

## Some memories of András Galács and of Hungary

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My first memories of András come from when I participated in the centenary celebrations for the Hungarian Geological Institute in 1969. An excursion went to Villány (FÜLÖP et al., 1969), where a famous, but anomalous, ammonite fauna had been recorded (TILL, 1910–11; LÓCZY, 1915), including the villainous genus *Villania*, which had had to have a whole new subfamily created for it by W.J. ARKELL in the Ammonite Treatise of 1957 (ARKELL et al., 1957). I will never forget how the various international groups, which included András, went to work at this famous locality. We, the English contingent, led by the much missed John Callomon (1928–2010 - see obituary notice by Ian MILLS and Hugh TORRENS, 2010) soon realised that not all the ammonites could have come from the famous Cephalopod bed – nr. 5 – here, because, unconformably below it, lay beds which also yielded fossils, including ammonites, and these revealed different methods of geological diagnosis. The first to be found were nautiloids, which French experts said only confirmed the existing, but fallacious, date of these beds, as Middle Jurassic. Brachiopods were next found, which Derek Victor AGER (1923–1993), British brachiopodologist and Hungarophile, realised had to be Pliensbachian (Lower Jurassic). Then we found a single ammonite. This soon emerged as a specimen of *Apoderoceras*. It proved the presence of the Taylori Subzone, of the Jamesoni Zone, of the Pliensbachian (AGER and CALLOMON 1971, and TORRENS 2002b). This proved that *Villania* was a normal Pliensbachian ammonite, whose horizon has been misunderstood, Barna GÉCZY later produced a fine monograph of these and named new species as *Villania callomoni* and *Villania galaczi* (see GÉCZY, 1998) to triangulate this story.

My next involvements with András came after I had taken up another interest in the history of science. I had come across the strange silence surrounding the Austro-Hungarian naturalist and traveller Robert Townson (1762–1827) during the early years of the Napoleonic War (see TORRENS, 1999) and I determined to try and uncover his complicated life and work. This culminated in a well

remembered visit to Debrecen in 1997, when Peter Rózsa put on a fine conference to discuss Townson's life and work (RÓZSA, 2002). The extraordinary range of Townson's work then took a large and international team to evaluate it. Townson, a true polymath, was one of the 50 entries I did for the new Oxford Dictionary of Natural Biography (TORRENS, 2004). He had been one of the least well served in the original Victorian DNB (CARLYLE, 1899), where his origin and fate had remained quite unknown, and it could merely report that he had written a series of significant books in the 1790s, whilst based in Shropshire. My research on him had started in the 1970s, and led me on a fascinating trail, with which András helped. Townson proved to be the illegitimate London-born son of a merchant, who was soon orphaned. He then led a peripatetic life, which saw him first settling in Shropshire, and then studying in Edinburgh, Goettingen, and Vienna (whence he travelled to Hungary). He then applied, unsuccessfully, for naturalist's positions in Canada, Sierra Leone, and India, before deciding to emigrate to Australia in 1806. This work led me to accumulate a large research collection, of books in many languages, photos, slides, photocopies and copies of his several books. I offered all this to Shropshire Archives late in 2005, which accepted it, as a gift, early in 2006. Sadly, by April, they had decided it was all of mere „academic interest”. So, in September 2006, I had to find a new home for it all, at Shrewsbury Museum (where what little of Townson's own natural history collections had survived). Then, in October 2012, following the loss of yet another natural history curator post there, I was warned that this museum had now put all this material „aside, prior to disposal”, so it had to be rescued yet again. The results of this is that an even larger accumulation now resides in my most unsuitable garage. All this seems a sad way to treat the results of much dedicated research, and so I wonder if I might now find a Hungarian home for all my Townson archives. This would be a way of paying proper tribute to my friendship with, and gratitude to, András Galács?

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