



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter May 2008

Coombes Quarry Grand Re-Opening – May 11th 2008

Around 60 people enjoyed a relaxed and sunny day at the grand re-opening event. Guided tours were conducted around the quarry and much excitement was had in discovering the wealth of fossil evidence pointing to this part of Buckinghamshire being submerged below a warm shallow tropical sea over 165 million years ago.

Tea and cakes were served under the marquee and members were able to enjoy conversations and learning more about Bucks geology.



Coombes Quarry is one of Buckinghamshire's RIGS - Regionally Important Geological Sites. The Quarry has been used from earliest times as a source of building material and also for the manufacture of lime.



The quarry is now part of a nature reserve, which is managed by Buckinghamshire County Council. Under the careful supervision of Julia Carey, the Buckinghamshire Countryside Officer, the quarry has been re-landscaped removing the rotting walkways, which were put in during the 1990's and grading the approaches to the rock faces to remove hazards and steep inclines. Large mechanical excavators were used to clean up some of the faces and in particular to excavate the south-east end of the face where a geological fault plane is believed to exist. Several large trees have also been removed which obscured the rock faces. It is hoped that the newly remodelled quarry will attract more visitors and be easier to maintain in the future.

AGM Report – May 3rd 2008

Around 25 members attended the first Annual General Meeting of the Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group was held in the County Museum, Aylesbury. Members were able to examine some of the specimens from the museum collection and exhibition displays on the recently designated RIGS sites.

Jill Evers then gave a short introductory talk to launch the book '**Rock around Bucks**' before copies were distributed to those in attendance.

The AGM was held and a good discussion was held about the group's aims, activities and it's future direction. Minutes of the AGM are attached.



Following the AGM the visiting speaker Louise Thomas from the Open University Uranium Series Facility gave a very interesting talk about the hazards of Geological Field work in particular relating it to her experiences around the globe. She described how studying the super volcanic eruptions such as Mount Pinatubo give insights into how the climate has changed in the last 2 million years. Louise also described her experiences in doing field works around the globe and the hazards caused by extreme weather changes, flooding due to rapidly melting snow, river crossings, alligators, horses, Russian helicopters, rock slides, map reading, mine fields and stupidity! The best bit of advise was if you think you've just run over a large dangerous snake don't stop and get out to check...if you did, and it's not dead it will probably be very angry.

Members Questions and Answers

Q. What is the origin of sarsen stones and could they ever be found in situ somewhere?

A. Sarsen stones can be found in small clusters throughout the Chilterns. They represent an ancient river deposit, which was laid down during the early Tertiary (58-55 million years ago) in a semi-arid warm climate. The rocks are referred to as Silcretes, as they have a silica (quartz) cement and are very hard. They can range from coarse sandstone to conglomerates containing rounded black /red coated flint pebbles. At Bradenham village, large blocks occur and it has been estimated that the formation was between 2 to 6m in thickness. The blocks may once have formed a continuous bed across the district but because of the subsequent erosion and the freeze thaw activities of the ice ages, the beds have been eroded and sludged their way down slope by a process called solifluction. It is possible that they could be found in situ however no definitive locations have been identified.



Future Programme

Saturday 31st May: South Lodge (Taplow) Pit SSSI. Site visit and clean up.10am-3pm. Bring lunch. Please contact Graham Hickman hickmang@bp.com / 07763 363266 if planning to attend.

June: Pury End Quarry visit (Northamptonshire) with Michael Oates. Date to be arranged. Contact Mike Palmer mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk / 01296 624519 nearer the time for details.

Saturday 14th June. Stone Pit SSSI. Site visit and clean up.10am-3pm. Bring lunch. Please contact Jill Eyers j.eyers@btopenworld.com or 01494 881325 if planning to attend.

Saturday 19th July: Rock & Fossil Road-Show at the County Museum's Fossil & Archaeology Day, Aylesbury. Bring along your mystery fossil and explore a range of hands-on displays and activities. 11am-4pm. Admission free. Contact Mike Palmer mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk / 01296 624519 for further information.

Wednesday 23rd July: Buckinghamshire's Earth Heritage: 190 million years of geological history. A lunchtime talk by Mike Palmer at the County Museum, Aylesbury, 12.30-1pm. Admission free. 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.

Website: www.bucksgeology.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

Bucks County Museum, 3rd May 2008

1. **Apologies:** Brian Mosely, David Russell, Rodney Sims.

2. **Officers Report**

2.1. Mike Henty gave a brief introduction to the purpose and aims of the Group. Mike outlined how the Group was set up in the late 1990s in order to record, conserve and promote the County's geology. In order to achieve this the Group surveyed the County, identifying and designating a number out Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) and promoting their use. The Group, while primarily concerned in the geological features of sites also took an interest in the ecological aspects and sought to conserve both where possible. The Group also run a varied programme of events aimed at increasing public understanding and awareness of the County's earth heritage. Mike went on to explain the importance of local geology and how it underpins a wide range of local heritage from buildings to plant-life. Mike concluded by encouraging members to get more involved noting that even a little knowledge could be very helpful at certain events, e.g. Rock & Fossil Roadshow events and that this was a fantastic way of learning more.

