




Spring 2010 Newsletter

Issue No 19

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
The Lapworth
Museum of Geology
4.6 billion years
of Earth history

Open to the public
Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm
Saturday and Sunday 2.00pm to 5.00pm

www.lapworth.museum.ac.uk



Field trips - Lapworth Museum - See page 13



Your New Trustees - See page 4

All change at WGCG

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

From the Chair

UP AND RUNNING!

You will be aware that last October's AGM made some pretty significant changes in the way that WGCG is run. Most importantly, we decided that the Group would prepare the ground for an application to become a Charity which would provide our committee with increased protection from exposure to liabilities together with other significant benefits.

As we move toward Charity status, it becomes ever more evident that your committees need to assess any activity against the all-important criterion of 'public benefit'. If we are to become a charity, whatever we do – talks, field trips, conservation or trail guides – must be seen to be of public benefit.

Also, we have a much expanded Management Committee – now some 12 strong. Your trustees are 'in lights' on page 4.

Although it has taken some time to get the new systems in place, we have now held two very positive meetings of the Management Committee and, as I write, the Education Committee is addressing the programme of talks and field excursions for the year ahead. This will be followed closely by the first meeting of the new Conservation Committee. Overleaf, Brian Ellis outlines his plans for this important element of our work.

The first three months of the new organisation have allowed us to 'bed down' the systems. Now the work begins in earnest (not that it has really stopped as you will see from the following pages).

I am particularly keen that as many of you as possible should be able to assist in the many activities that the Group is planning to undertake. As a Group, we are always short of skills, be it project management, taking minutes for one of our committees or, more practical skills that could be of real help in the conservation of our sites. In recent months, several of you have committed a lot of time & effort, both in training and in the follow-up surveying of Quaternary sediments and soils in some of the county's aggregate sites. The Group owes you all a 'big thank you'! Hugh Jones has single-handedly been criss-crossing the county to complete the survey of village building stones. I know he enjoys it – but he is still a volunteer, if a very knowledgeable one! It's this involvement that makes it so rewarding to be a part of WGCG.

On the down side, we had hoped that others would have been able to 'spectate' as Alan Cook visited some of the big quarries on the Nuneaton Ridge while preparing Site Management Plans. Unfortunately, organising permissions to visit these quarries often means moving at very short notice and with a restricted party. This time it didn't work but, hopefully, more possibilities will be around before too long.

Before long we shall be looking forward to our season of field meetings so we can imagine that those balmy summer evenings are already with us! Look forward to seeing you there!

Ian Fenwick

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

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For free BGS maps see this report:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8398451.stm>

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Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

New Trustees at the Helm Ian Fenwick

Since last October an elected group of nine Trustees has become responsible for charting the direction for WGCG over the coming months. They are fortunate to have the advice of our two 'observers', both wise heads – Jon Radley from the Warwickshire Museum and Anton Irving, Natural England's officer for the county. In addition, at their January meeting the committee coopted Bill Shakespeare, as Membership Secretary. In all, a full Management Committee will comprise these 12 people.

For those who couldn't be at the December meeting perhaps you might appreciate a few brief notes on each of our Trustees.

Paul Akers has a professional background in industry and has brought considerable skills to the Group in the form of web design and a deep understanding of IT in general. Without Paul many of us would be sunk! He has taken over responsibility for maintaining and developing our database of Local Geological Sites (LoGS) from Ian Fenwick and is adding the details of our sites to the website so they will be available to a wider public.

Alan Cook was an early member of the Group but his geological activity goes back much further – to his short trouser days! Alan has worked the Nuneaton Ridge as man and boy, and has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the area. If you need to know about Palaeozoic fossils then Alan is your man. He is a huge source of geological expertise to the Group, as witness his work as a consulting engineering geologist.

John Crossling was one of the founder members of the Group when it was initiated as an offshoot of the Wildlife Trust. For several years he was the Keeper of Geology at the Warwickshire Museum before he moved to Library Services where he still works as a consultant. John is chairing the Education Committee which organises our programme of talks and field visits.

