



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter May 2009

Burnham Beeches Geological Walk Sunday April 5th 2009



The Burnham Beeches Geological Walk isn't ordinarily something that would attract my attention, However, when I was asked if I would like to attend, I felt that it would be a good way to understand a little more about the Beeches and the ground they stand on.

The day was wonderful. Graham Hickman, who led the walk, proved to be a wealth of information and I learnt so much about the local geology that enabled me to understand the local flora and fauna as well. We were treated to the joys of sink holes and the local gravel quarry too. (Photo left).

The most impressive item however, had to be the Blue Peter model - a 3D model of the geology of the Beeches (Photo right) that gave us all a good insight into how the underlying geology influenced the present landscape. A most enjoyable walk that I would highly recommend when it is run again on June 20th. The walk starts and ends at the new ecological Café which has an excellent range of tea and cakes.

Kerry Hickman



Saturday 2nd May: AGM & Lecture 'Chalk mining and brick making in Reading' Dr Clive Edmonds

Around 20 members attended the second Annual General Meeting of the Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group was held in the County Museum, Aylesbury. Members gathered before the AGM to examining displays, local geological maps, rocks and fossils from the museum collection. The minutes of the AGM appear at the end of this newsletter.

Following the AGM our visiting speaker Dr Clive Edmonds gave an extremely interesting and illustrative talk. Clive described how his PhD study of Chalk associated subsidence in SE England lead him into a career of providing geological engineering advice. He described how Chalk was mixed with clay in the brick making process to reduce the shrinkage before firing and results in harder bricks after firing.

He described how historic brick and tile demand grew as a consequence of canals, removal of taxation and the growth of railways. Clive then went on to describe how numerous long forgotten underground Chalk mines (Photo right) were discovered in





the Reading area as a consequence of subsidence and building development activities. In 1933 only one mine was known but by 2003 over a dozen mines had been recognised. With many have been stabilised by drilling and injecting 'grout'. Clive then described the events which unfolded on 4th January 2000 when major subsidence occurred as a consequence of Chalk mine collapse below Field Road. (Photo left) The harrowing experiences of the residents, the geological and geophysical mapping and remedial stabilization work which took over a year to complete and cost £10 million. Judging from the abundant questions that the lecture stimulated this was a subject which the members found very interesting. Clive did an excellent job of combining history, geology and the dangers of subsidence.

Sunday 26th April: West Wycombe to Bradenham circular walk.

Unfortunately this event had to be cancelled. However, it is planned to be held again later in the year on Saturday October 17th 2009.

Walk around Whitchurch. May 17th 2009

Jill Evers and Mike Henty jointly lead the group on a circular walk around Whitchurch. We looked at how the geology and history of the village are interlinked. Jill described how the village is situated on a ridge of well drained Portland limestone. It was used as a building stone in many of the older buildings and is very fossiliferous, a few of the buildings have large ammonites built into their walls.



The Portland limestone forms a resistive cap to this outlier. On the slopes and flanks older Kimmeridge clays and Oxford clays form the agricultural land. Mike described the history of many of the older buildings and how the later buildings were made from bricks fired from the local clays, we were shown a variety of different types of bricks and towards the end of the walk, a pond which is all that remains of one of the many local brick pits.



At Whitchurch there are no longer any quarries of the local Portland stone. We were shown some of the problems facing building restoration projects. Such as at St John's Church, this was built mainly from local stone. However, newer repairs are being made from Portland stone brought from Dorset. A similar age rock but with a very different texture, but probably one that will weather better.



The walk details can be downloaded from the website:
www.bucksgeology.org.uk/pdf_files/Walk2_Whitchurch.pdf

Annual General Meeting Bucks County Museum, 2nd May 2009.

1. Apologies:

2. Officers Report

2.1 Agenda - Mike Palmer opened the proceedings, welcoming members and outlining the agenda for the day.

2.2 Financial Summary - Jill Eyers provided a summary of the groups financial accounts for the period 1st May 2008 to 30th April 2009. The group started with an opening balance of zero, but ended the period with a small balance of £228.28. A detailed breakdown of income and expenditure was provided.

Jill stressed how the group would be facing small ongoing expenditures from the payment needed to provide public liability insurance for the group, and for website hosting and domain name registration.

2.3 Group Progress last 12 months - Jill Eyers then described the progress the group had made regarding RIGS (Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites). The group used the funding provided by Natural England to monitor, record and photograph 24 RIGS. In addition around 10 sites termed as 'old RIGS' were de-listed for various reasons. Jill then described another dozen sites which will be surveyed as potential RIGS.

2.4 Review of 2008 field meetings - Graham Hickman then reviewed the 2008 field meetings providing a few photos and descriptions. A number of events were added to the programme as the year progressed and one event was cancelled. The group's main conservation effort was undertaken at the Taplow South Lodge Pit SSSI site.

