

# WARWICKSHIRE GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION GROUP

Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL

Email: [martyn.bradley@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:martyn.bradley@warwick.ac.uk) Tel: 02476 523533

[www.wgcg.co.uk](http://www.wgcg.co.uk)

## NEWSLETTER Issue No.11 Spring 2006

### **From the Chair**

In this spring newsletter you will find details of events for this summer together with news items and articles about our recent and forthcoming activities. WGCG aims to further the understanding and appreciation of geology and landscapes both by organising a programme of winter talks and summer field trips and by supporting geological conservation in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.

Our activities are made possible by the voluntary contribution of time and expertise from members without whom the group could not function. Members currently help in diverse ways, editing this newsletter, inviting speakers, providing coffee, stuffing and addressing envelopes, joining work parties, monitoring local geological exposures. Some join the committees, which coordinate these activities; others simply offer their help. Currently John Crossling, who has taken over as chair of the education committee, is looking for help with next year's programme, Ian Fenwick is always pleased to have more joining his monitoring group. The ongoing success of WGCG is very dependent on member's inputs.

We now look forward to new developments in Solihull and Ryton. The geological interpretation at Brueton Park is now going to be taken further with HLF money, which our treasurer Maurice Rogers has now secured. We plan to enhance the boards which were erected in 2004 and to provide additional materials. At Ryton Pools Country Park we now have a new interpretation site and cover for the Thrussington Till / Baginton sands junction. This site will be used by the UK RIGS education project to develop teaching materials for use by schools who we hope will then visit. The geologist's association 'Rockwatch' youngsters will be the first to use this site along with Pam Reason's 'Ryton Pools Creepy Crawlies.'

*We look forward to seeing you at WGCG summer events and associated field trips on University Day schools, and outings with the Atherstone Natural History Society and the Coventry Naturalists.*

***Martyn Bradley***

### **What's in a name? - Meriden Shafts**

At one of our recent meetings I was asked if I knew anything about the woodland area Meriden Shafts (Landranger 140/BGS 168 and 169 GR2683) about 2km. northeast of the village of Meriden. I didn't but my curiosity was aroused. It is tempting to think that the name has something to do with the geology and an extractive industry, although there is nothing active there now. The site is on a ridge underlain by Upper Carboniferous sandstones in the Keresley Member of the Barren Coal Measures so coal digging seemed unlikely, although quarrying or tapping an aquifer were possibilities. Indeed Severn Trent Water does have a works nearby (GR263827) named Meriden Shafts, which has four 200m deep bore-holes. However that is not where the name Shafts occurs on the map, so it raised questions about which name came first - the woodland or the waterworks. It is possible to date the waterworks as the first boreholes were sunk in 1938, while the woodland is named as Meriden Shafts on late 19th century O.S. maps. So the name is not derived from the borehole site. There is nothing to help with evidence of mining or quarrying in the Warwickshire Geological Record, nor on the Warwickshire Field Archaeology and the West Midlands Historic Engineering Works databases, nor in the Packington Estate archives. The woodland itself is private (it is Packington Estate land) and so dense that field research to reveal any clues is impossible.

So the next port of call was the Local Studies library, where things took an unexpected turn. There I found references from the 13th and 14th centuries to assarting (colonization or enclosure) of Common Wood where 'villagers were creating farmland out of virgin territory and held it freehold and because of this did not have to pay pannage (the tax for keeping pigs) in The Shafts'. So the name Shafts is much older than I had imagined. Historically the wood has also been known as Common Wood and presumably resulted from the fragmentation of the Forest of Arden. Sir Thomas Botiler (Butler) rented out 'Alspath Hall (GR266824) with a grove called Shaftes Spring' and when he died in 1532, his daughter Elizabeth, inherited 120 acres of wood, 'much of it in the Shafts'. There are documents of 1657 referring to a Robert Harper, a woodmonger, whose son Humphrey ran a wood merchants business, which flourished and expanded with leases on timber in Chantry Wood (GR257837) and in the Shafts.

So there is good documentary evidence of woodland associated with the name Shafts. But how did it become 'Meriden Shafts? The original village of Meriden was called Alspath and was located up the hill round the church (GR253817). It existed at the time of Domesday Book (1086) which records 'Godiva had a manor at Alspath (Ailespede) the wood (land) is one and a half leagues long and one league broad'. That was a large area and although it does not mean that Godiva's wood included the Shafts that is now the largest area of wood around Alspath, so it could well be a remnant of Godiva's land. The centre of the village shifted to its present location at the bottom of the hill with the growth of the coaching trade after Telford completed the turnpike road in 1824.

The first reference to Shafts Wood as Meriden Shafts is on a map which is undated but the context seems to be late 18th century and the renaming of the wood presumably reflects the rising importance of Meriden over Alspath. So maybe 'shafts' has nothing to do with mining and has no geological significance at all here which made me wonder about the origin of the name.

