



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter March 2010

Geology at High Wycombe Library – until 17th April 2010



Since January visitors to the High Wycombe library have been treated to more than just a good book. 8 cases exhibiting geological specimens, maps and fossils are distributed around the library. Each case has a special theme, including local interest items such as “Discovering Wycombe’s Geology” to “Fossils from the Chalk” and “Buckinghamshire’s Sea Monsters”.

The specimens on display come from a number of sources but principally from the collection of Jill Eyers and the Bucks County Museum Collection. Thanks go to Jill, Mike Palmer and Julia Carey for working hard to put this exhibit together despite the snow.

If you have not yet has a chance to visit the exhibit runs until April 17th. Directions and library opening times can be found at:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/libraries/Branches/wycombe.page>

Northmoor Hill NNR Conservation Project Completion

The Northmoor Hill conservation project was completed in February. Many thanks to the many people who have volunteered to support this work. The site is now safe to visit with new steps and hand rails installed. And the face of the old quarry has been cleaned to reveal the geological features.

The benefits of the clean up were enjoyed on February 18th, when Jill Eyers lead 24 people around the site as part of the joint OU / BEHG visit.



Photo left:
boardwalk over
the wetland area
of impermeable
Reading Bed
clays.

Photo right: A
fossil swallow
hole in Chalk.



More information on Northmoor Hill is available on our website and can be found at:

http://www.bucksgeology.org.uk/northmoor_hill.html

Members Questions

Question:

In carrying out local history project involving St Mary's Church, Westcott. I have come upon a reference stating the church was built using Blackthorn Bluestone, this seems to suggest as Blackthorn is only six miles up the road from Westcott a local quarry and that perhaps the bluestone is Blue Lias. Could this be so? **Bill**



Answer:

There was in the 19th C a fairly well-known quarry or pit at Blackthorn, in the Middle Jurassic (Bathonian) Cornbrash. The "Bluestone" probably refers to the fact that although the weathered upper layers of the limestone are cream-coloured, deeper, away from the effect of oxidisation, the stone retains its original colour, of blue-grey. It is definitely not Blue Lias. The nearest pit in Blue Lias would be north of Banbury, and in any case, all the Lias below the Pliensbachian, Jamesoni Zone, is missing beneath the basal Jurassic unconformity which was proven at nearby Calvert, in the boreholes drilled from 1910 until the 1950s.

Michael Oates

Photo left: Blue-hearted limestone from Pury End (Blisworth Limestone Formation).

Question:

I am nearly 6 years old. I live in Aylesbury. I want to find somewhere near home where I live to go fossil hunting? **Sam**

Answer:

My suggestion would be to join Rockwatch.org.uk because the organisation arranges excursions to otherwise inaccessible places with a lot of good fossil collecting potential, for children starting with your age group. Mind you, anywhere in Aylesbury on top of the hill will provide ample and good quality pickings whenever the soil is disturbed. **Michael Oates**

Question:

I received these pictures from Rodney who found this fossil in the lower chalk at college lake. The scale is in 1cm marks. Any thoughts on what it is?



Answer:

This looks like an excellent example of Nautilus which is common at a few levels in the Grey Chalk, particularly in one of the limestones in the upperpart of the West Melbury Marly Chalk (quite common in Southerham Grey Pit, Lewes). **Rory Mortimore**

In my youth, I learned that this nautiloid was given the generic name *Cymatoceras*, and the species I recall was *deslongchampsianum*, distinguishable by the clearly visible chevron ribs across the dorsum. I used to come across them in the Cenomanian of the Chilterns from time to time, and have a big example, also from Pitstone, collected in the pit's heyday. **Michael Oates**



2010 BEHG Programme

13th January – 17th April Geology at High Wycombe Library. A series of small displays dispersed throughout the library drawing on material from members of the Group and the County Museum collections. See <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/libraries/Branches/wycombe.page> for opening times.

6th March - 11th July 2010 Human: half a million years of life in Bucks. A temporary exhibition at Bucks County Museum. Journey through time from the Ice Age to the Tudors and discover the people who lived here during the past half a million years. See the bones of mammoths and woolly rhinos and the fascinating objects unearthed across the county that reveal the stories of past lives. Visit www.buckscc.gov.uk or contact the County Museum on (museum@buckscc.gov.uk) or call 01296-331441 for more information

March – further details to follow. Froghall Brickworks SSSI Conservation Day. Contact Graham Hickman (hickmang@bp.com) or call 07763363266 for more information.

Wednesday 31st March 2010: 12.30 - 1.00pm. The Ups and Downs of the Ice Age.

Note date change A Wednesday lunchtime talk at Buckinghamshire County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury. Contact Mike Palmer at (mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk) or call 01296-624519 for more information.

Saturday 27th March 2010: 2.00pm Ridgeway walk across Whiteleaf LNR and the quarry.

Meet 2pm at the Whiteleaf Cross car park. Contact Jill Eyers at (j.eyers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494-881325 (mornings only) for more information or to confirm your booking.

Sunday 18th April 2010: 1.00 - 3.00pm. Stowe geo-walk. A Sunday afternoon walk with Jill Eyers exploring the geology of Stowe's gardens, buildings and quarry. 1 to 3 pm. Further details to follow. To book a place contact Susan Le on 01280 822850 (susan.le@nationaltrust.org.uk)

Saturday 24th April 2010 morning & afternoon AGM and talk (morning) followed by Rock & Fossil Afternoon at Bucks County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury. Further details to follow. Contact Mike Palmer at (mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk) or call 01296-624519 for more information.

