

Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2010

More than 30 join John Wong at Totternhoe!

By Tony Britten

On Sunday 21st March a considerable number of our members gathered at Totternhoe Knolls car park for a walk to Castle Hill, followed by a visit to Totternhoe Stone Quarry both organised by John Wong.

After an introductory walk we set off for Castle Hill, crossing a couple of ditches and banks. These defences are mainly on the southern side, the other side having natural steep slopes, all to keep out invaders and inquisitive geologists! In the latter, they were unsuccessful and we spent some time at the summit admiring the views along the chalk escarpment with its various geological features, the clay vale and Greensand Ridge to the north.

During our return to the car park we passed a brick structure which aroused some curiosity, subsequent examination suggests it had supported a gravity water supply tank for the



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adjacent villages; there being a number of pipes and valves on the site.

After lunch, during which some of us visited the 15th century Cross Keys pub, we set off for the quarry pausing en route to view the fault in the disused central quarry south face. I found it difficult to pick out and appreciated John's expert interpretation.

The quarry contained some impressive chunks of the famous Totternhoe Stone in course of extraction. It was explained that sculptors can see potential figures in the raw stone. Alas, to my untrained eye any angels, figures etc. remained hidden, but there was an almost surreal alien atmosphere like another planet which accounts for its use as a film set, its other claim to fame.

The subsequent most enjoyable fossil hunt produced fish scales, spines, teeth, sea urchins, brachiopods, gastropods and other fossils of the chalk.

Our thanks to John for organising the event; to Angus Clarke for giving up his Sunday to join us and for allowing us access to his quarry. Also thanks to Jan Munro, Graham Bellamy and Martin Whiteley for supplying additional information throughout the visit too.



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 27th August 2010.

I hope you enjoy reading on.....

B&LGG News

B&LGG will soon become BGG.

At a specially convened meeting in April, the decision was made to change the Group's name to Bedfordshire Geology Group. We will have a new snappy name and updated, modern logo. At present, the design is being finalised and we will, hopefully, reveal the new name and nomenclature at the AGM in September. For more information see the Grassroots Funding Update, below.

Leighton Buzzard Library Workshop

By Anne Williams

On Saturday 24th April, Bev Fowlston and Anne Williams held a Geology Workshop at Leighton Buzzard Library. Lindsay Hiles had already set up a display about our work. About 15 budding geologists turned up, both old and young, to hear Bev introduce the work of our group. They then tried their skills at identifying a wide selection of minerals, rocks and fossils, helped by a range of testing equipment such as magnifiers, pins, coins and an acid bottle. This proved to be very noisy for a library, but very enjoyable for all of us; the library staff laid on coffee and biscuits and made a good space available as well as a range of books on Geology. We were also able to display specimens of local rocks and bricks and a collection of brachiopods from the local and rare Shenley Limestone donated by Richard Hogg. Altogether a very useful way to publicise our activities and interest people in the study of Geology.

Grassroots Funding Update

By Bev Fowlston

Updates to the website will be progressed during June/July ready for a re-launch in August. Martin Sims, our webmaster, has been tasked with this part of the Grassroots Project. If you have any comments or suggestions for the website then please forward to the Project coordinator who will forward them on accordingly.

Research on the three updated leaflets is under way by Martin Whiteley, Lindsay Hiles and Bev Fowlston. There will be a meeting in June to move these two areas of the project forward.

If you can help with any of this work then please contact the Project Coordinator, Bev Fowlston at bev.fowlston@gmail.com

LGS Update

Local Geological Sites (LGS) update

By Martin Whiteley
(LGS Manager)

The process of identifying new potential sites and upgrading existing ones continues. Top of our priorities is to identify a Middle Jurassic limestone site in north Bedfordshire and several candidates are being pursued. It's ironic that this rock type has been so widely used as a local building stone and yet there is currently no exposure in the county. We are also investigating a potential new Chalk site near Dunstable and are preparing the documentation that will see the small Chalk exposure in the Kensworth Nature Reserve become a LGS later this year.

