

Editorial

When the Council of BSHS approved the expansion of the Journal from three to four annual issues, it expressed the hope that it might prove possible to publish special, thematic issues on a more regular basis. In September 1989 the first of a new series was devoted to *Genetics, Eugenics and Evolution* and dedicated to the memory of Bernard Norton. We now have a sequel in which the unifying theme is Darwin as a geologist. The papers presented here were first given at a meeting held on 31 October 1988, at the Geological Society of London, to mark the 150th anniversary of the publication of what the organizer of the meeting, Frank Rhodes, describes in his contribution as Darwin's first major scientific theory – a remarkable attempt at a global tectonic synthesis.

In James Secord's essay we have a revealing study of Darwin's geological education prior to the *Beagle* voyage. It is shown to be far fuller and richer than standard accounts, including Darwin's own, have suggested. In Sandra Herbert's paper we follow his geologizing through different phases of the voyage and encounter his self-perception as a prospective geological author. Darwin's conviction that 'some great law of nature remains to be discovered by geologists' is then sensitively discussed by Frank Rhodes who, in a more general overview, identifies the principles of symmetry and simplicity that regulated Darwin's theorizing. I should like to thank each of the contributors for their assistance in bringing the collection together.

Readers may like to know that we currently have three similar special issues in preparation: one to be devoted to the history of ecological and environmental sciences, a second to historical aspects of chemical technologies, and a third having energy and its application as a unifying theme.