



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group Newsletter May 2010

Ridgeway walk across Whiteleaf Hill and the quarry – 27th March 2010



Jill Eyers lead an enthusiastic group around the newly devised Whiteleaf Local Nature Reserve Geological Walk. The group enjoyed stories of Bronze age burials, rabbit exarnations and great views.

Jill had obtained permission to visit the small quarry, where the group was able to examine the upper part of the Middle Chalk close up. It is surprisingly fossiliferous at this locality and sits just below the Chalk Rock member. A number of finds were made, including the bivalve *Inoceramus*, echinod spines and sponge remains.

Further details about Whiteleaf LGS can be found at: www.bucksgeology.org.uk/whiteleaf.html

Stowe Geowalk – 18th April 2010

Members attending the Stowe Geowalk enjoyed a glorious warm sunny day. The walk was jointly led by Susan Le from the National Trust and Jill Eyers. Together they were able to combine their expertise and describe the history of Stowe's gardens, buildings and geology. The group were able to examine many varieties of local and more distant building stones. Of particular interest was a large quantity of **Tufa** (Photo Right) which was being cleaned as part of a restoration project of the C18th Grotto. Tufa is a calcareous deposit associated with carbonate saturated springs. The blocks on view showed many of the typical pipe and flow-stone features.



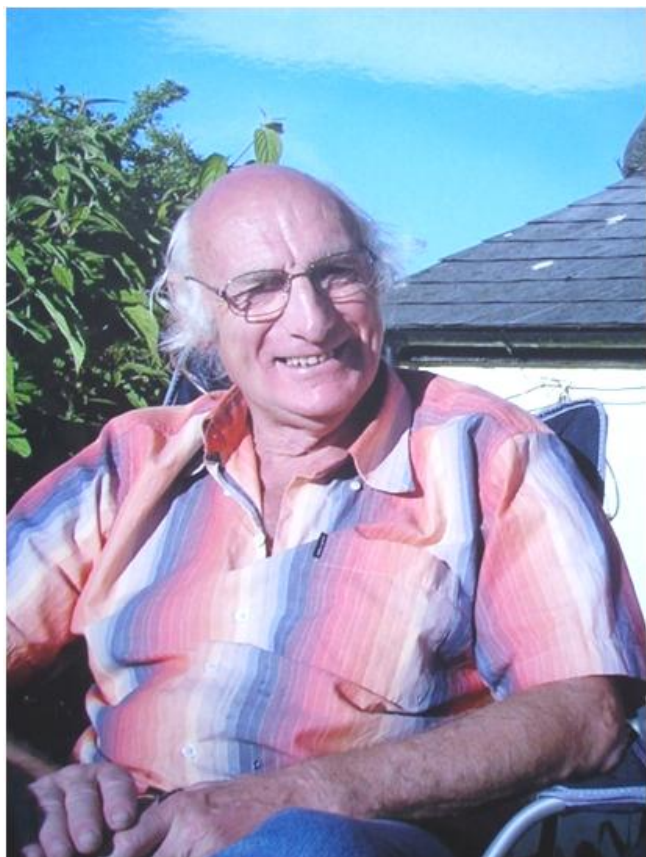
(Photo Above: Temple of Concord and Victory built 1747–49 using a local oolitic limestone called Helmond Stone)

The day ended by visiting the Home Farm gravel quarry which is actively used by the Stowe Estate for path repairs and for sourcing 30,000 pebbles for the Grotto floor repairs. The gravel is interpreted to have been deposited by an englacial stream (stream flowing through the ice in the interior of a glacier). The geological survey reports 18m of poorly sorted gravel, cobbles and boulders up to 0.7m in diameter. The group found numerous Jurassic fossils among the pebbles and even a piece of well travelled metamorphic schist. The interest in this site and the plentiful historic buildings in Stowe will certainly warrant a return visit.

Talk: The Ups and Downs of the Ice Age. - March 31st 2010.

