

# Development of academic publishing by the Geological Society of Jamaica 1987-1989

STEPHEN K. DONOVAN

Swinton, Greater Manchester, M27 8SD, UK. Email: SKennethDono@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT.** The few publications on Jamaican geology in the 19th Century were mainly monographs; only in the 1920s and 1930s did shorter publications become common, driven by research programmes on the island, but published overseas, mainly in the UK. It was only with the advent of *Geonotes* (name changed subsequently to *Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica* and, later still, *Caribbean Journal of Earth Science*) in 1958 that regular publication of geological research papers in Jamaica became a reality. Important changes to this publishing landscape were made in 1987-1989, instigated by Mr Rafi Ahmad. The *Proceedings of a Workshop on the Status of Jamaican Geology* was the last wide-ranging, general monograph on the geology of the island. *Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica* appeared in a new, two-column format on high quality paper in 1988. For the first time, each paper was sent to two external reviewers, placing the publication process of the *Journal* on a par with many international periodicals in the field.

**Keywords:** Rafi Ahmad, *Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica*, *Proceedings of a Workshop on the Status of Jamaican Geology*, monographs, peer review.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the years 1987-1989, Mr Rafi Ahmad (referred to as Rafi hereafter), then a lecturer in the Department of Geology, University of the West Indies, Mona (UWI), made two notable contributions to academic publishing – one of which deserves to be remembered as a pivotal innovation – that continue to influence Jamaican geology at the present day. I was there – Rafi and I inhabited offices on the same corridor at UWI – and appreciated both of these modifications at that time. But 35 years later I wonder that I did not quite identify them more fully as the significant changes that they were. Yet perhaps I was not the only one who, at that time, failed to fully acknowledge their full merit. In truth, Rafi needed a good ‘publicity agent’, perhaps a graduate student inspired by his contribution, but they proved to be a quiet bunch.

Rafi’s two notable contributions to academic publishing in Jamaica were neither of them too unusual in the Earth sciences of that time, yet nobody else had instigated them in Jamaica. We can thank him for dragging all of us towards the 21st Century.

## 2. 1987: PROCEEDINGS

*Proceedings of a Workshop on the Status of Jamaican Geology* (Ahmad, 1987) (Figure 1) originated after a meeting in Kingston in March 1984. It was published as *Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica*, Special Issue 10 (Gillings-

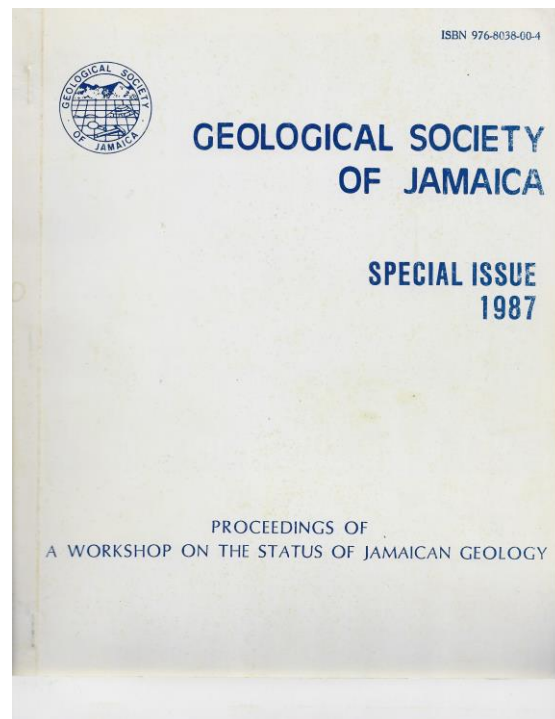


Figure 1. Front cover of Ahmad (1987), *Proceedings of a Workshop on the Status of Jamaican Geology*. Note the similarities and differences to the latest issue of *JGSJ* (Fig. 2). It may be seen as a transition layout to the new format of *JGSJ* under Ahmad’s editorship (Fig. 3). (Author’s library.)

Grant, 1996, p. xviii; Donovan with MacGillivray, 1998, p. 53), although the volume number was not quoted in the issue. Twenty nine papers were presented at the meeting (Ahmad,

**Table 1. Table of contents of the *Proceedings* (based on Ahmad, 1987, pp. iii-iv). Key: FIU = Florida International University, Miami; GSD = Geological Survey Division; PCJ = Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica; SRU = Seismic Research Unit, University of the West Indies, Mona; UWI = Department of Geology, University of the West Indies, Mona**

