

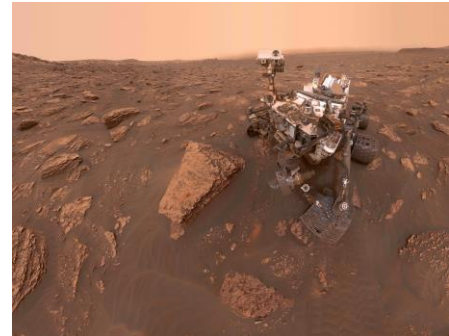


GWL Cluster Meeting

Thursday 1st November 2018 - 6:00 for 6:30pm

The adventures of the Curiosity rover at Gale crater, Mars

Sanjeev Gupta - Imperial College London



The search for rocks with potential to contain evidence for past life on Mars is dependent on reconstructing the palaeoenvironmental context of sedimentary rock strata and identifying those rocks that record ancient habitable environments. We have been using NASA's Mars Science Laboratory rover, Curiosity, to explore the sedimentary archive preserved in the $\sim 3.7 \pm 0.1$ Ga crater, Gale, for ~ 6 Earth years and have documented a rich array of clastic sedimentary rocks in lower Aeolis Mons (Mt. Sharp) and Aeolis Palus (the valley between the north wall of Gale and Aeolis Mons). Aeolis Mons is a 5-km-high mountain of stratified rock. Through detailed sedimentary, stratigraphic, and geochemical investigations using the rover and its tools and instruments, we have been able to derive a robust model for sedimentary evolution of potentially habitable environments in Gale at a time chrono-correlative with Earth's early Archean. The sedimentary rock record in Gale indicates a climate with sufficient warmth and humidity to sustain river systems and long-lived lakes in the crater. A current debate is how Mars' climate system could have achieved these conditions early in Mars' geological evolution.

Sanjeev Gupta is a geologist and planetary scientist. Trained as a field geologist, he is interested in reconstructing processes and environments from the ancient rock record. He is a Long Term Planner on NASA's Mars Science Laboratory Curiosity rover mission, where his role is to analyze ancient sedimentary rocks on Mars and determine if the Red Planet could ever have been habitable for life. He is also involved in the European ExoMars rover mission planned for 2020 and on the science team of the NASA Mars 2020 mission.

Venue: It will be held at The Royal Cambrian Academy, Crown Lane, Conwy, LL32 8AN (located behind Plas Mawr) and will begin at 6:30pm promptly. Refreshments will be served from 6pm

For further information please contact us: on 01492 592425 or admin@geoscience.wales