



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter No. 18 **March 2012**

Event: 'Saxons and stones' Reading town centre walk. - Jill Eyers
Sunday Jan 15th 2012.

An enthusiastic group of 16 people took part in the 'Saxons and stones', Reading town centre walk led by Jill Eyers. The starting point was at St Mary's church (**photo below**), St Mary's Butts, Reading.



St Mary's church has a characteristic chequerboard finish. This is achieved by the use of dark coloured local flint and lighter coloured limestone blocks. The flints come from the Cretaceous aged Chalk which has been heavily mined and quarried around Reading. While the limestone comes from Taynton in Oxfordshire and is of a Jurassic age.

St Mary's church is one of the most ancient buildings in the area and is mentioned in the Domesday book. Extensive repairs are historically recorded in 1549, when materials taken from the Abbey, which Henry VIII had demolished, were reused. This would imply that the Taynton Limestone was being quarried in the Norman period - from the early 1100s.

This part of Berkshire, like many parts of Buckinghamshire, has few local building materials. Local stones include flint, sarsen and occasional hard grounds within the Chalk and, of course, bricks made from local clays. As a result many far travelled rock types can be seen throughout Reading's Broad Street. The **photograph below** is an example of this and shows columns made of white Portland Limestone, probably from Dorset, while the column bases are of red Peterhead Granite from Scotland.



The group was able to identify many of the fossil impressions left in the Portland Limestone and learned to identify the many different rock types used to make the buildings in our town centres attractive.

The group found plenty things of geological interest along the route and the walk took a lot longer than originally planned. Geological discussions continued in a nice café by the river at the conclusion of the event. **Jill Eyers**

For those interested in further details Jill's Rocks Afoot booklet entitled: 'Reading Geological Walks' (RRP £4.50) comes highly recommended. See Jill to purchase a copy.

Event: Winter Hill –Too Wintery

Sunday February 5th 2012 to be re-run on Sunday March 18th 2012.



Due to heavy snow fall on the evening of February 4th 2012, this event was postponed.

Perhaps there is more to the name 'Winter Hill' than meets the eye?

The walk will be rerun on March 18th 2012. 'Winter Hill a story of past climate change' – Jill Eyers

Chilterns Commons Update.

March 2012

Through the Chilterns Commons Project, the Chilterns Conservation Board wants to reconnect people with their commons. The project wants to encourage people to make the most of commons for walking, playing and enjoying the outdoors.

Jill is involved in this project and is helping compile all of the geological observations being made.

A few of the interesting features being recorded include: small quarries; an abundance of small depressions and ponds; evidence of water sources for grazing animals and on Ibstone Common that standing stone WHICH IS not rare or ancient but a 21st century millennium MONOLITH!



Photo above: Chorleywood common pond.

A call for Volunteers: Nature surveys –

On-going through the year.

Each of our sites needs to have an on-going nature survey as different species come out at different times of the year. It is hoped that some of you may have an interest in one or more aspects e.g. butterflies, birds, fungus, trees, flowers, or many others. We also need to put out 'sand traps' to see who visits our sites at night - footprints are very useful. At Stowe they now have a camera to film wildlife at night. Please let Jill know if you want to help survey any of the sites. She has a list of sites and it need only be a very simple survey, nothing fancy- not even Latin names.

Contact Jill Eyers for more information at (j.eyers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Event: Burnham Beeches Geological Walk – Graham Hickman

Saturday February 18th 2012

This event was held as part of the Burnham Beeches public walks programme. It was attended by around 20 people, a mixture of BEHG members and interested locals.



Photo above: After a brief introduction the group went to the old quarry which exposes a good section of the Winter Hill gravels. The gravels are being extracted here at a small scale to maintain the paths within Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common. This helps to keep the management cost down and is more environmentally friendly - using local materials to maintain the acidic ecology. In addition groups such as BEHG can obtain access to fresh quarry faces without investing a large amount of time in clean-up efforts.