The linguistic evidence supports the idea that the name Shafts has associations with events and names at least a thousand years old (ie pre-Norman Conquest). Ailespede (Alspath) is derived from *paed*, which is West Saxon (or Anglian) for path, while *Al* is probably a personal name. The name Meriden also derives from Old English and meant 'the pleasant valley'. The only reference to 'shafts' in my Place Name dictionary is to Shaftesbury (Dorset) and it suggests that shaft is an Old English personal name. But if the Shafts was common wood, part of the Anglo-Saxon waste or wildwood (ie uncultivated land), the use of a personal name for it seems unlikely, unless it refers to an early coloniser. However that does not tell us the significance of the name. Collins Dictionary gives the origin of the word shaft as 'scaeft', (also Old English), and lists first its meaning of arrow or spear shaft. Interestingly one of the modern German words for shaft is 'der Schaff', which refers specifically to the shafts of arrows. There are also historical references to the coppicing of woods in the Forest of Arden for amongst other things broom shafts and the Packington Estate records show a Bowyer living near Shafts Wood. That could lead us to speculate about how the woodland got its name, but as we saw at the beginning it's dangerous to jump to conclusions! If anyone has any other information or ideas I would like to know.

Brian Ellis

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### COVENTRY SPIRES WALK, WED .12TH JULY

Meet at Holy Trinity Church 7pm. Suggest parking at the "Bus Station" car park (fee payable). The enjoyable Coventry Trail presentations from our Christmas meeting in action! Will those members who were given an illustrated copy of Jane's talk please bring it along.

**Members intending to come to any field meetings are recommended to give their name & contact details to Chris Hodgson (TEL:01926 511097)**

## **Conservation sub-committee report, January 2006**

The sub-committee last met at the Warwickshire Museum on the 13th December 2005. Ian Fenwick has been making good progress on RIGS identification and notification and has recently completed paperwork on the Napton Hill and Wood Farm quarry sites. He is also nearing completion on paperwork for the Brailes geological site, North Woodloes quarry site and Edge Hill Farm. Ian continues to co-ordinate a network of site workers in the Solihull area, updating site records from the museum's Geological Localities Record Centre.

Since the December meeting, Ian and I have undertaken fieldwork at Edge Hill Farm potential RIGS (ascertaining land ownership), the Napton Industrial Estate RIGS (negotiation of conservation areas in relation to a planning application) and Brailes Hill potential RIGS (agreement of RIGS details and boundary).

Katie Snape, our ALSF project worker, delivered a verbal report on the 13th December concerning progress on the Quaternary soft-sediment conservation project. She has made contact with Parish Councils and has been involved in site clearance work at Ryton Pools Park.

At the meeting, Paul Akers gave a progress report on remaining aspects of the Wood Farm Quarry geoconservation project. He has continued to monitor the covered section and the state of the screen construction. He has established a Wood Farm Quarry conservation website: JDR and other sub-committee members will be checking texts and other details before this goes live. Additionally Paul has been liaising with staff at Ryton Pools visitor centre with a view to displaying sediment peels and posters about the project.

Our Local Geodiversity Action Plan project is currently on hold, though we have an agreed phase 3 plan with English Nature, who have offered us more funding to take this forward. As ever this will depend on recruitment of a suitably experienced person, and the sub-committee's capacity to manage the project.

***Jon Radley***

### **Steaming Ahead on RIGS**

The last few months have seen some real progress on the conservation front -- quite apart from the work being undertaken on the Quaternary sites via the ALSF grant. The monitoring of sites contained in the Museum's Geological Record has been continuing at a steady pace and several new RIGS have been formally designated. Site vetting is throwing up some interesting exposures among the inevitable succession of totally unexciting infilled borrow pits, boreholes etc.

Progress has been particularly noteworthy around Kenilworth where Brenda & Jim Watts deserve a medal for their unstinting perusal of vague depressions in fields and back gardens Unfruitful though it may seem, this is a most valuable part of the process - we now know that those sites are now of very limited interest, something we didn't know before.

On the other side of the coin, Jim Bowman paid a visit to the old Cherry Orchard Brick Pit in Kenilworth, long since land-filled, although a face was preserved. Everyone with geological interest around these parts knows of the Cherry Orchard site -it is obviously a RIGS? Well, it isn't - it has been overlooked. Jim's search located the preserved face, now much overgrown, but quite able to be rescued so we have an almost certain RIGS that has been thrown up simply because the vetting drew attention to it and one of our members took the trouble to visit it.

As for the designation of new sites, a clutch of 6 have been finally 'put to bed' over the Christmas period.