Bank Holiday Monday 3rd May 2010: 1.00pm - Walk from West Wycombe to Bradenham.

Event suitable for the whole family. Meet at 1 pm at the Mausoleum. Short option: Learn about the Iron Age hill fort, chalk hills and ice age and then visit the Hell Fire Caves below (£5.00 entrance fee at time of publishing). Longer Option: As above followed by a walk along Bledlow Ridge to Bradenham to see the famous sarsens and St Botolphes church, before making our way back to West Wycombe for a well earned drink in the cafe at the caves. Contact Jill Eyers at (j.eyers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494-881325 (mornings only) for more information or to confirm your booking.

Wednesday 19th May 2010: 12.30 - 1.00pm. Bucks Ice Age Mammals **Note date and title**

change A Wednesday lunchtime talk at Buckinghamshire County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury. Contact Mike Palmer at (mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk) or call 01296-624519 for more information.

Saturday 19th June 2010: 1.00-3.00pm Burnham Beeches walk - Springs, Streams and Sinkholes.

A joint BEHG and Corporation of London event led by Graham Hickman. Numbers limited so booking required through the Burnham Beeches management team on 01753 647358. Contact Graham Hickman at (hickmang@bp.com) or call 07763363266 for more information.

Sunday 11th July 2010: more details to follow Visit to Munday's Hill Quarry, Leighton Buzzard for a fossil hunt. Contact Jill Eyers at (j.eyers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494-881325 (mornings only) for more information or to confirm your booking.

20th November 2010: 2.30 - 4.00pm. Messages in Stone - Buckinghamshire's geological

Past. A talk by Graham Hickman, Buckinghamshire County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury. A joint meeting of the BEHG and the BAS Natural History Section.

Froghall SSSI Conservation Project Underway

Major work has begun on clearing trees and scrub from this important site. Once the contractor has completed the main tree work, members will be encouraged to help with the clean-up of the exposed faces and record the stratigraphy.

The gravels represent the earliest recognised stage of the Thames and has been traced from the Goring Gap to Norwich. The geologist R.W.Hey named these as the 'Westland Green Gravels' after the type location at Westland Green near Bishops Stortford in Bedfordshire. The gravels contain pebbles of vein quartz, quartzite, sandstones, volcanic and Carboniferous chert believed to have been derived from a palaeo Thames drainage area which extended as far as the Midlands and possibly as far as Wales.

The SSSI notification is based on the stratigraphic importance of these gravels for understanding the history of the ancient Thames and for correlation between the Upper and Lower Thames.



More information on Froghall SSSI is available on our website at: www.bucksgeology.org.uk/sssifroghall_brickworks.htm

County Museum Lecture: "Ice Age Man in Britain" – Prof. Chris Stringer Thursday 25th March 2010



Professor Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum will be giving a talk on 'Ice Age Man in Britain' at the County Museum. Chris is a world authority on early man in Britain and runs the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain project. Some of you may also know him as the author of the recent and much acclaimed 'Homo britannicus', the definitive guide to ice age man in Britain. This talk is being run as part of the Museum's 'Twilight Sessions' and will start at 5.30pm with a private view of the 'Human' exhibition followed by refreshments and the talk from 6.30pm

Tickets cost £7.50 with advance booking is necessary.

Please phone the County Museum on 01296 331441 to book a place or contact Mike Palmer if you would like any further information on 01296 624519 or email at mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk

Drawing left: A reconstruction of Boxgrove Man (Homo heidelbergensis), 500,000 years ago

The Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group aims to record, conserve and promote the geology of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. For general enquiries please contact:

Mike Palmer, Tel: 01296 624519 email: mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk

Bucks County Museum Resource Centre, Tring Road, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5PN

Membership is open to beginners and experts alike. If you would like to join please complete and send the application form together with payment to:

Membership Secretary, Lindsay Hiles email: behg.membership@btinternet.com

4 Phoenix Close, Leighton Buzzard Beds LU7 3YW

Membership

Many thanks to those members who have completed the membership form and sent in the membership fees promptly.

A gentle reminder to those who have yet to act, membership fees run from 1st January 2010. Individual membership is £5 and Family membership is £8 per annum. A copy of the membership form is available below and on our website:

www.bucksgeology.org.uk

BEHG 2010 Membership Form

Individual membership £5.00

INDIVIDUAL/PRINCIPAL MEMBER (Please use BLOCK CAPITALS):

In order to keep costs to a minimum, correspondence will be forwarded via email wherever possible.

TITLE: NAME:

ADDRESS:

..... POSTCODE :

TELEPHONE: MOBILE:

EMAIL:

Family membership £8.00

2nd MEMBER – NAME:.....

3rd MEMBER - NAME:.....

4th MEMBER - NAME:.....

**I/We hereby apply for membership of the Bucks Earth Heritage Group
A cheque/PO for £..... is enclosed (cheques payable to BEHG)**

Signature :

Date :

Please send this completed form together with payment to:

BEHG Membership Secretary, Lindsay Hiles, 4 Phoenix Close, Leighton Buzzard Beds LU7 3YW
email: behg.membership@btinternet.com