3. Group Issues

3.1 Membership - Mike Palmer proposed a £5 membership fee be introduced from January 2010, as discussed but not implemented following last years AGM. A lively discussion was held about how other organisations handled the need to ensure members are covered by the liability insurance, but without adding extra stress of collecting small fees and spending resources on reminders. Communication on the implementation will occur later in 2009. The importance of using of sign-in sheets for all field meetings was also discussed.

3.2 Future AGMs - Mike Palmer proposed Saturday 24th April 2010 as the date for next years AGM there by avoiding holding it on a Bank holiday weekend as had been discussed at last years AGM. Mike suggested that in future years it would be good if members could bring along specimens and images of finds they have made over the last year, whether from BEHG trips or personal collection. Mike would be happy to provide cases for their display at the AGM.

3.3 Future Events - the 2009 programme was developed with emphasis on geological walks.

3.4 Volunteers - The group relies on its members volunteering for organising and running the events. A number of opportunities were discussed such as helping out at the Rock and Fossil Road-Show, the Bucks County show. Positions such as newsletter editor and membership secretary also require filling. Please contact Mike Palmer if you are interested in helping out.

3.5 Newsletter - 3 newsletters were produced during 2008. Their publication in 2009 will be event driven, following every 2 or 3 group activities and used to communicate upcoming events or changes. Members are encouraged to send in geological questions or photos they think the group will find interesting.

3.6 RIGS - Jill Eyers described how at a recent meeting of the South-East RIGS groups a proposal was made and supported to change the name RIGS to LGS - Local Geological Sites, to have a similar sounding name to Local Wildlife Sites which share a similar level of protection status. This was supported by the BEHG committee and no objections were raised by members.

3.7 Website - Graham Hickman has taken on responsibility for the website and has recently updated the navigation pages. Members are requested to report any pages not functioning properly or with content in need of updating. The new geological walk leaflets are available for download under the information tab - books and leaflets.

3.8 Other issues - No other issues were raised.

4 - Date of next AGM – Saturday 24th April 2010

BEHG Future Programme 2009

MAY 20th. 12.30 – 1.00. Victorian Fossil Collections in the County Museum. A lunchtime talk at Bucks County Museum. Admission free. No need to book, just turn up. Contact Mike Palmer at mplamer@buckscc.gov.uk or call 01296 624519 for more information.

JUNE 20th. afternoon. Burnham Beeches Geological Walk. A circular walk showing the underlying geology of Burnham Beeches. Graham Hickman. Booking required through the Burnham Beeches management team on 01753 647358

JULY 4th. 2 pm. A walk in Jurassic Park - around Coombs and the quarry. Contact Jill Eyers at j.eyers@btopenworld.com or call 01494 881325 to reserve a place.

JULY 18th 11.00 – 3.00 Fossil & Archaeology Day at the County Museum, Aylesbury. Discover the world beneath your feet. Hands-on displays, meet the expert and bring in your mystery find for identification. Admission free. No need to book, just turn up. Contact Mike Palmer at mplamer@buckscc.gov.uk or call 01296 624519 for more information.

AUGUST 27th. 10am- 4pm BEHG at the Bucks County Show: displays, activities and hands-on workshops. Just turn up and enjoy (note there is an entrance cost for the show from the organisers). We do need volunteers to help on our stand and activities.

AUGUST 30th. 10am. Ivinghoe to College Lake - A walk on the wild side. Contact Jill Eyers at j.eyers@btopenworld.com or call 01494 881325 to reserve a place. This walk involves a lot of nature and a little geology. Suitable for all ages as long as they can walk a couple of miles. (Sorry no dogs allowed in College Lake).

SEPTEMBER –Conservation work at Froghall SSSI – Chalfont – This is a rare opportunity to see the Westland Green Gravels and Reading Beds in part of a privately owned brick pit. Date to be confirmed.

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER : Quarry visit with Michael Oates: Joint meeting with the BAS Natural History Section. Date and venue to be confirmed.

OCTOBER 10th. 10:30am- 12noon. The Ice Age in Bucks - a visit to Buckingham Sand Pit. Jill Eyers. Just turn up. Contact Jill at j.eyers@btopenworld.com or call 01494 881325 for more information.

OCTOBER 17th. 10:30am. West Wycombe to Bradenham circular walk. showing the link between geology, landscape and archaeology. Pub lunch. Contact Jill at j.eyers@btopenworld.com or call 01494 881325 to reserve a place.

NOVEMBER 21st. 2.30 – 4.00: Charles Darwin and the tree of life. A talk by Dr Peter Skelton (Open University) in Learning Zone 2, Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury. Admission free. Contact Mike Palmer at mplamer@buckscc.gov.uk or call 01296 624519 for more information.

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:

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