



Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2007

Farewell to our Founding Chairman

It is with great sadness that the Group says farewell to our founding chairman, **Malcolm Oliver**. He will continue to support the Group by managing the Lottery Funding until April 2008 and with leading field trips from time to time. Below is a farewell letter from Malcolm. We all wish him well for the future and hope to see him at events.

A RETIRING CHAIR?



It was a cold and wintry night when my arm was twisted to help set up B&LGG from the previous RIGS set-up. Why invite a landforms bloke to lead on geology? Still, thanks mainly to a super team, we have achieved real progress - a good membership, an audit of Beds geology, more RIGS sites, a Lottery grant, a

whole host of walks, talks and quarry visits, and looks at LANDSCAPES, specimens, and even some real geology.

A National review of Geology Groups shows our performance well up the list despite our relative youth.

Looking ahead it is time for a fresh enthusiast (perhaps even a REAL GEOLOGIST) to take us onto the next stage of growth. Even if you don't want to lead, make sure you give the new Committee support – only with your help will the B&LGG progress! See you in a quarry sometime.....

Yours, Malcolm



News from the
AGM
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Find out how we got to be
on Anglia News!
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Find out more and how
you can help on
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What else you will find inside this issue:

Reports on our Autumn Talks evenings.

News from quarry visits and field trips.

Reports on other events.

Regional news.

Updates on projects.

Dates for your diary.

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 February 2008.

I hope you enjoyed reading on.....

News from the AGM 2007

The AGM was held at Bedford Museum and there was a good turnout.

Malcolm Oliver gave an uplifting report about the Group and its activities. Unfortunately, due to work commitments Malcolm has stood down as Chairperson this year, so any volunteers please come forward.

Your Group needs you!

On a much brighter note, Richard Cox has taken over the Treasurer's role following the excellent work of Dick Denton who stepped down this year. We wish Dick all the best and thank him for his time given to the Group. We also welcomed Jack Kirby and John Comont onto the committee. All remaining committee members continue their roles (see back page for details).

The evening was made especially good by the talk given by Dr Mark Barron of the BGS who told us more about the Jurassic of Bedfordshire than we could have known.

A huge thank you to all those who attended and we look forward to an even better turnout in 2008.

Our first talks event was held at Totternhoe on 20th September. This special event kicked off our Autumn/Winter talks programme. We had two excellent speakers, Mr Barry Horne of the Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeological and Historical Society (LBDABS) and Dr Haydon Bailey of Network Stratigraphic Consulting.

Mr Horne started with an enthralling talk on the Totternhoe Stone and how it was discovered and quarried in mysterious underground tunnels. A wonderful talk with many interesting slides of a bygone age.

"The Forensic Use of Microfossils" was the title of Dr Bailey's talk. He gave a fascinating insight into how a geologist works at the microscopic end of the subject. It brought the whole of the Chalk alive through the minuscule fragments of rock that can only be seen through the lens of a microscope.

Autumn Talks Evenings

Unfortunately, there were only a handful of members who joined us on the evening, but we did have many guests, including Joan Curran who wrote a very informative book on the subject of the Totternhoe Stone.

There was a display of Totternhoe Stone and the B&LGG poster display was put up for all to read.

Dr Julian Murton of the University of Sussex gave the 2nd talk in the Autumn/Winter programme. His talk was "Reconstructing Ice Age environmental change along the foot of the Chilterns scarp, Marsworth, Buckinghamshire".

He described the importance of porosity in chalk and how erosion of chalk is analogous with soil permafrost, with an insight into the processes that form dry valleys and coombes, which are evident in the Chalk Downs across Bedfordshire. There were wonderful descriptions of the laboratory modelling that explained so much about the subject.

The many Ice Age fossils that have been found at Marsworth indicate the type of environment that existed during the Holocene Ice Ages.

Chris Andrew put out a small display of the Ice Age fossils available to view at Bedford Museum, including a mammoth (or elephant) tooth.

Bedfordshire's Historic Environment Information Officer, Stephen Coleman, gave us an excellent slide show on 'Archaeology with a Geological Spin'. This evening, again held at Bedford Museum, was well attended.

Stephen took us on a fascinating tour across Bedfordshire's geology, showing us how the geology affected where ancient inhabitants of Bedfordshire lived. From the river gravels of the Ouse and Ivel to the peat in the Flit Valley, human habitation has been affected by and has effected local geology.

There were great views of quarries that can only be seen from the air, along with hidden features in the landscape, such as periglacial pingos, tundra polygons and ice wedges, only visible through crop markings.

A terrific evening, despite the dreadful traffic problems causing a slight delay to the start of the evening.

A brief introduction to Geomorphology

Geomorphology is the understanding of the form of the Earth's land surface and the processes by which it is shaped, both at the present day as well as in the past. Research into the processes of weathering and erosion, sediment transport and deposition, the characterisation of landforms and the materials of which they are composed is the mainstay of a geomorphologist's work.

Bedfordshire's RIGS of geomorphological interest include the river valleys of the Ouzel and the Ivel. But many features can be seen in other areas of Bedfordshire.

For more information on geomorphological features check out the following web link:

www.geomorphology.org.uk

Quarry Visits

Totternhoe Stone Pit

Following the Talks evening at Totternhoe, a group of members met on a rather wet and dreary Friday afternoon. Angus Clarke, who quarries the Stone, met us at the Pit.



