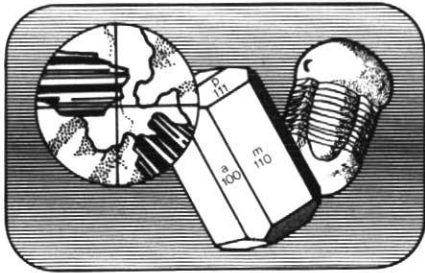


Features



Education Feature

Table Point, Western Newfoundland An Example of Disfiguration of a Famous Outcrop

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Summary

Unknown collectors have vandalised the classical locality at Table Point, western Newfoundland. Many fossils have been removed with more or less success. In attempts to collect fossils applying rock saws and chisels, debris of fossils or partly removed fossils were left at the locality. Because most geological localities are not protected by law in Newfoundland, we hope that geologists will develop a sense of responsibility towards nature and towards other scientists so that classical sites like Table Point will be respected in the future.

Table Point

Table Point, situated 2 km north of the Bellburns community, Great North Peninsula, Newfoundland (Fig. 1), is the type locality for the Table Head Formation (Upper Whiterock). As recently as 1977, this classic locality was severely damaged by indiscriminate and unnecessary collection of the megafossils preserved here.

Table Point was first mentioned by Richardson (as Table Head) in Logan (1863) in a memoir on the geology of western Newfoundland. The locality became very well known following description of the stratigraphy and the trilobite faunas (Whittington and Kindle, 1963; Whittington, 1965). Cephalopods have also been described (Flower, 1978) and conodonts have been documented in recent studies (Fåhraeus, 1970; Stouge, 1977, 1980).

Consequently, the strata and the faunas at Table Point are now accepted as a characteristic substage, the Tableheadian (Kay 1962; Fåhraeus, 1977), for the Upper Whiterock. Furthermore, Table Head is well established in North America as a representative of the circumcratonic Toquima-Table Head Faunal regime (Ross and Ingham, 1970).

A spectacular bedding plane at Table Point is known for its prolific faunal association of large gastropods and

