

# Newsletter

Vol.7 No.1 Autumn 2009

**Keeping you up-to-date with  
local and national RIGS activities**



UKRIGS Geoconservation Association, Newsletter V7 N1

## LOCAL RIGS GROUPS

### Berkshire RIGS Group

The Group has been renamed to the **Berkshire Geoconservation Group**; this name was felt to be more in line with the Group's work in in Berkshire and the south-east and is easier to explain to people.

Over the last twelve months the Group has been very active with nine new Local Geological Sites (formerly RIGS) being designated in the county and many walks and talks having taken place. The sites designated range from disused quarries to landscape features and one church built from local iron-cemented conglomerate. The profile of geodiversity has been raised enormously and the future looks just as busy.

*Gravels of Berkshire* – following a grant from ALSF the Group have just published leaflets giving information about the river gravels: origin and use as well as restoration of pits in the county. There is one leaflet for each of the unitary authorities and a booklet covering the whole of the county. The Group had support from all of the aggregate companies and many other individuals to produce these and this assistance is gratefully acknowledged. The Group's details are available on their website: [www.berkshirerigs.org.uk](http://www.berkshirerigs.org.uk) and new members are always welcomed.



*A quarry clearance day at Fognam Quarry.*

[Lesley Dunlop]

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## A L A S T E D I T O R I A L

Hello fellow Geoconservationists,

I have decided after running the *Newsletter* for the last nine years that it is now time for me to step down and allow someone else to take over the reins. Tom Hose has taken on the task, so from now on please address items for the *Newsletter* to him. I wish him well in his editorship.

It has been an interesting time for me in the role and during it I have seen much change in the development of RIGS and the raising of awareness of Geoconservation. I have made many friends and been privy to some marvellous stories, publicity productions and meetings. I think the *Newsletter* is a vital piece of communication showing what the individual groups can do. Some of you are truly an inspiration.

I will still carry on representing the voluntary movement on the editorial board of **Earth Heritage** which I hope now has a reprieve and will continue in its hard copy form. I think it is a great publication. The pictures and articles are brilliant.

All the best to all of you and thank you for all your support over my editorship.

Cynthia



*The informal handover of the Newsletter to its new Editor, Tom Hose - the candy bar is most definitely not a bribe!*

### Cornwall RIGS

The Group has been busy since the last issue of the Newsletter. The latest County Geology Site (RIGS) is at Carclaze, just north of St Austell. The site is the southern face of Carclaze Old Tin Pit, which was worked from Tudor times.

Carclaze was one of the largest open pit tin workings from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and provided a uniquely informative location for early geologists; amongst whom were some of the founding fathers of geological science. It enabled them to develop concepts concerned with the alteration of granites and metalliferous mineralization.

The pit was a 'must see' site for 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> C travellers and there are many descriptions and lithographs of the site; the earliest accounts were by scientists from France and Germany. The pit also shows how mining technology from the open pit tin mining industry was used by the early china clay industry. The site may also be the location for the earliest underground canal in Britain,

John Parnell of St Austell, although nothing can be seen of this at present. The site is owned by Imerys, who have given a verbal assurance that, if and when the Ecotown proposal at Baal is developed, the site will be preserved.



*An 1831 engraving of Carclaze Pit by Thomas Allom; water issuing from adits on the right is powering three waterwheels driving stamps that crushed the ore in order to release the tin.*

A recently published paper on the site can be accessed via the Cornwall Wildlife Trust website: find the 'Cornish Geology' section and look in the related links on the granites page.

[Colin Bristol]





## LOCAL RIGS GROUPS

**Kent RIGS**

The Group continues to develop new resources and tap new audiences. For example, in early August a party of Cub Scouts and Scouts was introduced to the joys of finding real fossils on a guided visit to The Fowlmead Fossil Site. This is an educational resource developed on a former coal tip site. Spoil from coal-working is a rich source of fossils, particularly plant fossils.

Kent Rigs has been actively involved with the conversion of the former working Betteshanger Colliery to the recreational Fowlmead Country Park. The Group recognised that a supervised fossil collecting site, with tools and equipment provided and experts



*Fowlmead Fossil Site in late May 2009 after a digger had exposed even more fossil collecting material.*

would be an excellent way of introducing children to geology

By this summer (excluding family days, open days or "get out" events which attract other audiences) Fowlmead Fossil Site has provided 422 children and young people from 12 different schools or youth groups a fascinating fossil experience. When the adults who accompanied children are included the total number is in excess of 500. All this has been achieved through the services of a dedicated band of volunteers.

**Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group**

This RIGS group has had an active year with several interesting developments including most recently grant aid from Natural England to develop some geosites at Northmoor Hill and Froghall Pit. A useful, to the members, consequence of this funding is the running of some workshops, with one on logging sedimentary deposits scheduled for mid-October. The group used earlier funding provided by Natural England to monitor, record and photograph 24 RIGS. In addition around 10 sites termed as 'old RIGS' were de-listed for various reasons, but another dozen sites are to be surveyed as potential new RIGS; much of the burden of this work fell onto the very capable shoulders of Dr. Jill Ayres. Meanwhile, the main conservation effort has been at the Taplow South Lodge Pit SSSI site. Members have had several opportunities to go on geological walks in various parts of the county and surrounding counties, including the Coombs Quarry, Buckingham sandpit, Burnham Beeches, Ivinghoe, and the Whitchurch area; the latter to look at fossil-rich Portland limestone.

The May AGM held at the Buckinghamshire County Museum in Aylesbury had a presentation "A History of Chalk Mining and Brick Making in Reading" by Dr. Clive Edmonds as a major attraction; it was also an opportunity for members to look behind the scenes at some of the Museum's reserve collection. In mid-July the Buckinghamshire County Museum in Aylesbury ran another of its popular Fossil & Archaeology Days. BEHG members pitched in, as usual, with sessions on handling and identifying a range of geological items; likewise, for the Bucks County Show in late August members spent the day promoting geoconservation in between the identifications! Overall, given its small band of active members the group has made much progress in conserving and promoting local RIGS over the past twelve months.

[Tom Rose]



*Mike Henty points out the fossil rich Portland limestone in a Whitchurch 'barn'.*



*Mike Henty and Mike Palmer identify geological material for a visitor to the Fossil and*

## GEOLOGY TRUSTS

**The Strategic Stone Study gathers momentum ...**

*Andrew Jerkinson & Julie Harrald [Geology Trust Co-ordinators for the Strategic Stone Study]*

During the last year, four Geology Trusts have been involved in an exciting and practical project with English Heritage. England has an incredibly rich and varied architectural landscape. This is in great measure due to the variety of local stone used in buildings and other structures, giving character to our towns, villages and rural landscapes. The Strategic Stone Study aims to identify and map distinctive building stones across the country, their use in representative buildings and the source quarries for them. Quite an ambitious project!

The four Geology Trust counties (Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire), together with the Stone Centre in Derbyshire, recently participated in a pilot exercise, each producing data for the project by different methods. This enabled English Heritage to formulate the best procedure to be used as the project is rolled out across the country. Four more of our member counties (Shropshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Bedfordshire) have just completed their contribution to the main stage of the project and a further six counties are now involved. We therefore thought it would be of use to share our experience and inform other geoconservation groups about

the project before it comes their way (in a schedule planned for the next two years).

English Heritage will be seeking experienced local geologists and historic buildings experts in each county to provide data on quarries, building stones and representative stone architecture, both vernacular and grand. The information should be gathered from the personal knowledge of local experts and existing archives (e.g.



*Distinctive Cornbrash is used in many old buildings in the Gloucestershire village of South Cerney.*

RIGS and BGS databases, County and National Monument Records), supplemented by some fieldwork. The data then has to be fed into spreadsheets and a written, illustrated summary of that county's building stones produced.

The output of the project will ultimately be made freely available on a Graphical Information System (GIS) on the web hosted by BGS and called EBSPits (England's Building Stone Pits). The new database will provide local authorities with the evidence they need to safeguard stone sources of historic importance. It will also enable heritage organisations to make sensitive repairs to buildings in their care, and it is hoped that it will encourage the use of indigenous stone for new builds, thereby supporting our stone industry and stone craftsmanship.

