

British Cambrian to Ordovician Stratigraphy

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In this reference list the arrangement is alphabetical by author surname for works by sole authors and dual authors. Where there are references that include the first-named author with others, the sole-author works are listed chronologically first, followed by the dual author references (alphabetically) followed by the references with three or more authors listed *chronologically*. Chronological order is used within each group of identical authors.

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Glossary

This glossary provides brief explanations of the technical terms used in the introductions to the chapters and in the 'conclusions' sections of the site reports. These explanations are not rigorous scientific definitions but are intended to help the general reader. Detailed stratigraphical terms are omitted as they are given context within the tables and figures. Words in **bold** type indicate an internal reference to another glossary entry.

Acadian: Used for a major Devonian **tectonic** episode. Also a **stratigraphical** term for the Middle **Cambrian** in eastern North America; broadly, but not exactly, comparable to the 'St David's Series' used in this volume (see Figure 2.2).

Accretionary prism: The wedge of sediments accumulating near an ocean trench that has been 'scraped off' the top of a **plate** being **subducted** by the overriding plate.

Acritarchs: Microscopic hollow organic-walled fossils, useful for **biostratigraphy** in marine **argillaceous** rocks.

Appalachian: Pertaining to the geology of the eastern North American fold-belt along the Appalachian Mountains.

Arc: The chain of volcanoes that forms on the overriding crustal **plate** parallel to the oceanic trench at a **subduction** zone, where one plate is subducted beneath another.

Arenig: The second epoch of the **Ordovician** Period in the British stratigraphical standard. See Figure 6.2.

Arenaceous: Descriptive of **detrital** sediments with sand-sized particles.

Argillaceous: Descriptive of **detrital** sediments with silt to clay-sized particles.

Armorican: A mountain building episode that occurred during the Carboniferous Period. Synonymous with, and largely replaced by,

the term **Variscan**.

Ashgill: The last epoch of the **Ordovician** Period in the British stratigraphical standard. See Figure 6.2.

Avalonia: An early **Palaeozoic** crustal **plate** consisting of south-east Newfoundland, England, Wales, south-east Ireland and part of western Europe, which collided with **Laurentia** during the **Silurian** Period. See Figure 1.2.

Back-arc basin: A sedimentary basin that is on the *opposite* side of the volcanic **arc** from the oceanic trench.

Baltica: 'Baltic', an early **Palaeozoic** crustal **plate** consisting of much of present day Scandinavia, European Russia and part of central Europe; the plate formed the south-eastern continental margin of the **Iapetus** Ocean and collided with **Laurentia** to form the **Caledonian** mountain belt when the oceanic crust was **subducted**.

Batholith: A large irregular body of igneous rock, commonly granite, emplaced deep in the Earth's crust.

Bathymetry: The measurement of the depth of water.

Benthos (adj. **Benthic**): Living on or in the sea floor.

Bentonite: A type of clay, derived from the weathering of glassy volcanic ashes.

Biofacies: A **facies** defined by its characteristic

Glossary

fossil assemblage, and reflecting environmental conditions.

Biostratigraphy: The subdivision and correlation of sedimentary strata based on their fossil content.

Biozone: A thickness of sedimentary rocks characterized by its fossil content, most usefully by species of narrowly defined temporal, but wide spatial, range, and named after one (occasionally two) constituent species.

Bioturbation: Disturbance and 'stirring' of soft sediments by burrowing organisms.

Brachiopod: (*Brachiopoda*): Marine shellfish that have two unequal but symmetrical shells (valves) held together at a hinge area. Particularly common in the **Palaeozoic** seas but largely replaced by the **molluscs** as the dominant shellfish since the beginning of **Mesozoic** times. See Figure 10.12.

Branchian: Stratigraphical name for part of the Lower **Cambrian** of eastern North America. See Figure 2.2.

Cainozoic: 'Recent life', the division of geological time that succeeds the **Mesozoic** and is characterized by the radiation of the mammals, flowering plants and insects.

Calcite: (adj. **calcitic**). The rock-forming mineral, calcium carbonate (CaCO_3), the commonest constituent of lime.

Caledonian Orogeny: A major period of mountain building that took place during the early and mid- **Palaeozoic Era**, associated with the closure of the **Iapetus Ocean**.

Cambrian: The first geological period of the **Palaeozoic Era** (and **Phanerozoic Eon**), named after *Cambria*, the Roman name for Wales where rocks of this age were first categorized. The base is taken below the level of appearance of the first abundant fossils with hard shells and the period ranges from about 540 to 490 million years ago.

Caradoc: The fourth epoch of the **Ordovician Period** in the British stratigraphical standard. See Figure 6.2.

Cephalopod (*Cephalopoda*): A class of marine **mollusc**, usually with a chambered shell, that includes the extinct ammonites, belemnites, and the living squid, cuttlefish, octopus and *Nautilus*.

Cheirurid: An **Ordovician** to **Devonian** group of **trilobites**, generally with a spinose tail-piece, that characteristically lived in shallow, clear seas.

Chitinozoa: An enigmatic group of extinct

marine, organic-walled microfossils consisting of small flask-like vesicles less than 1 mm long.

Chronostratigraphy: The correlation and subdivision of geological intervals of time, intended to provide an international terminology independent of the types of rocks (if any) deposited during those intervals.

Clast: A rock, shell or mineral fragment derived by erosion of pre-existing rocks. Most commonly used for coarser particles (>2mm)

Clastic: Descriptive of fragmental sediment composed mainly of particles derived from pre-existing rocks or minerals, including organic remains (designated as *bioclastic*).

Cleavage: Incipient parting in a rock, produced by the alignment of platy crystals such as mica in response to confining pressure during deformation.

Coeval: Of the same age or time.

Conglomerate: A coarse-grained sedimentary rock containing well-rounded **clasts**.

Conodont (*Conodonta*): 'Cone teeth', an extinct group of small eel-like marine animals, characterized by assemblages of paired tooth-like structures made of bone-like material. These 'teeth' have considerable use in **biostratigraphy**.

Craton: (adj. **cratonic**): The central part of a continental **plate**, usually with a relatively long history of stability because of its distance from active crustal plate boundaries.

Cross-lamination/stratification: Sedimentary laminae or strata that were deposited at an angle to the horizontal, as a result of current flow.

Cystoid: A type of **echinoderm** with a globose body constructed of plates and with free arms (the latter are commonly not preserved). See Figure 8.23.

Dalradian: A large tract of (mainly) late **Precambrian** **metamorphosed** sedimentary rocks in the Grampian Highlands of Scotland and the north of Ireland.

Dasycladacean algae: A type of green alga, with filaments emanating from a central axis. Often encrusted with calcium carbonate, leading to their preservation as fossils.

Décollement: The dislocation surface, commonly in soft strata, upon which rocks have slid and become folded or faulted, leaving the rocks below the surface relatively undeformed.

Detritus (adj. **detrital**): Eroded fragments of

Glossary

- pre-existing rock and mineral matter.
- Devonian:** The first period of the Late Palaeozoic sub-Era, ranging from 395 to 345 million years ago.
- Diachronous:** ‘Through time’ – descriptive of a body of rock that forms a continuous outcrop, but which was in fact deposited in different places at different times, e.g. as a result of a marine **transgression**.
- Disconformity** (adj. **disconformable**): A break in continuity of deposition, during which either no sediment was deposited or the sediment that has been deposited was subsequently eroded before the succession of strata continues – but without angular discordance.
- Distal:** Far from the source.
- Downthrown:** The side of a fault which, relatively, has been displaced downwards.
- Dyke:** A sheet-like body of igneous rock that cuts across the bedding of the rock that it intrudes, often steeply inclined.
- Echinoderms:** Marine invertebrates commonly characterized by a five-fold symmetry and possessing a **calcite** skeleton. Includes echinoids (sea urchins), crinoids (sea lilies), **cystoids** and asteroids (starfish). See Figure 14.14.
- Era:** A large unit of geological time composed of several periods. The **Phanerozoic** Eon is divided into the **Palaeozoic**, **Mesozoic** and **Cainozoic** eras, and their constituent periods are recognized on the basis of their characteristic contents of invertebrate, vertebrate and plant fossils.
- Euconodonts:** The typical or main class of **Conodonts**.
- Eustatic:** Concerning world-wide changes in sea level (as distinct from changes when land locally sinks into or rises from the sea). Eustatic changes of sea level may be caused by ice-ages or may reflect periods of major **tectonic** activity.
- Facies:** The characteristic features of a rock unit, including rock type, mineralogy, fossils, texture and structure, which together reflect a particular sedimentary, igneous or **metamorphic** environment and/or process.
- Feldspar:** A group of very common aluminium silicate rock-forming minerals.
- Feldspathic:** Containing **feldspar**.
- Foreland basin:** A sedimentary basin developed by depression of a continental margin due to the weight of sediment accumulating in front of an **orogenic belt**.
- GCR:** Geological Conservation Review, in which nationally important geological and geomorphological sites were assessed and selected with a view to their long-term conservation as **SSSIs**.
- Geochronology:** The measurement of absolute geological time and its division into episodes, in years, or millions of years (Ma), before the present time.
- Gondwana** (**Gondwanaland**): A grouping of the major southern continental **plates** of Africa, Australasia, Antarctica, South America, India, several smaller plates and fragments of what are now parts of Mediterranean Europe, which together formed a massive southern supercontinent in **Palaeozoic** times.
- Graben:** A linear block of crust downthrown between two parallel faults to produce a rift or trough.
- Graptolite:** An extinct group of marine colonial planktonic animals, widely used in **biosstratigraphy**. See Figure 15.7
- Greywacke:** A type of **arenaceous** rock made up of poorly sorted, commonly angular, material whose constituent grains are set in a matrix of fine, muddy material.
- Horse:** A displaced mass of rock caught between two faults.
- Horst:** An upfaulted block of crustal rocks, often on either side of a **graben**.
- Hyolithid:** An extinct group of **mollusc**-like animals with a conoidal shell, a single aperture covered by a lid and, in some at least, a pair of curved appendages. See Figure 8.4.
- Iapetus Ocean:** A former ocean, which separated the Early **Palaeozoic** crustal plates of **Laurentia** and **Baltica** plus **Avalonia** until the ocean floor was **subducted** in Ordovician–Silurian times during the **Caledonian Orogeny**. It divided the present British Isles and its trace is situated between what is now Scotland and the northern part of Ireland, and the rest of Britain. See Figure 1.2.
- Illaenid:** An **Ordovician** to **Silurian** group of **trilobites**, with a smoothed-out and featureless crust, which characteristically lived in clear, shallow seas.
- Imbricate:** Overlapping (like roof tiles). In **conglomerates**, descriptive of the internal structure of the rock where the long axes of pebbles lie roughly parallel to each other but at an angle to the bedding. Also descriptive of

Glossary

- rock units **tectonically** thrust into roughly parallel overlapping slices.
- Inlier:** An area of rock that is completely surrounded by younger rocks.
- Intercalations:** Layers of rock of one type alternating with other, thicker, layers of a different type.
- Isograptid:** A group of early **Ordovician graptolites** that favoured deeper levels in the ocean and characterize a deep-water **biofacies**.
- Lamprophyre:** A type of igneous rock, usually forming minor intrusions.
- Laurentia:** After 'St Lawrence'; the major North American crustal plate in early **Palaeozoic** times, prior to the **subduction** of the **Iapetus Ocean**; comprised mainly of the ancient **Precambrian** core of the Canadian Shield and Greenland plus Scotland and north-west Ireland.
- Lithology:** A term encompassing the constitution of rocks, especially the size, shape and the mineral composition of constituent crystals or clasts in the rock.
- Lithofacies:** A **facies**, defined by its constituent rock type(s).
- Lithostratigraphy:** The description, subdivision and correlation of rocks in terms of their rock-type features, rather than fossil content or precise time-equivalence.
- Llandeilo:** In earlier classifications of the **Ordovician** Period in Britain this was the fourth epoch, but in this work it is subsumed within the **Llanvirn**.
- Llandovery:** The first epoch of the **Silurian** Period.
- Llanvirn:** The third epoch of the **Ordovician** Period in the British stratigraphical standard. See Figure 6.2.
- Matrix:** Mechanically introduced (rather than chemically precipitated) material between grains or **clasts** in a sedimentary rock.
- Megasequence:** A major body of sedimentary rocks, bounded above and below by major **unconformities**. Built up of a number of **sequences**.
- Menevian:** A formation in the Middle Cambrian of South Wales, formerly used as a stage of the **Cambrian** Period. See Figure 4.1.
- Mesozoic:** 'Middle life', the middle division of geological time with abundant life, after the **Palaeozoic**, before the **Cainozoic** and containing the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.
- Metabentonite:** Metamorphosed **bentonite**.
- Metamorphism** (adj. **metamorphic**): Alteration of igneous and sedimentary rocks by increases in pressure and/or temperature within the Earth's crust.
- Moine:** A major **lithostratigraphical** division of **Precambrian metamorphic** rocks in northern Scotland.
- Molluscs (Mollusca):** Invertebrates with a fleshy soft body and, usually, a hard shell. May be marine, freshwater or terrestrial. Includes gastropods (snails, limpets) bivalves (oysters, mussels) and **cephalopods**. Contrasted with **brachiopods**.
- Monian:** Name for rocks of the Mona Complex in Anglesey, which may be partly in age, although they were formerly recognized as wholly **Precambrian**.
- Moridunian:** The earliest stage of the **Arenig** Series. See Figure 6.2.
- Nekton** (adj. **nektonic**): 'swimming', those organisms that actively swim rather than float (**Plankton**) in the water column.
- Neritic:** Relating to the sub-littoral zone, between the continental shelf and low water mark.
- Olenid:** A type of Cambrian to Ordovician **trilobite** that could live in poorly oxygenated water; it characterizes a particular **biofacies**.
- Olistostrome:** A sedimentary deposit consisting of a chaotic mass of intimately mixed heterogeneous materials, commonly including very large blocks, and formed by submarine slumping of unconsolidated sediment.
- Ophiolite:** An ordered sequence of petrogenetically related **ultramafic** rocks, gabbros, **sheeted dykes** and basalt lavas that originated through the generation of oceanic crust, but were subsequently thrust (obducted) onto continental crust.
- Orogenesis** (adj. **orogenic**): Crustal thickening following the collision of **tectonic plates** and resulting from magmatism, folding, thrusting and accretion, leading to regional uplift and mountain building.
- Ordovician:** The second period in the **Palaeozoic** Era, ranging from about 490 to 440 million years ago, named after a Celtic tribe called the *Ordovices*.
- Ostracod (Ostracoda):** 'Shell-like', members of a group of small crustaceans having a two-valved shell around the body. Throughout their long geological history (**Cambrian?** or **Ordovician** to Recent) they have diversified

Glossary

into a wide range of aquatic ecological niches both on land and at sea.

Outliers: Geographically, where younger rocks are surrounded by older rocks.

Palaeozoic: 'Ancient life', the first major division of geological time that is characterized by abundant life and which is preceded by the **Proterozoic** and succeeded by the **Mesozoic**; divided into six (or seven) periods from the **Cambrian** to the Permian.

Paraconodonts: A minor group of animals having tooth-like structures similar in form to **conodonts**, but the teeth are of simple form and different mineralogy.

Phanerozoic: Period of 'evident life' – the period of time comprising the **Palaeozoic**, **Mesozoic** and **Cainozoic Eras**, commencing around 540 million years before present.

Placentian: A stratigraphical term for the lower part of the Lower **Cambrian** of eastern North America. See Figure 2.2.

Plankton (adj. **planktonic**): Minute aquatic organisms that drift with the water movements.

Plate (Continental Plate): A large area of continental crust that has had its own history of geological movements and events. Compare the more restricted concept **terrane**.

Precambrian: A term to encompass the time that preceded the **Phanerozoic** Eon.

Proterozoic: The second eon of geological time, forming the later parts of the **Precambrian**.