Rafi Ahmad (UWI) – Preface (pp. v-vi)  
 R.A. Irvine (Government Minister) – Opening address (pp. vii-viii)  
 Conliffe Wilmot-Simpson (PCJ) – Advances in Jamaican geology 1962-1983 (pp. 1-6)  
 Ruth Crooks (GSD) – History and development of Geological Survey – Jamaica (1800-1983) (pp. 7-13)  
 Elsie E. Ellwood (PCJ) – The status of geological information resources in Jamaica (pp. 14-23)  
 Ming-Jung Jiang (Texas A & M University) and Edward Robinson (Texas) – Calcareous nannofossils and larger foraminifera in Jamaican rocks of Cretaceous to early Eocene age (pp. 24-51)  
 Winston Scott (PCJ) – Age and provenance of the Richmond Formation of the Rio Grande valley, eastern Jamaica (pp. 52-68)  
 J. D. Meloche (Petro-Canada Inc.) – Regional thermal alteration of Cretaceous strata, Jamaica: fact of fiction? (pp. 69-94)  
 Michael C. Isaacs (SRU) and Trevor A. Jackson (UWI) – The mineralogy and geochemistry of plutonic rocks from Jamaica (pp. 95-106)  
 Trevor A. Jackson (UWI) – The petrology of Jamaican Cretaceous and Tertiary volcanic rocks and their tectonic significance (pp. 107-119)  
 Grenville Draper (FIU) – Petrology of the metamorphic rocks of the Blue Mountains, Jamaica (pp. 120-150)  
 Grenville Draper (FIU) – A revised tectonic model for the evolution of Jamaica (pp. 151-169)  
 G. Wadge (SRU) and T. H. Dixon (California Institute of Technology) – Geological interpretation of SEASAT-SAR imagery of Jamaica: further points (pp. 170-182)  
 Roderick Bryce (GSD) – A geotechnical classification of Jamaican rocks (pp. 183-196)  
 Michael C. Isaacs (SRU) – Seismological investigations in Jamaica: a review (pp. 197-224)  
 Arthur J.S. Geddes (GSD) – Industrial minerals of Jamaica – an overview (pp. 225-248)  
 Allison Fenton (GSD) – A preliminary evaluation of the dimension stone potential of Jamaica (pp. 249-257)  
 Lawrence Henry (GSD) and Hugh Elliston (GSD) – The aggregate potential of Jamaica’s White Limestone: specifications and uses (pp. 258-268)  
 Allison Fenton (GSD) – The (non-bauxite) metallic mineral potential of Jamaica (pp. 269-281)  
 Locksley Allen (PCJ) and Michael Neita (Jamaica Gypsum and Quarries) – Geology of the North Bull Bay sulphate occurrence zone (pp. 282-298)  
 Michael Blackwood (PCJ) – Jamaica’s peat deposits (pp. 299-309)  
 Donald Poulton (PCJ) – Petroleum source rock potential in Jamaica (pp. 310-330)  
 Rollin Bertrand (Trinidad Aggregate Products) – A review of the Quaternary of Jamaica (pp. 331-339)  
 Raymond M. Wright (PCJ) – Petrofacies and age of the Wagwater Belt – a review (p. 340)  
 Franklyn McDonald (Office of Disaster Preparedness) – Geological hazards, planning and engineering practice in Jamaica (p. 341)  
 Parris A. Lyew-Ayee (Jamaica Bauxite Institute) – Recent investigations on the bauxite resources of Jamaica (p. 342)

1987, p. v); the volume contains 21 papers (including one that could not be read at the workshop) and three abstracts (**Table 1**). The fate of the other six papers is not recorded and an abstract volume from 1984 is not available. Hopefully, the ‘lost’ papers were published elsewhere. The obvious ‘missing’ contributors include three academics from UWI, namely M. D. Hendry and A. Kumar (lecturers), and museum curator B. E. Carby.

Although no such comment is made therein, the *Proceedings* must be seen, at least in part, as a ‘new beginning’ after the previous and comprehensive Zans et al. (1963). That it cannot be considered an outright replacement is demonstrated by the lack of contributions in certain important areas, such as Cenozoic stratigraphy (**Table 1**). Wilmot-Simpson (1987) attempted to

link the two publications, but the attempt was altogether too brief (just six pages).

The *Proceedings* is a late product of the age immediately before the ascendancy of desktop publishing. “Miss Sandra Beckford [formerly a secretary at UWI] was a great help in correcting the typing errors” (Ahmad, 1987, p. vi), but was she also the typist? It is not clear. The diversity of contributions is best determined from the table of contents (**Table 1**). These include both review and research papers, but authors, as expected, invariably focussed on their areas of expertise and interest. Thus, there seems to have been no intention of revising Zans et al. (1963) by inviting contributions from experts on specific areas of Jamaican geology, whether they attended the meeting or not. For example, there is no attempt to revise or reassess Chubb’s (1971) views of Cretaceous rudist

bivalves, biostratigraphic or systematic, despite the new ideas attributable to **Kauffman and Sohl (1974)**, **Coates (1977)** and others. Yet in at least some areas the *Proceedings* does successfully follow the earlier volume, such as (to name one example) **Jackson's (1987)** placing of Jamaican volcanic rocks within a plate tectonic context. One further pre-desktop publishing feature of the *Proceedings* is the several fold-out maps and diagrams, an extravagance almost unknown in modern journals and books.

