



Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group

Newsletter No.23 October 2013

Buckingham Sand Pit – May 2nd 2013

The 'Fabulous Five' turn out for a good clean-up of Buckingham Sand Pit in May. All quarries are in need of a spring clean and the sand pit now looks really good with brambles and hawthorn cleared back and the ivy, which had formed a trip hazard on the walkways, was cut right back to where it should be. It was a really good day and a grand way to get fit. There will be more sites that need a clean up during October and November, so please look out for these notices and hopefully more members will be able to join in. Details to follow.

Jill Eyers



A famous Buckinghamshire Geologist – S.S.Buckman

Reference is made on page 3 of this newsletter to an ammonite named by S. S. Buckman.

This prompted a short article about this distinguished Bucks geologist. Sydney Savory Buckman. (1860-1929). (Photo)



Born as the eldest son to a geology-botany professor at Cirencester, Sydney's interests in geology started early and were further aroused when the family moved to Dorset following the untimely death of his mother. There Sydney became a professional writer, "consultant palaeontologist" and fossil dealer.

His long association with Buckinghamshire started after he moved near Thame in 1904 and then to Southfields, Long Crendon, in 1910. Here he bought "The Castle" public house and converted it to become his home and museum.

Sydney Buckman was encouraged to write a monograph on Middle Jurassic ammonite systematics and later extended this in a seven volume work including many new ammonite species from the entire British Jurassic outcrop. Several of these type specimens were, until some years ago, housed in the Bucks County Museum's collections, with which he enjoyed a close association. The one described as being "in the museum yard" has unfortunately long since disappeared. Buckman's scientific reputation was long ridiculed, as a "splitter" of

species and for his very detailed stratigraphically ordered faunal sequences, called "hemerae". His isolation from mainstream academic circles and later publication without peer review may in part be responsible for this attitude, as well as his increasing tendency to become an armchair geologist in later life. When calling on "Southfields" a few years ago, and explaining the reason for my wish to photograph the property because of its famous geologist association, the occupants exclaimed "So that's why we find so many fossils in the garden!"

Mick Oates

Jill Eyers reports on her recent visit to the Coa Valley in Portugal

The Coa Valley is a tributary of the River Douro in northeast Portugal. It contains the largest collection of open air Ice Age art, consisting of hundreds of animal images made by pecking and fine line incisions. There is only one highly stylised human image in the valley and no abstract or motif designs. It is therefore unusual and a very special site.

The valley was due to be flooded as part of a dam project and construction was already well underway when the art was discovered along the river margins. Professional advice and support was gained from abroad and the dam construction stopped after a vigorous local campaign to help save the valley.



Photo above: Two auroch – these are the larger predecessors of our modern cow.

Although precise dating is still on-going, and may not be possible for many of the rock panels, the dates proven so far extend from 25,000 to 10,000 years ago. The carvings are believed to represent the work of hunter-gatherers during the ice age. But why did they engrave these animal images on the rocks? Suggestions range from hunting information; to way markers; to simply art or doodling; to 'replenishing' those animals just killed. Whatever the purpose of the art they certainly depict the animals of the time, which can be corroborated by bones of horses, auroch, deer, ibex and occasional fox or wolf. It is clear that the area lay well beyond the tundra wildlife. In contrast, animals such as mammoth, bison, woolly rhino and reindeer are depicted in abundance in cave art further north in France and Cantabrian Spain.



Photo above: The Coa Valley – the metamorphic rocks exposed are nearly all phyllites.

The area now has its own museum with guided tours taking people to the key sites in 4 x 4 vehicles. These sites are fascinating and show a variety of different styles. The Coa Valley art has prompted the search for more examples, not just in Portugal but throughout the world. Open air rock art may well have been the primary art from the Ice Age, good examples of ancient open air art have been found in the UK; Northumbria, Cumbria, Yorkshire and Scotland have revealed some interesting insights into what our ancestors were carving on rocks in open places.



Photo above: A goat made by a broad line groove

Perhaps the overall moral of this article and our recent UK finds is...if you look you will find! It also leads to considering if Bucks also had its own version, which due to the nature of Buck's softer rocks (Chalk and Jurassic limestone) may have long since disappeared.

3D fossil photos – a new resource

Members may be interested to learn of a new online resource of 3D fossil type images. The JISC funded project has created a publicly accessible free online database of type specimens of British fossil species.

A 'type' is a specimen (or a group of specimens) of an organism to which the scientific name of that organism is formally attached. In other words, it is the example that defines the features of a particular organism. In the UK, fossil type specimens are stored in a number of locations across the country, and until now there has been no easy way for researchers to search across these multiple different catalogues.