Pyrite (adj. **pyritic**): 'Fire stone', an iron sulphide mineral ('fool's gold'), common within sediments, resulting from the biochemical action of bacteria within anaerobic environments.

Pyroclastic: Descriptive of rocks formed from fragmented volcanic material.

Quartzites: A **metamorphic** rock formed from more or less pure quartz sandstones.

Rheic Ocean: The ocean that separated part of **Gondwana** (e.g. what is now Brittany and central Germany) from southern Britain, northern France and northern Germany during the later **Ordovician** and **Silurian** periods. Its closure caused the **Variscan Orogeny**. See Figure 1.3.

Sequence: In stratigraphy is used both in a general way to mean a succession of strata, and in a particular technical way to refer to a body of strata bounded below and above by **unconformities** (a 'sedimentary sequence').

Serpentinite: Altered **ultramafic** rocks (such as

peridotite), giving masses of soft greenish or red-coloured magnesium silicate minerals ('serpentine').

Sheeted dykes: Closely spaced **dykes** intruded parallel to each other; a major component of an **ophiolite**.

Silurian: The third period of the **Palaeozoic** Era, ranging from about 440 to 395 million years ago.

SSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest. The designation of an area of land for statutory protection under the provisions of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*.

Stratigraphy: The study of rock strata and their distribution in space and time.

Stratotype: A sequence of strata at a particular location, which has been designated as the definitive section for a particular **lithostratigraphical** or **chronostratigraphical** division.

Subduction (adj. **subducted**): The process of one crustal **plate** descending beneath another during plate convergence. The line of subduction is usually marked by an oceanic trench and a volcanic arc.

Succession: In **stratigraphy**, a continuous sequence of sedimentary rock units.

Taxonomic group: A category at any level in the classification of organisms (e.g. phylum, class, order, family, genus, species).

Tectonism (adj. **tectonic**): Pertaining to the deformation of the Earth's crust and the consequent structural effects (e.g. faulting, folding etc.).

Terrane: A fault-bound body of oceanic or continental crust having a geological history that is distinct from that of contiguous bodies, cf. **plate**.

Tornquist Sea: A former sea-way that separated **Baltica** from **Gondwana** and **Avalonia** during the **Cambrian** and earlier **Ordovician**.

Transgression: Referring to the encroachment of the sea across a landscape as a result of either a (**eustatic**) rise in sea level or subsidence of the land.

Tremadoc: The first epoch of the **Ordovician** Period in the British stratigraphical standard. See Figure 6.2.

Trilobites: An extinct class of marine arthropods, of importance in **biostratigraphy**. See, for example, Figures 4.8, 9.21.

Trinucleid: A type of **trilobite** with a pitted marginal fringe on the head-shield. See Figures 8.18, 10.20.

Glossary

Tuff: A compacted fine-grained **pyroclastic** rock.

Turbidite: A sedimentary deposit that was formed by the settling out of detrital matter from a mass of sediment in water, which, being denser than normal water, had flowed (as a turbidity current) down a submarine slope.

Type locality: The location where the type section (or **stratotype**) for a stratigraphical unit is located, or where the original type section was first described, or where a fossil was originally described from.

Ultramafic: Describes an igneous rock in which dark-coloured (ferromagnesian) minerals (e.g. pyroxene, olivine) comprise more than

90% of the rock.

Unconformity: A break in the relationship between successive strata in a sequence, resulting from a variety of causes, ranging from lack of deposition to an intervening phase of **tectonism** and erosion; consequently the time interval not represented by rock may also vary enormously.

Variscan Orogeny: A mountain building episode that occurred during the Carboniferous Period and affected, in the UK, rocks in south-west England, South Wales and southern Ireland.

Volcanics: Volcanic rocks, including ashes, **pyroclastic** flows and lavas.

Fossil index

Note: Page numbers in **bold** and *italic* type refer to **tables** and *figures* respectively

- Acanthodiacrodium* 118
Acanthopleurella 105
 A. stipulae 118
Acidaspis magnospina 169
Acrograptus acutidens 141,
 142, 236, 238
 A. nicholsoni 148
Acrothyra sera 76
Actinodonta naranjoana 134
Adelograptus tenellus 107,
 113, 113, 120
Aeglina bugbesii 196
Aethocrinus murchisoni 230
Agnostus nodosus see
 Glyptagnostus reticulatus
Agnostus pisiformis 63
Abtiella quadrata 204
Akidograptus ascensus 367
Allatbeca degeeri 83
Allumetoceras oneratus 178
Aluta ulrichi 76
Ambonychia triton 169
Amorphognathus inaequalis
 151, 152, 153
 A. ordovicicus 166, 168,
 169, 215, 283
 A. superbus 210, 211
 A. tvaerensis 145, 335
Amplexograptus 189
 A. confertus 172, 188, 197
 A. leptotheca 242
Ampyx cetsarum 132, 134, 188
 A. linleyoides 140
 A. linleyensis 141
 A. (now Cnemidopyge)
 bisectus 177
 A. reyesi 229
Anebolithus simplicior 231
Angelina sedgwickii 112, 120,
 121, 122
Anguloceras sericeum 121
Annamitella perplexa 201
Anopolenus henrici 63
Apatokephalus sarculum 111,
 119
Aphelognathus rhodesi 168
Aphetoceras 302
Araiopleura 104
 A. stephani 103
Araneograptus murrayi 262,
 263, 264
Archegocystis 164
Arenicolites 82
Arenigiphyllum 132
Arienigraptus zhejiangensis
 196
Asaphellus graffi 121, 122
 A. homfrayi 110, 111, 118,
 119
 A. whittardi 233
Aspidograptus implicatus 234
Astraborthis uniplicata 232
Atavograptus ceryx 367
Atractopyge scabra 164, 279
 A. verrucosa 164, 168, 169
 A. williamsi 239
Aulograptus 270
 A. cucullus 189, 269
Azygograptus 193
 A. eivonicus 188, 193, 267
 A. bicksii 137, 139
 A. lapworthi 192
Bailiaspis dalmani 61, 65
Bailiella lyellii 59, 62
Baltoniodus praevariabilis
 151, 152, 153
Bancroftina robusta 276
 B. typa 276
Barbatulella 366
Barrandia 175, 176, 236
 B. expansa 176
 B. homfrayi 141, 142, 146,
 236
Basilicus 157
 B. peltastes 154
 B. tyannus 151, 152–5,
 157, 158, 240
Belodina compressa 335
Beltella 104, 106, 122
 B. depressa 106
 B. nodifer 103
Bergamia 174, 206
 B. inquinatum 231
 B. matura 231
 B. rushtonii 132, 140
 B. rhodesi 233
Bergstroemograptus 269
Bettonia frontalis 238
Bettanolithus chamberlaini
 172, 238
Beyrichona triceps 113, 119,
 120
Bicuspinia 242
Bienvillia praecalva 134, 136

Fossil index

- Billingslla hicksii* 63
Birksfeldia 166
Blastoidocrinus antecedens 202
Boeckaspis hirsuta 102, 103, 104
B. mobergi 102, 104
Bohemilla (Fenniops) sabulon 140
Bohemopyge scutatrix 137, 139, 195
Bolopora 48, 186, 187
Brephocharieis complicata 152, 154
Broeggeria 39
Broggerolithus broeggeri 242
B. barnagensis 209, 247, 249
B. nicholsoni 211, 280
B. nicholsoni longiceps 276
B. transiens 253
Brongniartella bulbosa 288
B. sedgwicki 282
Bullaferum llandeiloense 241
Buttsoceras 302
Bystromena 242

Callavia 83, 234
C. callavei 74
Callograptus 138, 139
C. extensus 233
C. radiatus 139
C. radicans 131
C. salteri 234
C. tenuis 136, 233
Calyptaular planiformis 164
Camenella 82
Caryocaris 140
C. marrii 196, 197
C. wrightii 196, 267, 268, 269
Cassinoceras 302
Ceratopea 301
C. billingsi 302
Ceratopsis 145
Ceraurinella intermedia 161, 164
Cermatops discoidalis 38
Chonetoidae 279
Christiania elusa 172
Climacograptus 166
C. antiquus 242
C. bicornis 242
C. dorothaeus 365

C. sheldoni 174
C. spiniferus 364
C. supernus 360, 366
C. tubuliferus 366
C. wilsoni 360, 364
Clonograptus 265
C. multiplex 264
Clytoceras 302
Cnemidopyge 145, 157, 174
C. bisecta 178, 179
C. nuda 143
C. parva 176
C. salteri 137, 139
Coleoloides 82
C. typicalis 83
Colpocoryphe taylorum 140
Conchoprimitiella 145
C. papilalata 159
Condylolyge cambrensis 59
Conochitina chydaea 236
Conolichas melmerbiensis 280
Conophrys salopiensis 113
Conspicillium bipunctatum 178
C. ulularum 174
Cordylodus lindstromi 303
C. proavus 102
Corineorthis pustula 155
Corymbograptus deflexus 234
Corynoides calicularis 364
Costonia elegans 158–9, 249
C. ultima 242, 243, 245, 246, 249
Cotalagnostus lens 63
Cruziana 38
C. furcifera 191
C. semplicata 47, 48
Cryptograptus antennarius 269
C. hopkinsoni 269
C. latus 143, 146
C. ex gr. tricornis 175, 176, 178, 179, 239
C. tricornis schaeferi 189, 190
Cryptozoon 299, 301
Ctenopyge (Ctenopyge) 34
Cyathochitina calix 236
C. campanulaeformis 236
Cyclopyge 206, 268
C. genatenta see
Prospectatrix
C. grandis 230, 232
C. grandis brevirbachis 140

C. grandis grandis 137, 195
Cyclotron lapworthi 86
Cymabolbina acanthodes 174

Dactylogonia 206
Dakeoceras praecox 110
Dalmanella 155, 222, 242
D. elementaria 234
D. parva 151, 152, 154, 172
D. salopiensis 239
Davidocinctus pembrokensis 65
Decoroproetus piriceps 169
Degamella evansi 140
Dendrograptus arbusculus 131, 139
D. diffusus 131
D. divergens 131
D. flexuosus 131
Diacanthaspis (D.) trippi 336
Dicellograptus 335
D. anceps 360, 366
D. angulatus 358
D. cambriensis 178
D. complanatus 366
D. elegans 366
D. flexuosus 365
D. geniculatus 241
D. intortus 179
D. morrisi 160–1, 360, 365
D. salopiensis 178
D. sextans 144
Dichelepyge 105, 110
D. pascuali 113
D. phylax 113
Dichograptus
D. sedgwickii 266
D. separatus 269
Dicranograptus 145, 166
D. brevicaulis 178, 179
D. clingani 365
D. furcatus minimus 242
D. irregularis 178, 239, 240
D. nicholsoni 364
D. spinifer 242
D. ziczac 360
Dictyograptus cancellatus 139
Dictyonema cobboldi 234
D. fluitans 242
D. fragile 234
D. bomfrayi 131
D. pulchellum 263
Didymaulichnus 82
Didymograptellus minutus

Fossil index

- 267
Didymograptus 172
D. acutidens 189
D. artus 141, 142, 148, 150, 189, 238
D. balticus 266
D. 'bifidus' 206
D. decens 265
D. deflexus 265, 266, 267
D. distinctus 195, 196
D. filiformis 265
D. gracilis 267
D. birundo 188, 206
D. infrequens 267
D. kurcki 267
D. murchisoni 143, 146, 147, 148, 153, 170, 172, 175, 176, 206, 238
D. nicholsoni planus 269
D. probalticus 263, 264
D. probifidus 269, 270
D. protointendus 330
D. rigoletto 264
D. simulans 188, 266, 267
D. sparsus 131
D. spinulosus 141, 142, 199, 269, 270
D. uniformis lepidus 140, 195
D. vacillans attenuatus 265
D. varicosus 265, 266
D. v-fractus volucer 269
Dimorphichnus 48
Dindymene 196, 197
Dinobolus hicksii 146
Dinorthis flabellulum 246, 247
Dionide euglypta quadrata 242
Diplichnites 48
Diplograptus 143, 160
D. caelatus 148
D. decoratus 175, 176, 177
D. foliaceus 145, 174, 239, 240, 242
D. multidens 166
D. priscus 172
Dolerorthis duftonensis 211
Drepanoistodus suberectus 145
Duftonia lacunosa 282
Eccaparadoxides barknessi 59
Echinospaerites arachnoideus 164
Ectillaenus bergaminus 234
E. perovalis 141, 142, 236
Ectomaria 301
Ellesmeroceras 300, 301
Ellipsotaphrus monophthalmus 142, 236
Elliptocinctus vizcainoi 63
Emmrichops extensus 176
Encrinuroides sexcostatus 161, 164
Ensigraptus caudatus 364
Eodiscus 65
E. punctatus 61, 62, 63, 65
E. punctatus scanicus 65
Eoglyptograptus 269
E. dentatus 197
Eoharpes 196
Eoorthis 38
Eoplacognathus elongatus 159
E. lindstroemi 151, 152, 153
Eostropheodonta birnantensis 217, 221, 222
Estoniops alifrons 211
Euconia 301
E. etna 300
E. ramsayi 300
Eucystis pentax 164
Euloma 104
E. (Proteuloma) geinitzi 102
Eumorphocystis coxi 239
Euorthisina 232
Eurytreta sabrinae 102, 106, 110, 118
Expansograptus 268
E. extensus linearis 195, 268
E. goldschmidti 268
E. birundo 94, 203, 233, 268
E. nitidus 233, 234, 268
E. praenuntius 188, 233
E. sparsus 234, 269
E. suecicus 233
E. uniformis 268
Falcatodonta costata 132
Ffynnonia costata 202
Flexicalymene aurora 172
F. cambreensis 151, 152, 153, 155, 240
F. cavei 164, 166
F. onniensis 213, 215
F. onniensis lata 288
Furcalithus sedgwickii 139, 195
Gastropolus obtusicaudatus 236, 270
Gelidorthis cennenensis 151, 153
Geragnostus callavei 118, 119
Girvanella 285, 343
Girvanopyge 140
Glossograptus acanthus 141, 142
G. bincksii fimbriatus 172, 178
Glyptagnostus reticulatus 33, 86
Glyptograptus 176, 366
G. persculptus 366
G. teretiusculus see
Hustedograptus teretiusculus
Glyptorthis 242
G. viriosa 172
G. viriosa tumida 151, 152
Grandagnostus falanensis
(Peratagnostus) 86
Gravicalymene arcuata 215, 216
G. convolva 169
G. jugifera 279, 282, 288
graveyard of 216
Gunnaropsis narbethensis 159
Gymnograptus 238
Gymnostomix gibbsii 137, 139
Hadimopella 118
Halysites catenularius 165
Hamarodus europaeus 283
Hamatolenus (Myopsolemus) 28
H. (Myopsolemus) douglasi 27
Haplosphaeronis 164
Harknessella subplicata 248
H. verpertilio 246, 247
Harperopsis bicuneiformis 242
Harpidella tridens 169
Hartshillia inflata 65
Hartshillia spinata 31
Hedinaspis expansa 35
Hebertella llandeiloensis 169
Hesperonomiella carmelensis 201
Hesperorthis dynevorensis 151, 152, 153, 154, 172
Heterorthis alternata 247, 257
Hirnantia sagittifera 217, 221,

Fossil index

- 222
Histinia xanios 242
Holocephalina primordialis
 63
Holopea 301
Homagnostus obesus 29, 31,
 33, 66, 86
Homalopteron murchisoni 179
 H. radians 178
Homeoceratopsis jubata 154
Horderleyella 154, 155, 222
 H. convexa 151, 152
Hormotoma 301, 302
Hospes clonograpti 117
Howellites antiquior 211
Hustedograptus teretiusculus
 153, 156, 157, 174, 241
Hyalostelia fasciculus 152,
 174
Hyolithellus 82, 83
 H. micans 76
Hyolithes (s.l.) *primaevus* 78-9
Hypagnostus truncatus 65
Hypermecaspis venerabilis
 134
Hysterolenus 102, 103, 105
 H. toernquisti 105