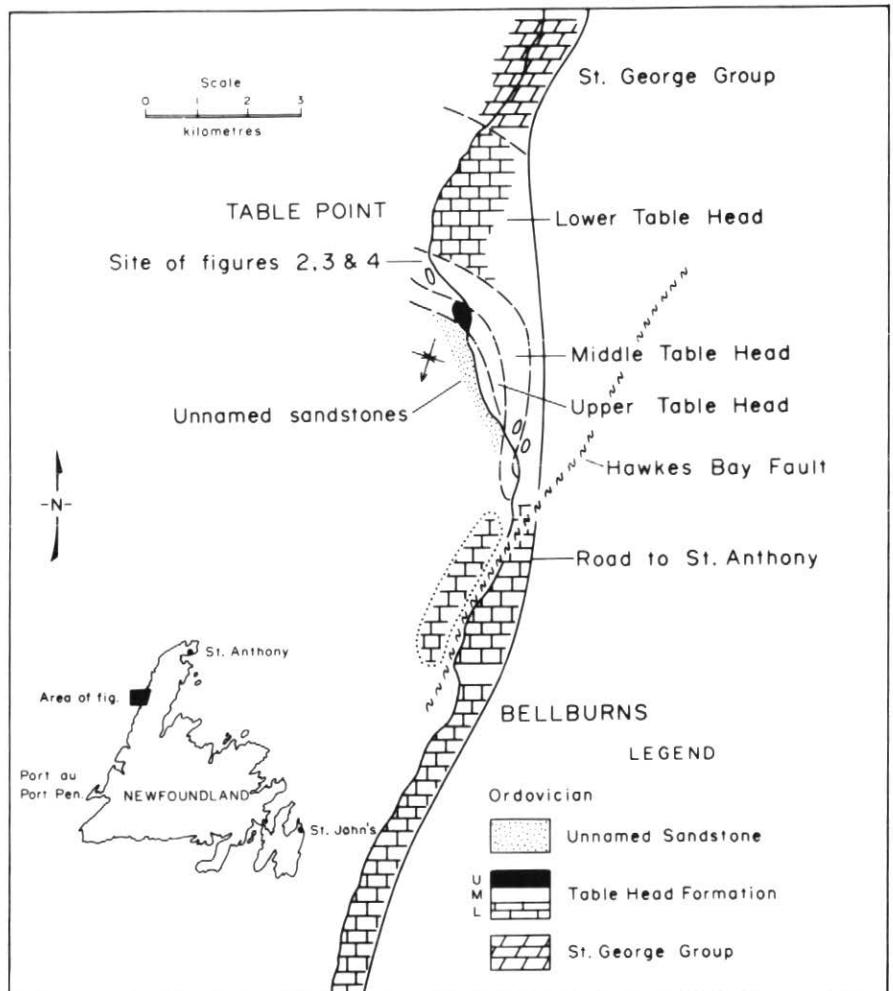


Figure 1 Location map.

cephalopods (up to 80 cm in length or 50 cm in diameter; Fig. 2), trilobites and bryozoans (Schuchert and Dunbar, 1934; Whittington and Kindle, 1963; Klappa *et al.*, 1980; Stouge, 1980).

A visit to the locality revealed that the surface of the bedding plane has been severely damaged. In at least ten localities, attempts have been made to remove slabs containing the gastropods, cephalopods and trilobites by use of chain saw and chisels. Some of these slabs have been removed leaving deep rectangular pits, whereas parts of others remain both as debris on the surface and in place where removal of specimens was unsuccessful (Figs. 3 and 4).

It is difficult to imagine what prompted professional geologists or fossil collectors to embark upon such an action, which is clearly inexcusable. The Table Point locality is unsurpassed in Newfoundland and, indeed, in the Appalachians. It is the only complete section of the Table Head Formation in Newfoundland, and it is an example of the Whiterock trilobite fauna (Whittington, 1965). If this act was carried out solely for scientific purpose, alternative places that would not have been visible on the main face of the outcrop would have sufficed. In addition, less famous or less impressive outcrops, with the same fauna and equally well preserved specimens, are available (Stouge, 1980; Klappa *et al.*, 1980) and would have served equally well.

It is very likely that those responsible were aware of the descriptions of this outcrop by Schuchert and Dunbar (1934), Whittington and Kindle (1963) and Whittington (1965). To damage a locality made famous by others for no valid scientific reason is both irresponsible and inexcusable. The relative remoteness of the locality is no excuse for this action because the construction of a new road now facilitates ready access which will in all eventuality bring increasing numbers of geologists to visit this famous area.

In the description of the vandalism on the famous Skaergaard Intrusion, East Greenland, Bridgewater *et al.* (1979, p. 12) wrote: "One might argue that only a small part of this outcrop was taken and that what remains is sufficient to show how it was in its entirety. This is no more reasonable than the removal of part of a famous sculpture or painting whose beauty as a whole is the sum of the detail of its parts." We believe that this argument also applies to the Table Point locality.

Most localities of geological interest are not yet protected by law in Newfoundland. It would be extremely difficult if not impossible to protect all geological



Figure 2 Conformable contact between lower and middle Table Head and the prolific outcrop at Table Point. Bellburns community is seen in the background.

