

ABBERLEY & MALVERN HILLS GEOPARK

Community Newsletter

Spring 2006



our objectives:

to conserve and enhance the
geology, geomorphology and
landscape of the Geopark.

NEWS IN BRIEF

West Gloucestershire Carboniferous Aggregates Project

Gloucestershire Geology Trust (GGT), who recently changed their name from Gloucestershire Geoconservation Trust, have just launched their "West Gloucestershire Carboniferous Aggregates Project". The project, which is funded by the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, aims to record and interpret the geodiversity of Carboniferous aggregate sites in the Forest of Dean area.

The project aims to disseminate this information through a number of educational and outreach activities and promote community use of old aggregate sites for education and recreation.

For more information contact:
Dave Owen of the GGT on 01452
864438 or email
dave@glosgeotrust.org.uk



Abberley & Malvern Hills Geopark Aggregate Quarry Trail

Gloucestershire Geology Trust are currently working on three self guided quarry trails on behalf of the Abberley & Malvern Hills Geopark. These guides will be free to the public and will be available from the Geopark Community Liaison Officer and Gloucestershire Geology Trust. The Hobbs Quarry trail guide will be launched during International Geopark Week.

Hobbs Quarry Longhope, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

National Grid Reference: SO 695194 : Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 162; 1:10,000: SO 61 NE

Hobbs Quarry contains a rare exposure of fossilized reefs that formed in a warm, shallow sea over 400 million years ago, during the Silurian Period. The lateral extent of the Quarry provides numerous features of interest, both geological and biological. The quarry is located on the western flank of May Hill and is a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The SSSI section covers approximately 100m of the disused quarry.

The site is also a Nature Reserve, owned by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and, as well as the

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Bioherms (fossil patch reefs).
Differential compaction of the bedded
limestones has produced apparent
folding around the reef masses.



Community Liaison Project

It has been a busy few months in my new role as Community Liaison Officer for the Geopark. I have enjoyed visiting a number of community groups, meeting Geopark residents and exploring some fantastic geological sites.

The community project has a number of objectives, which include liaison with community-based organisations in priority areas of the Geopark. These key areas were identified in the Local Geodiversity Action Plans and include the Teme Valley, the Severn Valley and Newent.

The project also involves the creation of six site-based trails and the development of a volunteer training program in site interpretation. There has been a steady increase of interest in the Geopark and in the benefits

of geotourism for local communities. It is possible to arrange a talk, a display, a walk or related activities for community and educational groups and we welcome enquiries from organisations and interested individuals.

The ALSF project has also supported the development of our new look website. Here you can learn more about the geology, archaeology, ecology and cultural heritage to be found in the Geopark. Log onto the community pages to find out "what's on" and how to become involved in Geopark initiatives. For example, why not join our community forum?

It will also be possible to download copies of Geopark site-based trails, copies of our newsletters and other important information.

If you would like more information about these activities or the Geopark in general, please contact Rona Davis via the website www.geopark.org.uk, email rona.davis@worc.ac.uk or telephone 01905 855185.

Welcome to
our new look
newsletter!

We have been able to update the design and layout of the newsletter as a result of a grant from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. The newsletter continues to be an important part of our Geodiversity Community Liaison Programme and contributions from local communities and organisations within the Geopark are always welcome. The Geopark partnership has been working hard to ensure that an exciting programme of events and activities will take place over the next few months. Many of these events will provide an exciting opportunity to explore the geology, wildlife, landscape and archaeology of the Geopark.

For further information on the events and activities planned for 2006, please visit the events section on our new website www.geopark.org.uk

If you are interested in the work of the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark and would like to know more or become more involved, please contact our Community Liaison Officer, Rona Davis.

Honorary Master of Arts degree

Geopark President, Professor Aubrey Manning was awarded an honorary Master of Arts degree from the University of Worcester in November 2005. The award was made in recognition of his work to preserve and promote the geology of the Geopark and for his contribution to the public understanding of science.

Professor Aubrey Manning with (left to right) John Yelland, Chair of Governors, Professor David Green, Vice Chancellor and Dr Cheryl Jones, Geopark director.



Local Heritage group secures funding for landscape project

The Four Parishes Heritage Group recently secured a Local Heritage Initiative Grant to investigate the landscape history of the Stottesdon hundred, which included the present day parishes of Stottesdon, Kinlet, Highley and Billingsley near Bridgnorth in Shropshire. They aim to investigate the medieval history of the four parishes using historical and archaeological methods. As well as using documentary sources the group will carry out topographical and geophysical surveys. Looking specifically at the medieval iron industry, the work of the Four Parishes Group will add significantly to existing knowledge of the landscape history of this area of the Geopark.

