



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2011

Bedfordshire's Amazing Waterfall

By Anne Williams

Martin Whiteley has found the only waterfall in Bedfordshire (if you know of any others please let us know). Combined with the only viable outcrop of the Middle Jurassic Great Oolite limestone in the county, following the BGG's exhaustive search for the 'elusive oolite'. So, on the afternoon of Sunday 19th June we went to view it.

The Blisworth Limestone formation is the thickest and most conspicuous part of the Middle Jurassic Great Oolite Group. These are the oldest rocks in Bedfordshire and occur in the north-west where the River Ouse has cut through the overlying strata to reveal a thin series of limestones and mudstones, only about 20 metres thick. They are dominated by micrites (lime mud), shell fragment and oolitic limestones. Ooids are tiny rounded particles of calcium carbonate formed by chemical precipitation as they rolled around in the currents of a warm shallow sea about 165 million years ago. The Great Oolite itself forms a good building stone and it has been used extensively in the local villages. A large number of pits and small quarries were developed to extract this stone, but these have largely disappeared, hence the search to find a good site for

possible designation as an LGS. (See Martin Whiteley's Building Stones Atlas of Bedfordshire on our website).

In the morning we visited the site of previous extensive quarrying of the limestone at Woodlands, just outside the village of Weston Underwood in Buckinghamshire. Here the landowner has excavated a pit to expose the limestone which is still quarried, cut and dressed for building stone. In large blocks near the farm we could see many of the features of this rock: the blue heart-stone contrasting with the oxidised outer creamy limestone, bivalve and brachiopod shells and shell fragments, and the variations in texture, current cross-bedding and load casts which indicate a high-energy shallow marine environment of deposition. Within the pit we found many small bivalves and brachiopods but were also shown the many spectacular fossils found by the landowner during quarrying, including ammonites and plant fragments washed into the Jurassic sea from nearby land.

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Bedfordshire's Jurassic waterfall!

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 25th November 2011.

I hope you enjoyed reading.

Event reviews

.....Bedfordshire's waterfall, continued

Lunch was taken in Cowper's Alcove, a small folly in the form of a Greek temple with views over the surrounding countryside or in the Cowper's Oak pub, according to taste.

In the afternoon we assembled in the village of Podington and Martin pointed out the many features of interest in the building stones used in the church, the use of more massive limestone blocks on edges compared with the walls, and the use in places of a rusty-red oolitic ironstone. Oolitic and sandy ironstones occur in the same belt as the limestones, but further north and east which was nearer to land in the Jurassic. These have been quarried as iron-ore in Northamptonshire.

After a short walk out of the village to Knapwell Bank, accompanied by the landowner to whom we are grateful for access, we reached the small waterfall where the plunge-pool has eroded a good section of the limestone. There was too much water in the brook to reach it directly, but outcrops were examined in the incised sides of the valley and we were able to collect some good fossils. As well as some unfortunate encounters with wasps who were also out and about on a sunny Sunday afternoon!

We walked back into Podington in time for a cup of tea or ice-cream sundae in the Garden Centre. It was good to get to know two new members of the group, Maryla and Grace. Welcome! And thank you to Martin for a really enjoyable and informative day.

For more images of the oolitic limestone from this visit please go to our new gallery page on the website at www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk/gallery

BGG at Priory Park

By Bev Fowlston

On 17th July, BGG were invited to attend the Heritage Day at Priory Park in Bedford. Anne Williams, Tony Britten and Bev Fowlston went along to set up in a marquee alongside Bedfordshire Natural History Society. This turned into a fun day with most of us fighting to hold the marquee down against the torrential rain and high winds! However, this did bring people into our marquee who turned out to be very interested in our exhibits of local rocks, fossils and the usual bricks that seem to grab people's attention.

A big thank you to Tony and Anne for helping out on this day along with Martin Whitely who also came along to help in the afternoon. It was also lovely to see an old friend and now new member Jack Kirby - it's good to have him back in the fold after a while away with ill-health.

College Lake, Tring visit

By Bev Fowlston

Many members enjoyed a tour of College Lake near Tring on 23rd July. We are grateful to Rodney Sims for his guidance around this fascinating man-made lake. The Nature Reserve that is now being created around this once industrial site is full of hidden treasures. Some of the fossils discovered during the extraction of chalk at College Lake are fascinating and Rodney showed us some of the more exciting ones that are kept under lock and key for protection. There are also some in a small hut dedicated to the geology of the area. This treasure trove is little known but if you can find it it is great!