Mike Palmer spoke to a group of around 30 people on the Ice Age as part of the Aylesbury Museum lunch time series of talks to tie in with Bucks County Museum's **Human: half a million years of living in Bucks** exhibition. Mike Palmer provided an overview of the ice age in Bucks and Britain exploring the fluctuating climate and changing fauna including early man. The exhibition runs until 11th July 2010 and there is another related talk at the Museum, **Bucks Ice Age Mammals**, on 19th May (see programme for details)

Remembering Mike Henty



It was with great sadness that we learned that Mike Henty had passed away on 13th April 2010 after a 4 year battle with cancer. Mike was a larger than life character with an enthusiasm for geology that was contagious. Members of BEHG will remember him for his talks on rock and minerals. The field trips he lead with Jill Eyers, and for his retail business selling rocks and minerals with Linda Jane.

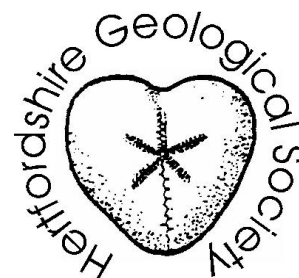
At Mike's funeral, Dr Peter Skelton from the Open University, at Mike's behest, read a letter he had written to his friends. In this letter Mike described himself as "a catalyst" who helped make things happen.

At the BEHG AGM, Jill Eyers likewise testified to Mike's welcoming attitude. When she first went to an OU conference, not knowing anyone, she met Mike who immediately introduced her to someone else and then retorted "...and now you know twice as many." Mike was a devoted father of five, grandfather, and just before his death becoming a great grandfather. Mike will be greatly missed.

For more about Mike : [Click for link to Mike Henty's obituary on the OU Website](#)

News from our Neighbours - Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape

The Hertfordshire Geological Society is hoping to publish a book later in 2010 entitled "Hertfordshire Geology and Landscape". It will be the first major work of its kind devoted to Hertfordshire. It has 10 chapters written by local experts covering the basic geology of the county, and also various aspects of geodiversity and biodiversity. This includes detailed accounts of soils, ecology, agriculture, prehistoric archaeology, hydrogeology, mineral resources and church building stones. The editor and principal author is John A. Catt.



Special advance purchase price. There will be an opportunity to order copies in advance at a much reduced price. This price has not yet been finalised but the HGS hope it will be around £35. The bookshop price is likely to be around £60. If you are interested in ordering one or more copies, you can register now, by emailing to herts.book@hertsgeolsoc.org.uk. This commits you to nothing at this stage, but will assist the Hertfordshire Geological Society in their financial planning. As soon as the details are finalised, you will be sent full information and an order form.

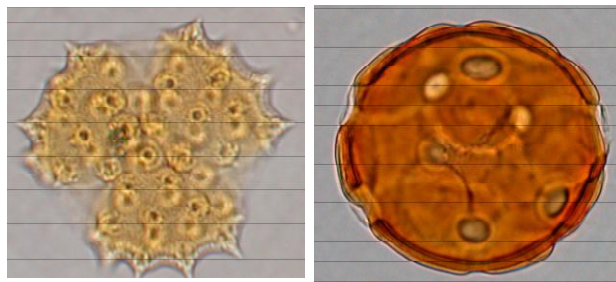
- approximately 450 pages long
- over 100 colour maps and diagrams
- over 100 colour plates.

Talk: Past environmental change in tropical South America by Will Gosling. – April 24th 2010.