Iapetognathus 102
Illaenopsis harrisoni 140, 268
Illaenus 206
Indiana lentiformis 58
Iocrinus pauli 152
 I. shelvensis 238
Ischyrotoma stubblefieldi 323
Isograptus 145
 I. caduceus 131
 I. caduceus gibberulus 195,
 195, 268
 I. primulus 267
 I. victoriae 262, 268
Isopodichnus 82

Jeffersonia timon 302

Kerberodiscus 28
 K. succinctus 27
Kinnella 222
Kjaerina bipartita 251
Kloucekia apiculata 280
Kootenia lakei 76
Kuckersella borealis 164
Kutorgina anglica 79

Lapworthella nigra 76
Lasiograptus 143, 189
 L. costatus 242
 L. barknessi 360
Latebina pseudantra 159
Laterophores 145
 L. elevatus 153, 241
Lecanospira 301
Leiagnostus 113, 114
Leperditia cambrensis 57
Lepidocoleus 242
Leptochilodiscus 28
Leptograptus capillaris 366
 L. validus 157, 241
Leptoplastides 122
 L. salteri 118, 119
Lingulella 106, 110
 L. bella 122
 L. davisii 38, 67
 L. displosa 176, 239
 L. lepis 110
 L. nicholsoni 118
 L. primaeva 57
Linnarssonia 84
 L. sagittalis 62, 63, 65
Litagnostus meniscus 119
Lloydolithus lloydii 152, 154,
 156, 157, 239, 240
Loganograptus logani 269
Lordshillia 232
 L. confinalis 231
Lotgnostus triseptus 34
Lyopora favosa 343

Maclurea 301
Macrocoelia llanveiloensis
 151, 152, 153, 174
 M. llanveiloensis elongata
 172
Macrocystella mariae 111, 118
Macrogrammus scylensis 231,
 232
Macropyge chermei 117
Maladioidella 39
 M. abdita 38
Marrolithoides 152, 157, 159
 M. simplex 155, 155, 156
 M. simplex elevatus 154
Marrolithus 151, 152, 157,
 158, 242
 M. anomalis 152
 M. favus 157
 M. inflatus 152, 157, 239,
 240

M. ventriculatus 159
Matherella acuticostata 202
Meneviella venulosa 31, 63, 65
Merlinia 193
 M. major 229, 231
 M. murchisonae 130, 132
 M. rhyakos 134, 136
 M. selwynii 132, 133, 134,
 188, 193, 194, 195
Mesopalaeaster primus 345
Micragnostus 34, 103
Micromitra 73
 M. labradorica 79
Microparia 268
 M. (M.) broeggeri 140, 142,
 195
 M. lusca 176
 M. princeps 236
 M. teretis 141, 142
Mobergella 73
Modestospira llanvirensis
 146
Modocia anglica 86
Monobolina 232
 M. crassa 179
 M. plumbea 230, 231
Monocraterion 303, 308, 309
Monorthis typis 202
Mucronaspis mucronata 221,
 275, 283, 288
Myttonia confusa 229, 230
 M. fearsidesi 133, 134
 M. multiplex 230, 232

Nemagraptus 145
 N. gracilis 156, 168, 178,
 179, 241-3, 246, 360, 360
 N. subtilis 178
Neseuretus brevisulcus 229,
 230
 N. bullatus 236
 N. complanatus 229-30
 N. monensis 201
 N. murchisoni 229, 231, 232
 N. parvifrons 188, 230, 232
 N. ramseyensis 122, 130,
 132
Neurograptus margaritatus
 365
Nileus 334
Niabella 104, 113
 N. homfrayi homfrayi 106
 N. homfrayi preciosa 103
 N. homfrayi smithi 109, 110

Fossil index

- Niobina davidis* 112, 123
Nobiliasaphus powysensis 178
Normalograptus 164, 366
 N. brevis brevis 178, 179
Novakella copei 142

Obolella groomi 73, 78, 79
Oelandograptus oelandicus 141
Oepikodus evae 353
Ogmoopsis (Quadridigitalis) siveteri 242
Ogygia marginata 133
 see also *Merlinia selwynii*
Ogyginus 174, 175, 176, 201
 O. corndensis 172, 238
 O. hybridus 137
Ogygiocarella 174, 175, 176
 O. angustissima 143
 O. debuchii 152, 154, 155, 156, 178, 179, 239, 240
Ogygocaris bettonensis 238
 O. seavilli 238
Olenelloides armatus 311
Olenellus 28, 303, 306, 309, 313
 O. gigas 310
 O. hamoculus 311
 O. intermedius 310
 O. lapworthi 310, 311, 312
 O. reticulatus 310, 312
 O. (*Olenelloides*) armatus 310
Olenellus (Angustolenellus) 311
Orentella rara 33
Olenus 29, 31
 O. austriacus 86
 O. cataractes 33, 67, 86
 O. gibbosus 33, 86
 O. micrurus 32, 33, 34
 O. mundus 67
 O. truncatus 33, 86
 O. wahlenbergi 86
Onnia 254
 O. cobboldi 257
 O. gracilis 213, 215, 257, 278
 O. pusillensis 288
 O. superba 257
 O. superba cobboldi 256, 278
 O. superba pusillensis 278
 O. superba superba 278

Onniella 257, 279
 O. gracilis 257, 258
 O. pusillensis 258
 O. reuschi 254
 O. williamsi 336
Onymagnostus barrandei 57
 O. davidis 62, 63
Oriostoma 301
Ormathops llanvirnensis 142, 146
 O. nicholsoni 140
Orthambonites 202, 206
Orthis 232
Orthograptus 365
 O. abbreviatus 163, 165, 366
 O. acutus 144
 O. amplexicaulis 242
 O. apiculatus 159
 O. calcaratus 360, 364
 O. socialis 366
 O. truncatus abbreviatus 221
 O. uplandicus 242
Orusia lenticularis 38
Otorozoum 280
Ovaluta salopiensis 76
Oxydiscus multistriatus 110
Ozarkodina pseudofissilis 168

Pagetia 319
Pagetides 319, 320
Palaeobolus quadratus 113
Palaeoglossa attenuata 154, 239
 P. myttonensis 230
Palaeoscolex piscatorum 118
Palaeura 236
Parabasilicus powisii 207
Parabolina 104
 P. acanthura 38, 102, 103
 P. frequens 103
 P. heres 102, 105
 P. heres heres 102, 103, 104
 P. (*Neoparabolina*) frequens 102
Parabolinella argentinensis 113, 114
 P. caesa 34
 P. contracta 102, 103
 P. triarthra 118
 P. triarthroides 123
Parabolinites longispinus 34, 35

P. williamsonii 35
Paradelograptus 330
Paradoxides 31, 76
 P. davidis 31, 54, 60, 63, 65
 P. groomi 74, 76, 78
Parakidograptus acuminatus 367
Paralenorthis 188
 P. alata 130, 132
 P. proava 201
Pariconchoprimitia oscillata 241
Paterina 82
 P. labradorica 79
 P. phillipsii 78, 79, 83
Paterula balclatchiensis 206
 P. bohemica 236
Peelerophon arfonensis 110
Peltocare olenoides 112, 120, 121, 122, 123
Peltura scarabaeoides
 scarabaeoides 34
 P. scarabaeoides westergardi 34
Pendeograptus fruticosus 265
Pensarnia 230
Periodon grandis 358
Peronopsis 65
 P. scutalis 61-2, 63, 65
Petigurus 304
 P. nero 302
Phacops (now Toxochasmops) amphora 167
Phakelodus 102
Pharostomina 114
Phragmodus 145
Phycodes 48
 P. circinatum 192
Piretopsis (Protallinnella) salopiensis 159, 242
Placoparia 197, 206
 P. cambriensis 140, 141, 142, 146, 233, 234
Placoparina 142
Planolites 25, 48, 82
Platanaster ordovicus 249
Platycalyptene 176
 P. duplicata 178, 179, 242
 P. tasgarensis 238
 P. tasgarensis simulata 143
Platycoryphe vulcani 238
Platylichas noctua 164
Platypeltoides 113
 P. croftii 110, 118

Fossil index

- Platysiphon* 302
Platysolenites 22, 28
P. antiquissimus 83
Plectodina 166
P. bullbillensis 215
P. flexa 145
Plectothyrella 222
P. crassicostis 217
Plegmatograptus nebula 358
Pleurograptus linearis 365-6
Plicatolina 35
P. quadrata 34
Plutonides aurora 61
P. hicksii 31, 32, 57, 60-2,
 65
P. sedgwickii 59
Porites (now *Heliolites*) *inordiatus* 165
Porterfieldia punctata 132,
 136
Pricycloppe 234
P. binodosa 197, 233, 236
P. binodosa binodosa 142,
 197
P. binodosa eurycephala
 140, 195, 196
Primaspis whitei 241
Prioniodus 169
Proceratopyge 86
Prochauvelicystis semispinosa
 119
Productorthis 202
Prospectatrix 118
Proteuloma geinitzi 110
P. monile monile 118
P. monile praemonile 117
Protocycloceras mendax 302
Protocystites menevensis 63
Protolloydolithus 143, 150
P. neintianus 238
P. reticulatus 176
Protopanderus liripipus 335
Protoskenidiooides revelatus
 234
Protospongia fenestrata 63
P. hicksii 63
Pseudagnostus 103
P. obtusus 35
Pseudatops viola 28
Pseudisograptus angel 195,
 196
P. dumosus 195, 196
P. manubriatus koi 196,
 197-8, 197
P. stella 131
Pseudobryograptus 265
P. cumbrensis 267
Pseudoclimacograptus angulatus *sebyensis* 176, 177
P. modestus 241
P. riddellensis 144
P. scharenbergi 197, 242,
 364
Pseudohysterolenus 113-14
Pseudokainella impar 111,
 119
Pseudolingula granulata 154,
 238
Pseudophyllograptus augustifolius 133, 267, 268
P. cor 190
Pseudosphaerexochus juvenis
 164
P. tectus 164
Pseudotrigonograptus ensiformis 140, 267, 268
P. minor 190
Psilacella 268
Psilocephalinella innotata 106
Ptilograptus cristula 131
P. hicksii 131
Ptychagnostus punctuosus 32,
 63
Ptychopleurella 206
Pygecystis quadrata 345
Ramseyocrinus cambriensis
 130
Rectrophia globularis 202
Redonia anglica 231
Reinversella monensis 202
Retrorsirostra retrorsa 169
Reuscholithus 248
R. reuschi 249
Rhabdinopora 104, 105
Rb. flabelliformis 36, 101,
 102, 104, 105, 107, 110,
 116, 120
Rb. flabelliformis desmograptoides 103
Rb. flabelliformis flabelliformis 102
Rb. flabelliformis parabola
 103, 104
Rb. flabelliformis socialis
 39, 103, 106, 109
Rhabdochitina turgida 236
R. usitata 236
Rhodesognathus elegans 169
Rhombocorniculum cancellatum 76
R. insololutum 83
Rhynchorthis rotunda 202,
 204, 205
Riberia complanata 231
Richardsonella 39
R. invita 38
Rorringtonia 179
R. kennedyi 176
Rostricellula lapworthi 343
Rusophycus 38, 81
Salopia turgida 152
Salterella 299
S. maccullochi 306
Salterolithus 207, 248, 249
S. caractaci 206, 242
S. caractaci paucus 206
Schallreuteria buithensis 174
Schizocrania salopiensis 152
Schizograptus tardefurcatus
 266
Schizotreta transversa 239,
 240
Schmidtides micula 179
Scotiaecystis curvata 345
Segmentagnostus 143, 175,
 176
S. scoltonensis 233
Seleneceme acuticaudata 142
Selenopeltis 196, 197
S. buchii macrophthalmia
 140, 142, 234
Sericoidaea 279
Serrodiscus bellimarginatus
 83
S. ctenoa 27
Shumardia gadwensis 139,
 195
S. (s.l.) curta 117
Shumardia (Conophrys) 104
S. (C.) alata 103
S. (C.) crossi 140
S. (C.) salopiensis 111, 118,
 119
Sigmoopsis (S.) duftonensis
 280
Siphonochitina robusta 236
S. tenuicollis 236
Skiagia scottica 27
Skenidiooides 206
Skljarella cracens 119

Fossil index

- Skolithos* 38, 39, 48, 57
Solenopleura applanata 63, 65
Solenopleuropsis variolaris 63
Sonxites 366
Sowerbyella 242
 S. antiqua 151, 152, 153, 154
 S. sericea 251
 S. sericea permixta 242
Sphaerochitina vulgaris 236
Sphaerocoryphe 288
Sphaeronites litchi 164
Sphaerophthalmus 34
Spirantyx calvarina 157, 241
Stapeleyella inconstans 141, 142
 S. murchisonii 199
Staurocephalus clavifrons 164
Stelliferidium trifidum 118
Stenopareia bowmanni 164
Stenotheeca 83
Sunnaginia 82, 83
 S. parva 79
Tallinnella tomacina 152, 153
Tectitheca decorata 118
Teichichnus 48, 56, 83, 87, 188, 192
Telaeomarrolithus 157
 T. intermedius 145, 178
Tetraeucystis munita 217
Tetragraptus 139, 267, 268, 269
 T. approximatus 329, 330, 330
 T. beadi 202
 T. (Pendeograptus) fruticosus 264, 330
 T. quadribrachiatius 266
Theca caereesiensis 146
Thymurus incertus 231
Tissintia 152, 178
 T. immatura 151, 152, 153, 155
 T. plana 151, 152
 T. prototypa 150, 151, 152, 153, 172, 238
Tomagnostus fissus 61, 62, 65, 73
Torellella 82, 83
Toxochasmops amphora 168
 T. bisseti 345
Treioria chaulioda 202
Trematis corona 276, 277, 277
Tretaspis 165
 T. caritus 282
 T. ceriodes 257, 288, 341
 T. convergens 279, 282
 T. duftonensis 279
 T. hadelandica 288
T. badelandica brachystichus 165, 166
T. moeldensis 277, 279
T. moeldensis moeldensis 159, 161
T. radialis 161, 164, 169, 282
T. sortita 216
Trinucleus abruptus 172
 T. acutofinalis 238
 T. fimbriatus 145, 178, 179
Triplegia edgelliana 153
Tritoechia pyramidalis 202
Trochograptus diffusus 266
Trochonema 301
Turcutbeca 83
Undulograptus 269
 U. austrodentatus 132, 141, 142, 196, 197, 234, 269
 Afon Seiont 196, 197
 U. cumbrensis 140, 141, 142
 U. shelvensis 234
Walcottoceras 300
Walliserodus 166
Whittardolithus 158, 174
 W. inopinatus 157, 239
 W. intertextus 239

General index

Note: Page numbers in **bold** and *italic* type refer to **tables** and *figures* respectively

