

GeoConservationUK Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 3

1st September 2011



Waves, water and . . .

In 1923, on the same day that this *GCUK Newsletter* is published, the Great Kanto earthquake struck Tokyo and Yokohama on the main island of Honshu, Japan and killed around 105,000 people. On the same day in 1954, Hurricane Carol landed on the shores of the north-eastern United States with winds in excess of 170 km per hour causing widespread damage and killing 35 people. In 2010 major floods in Southern Sudan left 57,000 people homeless. Of course, this year we have just seen the effects of Hurricane Irene.

So, we have now had planes across the Atlantic grounded over major holiday periods in the past couple of years for a volcanic eruption (exacerbated by ice) and a tropical storm. Since volcanic eruptions, major storms, and earthquakes are always with us, it is interesting to note that Japan holds a Disaster Prevention Day on 1st September every year. Perhaps in Europe, where the effects of such natural disasters are generally less felt, it might still be an idea to have a similar focussed event. It might be more meaningful to many citizens than the numerous events around global warming, carbon emission reduction targets



[Copyright: M. Oates]

and renewable energy sources! It is arguable in the UK, with the dramatic weather of recent years giving us variously ice-locked and flooded lowland landscapes, that its citizens need to be more knowledgeable about and better prepared for such conditions than has thitherto been the case. [TOM HOSE](#)

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third of this year's planned newsletters and the usual and sincere "thank you" to those of you who have contributed content; I hope you are pleased with the editing. It's been a hectic spring and summer for those of us responding to the various White Papers, reports and strategy documents emanating from Government and its agencies. Then, of course, there is the tedious and time-consuming process of finding partners from outside the Earth science community, because of the developing approach to landscape conservation and promotion, and infilling bid documents for the very few funding opportunities now available for geoconservation. Let's hope that the geoconservation community's expertise is actually recognised and rewarded by those in the life sciences who seem increasingly to be directing policy and holding the purse strings. Meanwhile, it is up to the Earth science community to continue to press its case and to raise public awareness of the key issues, not the least of which is the need to adequately resource undergraduate education. [TOM HOSE](#)

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GeoConservationUK Newsletter

ENGLAND — Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group

The Group is pleased to announce that it has just been successful in a lottery bid for £49,300 towards its new project called *Rocks and You!* The project is a way of combining three key elements:



1. **Conservation** work ensuring we keep a geological heritage for the future.
2. **Research** into key themes such as the Ice Age, chalk streams, Jurassic palaeoenvironments, past use of the resource (archaeology, history, local industries) and the link between rocks-soils-nature, amongst other things.
3. **Educate** the public and scientific communities through field visits, talks, workshops and published papers.

The idea is to provide the link showing how everyone is hugely dependant on geology in all aspects for every part of their lives - from the raw materials for their houses, tools, cars, roads, or heating, to their clothes, soils, makeup and medicines - we even eat rocks (honest!).

As a group interested in our local geology we can see for ourselves that we have lost key sites in Buckinghamshire – the brick pits, sand and gravel quarries, chalk pits and cement works — as its industries close. Old pits have become filled with waste and rock exposures have degraded or become overgrown. Even fresh cuttings for new roads are now landscaped and seeded with grass or flowers rather than leaving a little of the local rock showing for geologists!

We know there is a demand and growing interest in geology and the natural world in general - we can see this from the response to our previous events.

There is a growing public interest in all aspects of our heritage - and geology naturally fits into all of them. We will therefore be engaging with a wide range of people from rock-climbers, to ornithologists, to walkers, gardeners, farmers, archaeologists, fisherman and more! This project is by no means just for geologists. There is no age limit for this interest - from the most elderly to the tiniest child - a



BEHG and OUGS members at Coombes Quarry.



BEHG members and the public 'discover' hydrology at Burnham Beeches.

Volume 2, Number 3**ENGLAND — Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group (cont.)**

fascination for all aspects of geology can be found in every age group and from every cultural background. Lastly, but not least – where are we going to train our future geologists if all the quarries are totally backfilled and exposures covered over? We will offer our sites not just to interested locals, but also to universities and colleges to offer professional training opportunities.

