Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group
Newsletter October 2008

Buckinghamshire County Fair August 29th 2008

The Bucks Earth Heritage Group was well represented at the Buckinghamshire County Fair this year. Several members volunteered to staff the booth during the day. Attractions included; Gold panning, making plaster cast fossil, "feely bag" identification and a good display of rock specimens. The booth attracted a good number of enquires about the purpose of our group and the events we hold.

Our thanks goes to Mr Mike Henty for organising this event and it is hoped that the interest sparked will lead to more new members.

Sunday 7th September: Rock & Fossil Roadshow at Bradwell Abbey

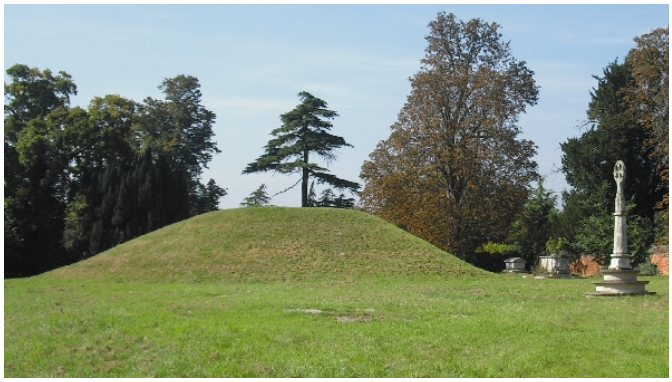
Unfortunately the Group were unable to attend this event although Mike Palmer did make some geology specimens and information about the group available on the Bucks County Museum stand.

Studley Grange near Swindon Saturday 20th September:

A small group of members joined Simon Penn on this return to Wiltshire. Despite being quite expansive in Buckinghamshire, exposures of Kimmeridge Clay are rare and temporary in our County. Here, at Studley Grange, the Kimmeridge Clay is excavated and piled to one side ready to use as backfill for landfill. Simon has made a number of trips to the site finding a range of Jurassic marine fossils (see right) including pliosaur, ichthyosaur, marine crocidile, fish ammonites and bivalves. Finds on the day included a shark fin spine, ichthyosaur vertebra and crocodile tooth. On my part, it was nice to see the site on a sunny day after the driving rain that greeted us on our December 2007 trip.

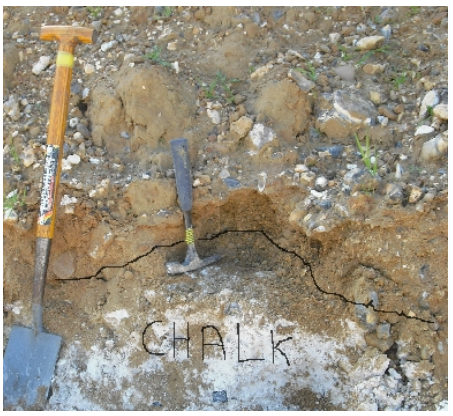
Taplow Geology
Saturday 27th September 2008

The return visit to Taplow followed the major clean-up which the group has performed earlier in the year at the South Lodge Pit - SSSI (See May 2008 Newsletter). But this time the group examined the geology and enjoyed the late September sunshine.
The South Lodge Pit exposes one of the few examples of the Late Cretaceous, (Santonian age ~84 myrs) Phosophatic Chalks in England. The beds contain a concentration of up to 15% P_2O_5 and preserve a rich variety of fossils. The group found lots of interesting items and a good discussion was had about what further work could be done to enhance the site.