- Abbey Shales Formation 53, 63, 71, 85
Illing's Trenches 83–4
Aber Mawr Shale Formation 128, 144
in Llanvirn Quarry 146, 147
Abercastle Beds 129
Abercastle Formation 138, 138
Aberdaron Bay Group 195
Abereiddi Bay 143–7
Llanrian Syncline, successions on two limbs differ 143, 145
and Llanvirn, geology 144
Porth Gain Slate Quarry 143–5
southern outcrops 145–6
stratotype area for Llanvirn Series 143
Abereiddi Tuff Member 128
Porth Gain Slate Quarry 143
Abereiddian Stage 94, 95, 128, 129, 144, 185, 228, 238, 352
Abergwaun 148–9
Afon Seiont 196, 197
Betton Shale Formation 237
Builth Inlier 169, 170
Ffairyfach Railway Cutting 149, 151
base in Llanfallteg Cutting 142
in North Wales 184
Abergwaun (Fishguard Old Harbour) 147–9, 148
Acerocare Zone 16, 25, 38, 40, 100, 105
Brynn-llin-fawr 101, 103, 104
Achray Sandstone Formation 322, 323
Acritarchs 11
Cherme's Dingle 117
Ercall Quarry 73
Hell's Mouth Formation 27
late Tremadoc 123
Maentwrog Formation 29, 30
Ordovician, Macduff Slates 92
Shineton Shale Formation 118
Trusmadoor 263, 264
Acton Scott Formation 244, 255
Actonian Substage 94, 244, 253, 271, 281, 282
acuminatus Zone see *Parakidograptus acuminatus* Zone
Adelograptus tenellus Zone 94, 99, 101, 107, 114, 116
Aeronian Stage 352
Afon Ffinnant Formation 128
Cwm yr Abbey 135, 136–7
Afon Llafar 30–3
Afon Seiont 196–8
Arenig to Llanvirn passage 186, 196, 197
Agnostus pisiformis Zone 16
Aldons Anticline 332
Aldons Quarry 332–4
Aldress Shale Formation 228
Spywood and Aldress Dingles 240, 241, 241, 242, 243
Alexandra Quarry *see* Moel Tryfan
Algal structures 76
algal stromatolites 82, 299, 300, 301
Allt Cystanog Member 128
Dan-lan-y-castell 132
Allt Ddu Mudstone Formation 185
Gelli-grîn 210
Rhiwlas 218
Allt Lwyd Formation 185, 188, 190
Llynnaau Cregennen 198, 199–200
see also Llyfnant Flags
Allt Pen-y-coed 134–5
Cwmffrwd Member 134–5, 135
Pibwr Member 134–5
alobatus Subzone 352
Alternata Limestone Formation 244, 245
Soudley Quarry 250, 251, 251, 252
Amnodd Beds 21, 21, 22, 41, 99
Amnodd Bwll 110–11
Amnodd Shales 110
Amorphognathus inaequalis Subzone 153
Amorphognathus kielcensis

General index

- Subzone 153
Amorphognathus ordovicicus
Zone 128, 168, 169, 210, 211, 215, 218, 340, 352, 366
Amorphognathus superbus
Zone 128, 167, 185, 211, 244, 339, 352
Amorphognathus tvaerensis
Zone 128, 145, 159, 185, 334, 344, 352
Ampyx-Protolloydolithus-Stapeleyella fauna, Hope Shales 238
An t-Sròn 304–9
Eilean Dubh Formation 304, 305, 305, 306
Eriboll Formation 304, 305, 308
False Bedded Quartzite Member 307, 308
Fucoid Beds Member 206, 305, 306, 306, 307, 308
Ghrudaidh Formation 304, 305, 306, 309
Pipe Rock Member 305, 306, 306, 307, 308
Salterella Grit Member 305–6, 307, 307, 308
An t-Sròn Formation 296, 304, 310, 315
Durness and Balnakeil 297, 298
Ord 313, 314
Anceps Bands 366
anceps Zone see *Dicellograptus anceps* Zone
Andalusite 268
Angelina sedgwickii Zone 94, 99, 100, 112, 119, 120
Anglesey 183
Ordovician 186, 201, 202–3
sub-Ordovician unconformity, diachronous base 205
Anglesey–Wexford Axis 108
anserinus Zone see *Pygodus anserinus* Zone
Apatocephalus serratus Zone (Scandinavia) 119
Applethwaite Member 271, 274
Appletreeworth Formation 271
Ashgill Quarry 273, 274
approximatus Zone see *Tetragraptus approximatus* Zone
- Aran Volcanic Group 184, 184, 186
dating end of volcanic activity 209
Llynnau Cregennen 186, 196
Araneograptus murrayi Zone 94
Arbuthnot Group 322, 323, 323
Ardwell Flags Formation 337, 337, 338, 339, 341
Ardwell Group 328, 336, 337, 337, 338
Arenaceous Beds Member 114, 119–20
Arenig Series 91, 94, 115, 128, 328, 352
Durness and Balnakeil 297
hiatus below 193–4
North Wales 184, 190
north-west Highlands 296
South Shropshire 227
transgressive base at Ogof Hên 129
Arenig–Llanvirn boundary Afon Seiont 196
Llanfallteg Cutting 141, 142
Afon area 15, 40–9
general stratigraphical succession 41
artus Zone see *Didymograptus artus* Zone
Arvanian volcanic rocks, Llyn Padarn 42
Asaphus Ash 128, 153
Meidrim Road Section 157, 157
Ashgill Formation 271, 272, 273, 288, 290
Backside Beck 290
Ecker Secker Beck 291, 292
Swindale Beck 281, 282–3, 282
Ashgill Quarry 272–4
Ashgill Series 94, 95, 128, 261, 271, 280, 328, 352
Backside Beck 289–90
base of Girvan foreshore 336, 341
North Wales 215
northern England 286
hiatus below 183
North Wales 184
Sally Beck and River
- Rawthey, basal stratotype 286, 288
Ashgill Shales 272
Ecker Secker Beck 291, 291
Atavograptus atavus Zone 285
Atdabanian Stage 16, 83
Aurelucian Stage 94, 128, 129, 144, 170, 185, 228
South Shropshire 244, 245, 245
Aurelucian–Burrellian palaeogeography 8
Australasian stages 328
Avalonia, Ordovician movement 7
Bach-y-graig 174–7
murchisoni–teretiusculus zonal boundary 174–5, 175, 176, 177
tuff bands 175
Backside Beck 289–90
Bala Fault 217, 218
Bala Group 208, 217
Balchreuchan Group 329, 329, 330
Balclatchie Group 328
Balcreuchan Point–Bennane Head 329–31
Ballantrae Complex 334, 336, 342
Aldons Quarry 332–3
Balcreuchan Point–Bennane Head 329, 329
Tyrone–Girvan Subterrane 327–8
Balnakeil 92, 93, 295, 297
Balnakiel Formation 296
Durness and Balnakeil 297, 298, 301–2, 304
Baltic conodont zones 128, 352
Baltognathus variabilis Subzone 159, 352
Baltoniodus gerdae Subzone 334, 335, 352
Bancroftina typa association 252
Bancroftina typa Zone 214
Banff Nappe 92
Barf 266–8
Barmouth Formation 21
stratotype base, Barmouth Hillside 25

General index

- Barmouth Hillside 23–6
Barr Group 328
Basin inversion 122
Basin subsidence, North Wales 183
Benan Conglomerate 336
Bentonite beds/horizons 142, 146, 174, 254, 256
see also Metabentonite beds
Bergam Quarry 232–3
Berwyn Hills 183
Betton Dingle 237, 237–8
Betton Shale Formation 228, 237, 237, 238
Bettonolithus-Trinucleus-Didymograptus fauna 238
bifidus Shales *see* Aber Mawr Shale Formation
bifidus Zone *see* *Didymograptus artus* Zone
Billy's Beck 275
Billy's Beck Member 271, 275
Pus Gill 278
Swindale Beck 281
Biotas, Cambrian and Ordovician 10–12
Birdshill Limestone 128, 162, 169
Birdshill Quarry 168–9
Birkhill Shale Formation
Dob's Linn 361, 362, 362, 365, 366–7
Glenkiln Burn 360, 361
bisulcata Subzone *see* *Ctenopyge bisulcata* Subzone
Bitter Beck Formation 261, 262
Blaencediw Formation 128
Blaze Bridge and Scawgill Quarry 264–6
Bodeidda Mudstone 185, 220
Cadnant Cutting 212, 212
Body fossils 10–11
Bolahaul Member 128, 129
Dan-lan-y-castell 131
Bonnia-Olenellus Zone 209, 309, 310
Boon's Member 79, 80, 80, 81
Boon's Quarry 71, 79–81
Borrowdale Volcanic Group 92, 261, 261, 272, 275, 281
overstepped from North 270
Bouma cycles/sequences 26
Arenaceous Beds Member 119
Barmouth Formation 25
Dorothea Grits Group 47
Rhinog Formation 24–5
Scawgill Quarry 265, 266
South Shore Formation 338–9, 341
Brachiopod Beds 114, 117–18
brachymetopa Zone *see* *Solenopleura brachymetopa* Zone
Branchian Series 16, 17
north-west Highlands 296
The Brand 87
Brand Group 71, 86
Brand Hills Formation 87
Brigus Formation 78, 83
Bron-y-buckley Wood *see* Trilobite Dingle
Bronllywd Grit Formation 21, 41, 41
Bronsil Shale 53
Broughton Moor Formation 271
Ashgill Quarry 273, 274
Bryn Brith Member 185, 198, 199, 199, 200
Garth Grit over Upper Mudstone Member 187
Bryn Glas Quarry 186–7
Bryn-banc Quarry, Llan-mill 158–9
Bryn-llin-fawr 101–5
Dolgellau–Dol-cyn-afon transition 100
Merioneth–Tremadoc series boundary 101, 102, 103, 104
Bryn-teg Volcanic Formation 22
Building stone 3, 57
Builth Inlier 10, 11, 91, 127, 129, 169–79
graptolitic-shelly faunas 10
mudstones deposited in dysaerobic conditions 129
trilobites from Llanvirn sites 11
volcanic edifice 129
created rapid lateral facies changes 127
Builth Volcanic Formation 170
Howey Brook 170, 171, 172
Newmead 173
Builth–Llandrindod Inlier *see* Builth Inlier
Burgess Shale 10
Burrellian Stage 94, 128, 185, 228, 244, 271
base in Hoar Edge Grit Formation 248
succession, northern Caradoc area 245
Burrow mottling 301, 303
Burrowing, Pipe Rock Member 305, 308
Buttermere Formation 261
an olistostrome deposit 116, 123
Cadnant Cutting 211–13, 212
Nod Glas Formation (locally Cadnant Shales) 186, 211
Cadnant Shale Formation 185, 212, 213, 220
Caerbwdy Sandstone 53
St Non's Bay and Caerfai Bay 54, 56, 57, 58
Caerbwdy Sandstone–lower Solva Group boundary 58
Caerfai Bay Shales 53, 54, 54, 58
St Non's Bay and Caerfai Bay 56–7
Caerfai Group 53, 54, 58
St Non's Bay and Caerfai Bay 55–6
Caerfai Series 15
Caerfai–Solva groups contact 54
Caerhys Shale Formation 128, 144
Abereiddi Bay (south) 145–6
Porth Gain Slate Quarry 143–4
Cahore Group 5
Calcichordates 344, 345
Caldecote Volcanic Formation 53, 79
River Calder, Latter Barrow 123–4
Calettwr Quartzite, equated with Hirnant Limestone Member 222
Callavia Zone, Newfoundland 78
Calymene Beds 273, 274
Calymenid Association 274
Cambrian System 15
basal Cambrian unconformi-

General index

- ty 17, 53–4, 57, 74
base 53
defined in Newfoundland 5, 17, 73
difficult to identify, Llyn Padarn 42–3
lies unconformably on Ercall Granophyre 72, 73
as recognized by Sedgwick 45
transgressive 78, 79
younger in Shropshire 73–4
boundaries of 16–17
conformable/paraconformable contact with Precambrian 40–1
correlation of principal sequences, South Wales and England 53
distribution of outcrops 15–16
divisions of 17–18
fauna 9, 10
north-western Scotland 296
Durness and Balnakeil 297
palaeogeographical maps 8
Wales 15
Cambrian–Arenig junction, Trwynhwrddyn 138
Cambrian–Ordovician boundary 17
identified by fauna 95, 100, 101–2
level at or close to base of Tremadoc 92, 95
Ogof Ddû 39, 40
Unconformity at Cwm Graianog 47
Cambrian–Ordovician succession, Hebridean marine shelf 295
Camenella baltica Zone 83
Camnant Mudstones Formation 170
Howey Brook 170, 171–2, 171
Caradoc area 92, 243–58
'Caradoc Limestone' see Crûg Limestone
Caradoc Series 94, 95, 128, 129, 185, 228, 261, 271, 280, 286, 337, 328, 336, 352
active volcanism in North Wales 184
base redefined 245
Builth Inlier 170
Cross Fell Inlier 275
North Wales, shallow neritic environment 184
South Shropshire 243–58
Wales, pattern of recurring biofacies 210
Caradoc–Ashgill boundary Pus Gill 277, 279
Mylet Road 159
Carmarthen district, olenid biofacies 137
Carmarthen Formation 128, 129
Carmel Formation 185
Treiorwerth and Ty Hen, Anglesey 201, 202
Carnarvonshire Slate Belt 40
Carnedd Iago Formation see Allt Lwyd Formation
Carnedd y Filiast Grit Member 21, 41
Cwm Graianog 47–8
Castell Limestone Formation 128, 144, 149
Abereiddi Bay 144–5
Castelldraenog Member 128
cataractes Subzone see *Olenus cataractes* Subzone
caudatus Subzone see *Ensigraptus caudatus* Subzone
Causey Pike Fault 261, 269
Cautley Inliers 92, 261, 285–92
Cautley Mudstone Formation (Cautley Mudstones) 261, 285–6
Backside Beck 289–90
Ecker Secker Beck 291–2, 291
Sally Beck and River Rawthey 286–8, 288
zonation 286–7, 287, 289, 290
Cautley Volcanic Member 271, 274, 290
Backside Beck 289–90
Sally Beck and River Rawthey 287–8, 287, 288
Cautleyan Stage 94, 185, 214, 226, 271, 286
basal stratotype 288
Berwyn Hills 184
Billy's Beck 276
Ecker Secker Beck 290, 291–2, 291
Sally Beck and River Rawthey 286
Stile End 270, 272
Cefn Coch Grit 32
Cefn Hir Member 185, 198, 199, 199, 200, 200
Ceiriad Formation 21
Porth Ceiriad 28
St Tudwal's Peninsula 23
Trwyn-llêch-y-doll 190, 191
Ceiswyn Formation 185
'Celtic Province' brachiopods 202
Ceraurinella-Encrinuroides Association 219
Chamberlain's Brook Formation 26
Charnian Supergroup 86
Charnwood Forest area 71, 86–7
Charnwood Supergroup 5
Chatwall Limestone 252
Chatwall Sandstone Formation 245, 251
Cheney Longville Formation 244, 251, 253
Cheneyan Stage 94, 128, 185, 244, 245, 271
Cherme's Dingle 116–17
Chitinozoa 11, 236
Chondrites burrows 39, 188
Church Stretton Fault 92, 227, 227, 245
Church Stretton Lineament 71
Cilan Formation 21, 23
Cilgwyn Conglomerate 21, 41, 42
Moel Tryfan 45, 46
Cleavage, Llanberis Slates 45, 46
Cliff Member, South Threave 345, 346, 346
Climacograptus ?extraordinarius Zone 94, 328, 352, 364, 366
Climacograptus peltifer Zone 328, 335, 352, 358, 360, 364, 364
Climacograptus wilsoni Zone