Brian Ellis was, in former days, head of the Geography Dept. in the School of Education at Warwick University. Originally a human geographer, he is now a perceptive analyst of the landscape around us. In his spare time Brian serves as Treasurer of the Geographical Association, an experience which has been of immense value to the Group in forging our new Constitution. Brian will be chairing the Conservation Committee and he spells out some of his immediate tasks in these pages.

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

Ian Fenwick spent most of his career as a lecturer in soils and cold environments in the Geography Dept. of the University of Reading, spending field seasons in the Norwegian tundra for nearly 20 years. For the past five years he has been updating the records on our RIGS (now LoGS) as well as helping to put together bids for funds from bodies such as ALSF. Ian was chosen by the Trustees to be chair of the Group this year.

Colin Frodsham brings with him a wealth of experience in general management involving civil engineering projects. The edifice we have been building over the past year – our charitable organisation – is small fry for Colin! He is already preparing much of the documentation required by the Charity Commission. He also claims that he knows nothing about geology (but I wouldn't try to trip him up)!

Chris Hodgson is a classic example of what an enthusiastic amateur can achieve. Always willing to take on a challenge, she has participated in most of our conservation activities over the past years and her enthusiasm for field geology has taken her to some wonderful sites with many groups in the UK and abroad. Unsurprisingly, as chair of the Education Committee for the last two years, contacts she has made on these trips have often finished up on our speakers' programme!

Jim Watts, like many of our members, found his way into WGCG via one of Martyn Bradley's classes. Our volunteers are the lifeblood of an organisation like WGCG and Jim demonstrates this par excellence. For two years he acted as a very efficient 'book-keeper' to our former treasurer, Tony Elger, but when Tony migrated to enjoy the delights of North Berwick, Jim stepped into his shoes and is continuing in that role.

Frank Wells only joined the Group a couple of years ago after a career as a consultant biochemist and latterly in teaching. However, he should have realised that taking early retirement is immediately seen as a signal that here is someone who has TIME. Very willingly, Frank agreed to give some of this to our Group as Secretary where he has organised us with re-assuring competence.

I recognise, and think you will agree, that we are fortunate in having a team of very diverse talents which should be able, not only to make wise decisions on a day-to-day basis, but also to take a strategic look at where WGCG should be in 5 or 10 years time.

But we are looking to see a constant refreshing of our committees so we shall need new blood in 2010... and 2011 ... and So, please get involved and see if you can help to make this a Group that is known around the country as one where EVERYONE feels they have a role to play.

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

English Heritage - Building Stones project

Hugh Jones

Twelve months ago, it all seemed quite simple, with the help of the amazingly competent Julie Harrald I was to unload my simple but quite extensive knowledge of Warwickshire's building stones, acquired over many years, into a spreadsheet for English Heritage's terrifyingly complicated data base. The intention, as I understood it, was to *assess the extent of use of local stone throughout the country so that sources could be secured for conservation purposes*. A very laudable aim. However we were a pilot study and there was some confusion over the nature of the exercise. Hence the 'goal posts' kept being shifted.



Having completed that first phase, a whole new 'sports field' opened up with additional field work needed to expand on the information which we had already given. Now, the aim is to identify all villages in the county where significant use is made of local stone. We've been asked to specify several buildings in each which exemplify that use, each identified by a twelve figure grid reference (I couldn't do that without Julie !) and where possible an indication of the stone source.

Not a bad excuse for jaunts into the countryside, except that English Heritage want it done before the middle of April and the weather is not really very kind. Such pressures and changes of course are not uncommon where the tune is called by external funding bodies. But I've found interesting buildings that I didn't know existed, met up with interesting locals such as the old chap who lives in a cob house in Ettington, and let's hope, at the end of the day helped to assemble a database that might ensure that our historic buildings are repaired in a sympathetic way.

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

Geoconservation activities - Where next?

