Nottingham University wrote pressing for a progress statement.

### **1 June 1973**

The DES agreed to a start to formal negotiations but not to actual purchase or rental.

## **21 June 1973**

The Secretary, NERC wrote to the DES saying financing was becoming increasingly unlikely without help from outside the Science Budget.

## **25 June 1973**

The DES wrote to the Secretary, NERC -- 'It occurs to me also to wonder whether the whole project could be staged in such a way as to maximise recurrent savings'.

## **2 July 1973**

The Secretary, NERC wrote to the DES -- 'You will realise, in fact, that having never been enthusiastic about phasing I am now much less so for practical and managerial reasons, nevertheless appreciate that the financial problem is a real one'.

## **25 July 1973**

Nottingham University reduced the size of the proposed site.

## **1 August 1973**

This was reported to the DES saying the proposed site was only large enough for the present needs of the IGS plus statutory car parking, leaving no room for future expansion.

## **3 August 1973**

The Director contacted NERC HQ to say the IGS would have to move from Grays Inn Road because of pressure on space (an office in Clerkenwell Road was acquired on lease).

## **14 August 1973**

The DES reiterated that no extra funds were available from outside the Science Budget.

## **30 August 1973**

The Treasury confirmed this to be so.

One of the college's principal lecture rooms. The building is now H Block.

## **12 October 1973**

The DES wrote to the Secretary, NERC suggesting two ways forward:-\*

Staging the whole operation in such a way that, whilst it is not spread over too long a time to be administratively unmanageable, the incidence of capital expenditure, after taking into account savings in rent accruing stage by stage, could be included in Council's forward look.

- Financing the construction through a developer.

## **17 April 1975**

Nottingham University was informed that the site was too small because the local authority did not

want multistorey development.

As it seemed that finance for the project from within the Science Budget was increasingly unlikely the only way forward was to finance the project in a different way.

### **Early 1975**

A number of new towns were approached with a view to them financing development. Telford, Runcorn, Warrington, Central Lancashire, Skelmersdale and Milton Keynes were asked. Milton Keynes was chosen as the most advantageous proposal.

### **February 1975**

Mary Ward College at Keyworth came on the market, and was visited by the BGS Secretary on 14 March followed by Sir Kingsley Dunham and Dr Howel Francis on 27 March and a Directorate visit on 7 April (with the Secretary, NERC).

### **May 1975**

The Director, BGS appointed a working group to investigate the feasibility of Mary Ward College becoming the BGS headquarters. This group, chaired by Mr David Gray, Assistant Director, recommended that the site offered the opportunity of substantial office accommodation and good laboratory and storage facilities.

### **30 May 1975**

Nottingham University was informed that even if they could provide a 20 acre site, the NERC could not finance the project from within the NERC and could not find a developer interested.

### **9 June 1975**

The DES was told formally of the NERC's interest in Mary Ward College (although it had been kept abreast of developments by telephone).

### **29 September 1975**

The Secretary, NERC wrote to the DES reporting on progress and seeking formal approval for a purchase.

### **September 1975**

Outline planning permission for change of use and for the erection of additional buildings was granted to the BGS/NERC.

Sir Kingsley Dunham retired on 31 December 1975 and was succeeded as Director by Dr Austin Woodland.

### **5 January 1976**

The DES wrote to the Secretary, NERC saying £2.3 million would be made available for the purchase.

### **7 January 1976**

A formal offer of purchase was made.

## **1 September 1976**

The BGS/NERC became the owners of the site.== Dates of transfers and closures of buildings ==

For completeness, details here include key events for the BGS in Scotland during the same period. These details highlight the extensive activity on relocations over a period of 16 years.

## **August 1971**

Treasury approval was received for the new building (Murchison House) to house the Edinburgh office of the IGS (planning had commenced in the mid 1960s).

## **September 1971**

As part of the centenary celebrations of the Grant Institute, sods were cut to mark the start of the new building in Edinburgh.

## **February 1973**

The Marine Geophysics Unit transferred from Princes Gate, London to Edinburgh (Braefoot Terrace, temporary accommodation).

## **February 1974**

Some staff of the Hydrogeology Unit, Exhibition Road, London transferred to Harwell to enhance the waste disposal programme (this team became the Environmental Pollution Section of the Hydrogeology Unit later the separate Fluid Processes Unit).

## **October 1975**

The first staff move into Murchison House (construction work was delayed by nearly two years).

During late 1975 and early 1976 staff moved into Murchison House and buildings at South Oswald Road, West Granton Road and Braefoot Terrace were closed. It was decided that the Grange Terrace building, the headquarters office of the BGS in Scotland, since 1926, should remain open to accommodate the extra staff associated with the major hydrocarbons programme. This building was closed in March 1993 when funding for hydrocarbons work declined.

## **4 October 1976**

The first BGS staff arrived at Keyworth. These were the Industrial Minerals Assessment Unit plus some support grades from administration, the Drawing Office and Computing Services. At the same time, a storage building was leased at Bunny.