For further information on the project please contact David Poyner on 0121 204 3997.

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geological importance of the site, contains diverse plant and animal life. The rich flora includes Ash, Pedunculate Oak, Silver Birch, Field Maple and Small-Leaved Lime.

The site is of international geological importance for two main reasons; the abundant and well preserved fossil fauna, including the type specimens of a number of species and for the presence of fossil patch reefs or bioherms (known to quarrymen as "ballstones"). These occur at regular intervals of about 10m between each mound. The bioherms

contain very little evidence of internal structure or macrofossils, suggesting that much of this material was deposited as calcareous algae. The thinly bedded Wenlock limestones contain both whole and broken fossil material. The fauna is dominated by brachiopods, such as *Atrypa*, *Meristina*, *Leptaena*, *Salopina* and *Rhynchonellids*, but also trilobites such as *Calymene* and *Dalmanites*, gastropods such as *Poleumita*, and crinoid ossicles.

The Limestones extracted from Hobbs quarry were used as an aggregate for the construction of local trackways and for building field walls. Much of the rock was used in limekilns to produce lime used for fertiliser.

The community liaison project is funded by the ALSF Partnership Grants Scheme through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.



Vernon the Velociraptor makes an appearance at Eastnor Castle. Vernon is accompanied by Abigail Brown (Geodiversity Manager for Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust).

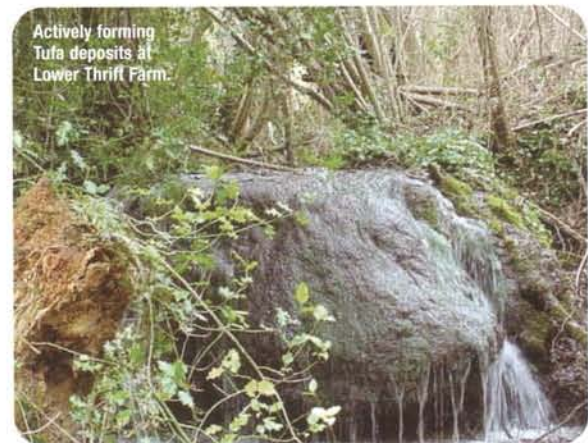
Come and Meet Vernon

Vernon the Velociraptor is once again preparing himself for a busy season of Rock and Fossil Roadshows. You can join Vernon and the volunteers from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust at their Rock and Fossil Roadshows and family fundays taking place in the Geopark throughout the year.

For more information about the Rock and Fossil Roadshow 2006 program contact Julie Bundred on 01905 562014.

Lower Thrift Farm

Lower Thrift Farm lies midway between Clifton-upon-Teme and Whitbourne. Owned by Harvey and Diane Richards, the farm is managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Harvey and Diane are able to offer schools and other interested community groups a range of walks and activities. These can be tailored to meet many aspects of the national curriculum and both schools and adult groups may investigate subjects related to farming, the historic or natural landscape, wildlife and the countryside. The farm takes in the River Teme, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and several Special Wildlife Sites (SWS). One of these SWS is the Whitbourne Brook, which is of particular geological interest due to its stunning (actively forming) tufa deposits. Tufa is formed by springs emerging from beneath the Bishops Frome Limestone. The calcium carbonate dissolved in the spring water precipitates to form a soft white or grey sponge like rock. The tufa deposits often contain petrified plant and animal remains. The delicate tufa deposits are an important "geoindicator" of current environmental status, groundwater quality and



Actively forming Tufa deposits at Lower Thrift Farm.

are an indicator of rapid environmental change. Tufa supports lime tolerant species and the alkaline conditions of soils make this an ideal location to demonstrate the links between geology and biodiversity. The old orchards, semi-natural ancient woodlands and old meadow pasture, lying adjacent to the brook, support a range of flora and are a haven for insects and birds.

For more information or to receive an information pack on the range of educational facilities offered at Lower Thrift Farm, please contact: Rona Davis on 01905 855185 or email rona.davis@worc.ac.uk Alternatively you can contact the Richards directly at Lower Thrift farm, Clifton upon Teme, Worcester, WR6 6EF

Heather Returns to May Hill

David Armstrong, Head Warden,
SW Gloucestershire National Trust

May Hill is a prominent landmark situated on the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire border. Although formerly thought to have been more of a heath/wet heath, the site is designated as an SSSI on account of its acidic grasslands and small areas of mire. The hill was cultivated during the war and has subsequently been grazed quite heavily by sheep and the occasional pony. A Nature Conservancy report from the 1950's indicated that there were then no heathers present. However over the years the odd plant of common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) has been found protected within gorse bushes.