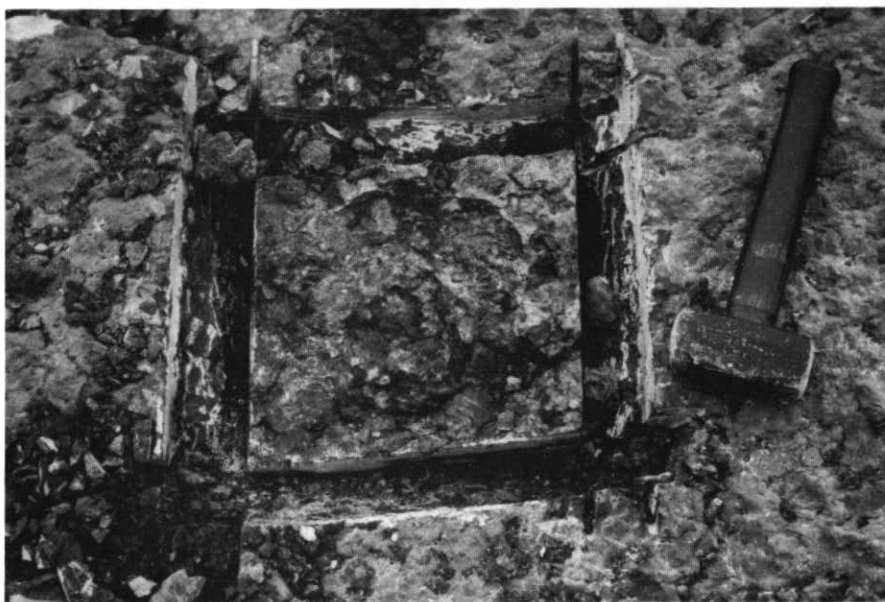


Figure 3 Partly removed gastropod (*Maclurites* sp.) and debris. Length of hammer is 25 cm.

localities by law or to make a complete listing of areas that should be protected. Alternatively, the best protection would be for the individual geologist to develop a sense of responsibility towards nature and towards other geologists so that classical sites like Table Point will be respected in the future.

To avoid situations like this in Newfoundland, it is suggested that scientists consult the Department of Mines and Energy, Mineral Development Division or

the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Geological Department, both at St. John's, Newfoundland, for information on alternative localities or advice for places to go when damage will be as little as possible.

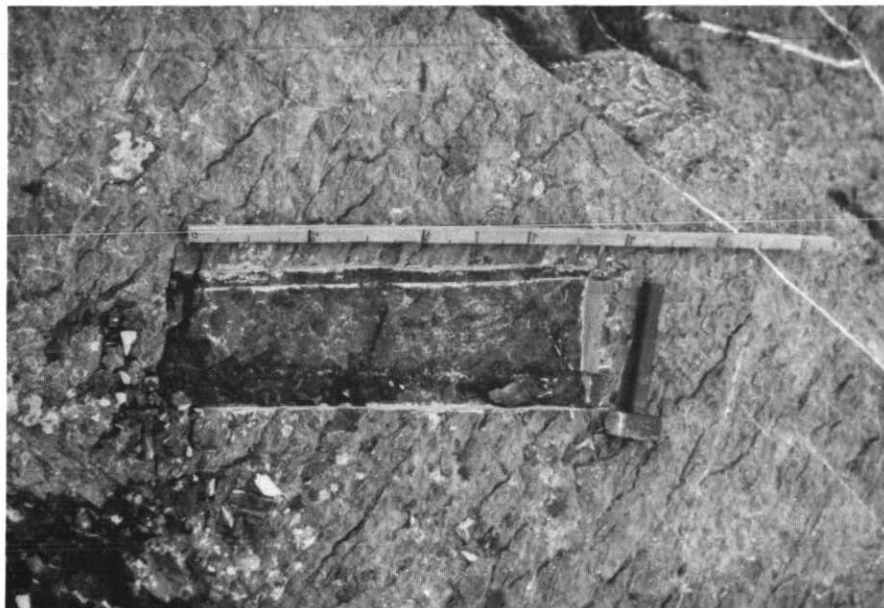


Figure 4 Completely removed specimen of cephalopod. The length of the slab is 70 cm.

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Late Silurian and Early Devonian Graptolite, Brachiopod and Coral Faunas From Northwestern and Arctic Canada

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Special Paper 17

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