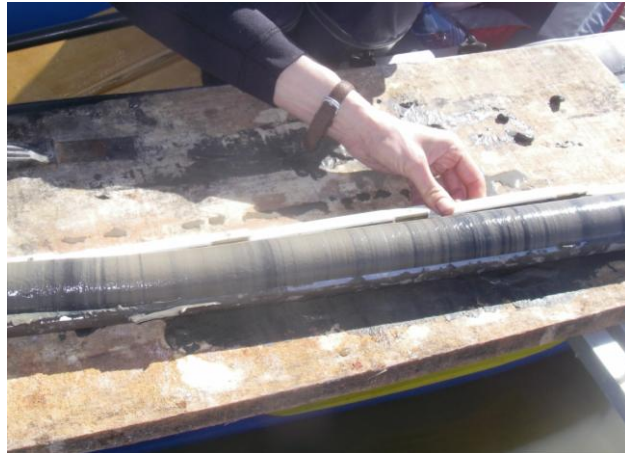
Following the AGM, members were given an excellent account of recent research into the past climatic changes of the Amazon basin. Dr. Will Gosling explained how ancient pollen preserved in the layers of lake sediment could be used to interpret the past climate of the region. He explained how the study of pollen (Palynology) was performed and even showed us how to make our own pollen collecting devices using a plastic funnel. He stressed the importance of understanding the present distribution of pollen and how that relates to present day flora and climate before applying interpretations to the fossil pollen record.

The data which has been collected was used to answer a number of questions relating to how much influence people have had on the Amazon forest; both before and after Columbus. Within the lake sediments distinct layers of charcoal occur, we were shown how these almost certainly relate to human activity. The charcoal combined with evidence of human enhanced soils ('Terra preta') and climate indicators from the pollens, a picture can be built up of the scale and distribution of human activity.

Photo below – ancient earth-works revealed through Amazon deforestation.



Photos above – microscopic pollen images. Photo below – Holocene lake sediments.



The research was used to address two contradictory and opposing views of the Amazon's past. One view, especially popular with ecologists, is that the Amazon is a virgin forest untouched by humans. The other view, brought to light by deforestation, is that there are numerous ancient earth-works which may indicate a manufactured landscape which has only gone wild in the last 400 years following the collapse of the indigenous population after AD1491.

The research looked at the lake sediments of a number of widely-spaced locations within the Amazon basin and concluded that pre-Columbian populations were widespread, but local. It is very unlikely that the majority of Amazonia was strongly impacted by human activity. But evidence exists for an intensification of Amazonian land use in the millennium prior to European contact. Abandonment of occupied sites post-contact is widespread.

Will left us with the thought that scale is a huge factor in this debate. The area is the size of Europe and studies of this kind are only just beginning. Members thanked Will for an interesting and well delivered talk.

BEHG Annual General Meeting
Bucks County Museum, Saturday 24th April 2010.

Jill Eyers opened the proceedings with a tribute to Mike Henty who recently passed away. Mike was a very active and enthusiastic member of the group and will be sadly missed. Mike Palmer proceeded to welcome members and outlined the agenda for the day.

1. Apologies: Alan and Mavis Robertson

2. Minutes of 2009 AGM: Mike Palmer presented the Minutes from the last AGM which were approved by members present with no matters arising.

3. Membership: Lindsay Hiles gave an update on the membership which now stands at 53. Membership fees were introduced on January 1st 2010 and have generated an income of £229 for the BEHG. Lindsay has taken on the role of Membership Secretary and has become the point of contact for communicating to the membership.

4. Report on Previous 12 months

4.1 Conservation and field meetings: Jill Eyers described the activities the group has been involved in; 6 geological walks, 3 outreach events including a workshop and 4 conservation or site visits. The latest Stowe walk was hugely popular and will probably be re-run. Jill made a request for members to come forward if they have ideas for walks in their local areas or particular interest.

4.2 Talks: Mike Palmer described the 4 talks which the BEHG hosted during the last year and a number of others which members of the group have given. In his role as Keeper of Natural History Mike has been giving lunch-time talks at the Museum in support of the current Ice Age exhibition, he encouraged members to attend.

4.3 Newsletters and Website: Graham Hickman updated the group on the improvements to the website made during the last 12 months. Drop down menus and progress towards W3C compliance. Future plans are to enhance it with a 'clickable' geological map. 5 newsletters were published on an 'as needed basis' to communicate upcoming events or changes. Members are encouraged to send in geological questions or photos they think the group will find interesting.

