

## Wales Euro 2016 Campaign Set in Clarach Sandstone

20 June 2016

A piece of sandstone from Cardigan Bay has been chosen by an Aberystwyth University professor to take its place in a Euro 2016 exhibition of rock 'footballs' in Vienna.

Professor Alex Maltman from the University's Department of Geography & Earth Sciences was asked by the Geological Survey of Austria earlier this year to send them a block of rock from Wales.

He chose a block from the cliffs of Clarach, just a short drive from where he works at Aberystwyth University - a charcoal-grey sandstone, with striking white veins of calcite mineral from the Silurian period between 419.2 and 443.8 million years ago.



*Dr Maria Heinrich of the Geological Survey of Austria (left) and Professor Alex Maltman with the rock football.*

The Clarach rock was sent to Austria where it was formed into a polished mini 'football' before taking its place in an exhibition of 24 rock footballs from all the Euro 2016 competing nations.

This is the third time the Austrian Geological Survey has created such a display to celebrate the Euros – but it's the first time they've had to include Wales.

"It was all quite amusing really,' says Professor Maltman who's just returned from Austria. "One moment, I was discussing a forthcoming geological trip to Austria, the next I was being asked to select a single piece of rock to best represent a whole country! I had a chuckle to myself as I sent the heavy package from little Post Office in Penrhyncoch all the way to Vienna."

The 24 miniature footballs in the display have been sectioned into their prospective groups with Wales's sandstone joined by England's limestone, Slovakia's golden onyx and Russia's black dolerite.

With a field trip already organised to the country in June 2016, Professor Maltman had the perfect opportunity to witness the rock take its rightful place in the Euros exhibition.

Much like Wales, he says, Austria is a relatively small country delighted in being involved in the tournament with pictures of their team on the streets everywhere in Austria.

Professor Alex Maltman hopes the Clarach rock augurs well for Wales' future in the display:

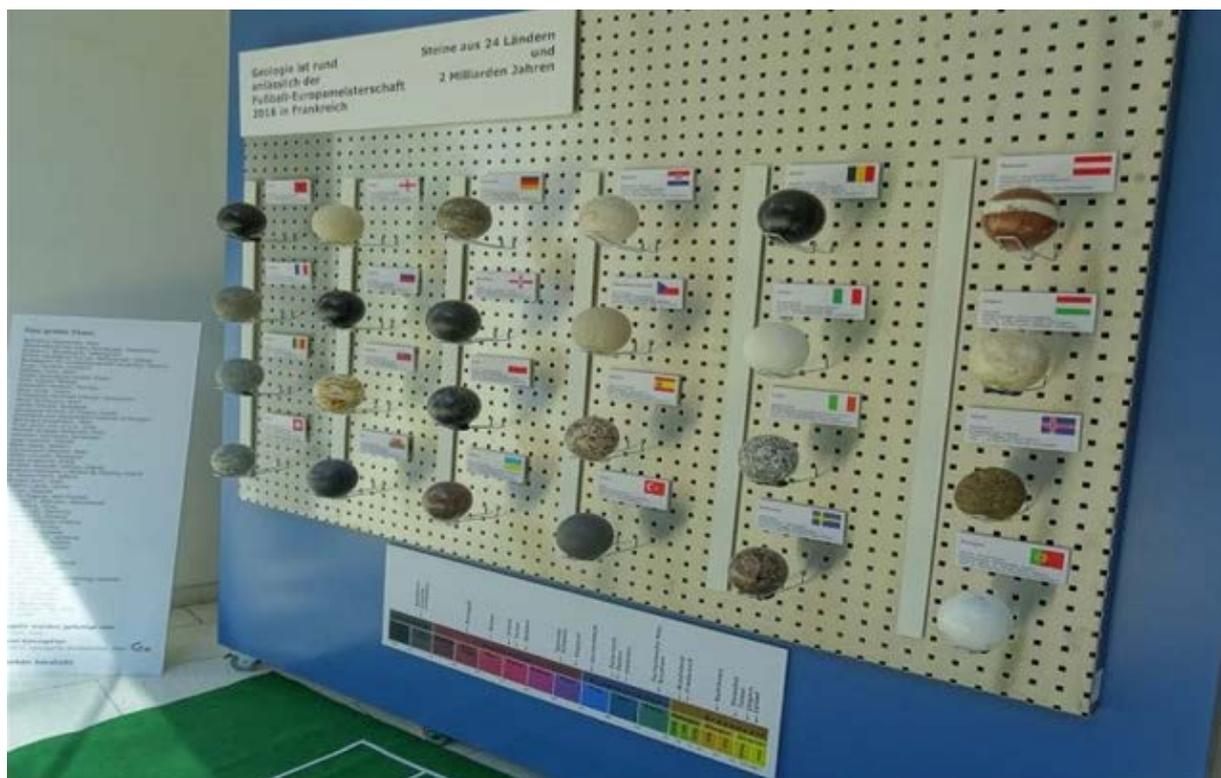
"If a country already has a rock football from previous years they use the same one for display again; but as Wales has not qualified for a while, they needed an initial one and it was great to see us up there. I have high hopes that I will be seeing it up there once again in four years' time!"

Not since 1958 has Wales qualified for a major international football tournament but 57 years later, the team secured a golden ticket to Euro 16 and fans could dream again. Their place in the history books was secured and their achievement has now also been set in stone.

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Group B of the Euro 2016 tournament represented by rock footballs



The display on which the rock rests at an exhibition organised by the Austrian Geological Society Vienna, Austria.