General index

- 328, 352, 358, 359, 360, 364, 364
clingani Zone see *Dicranograptus clingani*
 Zone
clingani-linearis zonal boundary 215
 Clogau Formation 21, 22
 Afon Llafar 30–1
 Clogau Shales 31
 Clogwyn Volcanics 46
 Colomendy Formation 128
 Comley area 15
 Comley Limestones 71, 73, 74, 75, 76
 Comley Quarry 74–8
 Comley–St David's series boundary 74, 78
 Excavation No. 2 76–7, 78
 Comley Sandstone 72, 114
 Comley Series 15, 16, 17, 22, 26, 41, 73
 Comley Quarry 75
 Hartshill Sandstone Formation 81
 zones of 16, 18
 Comley–St David's series boundary 78
 Complanatus Bands 366
complanatus Zone see *Dicellograptus complanatus*
 Zone
complexus Subzone see *Dicellograptus complexus*
 Subzone
 Condensed sequences 83, 252, 308
 Cone-in-cone structure 38, 112, 116
 Confinis Formation 333
 Coniston Limestone 272
 Conodont Alteration Index 335
Conophrys pusilla Zone 114
Conophrys salopiensis Zone
 see *Shumardia (Conophrys) salopiensis* Zone
 Conway Castle Grits 185
 Deganwy Quarries 219, 220, 221
 Coquinas, Alternata Limestone 251
 Corals
 halysitid 166
 rugose 221
Corineorthis Flags 155
 Corona Beds/corona facies 271
 Harthwaite Sike 275
 Swindale Beck 281
Corona Series 277
 Corsewall Formation 351, 352
 Conglomeratic and Flaggy divisions 354
 Corsewall Point 354–6
 Corsewall Point Conglomerate Member 352, 353
 origin of boulders/clasts 354, 355
 Coston Beds 243
 Coston Farm 245–7
 Coston Formation 244, 245
Costonia ultima Beds 246, 249
 Costonian Substage
 gracilis–multidens zonal boundary 246
 North Wales 185, 186, 228
 Shropshire 158, 159
 South Shropshire 244, 245, 245
 South Wales 94, 128, 159
 Coundmoor Brook, Evenwood 119
 Coundmoor Brook, Harnage 247–9, 248
 Crafnant Volcanic Formation 212
 Craig Cau Formation 185
 Craighead Inlier 328–9
 Craighead Limestone
 Craighead Quarry 342–4
 Craigskelly 336, 337
 Craigskelly Conglomerate 341
 Craven Fault System 92
 Craven Inliers 92, 290
 Crawford Group 351
 Cregennen Formation 185
 Llynnau Cregennen 198, 198–9, 199, 200, 200
 Cressage–Cardington Sub-basin 243
 Cressagian Stage 94, 99, 99, 108, 228
 Bryn-llin-fawr, *de facto* base 104
 rocks at Pen Benar 100
 Croisaphuill Formation 296
 Durness and Balnakeil 297, 298, 302, 304
 Cross Fell Inlier 92, 261, 275–85
 Crosspipes Member 244, 253, 255
 Crowsnest Dingle 229
 Crûg Farm 167–8
 Crûg Limestone 128, 154, 162
 Crummock Water aureole 261, 269
Cruziana Sandstone Facies, Trwyn-llêch-y-doll 191, 192
 Crystal tuffs
 Abbereiddi Tuff Member 143
 Caerfai Bay Shales 56
Ctenopyge bisulcata Subzone 34, 35
Ctenopyge linnarsoni Subzone 34, 35
 Cwm Bowydd Fault 187
 Cwm Crymlyn 112–14
 Cwm Eiggiau Formation 185
 Cwm Graianog 47–9
 Cwm Hirnant 221–3
 Cwm yr Abbey 135–7
 Cwm yr Abbey Member 128, 135
 olenid biofacies 137
 Cwm-amliw Tuff, Howey Brook 172
 Cwmfelin Boeth Formation 128
 Cwmffrwd Member 128
 Allt Pen-y-coed 134
 Cwm yr Abbey 135
 olenid biofacies 137
 Cwmffrych Grit 41
 Cwms, the 76
 Cyffredin Shale Member 128, 144
 Porth Gain Slate Quarry 143
 Cymerig Limestone Member 185, 215, 217
 Gelli-grín 209, 210, 210
 past controversy 209
 Cynwyd 215–17
 Cystoid Limestone Member 286, 287, 290
 Backside Beck 290
 Ecker Secker Beck 291, 291, 292
Dalmanella borderleyensis

General index

- Zone 214**
Dalmanella indica Zone 214
Dalmanella
multiplicatus-Sowerbyella
sericea Association 253, 254
Dalmanella unguis Association 253, 254, 257
 Dalradian Supergroup 92
 age of 319
 and the Leny Limestone 321
 Dan-lan-y-castell 131–3
 Ddolhir Formation 185
 Cynwyd 215, 216
 Debris flows 354
 Debrites 269
deflexus Subzone 188 (also see
 Didymograptus varicosus
 Zone)
 Deganwy Mudstone Formation 185, 219, 220, 221
 Deganwy Quarries 219–221
 Dent Fault 92, 286
 Dent Group 5, 261, 270–5, 271
 Cautley Inliers 285
 Dent Inlier 261
 Derfel Limestone 185
 Nant Aberderfel 208, 209
Diacylomene Beds 276
Dicellograptus anceps Zone 94, 165, 221, 271, 328, 340, 352, 358, 364
Dicellograptus complanatus Zone 94, 271, 328, 340, 352, 364, 366
Dicellograptus complexus Subzone 94, 328, 352, 364, 366
Dicellograptus morrisi Subzone 94, 328, 352, 364
Dicranograptus clingani Zone 94, 95, 161, 212, 215, 220, 271, 328, 338, 344, 352, 358, 360, 364, 364
Dicranograptus Shales 128, 144, 152, 165
 see also Mydrim Shales
Dictyonema Band 39, 107, 108, 109
Didymograptus artus Zone, 94, 128, 143, 148, 170, 190, 196, 199, 205, 262
 Ffairfach Railway Cutting 150, 153
 Llanfallteg section 141, 142
 Outerside 269–70
 Shelf area 228, 235
Didymograptus bifidus Shales 148, 157
Didymograptus extensus Zone 196, 264
Didymograptus murchisoni Shales
 Betton Dingle 237
 Meidrim Road Section 157, 157, 158
Didymograptus murchisoni Zone 94, 128, 143, 153, 170, 174, 205, 228, 238
 Howey Brook 170, 171, 172, 172–3
Didymograptus simulans Zone 94, 262, 266, 267
Didymograptus varicosus Zone 94, 262, 264–266
 Dimetian, controversial interpretation as Precambrian 53–4
Dinorthis association fauna 246
Dionide levigena Zone 141, 142
Diplograptus foliaceus Zone 209, 212
Diplograptus multidens Zone 94, 95, 207, 211, 228, 335
 base of 249
Discina corona bed 277
 Dob's Linn 361–7
 Birkhill Shale Formation 361, 362, 362, 365, 366–7
 Gala Group 362, 363
 Glenkiln Shale 362, 362, 364
 Lower Hartfell Shale Formation 362, 364–6
 Upper Hartfell Shale Formation 361, 362, 362, 363, 366
 Ordovician–Silurian boundary 361, 365, 366, 367
 Dol-cyn-afon 105–6
 Dol-cyn-afon Formation 21, 22, 22, 99, 100, 199
 Bryn Glas Quarry, Upper Mudstone Member 186–7, 187
 Brynllyn-fawr 101, 102, 103
 Dol-cyn-afon 100, 105, 106
 Ogof Ddù 35, 38–9, 100
 St Tudwal's Peninsula (Pen Benar) 107
 Tyn-llan 100, 106–7
 Wern Road, Lower Mudstone Member 109
 Y Garth, Upper Mudstone Member 112
 Doldinas 31
 Dolgellau Formation 21, 21, 22, 41, 99
 Brynllyn-fawr 101, 103
 concretions, 37, 38
 Dol-cyn-afon 105, 106
 Ogof Ddù 35–39, 37
 volcaniclastic sandstone 38, 39
 Rhobell-y-big 34–5
 Dolgellau–Dol-cyn-afon formation boundary
 Dol-cyn-afon 105, 106
 Ogof Ddù 38, 40
 Dolgelly Beds 99
 Dolgelly Division 18
 Dolwen Formation 21, 22, 28
 Dorothea Grits Group 21
 Moel Tryfan 45
 Dounans Limestone 92, 296
 of Arenig age 319
 Lime Craig Quarry 322–4, 323
 Drummuck Group 328
 upper, South Threave 344, 345
 Drygill Shales 275
 Dufton Shale Formation 271, 275
 Harthwaite Sike 275–6, 275
 Melmerby Road 279, 279, 280
 Pus Gill 277, 278–9, 278
 Swindale Beck 280, 281, 282
 Durine Formation 296
 Durness and Balnakeil 297, 298, 302–3, 304
 Durness and Balnakeil 296–304
 An t-Sron Formation 297, 298
 Balnakeil Formation 297, 298, 301–2, 304
 Crosaphuill Formation 297, 298, 302, 304
 Durine Formation 297, 298, 302–3, 304

General index

- Eilean Dubh Formation 297, 298, 299, 303
Eriboll Sandstone Formation 297, 298, 303
Ghrudaidh Formation 298, 299, 303
Pipe Rock Member 298–9
Sailmhor Formation 297, 298, 299–301, 302, 303, 304
Sangomore Formation 297, 298, 301, 301, 302, 303, 304
Durness Bay 92
Durness Group 295, 296
Durness and Balnakeil 296–304
Dwndwr Grit 21
Dwrhyd Pit 54, 64–5
Dyfed Supergroup 7, 91
Dynevor Park 153–5
- Eastridge Wood *see* Granham's Moor
Ecker Secker Beck 290–2
Economic exploitation slate workings, Ashgill Quarry 273
see also Building stone, Roofing slates
Eilean Dubh Formation 296
An t-Sròn 304, 305, 305, 306
Durness and Balnakeil 297, 298, 299, 300, 303
Ord 313, 314, 314
- England
Cambrian 71–87
Midlands 71, 79–87
Welsh Borderland 71, 71–9
northern, Arenig to Ashgill 261–92
Shropshire, Arenig to Caradoc 227–58
and Wales, Tremadoc Series 99–124
Ensigrapthus caudatus Subzone 94, 328, 352, 364
Eodiscus bellimarginatus Limestone 74, 75, 76, 77, 78
The Ercall 72–3
Ercall Granophyre 72
Ercall Quarry 71–4
Eriboll Sandstone Formation 296, 310
An t-Sròn 304, 305, 308
Durness and Balnakeil 297, 298, 303
Ord 313, 314
constant thickness of 315
Erwent Limestone 188
Eutaxitic texture, Precambrian welded tuffs 44
evaevae Zone *see* *Oepikodus evaevae* Zone
Event beds 38
Evolutionary radiation, mid-Ordovician 10
extensus Zone *see* *Didymograptus extensus* Zone
Extraordinarius Band 366
extraordinarius Zone *see* *Climacograptus extraordinarius* Zone
Eycott Volcanic Group 261
- Fachwen Formation 21, 41
Llyn Padarn 42–4
Fachwen Syncline 42, 43
Facies
alternating 10
characterized by fossils present 10
graptolitic 10, 12
see also named facies and biofacies
Fairy Gill Shales 291
False Bedded Quartzite Member 296, 309
An t-Sròn 307, 308
Ord 313, 314, 314
junction with Lewisian Gneiss 308
Farden Member, South Threave 345, 346
Fennian Stage 94, 127, 128, 129, 142, 185, 269, 352
Afon Seiont 196, 197
Anglesey, approximate shoreline positions 201
in historic Arenig type area 190
Nant y Gadwen 194, 195
Nantannog Formation 202
Ogof Hên and Road Uchaf 130
Shelve area 228, 233
- Ffairfach Grit 150
Ffairfach Group 128, 149–153
facies of the *murchisoni* Zone 149, 153
junction with basal Llandeilo Flags 152
lithological and faunal succession 151
Ffairfach Railway Cutting and Afon Cennen 149–53
Fferam-uchaf 205–6
Ffestiniog Flags Formation 21, 21, 33–4
Ogof Ddù 35, 35, 36, 38
Ffilltirgerig Beds 188
Ffron Newydd Formation 185
Ffrondderw Tuff 185
Fishguard Volcanic Group, Abergwaun 147–8, 149
fissus Zone *see* *Tomagnostus fissus* Zone
Flaser bedding 122
Flute casts 25, 26, 45, 48, 243
Foel-y-Ddinas Mudstone Formation 185, 221
Hirnantian age of 219
Foggy Gill 277
foliaceus Zone *see* *Diplograptus foliaceus* Zone
Foliomena fauna 341
forchhammeri Grit 30
Fosters Point Formation 83
Fuaran Mor 309–11
Fucoid Beds Member 296, 296, 299, 314
An t-Sròn 206, 305, 306, 306, 307, 308
Fuaran Mor 309, 310–11, 311
- Furcalithus radix* Zone, Cwm yr Abbey 135, 137
- Gaerfawr Formation 185
Gwern-y-Brain 186, 214
Gala Group 352
Dob's Linn 362, 363, 366
Glenkiln Burn 359, 360, 361
Gallt-y-foel Anticline 42, 43
Gamlan Formation 21
Afon Llafar 31
Cefn Coch Grit present 32
Barmouth Hillside 25
basal stratotype 26
Garth Grit Member 185, 187

General index

- Bryn Glas Quarry 186
Garth Hill Beds 99
 Y Garth 112
Gawthrop Inlier 292
Gelli-grín 186, 209–11
Gelli-grín Calcareous Ashes
 185
Gelli-grín Formation 208, 209
gemmatus Subzone 360–1
gerdae Subzone see
 Baltoniodus gerdae Subzone
Ghrudaidh Formation 296
 An t-Sròn 304, 305, 306, 309
Durness and Balnakeil 298,
 299, 303
 Ord 313, 314, 314
gibberulus Zone see *Isograptus gibberulus* Zone
gibbosus Subzone see *Olenus gibbosus* Subzone
gibbus Zone see *Ptychagnostus gibbus* Zone
Gilfach Borehole, Llanwrtyd
 178
Gilwern Anticline, Howey
 Brook 171, 171
Girvan district 7, 92, 327
Girvan foreshore 336–41
 Ardwell Flags Formation
 337, 337, 339
 Ballantrae Complex 336
 Benan Conglomerate 336
 Craigskelly Conglomerate
 341
 Henderson's unconformity
 337, 338
 Kilranny Conglomerate 336,
 337, 337, 338, 341
 Mill Formation 339–40
 Myoch Formation 339
 Penwhapple Formation 339
 Scart Formation 340
 Shalloch Formation 337,
 338, 340
 South Shore Formation
 338–9
 Three Mile Formation 339
 Whitehouse Group 336, 337,
 338–40, 340
 Woodland Formation 340
Girvan Valley Fault 336
Glaciation, at end of
 Ordovician 7
Glan Pibwr 133–4
Glauconite 76, 81
Glen App Fault 354
Glenburrell Formation 244
Glenkiln Burn 359–61, 359
Glenkiln Shale Formation 328,
 351, 352
 Dob's Linn 362, 362
 Glenkiln Burn 359, 360, 361
 Morroch Bay 357–8
Glenmark Member 346
Glenwhargen Formation 351
 Port of Spittal Bay 356, 357,
 358
Glog Grits 21, 41
 cut out at Moel Tryfan 45
Glyn Gower Siltstone 185
Glyn Grit 185
Glynboro Member 244
 Soudley Quarry 250, 251–2,
 251
Glyptograptus persculptus
 Zone 94, 95, 271, 275, 285,
 290, 328, 352, 364, 366
Goodwick Syncline 148
Gorran Quartzites 92
gracilis Zone see *Nemagraptus gracilis* Zone
Graianog Sandstone 21, 41, 42
 Cwm Graianog 47, 48, 49
Grampian Terrane and
 Highland Border Sub-terrane
 319–24
Granham's Moor, Eastridge
 Wood, Linley Big Wood
 120–3, 121
 Tremadoc to Arenig passage
 120
Graptolite biostratigraphy 3, 12
 see also named graptolite
 zones
Graptolite zonation,
 Tremadoc–Ashgill 94
Green Slate 21
Groove casts 25, 26, 58, 243
Gualann Fault 322, 323
guerichi Zone 360, 361
Gullet Pass Pit 71, 78–9
Gwern Yfed Fâch, Builth Road
 178–9
Gwern-y-Brain 213–15
Gwna Melange, Ogof Gynfor
 203, 204
Gwna Quartzite 205
Gwynedd Supergroup 7, 91–2
hiatus within 183
Gynfor outliers 201, 203–5
 basal rocks Fennian 186
Isallt 204–5
Llanlleiana Head to Porth
 Cynfor 205
Ogof Gynfor 203–4
Porth Wen Group 205
Gynfor Shales, Ogof Gynfor
 204
Habberley Formation 100, 112,
 115, 116, 228
 Granham's Moor, Eastridge
 Wood, Linley Big Wood
 120–2
Hafoty Ffilltirgerig and
 Amnodd-Wen 188–90
Hafoty Formation 21, 21, 24
 Barmouth Hillside 25
Hagley Shales Formation 228
 Spywood and Aldress
 Dingles 240, 241
Hagley Volcanic Formation 228
 Spywood and Aldress
 Dingles 240, 241, 241, 242,
 243
Hardgrounds 82, 193
Harknesella Beds 245–6, 249
Harknesella *subplicata* Beds
 249
Harknesella subquadrata
 Beds 248, 249
Harlech Dome 15, 21–40, 183
Harlech Grits Group 21, 184
 Barmouth Hillside-St
 Tudwal's Peninsula correla-
 tion 26
 in Bryn-teg borehole 22
 manganiferous rocks 26
Harnage Shale Formation 114,
 245
 Coundmoor Brook, Harnage
 247–8, 248
 Hope Bowdler Road Section
 249
Harnagian Substage 94, 185,
 228, 243, 244, 245, 249, 335
 Coundmoor Brook, Harnage
 247, 248
 Trilobite Dingle 206–7
Harthwaite Sike 275–7
Hartshill Quartzite see Hartshill
 Sandstone Formation