In Nuneaton, the owners, the local council, are now aware that they have an important site at the old quarry in the Paul's land recreation ground. This reveals a small section in the "Waterstones"

At Bubbenhall, two new sites have been given protection - the conserved section in the Baginton sands and gravels at Wood Farm, together with its neighbour in Ryton Pools Country Park. The latter is now being prepared for public display (see the article by Katie Snape elsewhere). Also a new RIGS in the Bromsgrove Sandstone, close by the Centenary Way, on the Warwickshire Golf Course has benefited hugely from the efforts of a group of 7 members who braved the winter cold to clear away a massive amount of 'agricultural junk' to convert this valuable exposure into a site which is well worth visiting.

Several sites have been dealt with in Stratford District. The Napton quarry visited by the Group last July now has full RIGS designation, while the doggers, removed from the old brick pit (itself a 5551) on the slope above the quarry also now have RIGS status. In the far south of the county, a fossiliferous outcrop of the Northampton Limestone, one of the youngest rocks in Warwickshire, on Brailes Hill now complements the geomorphological RIGS on the same hill. Nearby, an excellent exposure of the Marlstone on the top of the Edge Hill scarp has been designated with the cooperation of the owner. She had already cleared back some 100m of overgrowth which allows the section (with some fine weathering & soil profiles) to be clearly seen from the Centenary way which passes by the site.

These RIGS are there to be enjoyed - so do make the most of them. I can provide you with further details. Call me on **01926-512531** or via **ian@ianfenwick3.wanadoo.co.uk**

*Ian Fenwick*

## **South Warwickshire Quaternary ALSF Project**

Further ALSF project work is underway this time concentrating on encouraging interest in local earth heritage around the villages of Wolston, Ryton, Brandon and Baginton, installing more information boards and producing a leaflet publication with a version aimed at Primary schools. Presentations have been given to Wolston and Ryton parish councils and more are in the pipeline for March. These meetings have led to important community links; we have been invited to set up a stand at Ryton's village fete in June and are currently negotiating with Wolston councillors as to where they would like their interpretation board sited.

It was felt it was time to freshen up our output and we are now working with The Drawing Room design company, Leamington to produce two new leaflets, one of which will be aimed at primary school level children. The leaflets will provide a generalised source of information about the ice age in southeast Warwickshire incorporating geology, archaeology and geomorphology. Information boards for Wolston village and the Wildlife Trust's Brandon Marsh Nature Centre will also be produced. The leaflets will hopefully be housed at the Nature Centre and at Ryton Pools Country Park in our display at the visitors centre there.

We have also been doing some practical geoconservation work at Ryton Pools Country Park, Bubbenhall, exposing different sections of the Wolstonian deposits, which include the Baginton Sand and Gravel and the Thrussington Till. A protective structure has been installed over the contact between the sand and till. The site is being developed so that it is suitable for supervised parties to gain access and study the sediments. We are also working alongside UKRIGS Earth Science On Site Education Project, which will be producing secondary educational materials for the site.

***Katie Snape***

## **Conservation Research at Wood Farm Quarry**

As reported in the Autumn 2005 Newsletter, an experimental system for conservation of a face of the Quaternary geology at Wood Farm Quarry, near Bubbenhall, was installed last September. As expected, the winter months tested the system to the full with high winds and plenty of rain. But the good news is that everything is still in place! The framework is still securely fastened to the clay and the tarpaulin has not been damaged or become detached from the frame.

We have, however, encountered a couple of problems. Some of the clay overburden fell at one side covering a small part of the fabric base. Also, a "lake" formed at the base of the face, which made it difficult to access the bottom of the fabric. Neither of these problems is serious and we expect to be able to remove the tarpaulin next month for inspection.

A display has now been installed in the Visitor's Centre at Ryton Pools Country Park. This illustrates the geology of the area as well as giving details of the conservation project. An important aspect of the display is the latex peels taken from the Baginton Sands and Gravels last year. If you would like to see the display, the Centre is open at weekends from 10am until 4pm up until Easter and then daily thereafter.

The taking of latex peels from an unconsolidated geological face is believed to be a first for WGCG. The technique is being made available to other groups and The Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group plan to use it in the summer to take peels from their local quarries. They aim to produce an archive and display material for the Bedford Museum showing the Lower Greensand and Quaternary sand features.

The Wood Farm Project now has its own web site. Here you can find full details of the project together with photographs of the geology, the covered section and the peels. You can get to the site via a link on the WGCG site or go direct to **[www.WoodFarmProject.org.uk](http://www.WoodFarmProject.org.uk)**

*Paul Akers*

## **Landscape and Geology Walk: Leek Wootton - June 14th 2006**

This will be a 4-mile gentle walk with the opportunity of a short cut across the golf course. It takes us across Permian and Triassic rocks exploring the effects of lithology, faulting and unconformities on the landscape and on building materials. There are outcrops to examine, including one very good accessible disused quarry and some good views. There will be the opportunity to interpret geology maps in the field.