Our current LGS inventory is rather weighted towards the Woburn Sands for the reason that plenty of working quarries exist along its outcrop. However, in recent years it has become increasingly difficult to access most of these because of health and safety issues, so the search is on to replace some of them. A couple of disused quarries in the Clophill area are now being assessed. These sites have the added advantage of providing a better geographic spread along the outcrop by relieving the concentration around Leighton Buzzard. This ambition is also served by the Scout Hut Quarry at Potton, a prize site that is already known to most of you and is now ready to be ratified as a LGS.

Quaternary sites are notoriously difficult to conserve because the sediment is often loose and unconsolidated. Working gravel pits often provide spectacular exposures but they are temporary at best and usually completely lost when gravel extraction ceases. So the news that part of an old gravel pit at Biddenham may be cleared and properly conserved is very welcome. It is already a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, but it has become so overgrown during the last decade that it serves no useful purpose. We are working with Natural England and The Wildlife Trust to try and provide a long-term solution.

Event reviews

Visit to Kidney Wood and Stockwood Discovery Centre

By Lindsay Hiles



Bev Fowlston describes the brick making in the area and what evidence to look out for.

On 10th April, members met at Stockwood Discovery Centre for an 11.00 am start. We walked the short distance to Kidney Wood, a little oasis of ancient woodland, tucked in between London Road and the A1081 to Luton Airport. It is an area of public open space, owned by Luton Borough Council.

We went in search of old 19th century brickwork pits. We were looking for either small, circular 'prospecting' pits with depths of around 2 - 3m, or larger, irregular quarrying pits with sloping access ramps. We were successful in find both types of pits. The brickearth is silted, fine material deposited in small ponds created by the melting of ice at the end of the Ice Ages.

Not only was the local history interesting, but the flora was beautiful too. We had a lovely day

with good weather. We finished our visit back at the Discovery Centre where some of us viewed the excellent geology exhibition situated there.

Thank to both Peter Lally and Bev Fowlston for jointly leading this walk and for their comprehensive handout sheet about the Wood. Also, thank you to John Buxton who gave us anecdotes about the Wood's more recent history.



Members exploring the small, but mighty displays at Stockwood Discovery Centre.

Bromham Geotrail 9th May 2010

By Lindsay Hiles, Images from Peter Lally

On the back of our first 'Geotrail' publication *Jurassic Limestone Villages**, Peter Lally led a small group of members on the 6.5 miles Bromham to Stevington circular walk. The landscape of gentle rolling hills being one that has been sculpted by glaciation, with boulder clay in varying depths of 3 to 30 metres overlying the Jurassic limestone bedrock. Both



The group pause to enjoy the flora along the Jurassic Limestone Geotrail.

Bromham and Stevington are beautiful villages with many of the buildings made from the local stone. Stevington Church was a particularly interesting mix, including local oolitic limestone and some Totternhoe stone thrown in for good measure. A bonus to the walk was a stop at Stevington Windmill, which was open to view inside. The walk ended back at Bromham Mill for refreshments



Resting at Stevington Church, above.

I thoroughly enjoyed the walk, the weather was perfect and the company was great too!

To Peter, a thank you for devising & organising the walk and a thank you to Martin Whiteley too for imparting his knowledge on the local geology along the route.

*(available to download from the website)



An interesting bonus: Stevington Mill, left.

Dear Editor,

Kensworth unveiled ...

Look out for an interesting article in the current issue of *Discover Bedfordshire* (Issue 25) by Trevor Stewart that describes the village of Kensworth in south Bedfordshire. He mentions that the village is located next to the largest hole in the chalk in the UK (Kensworth Quarry) and describes how the strata formed during Cretaceous times. He also publicises the adjacent Nature Reserve with its small quarry, the one that has recently been cleared by our group and is enhanced by an information board for the benefit of visitors.

The western boundary of the parish runs along the Dunstable Downs, close to one of the oldest long-distance pathways in the country, the Icknield Way. The path follows the line of the Chalk ridge and has provided access between central southern England and East Anglia for over 5000 years. Back in the village the beautiful church of St Mary's dates from Norman times and is built from limestone probably imported from northern France. It's little surprise to us how geology has shaped our landscape and our heritage, and the area around Kensworth provides a perfect illustration. Go take a look...

