

create a comprehensive network of biotopes, and we should not hesitate to invest time and money in this task.

Of course the States or society must provide basic compensation for the farmers' loss of agricultural production in these circumstances, but we ourselves should bear the responsibility for organizing the land for preservation, in which case it would certainly make sense to involve the farmer concerned in some return of appropriate additional remuneration or supply of seed or plants for hedges, bushes, and thickets.

The aim should not be to allow set-aside fields to become unintended fallow land; neither from an ecological point of view nor with respect to the surrounding fields should that continue. The biotope areas (according to situation and the prevailing animal species) need to be arranged wisely, to suit the landscape. In other words they should be as 'natural' as possible, and this applies to all biotopes, ranging from wetlands for amphibians and dragonflies, to the now-rare dry grasslands and meadows. Hedges and thickets must also be maintained or reconstituted, *eg.* with such species as:

- Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*)
- Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
- Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*)
- Various species and types of willow (*Salix*)
- Lime (*Tilia cordata*)
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)
- Robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*, introduced but widely naturalized)
- Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Wild Service-tree (*S. torminalis*)
- Whitebeam (*S. aria*)
- Service-apple (*S. domestica*)

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

Sloe (*Prunus spinosa*).

Set Aside Strips

Even where there are no set-asides, it should be possible for strips, 3 to 5 metres wide, to be taken out of production along paths, streams, and ditches, etc., leasing them out if necessary, to protect them as 'wild land'. Countless animal species would thus be provided with a habitat of shelter and food. Of course, none of these areas should be fertilized or sprayed; nor should any attempted amelioration be carried out on them. Areas with numerous dehiscent fruits should be mown once a year after the seeds have fallen, whereas wild grazing meadows should be mown in sections, so that there is always some fresh grazing. It should be observed that these measures would benefit all animal-wildlife and certainly not only game animals.

Decisive action on the part of Europe's hunters would, however, confirm the sometimes disputed assertion that 'hunting is applied conservation too', and would legitimize our claim to carry out sustained exploitation of wild species. However, as hunters, we should not disguise the fact that, although we hunt to enjoy Nature, we do also like to 'bag' our quarry. On the other hand, we are prepared to use our own efforts and money, without the help of subsidies, to restore the environment to the healthier state that it formerly enjoyed.

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The Commonwealth of Learning

This is a new International Organization established by Commonwealth Heads of Government in September, 1988. Its aim is to widen access to education by promoting cooperation in 'distance education' among Commonwealth countries. Enhanced educational opportunity through distant study is considered to be crucial in meeting human resource development needs in member states.*

The Commonwealth of Learning will work with colleges and universities throughout the Commonwealth, complementing and supporting their work in developing the most cost-effective means for delivering learning at a distance.

What Can it Do?

The Commonwealth of Learning will work towards three goals: good 'distance education' depends on good materials. Considerable expertise has been developed in many Commonwealth educational institutions on the development and distribution of distance-learning materials. The sharing of such expertise and resources can improve, extend, and enrich, programmes throughout the Commonwealth. *The first goal* of The Commonwealth of Learning, therefore, will be to promote the sharing of distance teaching materials and to support the development of new materials to meet particular educational needs.

* and we would affirm, due *environmental awareness*, which it is much-to-be-hoped The Commonwealth of Learning will stress, especially in the Commonwealth itself which includes something like one-quarter of the world's living human population.—Ed.

The further development of high-quality 'distance education' programmes will require up-to-date information on how materials may be acquired or produced, and on having access to appropriate communications systems. *The second goal* of The Commonwealth of Learning is to strengthen institutional capacities by providing staff training, fostering communications, establishing an information base on distance education programmes and services, and supporting collaboration in evaluation and research.

People who study at a distance do not have access to conventional student services and study-support systems. It is widely acknowledged in the field of distance education that the learning of students is improved when alternative methods of providing these support-systems are available, and when students have greater access to these services than is generally the case. *The third goal* of The Commonwealth of Learning is to assist distance teaching institutions in providing better services than formerly to students, improving study support-systems, and facilitating the transfer of credit between Commonwealth institutions.

The Commonwealth of Learning is committed to achieving these goals in distance education through consultation, cooperation, and collaboration. It will *not* enrol individual students. Its function is to work with *bona fide* colleges and universities. It will *not* concentrate all of its attention on highly sophisticated technology: The Commonwealth of Learning is as much interested in simple forms of technology, including print, as it is in more advanced communication technology involving satellites and computers.

In its first year, The Commonwealth of Learning focused on a limited number of objectives. These included work on the cooperative use of teaching materials in accounting, business education, and management; the sciences; agriculture/rural development; health; education and training of teachers; womens' studies; the establishment of Commonwealth-wide information services, and staff training in cooperation with partner institutions. While the start was modest, the long-term aim is bold: 'to look forward to the day when any learner, anywhere in the Commonwealth, shall be able to study any distance-teaching programme available from any *bona fide* college or university in the Commonwealth'.

