



# Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group

## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2008

### A letter from B&LGG's new Chair, Peter Lally

Hello All,

As a child in Derbyshire, searching for treasures of galena, fluorspa, and the occasional limestone fossil within Lead Mine spoils, wondering at stalagmites, and tight's whilst potholing, was probably where my interest in geology began.



Hill Walking is my hobby, and has broadened my interest in geology, finding gritstone-weathered sculptures amongst Kinder Scout's bed of peat, with Man's remnants of Millstones scattered around. Ingleborough's limestone pavements, the oddity of Norber Erratics, National 3 Peaks volcanic rocks, and the Old Red Sandstone at Pen Y Fan. In 2002 I moved to Bedfordshire, not a stone in sight. Well possibly the odd piece of flint, a few grains of sand, and chalk!

Not fully understanding Geology, I decided to seek a local evening class on the subject, no joy, so spent the next 3 years attending a French Language Course.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> January of this Year, feeling stimulated after a walk in the hills, I decided to explore the Geology thought, and searched the Net for "geology Bedfordshire", and was surprised to find B&LGG. Contacted by email, quick response with full details, sent off my Membership cheque, and all done.

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### News from B&LGG's 3rd AGM

The B&LGG's 3rd AGM was very well attended. It was held this year at Wilstead Village Hall which was a lovely venue. Mike Henty and his Peacock Partners rock, gem and fossil stall was open for members to buy bits and pieces to add to their own collections.

Following the business section of the meeting, that went extremely well with new members on the committee (see the list on page 4), we heard a lecture by Professor Angus Duncan on the hazards of living with volcanoes. He gave an excellent talk that delved into the lives of people who study and live near to active volcanoes.

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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 20th Feb 2009.

I hope you enjoy reading on.....

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16<sup>th</sup> February Diary tells me “went over to Dunstable Downs (Kensworth), first encounter with B&LGG”. Realised then, just what I wanted, nice friendly, knowledgeable people, something to get my teeth into. At the time little did I know what getting my teeth into meant, read on!

Since then I have attended various gatherings, events, and activities - Social Evening at LB, Greensand Ridge walk, Dunstable Downs activity, guided tour of Charnwood Forest, B&LGG representation at the Canal festival, exploration of Munday's Hill Quarry, my first impression of nice people, and a Group worth belonging to confirmed.

Then an EGM is called, 28<sup>th</sup> July at Husborne Crawley, “Do we become a Club, or remain as a Group?” – a debate follows, concluding with we remain as a Group, continue with Events to satisfy all our Geology needs, and pursue our RIGS position, which requires Funding (quite a task).

That decided left the big problem, the Mainstay, Bev, doing 4 Roles, Acting Chairperson, Secretary, Membership Secretary, and Public Relations/Promotions Officer, more than stretched! Any volunteers – silence!

AGM planned for 14<sup>th</sup> September, no sign of volunteers for Chairperson, visualised geology dreams dwindling, so I counselled Malcolm as to whether I ought to throw My Hat in the Ring, spoke to Bev, and after having a telephone conversation with persuasive Martin W, the rest is history.

The first meeting with me as Chair was held 8<sup>th</sup> October, and the very capable Committee Team are aware of our priorities to obtain funding for new RIGS, whilst maintaining your interests, and participation in Geology. I am a great believer in open communication, and welcome any ideas, thoughts, and participation of how we should maintain our strong position as a Geology Group, and how we move forward.

We are arranging a Social Evening at Husborne Crawley on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2008, which I hope you are able to attend so that we can get to know each other, and discuss thoughts.

Looking forward to seeing you.

Regards

Peter Lally

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The slides were amazing and everyone in the audience felt they learnt a lot. From how Local Authorities have tried to divert lava flows around villages or even in one example moved the village!

A great afternoon was had by all and the B&LGG is left with a very positive outcome as long as we continue getting your support!

**Next year's AGM will be held on Sunday 13th September 2009.**

## RIGS and other site news

### Funding for geoconservation in Potton.

**News on sites is limited this quarter. But there is good news** on the funding front. We have received £200 from Potton Consolidated Charities.

This money will be used to fund a geoconservation day in January, the 24<sup>th</sup>. The day will include a morning of working on the exposure at Potton Scout Hut Quarry and during the afternoon there will be an opportunity for members and the public to attend a Hands on Rocks workshop.

If you wish to attend either or both of these then please let Bev Fowlston know in the usual way.

## Regional News

### GeoEast Chalk Project

**Another meeting was held** in Cambridge to discuss the project with Jonathan Larwood of Natural England. This project has now been named ChalkEast and will have a website and a leaflet produced from the first tranche of money from Natural England.

Tim Holt-Wilson, on behalf of GeoEast will put in a funding bid for 2009/2010 to take county projects forward. Bedfordshire's projects will be centred on the work being done at Kensworth Nature Reserve. If you want to become involved then please let Bev Fowlston or Jan Munro know.