Martin Whiteley (via email)

Dear Martin,

Thank you for bringing this to the Group's attention. You may be interested in the email received from Anne Williams, opposite.

If anyone else is aware of a news article about Bedfordshire's geology then please let us know so we can inform members via this page.

All the best, **Editor**

If you have any interesting images or just want to voice your opinion on a geological issue, events or how the group is run then this is your page. Just send your images, in jpeg format, or any letters or comments as a Word .doc document via email to the editor at bev.fowlston@gmail.com

Members' Page

Dear Editor,

This is to ask if you think we could fit in a clearance day at Kensworth this summer. When I took the students a few weeks ago it was completely

wrecked by the bad weather in the winter, and it is necessary to see exactly what is there to do the designation. The memoir covers the whole quarry but Martin thinks we have to do just the scrape. We could perhaps do a representative section with a small group one Saturday or Sunday.

very best wishes,
Anne Williams (via email)



Image taken by Anne during a visit to Kensworth scrape in April 2010.

Dear Anne,

Thank you for bringing this to the Group's attention. We will look into organising this visit. If anyone is interested in helping, possibly during the month of August, then please contact the Events Coordinator in the usual way.

If anyone else is aware of a site that needs attention then please do let the committee know. Together we can preserve our fragile geology in Bedfordshire.

All the best,
Bev Fowlston, Editor and Events Coordinator!

Dear Editor,
We worry about oil running out...do we know what would happen to oil and gas pockets in geological time...would they always migrate and be kept below ground so to speak in a basin or would they eventually be likely to be part of an uplift and so brought to the surface...just wondered if there was an easy answer?

Graham Bellamy
Editor - can anyone answer Graham's question?

Regional News

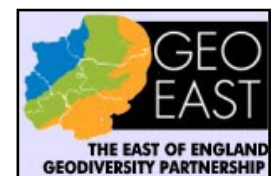
Geo East Report

By Peter Lally, edited by Lindsay Hiles

- Having completed his year, Peter Lally has handed over the chair to Alan Murphy of Cambridgeshire.
- Geo-East is now headed up by a triad (chairman, secretary & treasurer), primarily to handle funding for the 6 Groups it represents. The Triad has already discussed with Natural England on how to split this current year's £16,000 Grant. *B&LGG* will receive £2,000, but we need to expand on what we spend it on (possible site clearance project and/or another geotrail walk).
- A *B&LGG* representative is required. If you would like to become involved with Geo-East and/or require further information then please contact Peter on plally65@googlemail.com
- Next Geo-East meeting is 14th June 2010.

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



Forthcoming Events and Contacts

**Don't miss the
next event**

**Sun 27th June
Bedford Building Stones Walk**

Dates for your diary

Jun 27th - 10am

Bedford Building Stones Walk

Jul 3rd - 11am

Bedford Museum Training Day

Jul 24th - (time t.b.c.)

Harrold-Odell Walk and Stall

A 12-month rolling programme of events is being organised - check the website for further details. Further events will be confirmed via email and in the next newsletter. Watch this space!

If there is an event you would like to see then please let Bev Fowlston know and she will aim to organise it.

For more information on any of the events, please contact Bev Fowlston at the details below.

Final Call for Membership subscriptions!

If you have not already renewed this years membership, you will be sadly missed from our events but please keep checking the website as you can renew at anytime.

Membership Secretary, Lindsay Hiles

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!

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 past events.

Committee Members 2009 - 10

Chairperson

Secretary

Treasurer/Membership Secretary

RIGS Manager & BNHS representative

Events Coordinator

Chalk Downs rep/Events Organiser

Beds CC & Biodiversity Forum rep

Events Organiser

The Greensand Trust representative

PR/Promotions/Fundraising Officer

Committee member

Peter Lally

Vacant

Lindsay Hiles

Dr Martin Whiteley

Bev Fowlston

Janet Munro

John Comont

John Wong

Malcolm Oliver

Vacant

Anne Williams

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