

Site Name**Old St Mary's Church, Clophill****BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITE DESIGNATION FORM****SITE LOCATION, ACCESS, OWNERSHIP, STATUS & SUITABILITY**(1) **Name of site:** Old St Mary's Church, Clophill(2) **National grid reference:** TL 092 389(3) **Unitary authority:** Central Bedfordshire Council(4) **Site access and local amenities:**

Access is via a track and public footpath off the minor road that passes through Clophill. The track leads to Clophill EcoLodges, and there is a sign for this as well as a public footpath sign, on the north side of the road, a little way east of the present St Mary's Church.

(5) **Site ownership:**

Central Bedfordshire Council hold the freehold, but it is managed on a long-term lease to Clophill Heritage Trust.

(6) **Mineral rights ownership:** N/A(7) **Is permission needed to access the site?**a. No

b. Yes

If yes, from whom?

Site is open daily 9 – 4pm. Permission to enter the tower is via Clophill Heritage Trust on 07935 911207.

(8) **Site status:** Active [] Disused [] Historical [] Managed [] Restored [] New []
Other []

(9) **Suitable for visits by:** a. General public b. Small parties c. Large parties d. Primary school e. Secondary (Nat. Cur) f. Secondary (AS/A2) g. Undergraduates h. Researchers i. Adults (10) **Site suitable for frequent visits by parties?**

a. No

b. Yes (11) **Should collecting and hammering be encouraged at the site?**a. No

b. Yes

SITE DESCRIPTION			
(12) Exposure type:	a. Natural outcrop	b. Road cutting	c. Railway cutting
	d. Active quarry/pit	e. Disused quarry/pit	f. Disused mine workings
	g. Built structure ✓	h. Other	
(13) Dimensions of exposure of interest (m):			
100 m x 50 m for church building and surrounds, including Wall of Geology part of the cemetery wall restoration in 2018; gravestones of churchyard could also form part of the interest for a geological visit, as well as the area around the adjacent Eco Lodges and the village landscape.			
(14) Main interest(s):	a. Structural	b. Geomorphological	c. Mineralogical
	d. Palaeontological	e. Petrological	f. Stratigraphical
g. Other (please specify): Lithology of local building stone (Woburn Sands sandstone); Wall of Geology comprised of local Bedfordshire stones from all lithologies; gravestones from all over UK and worldwide.			
(15) Summary description and reason for designation:			
The building is an attractive, consolidated ruin and uses the local building stone (Woburn Sands). Its ease of access makes it a preferable site for a building LGS than the more recently-built, much-used local churches, many of which also use Woburn Sands in their structure. The site is almost central to the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership area and figures in the Greensand Country Conservation Action Plan, under Sandstone Structures and Historic Environment. It is strategically positioned at the centre of the Greensand Ridge Walk a significant regionally important walking route through Bedfordshire. The reconstructed (2018) cemetery wall includes a Wall of Geology with interpretation that will be of interest to educational groups and the public.			
(16) What threats exist for the site?			
The on-site management by the Clophill Heritage Trust has prevented dereliction of the ancient monument and discourages any anti-social behaviour at this countryside site.			
(17) What additional work is required to enhance the site?			
Any LGS activity would need to be agreed with the owners, managers and English Heritage. To preserve the building further, continued maintenance of the lime mortar joints is required. A record of the rock types of the gravestones would be an interesting addition to an educational pack being currently produced.			
(18) Published/unpublished references to the site and wider area:			
Clophill Heritage Trust www.clophillecolodges.org.uk			
The Greensand Trust www.greensand-trust.org.uk/stmarys.html			
The Clophill Timeline www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vib/			
Kerr, B., (2014) <i>An Unassuming County: The Making of the Bedfordshire Countryside</i> , Eventispress, UK.			
Shephard-Thorn, E.R. et al, (1994) <i>Geological Memoir: Leighton Buzzard E220</i> , BGS, UK.			

SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE		
(19) Does the site exhibit features of local/regional importance?	a. No	b. Yes ✓
(20) Is the site already a designated SSSI?	a. No ✓	b. Yes
(21) Collector interest:	a. Rare species	b. Common species
	d. Regional significance	e. National significance
		c. Local significance
		N/A
(22) List of confirmed fossils, minerals, etc: No fossils. The mineral composition of the sandstone, quartz sand and ferruginous cement. See (25) above.		

HISTORICAL/AESTHETIC VALUE		
(23) Does the site have important historical associations?	a. No	b. Yes ✓
(24) Does the site form a key part of an attractive or evocative landscape?	a. No	b. Yes ✓
<p>(25) Full description of site and its significance:</p> <p>Old St Mary's church is now a ruin. The church is out of the main village and went into decline when the currently-used church was built in 1848 in the central part of the village. It ceased regular services in 1934 was officially declared redundant in 1972 and purchased by Bedfordshire County Council in 1977. It now forms a very attractive ruin that would be inspirational to artists. A church has been on this site for 1000 years, but the present structure is the remains of the 15th Century church.</p> <p>Architecturally, the church is interesting as it has two large perpendicular windows in the north and south side of the nave. Archeologically, there may be much information on its history preserved beneath the surface.</p> <p>The geological interest lies in the use of local building stone – Woburn Sands – which is a deep red-brown colour. The sandstone is very typical of that used in older buildings throughout this part of Bedfordshire. It can be seen in many churches and old houses throughout the area. This site is chosen above many others as it is not currently in use as a church, a hall or residence – making it much easier to visit and use as an LGS site for close examination.</p> <p>The sandstone shows a good example of all the key features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a coarse sandstone with pebbly layers. • Cross-stratification can be seen in many blocks. • Iron nodules and pebbles are present in some blocks. • Variable iron oxide cements can be seen: haematite and limonite being most common. <p>The churchyard adds a further geological interest in that the headstones are made from different rock types – from local to throughout the UK and worldwide. Examples include: Liassic sandstone (Beds or Bucks), Scottish granite, Cornish granite, Purbeck Marble (Dorset), marble (Italy?) and a variety of igneous rocks such as gabbros and syenites from many parts of the world. They all have interesting geological interpretations.</p> <p>There is also a good view down into the valley of the River Flit (to the south). This aspect, and others of the Greensand Country landscape, forms an interesting and beautiful interpretation opportunity.</p> <p>The church grounds afford an opportunity to provide a good natural history location for many types of wildlife. Nearby is a copse with a circle of oak trees, which warrants further investigation, this area of woodland could be developed to enhance the interest of the adjacent area of the ruins.</p> <p>In 2018, a Wall of Geology was constructed as part of the restoration of the cemetery wall. This 3m X 1.5m section shows Bedfordshire's geology in cross-section and has been constructed of locally-sourced materials. An interpretation panel describes the geology of Bedfordshire's rocks.</p>		

Site Name

Old St Mary's Church, Clophill

RECORDER'S DETAILS

(26) **Name and organisation:** Beverley Fowlston MSc, Bedfordshire Geology Group

(27) **Date of recording:** 23 Jan 2019

(28) **Date of designation by Bedfordshire Local Geological Sites Panel:** 7 Jan 2020

CURRENT SITE CONDITION

(29) Excellent.

NOTES

(30) For further details contact Anne Williams: annew36@hotmail.com