



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter July 2008

South Lodge Pit - Taplow Quarry Cleanup May 31st 2008

The South Lodge Pit exposes one of the few examples of the Late Cretaceous, (Santonian age ~84 myrs) Phosphatic Chalks in England. The beds contain a concentration of up to 15% P₂O₅ and preserve a rich variety of fossils.



Quarry Vista before the work party started at 10:30am



Martin Albertini looks on the days work with satisfaction.

Around a dozen people enjoyed a fine day at the Taplow site performing the first major clean up since the site was last re-excavated in 1999.

Graham Hickman started by explaining the origins of the Phosphatic Chalk and why the site has a geological SSSI status (Site of Special Scientific Importance). The group, a combination of BEHG, Taplow & Hitcham Society members, and regular volunteers from Taplow Court, then proceeded to cut back the Buddleia.

Taplow Court staff provided a large mechanical chipper, which was used to dispose of the cut branches.

The site will need to be revisited next year to manage the re-growth of the Buddleia and the hard to reach places. However a general interest visit is being arranged for more members to view the geological features here.



Tony finds the Fossils!



Taplow Court Staff operate the Mechanical Chipper



Volunteers hard at work cutting back the Buddleia

Stone SSSI - Quarry Clean-up – June 12th 2008

Unfortunately this event had to be cancelled. Jill Eyres made a reconnaissance trip and discovered that the site was far too overgrown and a task too large for our group to attempt.

Pury End Quarry Trip – July 12th 2008



Michael Oates led an excellent trip exploring the Middle Jurassic sequences found at the Pury End Quarry (SP 707458) just north of the Buckinghamshire border.



A full section of Blisworth Clay, Blisworth Limestone and Rutland Formation are exposed. They were formed on a shallow warm sea-floor around 175 million years ago. Of course, England as we know it did not exist then. A low-lying island, possibly occasionally completely submerged, would have been present to the south, lying where London now is, and extending to the east, forming what is now the Ardennes Hills in Belgium. Very shallow sea fringed this island, much like the Florida Keys in the USA today. We find the same types of animals living in Florida as the fossilised shells that lived all those years ago in Northamptonshire. Sea Urchins, burrowing and surface-living bivalves and long narrow gastropods (snails), which live among sea-grasses. Fossil fish teeth provide evidence that some mollusc-eating shark-like creatures enjoyed feasting on these shellfish.

On top of these is a cover of a different type of clay, completely without any structure and full of fragments of other rocks. This is the Boulder Clay, and is proof that this area was covered during the Ice Age (a paltry 120 thousand years ago!) by glacier ice. The Boulder Clay was scraped up from the land surface as the ice moved southward left behind, dumped when the ice melted. Many different types of exotic rock were found within the Boulder Clay. Some of these even show scratch marks, from being ground together in the slowly-moving ice.



Fossil & Archaeology Fun Day at the County Museum – July 19th 2008

The BEHG put on a good display in the garden marquee at the Museum's summer fun day. Attractions included Mike Henty's Magic Minerals, Simon Penn's remarkable display of fossils he has found over the last couple of years and Linda McArdell's gold panning activity. Mike Palmer, with the help of Alice Kennedy, also made produced some displays of geological specimens from the Museum's collections. Visitor numbers were certainly up on last year's event and it was particularly pleasing to see people bringing in their mystery rocks and fossils for identification. Thanks must go also to Linda Jane, Lindsey Hiles and Carol Alice Kennedy for helping out.

The BEHG *Rock & Fossil Roadshow* moves on to the County Show on Thursday 29th August. This is always a popular and well attended show and the Group's hands-on geology displays should prove a real hit. It is always useful to have a number of people to help out on the stand as it allows volunteers to balance their time between manning the stand and wandering around the wider show. If you would like to help out please contact Mike Palmer (see end of newsletter for contact details).

Questions & Answers ?

No *Questions & Answers* have been received for this issue. If you do have any questions on any aspects of Buckinghamshire's geology send them to Mike Palmer (see end of newsletter for contact details). Another possibility for inclusion in future newsletters would be images of fossils found on any of this year's trips. Small fossils tend to scan quite well while a digital camera is always useful. Don't worry if you don't have access to such equipment as any conventional photographs can be scanned in also for inclusion.

Future Programme

Thursday 29th August : Buckinghamshire Country Fair. The Bucks Earth Heritage Group will have a booth at the fair site on this day. Volunteers are needed to help out. Please contact Mike Palmer mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk / 01296 624519 for further information.

Sunday 7th September: Rock & Fossil Roadshow at Bradwell Abbey as part of the Milton Keynes Family Wildlife Fun Day. 11am-4pm. Please contact Mike Palmer mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk / 01296 624519 for further information.

Saturday 27th September. Taplow Geology 10.00am- 3:00pm. A return trip is being planned to examine the geology of the South Lodge Pit and also visit the nearby Berry Hill Farm Quarry, where the Taplow gravel is being extracted and the unconformity with the Chalk is exposed. Contact Graham Hickman hickmang@bp.com / 07763363266 for further information.

The Group are currently looking at other possible trips for Autumn 2008. Details will be circulated as and when available

The Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group aims to record, conserve and promote the geology of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Membership is free and open to beginners and experts alike. If you would like to join the free mailing list please send your address, phone number and email address to: Mike Palmer, Tel: 01296 624519 email: mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk

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