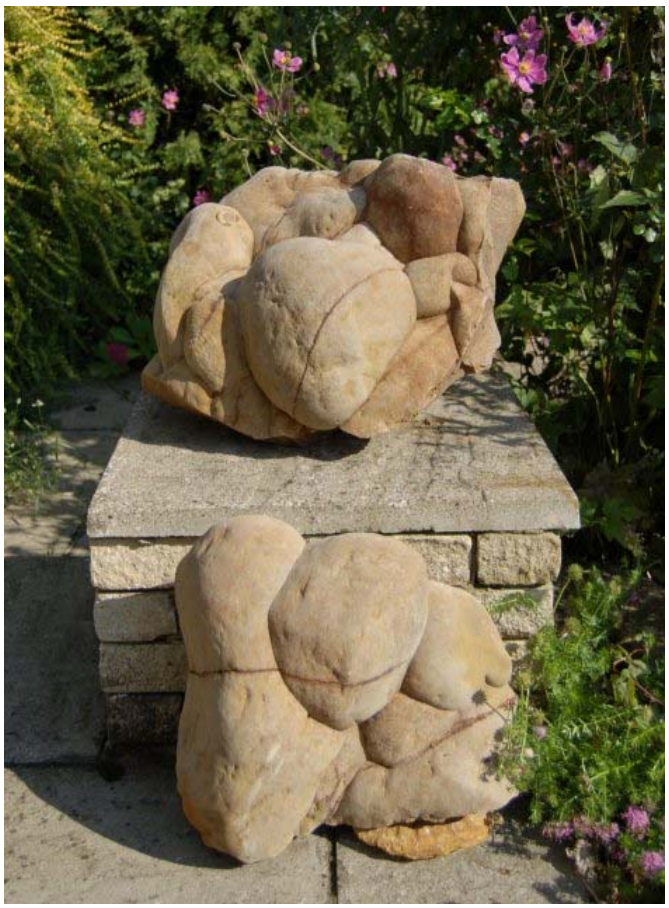
The next stop was Taeppa's Mound, the burial site of Taeppa, a significant local Saxon leader. Mike Farley very kindly described to the group the archaeology and in particular the recent discovery of evidence an iron age hill fort, found during building works at Taplow Court. Good discussions were had about the local springs, which provided water, and their relationship with the geology of the Thames River Terraces.

The final site to be visited was Berry Hill Quarry, where the Taplow River Terrace deposits are being extracted for sand and gravel. The Photo above, looking north towards Taplow, shows the extensive flat upper surface of river terrace and the exposed face of 6 to 8m of exposed sands, gravels and silts. These are some of the youngest deposits to be lain down in the area (~ 186,000 to 132,000 year ago). Of special interest was the contact between the Chalk Bedrock and the gravels. (Photo to Right: the black line has been added to indicate the unconformity surface).



Questions & Answers ?

Geological 'Art' from Whitchurch



Keith Adams recently sent a photograph of these geological *'sculptures'* in the hope that someone could tell him how they formed. The objects were found when a tractor laying drainage pipes in a field behind his house in Whitchurch came across an obstruction in the form of these two large lumps of sandstone. To me they appeared similar to the bowel stones to be found in the perimeter walls of Hatrwell House although Michael Oates points out that these ones are more knobbly. Judging from the location of the find it seems probable that they have come from the Whitchurch Sand formation. Michael describes them as concretionary masses, which have formed within the sediment, probably at a fairly early stage after deposition. Michael notes that small amounts of organic matter in sediment can change the chemical nature of the immediate surroundings. In sand, in particular, movement of groundwater can be fairly free. If the water in the formation contains dissolved silica (i.e. from the sand grains) this could be deposited out in the pore-space between the sand grains and build up incrementally to form an ever-increasing sphere. Several of these growing together could form deposits like those shown here.

Future Programme

The events described in this newsletter are currently the last for the 2008 programme although it is always possible that new events may be arranged at short notice in which case the relevant details will be circulated around the Group.

The committee will be meeting shortly to discuss, amongst other things, the events programme for 2009. If there any trips you would like to see included please contact me at the address below and we will see what we can do. Currently, most events are delivered by a small number dedicated members which tends to limit the number of events we can run. If you would like to help by offering to lead any site visits of give talks please let me know

The Buckinghamshire Earth Heritage Group aims to record, conserve and promote the geology of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Membership is free and open to beginners and experts alike. If you would like to join the free mailing list please send your address, phone number and email address to: *Mike Palmer, Tel: 01296 624519 email:* mpalmer@buckscc.gov.uk

Bucks County Museum Resource Centre,
Tring Road, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5PN