Brian Ellis

We have started thinking about what the Group's preferences and priorities are for conservation activities in the next few years. I am writing to encourage you to let me know what your ideas are.

The current work on quarry site management plans, Quaternary and soil surveys and the second phase of the Building Stones Project should be nearing completion when you read this. For the spring and summer we are committed to providing interpretation of the geology on the new cycle track along the old Kenilworth – Berkswell railway line, especially in the cutting below Kenilworth Common and there is a possible project on the interpretation of the geology along the canals in the West Midlands in conjunction with British Waterways. Most of these activities have come through our membership of the Geology Trusts rather than being activities generated from within WGCG. There is nothing wrong with that and they do bring us some income. But as we look forward, now is the time to think what our own WGCG priorities are.

One possibility comes from the new DEFRA guidance on LoGS (Local Geological Sites – the new name for RIGS) which gives us the chance to identify new localities to add to our register of ninety or more sites in Warwickshire. This could help provide new information for the development of the Local Geodiversity Action Plan (LGAP) with the County Council. But we mustn't forget that we identified the need for a programme of monitoring and maintaining our existing LoGS. As we move to trying to register as a charity we also have to ensure that we can show that our activities have a 'public benefit'. One way we have done this has been to set up interpretation boards (at Brueton Park and in Wolston, for example) and produce leaflets for geology trails and guides (most recently for Leamington Spa). How might we make most impact with such activities in the future? Where for example should we decide to put any new interpretation boards if we want as many people to see them as possible (and possibly get new members as a result)?

All these take time, money and above all people, all of which are valuable. I know it's a cliché but we will have to make "difficult choices" about what we want and are able to take on. What I have said above reflects some chats I have had with some of you but what I really would like is to hear what **your** ideas for our future activities are. I am happy to receive emails at brian@cwellis.freeserve.co.uk or you can buttonhole me at one of our meetings.

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Warwickshire sites No.2

Ian Fenwick

Some parts of the geological column are not at all well represented in our designated sites – now called Local Geological Sites or LoGS in the local vernacular. However, for some units, notably the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation (or Warwick Sandstone in the old parlance), we have several excellent exposures. It is planned to visit one of these at Rock Mill, Leamington during the coming summer.



Another is found in the very pleasant surroundings of the Quarry Garden at Russell's Garden Centre at Baginton Bridge (SP339 750). This



old quarry has been sympathetically adapted to display heathers, rhododendrons and many other plants. However, the geology can still be seen very clearly, especially on the north-east face.

Across the pond, 1-2m of thinly bedded, fragmented sandstone is succeeded by 2-3m of a much more massive bed which, in turn is overlain by 3-4m of softer, less well-defined material which is largely vegetated. Near the path, interesting features – current-

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group



bedding, an s-shaped structure which may be a channel feature or perhaps the result of post-depositional de-watering – can be seen in the massive bed. This unit is also very well jointed. Some joints have weathered out to be at least 9” wide and partially filled with clayey material.

There is a small charge to enter the garden but it is good value for the geology alone – and if you visit in May there’s always the bonus of the rhododendrons!

Geology at Harrods Jim Passmore

When one thinks of Harrods, geology is not the first thing that comes to mind. However, tucked away on the third floor is the Fossil and Mineral Gallery with all one needs to decorate the modern home.

For the entrance hall one can buy a 5ft stalagmite which has been cut lengthwise to display the crystal interior. A number of fish fossils mounted to display on the wall. Large ammonites as a conversation piece or a stone coffee table made from a section through a fossilised tree trunk. A slab of rock has been painstakingly carved out to reveal a swarm of trilobites, each over 1 inch long and ½ inch high.



If you are not planning to shop there soon visit www.harrods.com and click on **Harrods 360°**, from here you can move to the Fossil and Mineral Gallery for a virtual tour.

