

Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2009

In the Gutter with Martin Sims!



On a sunny morning in early May I joined the Herts Geological Society walk to see the hydrological feature, Bourne Gutter, and its associated landscape morphology. Meeting near the A41, as it bypasses Berkhamsted, we then walked down the south facing slope into the easterly running valley to meet the land owner who had kindly offered his assistance and information.

There are a pair of paddocks along the bottom of the valley, either side of the Lower Farm buildings, which have been left uncultivated for at least a decade and on this day were pretty flower meadows, full of bright yellow buttercups and bright green grasses.

Firstly, we were taken a hundred yards to the west to see the most obvious sink hole (see photo). With clear unusually steep sides and visibly centred in the valley, the feature's interpretation as a sink hole is

fairly certain. We were then taken down the valley, along the other paddock, and shown a very clear channel which the Bourne is said to follow when it does flow. This lead to a large ex-gravel pit, described as a sink hole, which we were told has very variable water levels, indicating that it is at water table level.

Hearsay tells of the whole of both paddocks flooding and on the worst occasions, the bourne continuing past this large sink hole across the fields to the east, then under the old A41, via a culvert, to join the Bulbourne. Local legend refers to the bourne as the Hertfordshire Woe Water, presaging war and disaster. Apparently, it flowed in 1945 before the A-bombs were dropped and in 2001 before the World Trade Centre attacks. Supposedly, it also flowed in 1992 presaging the Iraq war.

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Records indicate that the bourne will flow from February to Late April if the previous calendar year's rainfall totals over 32 inches. See <http://picasaweb.google.com/john.marsland> for some pictures of the last bourne flows taken by the current land owner. A hydrological study of the bourne by visiting academics suggests that there are two separate hydrological systems contributing to the bourne. One flows from the Upper Chalk above the Chalk Rock and reaches the surface where the Chalk Rock does whilst the other releases water from below the Chalk Rock into the same valley. In the hope of seeing some supporting evidence I searched for some expression of the Chalk Rock on the surface, but I couldn't see anything likely.

Lastly, and somewhat alarmingly, there seems to be a threat to the bourne as the government have earmarked the valley for housing development.

My thanks to Dr John Catt, of the HGS, for organising and running the event, as well as all the information and his permission to write this article for the B&LGG. Please be warned that the land is private but there are public footpaths in the area which will afford views of the vale.

Edited by Bev Fowlston.

If you have any comment or wish to include an article in the next issue of this newsletter then please contact me on 01525 375353 or by email bev.fowlston@gmail.com Deadline for next issue is 26th November 2009.

I hope you enjoy reading on.....

RIGS Update

Strategic Stone Study coming to an end.

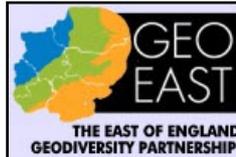
Dr Martin Whiteley has been working hard to obtain all the information required for the English Heritage-backed study of the building stones of Bedfordshire. He will report in the next newsletter.

Regional News

Geo East

Should you require more details about, or wish to get involved with Geo-East, please let Peter Lally know.

Check out the website at www.geoeast.org.uk



B&LGG News

New committee coming soon!

The Annual General Meeting is soon upon us - 13th September at Harlington village Hall. Please ensure you let Corinne Calligan know that you will be attending. This makes catering easier! We have a wonderful speaker lined up in Bernard O'Connor a local expert on the coprolite industry.

This is YOUR chance to get involved with YOUR Geology Group. Come and show your support to all the hard working committee members and the volunteers who have helped admirably this past year.

Event reviews

The Dukes vs Blues Event

By Jan Munro



Duke of Burgundy (photo courtesy of http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamearis_lucina)

On May 30th I was invited to represent B&LGG at an event organised by the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants & Peterborough being held in Totternhoe, South Beds.

Dr. Ed Turner, their Ecology Groups Officer had been conducting an in-depth study of two groups of rare chalk grassland butterflies, the Duke of Burgundy and different species of blues, particularly the Small and Chalkhill Blues.

The Trust has recently been able to purchase, with the help of grants and public subscription, a large parcel of land incorporating Totternhoe Quarry and part of the Lime Works. This has enabled them to join together previously isolated nature reserves and manage them intensively with butterflies in mind.

