

Events Reports

Downton Gorge Walk: Leader Tom Wall

The Ironbridge Gorge is well known and accessible but its smaller relation taking the glacially diverted Teme through the limestone escarpment towards Bromfield and ultimately to the Severn, and away from its original route via the Aymestrey gap to the Wye basin, is often overlooked. Actual geological exposures are limited but well worn pebbles in the river bed yielded fossils to sharp eyed members. Otherwise the value of the walk on a clear evening lay in the general enjoyment of scenery and vegetation. The role of former owners in preserving such scenery and 'presenting' it to their visitors in a dramatic way by the careful design of paths was well appreciated. English Nature retains this tradition of care and restricted access on those parts under its control and we wish Tom Wall well in his efforts to both present and preserve it.

Nesscliffe Hill Walk: Leader: David Pannett

A joint meeting with Shropshire Archaeological Society, in view of the truly interdisciplinary nature of this landscape. Quarries old and recent show clear exposures of Triassic dune sandstone and reveal the techniques of stone cutting. They relate also to the two main periods of stone building i.e. Medieval churches and castles, then a revival started by Telford and the local estates appreciating the romantic appeal of red sandstone after an age dominated by 'white' Grinshill stone. The two ages of quarry faces also illustrates processes of weathering including the development of hard crusts which so well preserve old tool marks. The tree cover planted over many years by the Bradford estate illustrates the wealth of exotic material which such estates introduced into our landscape from many parts of the temperate world. In any debate about native v. exotic in our woodlands a geologist could point out that the fine redwoods which flourish here now are related to those which covered Europe 30million years ago and formed the brown coals of Dean and Germany. Ice ages not only wiped out this flora but created most of the landforms along the Severn Valley visible below the hill.

Needless to say the publications and display boards provided by the County Countryside Unit, managing the park, avoid any explanation of its Geology.

David Pannett

Members Evening: From the Ground Up!

On the 21st of March our indoor meetings programme drew to a close with a dozen members discussing aspects of the county's building stones.

Andrew Jenkinson introduced the topic with a look around the county at those localities which can be characterised by their very distinctive local building stones - Alberbury, Acton Scott and Norbury were taken as examples.

David Pannett showed how a number of different local sandstones had contributed to the building of Roman Wroxeter, and where these had subsequently ended up as Wroxeter itself became a "quarry".

A discussion followed on how the compilation of some form of county building stones atlas might become a Society project. Broadly it was considered that we could look at this in two ways - record all the stone buildings in an area and try to determine the source rock, or map the use and distribution of distinctive stones.

Karen and Laurie Whitaker volunteered to take the former approach in respect of Shifnal, while Mike Rayner volunteered himself (and Chris in her absence!) to look at the distribution of Kenley Grit. This very coarse, ferruginous, basal conglomerate has a restricted outcrop and is very noticeable in the local buildings.

Andrew would be pleased to hear from any other member willing to survey local building stones. For further advice or information or to let us know which area (village, town etc.) or geological formation you are interested in please contact Andrew on 01547 530660 or email: buildings@shropshiregeology.org.uk. We will return to this subject in the autumn. Meanwhile happy stone spotting on your summer excursions.

Andrew Jenkinson