This lottery funded project hopes to address some of the issues of loss of geology sites by providing and enhancing sites for visits, interpreting the geology exposed, and providing a range of information from general interest accounts for non-geologists to professional papers for the geological journals. We now have £49,300 to put towards it and just need some willing people to help. The launch over the August Bank Holiday weekend [see previous page] got us off to a good start – anyone local enough to help? Just feel free to contact us via the website at www.bucksgeology.org.uk and I am sure we can find something for you to do!

Jill Evers

ENGLAND — Dorset's Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites Group

The Group continues to promote geology and geo-conservation. The Group had a successful visit to Bookham Farm in late June and the weather was glorious. Ian, Jo, Pete, Pat, Roger and myself spent a couple of hours clearing vegetation [see top right] covering the rock face. The face is now in pretty good condition [see bottom right]. The information boards are generally okay but one is fading badly - as it gets more Sun! We found some good fossil material in the Shaftebury Sandstone (Upper Greensand).



Bookham Farm is one of our DIGS sites between Alton Pancras and Maiden Newton in central Dorset. It shows the Chalk and Upper Greensand boundary with the Zig Zag Chalk above with the Bookham Conglomerate, then the Shaftsbury Sandstone and the Cann Sandstone at the base of the face. The owner of the land (Mr. Foot) is very helpful and not only has the DIGS site on his land but also a nature reserve that is accessible to the public and to anyone who stays at the self-contained farm accommodation.



Alan Holiday



GeoConservationUK Newsletter

ENGLAND — *GeoSuffolk*

GEOCONSERVATIONUK

GeoSuffolk's Chairman, Bob Halstead, was awarded, in May at Burlington House in London, the prestigious Halstead Medal by the Geologists' Association for "*his outstanding contribution to East Anglian geology and Crag palaeontology*". On 10th September, GeoSuffolk members will have a stand at St. Peter's church, Ipswich for a guide to the building stones of the church and other Ipswich buildings.



On 17th September, GeoSuffolk members will be working with Ipswich Museum staff to explore the exciting world of award winners. fossil echinoids (sea urchins); the event will allow the public to examine specimens from the Museum's collections and also give them a chance to have a go at some hands-on craft activities.

Bob Halstead (second from right) with the GA President (David Bridgland) and other award winners.

SCOTLAND — *Strathclyde Geoconservation Group*

The Group has been quite busy in the past few months and has recently published its newsletter. This year the Group has been busy with work on the Lang Craigs [see top right] above Dumbarton. These are basalt cliffs formed by a series of flows of the Carboniferous Plateau lavas. The Craigs overlook a vast expanse of heather and moorland; this is a site of Special Scientific Interest and one of the largest escarpments in lowland Scotland. There is at present a designated circular pathway leading up and over the Craigs promoted by Dumbarton Council.



Some 240 hectares have recently been acquired by the Woodlands Trust whose plans include developing the pathways even further. With this in mind, a group from the Group organised a visit to see how the geology could be promoted to the general public as they took a stroll round this imposing view point. Apart from the obvious basalt crags there is a splendid view up and down the Clyde estuary with the volcanic plug of Dumbarton Rock topped by the castle a prominent feature in the landscape [see bottom right]. The most interesting geomorphological feature of this area however is a post glacial land slip. There are actually quite a number of mounds



SCOTLAND — *Strathclyde Geoconservation Group (cont.)*

below the Craigs [see top right] that point to ancient land-slips that may have been smoothed down by subsequent ice movement, but the most dramatic slip can be seen at the foot of the Craigs [see middle right] in the form of a large mound separated from the crags by a valley which has obviously not been formed by any fluvial means.

At present members of the group are also preparing to publish a guide to the rocks around Dumbarton Castle and intend including brief guides to a number of local sites including Lang Craigs on the Glasgow Geological Society website [www.geologyglasgow.org.uk].

