

GROUND WATER DIVISION

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The idea of forming a professional society for geohydrologists in South Africa was first raised in 1977 during discussions between officials from the Department of Water Affairs and staff at the Department of Geology, University of the Orange Free State. From the start it was thought that such a group could form part of the Geological Society of South Africa. Consultation with the Geological Society commenced in 1977, and a draft constitution was drawn up in consultation with the Society with the view of forming a specialist division of the Society.

After the conclusion of a colloquium on 29 November 1978, organised by the Branch of Scientific Services of the Department of Water Affairs to specifically address ground water issues, a meeting was held to discuss the formation of an association for geohydrologists. This meeting, under the chairmanship of Mr J R Vegter, was attended by 56 persons and culminated in the formation of the third specialist division of the Geological Society of South Africa (GSSA) and is referred to as the Ground Water Division of the GSSA. At this meeting a working Committee comprising of Mr J R Vegter (Chairman), Mr W R G Orpen (Secretary) and two additional members, Prof B T Verhagen and Mr M N Sara, was formed.

In the Constitution, the objective of the Division is stated to be the advancement of the science and technology of ground water.

In February 1979 membership stood at 53 and the Division started its activities with a bank balance of R50,55! The following members were elected to from the first Executive Committee of the Division.

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| Mr J R Vegter | Chairman |
| Prof F D I Hodgson | Vice-Chairman |
| Mr W R G Orpen | Secretary/Treasurer |
| Dr C M Jennings | Representative on GSSA Council |
| Dr J S V van Zyl | |

It is interesting to note that some of the decisions taken during that first meeting are still enforced by the Division. These include the organisation of biennial symposia, quarterly lectures on ground water and related topics, as well as using the GSSA's Bulletin as a vehicle to publicise the activities of the Division to the geological community at large.

In addition to its quarterly lectures, the first major project launched by the Division was a symposium entitled "Ground Water '80". This three day event was organised jointly with the Division of Hydraulic and Water Engineering of the S A Institution of Civil

Engineers. The occasion was a great achievement and laid the foundation for the following six symposia that have been organised to date. The symposia and the respective topics are in the table at the end.

Apart from these symposia, numerous short courses and workshops were organised by the Division. The highlight of these courses is undoubtedly the "Introduction of Ground Water". Up to four of these three day courses are presented every year, some beyond the borders of South Africa. This course had its origin in the geohydrology course initiated by the Division and offered at the University of the Witwatersrand as part of the earth sciences curriculum in the Department of Geology. The extensive course notes that have been compiled over the years are currently being revised and rewritten to form a textbook on geohydrology with geohydrological case studies from southern Africa. Other courses offered through the years include:

Hydrogeology of Waste Management (1982)
Prof Stanley Davis, University of Arizona.

Geophysical Borehole Logging (1982)
Various lecturers.

The Division has also been active in organising workshops, mini symposia and working suppers, including the following:

- Working Supper with invited speakers from South Africa, Namibia (SWA), Botswana and Mozambique (March 1982);
- Ground Water and the Urban Environment (August 1984); and Dolomitic Ground Water of the PWV Area (March 1988).
- Test pumping standards for South Africa (October 1993).

A document in which new tests pumping standards for South Africa have been described, was debated at length during the workshop. The recommendations emanating from the workshop have been incorporated into a document which has now been submitted to the SA Bureau of Standards for review, and will hopefully be accepted as the new standard for South Africa.

During the mid-1980s a Ground Water Medal was introduced to be awarded to those persons who have excelled in the field of geohydrology and in recognition of their dedication to the advancement of the science of geohydrology in Southern Africa. The recipients of the four medals that have to date been

awarded are Mr J R Vegter, Prof F D I Hodgson, Dr J F Enslin and Dr T S Kok. A bursary scheme consisting of two bursaries, one for post-graduate studies at an university (current value R5 000) and one for a senior student at a Technikon (current value R3 000) have also been introduced.

Through the years the Division has been actively involved in the activities of the Society by participating at congresses, drawing up of brochures depicting the earth sciences as a career and publishing papers in the Transactions of the GSSA. The Division played a leading role in the current drive to restructure the Society and is actively participating in this rejuvenation process.

A branch of the Division was established in the Western Cape to cater for members in this region.

This Branch organises its own lectures and from time to time presents courses relevant to geohydrology. During the 1993 Congress "Africa Needs Ground Water", the Division, with the support from the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) established a new society called the Hydrogeological Association of Africa (HAA) to cater for the needs of hydrogeologists in Africa. One of the aims of this Association will be to establish close links with the international association.

The Ground Water Division is proud of its achievements since 1978 and intends to serve its members even better in the years to come. The proposed restructuring of the Society will enhance the co-operation with the earth sciences in general and promises to be to the benefit of our members.

Symposia and Themes

| Date | Venue | Title | Theme |
|------|--------------|---|--|
| 1980 | Pretoria | Ground Water '80 | Ground water chemistry and pollution, geophysical applications, ground water modelling, regional investigations, ground water testing and development, legal aspect of ground water. |
| 1982 | Johannesburg | Ground Water '82 | Resource evaluation and management, hydrogeochemistry and pollution, modelling, mining and geotechnical aspects. |
| 1985 | Pretoria | Ground Water '85 | Resource assessment, Management and Conservation. |
| 1987 | Grahamstown | Hydrological Sciences | Southern African Water Resources. |
| 1989 | Randburg | Ground Water '89 | Ground Water and Mining. |
| 1991 | Midrand | Biennial Ground Water Convention. | Ground water quality and pollution. |
| 1993 | Johannesburg | Africa needs Ground Water. International Symposium jointly organised by the Division and the Borehole Water Association of Southern Africa. | Geohydrology of Africa. |
| 1995 | Midrand | Ground Water '95 (planned). | Ground Water Recharge and Rural Water Supply. |

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