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Boon's and Jee's quarries

Andrew Swift

*The following article first appeared in **Charnia** January 2010, the newsletter of the Geology Section of the LLPS (www.charnia.org.uk), and was written by Andrew Swift, who also took the photographs'*



In Boon's quarry

Our joint excursion with the Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group is now becoming an annual fixture in our summer programme, and on September 26th 2009 we joined our friends at two highly interesting quarries near Nuneaton. The turnout from both groups was excellent, and 18 Geology Section members made the short trip to north Warwickshire

contributing to a party well in excess of 40 enthusiasts. It was a good job the car park at our meeting place at the quarries was a large one. In order to maintain some order amongst the large group, we were split into three parties, each individually led by a WGCG member. We began the day in Boon's Quarry, and not for the first time we wondered at the amazing recuperative powers of Nature, which had created a sylvan and attractive oasis where before had been industrial clamour.

The quarry was opened to exploit very hard Precambrian rocks for road metal. These rocks are part of the Caldecote Volcanic Formation, and consist of a complex of igneous types, including tuffs and submarine pyroclastic flow deposits. The finest feature at Boons is the magnificent unconformity between these Precambrian strata and the overlying Lower Cambrian Hartshill Sandstone Formation. The underlying Precambrian is heavily weathered which indicates a long hiatus before the basal conglomerates (containing variably-sized clasts of the older beds, perhaps representing a beach or eroding cliff) of the Cambrian were laid down. Much stimulating discussion took place regarding the nature of the junction.

After lunch back at the car park we walked the short distance to the 'twin' quarry of Jee's. Here a magnificent lake had developed in the hole left by quarrying, but the number of drownings recorded at the site and

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The large joint group at Boon's quarry, Precambrian / Cambrian boundary background

at Boon's indicated the great danger that attended these old workings. In Jee's we were able to see a much more comprehensive exposure of the Hartshill Sandstone Formation, including extensive exposures of single bedding planes, often showing nice sedimentary structures. Cutting impressively through the sandstones were several dykes and sills. Towards the top of the HS Formation was the 'Hyalolithes Limestone', now known formally as the Home Farm Member, which has yielded the oldest Shelly fauna known from Britain. Unfortunately we couldn't access the exposure, or the higher Cambrian and Ordovician Stockingford Shales, but some fallen blocks were available for inspection.

Dyke (L) and sill (R) at Jee's quarry

After the usual thanks and goodbyes to colleagues from the WGCG, the Geology Section party dispersed, some of us to show solidarity with one of our members who was 'minding' a pub nearby.



Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

A Happy Christmas Event

Ian Fenwick

Our Christmas 'soiree' is always a convivial occasion, non the moreso than this year when we had a mix of displays by members, a hilarious talk(?) on exam. howlers by Norman Dutton and, above all, an opportunity to celebrate and thank Martyn Bradley for his huge contribution to the Group and to Warwickshire geology over the past 20 years..

With the changes in the way the Group is organised, Martyn decided to stand down from the Management Committee and from the position of Chair which he had occupied for many years. Brian Ellis and Martyn have worked together in the University as well as on the various committees of the Group. It was therefore appropriate that Brian should convey to Martyn a present from the members.

We have long known that Martyn could enthuse over Arran and its geological wonders so it was perhaps no surprise that Brian 'plucked out of the hat' a framed and mounted geological map of the island which clearly gave Martyn much pleasure.



However, that was not all. Alan Cook stepped forward to offer Martyn a precious trilobite from the Cambrian of the Nuneaton Ridge – again, great glee!

Then finally, Colin Frodsham recalled Bradley the poet reciting part of Houseman's *A Shropshire Lad* while perched on Wenlock Edge and surveying the Shropshire plain at his feet. From his pocket he produced a copy of Houseman's poems for Martyn's enjoyment.

Martyn has made a major contribution to WGCG, not only in an administrative role, but especially by his inspiring teaching, most notably in the field. He will be a hard act for us to follow. Thank you, Martyn.

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

Additional field trips

Martyn Bradley is leading several field trips over the next few months for other groups and has invited WGCG members to join him.