The Group has also contributed to the proposed new developments at Fossil Grove in Glasgow's Victoria Park. Fossil Grove is one of the world's oldest examples of geoconservation. The fossil Carboniferous trees [see bottom right] have been preserved *in situ* enclosed within a purpose built museum since 1887. Over the years the building has been renovated and replaced but as a visitor attraction it was becoming a forgotten gem.

Since 2006 the Group has been actively involved in pushing for something positive to be done with the building and the surrounding quarry. There is now a Board of Trustees and an active steering group. These two bodies cover a wide range of individual skills both from outside and within Glasgow City Council. With monies from a trust fund, plans have been set in place to upgrade and update the Fossil Grove. Improvement of the on-site interpretation is already in place and a group of architects have been given a brief to come up with three suggested designs to bring this iconic building into the 21st century: (1) to keep the *status quo* with minimal upgrading; (2) to extend the present building; and (3) to design a new build. The architects have met with a number of interested parties including the Group and the Glasgow Geological Society, and the initial outline plans have been discussed. The Fossil Grove we feel is now on its way to becoming a beacon of geoconservation.



Margaret Greene



GeoConservationUK Newsletter

NEWS ITEM — *West Dorset Fossil Collecting Code of Conduct*

West Dorset Fossil Collecting Code of Conduct Review

The West Dorset fossil collecting code of conduct has been running for 12 years and was developed through a working party of interested groups with wider consultation. The code was accepted by



Rough seas, such as these in March 2008 near Charmouth, provide very good fossil collecting opportunities.

UNESCO as appropriate management for a rapidly eroding coastline. As part of the Dorset and East Devon Coast Management Plan review, it has been agreed that now is the time to undertake a review of the code. The aim of the review is to examine the effectiveness of the code and to consult widely with organisations with an Earth science and geoconservation interest. Views are also welcomed from individuals with any background and interest in the area. The main review document sets out the background to the code and undertakes the review in two parts:

Part 1 'the state of the coast' and Part 2 'the record of important specimens'. It includes a discussion and a series of appendices, including a questionnaire.

The consultation started in June and it will finish at the end of September. All of the responses will be considered by the Science and Conservation Advisory Group and the fossil code working group. The consultation can be accessed at:

<http://www.jurassiccoast.com/299/managing-the-site-37/whs-management-167/fossil-code-review-803.htm>

Please do take the time to give us your views and make that important response.

Richard Edmonds

M E E T I N G S and C O N F E R E N C E S

GeoConservationUK SGM and AGM

Due to constitutional changes there is a need to hold both a SGM and a AGM this year. Despite the much appreciated benefits over the past few years of holding the AGM at the GA's Festival of Geology in London, this year venue shifts back to possibly more accessible central England location. The GCUK AGM will be at Dudley Museum on Saturday 29th October. It will be at midday to enable time to get to the afternoon excursion venue, the Wren's Nest, to examine its new way-marking that is currently being installed. Papers will be going out to member groups towards the end of this month.

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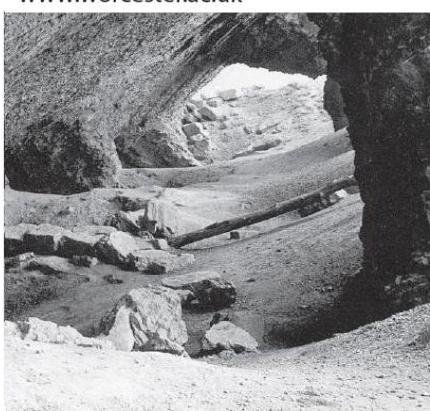
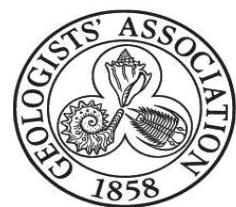
MEETINGS and CONFERENCES

The Geologists' Association Two-Day Meeting 2011

GEOCONSERVATION FOR SCIENCE AND SOCIETY: AN AGENDA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

9 and 10 September 2011

University of Worcester,
St John's Campus, Henwick Grove,
Worcester, WR2 6AJ
www.worcester.ac.uk



Left: Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve. © Natural England.