We have found it enjoyable and very satisfying to contribute to such a worthwhile project, utilising the knowledge and expertise that we, as a collection of geoconservation groups, have built up over many years, and that fits so well with the ethos of our work. Details of the four Trust's experiences and the practical aspects of doing the work, and contact details for English Heritage in order to offer to be involved in the study, can be obtained by emailing [info@thegeologytrusts.org](mailto:info@thegeologytrusts.org)



*Assessing building stones at Chilmark Church, Wiltshire.*



*Assessing building stones at a Bedfordshire quarry.*





## GEOPARKS

### Geopark Way gets Official Opening - despite monsoon weather!

Natalie Watkins (Geopark Way Project Manager)

Geoparks, across Europe and the UK, continue to be recognised and existing ones further develop new interpretative provision. Most recently, the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark has developed the Geopark Way. Not even monsoon weather and limited visibility due to the low cloud in Tank Quarry on the side of the Malvern Hills could dampen the spirits of the team responsible for the impressive 109 mile long Geopark Way on Saturday, 9th June at the official opening performed by Professor David Dineley watched - as the rain began to abate a little - by Natalie Watkins (Geopark Way Project Manager) and Gerry Calderbank (Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust Chairman) and a hardy group of supporters including representatives of *The Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, Gloucester Geological Trust, Malvern Hills Conservators, Gloucestershire County Archaeology, Wyre Forest Visitors Centre – Forestry Commission, Treasure Trails – Herefordshire & Worcestershire, Community Action, Malvern Walking Festival, the Countryside Service, the Worcestershire Bat Group, the Forest of Dean Historical Society, the Worcestershire Archaeological Service, West Mercia Police, Herefordshire Ramblers, Gloucestershire RSPB, and the Worcestershire Barn Owl Trust.*



*The Official Opening of the Geopark Way; (left to right) Natalie Watkins, Geopark Way Officer, Gerry Calderbank - H&WEHT Chairman and Professor David Dineley at the one moment the heavens weren't belting it down during the day!*



*Natalie Watkins, Geopark Way Officer trying out a section of the walk using the recently released Trail Guide.*

The Way winds its way through the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark, from Bridgnorth in Shropshire in the north to Gloucester in the south, passing through fantastic countryside exploring 700 million years of the Earth's history. The public can now walk either the whole length of the Geopark or several 'manageable chunks' of it, for those who want to do a little bit of the walk and come back to continue their journey at a later stage. The first group of thirty walkers completed the whole 109 walk by finishing at Gloucester Cathedral on the Sunday afternoon – taking eight days to finish the walk in bite sized chunks. The walkers were met and each presented with a certificate to acknowledge that they were the first to complete the walk.

A new *Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark Way Trail Guide* is available now for just £9.95 and can be obtained from a variety of outlets, including several Tourist Information Centres within the Geopark, or direct from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. Between the sizeable raindrops, as he opened the walk, Professor David Dineley said: *"In terms of Geo and Bio diversity this opening of the Geopark Way is a major event. The work that has gone into planning, way marking and guiding people on the 109 mile walk is quite extraordinary and the new trail guide that has been released that guides walkers by the hand every step of the way, pointing out some wonderful and fascinating sites and sights they can see is a mighty impressive guide."*; now you cannot get a better recommendation than that! Hundreds of guides already have been sold and at least four large groups of walkers from the West Midlands are visiting the Geopark on a monthly basis to complete the walk during 2009.

## EGM and AGM



### Notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting

The Executive will be proposing the following changes to the Constitution.

1. A change of name of the Association to GeoConservationUK
2. Increasing the number of Members of the Executive from 7 to 10
3. Introducing the term Local Site, as used by government departments, to sit alongside the term RIGS

### Notice of the Eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Association of UK RIGS Groups (UKRIGS) Following the EGM

at

University College London

on

Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2009

12.00 – 13.00

*Membership renewals and applications must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2009 for Groups to be eligible to vote at the AGM and the EGM.*





## EGM and AGM

### UK RIGS AGM 2009 and EGM - First Mailing of business papers (September 2009)

#### 1. The UKRIGS AGM and EGM, Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2009

The AGM this year is again being held in conjunction with the Geologists' Association Festival of Geology. The AGM will be held after the EGM at University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT

#### 2. Subscription Renewals

Subscriptions to UKRIGS are now due and should be paid to the Treasurer using the appropriate form.

#### 3. Annual General Meeting: invitations to stand for election to the UKRIGS Executive.

The following positions become vacant at the AGM on 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2009:

- Chairman
- Treasurer
- Eight Members (assuming the constitutional changes are passed by the EGM)

In accordance with Rule 14(e) nominations for election to the above posts are sought; use should have been made of the nomination form(s) which must have been returned, accompanied by a statement from the nominee, to the Secretary by the 2nd of October 2009 to ensure mailing to members with the AGM and EGM papers.