Meet at 6.30pm at the Leek Wootton War Memorial Recreation Ground car park (GR290694), which is about 150 meters from the Anchor pub just off the road on the Kenilworth side of Leek Wootton and is signposted 'To Village Hall'. It is up a short steep drive near the bus stop.

**Brian Ellis**

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## **Conservation in a quarry at the edge of Warwick Golf Club**

On Tuesday 21st February, a working party of conservation geologists under the guidance of Ian Fenwick & Martyn Bradley, met at the Golf Club compound. Taken by tractor and trailer to the disused quarry at the edge of the golf course, Ian described the vertical rock face (Bromsgrove Sandstone).

We spent the morning removing the rubbish from the bottom and loading it into two trailers. There were iron posts, corrugated sheets, timber and large panels of carpet, which were quite difficult to move.

This is a newly designated RIGS site and we left with a feeling of satisfaction that other geologists, members of golf clubs and passing walkers would be grateful for our efforts. The only regret the writer had was that he did not retrieve any golf balls!!

**Colin Stevens**



## **Extracting Warwickshire's Past: Neighbourhood Outreach Strategy**

Warwickshire County Council is pleased to introduce a new and exciting outreach project for the county. The project, made possible by the Aggregates Levy Sustain-ability Fund, will concentrate on the aggregate producing areas of Warwickshire and the archaeology found within them. The project is aimed at community groups, from school children to local history societies; it will create strong links between the Historic Environment Record and the local community.

Within the duration of this year long project exhibitions will be produced which identify important finds and a community archaeological network will be created. The network will be aimed at all members of the public and intends to involve them in a programme of archaeological research and fieldwork. This will be achieved by providing relevant training, which will also aid the reporting of their results. It is anticipated that a range of community groups will become involved, such as geological ones, allowing a wide range of training to be offered.

The outcome of all of these activities will be incorporated into the Warwickshire Historic Environment Record. It is hoped that the project will enhance the county's records and provide further knowledge of the county's aggregate producing areas. For further information or enquiries please contact:

**Christina Evans, Archaeological Project Manager, at Museum Field Services,  
The Butts, Warwick, CV34 4SS. (01926 412734)**

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LEICESTER LITERARY & PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

SECTION C (GEOLOGY) - SUMMER FIELD TRIPS

For further details contact:

Dennis Gamble: Tel: 0794 772 5361

**WARWICKSHIRE GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION GROUP**  
***SPRING - SUMMER PROGRAMME 2006***

Note that the Leicester Building stones, Mendip Weekend and Munday's Hill are Leicester Section C events. We will join them in September at Croft, their Horsehay trip may change. Contact me, not Chris, for details of the Leckhampton hill day.

Martyn

Sat 8th April

Leckhampton Hill, Cheltenham with Gloucestershire Geoconservation Trust.

Fri 28th April - Mon 1st May

The Lizard and Land's End, Cornwall. Led by Chris King, a few places still available.

Sun 7th May

Moorwood Trail with Atherstone Natural History Society, 10 am - 12 pm, start at Hartshill Hayes Country Park Car Park. Led by Martyn Bradley.

Wed 24th May

7.00 pm Jurassic Landscapes led by Jon Radley. Windmill Hill, Upper Tysoe, South Warwickshire. Meet on Upper Brailes Road SP 33443

Wed 7th June

Building Stones of Leicester.

Wed 14th June

Leek Wootton Landscape and Geology. Led by Brian Ellis.

Fri 23rd—Sun 25th June

Mendip Weekend.

Wed 12th July

Coventry Spires Walk led by Jane Mitchell.

July

Horsehay Quarry, nr. Banbury led by Maurice Rogers.

August

Munday's Hill (Gault Clay) nr. Leighton Buzzard. Led by Chris Andrew.

September

Croft Quarry, South Leicestershire with Section 'C' of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society. Date TBC.

Fri 6th - Sun 8th October

Forest of Dean Weekend. Led by Nick Chidlaw and Chris Hodgson.

*The Coventry & District Natural History and Scientific Society Summer Programme includes a visit to Shire Oak Park, a nature reserve in Walsall, meeting at 2:30 pm on Saturday 22nd April. Included in our two mile ramble we hope to see the sands and gravels of the Kidderminster Formation topped by glacial sediments. WGCG members might be interested. Please contact Chris for further details.*

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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

PLEASE MAY I HAVE ALL ARTICLES BY JULY 31ST 2006

IF POSSIBLE SEND AS AN E-MAIL ATTACHMENT OR AS PART OF AN E- MAIL  
WHICH I CAN COPY & PASTE

[juliabob@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:juliabob@tiscali.co.uk)



*Protecting the county's geological heritage*