Where Will it Work?

Through the generosity of the Canadian and British Columbian Governments, the headquarters is in Vancouver, Canada. However, much of the work of The Commonwealth of Learning will be decentralized. It will work closely with colleges and universities in all parts of the Commonwealth, and will arrange for much of its work on the development of materials and the provision of consulting services to be carried out under contract. For example, its principal information services will emanate from the International Centre for Distance Learning operated by the British Open University.

Wherever possible, The Commonwealth of Learning will foster regional programmes and consortia. Precedents for arrangements of this type already exist in the Commonwealth at the University of the South Pacific and at the University of the West Indies. In time, regional arrangements may be established in other parts of the Commonwealth, such as Nigeria, India, and the southern African countries.

Who Runs It and Pays for It?

The Commonwealth of Learning is governed by a Board that is representative of all parts of the Commonwealth. It consists of a Chairman *plus* nine members representing Governments, five individual members, and two *ex officio* members who are the Commonwealth Secretary-General and the President of The Commonwealth of Learning. Five of the Board members represent Governments that have pledged the largest contributions to its funds. At present these are Britain, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, India, and Nigeria. Four other Government Board members represent geographical areas. These are Australia, Barbados, Malta, and Zimbabwe. The first Chairman is Lord Briggs of Lewes (better known as Professor Asa Briggs) and the President is Dr James A. Maraj.

The Commonwealth of Learning has been launched with pledges of funds from Commonwealth Governments amounting to approximately 15 million (pounds) for its first five years. The Organization is expected to raise funds from governmental and non-governmental agencies and from the private sector in order to finance individual projects and programmes. Specific enquiries and useful comments may be addressed to the undersigned.*

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* To whom we recommend environmentalists and conservationists to write strongly to emphasize the splendid opportunities which The Commonwealth of Learning offers for extending knowledge and appreciation of their two vital themes.—Ed.

For Geologists: A Code of Conduct for Rock-coring

Thoughtless behaviour by some parties in recent years has brought geological field-work close to prohibition in parts of Britain and elsewhere. Acceptance of a self-imposed *Code of Conduct* has done much to defuse that situation, and happily we have today a reasonable working relationship with both industry and landowners, to our very great benefit. However, such agreements must inevitably hang in a state of delicate balance that is liable to be upset by a single act of thoughtlessness by even a small minority of offenders.

An example of the response that such want of thought can provoke is to be seen in the reaction of country-goers—geologists among them—to the widespread practice of scarring rock outcrops by the extraction of small-diameter cores for geological research. When such coring first began as a technique for sampling, it was normally discrete in location and limited in scale. Now, however, it seems to be common practice to take cores in clusters, for instance from the contact zones of igneous rocks or from sedimentary boundaries, or else from the cores of folds. Sometimes the attack appears to be systematically three-dimensional. Fig. 1 shows an example used in the circulated Code of Conduct.

Needless to say, coring on this scale has resulted in some very unsightly damage, and has ruined the appearance and photographic value of several well-known localities, such as the Zechstein reef contacts in Durham (Fig. 2), or the Ludlow slump structures. Every igneous dyke, no matter how thin, seems to draw the attention of covers, and various stratigraphically important sections, e.g. the Middle

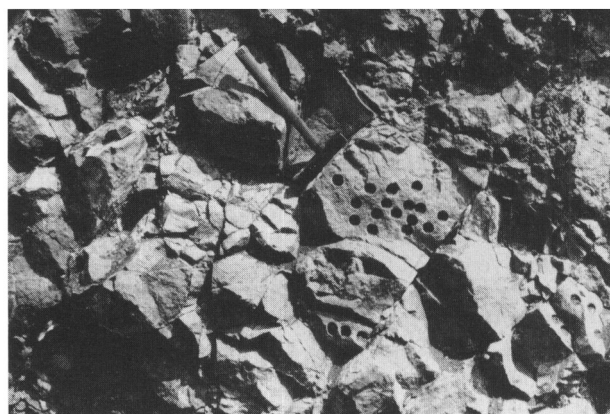


FIG. 1. Photograph of Cyprus pillow lava used in the circulated Code of Conduct. Geologist's hammer gives scale. Photo: Prof. J. Knill.

Jurassic in the Burton Bradstock road-cut, where previously geologists had accepted a 'no hammering' restriction, have lately suffered extensive damage by coring.

Unlike hammering, which might be the work of just anyone with only the remotest connection with organized geology, coring can only be the result of premeditated acts on the part of specialist research workers backed by geological centres of study, who should know better how to behave in the field.