Photo above: Examining the Winter Hill gravels at the old quarry

After walking along the Nile stream (yes, Nile – Egypt common is located close by), to examine the Lambeth Group Reading Formation Clays, the group continued to where the stream disappeared into the ground at a large sink hole. Chris Morris, the Burnham Beeches Ranger, described how he has observed the sink holes changing over a number of years and how at one time the current sink hole was a well established pond during the winter months.



Despite the rain, which started soon after the walk began, the group maintained a high level of interest and enthusiasm throughout. The afternoon was topped in a traditional manner with tea and cake at the Burnham Beeches café.



Burnham Beeches Trail No. 1

GEOLOGY TRAIL

The Geology Trail starts and finishes at the Beeches Café, taking you out through Egypt and back along the footpaths of Burnham Walk and Victoria Drive. It is about 3 km long and takes about 1½ hours to complete.

This trail is not suitable for wheelchairs or 'stroller' pushchairs, but should be alright for off-road buggies unless it has been raining, when the path becomes muddy and slippery. Boots or stout shoes are advisable whatever the weather.

The landscape of Burnham Beeches - the pollards, the mire, the open grasslands, the ponds - has been created by the way people used the site in the past, and the way it is managed today. Underpinning this, quite literally, are the soils, rocks and minerals that make it possible for this range of habitats to exist.

The type of vegetation that can grow here is determined by, among other things:

- soil type
- drainage
- and
- topography

or, in essence, by the site's geology.



Burnham Beeches is a National Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest and European Special Area of Conservation; the City of London has a legal duty to protect, conserve and enhance this Open Space. It is a registered charity, no. 232987.
www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/burnhambeeches

The leaflet produced to explain the geology of Burnham Beeches is now available to download from the BEHG website and the Burnham Beeches website see link below:

www.bucksgeology.org.uk/burnham_beeches.html

Graham Hickman

'Discoveries of Ice Age mammals and other Pleistocene deposits in central and north Buckinghamshire' - Michael Farley

Michael Farley, one of our members, has provided the following photographic highlights to a paper which he is authoring in the Records of Bucks (2012) entitled 'Discoveries of Ice Age mammals and other Pleistocene deposits in central and north Buckinghamshire'. The Records of Bucks is the annual publication of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society. Michael states that two, possibly three, of the previous discovery-sites fall on the current line of HS2 and hence are potentially in line for major earthmoving sometime and he wanted to draw to the attention of BEHG members.



In the upcoming publication Michael lists the discoveries of Pleistocene mammal remains in central and north Buckinghamshire. Most of the finds have been made in the course of gravel extraction. His account also reviews the various documentary material associated with these finds in the local museums and literature. His interest is to enhance understanding of both the Ice Age history of the county and the relationship between early man and his environment. Michael is happy to provide anyone interested with a Word version unless they want to wait with bated breath for the Records of Bucks version!

Mammoth tusk from Willen, Milton Keynes. The excavations at Willen Lake around Milton Keynes, in the early 1970s removed substantial areas of sand and gravel and revealed a number of mammal bones including this spectacular mammoth tusk (**Photo left**) which is now on display at the City Discovery Centre, Milton Keynes.

Photo right, taken in 2007 by Michael Farley, shows a 2-3m thickness of gravel exposed at the top of Wing Hill during construction of the Leighton-Linslade by-pass. Here BGS mapping (1990) shows this area as glacial till, however a reported find of a Palaeolith trimmed blade at Wing Hill was made by F.Gurney of Egginton in 1919, suggesting a river gravel origin. It is possible that Gurney's Palaeolithic flint find was derived from such a deposit as exposed temporarily here.



Photo left: (1) Bear canine and (2) hyena jaw from Hartwell brickpit. On display in the Touch of Bucks Gallery, County Museum. Two specimens in the Edwin Hollis collection from the Hartwell brick pit. Hollis' account of the 1914 discovery at Hartwell (Hollis 1914), notes that Locke's brick pit was dug into 'the well-known Hartwell Clay', but that the clay was overlain by 'about five feet of Pleistocene deposit'; the latter being '... composed largely of local Portlandian material ... here and there towards the base of the Pleistocene deposit are shallow bands of gravel and in these the mammalian bones are found.. '

New Publication of interest to Bucks.