2.2. Jill Eyers provided an account of the outcomes of the Groups successful HLF Local Heritage Initiative bid as follows:

- Geological audit 1: RIGS (for conservation and enhancement)
- Geological audit 2: LGAP (to assess value of sites to register with local authorities, Natural England and National RIGS network)
- List of all interesting geological sites in the County
- Interpretation of selected sites (24)
- Trails for 6 sites
- Two leaflets (x1000 copies)
- Access to appropriate sites
- Conservation group, increase membership, train for conservation work, hold events, trips and talks.
- Website
- Book, A4-size, full colour 100 pages, 1000 copies.
- CD Rom of all sites and project information for members and general public (100 copies)
- Workshops (5)
- Fun Days (2)
- Open Days joint with others (2)
- Field visits (led for group and general public, 12)
- Coombs Quarry site enhancement & conservation work:
 - Geological interpretation
 - Training exercise in geological fieldwork (logging, rock identification and sample description)
 - Full archive of work for the Bucks County Museum
 - Leaflet interpretation of site
 - Guided visit/open day
- Mobile display for use throughout the County
- 4 exhibitions at public events
- 4 talks to schools
- Education pack (35 work and site sheets); printed in folders, also on website or available on CD-Rom
- Plan for future management and conservation of sites

All present expressed their appreciation for all the hard work Jill has put in over the last 18 months.

2.3. Mike Palmer led a discussion on where the Group goes from here. Mike started by outlining the current programme and asking what type of events members wanted in the future. The current mix was generally thought to be good although the popularity of the hands-on rock and fossil workshop at College Lake was noted. Quarry visits and site tours, especially to

locations not usually accessible, were also considered good as were site recording workshops. The visit to Buckingham Sandpit was signalled out for praise. Other events to explore included village tours, events for children and shorter, weekday evening events. It was also noted that it would probably be a good idea to avoid bank holidays for future AGMs. Mike stated that the Group would endeavour to provide a mixed programme but noted that most events are currently delivered by a small group of regulars and reiterated Mike Henty's comments regarding encouraging other members of the Group to step forward, whether as an expert or an assistant. Mike added that if anyone had any further ideas for events after this meeting or would like to help out, they could always contact him at a later date (see contact details at end).

Mike informed the Group that the committee had been considering introducing a newsletter. This was seen as a good idea. It was suggested that this could be similar to the Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group's as-and-when write-ups of events rather than a timetabled publication. It was generally thought that write-ups of events would add to the aim of the Group to increase understanding and appreciation of local geology. Introductions to forthcoming events could also help improve attendance. Other possible items for inclusion could be interesting finds, identifications and notes & queries.

Finally, Mike raised the impending problem of funding. Over the last couple of years, money from the LHI bid had allowed the Group to operate without having a membership fee. With this money now all accounted for, the Group had to find some way of covering the ongoing costs of running the Group, notably providing insurance for events, annual website fees and any little extras such as tea and coffee at the AGM or the cost of having a stand at the County Show. Mike reported that at the last committee meeting it had been suggested that we introduce a £5.00 membership charge from January 2009. Non-members would still be able to attend individual events but for a nominal charge of £2.00 which would make them members for the day and thus, covered by the Group's insurance policy for the duration of the event. This was generally thought to be reasonable and noted as being similar to a number of other local groups, e.g. the North Bucks Bat Group and the Bucks Fungus Group. It would be expected that the current 130 membership figure would come down but that a stronger, if slightly smaller group would develop. Again, any members with further thoughts on this issue are welcome to contact Mike Palmer.

3. Financial Summary

Jill Eyers provided an account of the LHI funding: -

Statement of income and expenditure to 31st December 2007

Income:

First advance 8 th June 2006	£11,673.50
Second advance November 2007	£10,506.15

Total income: £22,179.65

Budget categories/total allowances:

2	3	4	5	6	7
Materials/ Equipment	Fees/ Consult	Design/ Print/photo	Exhibit	Travel	Office
£1,475	£5,300	£12,600	£950	£700	£200

Expenditure to 31st December 2007

2	3	4	5	6	7
£1,491.59	£6,211.08	£12,892.13	£1013.13	£341.32	£230.40

Total expenditure: £22179.65

Total income £22,179.65 less total expenditure of £22,179.65 = £0.00

No contingency is required from the HLF funds.

Jill ended by noting other possible sources of future funding such as the HLF Awards for All programme and asked any members with experience of submitting bids to contact her.

4. Committee

Mike Palmer explained that currently the committee comprised a number of people with a shared interest in ensuring the continuance of the Group rather than any formally elected body (although that may come in the future). He noted that there were currently two levels of committee membership, active and corresponding, but that there was no hard dividing line between the two. Active committee members are those people who are likely to come along to some or all committee meetings, while corresponding committee members are those who, for whatever reason, find it hard to attend committee meetings but find it useful to be kept aware of the group's business and plans.

Following a recent survey the current committee is as follows: -

Active committee members: *Julia Carey, Jill Eyers, Martin Harvey (until July), Mike Henty, Graham Hickman, Tom Hose, Michael Oates, Mike Palmer, David Russell*

Corresponding committee members: *Jo Hodgkins, Jon Radley*

Currently the committee meet around three times per year on a weekday evening, 7.00 – 9.00 at the Museum Resource Centre at Halton. Mike suggested that it would be good to see some new faces. People were welcome to come along on a trial basis. Lindsay Hiles expressed interest in coming along to a committee meeting. Please contact Mike Palmer if you would like to join the committee.

5. Any Other Business: None

6. Date of Next Meeting: To be decided (not a bank holiday weekend)

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

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

Website: www.bucksgeology.org.uk