The fossils found are Ice Age mammals and plants along with many older marine bivalves and some large gastropods. For someone who doesn't know a thing about fossils (that's me!) it was fascinating. Thank you Rodney for a great day and I hope that those people who could not make this visit will endeavour to go along to College Lake in the future - it is well worth it!

Talk in the Chalk

By Bev Fowlston

As part of a funded project from the Chilterns Conservation Board, Bev Fowlston ran a Talk in the Chalk public outreach project on 13th August. This required extensive publicity via posters, radio and local papers. The event took place on an overcast but brightening day. The idea was to walk a trail from Stanbridgeford near Leighton Buzzard across the A505 past Totternhoe and along the industrial routes that have been carved by the chalk industries of the Chilterns in Bedfordshire.

The people who came along for the Talk in the Chalk were advised to bring a picnic as we would stop in the ancient earthworks of Maiden Bower where we could talk about the changing landscape and industries related to the chalk. Following a relaxing picnic, we continued the circular routes returning via the vast Totternhoe quarry site and the lime kilns.

If you want to find out more about the Industries of the Chilterns and the way geology underpins that, then take a look at the leaflets produced as part of this project on the publications page of our website.

www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk/information



Totternhoe quarry, home to birds of prey.



Post-picnic in Maiden Bower. Attendees with friendly but unknown beagle!

News

Challney School outing

By Bev Fowlston

Anne Williams and Martin Whiteley led a field trip for Challney Girls School to Dunstable Downs, Kensworth Nature Reserve and Barton Hills. This allowed the girls, aged 14+, to learn about map reading, the local landscape and the quarrying practices of the chalk industry.

This was a great opportunity for BGG to establish educational links with a local school and to teach the appreciation of geology at a local level.

Bucks U3A outing

By Bev Fowlston

Anne Williams and Bev Fowlston led a field trip for a wonderful group of older enthusiasts to Dunstable Downs and Kensworth quarry. Some of the members of this enthusiastic and knowledgeable group were aged well into their 80's and one gentleman was 90! They all enjoyed their trip into the Nature Reserve at Kensworth collecting fossils and banging away with geological (and ball pein!) hammers!



U3A group breaking rocks!

Members' Page

Dear Editor,

A short email to say how much Bob and I enjoyed today's (13th August) activities. We have lived in the area for many years yet we both found ourselves to be on ground not walked before! Being a Sustrans Ranger I am very familiar with the Sewell Greenway and cycle it regularly. I do often lead rides for local cyclists so will endeavour to pass on my new knowledge about the geology of the area, I was particularly impressed by The Maiden Bower - so it is not just a pub on the A5 then!

Best wishes,
Angela and Bob Feaviour
Via email

Dear Angela and Bob,

Thank you for your enthusiasm and I'm glad you enjoyed the trip.

Kind regards
Bev Fowlston
Editor

Dear Anne (Williams),

A big 'Thank you' from all of us to you and Bev for our wonderful day - you taught us so much and were patient with all our questions. We had a great time and would certainly like to go somewhere else with you next year if you can manage that.

Everything was perfect,

Judith
(Bucks U3A Geology group)
Via email

Dear Judith,

Thank you for your enthusiasm and I'm glad you enjoyed the trip.

Kind regards
Bev Fowlston
Editor

If you wish to see more images of John Buxton's 80th birthday dive, featured in the Spring newsletter, then please visit our new Gallery page on the website.

www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk/gallery

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

Forthcoming Events and Contacts

Don't miss the next event

**AGM and walk around Bromham/Biddenham
On Sunday 11th September**

Dates for your diary

Oct 15th - Visit to Sedgwick Museum,
Cambridge 2pm

Nov 20th - Site clearance (Potton, Landpark or
Biddenham, t.b.c.)

Dec 8th - Annual Social Eve t.b.c.

Jan - Talks evening details to follow

Feb - Talks evening details to follow

Mar - Field trip to Reading Beds to be confirmed

**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.**

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 BGG
2. Requesting and completing a Standing Order form

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

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

We need you!

Committee Members 2010 - 11

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

Vacant

Vacant

Malcolm Oliver

Vacant

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