5. Treasurers Report: Jill Eyers presented a summary of the Group's financial accounts for the period 30th April 2009 to 31st March 2010. Shown below:

	Receipts £	Payments £
Income:		
Book sales	252.51	
Natural England	3750.00	
Membership	229.00	
Expenditure:		
Materials and equipment		0.00
Fees and consultancy		550.00
Design, print photography		33.00
Exhibition		674.76
Travel		175.04
Office		6.00
Other sundries: (Insurance, website)		190.79
	£4231.51	£1629.59

The group started with an opening balance of £228.28 and ended the period with a closing balance of £2830.20. The largest income for the BEHG was a grant from Natural England to perform conservation work on Northmoor Hill LGS and Froghall SSSI, 3rd party contractors were hired for much of the work requiring heavy machinery and many of the invoices for this work are still outstanding. Jill stressed that when these have been paid the group will have a balance similar to that with which it started the year with.

6. Review and approve changes to the BEHG Constitution: Graham Hickman summarised the changes which have been proposed to the Constitution. Members will have received these proposed changes 21 days in advance of the AGM. The changes include one additional high level objective to recognize the Group's influence, beyond just RIGS. Two additional rules were added to reflect membership subscription changes participation of juniors and a specific item around the Group's association to GeoConservationUK. Other changes include a name change of RIGS to LGS (Local Geological Sites) in keeping with national proposals. A clearer definition on what constitutes a committee quorum and less onerous conditions requiring a Special General Meeting to be met. Members voted unanimously to adopt these changes.

7. Elect and re-elect officers: Mike Palmer described the work of the BEHG committee and presented those volunteering for election. The membership elected the following officers unanimously: Chair – Mike Palmer, Treasurer – Jill Eyers, Vice-Chair - Graham Hickman, Membership Secretary – Lindsay Hiles.

Mike Palmer invited members who would be interested in joining the committee to consider attending the upcoming committee meeting in June. Co-opted committee members are: Mick Oates – Geological advisor, Tom Hose – GeoConservation UK and Julia Carey – Bucks Countryside Officer.

8. AOB –

Funding: Suggestions were made to explore other sources of funding such as the landfill tax. Also a suggestion was made to consider Gift Aid for membership fee.

GA (Geologist Association): Members discussed why the BEHG was not an associate member of the GA. The possible benefits might include a reduced rate for insurance and links with other groups. GA associate membership is currently £30 annually. This will be investigated and discussed at the next BEHG committee meeting in June.

Publicity and attracting new members: Members discussed how effective the publicity was for events such as the Rock and Fossil day and how effective the County Show was for attracting new members.

9. Date of next AGM - Saturday April 16th 2011

Rock and Fossil Event – 1pm to 4pm April 24th,

The Rock and Fossil Event following the AGM was a great success. We were able to fill both rooms at the Aylesbury Museum's Learning Centre with displays and activities. Displays included: Ice age fossils, Plesiosaurs, Volcanic rocks, fluorescent minerals, magic minerals. Fossil identification, microscope demonstrations and personal collections. Children's activities included plaster cast making, fossil rubbing, fossil dig and a Jurassic sea colouring wall. The mix of activities was well received and a number of very positive comments were received from visitors. Special thanks goes to all those who helped and to those who came to view the displays.

This was the first time the Rock and Fossil event was held on the same day as the AGM and the committee would like to hear your views on how this worked for you and if it is something we should consider doing again or holding it at another time.



2010 BEHG Programme

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

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.

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Membership

Membership is open to beginners and experts alike. Annual membership runs from 1st January. Individual membership is £5 and Family membership is £8 per annum. 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 email: behg.membership@btinternet.com
4 Phoenix Close, Leighton Buzzard Beds LU7 3YW

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

For general enquiries please contact:

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