## **October 1976**

The Knightsbridge office, London, was closed.

## **January 1977**

The Geomagnetism Unit transferred from Herstmonceux to Murchison House.

## **May 1977**

The first group of 15 staff of the Hydrogeology Unit transferred from Exhibition Road to the Institute of Hydrology site at Wallingford (hydrogeochemistry, trace-elements laboratories, infiltration and modelling, overseas hydrogeology).

The remainder of the Hydrogeology Unit transferred to Wallingford between 1980 and 1984. This took place as a result of a recommendation of a NERC Working Party set up to determine the future location of the BGS Hydrogeology Unit. Earlier, the Water Resources Act of 1963 had led to the transfer of seven staff from the Water Department (later the Hydrogeology Unit) to the Water Resources Board in Reading.

## **14 June 1977**

Murchison House, Edinburgh was opened officially by Sir Frederick Stewart Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

## **March 1978**

The Working Party on BGS Office Location was set up (the recommendation was the creation of regional offices at Abserystwyth and Newcastle and the retention of the Exeter office). In addition JOSCK (Joint Official and Staff Side committee on Keyworth) was set up.

## **June 1978**

A site library was established at Keyworth.

## **August 1978**

The Deep Geology Unit was established at Keyworth by staff transfers from Exeter, London and Leeds.

## **January 1979**

The Metalliferous Minerals and Applied Geochemistry units transferred from Clerkenwell Road, London.

## **January 1979**

The Overseas Division transferred from Clerkenwell Road

## **November 1979**

The Central & South Midlands Unit transferred from Princes Gate, London.

The period from March 1978 to October 1981 was fraught with difficulties. Relations between the Official Side and Trade Union Side were poor and this led to a delay in the construction and transfer programme. In February 1978, the Official Side agreed with a Union Side request for a joint working party with the term of reference 'to identify and assess the scientific and organisation considerations for and against the centralisation of the IGS staff in England and Wales'. In the eyes of many, this review should have been conducted before the purchase of the Mary Ward College. Out of this working party and further joint working party, came the main recommendations that the Exeter Office should be maintained and that there should be a Welsh office based at Aberystwyth and an office for Northern England based at either Newcastle or Durham.

## **October 1981**

Offices were opened at Aberystwyth and Newcastle (these were closed in September and August 1994 respectively, as an economy measure).

## **December 1981**

The Applied Geophysics Unit, Princes Gate Drawing Office staff, the East Anglia and South-east England Land Survey Unit arrived at Keyworth.

## **December 1981**

The Princes Gate office was closed.

## **October 1982**

Engineering Geology and the North-west England Land Survey Unit transferred to Keyworth.

## **March 1983**

The Bashley Road workshops (London) were closed.

## **April 1983**

The Directorate and Central Administration arrived at Keyworth. Thus Keyworth was established as the BGS headquarters.

The following units were also transferred during this year from London, Harwell and Leeds:

Leeds Drawing Office staff

Leeds Photographic staff

Palaeontology Unit Petrology Unit

Marine Geology Unit Leeds Library

Beaumont Hall, the college's principal hall. This area of the campus is now occupied by the library.

Yorkshire and East Midlands Land Survey Unit Fluid Processes Unit

## **October 1983**

The BGS vacated its offices at Harwell.

## **January 1984**

The Assistant Director, Continental Shelf Division, Editorial and Publications and London Photographic Staff transferred to Keyworth.

## **December 1984**

Commencement of the transfer of the main library from Exhibition Road (completed March 1987).

## **June 1984**

The Leeds office was closed.

### **March 1985**

The Exhibition Road office was vacated.

### **April 1985**

The Geological Museum was transferred to the British Museum (Natural History).

### **8 October 1985**

The Official opening took place of the Keyworth office as the BGS headquarters by the Hon Peter Brooke, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science.

### **December 1985**

The Gorst Road core store (London) was closed with consolidation of borehole material and specimen collections in the new NGDC building at Keyworth.

### **March 1986**

The Kippax (Leeds) core store was closed.

### **June 1987**

The Clerkenwell Road office was closed.

### **June 1987**

Mineralogy staff of the Mineral Sciences and Isotope Geology Group and some of the commodity and statistics staff in the Mineral Resources and Applied Geochemistry Group arrived at Keyworth from Grays Inn Road.

### **August 1987**

The official opening of the new library by Lord Dainton took place.

### **December 1989**

The Mineral Sciences Group, Fluid Inclusions staff and personnel engaged on the Geochemical Survey and Mineral Reconnaissance Programmes within the Mineral Resources and Applied Geochemistry Group (MRAG) transferred to Keyworth.

Finally, the Analytical Chemistry Section of MRAG and the NERC Isotope Geology Unit completed the transfers in December 1989.

### **December 1989**

The Grays Inn Road, London office closed.

### **July 1990**

The Keyworth site was named the 'Kingsley Dunham Centre', by Sir Kingsley Dunham.

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