The significance for us is the link between the underlying chalk geology, the biodiversity arising from it and the industrial use of the chalk both past and present.

Potentially, the Totternhoe Lime Works area is one of the most important geological sites in the County with access to the strata and fossils within it. For that reason I was keen to develop a relationship with the Trust so we could have access to the geology during future field trips.

The event was very well attended and the B&LGG stand generated a lot of interest. For further information, log on to the Wildlife Trust website www.wildlifebcnp.org and go to the News & Vacancies section. Their bulletin was posted on July 8th. Alternatively contact Ed.Turner@wildlifebcnp.org for more about his butterfly work.



Chalkhill Blues (photo courtesy of http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalkhill_Blue)

Outreach Work with Harrold Cub Scouts

By Jan Munro

One of the aims of the group is to carry out a certain amount of outreach work in the communities we come into contact with. As people have become more aware of our existence, we are receiving invitations to speak to schools, events and community groups around the County.

One such invitation came on June 16th from the 51st Harrold Cubs to hold an Introduction to Rocks & Fossils evening at their headquarters in the village. The venue is just up the road from where I work at Harrold Odell Country Park so it seemed like an ideal opportunity to set up a community link.

I brought along a selection of fossils wrapped up in paper and asked the kids to open the parcels and discuss what creatures/plants they thought they were. Some of them brought along rocks and fossils that they had collected themselves for me to look at. We then drew representations of what we thought they looked like when they were alive.

The second part of the evening was spent looking at the common rock types, how they were formed and what man used them for. It made them think about just how much we depend on rocks for raw materials

It was encouraging to see how interested and knowledgeable they were and the leader was delighted with their response. In an era when the press is commenting on the “dumbing down” of science subjects within the National Curriculum it’s nice to see that there are some future scientists waiting to be enthused.

Sunny Hunny!

By Bev Fowlston

On July 4th, a number of members congregated at the top of Hunstanton’s famous red chalk cliffs. The group were met by Robin Stevenson and Mike Hurn both experts in their fields and have worked on the cliffs. The day was especially warm but in the shade of the cliffs things were bearable!



Robin Stevenson explaining the jointing seen in the Carstone.

Robin began the field trip by giving out handouts, which are available to download from our website, explaining the geology we were going to look at. He then took us along the beach pointing out significant changes in geology and explaining in more detail how different features had occurred. Also along the way we looked at fallen blocks of rock to find numerous fossils and traces of life from the Cretaceous Period.

Although the heat of the day brought an early end to the field trip, everyone enjoyed the informative day and some even took away fossils they had managed to extract from the fallen cliffs.



An intrepid few go fossil-hunting!

Many thanks to Lindsay Hiles for organising the trip and to Robin and Mike for their wonderful leadership.

Beds County Show

By Bev Fowlston

B&LGG were invited to hold a stall at the inaugural Beds County Show on 11th and 12th July at Shuttleworth, nr Biggleswade. Corinne Calligan attended this two-day event. She had a display on the Saturday and was there in person on the Sunday. Positive comments from John Pitts of the BNHS were received. This is an event that the B&LGG would like to attend in future years but we need more help!

If you can give any time to helping out on stands - no technical knowledge required! - please let Lindsay Hiles or Bev Fowlston know in the usual way.

A huge thanks must go to Corinne for her commitment at this event.

Leighton - Linslade Canal Festival

By Lindsay Hiles

Round two of the Leighton and Linslade Events to fulfil our qualification for a Grant from the local Council was held at the Canal festival on 25th July. Round one being the May Day Fayre.

The weather was kind, and fortunately this provided a good turnout, with numerous people visiting the stand, which comprised of some of our samples and specimens of the local Bedfordshire geology together with minerals and fossils we had brought along to sell. We had a good team on hand to answer questions and sell the small trinkets and my thanks goes out to all of them. The team included Bev Fowlston along with her niece Stacy Plunkett, Peter Lally, John Wong & Malcolm Oliver as well as myself.

With this Event coinciding with Jan Munro’s Priory Park, Bedford event, our help resources were well stretched, but thanks to all both went well.



Stacy Plunkett with Leighton-Linslade Mayoress Karen Curzons

Countryside Event at Priory Country Park **By Jan Munro**

As a follow-up to the “Dukes vs Blues” event at Totternhoe in May, the Wildlife Trust asked us to be part of their Countryside Event at Priory Country Park, Bedford on July 25th.