## B&LGG News

### MK Science Festival

**Members of the B&LGG joined in the MK Science Festival this year** by taking geology into some of Milton Keynes Primary Schools.

On Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, Martin Whiteley, Jan Munro and Bev Fowlston all gave introductory Rocks & Fossils classes to Year 3's at various lower schools across Milton Keynes and Bletchley.

These were very well received by both pupils and teachers.

### Dry Valleys explained .....

Dry valleys are valleys that have never been occupied by a stream. They are formed during Ice Age periods in geological history. The melt water from a glacier forms the valley by cutting into ground that is permanently frozen. They are being formed today in glacial regions around the world. Some of the most spectacular are found in Antarctica. To find out more visit: [http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/about\\_antarctica/geography/rock/dry\\_valleys.php](http://www.antarctica.ac.uk/about_antarctica/geography/rock/dry_valleys.php)

## B&LGG News continued .....

### Library Displays

The B&LGG poster display has been shown at Toddington Library and Shefford Library this quarter. It is to be erected again at Bedford Central Library in February 2009.

If you are in Bedford between 16th February and 28th February then do pop into the library and see the display.

### An interesting enquiry

B&LGG received an enquiry via email from Dunstan Arthur. He asked if these rocks pictured below were iron nodules.



Martin Whiteley, B&LGG's resident geologist, replied to Dunstan's query.

"What you've found are ironstone nodules from the Woburn Sands. They're quite common and they appear in all sorts of shapes and sizes, although tear-drop, flask-shape and round forms predominate.

Their formation is complex, involving the precipitation of iron-rich minerals around a nucleus of sand grains, fossil fragment or pebble. This happens soon after the sand was deposited on the shallow sea floor, whilst it still contains plenty of dissolved minerals. Nobody is quite sure why some nodules retain a 'soft-centre' of sand grains, but it suggests that the precipitation process worked from the outside inwards, and never infilled the whole body.

Some nodules have several crusts, often of different colour and composition (the manganese-rich ones tend to be purple). This suggests more than one phase of precipitation.

There are plenty of articles and pictures about nodules on the internet, although the scientific explanation about their formation is often woolly (like mine!). They're popular because they create such interesting forms and they are known from many stratigraphic horizons and different environments throughout the geological record. Thanks for bringing your collection to our attention and for providing such useful photographs. Keep your eyes open for more!"

**If you have interesting finds you would like identified then bring them along to the Members' Social Evening on Friday 5th December.**

## Event news

### Sundon Hills Walk and Talk

John Wong, Jan Munro and Bev Fowlston (with a lot of help from Martin Whiteley!) led a group of fifteen members and guests on a tour of Sundon Hills.

The day started off in Leighton Buzzard with some lovely



blue skies and a light breeze, however, by the time we reached Sundon Hills a few miles away there was a light persistent drizzle and the skies had turned a murky grey!

This didn't stop members from trekking across the hills of Moleskin and Markham Woods to finally emerge on the chalk grassland of Sundon Hills.

Jan gave us a wonderful commentary about the flora and fauna of the woods and downs as we went. She gave us all an insight into the management of this wonderful landscape which everyone found fascinating, asking questions of Jan as we went.

Once we emerged onto Sundon Hills, Bev and Martin told of the geological nature of the area with emphasis on the formation of the dry valleys and coombs during the Ice Age.

The group followed the five main dry valleys on a geological map provided by John Wong. On a clear day from the top of the Hills you can see far across the Gault Clay valley to the Greensand Ridge beyond.



Unfortunately, on this day we could just see Sharpenhoe Clappers in the distant (see photo above!).

The walk culminated in a short tour of the 19th Century disused quarry which exposes a wonderful section through the chalk and is topped by Totternhoe Stone.

Bev and John provided a car ferry for those who did not wish to trek back across the Hills. Many of the more hardy members did take a gentle stroll back across the way we had come.

A lovely day, despite the drizzle, was had by all. A big thank you to Jan, John and Martin for providing the information and knowledge to make an enjoyable day out.

# Events and Contacts

## Bushmead Museum Resource Centre visits.

John Wong hosted two visits to Hitchin Museum's collection of rocks and fossils. A great day was had by all those who attended. Members were given access to the trays and boxes of fossils that are stored in this facility. Many of which are relevant to Bedfordshire's geology as Hertfordshire has similar geology.



Below is a photograph of part of an Ichthyosaur skull excavated from Quest Pit.



If you missed out last time then John Wong will be happy to host another session in the New Year.

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.

**Don't miss the next event .....**

**Members' Social Evening on 5th December**

### Dates for your diary

**Fri 5th Dec - 7.30pm**

Members' Social Evening at Husborne Crawley Reading Rooms.

**Sat 24th Jan - 10am**

Potton Scout Hut Quarry  
geoconservation day

**Sun 9th Mar - 10am**

RIGS geoconservation day

If there is an event you would like to see then please let the 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.**

### 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!*

**Remember to check out the website  
[www.bedsrigs.org.uk](http://www.bedsrigs.org.uk)**

### 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

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