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Load casts on the base of a greywacke turbidite bed from the Upper Ordovician Kirkcolm Formation of the Southern Uplands. This example is exposed on the west coast of the Rhins of Galloway at Slocknamorrow, near Portobello and about 13 km NNW of Portpatrick. In areas of complex folding and steeply inclined beds it is features such as these which allow the younging direction of the strata to be determined and hence enable an interpretation of the structural geometry to be made. The origin and value of these sedimentary features have only been widely appreciated and utilised for about the last 50 years.

This year, 1999, marks the centennial of the seminal work on Southern Uplands geology by Ben Peach and John Horne, published as a Geological Survey Memoir. Peach and Horne made extensive use of graptolite biostratigraphy, the radical new technique pioneered by Charles Lapworth, but did not have the advantage of sedimentological understanding. Nevertheless, their interpretation remained unchallenged until the latter part of this century and some aspects are still valid. It is only relatively recently that application of sedimentology, linked with models arising from the plate tectonic revolution, has led to a fundamental re-interpretation of Southern Uplands structure in terms of subduction and terrane accretion. The centennial of geological research in the Southern Uplands was marked by a symposium at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh’s new state-of-the-art earth science visitor attraction, on 23rd and 24th September 1999. The symposium was jointly supported by the British Geological Survey, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the National Museums of Scotland, and the University of Edinburgh.

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