Since foot-and-mouth the hill has been solely grazed by ponies and the effect has been quite dramatic. Clear improvements in the quality of the acidic

grassland have been observed, plants are flowering more profusely and common heather has reappeared together with bilberry and is spreading at a promising rate. It is hoped that areas of heath can be successfully re-established on the hill through careful control of the grazing, possibly using sheep in moderation in the future.



View of May Hill.

It's Full Steam Ahead For Stanley Quarry!

The Geopark has received grants from English Nature through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund to fund two trails that explore the geology and landscape of Stanley Quarry near Highley in Shropshire. The quarry is situated near Highley Station at the site of the old Highley Colliery. The quarry is predominantly Highley Sandstone, formed by the deposition of sediment in rivers during the Carboniferous period. Stone was quarried from the area as far back as the Medieval period and was used for building stone and as aggregate for Highley's roads. The first trail is a self guided, community site based trail. This will

explore the geology and industrial heritage of the area and will take in the deep rock cutting that once provided access to the colliery. The second trail is guided and will be available by appointment for both amateur geologists and educational groups. The preparatory work for both trails is now in progress. Rubbish, unsafe trees and scrub have been removed from the site during February ensuring that birds would not be disturbed during the nesting season. A wildlife habitat log pile has been created using fallen material recovered from the site, increasing the potential biodiversity of the quarry. The Severn Valley Railway have

improved a small section of the quarry near to the planned Heritage Centre, creating new observable exposures in the adjacent bank.

Specimens of sandstone have been retained for later use and cut stones will be moved to safe locations in the quarry for subsequent viewing and interpretation. The trails will be officially launched to coincide with the opening of the Severn Valley Railway Steam Heritage Centre in March 2007.

The history of aggregate extraction at Stanley Quarry and its transformation from working quarry to community based resource can be found on the Geopark website www.geopark.org.uk



Site clearance work at Stanley Quarry.



View over the Severn Valley. A new viewpoint has been created near to the entrance of Stanley Quarry.

"The hill of fountains"

Today the popularly held view is that Malvern means "bare hills", but in 1875 James McKay of the Malvern Advertiser suggested that Malvern is pure Gaelic — Mial-chiurn — being literally "the hill of fountains or waters," pronounced as Mal-vurne.

In 1998 the Malvern Spa Association (MSA) was formed to "conserve, protect and restore" over one hundred springs, wells, spouts and fountains around the hills that were mapped by local residents in 1997. In order to increase public awareness of the dilapidated state of many of these water sources, the Association organises an annual "Well Dressing" competition and twenty four sites were decorated by the local community in last year's May Day celebrations.

Since 2002 the thirty-two voluntary MSA Well Wardens who live near water sites, have reported on the changing condition of many springs and this has helped to secure a Heritage Lottery grant of £290,000 to restore up to 20 of these water features. Restoration work on the pond, side spring and terraces at the first site, St Ann's Well, was completed in December 2005 in a unique partnership between the MSA, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Office and the Malvern Hills Conservators who own the site. The MSA hopes to begin work soon on restoring the Clock Tower and Well Room, the Holy Well and Sanctuary rooms and Hayslad spout.

If you want to support the activities of the Malvern Spa Association you can write to the Chairman, Carly Tinkler, 46 Jamaica Road, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 1TU or email chairman@malvernspace.org.uk and further information is on the website at www.malvernspace.org.uk



The Abberley & Malvern Hills Geopark is a member of the European Geoparks Network and the Unesco Global Geoparks Network.



Lifelong Learning in the Geopark

Why not try something new this year... would you like to;

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The Department of Applied Sciences, Geography and Archaeology at the University of Worcester offers an exciting variety of short courses in a wide range of subjects. Choose from Archaeology,

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- Delivered by experienced, friendly tutors

To find out more about Lifelong Learning in the Environment email c.jones@worc.ac.uk

What's on in the Geopark in 2006

Tuesdays and Sundays throughout 2006

Free Wyre Forest Health Walks for all abilities (with trained leader), 10.30 am from the Wyre Forest Visitor Centre.