Right: Barn Green Quarry, Lickey Hills, before and after. © Lickey Hills Rangers.

This meeting will examine the 21st Century challenges and opportunities for geoconservation and the partnerships required to ensure that our geological heritage continues to be valued and protected as part of the natural environment. It will also celebrate 60 years of successful geoconservation since the first SSSIs were designated.

Programme

The one day conference on 9 September will consist of invited lectures, poster sessions and debates exploring topics including the importance of local groups, funding opportunities, the benefits of raising public awareness and the future of the Geological Conservation Review. Registration from 9.30am, conference starts at 10am. Lunch and refreshments included. Confirmed speakers include: Professor Rory Mortimore (University of Brighton and ChalkRock Ltd), Dr Murray Gray (Queen Mary, University of London), Professor Jim Rose (Editor, Proceedings of the Geologists' Association), Phil Harding (Wessex Archaeology and Channel 4's Time Team), Tim Badman (World Heritage Programme, IUCN), Dr Colin Prosser (Natural England), Dr Jonathan Last (English Heritage) and Drew Bennellick (Heritage Lottery Fund).

The one day field trip on 10 September, will visit the Lickey Hills Champions Project, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery and the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve to examine geoconservation in action and the role of local groups and communities. Departure from the University of Worcester at 9am, returning by 5pm. Lunch, coach travel and field guide included. The field trip is supported and led by the Black Country Geological Society, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, the Ripples Through Time Project and the West Midlands Regional Group of the Geological Society.

Submission of Poster Abstracts

Offers of posters, including an abstract (max 300 words), should be submitted by email to Sarah Stafford at the Geologists' Association by 1 July 2011. Those accepted will be notified by 15 July 2011. Max size A0. Portrait style preferred but not essential.

Registration Costs

One-day conference registration (9 September): students £15, members* £25; non-members £30

Field trip registration (10 September): students £5, members* £10; non-members £15

Overnight accommodation at the University of Worcester is available at £32 B&B (en-suite). Reservations can be made via the registration form.

*Includes members of the Geologists' Association, Geology Trusts, GeoConservationUK and Affiliated Groups, British Society for Geomorphology and the Quaternary Research Association.

Registration is essential. For further details and registration please visit:

www.geologistsassociation.org.uk/conferences.html





GeoConservationUK Newsletter

MEETINGS and CONFERENCES



GeoConservationUK acknowledges the support of **Rockhounds Welcome!** in the production of this Newsletter

National Stone Centre — *Stone Balancing* (10th– 11th September 2011)

The UK's first National Stone Balancing showcase event is being held at the National Stone Centre near Wirksworth, Derbyshire. This novel event is a partnership between the National Stone Centre and Responsible Fishing, an artistic collaboration established by James Brunt and Timm Cleasby; the pair create and photograph natural stone balancing installations and sculpture at locations across the UK.

Stone Balancing

The art of stone balancing is to create the seemingly impossible by balancing stones on top of each other in arrangements that appear to defy gravity. In the UK, stone balancing is somewhat of a hidden art-form with few people practising it professionally, however it does go on and it's not uncommon to stumble upon strange rock or stone structures while walking on a beach. Internationally, there are a number of well established practitioners creating the most amazing work around the world.



Balancing Point

Balancing Point aims to bring together stone balancers, known and unknown, the experienced and the novice from around the country to work together in one location, raising the profile of this hidden but dramatic art-form and the artists who create these amazing works. The weekend event will be a mix of exhibitions, demonstrations, public workshops and community stone balancing at the National Stone Centre, near Matlock in the Peak District. Further details are available from Jerry@nationalstonecentre.org.uk and james@responsiblefishinguk.co.uk. The event is part of the Fringe activities of the Wirksworth Arts Festival.

Jan Thomas

GeoConservationUK Executive Committee

Chair: Mike Browne - Lothian and Borders
GeoConservation Group

Treasurer: Alan Cutler - Black Country Geological Society

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