General index

- Hartshill Sandstone Formation 53, 71, 83
base, Boon's Quarry 71, 81
correlation with Tommotian and basal Atdabanian 83
Hyolithes Limestone 81
Woodlands Quarry 71, 81–3
Hebridean Terrane 7, 92, 295
Cambrian and Ordovician 293–313
correlation with Laurentian chronostratigraphy 296
'Hell's Mouth' conglomerate *see* Porth Cynfor Conglomerate Formation
Hell's Mouth Formation 21, 21, 22, 26
St Tudwal's Peninsula 23
Trwyn Carreg-y-tir 26, 27–8
Trwyn y Ffosle 27
Hendre Shales 128, 156, 157
Henley Member 257
Henllan 159
Henllan Ash Member 185, 232
Hafotty Ffylltirgerig and Amnodd-Wen 188, 190
Heterorthis association 247
High Pike Haw Member 271, 273
mid-Cautleyan 274
Highland Border area 7
Highland Border Complex 321, 323, 324
Highland Boundary Fault complex 92, 319
Hirnant Limestone Member 184, 185, 221
Hirnantia Fauna 11, 184, 217, 275, 346
Cwm Hirnant 221, 222–3
Keisley Quarry 283, 285
Swindale Beck 283
Hirnantian Stage 94, 128, 185, 221, 286
glacio-eustatic fall in sea level 184, 219
birundo Zone 194, 228, 232, 233, 262, 269–70
Hoar Edge (Grits) Formation 114, 243, 245, 245, 246–8
Coundmoor Brook, Harnage 247, 248–9
Cwms, base of Burrellian Stage 248
Hollybush Sandstone 53, 78
Home Farm Member 79, 81–2, 82, 83
Hope Beck Formation 123, 261, 262
Blaze Bridge and Scawgill Quarry 264, 265
Hope Bowdler Road Section 249–50
Hope Shale Formation 228, 235
Bergam Quarry 232, 233
Betton Dingle 237–8, 237
Hope Valley 234–5
includes volcanic rocks and Staapeley Shales 235
Hope Valley 234–7
Chinastone Ash *see* Hyssington Volcanic Member
Horderley Flags 251
Horderley Sandstone Formation 244, 251, 252
Howellites-Kloucekia Association 211
Howey Brook 170–3
Hughley Shale Formation, Onny River 254, 255, 256
Hunnebergian Stage (Scandinavia) 123
Hustedograptus teretiusculus Zone 94, 143, 153, 158, 170, 228, 242
Bach-y-graig 174–7
Meadowtown Quarry 239, 240
Hyolithes Limestone 81, 82
Hypagnostus parvifrons Zone 16, 29, 30, 31, 32, 63, 65
Hyssington Volcanic Member 228, 235
Iapetus Ocean 3, 10, 295, 324, 336
closure of 7
evidence for 297, 310–11
Laurentian margin 336
Illaenid Association 274
Illaenid–cheirurid faunas/facies 283, 284, 333
Illing's Trenches, Hartshill Hayes 71, 83–5
Imbricate thrusting 328, 329, 351, 359, 361
Morroch Bay 357, 358
Ingleton Group 5
Intrusions (*see also* Sills)
dolerite 56, 233
microgranite 199
Isallt 204–5
Isograptid Biofacies
Nant y Gadwen 195–6
Road Uchaf 131
Isograptus gibberulus Zone 228, 262, 262, 268–9
Jasper 45, 47, 190, 202, 343
Jee's Member 79, 82, 83
Jubilee Quarry *see* Mancetter Quarries
Judkin's Quarry 79
Kainella meridionalis Zone (Argentina) 113
Keisley Crags 284
Keisley Limestone Formation 271, 283–5
Keisley Quarry 283–5
Kennedy's Pass 336, 337
Kentmere Member 271
Kilmahog Quarry 319
Kilranny Conglomerate, Girvan foreshore 336, 337, 337, 338, 341
Kinlochewe Thrust 309, 310
Kirk Stile Formation 261, 262
Outerside 269
Randel Crag 268
Kirkcolm Formation 352
Kirkland Conglomerate 333
Kirkley Bank Formation 271, 272
Kirkton Formation 351, 352, 353
Kishorn Thrust 313
Kjaerulfina polycyma Zone *see* *Onniella reuschi* Zone
Lady Burn Formation 345, 346
Lady Burn Starfish Beds 328–9
South Threave 344–7
Laggan Burn 334–6, 334
Lake District Inlier 92
Main Outcrop 261–70
Dent Group 270–5
Skiddaw Group 123–4, 261, 261–70

General index

- Lampeter Velfrey 159
Lapworth, C.
and the Highlands controversy 305
proposed Ordovician System 9, 91
used Dob's Linn section 361, 362
Lapworthella Limestone 74, 75, 76, 77, 77, 78
Latterbarrow Sandstone Formation 123
Laurentia, Scotland at the margin of 7
Lauriston Fault 361
Leadhills Fault 351
Leadhills Imbricate Zone 351, 353, 354
Lejopyge laevigata Zone 16
Leny Limestone 16, 296, 319, 321–2
Leny Quarry 9, 319–22, 320
Leopard stone (leopard rock) lithology 299, 303
Leptoplastus Zone 16, 35, 38
Lewisian Gneiss 295, 297, 298, 305, 308, 310
Lickey Quartzite 92
now regarded as Ordovician 71
Lime Craig Quarry 319, 322–4, 323
linearis Zone see
Pleurograptus linearis Zone
linearis-complanatus zonal boundary, Myoch Bay 340
Lingula Flags 21, 53, 53, 54, 54, 63
Ogof Hên and Road Uchaf 130
Porth-y-rhaw 60, 63
Treffgarne Bridge 66, 67
Trwynhwrddyn promontory 138
Lingulella Band 48
Linley Big Wood 116, 121–2
Linley–Pontesford Fault 92, 227, 227
major subsidence 236
Llanababo Formation 206
Llanbadrig Group 201, 205
Ogof Gynfor 203–4
Llanbedr Formation 21, 28
Llanbedrog Volcanic Group 184
Llanberis Slate Formation 21, 28, 41
Llyn Padarn 44
lower boundary 41
Moel Tryfan 45, 47
Llandeilian Stage 94, 95, 128, 129, 144, 185, 228, 352
Builth Inlier 170
Cwm Pennant 184
Ffairfach Railway Cutting 149, 151
Meadowtown Quarry 239–40
in North Wales 183
Llandeilo, Upper, Middle and Lower 150
Llandeilo Flags 127, 128, 129
Corineorthis Flags 155
Dynevor Park 153
Ffairfach Railway Cutting and Afon Cennen 149, 152–3
Lloydolithus lloydii Flags 152, 154
Marrolithoides simplex Beds 156
Middle, Talar Wen 156
Sowerbyella Beds 154
Upper, Middle and Lower 154
Llandeilo Series
Dynevor Park 153–4
status of 150
treated as stage of Llanvirn 5, 98
Llandovery Series 235, 243
Llandrindod Tuff
Howey Brook 170, 171, 171, 172
Newmead 173
Llanfallteg Cutting 141–3
Llanfallteg Formation 128, 141–2
Llanfawr Mudstones Formation 170
Bach-y-graig 175, 177
Gwern Yfed Fâch, Builth Road 179
Llanfawr Quarry 177, 178
Newmead 173, 173
Llanfawr Quarry 177–8
Llangynog 15
Llangynog Inlier 131
Llanlleiana Head to Porth Cynfor 205
Llanrian Syncline 143, 144, 146–7
Llanrian Volcanic Formation, Abereiddi Bay 128, 143, 144, 146
Llanvирn Quarry 147
Llanvирn Series 94, 95, 128, 328, 352
Abereiddi Bay 129
stratotype area 143, 147
base at Llanfallteg Cutting 141, 142
base seen at Outerside 269
Builth Inlier 170
basin-margin volcanism, North Wales 184
Hope Shale Formation 234–6
Llynnau Cregennen 198
north-west Highlands 296
South Shropshire 227
Llewelyn Volcanic Group 184, 185
Lloydolithus lloydii Flags 152, 154
Llwyngwryl, Gamlan–Clogau formation contact 32
Llyfnant Flags 188, 189, 199
Llyfnant Member, age of 188
Llyn Conwy Formation 185, 208
Llyn Padarn 42–5
Llŷn (Lleyn Peninsula) 91, 183
Llŷn Shear Zone 192
Llyn y Gafr Volcanic Formation 185
Llynnau Cregennen 198, 199
Llynnau Cregennen 198–200
Load structures 25, 45
Loch Awe Quarry 311–13
Login Beds 128
Long Mynd 227
Longmynd Group 53
Longmyndian rocks 115
'Longsleddale Formation' 270
Longsleddale Member 270, 271
Longville Flags see Crosspipes Member
Longvillian Substage 94, 185, 244, 245, 271, 278
Harthwaite Sike 275
local emergence 252, 253

General index

- Melmerby Road 279, 279, 280
Swindale Beck 281, 282
Lord's Hill 230–1
Lower Birkhill Shale Formation 328
Lower Cambrian 16, 53
Comley Quarry 78
Lower Comley Sandstone 53, 71, 73, 76
Comley Quarry 75, 76, 77
Lower Hartfell Shale Formation 328, 351, 352, 361, 362
Dob's Linn 362, 364–5
Glenkiln Burn 359–61
Morroch Bay 357, 358
Port of Spittal Bay 358
Lower Mudstone Member, Tremadoc 39, 40, 107–8, 109
Lower (Ore Bed) Shales 25
Lower Rhyolitic Tuff (Abereiddi) 128
Lower Sandstone Member (Tremadoc) 40, 100, 101, 106–7
Lower Solva Beds 59
Lower Tremadoc 99
Lower–Middle Cambrian Boundary/contact 28, 74, 77
Loweswater Flags 264–5
Loweswater Formation 261, 262, 264, 266

Maentwrog Division 18
Maentwrog Formation 21, 21
Afon Llafar 31
Nant y Graean and Nant Ganol 33–4
Porth Ceiriad 29–30
St Tudwal's Peninsula 23
Maen Gwenonwy, Moridunian fauna 193, 194
Main Outcrop, Lake District Inlier 261–70
Malvern Hills 15, 71
Malvern Line 71
Malvern Quartzite 53, 71, 78, 79
Malvernian Complex 53, 78, 79
Man, Isle of 92
Man-Abell's Quarry *see* Boon's Quarry
Mancetter Quarries 71, 85–6
Mancetter Shale (Grits and Shales) Formation 53, 84, 85
Manganese Grit Member 25
Manganiferous rocks Hafotty Formation 21, 22, 24
possible origins 25–6
stratigraphical marker separating Rhinog and Barmouth grits 23
Trwyn y Fulfran Formation 22
Marchlyn Formation 21, 41, 41
Cwm Graianog 47–8, 48–9
Marine transgressions Arenig 127, 186, 201
basal Caradoc 250
Cambrian 73, 78, 79, 81
early Ordovician 39, 40, 106, 304, 332
northern England, diachronous 7
over Girvan Valley 344
Rorrington Formation 242
Marker Bands Fucoid Beds Member 311
manganiferous rocks, separating Rhinog and Barmouth grits 23
Marrolithoides simplex Beds 156
Marrolithus inflatus maturus Beds 152
Marrolithus simplex elevatus flags 152
Marrys, the 116
Marshbrookian Substage 94, 185, 244, 271, 281, 282
Harthwaite Sike 275, 275, 276
Marshwood 253
Marshwood 253–4
Mass extinctions, latest Ordovician 222, 223
Mass-flow deposits 184, 243, 269
Mawddach Group 21, 184
subsidence during 22
Meadowtown Calcareous Beds 239
Meadowtown Formation 228, 237, 238, 239, 240
Spywood and Aldress Dingles 240, 241
Meadowtown Quarry 239–40
Megasequences
- Arenig to Ashgill, North Wales 184
Ordovician, England and Wales 91
Meidrim Road Section 156–8
Melmerby Beds 279, 280
Melmerby Road 279–80, 279
Menevian Beds 60, 62, 64
Menevian Division 18
Menevian Group 31, 53, 54, 57, 58
part of second phase of basin filling 54
Porth-y-rhaw 60, 61–3
type section 54, 60–1
Solva Harbour 65
Merevale No. 3 Borehole, Outwoods Shale Formation 86
Merevale Shale Formation 53
Merioneth Series 16, 17, 22, 41
north-west Highlands 296
Ogof Ddû 35, 36, 38
Ogof Hên 130, 130
Porth Ceiriad 28
zones 16, 18
Merioneth–Tremadoc boundary Bryn-llin-fawr 101, 102
Dol-cyn-afon 100, 105
Ogof Ddû 36
change to higher levels of oxygenation 104
mesaoudii-trifidum Assemblage 263, 264
Metabentonite beds 62–3 Dob's Linn 362, 366, 367
Metamorphism, contact, Y Garth Quarry 112
Metasomatism 178, 269
Microfaulting 61, 107, 263
synsedimentary 39
Microfossils 11
Middle Cambrian 8, 16
Abbey Shales Formation 85
Comley Quarry 78
Illing's Trenches 83–5
see also Porth-y-rhaw; Solva Harbour
Middle–Upper Cambrian boundary close to Ghrudaidh-Eilean Dubh boundary 304
Merevale No. 3 Borehole 30