The Society printed hundreds of copies of the *Proceedings* and kept the price at J\$50 for many years. It thus remained affordable to, amongst others, undergraduates at UWI. Few of my students in the late 1980s and 1990s had surplus funds to buy textbooks, but hopefully this was one that they could, and did, afford.

### 3. JOURNAL OF THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF JAMAICA, 1986-1989

Dr Trevor A Jackson (**Donovan and James-Williamson, 2017**) was editor of *Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica* (JGSJ) between volumes 20 (dated 1981, published 1982) and 23 (dated 1985, published 1986), inclusive. The format remained similar to earlier volumes (**Figure 2**). Papers were typed in the (then) journal format on foolscap paper by a secretary at UWI, commonly Mrs R. Richards, and reduced in size by the printer; the same procedure was followed for the *Proceedings*. Text was not divided into columns and, commonly, each figure or table was given a single page. Papers were not sent for external peer review.

Rafi Ahmad was elected unopposed as new editor of JGSJ at the Annual General Meeting of the Society early in 1986. Rafi's ascent to the editorship led to the most revolutionary developments for JGSJ since it stopped being a newsletter (*Geonotes*). The principal changes between volumes 23 (**Figure 2**) and 24 (**Figure 3**) were several. Most obviously, the cover was distinctly different (compare **Figures 2** and **3**). Indeed, the cover format of volume 24 is arguably closer to that of the *Proceedings* (**Figure 1**); subliminally, the readership of JGSJ had been prepared for a change. A further and most positive modification was the movement of the table of contents to the cover. This was an immediate 'hook' for readers; previously, this had been inside and not necessarily on the first printed page. For example, in volume 21 (for 1982), the contents were not listed until p. iv.

The internal arrangements of JGSJ were greatly

improved. Printing was now on a higher quality, glossy paper than hitherto and in a two-column format. The University of the West Indies Publishers' Association had instigated a desktop publishing facility which provided a distinctly superior product, appreciated by contributors and readers alike. Diagrams and tables could now be integrated with the text, and reproduction of photographs was greatly improved. Overall, the finished product was an obvious improvement over what had gone before.

Not just appearance, but content was improved. The JGSJ became a two external reviewers-per-paper journal. For the first time, experts in the field of a submitted paper were asked for their opinions of typescripts. This was common practice in most leading scientific research journals at the time. Many had undergone a change from one to two external reviewers during the early to mid-1980s; JGSJ jumped straight from none to two. There is little doubt that the instigation of peer review in JGSJ changed the landscape of contributors; for example, most authors of papers in volume 23 never again published a research paper within its covers.

Ahmad also instigated an Editorial Advisory Board in 1987 of nine savants with expertise in Caribbean and, particularly, Jamaican geology. The idea was a strong one, but, sadly, failed to live up to its original purpose. "The Editorial Advisory Board, it is sincerely hoped, will not serve merely as a figurehead for the Journal, as is usually the case. The membership of this board will be performance-oriented *and will be offered on a yearly basis* [my italics] to individuals who are prepared to wholeheartedly support the activities of the GJSJ, especially in the area of publications, by advising and assisting the Editor on editorial matters" (**Ahmad, 1988**, p. 1). Of the original nine, some never published in JGSJ and one stopped publishing after the instigation of peer review. Perhaps half the Board were active on behalf of JGSJ, publishing their own papers or encouraging their students or colleagues to do so. Yet they would likely have done so whether on the Board or not. I disbanded the Board when I became editor in 1989; it was, sadly, little more than a figurehead.

### 4. DISCUSSION

In the 19th Century ideas on the geology of Jamaica progressed by saltation; there was no permanent presence by a survey or a university, or by knowledgeable amateur geologists. The evolution of ideas on the island's geology progressed by publication of a few major monographs (**De la Beche, 1827**; **Sawkins, 1869**; **Hill, 1899**). Short