#### 4. Proposed amendments to the Constitution

In accordance with Rule 14(f) the Executive Committee and all full member groups may still submit items to be included on the agenda of the AGM. Proposed amendments must be received by UKRIGS, at the address below, by 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009 to ensure mailing to members with the AGM papers; *these may be submitted electronically to [c.jones@worc.ac.uk](mailto:c.jones@worc.ac.uk)*

After extensive consultation with the Membership, the Executive will be proposing the following changes to the Constitution:

1. A change of name of the Association to GeoConservationUK.
2. Increasing the number of Members of the Executive from 7 to 10.
3. Introducing the term Local Site, as used by government departments, to sit alongside the term RIGS.

## FUTURE CONFERENCE

### 2nd Global Geotourism Conference

This will be held in Mulu, Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia from 17<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010. It will follow on from, and be closely connected with, the **4<sup>th</sup> International UNESCO Conference on Geoparks 'Geoheritage Education for Sustainability'** being held in Langkawi from 10<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

Details of the geotourism conference can be downloaded from:

<http://www.globalgeotourism.com/>

Abstracts of papers must be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 and, if accepted, will be included in the conference's initial bound publication.



## FIRST EDITORIAL

An incoming Editor's job is never an easy one when it follows a superb and long-running act such as Cynthia's, but I will do my best; on which note, I was pleased to learn about Scouts visiting the Fowlehead Fossil Site, but saddened that the Scout Association no longer offers a discrete geologist badge! I will recall the shared pleasures of a late-1970s' geology field trip for Scouts into Clwyd's rain swept hills looking for Carboniferous fossils and more recently with a party of primary school children standing in a sand quarry in Bedfordshire on an overcast spring morning, also trying to evoke distant volcanic eruptions and warm seas. We should, of course, make every effort to involve young people in the fascination of geology because eventually we will need to hand over to them the baton of geoconservation. Equally, we should not forget that many mature citizens derive much pleasure from informal geology sessions and contribute a great deal to the volunteer effort of the RIGS movement. In the middle we need to establish a greater awareness amongst new graduates and recently qualified professionals. So, the *Newsletter* will continue to reach out to its established audience and intentionally to newer ones. My intention is to get the *Newsletter* back onto its four issues a year basis; submission dates and details for 2010 will be posted on the UKRIGS website by late October. I must thank my colleagues and employer for their support and forbearance as I assume the challenging role of Editor and I must praise our contributors for swiftly answering the call for news and apologise for some necessary editing. I'm already looking forward to putting together the Christmas issue, so keep the stories coming in. *TOM HOSE*

## PAST CONFERENCE

### Conserving Geodiversity in a Changing Climate

[A seminar convened by The Geoconservation Commission of the Geological Society of London and the UK conservation agencies]

A most engaging and stimulating opportunity to topically assess the impact of climate change on geoconservation was afforded by this one-day (9th June) seminar held at Burton Manor, Chester University. After the welcome and introductory sessions by Chester University's Vice Chancellor, Professor Tim Wheeler, Cynthia Burek Andrew McMillan, (Chair of the Geoconservation Commission), and Colin Prosser (Natural England) delegates were introduced to the delights of computer-aided climate modelling by Paul Bowyer (UKCIP). During the rest of the day through a series of further keynotes and some workshops the seminar examined: the impacts of climate change and how they will affect sites that

John Gordon (Scottish Natural Heritage) keynotes on climate change and geomorphological processes.

are valued for their geological and geomorphological interests; the implications for the future management of sites; and how geomorphological processes in the wider landscape will adapt under this changing regime were noted. The four workshops, each most ably chaired, focussed on the impact of climate change on exposure sites, active processes, integrity sites and soils; if only delegates could have gone to them all! Some fifty plus delegates attended representing a broad range of national conservation agencies, RIGS groups, Geology Trusts, geodiversity academics, and voluntary conservation bodies. All geoconservationists would have found it a useful contribution to the development of the UK Geodiversity Action Plan.

[Tom Hose]



## 'CREDITS'

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#### Co-opted

Secretary: Dr Cheryl Jones  
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Supported by:



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*It is always interesting and enjoyable to read about RIGS groups activities and their work. To share your news, please contact Dr Thomas A. Hose, RIGS Newsletter Editor, [tom.hose@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:tom.hose@bucks.ac.uk)*

[Copy Date for V7 N3 is 1st December 2009]

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