



Peter Trusler's/Tom Rich's Attendance at the "SNOWBALL EARTH 2006 CONFERENCE"

16th-21st July 2006

Monte Verita International Conference Centre, Ascona, Switzerland.

As an illustrator and Associate Research Fellow, Monash University School of Geosciences, Peter Trusler's interest in this field is occasioned by his involvement in the reconstruction of the Ediacaran metazoan biota. He has illustrations submitted for several research papers and the title "The Rise of Animals", Fedonkin, Vickers-Rich, Gehling, Grey & Narbonne (in press, Johns Hopkins Press, Washington). His previous attendance at the Prato Conference 2004 has already fostered much of the preliminary work of which the Australia Post Stamp issue on the Ediacaran biota, "Creatures of the Slime" was a product. Tom Rich attended the meeting in place of Patricia Vickers-Rich, due to her inability to attend due to her setting up an exhibition on Precambrian metazoans in Japan, which conflicted with the Ascona conference.

Specifically, Trusler's interest in the presentations at the Snowball Earth Conference related to understanding the environmental conditions that spawned and supported the rise of the metazoans in the Neoproterozoic. There could not have been a better circumstance in which to gain an up-to-date insight into the glacial sedimentology palaeogeography, palaeoceanography and biogeochemistry contingent with understanding the environmental constraints on the evolution of these unusual organisms. Without a thorough knowledge of the literature in such a diversity of disciplines, it has been extremely important for me to gain a critical appreciation of the state of the debate and the immediate directions that research and climate modeling are taking to resolve the many issues.

This broader appreciation will further help to comprehend, not only the unusual preservational circumstances of the Neoproterozoic fossil record and the geochemistry involved, but also assist in the functional analysis of the reconstructed morphologies and their biochemistry. The conference also presented a spectrum of palaeontological papers that were of direct relevance to Trusler's reconstructions. Aside from the formal discussion sessions, he and Tom Rich were able to talk informally with delegates and those colleagues with whom Trusler had met in Prato and during his fieldwork in Newfoundland.

The conference centre, facilities, accommodation and catering were most conducive to this purpose and deepening my specific role in this field. To further this end, Trusler presented several posters (my own and one on behalf of Prof. Pat Rich) and contributed illustrations to the proceeding's abstracts. Tom Rich presented a poster on the polar vertebrate faunas of southern Australia, drawing comment on the dinosaurs and mammals that inhabited this rather severe

environment that existed on Earth in Greenhouse time during the Early Cretaceous.