General index

- Porth Ceiriad 30
 Midland Platform 7, 15, 243
 Midland Valley Terrane 319,
 329
 basement faulting 331–2
 development of southern
 edge 342, 344
 faunal similarities with
 Laurentian craton 327
 Highland Border Sub-ter-
 rane 327
 Ordovician of 92, 327–47
 Tyrone–Girvan Subterrane
 327–9
 Midlands microcraton 114
 Migneint area 187
 Migneintian Stage 94, 99, 228
 intended base, Amnodd-Bwll
 100, 110
 salopiensis Zone to *sedg-
 wickii* Zone 99
 Mill Formation 339–40
 Moel Tryfan 41, 45–7
 Moel-y-gest (Moelygest) Beds
 39, 99, 108, 109
 Moelfrynn Mudstone Formation
 185
 Gelli-grîn 210, 210
 Rhiwlas 218, 219
 Moffat Shale Group 351
 Dob's Linn 361, 362, 365
 Glenkiln Burn 359, 361
 Morroch Bay 356, 356, 358
 Moffat Shale inliers 351
 Moffat Shale succession 328
 Moine Thrust Zone/belt 295,
 298, 305
 Mona Complex 5
 Monian Supergroup 186, 201,
 201
 Ordovician outliers upon
 203
 Monian Terrane 92, 186
 Monks Park Shale Formation
 53, 85, 86
 Moor Wood Flags and Shales
 85
 Moridunian Stage 94, 95, 127,
 128, 132, 185, 352
 in Arenig historical type area
 190
 Nant y Gadwen 194–5, 194
 Shelve area 228, 232
 Morocco 16
- morrissi* Subzone *see*
Dicellograptus morrissi
 Subzone
 Morroch Bay 356, 356–9
 see also Port of Spittal Bay
Mucronatus Beds 273
 Mud cracks 39, 49
 Muddy/mudstone drapes 57,
 83, 209
 Mulloch Hill Conglomerate,
 South Threave 346, 346
multidens Zone *see*
Diplograptus foliaceus Zone;
Diplograptus multidens Zone
 Murchison, Sir R.I.
 and the Highlands contro-
 versy 304
 work at Howey Brook 170
murchisoni Zone *see*
Didymograptus murchisoni
 Zone
 Murthwaite Inlier, Sally Beck
 and River Rawthey 286–9
 Mydrim Limestone 128, 156,
 157
 Mydrim Shales 154, 157, 169
 Mylet Road 159, 160, 167
 Sholeshook 162–3, 162
 see also *Dicranograptus*
 Shales
 Mylet Road 159–61
 Myoch Bay, upper Whitehouse
 Group 340
 Myoch Formation 339
 Myton Dingle and Snailbeach
 229–32, 230, 231
 Myton Flags Formation 115,
 228
 Myton Dingle and
 Snailbeach 229, 230, 231,
 232
 Tankerville Flags facies,
 Bergam Quarry 232, 233
- Nant Aberderfel 208–9
 Nant Braich-y-Ceunant 34
 Nant Ffrancon Formation, Afon
 Seiont 196
 Nant Ffrancon Subgroup 184,
 185, 196, 198
 Nant Hir Mudstones 185
 Nant Aberderfel 208
 Nant y Gadwen 194, 194–6
 Nant y Graean and Nant Ganol
 33–4
 Nant-ddu Beds 21, 21, 22, 41,
 99
 Nant-pig Mudstones 28–9
 Nant-y-Big Formation 21
 Porth Ceiriad 28–9, 30
 Calcareous Grit unit 29
 St Tudwal's Peninsula 23
 correlations 22, 30
 Nantannog Formation 185,
 202, 203
 Fferam-uchaf 205
 Nantannog Ravine 202–3
 Narbeth Group 128
 Bryn-banc Quarry, Llan-mill
 158–9
Nemagraptus gracilis Zone 94,
 95, 145, 159, 170, 178, 228,
 240, 246, 249, 328, 333, 352,
 360
 and base of Caradoc 245
 Glenkiln Burn 359, 359
 Morroch Bay 356, 357–8
 Neptunian dykes, of Harnage
 Shales 250
Neseuretus Biofacies/communi-
 ties
 Carmel Formation 202
 Dan-lan-y-castell 133
 of Moridunian age 131
 Ogof Hên Formation 131
Neseuretus sandstone facies
 191
 Newfoundland
 north-west,
 Cambrian–Ordovician
 boundary 17, 95
 south-east 16
 base of Cambrian defined
 17
 Newmead 173, 173–4
 Newmead Formation,
 Newmead 173–4
 deposition after closing
 phase of Builth volcanism
 174
 highly erosive base 173
 rapid deposition of 174
 shallow-water facies of
 murchisoni Zone 173
 Newmead Scar 173
Nicolella palaeocommunity
 208–9
Nicolella–*Onniella*

General index

- Association, Gelli-grîn 211
Nileus association 334
Niobe Beds 99, 106
Nipstone Rock 122
nitidus Subzone 264–5
Nod Glas Formation 184, 184, 185, 186
as a decollement horizon 213
Gwern-y-Brain 213, 214–15
to replace local names 213
Nodules
calcareous 116
carbonate, weathered-out 131
chert 299, 302, 314–15
diagenetic 301
ferruginous 65
of *Girvanella* 333
limestone 210, 256, 282
phosphate 38–9, 40, 62, 64, 65, 106, 110, 113, 161, 168, 193, 220, 252
pyrite 212, 218
siliceous 121, 140
Novaspis–cyclopigid Association 219
Nuneaton Inlier 71
Obduction 329, 336
Oceanic crust 351
oelandicus Beds, Sweden 78
oelandicus Zone see *Paradoxides oelandicus* Zone
Oepikodus evae Zone 352, 353
Offrwm Volcanic Formation 185
Llynnau Cregennen 198, 199, 200
Ogof Ddû (Rhiw-for-fawr) 34, 35–40
Merioneth Series 36, 38
Tremadoc Series 38–9
stratigraphical succession 35
volcaniclastic sandstone 38, 39
constraint on base of Ordovician 40
Ogof Gynfor 203–4
Ogof Hên Formation 128, 232
Dan-lan-y-castell 132, 133
Ogof Hên and Road Uchaf 129
Trwynhwrddyn 138
Neseuretus community 131, 133
Ogof Hên and Road Uchaf 129–31
basal Arenig 127, 129
Ogof Velvet Formation 130
see also Lingula Flags
Ogwen Group 183–4, 184, 214
excludes Rhobell Volcanic Group 184
Ogygia marginata Beds 133
Old Perkins level 231
Oldbury Quarry 85, 86
Oldbury Shales 85
Olenellus Limestone see Red *Callavia* Sandstone
Olenus cataractes Subzone 33, 34, 67, 86
Olenus gibbosus Subzone 33, 34, 86
Olenus truncatus Subzone 33, 34, 86
Olenus wahlenbergi Subzone 86
Olenus Zone 16, 18, 29, 66, 67, 86
subzones seen at Nant y Graean and Nant Ganol 33–4
Olistostrome deposit, Buttermere Formation 116, 123
Oncoliths, phosphatic 130
Onnian Substage 94, 160, 215, 244, 271, 286
base defined 256
Oniella broeggeri–*Sericoidaea homolensis* Association 257
Pus Gill 277, 278–9, 278
taxonomic revision of *Onnia* 257
Onnian–Pusgillian boundary, Sally Beck and River Rawthey 288
Oniella broeggeri–*Sericoidaea homolensis* Association 257
Oniella depressa Association 257
Oniella reuschi Zone 253
Oniella reuschi–*Chonetoidaea radiatula* Association 257
Oniella reuschi–*Sowerbyella sericea* Association 254, 254
Onniella–*Chonetoidaea*/*Sericoidaea* Association 288
Onny Formation 244, 255, 256, 257
Onny River 10, 254–8, 255, 256
Onny Sub-basin 243
Onny Valley, Caradoc succession 244
Ooids, ferruginous 193
Oolites 299
Ophiolite 327, 329
Ord 311–15
Ord Thrust 314
Ordovician System 352
Arenig to Ashgill 127–79
basal age indication
Brynllyn-fawr 105
Ogof Ddû 36
boundaries of 92–5
changes to 5
distribution 91–2, 93
divisions of 95
England and Wales 91–2
Lapworth's use of fossils 9
Northern England 261–92
Northern Scotland 92, 296
base of 304
palaeogeographical maps 8
Ordovician–Silurian boundary 289, 351
at base of *persculptus* Zone or *acuminatus* Zone 95
age of 95
Dob's Linn
at base of *acuminatus* Zone 362
boundary trench 365, 366
international stratotype for 361, 367
Keisley Quarry 283, 284
ordovicicus Zone see *Amorphognathus ordovicicus* Zone
Orogenies
early Ordovician (Monian) 5
Grampian 319
Orusia Band, Ogof Ddû 35, 36
Orusia Shales 53
Outerside 269–70
Outwoods Shale Formation 53, 71, 86
Mancetter Quarries 85, 85–6

General index

- pacificus* Subzone *see*
Paraorthograptus pacificus
Subzone
Padarn Tuff Formation 6, 21,
41, 41
Llyn Padarn 42, 44
Paleozoic Fauna 9, 10
Pant-yr-hendre Quarry 156,
157
Parabolina lobata Subzone
34, 35
Parabolina spinulosa Zone 16,
34, 35, 38
Paradoxides forchhammeri
Zone 16, 63
Paradoxides oelandicus Zone
16, 58, 59–60
Paradoxides paradoxissimus
zonal group 16, 63
Parakidograptus acuminatus
Zone 95, 285, 290, 328, 352,
364
base at Dob's Linn chosen
for Ordovician–Silurian
boundary 362
Paraorthograptus pacificus
Subzone 94, 328, 352, 364,
366
Park Hill Member 79, 81
parvifrons Zone *see*
Hypagnostus parvifrons
Zone
Passage Beds 99
Pebidian 45
controversial interpretation
as Precambrian 53–4
Pebidian Volcanic Group 53,
55, 55
contact with basal Cambrian
conglomerate 55, 55, 57
peltifer Zone *see*
Climacograptus peltifer Zone
Peltura minor Zone 16, 35, 38
Peltura punctata Beds 134,
136
Peltura scarabaeoides Zone
16, 34, 35, 38
Ogof Ddù 37
Rhobell-y-big–Foel Gron 34
Peltura zones 16, 101
Pen Benar 100, 107–8
Pen y Cryfrwy 57
Pen y gadair Formation 185
Pen-y-Bryn Grit 21
Pen-y-garnedd Phosphorite
Member 213, 215
Pen-y-garnedd Shale Member
213, 214, 215
Pengawse Hill 129, 160, 160
Dicellograptus morrisi
Subzone 161
passage from
Dicranograptus (Mydrim)
Shales to Sholeshook
Limestone 161
Slade and Redhill Mudstone
Formation 161
Penmaen Dewi Shale
Formation
base defined at Porth Gain
137
Pwlluog (Whitesand Bay)
137–8
Penmorfa Beds 99
Pennine Fault System 92
Penrhos Member 21, 33
Penwhapple Formation 339
persculptus Zone *see*
Glyptograptus persculptus
Zone
Phillipsinella Beds 273
Phosphate 76
precipitation in nodules 40
Phycodes pedum trace fossil
zone
at base of Cambrian 16, 17
phyllograptoides Zone
(Scandinavia) 264
Pibwr Member 128
Allt Pen-y-coed 134
Glan Pibwr 133
Raphiophorid community
134, 135
Pinbain 329
Pinmore Fault 336
Pipe Rock Member 296, 309
An t-Sròn 305, 306, 306,
307, 308
Durness and Balnakeil
298–9
Ord 313–14, 314, 314
Sangobeg 303
pisiformis Zone 32, 86
Pitts Head Tuff 185
Placentian Series 16, 17
base of Cambrian 86
north-west Highlands 296
Planolites burrows 299
‘fucoids’ 305
Plate margins
active, subduction-related 91
passive 5, 7
Platycoryphe–Ogyginus–Tissintia fauna, Weston Flags 238
Pleurograptus linearis Zone
150, 161, 215, 271, 328, 339,
352, 358, 364, 365
Pont-y-Ceunant Ash Member
(Tuff) 185, 209, 210, 210, 211
Pontesford Lineament *see*
Linley–Pontesford Fault
Pontyfenni Formation 128,
139–41
Pontyfenni, Whitland 139–41
Port of Spittal Bay 357
Porth Ceiriad 28–30
Porth Cynfor Conglomerate
Formation 185, 201
Llanlleiana Head to Porth
Cynfor 205
Porth Gain Beds 129
Porth Gain Slate Quarry 143–5
Porth Llaug Formation 128
Porth-y-rhaw 60–4
Menevian Group, type sec-
tion of 54
Portmadoc Flags 99
Portpatrick Formation 351, 352
Morroch Bay 356, 356, 357,
358, 359
Port of Spittal Bay 356, 358
Portrane Limestone 167
Potash-rich Beds, Fucoid Beds
313
Powis Castle Conglomerate
Formation 207
Gwern-y-Brain 214
Powys Supergroup 7, 91
Hirnantian rocks 92
Precambrian–Cambrian contact
15
Proetid Association 274
Protolenus faunas 74, 78
Protolenus Limestone 74, 75,
76–7, 77, 78
lower or middle Cambrian
78
Protolenus Zone 77
Protopeltura praecursor Zone
16, 35, 38
Ptychagnostus gibbus Zone 16,

General index

- 60, 61, 84
Ptychagnostus punctuosus
Zone 16, 31, 32, 60, 61, 63,
65, 84
Purley Quarry 85, 86
Purley Shale Formation 53
Illing's Trenches, Hartshill
Hayes 84
Woodlands Quarry 81, 82,
83
Purple Slates 45
for roofing slates 45
Pus Gill 277–9
Pusgillian Stage 94, 128, 185,
271, 276, 290
Berwyn Hills 183, 184
Pus Gill 277, 278, 278, 279
Sally Beck and River
Rawthey 286, 287
Swindale Beck 281, 282, 282
Pwll-y-glo Formation 185, 214
Pwlluog (Whitesand Bay)
137–9
Pygodus anserinus Zone 153,
333, 352, 353, 358
Pyrite 105, 106, 109
Quarrel Hill Formation 346
Quarry Ridge Grits 74, 75, 76,
78
Quarry Ridge Shales 75, 76
Quartz, blue 24, 47
Ragdon Member 244, 255, 255
Ramsey Island 130
Randel Crag 268–9
Random Formation 81
Raphiophorid community
Llanfawr Quarry 178
Pibwr Member 134, 135
Raven Gill 351, 353–4
Raven Gill Formation 351, 352,
353, 354
Rawtheyan Stage 94, 129, 271,
282, 283, 290, 292
Ashgill Quarry 274–5
Backside Beck 290
Lady Burn Starfish Beds 344,
346
North Wales 184, 185, 212,
213, 219
Cynwyd faunas 215–17
Robeston Wathen 166
Sally Beck and River
Rawthey 286, 287, 288
Sholeshook 162, 165
Swindale Beck 282, 283
Rebecca Member 292
Red *Callavia* Sandstone 75,
76, 77, 78
Red Grit 21
Rhabdinopora flabelliformis
Zone 16, 35, 94, 99, 100,
107, 114, 116
Bryn-llin-fawr 101
flabelliformis Subzone,
Norway 104
Rhinog Formation 21, 24
Barmouth Hillside 23, 24–5
Rhins of Galloway 354
Rhiwlas 217–19
Rhiwlas Limestone 185, 186,
217, 218, 218–19
 hiatus below 219
Rhobell Volcanic Group 22, 91,
184
Rhobell-y-big-Foel Gron 34–5
Rhodochrosite 25
Rhuddanian Stage 328, 352
Rhyd Henllan Member 128
Rhynchonella Grits 248, 249
Rifting 114
 fault-controlled, Tremadoc
117
 Precambrian 5, 7, 81
Rip-up clasts 25, 59
Ripple marks 48, 48
Road Uchaf 129–131
Road Uchaf Formation 128
Fennian age 131
isograptid biofacies 131
Ogof Hên and Road Uchaf
130
Robeston Wathen 165–7
Robeston Wathen Limestone
Formation 128, 162
Robeston Wathen 165, 166,
167
Cautleyan–Rawtheyan age
156–6
halysitid corals in lime-
stone beds 166
upward passage into
Sholeshook Limestone
Formation 166
Roofing slates 40, 45
Rorrington Shale Formation
228, 237, 238
Spywood and Aldress
Dingles 240, 241, 241, 242
Sailmhor Formation 296
Durness and Balnakeil 297,
298, 299, 299–300, 301,
302, 303, 304
fissuring and erosion at
top of 297
Ord 314, 314–15, 314
St David's area/peninsula 15,
53
Cambrian 53–65
St David's Series 16, 17, 22, 48,
53
Comley Quarry 75
north-west Highlands 296
Porth Ceiriad 28
Porth-y-rhaw 60
zones of 16, 18
St David's–Merioneth series
contact 28
St Non's Bay and Caerfai Bay
54–8
St Non's Sandstone 53, 54
St Non's Bay and Caerfai Bay
55, 55–6, 55
interpretation of top bed
58
St Tudwal's inlier 21, 22
correlation with Harlech
Dome 22
St Tudwal's Peninsula 15, 23,
26, 27, 30
Dol-cyn-afon Formation 107
Trwyn-llêch-y-doll 186,
190–2
Sally Beck and River Rawthey
286–9
salopiensis Zone see
Shumardia (Conophrys)
salopiensis Zone
Salterella Grit Member 296,
299, 314
An t-Sròn 305–6, 306, 307,
307, 308
Fuaran Mor 309, 310
Sangobeg 298
Eriboll Sandstone Formation
303
Sangomore Formation 296
Durness and Balnakeil 297,
298, 301, 301, 302, 303,

