



ALBURY DOWN FIELD VISIT FEBRUARY 19 2012

On a beautifully sunny morning on Sunday 19th February I awaited pick up from Lewknor dressed as Paddington Bear, a sign around my neck "Albury Down"! This was my second field trip. As the minibus approached I breathed a sigh of relief that I wasn't going to be picked up by the men in white coats but Paul Austin Sargent and my fellow members of OGG who were all laughing at the joke! This all came about as a result of Paul being a tad cheeky with his pick up directions!

Our trip to the north downs of Surrey was interrupted by a stop at the services in Beaconsfield for a quick warming coffee and marmalade sandwich before continuing our journey with a geological word search to keep us all amused (or was it to keep us quiet) with much brain teasing. In fact I think most of us found the words and then tried to fit them unsuccessfully to the clues!

NEWLANDS CORNER

We were met at Newlands Corner by Iain Fletcher from Surrey RIGS. Newlands Corner was populated by people from all walks of life and interests. The view from the top of the hill was amazing especially as the weather was so good. Once we had organised ourselves and some of us had stopped drooling over the numerous motorbikes we set off down the hill towards the village of Albury. About halfway down Iain stopped us and gave a very interesting account of the landscape around us which has been documented over the past 100 years. The hills originate from the Alpine orogeny when Africa collided with Europe. We were standing on the upper chalk and would be traversing the middle and lower chalks on our walk down the hillside. Looking across the valley ahead Iain pointed out the change in geology from chalk to upper greensand and then gault which was clearly visible in the field ahead as a black strip (something that Iain noted he had not seen before).



Beyond this lies Folkestone sand and then Hythe sands. Iain pointed out the relationship between the geology and land use, the sand being mainly wooded, the chalk being used for farming. Surrey is the most heavily wooded county in England which means it can be very difficult to see the geology; however, Iain had some quarries for us to view...

At this point we turned left and walked across the Upper Chalk (mainly used for grazing sheep) and then down a track where we began to pick out the change from Upper to Middle chalk. The flints in the Upper chalk were visible in places. Before reaching the lower chalk we took a small detour into a quarry. Here Iain explained the dip in the strata and the marl seams that were visible. Also in a far corner there were fossils to be seen, so several of the group went to have a good rummage and found some!

Our walk continued down through the lower chalk, somewhat more grey in colour. We then turned into the field we had seen earlier with the strip of Gault

Clay, which was very sticky under foot and contained large pebbles and some flints washed down from the Upper Chalk. Once we had managed to rid ourselves of the vast amount of mud which had stuck to our boots, we continued along the lane where we came across some very bright yellow sand which was amazingly soft to the touch and looked as though someone had tipped an entire lorry load of builders' sand on the verge.

WATER LANE QUARRY

We then stopped at Water Lane Quarry, in the Folkestone Sand. It was beautiful. The Folkestone Sand is very clean and was laid down about 114 Mya. The bedding indicates that the sand was deposited on the face of sub-marine dunes. Three of us climbed up the ridge below the tree roots which put me in mind of rain forest roots. Up here we could clearly see the ironstone, hard brown veins of iron oxide deposited in spaces between the sandstone.

We then took a quick walk into Albury village, passing estate houses which had been built using the local ironstone as a facia, to the Drummond Arms where we deposited our walking boots in a neat line outside the back door much to the amusement of other patrons. We ate a very hearty Sunday lunch accompanied by a pint of tea*! The food was excellent – well done Paul, another good recky. After much laughter and good conversation we found our boots, which fortunately to Doug's great relief hadn't



A sunken lane above Albury

been stolen! (I feel a future prank coming on).

Fully refreshed we set out again, first along Blackheath Lane which sits on the Bargate Stone, a deltaic sandstone cemented by calcium carbonate. On, up the hill via Warren Lane and across the Hythe Sands, fine brown sand with nodules of chert. We stopped to look at the sands and noted many worm burrows. Iain pointed out that the presence of glauconite in the dark, grey layers was a signature of submarine deposition. Our route then took us on into the woods that cap the ridge. Just as we were passing a field of cows a dog walker pointed out that one of them was calving so we all stood and watched as her calf made its way successfully into this world: quite a highlight and well organised by Iain.

A short way later we turned back towards the village down a path that was once used by the local village children to get to school. This path cut a gully into the various sandstones which changed as we walked its length. It was fascinating looking at the tree roots clinging to the arenaceous rock face, and the trees changed from pines to oak and ash highlighting the change in the underlying geology.

SILENT POOL

We continued through the village to Silent Pool passing some houses with the most ornate Victorian chimneys – I wonder whether they sent small boys up those ones to clean them!

First to Sherbourne Pool then Silent Pool (famous for Agatha Christie, well the car park is). Silent pool is currently drained due to a very invasive weed but we had the benefit of seeing the underlying rock. We past a local vineyard and up a very long steep hill stopping to see the landscape we had just walked across and a remnant of the war defences, a pill box. Then a hike up the hill passing from lower to upper chalk with a stop for some near to a quarry now fenced off but very good for sea urchin fossils!

It was a fascinating walk. Iain was an enthusiastic and very informative guide. We had been out in the field for 5 ½ hours in the fresh air and I for one was very tired. A quick pit stop at Beaconsfield on the way back and I was thrown out at Lewknor!! An excellent and most enjoyable day.

Kate Beckett