He gave us a fascinating insight into how he extracts the rock without damaging it and a vivid depiction of his father shouting down to Angus from his digger!



We saw some wonderful trace fossils on the extracted blocks of Totternhoe Stone and excellent basal features that make this rock so scientifically interesting, thus the SSSI status of the Pit.

We ended the afternoon with a walk through the now disused Lime Co's quarry and saw a higher-level exposure of the Totternhoe Stone. Although the famous limekilns of the Lime Co are now all gone, as we walked back to the car park we could see some of the old working areas and the bottom of the limekiln ovens.

If you are interested in visiting Totternhoe Stone Pit then please contact Bev Fowlston, see back page for contact details.

News and Events

Living History Heritage Day run by Leighton Buzzard's Town Council was run in October. The theme was "Pastimes" and we were invited to hold a stall as a group with local members. It was an opportunity to promote the B&LGG through a local event. Our aim was to let the public know who and what we are about and to attract new members.

The day helped to revive Bev's and Henrietta's knowledge of geology that was buried somewhere deep in the dark recesses of their brains!



It was an excellent day with lots of interest - we even appeared on Anglia News!

Fossil Fun Day at Kempston Library was a joint event run for local children during the school holidays in October. Two sessions took place and it was well attended by children of all ages ranging from babes in arms to ten-year olds with more questions than I care to think about!

Some of the Mum's were intrigued by the Group's activities and even took membership forms away – fingers-crossed we will see them again! The Mum's and the membership form!

In November, B&LGG became a member of GeoEast, a regional group in its infancy that aims to discuss regional geodiversity issues. This involvement was borne out of a Regional Geodiversity seminar set up by UKRIGS, The Geology Trusts and Natural England as a way of having a louder voice on geoconservation issues and in obtaining funding.

Bev Fowlston and Martin Whiteley attended the initial seminar on behalf of the B&LGG and agreed that with geoconservation becoming a bigger part of the Government's agenda then it would be good to at least have an ear to the ground, so to speak! The other regional geo-groups involved are from Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Through email discussion forums we will hopefully have an influence on East of England Regional Strategies and policy making.

For more information on GeoEast, please contact Bev or Martin.

Project News and Upcoming Events

Potton Scout Hut

Whilst researching information for the new industrial leaflet series, Bev Fowlston was searching for coprolite workings in and around Potton with the help of B&LGG member Ray Piercy. It was during these explorations that Ray showed Bev a rare exposure of Bedfordshire's Lower Greensand.

The idea for a small geoconservation project was born!

After agreement with Potton Scout Association, a proposal was put forward and accepted. The project is to clean a small area of the 150m face of what was a Victorian building stone and sand quarry. Work on the history of the quarry is being carried out on our behalf by Potton History Society. The site will be used to educate and inspire young and old alike, with easy access for groups of enthusiasts who have difficulty getting into working quarries.



To learn more about this wonderful opportunity to expose the Lower Greensand and preserve it for future generations, then come along on Sunday 9th or Saturday 15th December.

Kensworth Quarry

Following a meeting in November between B&LGG, Beds CC, Grondworks, The Wildlife Trusts, The National Trust and, of course, CEMEX an initial short term project was agreed.

The B&LGG will be providing an interpretation board for the SSSI Nature Reserve, where a chalk face has been left exposed but with no interpretation it is of little use to geologists interested in the chalk.



There is also a need to clean the exposure of vegetation and debris. Again, this is a chance for you to get involved with a small geoconservation project where you will learn about the chalk exposures and how we can enhance these rare sites.

Work will be starting in February 2008. Come along and help.

Dates for your diary

Sunday 9th December

9.30am - Potton Scout Hut Clearance Day

Saturday 15th December

10 am - Potton Scout Hut Clearance Day

Wednesday 12th December

7.15pm - "Social evening and geological natter with wine and cheese" - at The Rufus Centre, Flitwick

Wednesday 16th January 2008

7.15pm - A talk at Bedford Museum entitled "Your house is made of shrimp shit" by Dr Dave Martill

Thurs 28th February

7.15pm - B&LGG Promotional Evening at Delta House, Leighton Buzzard (venue to be confirmed)

Sunday 9th March

10.30am - Harrold-Odell site investigation day at Harrold-Odell Country Park

Sunday 30th March

A Guided Tour of Charnwood Forest

Sunday 27th April

11am - Fullers' Earth Walk and Talk

Saturday 26th July

Leighton-Linslade Canal Festival

Saturday 23rd August

Munday's Hill Quarry visit

Sunday 14th September

2pm - AGM

If there is an event you would like to see on the above list then please let the committee know and we will aim to organise.

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

Committee Members 2007 - 08

Chairperson
Secretary & Events Organiser
Treasurer
Membership Secretary
RIGS Manager
Education and Schools Liaison
National Trust & Chalk Downs rep
Bedford Museum rep
Beds CC & Biodiversity Forum rep
Committee Member

"Awaiting a nominee"
Bev Fowlston
Richard Cox
Henrietta Flynn
Dr Martin Whiteley
Richard Dowsett
Janet Munro
Chris Andrew
John Comont
Jack Kirby

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**Don't forget to look at the website
www.bedsrigs.org.uk**