General index

- 304
Sarn Complex 192, 193
Sarn-Abersoch Thrust 107
scarabaeoides Zone *see*
Peltura scarabaeoides Zone
Scart Formation 340
Scawgill Quarry 265, 266
Scotland
 Cambrian
 Northern Scotland 15
 and Ordovician,
 Hebridean Terrane
 293–313
 Ordovician
 Midland Valley Terrane
 327–47
 Northern Scotland 92
 Southern Uplands Terrane
 351–67
 Southern Uplands 7, 351,
 359, 361
 terrane 7
Sea-level fall, glacio-eustatic
(Hirnantian) 92, 124, 184,
186, 219
Sea-level rise, around
 Cambrian–Ordovician boundary 39, 40, 106
sedgwickii Zone *see Angelina sedgwickii* Zone
Sedimentary structures 29, 45,
64, 299, 339, 354
 see also ripple marks, flute
 casts, sole marks
Series and Stages
 British Standard 14, 92
 Laurentian 16, 17, 296
 Morocco and Siberia 16
Serpentine 343
Serpentinite 322
serra Zone (Scandinavia) 128,
352
Serw Formation 185, 188
Severn Valley Fault 227
Shalloch Formation 328, 336
 Girvan foreshore 337, 338,
 340
Sheinton Brook 115–19
Shelly facies 10
Shelly faunas, Caradoc Series,
South Shropshire 243
Shelve area 10, 92, 115, 124
 correlation of Abereiddian
 faunas 238
Llandeilian Stage,
 Meadowtown Quarry 240
Llanvирn volcanic edifices
 227
Ordovician rocks 227–43
stratigraphical succession
 228
Shelve Church 233–4
Shelve Church Beds 228,
 233–4
Shinerton Shale Formation 53,
100, 114, 114, 115, 228, 248
Arenaceous Beds Member
 Coundmoor Brook,
 Evenwood 117–19, 120
 Coundmoor Brook,
 Harnage 248
Cherme's Dingle 116–17
acritarch zonation 118
erosion at top of 115
 of Tremadoc age 116
Shinnel Formation, Port of
 Spittal Bay 358
Sholeshook 11, 162–5
Sholeshook Limestone
Formation 128, 129
 diachronous base 165
 Mylet Road 159–61
Pengawse Hill, Pusgillian age
 for base 161
Robeston Wathen 165
Sholeshook 162, 163–5
Shropshire
 areas of Ordovician rocks 92
 Caradoc area 243–58
 Shelve area 227–43
Shumardia (Conophrys) salopensis Zone 94, 99, 123
 Amnodd-Bwll 110
Shumardia pusilla fauna *see*
Shumardia (Conophrys) salopiensis Zone
Sills
 dolerite 112, 177–8, 179,
 194
 felsite 57, 65, 290, 291, 292
 lamprophyre 85, 86
Silurian System 9, 15, 95, 352
simulans Zone *see*
Didymograptus simulans
Zone
Skelgill Formation 273, 275,
290
Skiddaw aureole 261
Skiddaw Group 261, 261–70,
275
Latter Barrow, River Calder
 123–4
Tremadoc rocks, Northern
England 116
Skolithos burrows/tubes/pipe
rock 56, 122
Pipe Rock Member 303, 305,
308, 309, 313
suggest shallow-water deposi-
tion 58
Skye, Isle of 92
Slade and Redhill Mudstone
Formation 128, 154, 169
Pengawse Hill 161
Robeston Wathen 166, 166
Sholeshook 162, 163
Sleat Peninsula, Ord Window
 313
Slumping, into Buttermere
Formation 123
Smeathen Wood Formation
 244, 249
Smoo Cave 298, 302, 303
Snailbeach 229
Snar Water 351, 353
Snowdon Volcanic Group 184,
185, 212
Snowdonia 91, 183, 185
Sole marks 25, 26, 242
Solenopleura brachyptera
Zone 29–30
Solva Division 18
Solva Group 53, 54, 56
 early St David's age 59–60
Upper, Middle and Lower, St
David's area 53
Upper and Middle, Solva
Harbour 66
 Upper, Porth-y-rhaw 60, 61
Solva Group–Caerbwdy
Sandstone junction, faulted
57
Solva Harbour 54, 65–6
Solva–Menevian groups bound-
ary, Porth-y-rhaw 61
Soudley Quarry 10, 11, 250–3
Soudley Sandstone 251
Soudleyian Substage 94, 185,
227, 228, 244, 245
South Shore Formation, Girvan
 338–9
South Threave 344–7

General index

- echinoderm Lagerstätte 344
South Threave Formation 345, 346
Southern Highland Group 323
Southern Uplands 7
division into structural tracts 351
imbricate thrusting 351, 359, 361
Moffat Shale inliers 361
Southern Uplands Terrane, Ordovician 92, 351–67
Sowerbyella Beds 154
Spessartine 25
spinulosa Zone *see Parabolina spinulosa* Zone
Spy Wood Grit 159
Spy Wood Sandstone Formation 228, 240, 241, 249
Spywood and Aldress Dingles 240, 241, 241, 242, 242–3
Spywood and Aldress Dingles 240–3
Stable Pit, Bradgate Park 87
Stapeley Shales 235
Stapeley Volcanic Member 228, 235
Betton Dingle 237, 237
Stile End 270, 272
Stile End Formation 270, 271, 272
Stinchar Limestone 328
Stinchar Valley 329
Stinchar Valley Fault 332
Stiperstones Quartzite Formation 115, 228
Granham's Moor 120, 121, 121, 122
Mytton Dingle and Snailbeach 229, 230
Stockingford Shale Group 53, 71
Mancetter Quarries 85–6
Streffordian Stage 94, 128, 185, 244, 254, 271
Onny River 254
Strenuella Limestone 74, 75, 76, 77, 78
Striped Blue Slates 21, 45, 46
Stromatolites 299, 300, 301
Subduction 329
suecicus Zone 128, 352
superbus Zone *see Amorphognathus superbus* Zone
Swindale Beck 280–3
Swindale Limestone Formation 271, 275, 280
age of 282
Harthwaite Sike 276, 277
Swindale Beck 280–1, 281–2, 282
Swindale Shales 281
Swithland Formation 5, 87
Tai-hirion Flags 99
Talar Wen 155–6
Tan-Lan 173
epiclastic sandstones 174
Tankerville Flags 228, 232
Bergam Quarry 232–3
Tarn Moor Formation 261
Taythes Inlier 290, 290–2
Telychian Stage 352
tenellus Zone *see Adelograptus tenellus* Zone
teretiusculus Zone *see Hustedograptus teretiusculus* Zone
Terranes
British, distribution of Cambrian and Ordovician rocks 4, 5, 7
see also named terranes and subterranea
Tetragraptus approximatus Zone 123, 264
Tetragraptus Beds 131, 140
Tetragraptus phyllograptoides Zone 94, 262, 264
Thermal alteration 268
Thornton and Twistleton Glens 5
Three Mile Formation 339, 340
Thrusting 314, 330, 335
imbricate 351, 359, 361
St Non's Bay 55
see also named thrusts
Tomagnostus fissus Zone 16, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 58, 61, 62, 64
Tommotian Stage 16, 73, 74, 81, 83
Torlwyn Formation 185, 201, 205
Ogof Gynfor 203, 204, 204
Torridonian rocks 295, 297
Torridonian Sandstone Group 309
Torver Member 271, 272, 273
Illaenid Association 274
Trace fossils 11, 56
Cambrian, Swithland Formation 86
Cwm Graianog 48
Ffestiniog Flags Formation 38
Jee's Member 82
Treffgarne Bridge 67
Upper Mudstone Member 112
Transition Beds 114, 116–7
Trawscoed Formation 185
Trawscoed Mudstone Formation, Gwern-y-Brain 214
Treffgarne Bridge 66–7
Treffgarne Bridge Beds 54, 66
Treiorwerth Formation 185, 201–2
Treiorwerth and Ty Hen, Anglesey 11, 186, 201–2
Tremadoc Series 16, 94, 95, 99, 328, 352
Durness and Balnakeil 297
England 114–24
latest absent in North Wales 186
lower
Cherne's Dingle 117
Pen Benar 107–8
Tyn-llan 106–7
Wern Road 108–10
north-west Highlands 296
Ogof Ddû 38–9, 100
South Shropshire 227
upper
Amnodd-Bwll 110–11
Sheinton Brook
Y Garth 111–12
Wales 99–114
divisions of 99
Tremadoc Slates *see Dol-cynafon Formation*
Tremadoc–Arenig boundary 302
Trilobite Dingle 186, 206–8
Trilobite Dingle Formation 185, 206–7
Trilobites 11
agnostoid 30

General index

- Gondwanan affinity 269
pagetiid, Leny Limestone 320–1, 321
Sheinton Brook, ontogenetic study 118–19
trinucleid, evolution of 11
Troutbeck Member 271, 292
Ashgill Quarry 273, 274, 275
truncatus Subzone *see Olenus truncatus* Subzone
Trusmadoor 262–4
graptolitic basal Moridunian 116
Trwyn Carreg-y-tir 9, 26–8
Trwyn Castell, Llanrhan Volcanic Formation tuffs 143
Trwyn y Fulfran Formation, St Tudwal's Peninsula 21, 21, 23, 27, 27
Trwyn-llêch-y-doll 190–2
Trwyncynddeiriog 58–60
Trwynhwrrdyn promontory, Lingula Flags 138
Tryfan Grit Group 21, 41
Moel Tryfan 45, 46
type section in Moel Tryfan tunnel 45
Tudwal Sandstone Formation 23, 27, 185
Trwyn-llêch-y-doll 190, 191, 192
Tuppark Linn 361
Turbidites 290
Afon Ffinnant Formation 136–7
Arenaceous Beds Member 119, 120
Boon's Member 81
Cwmffrwd Member 134, 136, 137
distal, Three Mile Formation 341
Hell's Mouth Formation 27
Kirk Stile Formation 268
Loweswater Formation 266
Moffat Shales 367
Nant-y-big Formation 28
proximal
Barmouth Formation 26
Dorothea Grits Group 47
Rhinog Formation 25
Scawgill Quarry 265, 266
Turbidity currents 221, 243
deposition from 26, 188, 341
high-concentration 137, 354
low-concentration 38, 39, 40, 64, 110
Tuttle Hill Member 79
tvaerensis Zone *see Amorphognathus tvaerensis* Zone
Ty Newydd, *N. gracilis* in Hendre Shales 156
Tyn-llan 100, 106–7
Tyn-y-twmpath Formation 185
Tynllan Beds *see Dol-cyn-afon* Formation
Tywi Lineament 169
Ordovician along 91
shelf-to-basin slope 127
Unconformities
basal Cambrian unconformity 53–4, 57, 74, 309
Graianog Sandstone over Carnedd y Filiast Grit 48, 49
Onnian–upper Llandovery 254–5, 256–7
Torridonian Sandstone–Cambrian 297–8
Ercall Granophyre–Wrekin Quartzite 72, 73
Gwynedd Supergroup and Powys Supergroup 91
Harnage Shales–Uriconian Group 249
Hartshill Sandstone Formation–Caldecote Volcanic Formation 79
Malvern Quartzite–Malvern Complex 78, 79
Precambrian–Cambrian 17
sub–Arenig 183, 194, 202, 204, 263
sub–Caradoc 246
sub–Powys 219
Tremadoc–Arenig 17
Tremadoc–Gwynedd Supergroup 91
Undulograptus austrodentatus Zone 140, 196, 198
Undulograptus sinicus Subzone 140
Upper Cambrian base lying within Maentwrog Formation 32
Oldbury Shales 85
Upper Comley Sandstone 53, 71, 77
Upper Hartfell ‘Barren’ Mudstones 360
Upper Hartfell Shale Formation 328, 352
Dob's Linn 361, 362, 362, 363, 366
Upper Lodge Volcanic Group 184
Upper or Manganese Shales Member 25
Upper Tremadoc 99
Upward-coarsening cycles/sequences 39, 340
Upward-finishing sequences 46, 131, 263
Uriconian Volcanic Group 248
Ercall Quarry 72
variabilis Subzone *see Baltognathus variabilis* Subzone
varicosus Zone 264
see also Didymograptus varicosus Zone
Velfreyan Substage 94, 128, 185, 228
Vigra Member 33
Volcanic ash
deposits in Dolgellau Formation 38
isotopic dating of 3
Volcanic centres, North Wales 183–4, 184
Volcanic episodes
Arenig–Ashgill 91
Builth Inlier 169, 172
North Wales 184
South Wales 127
Wales
Cambrian 15
diachronous occurrence of shallow-water facies 66
early Ordovician back-arc basin 7
North Wales
Arenig to Ashgill 183–223
Cambrian 21–49, 91–2
Tremadoc rocks and Cambrian–Ordovician boundary 91

General index

- South Wales
Arenig to Ashgill 127–79
Cambrian, St David's area 53–65
Ordovician along Tywi lincement 91, 127
Tremadoc rocks 91
south-central 127, 137
Tremadoc Series 99–114
Waning-flow events 38, 40, 58, 63, 107
Watch Hill Formation 123, 261, 262
Trusmadoor 263–4
Watch Hill Thrust 261
Waterfall Member, South Threave 345, 346, 346
Wattsella unguis Zone 253
Wattsella watti Zone 253
Welsh Basin 5, 7
Welsh Borderland 71, 71–9
Wern Road 108–10
Westerdale Inlier 289–90, 289
Weston Flags Formation 228, 240
Betton Dingle 237, 237, 238
Wet-sediment sliding 130
- Wharfe Conglomerate 292
Wharfe Member 271
White-leaved Oak Shale 53, 78
Whitehouse Group 328
Girvan foreshore 336, 337, 338–40, 340, 341
Whitland Abbey Member 128
Whitlandian Stage 94, 127, 128, 129, 185, 352
Cwm yr Abbey 135, 137
Nant y Gadwen 194, 195
Pwlluog 137–8, 139
Shelbe area 228, 232
Whittery Shale Formation 228
Whittery Volcanic Formation 228
Wig 192–4
Wig Bâch Formation 185, 192, 193
Nant y Gadwen 195
Wig Fault 192, 194
Wig Member 192, 193, 193, 194
Wilsey Beck Sandstone Member 271, 292
wilsoni Zone see *Climacograptus wilsoni*
- Zone
Wistanstow Member 244, 255, 256
Woodland Formation 340
Woodlands Member 79, 82, 83
Woodlands Quarry 71, 81–3, 82
Woolstonian Substage 94, 185, 244, 245, 251, 271, 281, 282
Hartwaite Sike 275, 275, 276
Melmerby Road 279, 279, 280
The Wrekin 15, 72, 76
Wrekin Quartzite 71
Ercall Quarry 71–3
- Y Garth 111–12
Yarlside Volcanic Formation 270, 271, 272
Ynyscynhaiarn Anticline 33, 36, 39
- Zircon 37, 38, 105, 143, 175–6, 188, 189, 362, 366