

# Someone should inform the Glasgow frackademics about the Daily Mail

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Posted on 12th February 2017 by Professor David Smythe



Wikipedia has ruled – correctly, in my view – that the *Daily Mail* cannot be considered a reliable source of information. The online encyclopedia will no longer accept citations from that source.

But Glasgow University fracking researchers have taken a diametrically opposed view, by elevating this ghastly right-wing, climate-change denying, Hitler-supporting example of the gutter press to the status of



an academic authority.

Here's what the *Daily Mail* wrote in 2014 – a story revolving round Professor Younger's defamatory comments about me:

*But a professor at his old university now accuses him of 'pseudo-scientific scaremongering'. – Prof Paul Younger, Glasgow's professor of energy engineering, said Mr Smythe – who played bass guitar in the 70s punk band The Rezillos – was unqualified to give expert evidence on fracking, having retired 16 years ago. 'He has published nothing on (shale gas) in any proper scientific forum – no doubt because he knows he would never get past peer review with his pseudo-scientific scaremongering.'*

Scientist David Smythe is a 'fraud who has lied about his credentials' | ... <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2713509/Scientist-claim-fraud.html>

## MailOnline

### Anti-fracking 'expert' and question marks over his credentials: Ex punk rocker 'lied and peddled pseudo science'

- David Smythe accused of being less than totally honest over his credentials as shale gas expert
- Retired geologist has been prominent in highlighting dangers of fracking
- Professor at his old university accuses him of 'pseudo-scientific scaremongering'
- Geological Society demands he stops claiming to be chartered geologist
- Mr Smythe insists he has done extensive research into unconventional energy extraction

By Michael Seamark

Published: 17:48 GMT, 1 August 2014 | Updated: 00:47 GMT, 2 August 2014

Never mind the serious error of fact – that the *Daily Mail* wrongly describes *The Rezillos* as a punk band! – Dr Rob Westaway, Younger’s colleague and co-author in fracking studies, went on to cite this article under the guise of a scientific study, referring to it as ‘Seamark, 2014’ (Michael Seamark being the hack who wrote it). He commented on a paper I had published in *Solid Earth Discussions*. Here’s how he referenced the *Daily Mail*:

*In this comment on the Smythe (2016) discussion paper I shall try to avoid distraction by this author’s record in the field of shale gas and fracking (cf. Seamark, 2014; Smythe, 2014, 2015)*

I complained to the journal editor that his reference to “*Seamark, 2014*” was inappropriate for a scientific commentary, and, furthermore, that the article in question was defamatory. The editor then asked Westaway to remove the reference. But before he complied, Westaway wrote to Cuadrilla geologist Huw Clarke, inviting him to comment on my paper, and adding:

*Dave Smythe, being as he is such a champion of fair, open scientific debate, has requested that some of my commentary be deleted. So if you would like to see the ‘unexpurgated’ version you should download it right away.*



The Glasgow researchers had been in contact with Cuadrilla since summer 2014, and in June 2015 two Cuadrilla staff flew to Glasgow for a meeting. I can only surmise that the purpose of the exchanges was some sort of collaboration. The cordial Glasgow-Cuadrilla relationship may help to account for the antipathy that these two researchers feel towards me (a fellow member of the College of Science and Engineering), because of my critical views on fracking.

Dr Westaway later saw fit, despite the editor’s request, to re-insert the *Daily Mail* reference again in a further commentary, writing:

*I am most surprised that Smythe (2016b) has now aired this issue over again, and has thereby been allowed to place in the public domain his own spin on the matter. It therefore now seems reasonable to provide the reference details for the newspaper article he is alluding to, by Seamark (2014), so readers can judge the matter for themselves.*

The Editor in Chief of the journal then took it upon himself to rebuke Westaway publicly, in the form of a comment on my paper (a most unusual event in the scientific publishing world):

*Dear Dr. Westaway,*  
*the first part of your interactive comment SC18 contains criticism of the Journal’s editorial policy regarding the handling of manuscript se-2015-134 authored by D.K. Smythe. I’m sorry*

*to say that, from what you wrote, it seems to me that you are not fully familiar with the EGU [European Geoscience Union] open access publication policy. ...*

*To conclude, as Chief Executive Editor of Solid Earth, I have a twofold feeling on what is happening with this manuscript. On one hand, I'm very happy to see that, given the sensitive issue, the manuscript stimulated a vigorous discussion, thus utilising the editorial workflow. On the other hand, I have the impression that not all the content of the interactive comments/replies comply with the purpose of providing constructive contributions to the review process of the manuscript, and this is not what we are looking for. I fully agree with the Topical Editor that the ongoing debate is positive in helping to make further progress on such a delicate issue and, consequently, I would recommend that you, and everybody else that adds further interactive comments, deals strictly with the science of the manuscript and nothing else.*

So Westaway appears to think that the *Daily Mail* is an authority worthy of citation in the scientific literature, in defiance of the editors of a respected academic earth science journal. I think he should be told the truth. This sad little episode also illustrates the cosy relationship that the Glasgow frackademic pair had already cultivated with Cuadrilla (as evidenced by emails between Glasgow and Cuadrilla released under FoI) – hardly conducive, in my view, to an objective view of possible problems with fracking in the UK.

Ironically, Neither Younger nor Westaway appears to have obtained any research grants from Cuadrilla (or any other fracking company, for that matter), despite their efforts to curry favour; the actions of the two researchers might be seen only to have diminished Glasgow University in the eyes of the public.

I shall be writing about the jointly authored Younger-Westaway fracking papers in future posts.