May 17th: "Geology of the Malverns"

A talk by Dr John Payne Cradley Village Hall 7.30pm. Free.

27th May: Lecture "Spotlight on Geology — under our feet in Droitwich"

Dr Cheryl Jones will present a lecture on the geology of Droitwich and how it relates to the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark. Droitwich Library 3pm No charge, turn up on the day. For more information contact Droitwich Library 01905 773292 02 779970 or the Geopark on 01905 855185, email rona.davis@worc.ac.uk

27th and 31st May: Rock & Fossil Fun Event — Severn Valley Country Park

Shropshire Geology Trust 1pm — 3pm. Find out more about rocks and fossils. This event features a variety of fun hands-on activities for children. For more information contact 01905 855185 or email rona.davis@worc.ac.uk

Sunday 28th May: Wyre Forest Ramble — A Severn Valley Country Park Event

10am — 4pm. A nine mile ranger led ramble from Highley through the Wyre Forest. Meet at the Severn Valley Country Park, Station Road, Highley. £2 Adults £1 Children. Please call 01746 781192 for advice/information as steep climbs are involved in this walk.

28th May — 4th June: International Geopark Week

For a full events listing contact the Geopark on 01905 855185, email rona.davis@worc.ac.uk or log onto

www.geopark.org.uk Events include guided walks, public talks and Rock and Fossil Roadshows.

31st May — 1st June: Rock & Fossil Roadshow — Gloucester Cathedral

Gloucestershire Geology Trust 10 am — 4pm This two day event will include geological tours around the cathedral, a display of stonemasons' work and lots of fun, hands-on activities for children. Free admission. For further details contact the GGT on 01452 864438.

2nd June: Fun with Rocks and Fossils — Wyre Forest Discovery Centre

Find out more about rocks and fossils, and make your own fossil to take home! Bring along any fossils you may have for identification. Family event — all children to be accompanied by an adult. No booking required Drop in any time between 1pm and 3.30pm. £1.50 per child. For further details contact the Discovery Centre on 01299 266929

4th June: New England, Highley Walk

This walk will look at coal mining in and around Highley. See the different types of rocks that are found associated with coal and look at some of the ways coal mining has influenced the landscape. The walk will be led by Dr David Poyner. Meet at the car park, Severn Centre, Highley, 2.00pm for 2hr — 3hr walk to New England and back. Distance about 4 miles. No charge. For further details ring 01905 855185 or email rona.davis@worc.ac.uk

8th June — 13th July: Geology for All

This short course offers an exciting and stimulating introduction to Geology and requires no prior

knowledge of the subject. Through a series of six weekly lectures, you will be introduced to the basic concepts of geology, understand how changes in climate, sea-level and relief can be recognised and understood in the geological record. For further details ring 01905 855425 or email c.jones@worc.ac.uk

11th June: Rock and Fossil Roadshow. Larruperz Centre, Ross-on-Wye

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust 01905 855184.

11th June: Soudley Valley Guided Geology Walk.

Meet at the Dean Heritage Centre, 2.30pm (walk for The Forest of Dean Local History Soc.) Gloucestershire Geology Trust 01452 864438

24th and 25th June: Berkley Festival Rock and Fossil Roadshow

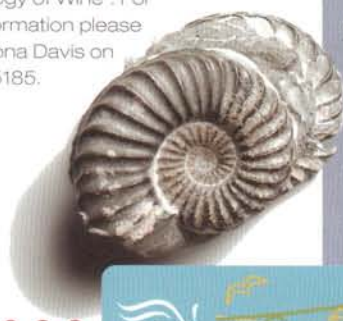
...and building stones walks of Berkley Castle and grounds led by Dr Eric Robinson. Gloucestershire Geology Trust 01452 864438.

25th June: Open Day at University of Worcester

Find out more about the courses, enjoy a tour of the campus and discover what the University of Worcester has to offer. This Open Day is from 10am — 3pm. To find out more, contact us on 01905 855 141 or email study@worc.ac.uk

29th — 30th July Severn Valley in Bloom

"The Geology of Wine". For further information please contact Rona Davis on 01905 855185.



the Geopark covers...
1250 sq km in Herefordshire,
Gloucestershire, Shropshire
& Worcestershire

Contact details

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Tel 01905 855185

Geopark Partnership:

Abberley Hills Preservation Society ■ English Nature ■
Forestry Commission ■ Gloucestershire Geology Trust ■
Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust ■
Shropshire Geological Society ■ University of Worcester



Our Sponsors

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