Jon Radley writes "Thanks as always for the newsletter... I'm in the process of publishing the Geological Conservation Review Volume covering English Wealden (non-marine Lower Cretaceous) sites. The papers will make up a special issue of the Proceedings of the Geologists' Association. They are being published online in the first instance, with paper copy due sometime next year [2012]. Of special relevance to Buckinghamshire is the 2nd paper:

The marginal Wealden (non-marine Lower Cretaceous) between Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire, England). This includes accounts of the SSSIs/GCR sites at Muswell Hill and Stone. With best wishes, Jon"

Dr Jon Radley
Curator of Natural Sciences
Warwickshire Museum Service

Abstract link: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S001678781100112X>

Details of the Muswell Hill SSSI site can be found on our website at:
www.bucksgeology.org.uk/muswellhill.html

Members Questions

Question: The following image is of an spherical object found school children in Farnham Common, South Bucks. No scale is given to show how large it is, but it apparently attracts a magnet. None of the marcasite or ironstone nodules in the Bucks museum collection do so I am guessing that it is not geological. Has it come from out of a cannon or from outer space? All thoughts welcome



Answers:

From outer space - unlikely.
From a cannon - possible, but depends on size. I have never heard of iron gunshot of modest calibre but will stand corrected if this is in fact normal. Old, rusty ball bearing or ball from a ball mill - my favourite guess.

Dr. Michael Oates

Yes, I have come across these before and I am sure as Mick says they are ball bearings of the type used to crush aggregates or cement. I saw them at Chinnor cement works. This was a very embarrassing moment that I shall not forget- the works had thrown a whole pile back in the quarry at the end of its lifespan and I picked them up with a group thinking they were marcasite nodules. I tried and I tried and I could not break them open even with the biggest hammer I had. I took some home, placed it on my new patio and whacked it with a large hammer - only to break the paving! Definitely industrial (magnetism induced by process involving heat I assume).

Dr. Jill Eyers

2012 Future Programme

Further trips and talks will be scheduled as the year progresses. Please check the BEHG website or email the organisers before any event for the latest update.

Saturday March 17th 2012, 10am to 4pm: Coombs Quarry - nature survey day. Followed by a light clean up of the section. Suitable for all. For details and to reserve a place contact Jill Evers: at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Rescheduled event

Sunday March 18th 2012, 10am - 12.30pm: Winter Hill - a story of past climate change. Walk led by Jill Evers followed by lunch in the Jolly Farmer in Cookham Dean. For details and to reserve a place contact Jill Evers: at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Saturday April 7th 2012, 10am - 4pm: Buckingham Sand Pit. Nature survey and quarry clean up day with a lunch time BBQ. For details and to reserve a place contact Jill Evers: at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

New Event

Sunday April 15th 2012, 10am: 'College lake geology and wildlife walk' co-led by Jill Evers and Rodney Sims. Lunch in cafe at end of trip. Walk will be just under 2 miles, mostly on the flat. Essential to book with Jill as places are limited. For details and to reserve a place contact Jill Evers: at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Saturday April 21st 2012. AGM, followed by a geological walk. The venue this year will be the Old Gaol, Buckingham. Following the AGM we will take a geological tour around Buckingham and down to the sand pit. For details and to reserve a place contact Jill Evers: at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Saturday May 5th 2012, time tbd: Churchyard geology. Hurley, Berkshire. This is a half day workshop with an indoor session (talk) followed by a walk around the village churchyard. Graveyards are full of different rock types and fashions in memorials have changed over the years. This workshop will enable you to identify the main ornamental stones used and how to map out changes and styles in a churchyard. This will allow you to look at and assess your own local churchyard. To book contact Jill Evers at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

