Preface

From time to time, *PPP* intends to publish the proceedings of workshops or symposia which focus upon specific periglacial or permafrost topics. The International Workshop of Permafrost and Periglacial Environments in Mountain Areas led to two such publications (*PPP* vol. 3 nos. 2 and 3) and a special issue devoted to permafrost and climatic change was published on the occasion of the Sixth International Permafrost Conference (*PPP* vol. 4 no. 2). In this issue of *PPP* we continue this tradition by publishing some of the results of a specialist symposium held in France in early September 1994 dealing with the problem of *grèzes litées* or stratified slope deposits.

The *grèzes litées* of south-western France are an unusual deposit consisting of alternating beds of fine and coarse angular calcareous material with a variable fine fraction. They were given a cold-climate or periglacial significance by the French geomorphologist Yves Guillien in 1951. Subsequently, other stratified slope deposits elsewhere in France have been described as *grèzes litées, groizes litées, la grézière, le graveluche* and *éboulis ordonnés*. In the English literature the term 'stratified scree' is sometimes used. Whether these deposits are of the same origin has been the subject of discussion for many years. The necessity for intense frost action in their formation, either diurnal or seasonal, and the possible occurrence of perennially frozen ground, is often complicated by the highly frost-susceptible nature of the parent material, and by the fact that *grèzes litées* are rarely reported as forming in high latitudes today.

Accordingly, a field excursion was organized by French colleagues under the auspices of the Association Française du Pergélisol and with the support of the IGU Commission on Frost-Action Environments (President J.-P. Lautridou) and the IPA Working Group on Periglacial Processes and Environments (Chair A. G. Lewkowicz). The principal organizers of the excursions were J.-C. Ozouf and J.-P. Coutard (Caen), J.-P. Texier and P. Bertran (Bordeaux), A. Weisrock, M. Deshaies and D. Harmand (Nancy), and A. Marre, M. Laurain, H. Guérin and J. Richard (Reims). In addition there were two paper sessions, one at Reims and the other at Nancy. The excursion group, which travelled across France together, consisted of 35 participants from 10 countries.

If one were to attempt to summarize briefly the results of this highly successful meeting, the main conclusions are twofold. First, a number of possible mechanisms exist for the formation of stratified slope deposits (e.g. slopewash, solifluction, debris flow, dry grain flow, frost-coated clast flow, aeolian accumulation) and it is unwise to attach specific periglacial significance to such deposits without careful investigation. Second, it seems best to restrict the term *grèzes litées* to the stratified slope deposits of the Charente region of south-western France.

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