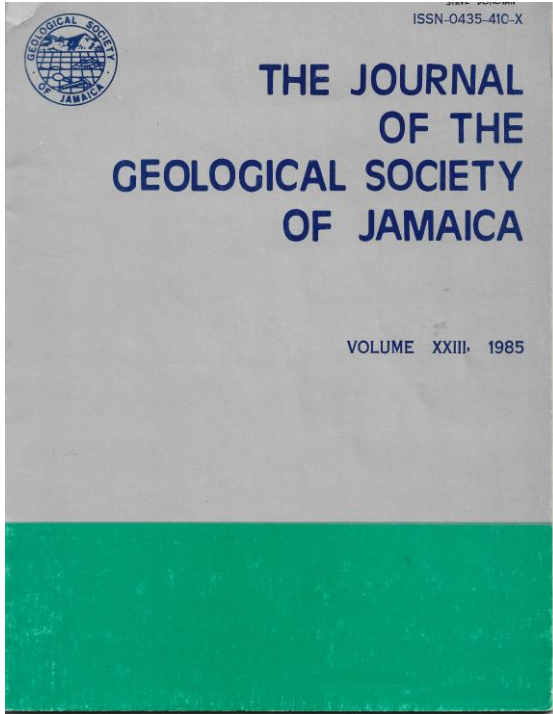


Figure 2. Front cover of JGSJ volume 23, published in 1986 and edited by Jackson. (Author’s library.)

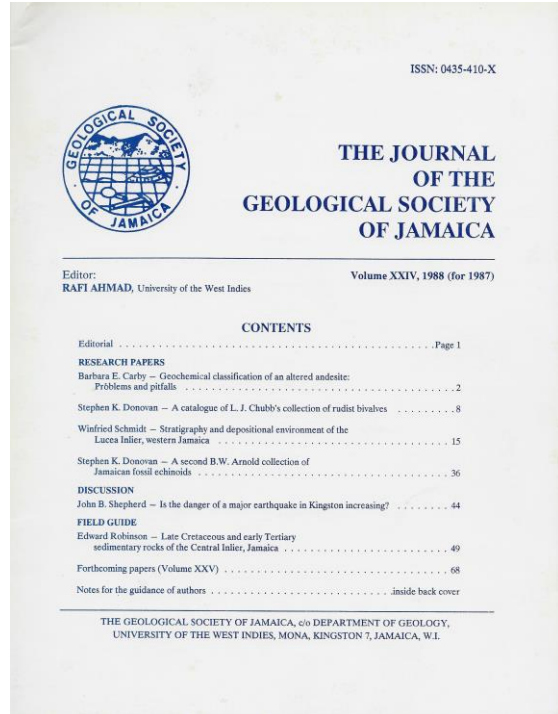


Figure 3. Front cover of JGSJ volume 24, published in 1986 and edited by Ahmad. (Author’s library.)

research papers were few; one of the first was **Barrett (1860)**. All publication was elsewhere, mainly in the UK.

Patterns of publication changed in the 20th Century. Monographs were still published, such as **Woodring (1925, 1928)**, **Matley (1951)**, **Zans et al. (1963)** and **Chubb (1971)**. Yet, with the advent of the research programmes of the Second Jamaican Geological Survey and Charles T. Trechmann (**Donovan, 2010**), the 1920s, 1930s and after saw many short papers on the geology of the island. But publication was almost invariably in the UK and USA until the first appearance of Geonotes in 1958 (**Gillings-Grant, 1996**), that is, over 130 years since **De la Beche (1827)**. Geologists in Jamaica, at the Survey and later UWI, could publish locally at long last.

The change in name to *Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica* happened in 1965 (volume 7). Page size eventually stabilized to that we associate with JGSJ and its successor, *Caribbean Journal of Earth Science*, in the mid-1970s. But production was still very parochial, with editors not sending papers elsewhere for review, if reviewed at all. By this time, external peer review was the norm in the leading academic research journals and publication in them was seen as a mark of approval by one’s peers. Publication in those journals without peer review was considered less impressive by interview panels, promotion

boards and the like. By the mid-1980s, few academics pursuing an international reputation were publishing in journals without peer review.

It is apparent that Rafi Ahmad’s achievements for JGSJ in the late 1980s contributed to one of the island’s oldest monographic traditions while pushing publication firmly towards the present century. The *Proceedings* (**Ahmad, 1987**) was a contribution to a trend of major monographs on Jamaican geology dating back to the 19th Century. Although coverage is patchy in some places, it is nonetheless broad in its coverage and appeal. It was also the last attempt to summarise Jamaica’s geology with such a broad brush. Thirty-five years later, perhaps the time is ripe for a reassessment?

The changes to JGSJ were of great significance, raising the profile of the journal. The new format was certainly an improvement and timely in the sense that it made use of the new technology as it became available. The move to external peer review propelled the appeal to potential contributors into the late 20th Century and beyond. A further name change has done nothing to diminish this call.

**Acknowledgements.** Pithy comments by two anonymous peer reviewers led to some changes of this paper, but I must agree to disagree with them on some points. I hope they still enjoy the finished article.

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