May 18th to 20th 2012. Weekend field trip. The Ice Age in Norfolk. Leader: Jill Evers. Some of the UK's finest ice age geology (Happisburgh, Overstrand, Cromer, Blakeney Quay and esker, plus West Runton and an elephant! Friday to Sunday with a nice hotel based in Mundesley. 3-course dinner, B&B. The price looks like being £190 for a single room, and between £230 to £260 for two people sharing twin or double room for the weekend. To book contact Jill Evers at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Friday June 1st 2012, 10am to 4pm. Whiteleaf Cross NNR. Two activities; light clean-up of quarry at Whiteleaf Cross Nature reserve, followed by a nature survey of quarry, woodland and grassland. Suitable for all. To Book contact Jill Evers at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Sunday 17th June 2012, 1pm to 3.30pm. Ivinghoe Beacon to Incombe Hole. A walk in stunning scenery with geology, archaeology and nature. Circular walk, one steep hill. To Book contact Jill Evers at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

Saturday July 28th 2012, - 10.30am to 3.30pm Rock Art - a drop in event in Buckingham Sand Pit. Anyone can paint and we show you how. Suitable for all ages and all abilities. We also have geologists and biologists to take you round the site, including the 'bug man'. Just turn up. SP 699 344.

August 13th to 18th 2012, time tbd. Geology week at Stowe. In partnership with the National Trust. The BEHG will be setting up activities such as hands on fossils, minerals, rock ID at the New Inn visitor centre. Plus guided walks down into the Home Farm Quarry. More details or to volunteer contact Jill Evers at (j.evers@btopenworld.com) or call 01494 881325

August 23rd, 26th and 30th, time tbd. Rock Art, Ammonite Art, Geology & Archaeology. Drop in session at the Amersham Museum and the Old Goal, Buckingham – further details to follow.

AGM – Committee

The BEHG will hold the Annual General Meeting on Saturday April 21st 2012 at the Old Gaol in Buckingham. The business to be covered will include:

- a) Present and approve minutes of the previous AGM
- b) To consider matters arising from the minutes of the previous AGM
- c) Report from the Chair on the previous 12 months
- d) To receive and approve a statement from the Treasurer on the finances of the previous year
- e) To elect or re-elect officers
- f) To discuss any other business

The committee positions of the four elected officers are up for re-election at the AGM. After serving a term of 2 years, members of the committee are happy to continue in their roles. However, Graham Hickman is moving overseas for 2-3 years and whilst happy to fulfil the role of webmaster, is standing down from his role as Vice-Chair / Secretary. **So this position needs to be filled.** If you are prepared to join the committee, in whatever capacity, but require further information about what this involves, then please feel free to contact any of the committee members.

Chair	Mike Palmer	Standing for re-election
Vice-Chair	Open position	
Treasurer	Jill Evers	Standing for re-election
Membership Secretary	Lindsay Hiles	Standing for re-election

Co-opted committee members include:	Tom Hose Julia Carey Michael Oates Clive Rodgers Nicky Muizelaar
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Membership

Annual membership runs from 1st January. Individual membership for the 2012 calendar year is **£7.50** and family membership is **£12**.

A copy of the membership form is available on our website: www.bucksgeology.org.uk

If you would like to join please complete and send the application form together with payment to:
Membership Secretary, Lindsay Hiles 4 Phoenix Close, Leighton Buzzard Beds LU7 3YW email:
behg.membership@btinternet.com

Alternatively, you can pay your subscription direct to the **BEHG** account at :
Lloyds TSB (White Hart Street, High Wycombe)
Sort code: 30-94-28 Account no. 00744003

Confirmation of receipt will either be by email or by post. The BEHG welcomes all new members.

The Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group aims to record, conserve and promote the geology of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Website: www.bucksgeology.org.uk

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

Bucks Earth Heritage Group

Membership Subscription due 1st January 2012

Individual membership £7.50

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 £12.00

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 :

How did you hear about the BEHG?.....

Please send this completed form together with payment to:

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

For general information about the Bucks Earth Heritage Group and for an up to date programme of events please visit:

www.bucksgeology.org.uk