The GB3D Type Fossils Online project aims to develop a single database of the type specimens, held in British collections, of macrofossil species and subspecies found in the UK, including links to photographs (including 'anaglyph' stereo pairs) and a selection of 3D digital models

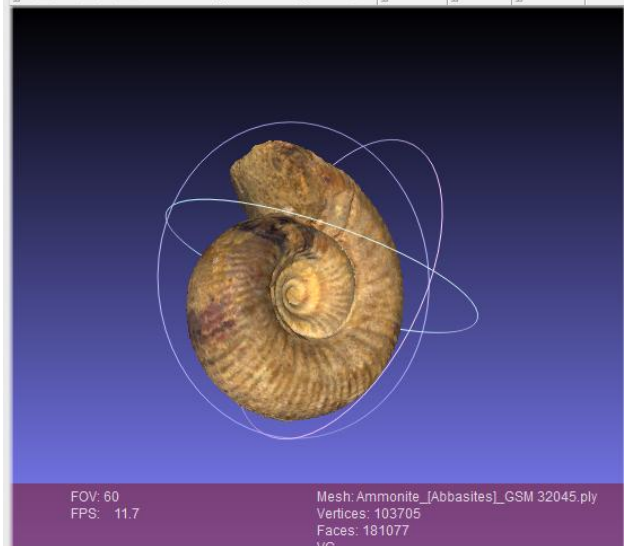
The virtual fossils look particularly impressive when viewed in MeshLab on an iPad or iPhone, and usually work on Android devices as well. They can of course be downloaded and viewed on a PC.

<http://www.3d-fossils.ac.uk/home.html>

The models are available for download from the BGS ftp server at:

ftp://ftp.bgs.ac.uk/pubload/mhowe/GB3D_Selecte%20Fossils/

Example image below: *Abbasites abbas* in MeshLab 3D viewer. This is a Type Ammonite published by SS Buckman in 1921. Now held by the BGS. The specimen can be viewed, rotated and zoomed from all over the world and viewing is no longer restricted to the confines of the museum.



step-by-step instructions can be found on the project blog:

<http://gb3dtypefossils.blogspot.co.uk/>

Further information can be obtained from:

Dr Mike Howe. email: mhowe@bgs.ac.uk
JISC GB/3D fossil types online project & Chief Curator. National Geological Repository

2013 Future Programme –

Further trips and talks will be scheduled as the year progresses. Please check the BEHG website or email the organisers before any event, for the latest update.

Sunday October 13th 2013, 10:30am-2:00pm, Geological Excursion: New Bradwell, Milton Keynes. Leader Dr Tom Hose. The walk (and cyclists are welcome) entitled "Nobby and the Cut" will be following the new Geotrail along the Bradwell to Newport Pagnell railway walk/cycle route. For details and to reserve places contact Tom Hose: at (t.hose123@btinternet.com)

~~**Postponed :Saturday 26th October:** Geological "fly drive" based upon an old GA Centennial Guide route. Leader Tom Hose. More details to follow.~~

Saturday 23rd November, 2.00pm-3.30pm: "Chalk - backbone of the Chilterns" a talk by Dr. Haydon Bailey, Geological Advisor to the Chilterns Society. This is a joint BEHG/BAS event, at Bucks County Museum, Aylesbury. Contact Mike Palmer for further information Tel: 01296 624519 or email: mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk

Membership

A thank you to those that have already renewed their subscriptions for this year, 2013 and a reminder to those that have yet to renew to forward on their membership fee as soon as possible please to Julia.

Annual membership runs from 1st January. Individual membership for the 2013 calendar year is **£7.50** and family membership is **£12**.

A copy of the membership form (Page 9) is available on our website:
www.bucksgeology.org.uk/pdf_files/BEHGMembershipForm2013.pdf

If you would like to join please complete and send the application form together with payment to:

Membership Secretary, Julia Carey, c/o BMERC. Place Service 9th Floor, County Hall,
Aylesbury. Bucks. HP20 1UY

email: jcarey@buckscc.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can pay your subscription direct to the **BEHG** account at :
Lloyds TSB (White Hart Street, High Wycombe)
Sort code: 30-94-28 Account no. 00744003

Confirmation of receipt will either be by email or by post. The BEHG welcomes all new members.

The Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group aims to record, conserve and promote the geology of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Website: www.bucksgeology.org.uk

For general enquiries please contact:

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