Sunday 25th April 9.30-12.30pm (Open Univ. Geol. Soc.)
A Geological Traverse from University of Warwick to Warmington (Edge Hill)
Meet Gibbet Hill campus car park.

Saturday June 12th 10am Ryton Pools Country Park (Stamford Geol. Soc.)
"Lake Harrison Does it Hold Water?" A look at the post glacial effects on the Midlands' landscape.

Saturday 19th June Geology of the Chiltern Line (Warwick to Marylebone)
(part of Martyn's Earth Science class programme).

For details telephone Martyn Bradley on 01926-428835

Sunday 20th June Geology of the Chiltern Line (Marylebone to Warwick)
- a Rockwatch excursion for youngsters

For more information and to book places please email the Rockwatch office: rockwatchatga@btinternet.com

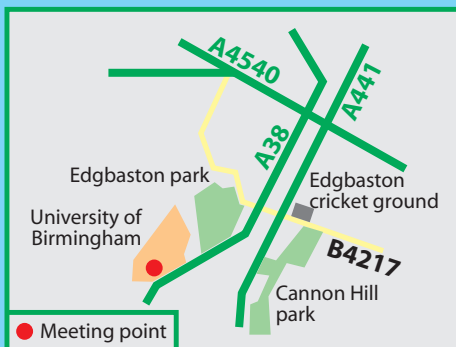
Field trips 2010 - Programme summary

Day field trip - Saturday 17th April - 11.00am

Lapworth Museum
University of Birmingham, B15 2TT
Leader John Clatworthy - curator
Meet SP 0476 8342

After coffee on arrival, a talk on the museum, its collections and the associated people. Then a behind the scenes look at the museum and some of the object based collection stores and also the extensive archive collections.

Packed lunches may be eaten in the museum seating area.



Arrangements for the unexpected cancellation of meetings:

An email will be sent to all members, and phone calls to those not on line.

**The WGCG mobile phone will be answered on the day from 11am:
The number to ring is 0752 7204184**

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

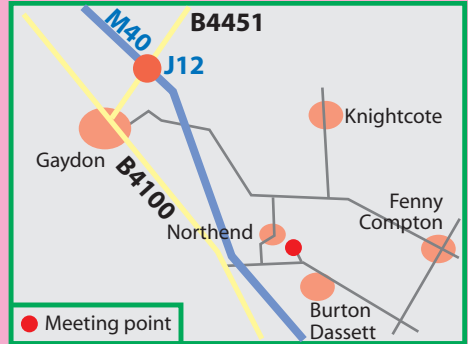
Field trips 2010 - Programme summary

Evening field trip - Wednesday 19th May - 6.30pm

Burton Dassett Hills & Avonhill quarry

Leaders - Jon Radley & Ian Fenwick
Meet SP 3948 5213

Exposures of interesting sedimentary features in the Marlstone Rock Formation at Burton Dassett; faulting at Avonhill results in exposures of the Dyrham, Marlstone Rock and Whitby Mudstone Formations being revealed - with excellent fossil collecting opportunities!



Weekend field trip - Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th June

Hamps & Manifold Valleys, Staffs.

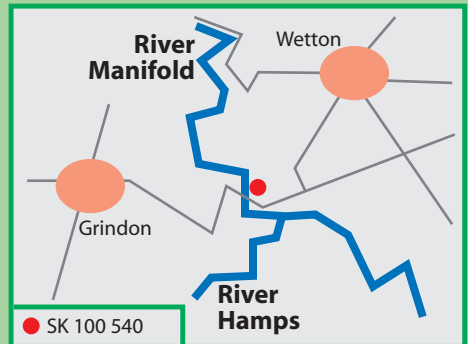
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Leader Dr Patrick Cossey,
Staffordshire University

See:

<http://srigs.staffs-ecology.org.uk/Sites/SSSI/HampsManifold/index.html>

More details to follow

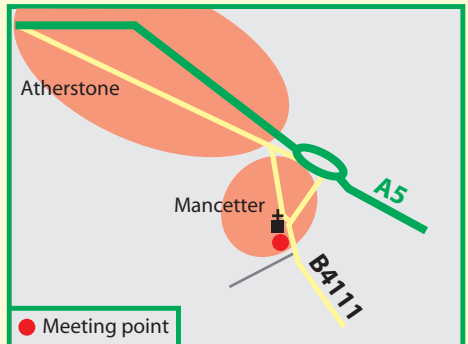


Evening field trip - Wednesday 21st July - 6.30pm

Building stones of Atherstone

Leaders Hugh Jones & Alan Cook
Meet SP 3206 9676

Including a visit to Baxterley Quarry (Carboniferous sandstone).
Meet at "The Plough" pub car park adjacent to Mancetter church.



Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

Field trips 2010 - Programme summary

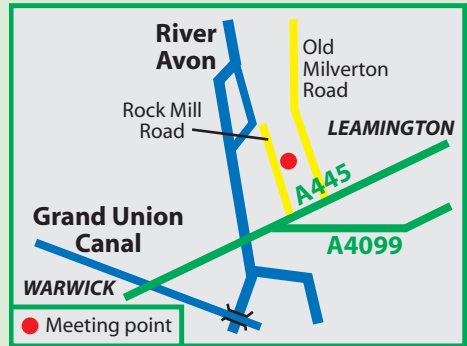
Evening field trip - Wednesday 18th August - 6.30pm

Rock Mill & Coton End quarries

Leaders John Crossling & Ian Fenwick
Meet SP 3016 6613 (Rock Mill Lane)

Please park in adjacent streets as approaches to Rock Mill are private areas.

At Rock Mill there are excellent sedimentary structures in the Bromsgrove Sandstone.



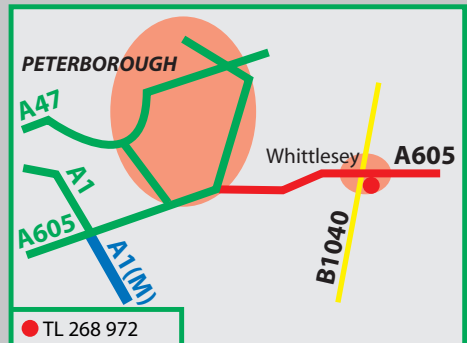
Day field trip - Saturday 4th September

Whittlesey - Cambridgeshire

TL 268 972

This year our joint field trip is being organised by the Geology Section of the Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society.

More details to follow



Weekend field trip - Friday 10th to Sunday 12th September

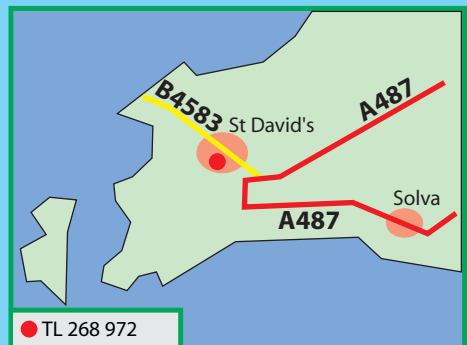
St David's Peninsula - Pembrokeshire

SM 753 253 (St David's)

Leaders TBC

From the Pre-Cambrian to the Quaternary in one weekend
Palaeozoic sediments and volcanics & Quaternary.

More details to follow



Earth Science

Summer Term 2010

LANDSCAPE AND SCENERY IN WARWICKSHIRE

Tutor: Martyn Bradley

Reference: 1837/SU10

Modern Warwickshire landscapes reflect underlying rocks and structures formed in very different ancient environments: volcanoes, tropical swamps, deserts, a marine Jurassic Park and the Ice Age. Interpret and visit local scenery through geological eyes and geological maps.

Six classes plus four field visits (cost of travel not included in fee).

Courses start on Monday 26th April

Times : 7 - 9pm Lifelong Learning Building WCE0.9a, Westwood

To enroll please go to the **Centre for Lifelong Learning** website:

www2.warwick.ac.uk/study/cll/open_courses/certificates/earthscience

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