

Development, Evolution and Petroleum Geology
of the Wessex Basin

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J. R. UNDERHILL
The University of Edinburgh, UK

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Preface

Despite being one of the best known and most visited field areas in the United Kingdom, a full, integrated and unified assessment of the Wessex Basin has long been overdue. The purpose of this Special Publication is to use not only surface outcrops but also information provided by subsurface data, largely obtained in the successful quest for commercial hydrocarbons, to provide insights into the development, evolution and petroleum geology of the Wessex Basin. Whilst several of the papers contained in the book are the products of a highly successful two-day conference entitled 'The Development and Evolution of the Wessex Basin and Adjacent Areas', held at the Geological Society at Burlington House on 27 and 28 June 1995, others are included so as to provide a balanced and more comprehensive overview of the main aspects of the basin's geological history.

Given its status as volumetrically the most important UK onshore petroleum province, a particular emphasis has been placed upon understanding the hydrocarbon habitat in the basin. What becomes apparent from reading contributions contained within this Special Publication is that the 'Wessex Basin hydrocarbon province' is so limited in spatial extent that the term might be considered a misnomer (since over 95% of known reserves actually resides in one field). However, what is equally evident is that the apparently unique nature of the Wytch Farm oilfield may only be explained via a full understanding of the whole basin's development and evolution. Conversely, it is only with the unique insights afforded by the use of well-calibrated seismic data that provide important clues that have allowed significant advances to be made into understanding the controls on basin development, the stratigraphic response and sedimentary fill history in the basin.

Given the breadth and depth of the contributions in all of the areas covered in the volume, I am sure that this Special Publication will become an important reference for petroleum geologists, academic researchers, students and anyone else who has an active interest in the basins of southern Britain.

John R. Underhill
The University of Edinburgh

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the participants and contributors to the volume for their assistance in putting this Special Publication together. The original Geological Society Petroleum Group meeting programme from which this Special Publication draws much of its material consisted of 31 talks, three poster contributions and a one-day fieldtrip to visit classic outcrops of the Otter Sandstone Formation, the exposed analogue to the Sherwood Sandstone Group reservoir in Wytch Farm. As well as Arco's financial and logistic support of the fieldtrip, financial sponsorship for the meeting was gratefully received from five other oil companies: Amoco, Brabant Petroleum, British Gas, British Petroleum, Kerr McGee and one service company: Jebco. Their money was not only put towards the costs associated with the running of the original meeting but has also been used to provide financial support for colour plates and fold-outs contained in this volume. The meeting also benefited greatly from the support of Lynx Information Systems Ltd who curate the UK Onshore Geophysical Library. Earth Images Ltd are acknowledged for permission to produce the satellite image on the front cover of the volume. Finally, I would like to thank Angharad Hills and Alan Roberts for their help in steering the book through the final stages to eventual publication.

John R. Underhill
The University of Edinburgh