Attractions included Albion Archaeology, a Celtic Band, Bee Keepers and a stall selling knitting wool spun from the fleeces of Hebridean sheep currently grazing their nature reserves around the County (Nude Ewe).

This was the same date as the Canal Festival in Leighton Buzzard and I wasn't sure that we would have enough members volunteering to cover it. I needn't have worried. A very big thank you to Frances Maynard and her gallant hubby who supplied and erected a gazebo, Anne Williams who brought along a fine selection of rock and fossil samples and Martin Whiteley who helped to chat to the visitors and give out leaflets and information.

Another big thank you needs to be extended to Mike Henty of Peacock Partners who very generously sorted out some rocks and fossils for us to sell on the day. We were one of the busiest stalls there and raised £72.90 for the group's coffers. One of the best received activities was a geode lucky dip which the kids adored and we sold out well before the end.

It was interesting to note how many people visiting our stall wanting to buy minerals for their health-giving properties. Does anyone know whether any studies have been done on this subject?

Martin made a very interesting contact with a man who had knowledge of former limestone quarrying in the area. He has since sent him data which he will be able to use in his quest for information about Bedfordshire's building stones. Unfortunately, the quarry is now flooded preventing us from seeing the rock face but useful info nonetheless.

A Wildlife Trust report can be seen on their website www.wildlifebcnp.org

Fossil Fun Day at Harrold Odell Country Park **By Bev Fowlston**

Jan Munro organised a Fossil Fun Day for children during the Summer holidays. Activities were devised for the children to enjoy, such as fossil cast making, rock pet creation and colouring sheets of Bedfordshire's sea monsters. Also a display of Bedfordshire's rocks and fossils was laid out for the interested adults to enquire about. A lot of interest was shown and a number of membership forms were taken away.



Children enjoying the activities in the marquee.

Richard Dowsett led an Ice Age walk through the landscape of Harrold Odell Country Park. This was very well received and I wish I'd had time to go on it!

A number of helpers came on the day; Lindsay Hiles, Anne Williams, John Buxton and Martin Whiteley. All help was greatly received and made the day a lot easier for all. Mike Henty from Peacock Partners came along in support with his stall selling rocks, fossils and semi-precious gemstone jewellery.



Mike Henty and Linda selling their wares!

A big thanks goes to all of the above for a wonderful day in the sun.

Forthcoming Events and Contacts

**Don't miss the
next event**

**Sun 13th Sept - Annual
General Meeting**

Dates for your diary

Sat 13th Sep 2.30pm

AGM at Harlington Village Hall

Weekend 2nd-4th Oct

Field trip to the Mendips, contact Martin Whiteley for more details.

A 12-month rolling programme of events is being organised and will be announced at the AGM in September - Watch this space!

If there is an event you would like to see then please let John Wong know and he will aim to organise it.

For more information on any of the events, please contact John Wong at the details below.

For more detailed reports on recently held events, go to the Events page on the website at

<http://www.bedsrigs.org.uk/reports.html>

You can see written reports and images of all our recent events.

Membership information

Individual membership is £7.50 per annum.

Group membership is £25.00 per annum

(Available to organisations that have 4 or more employees or members wishing to join B&LGG)

To continue to receive this newsletter by email or post then you must renew your membership. This newsletter is not the only benefit of remaining a member of the B&LGG; all our events for members are **free of charge**, non-members must pay £2.00 to attend.

You can renew now by either:

1. Sending a cheque made payable to B&LGG
2. Requesting and completing a Standing Order form

Both available through contacting:
Lindsay Hiles B&LGG Secretary, 4 Phoenix Close
Leighton Buzzard, Beds LU7 3YW

Remember without you - the members - this Group does not exist.

We need you!

Committee Members 2008 - 09

Chairperson

Secretary

Treasurer

Membership Secretary

RIGS Manager & BNHS representative

Education and Schools Liaison

Chalk Downs representative

Beds CC & Biodiversity Forum rep

Field Events Organiser

PR/Promotions/Fundraising Officer

Peter Lally

Corinne Calligan

Richard Cox

Lindsay Hiles

Dr Martin Whiteley

Richard Dowsett

Janet Munro

John Comont

John Wong

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