

Dorset Interesting Geological Sites (DIGS) Meeting
7.00 pm Tuesday 24th May 2016
Dorset Wildlife Trust, Brooklands Farm, Forston

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Present

- Alan Holliday, Giles Watts, Ian Hacker, Kelvin Huff, Richard Edmonds, Pat Snelgrove, Roger Snelgrove, Bob Christian, Pete Bath, Geoff Rowland, Charles Jackson, Rhiannon Rogers

1.2 Apologies for Absence.

- Andy Bradley, Sam Scriven, Jo Thomas, Malcolm Wright

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising.

- None

3. Financial update (Rhiannon)

- Accounts prepared to 31st March. All finances are up to date.
- The accounts are very simple and everything is ready for the AGM in September.
 - Nationwide balance £3846.20
 - Lloyds balance £683.53
- The balances are gradually coming done due to sales not meeting expenses. Alan managed to sell some DIGS material at the Lyme Regis Fossil Festival but this was the only event where sales were made.
- Insurance has been renewed with another company covering employers' liability, personal accident and 3rd party. But please be safe!

4. Update on Jurassica (Richard Edmonds)

4.1 Introduction

Richard used to work in the World Heritage team but is now working in a small team progressing Jurassica.

Mike Hanlon the originator of Jurassica unexpectedly died in February. The project could have fallen apart but there is a very strong London-centric board who want to see it happen. The project itself is hugely ambitious and could cost as much as £120m to see it fully realized. There are discussions with Treasury to make this into much more than a local enterprise but to turn it onto a UK wide project.

There is a very small team and Richard Edmonds is the only Geologist and Alison Smith is the only full time employee plus two others. Since February the team has concentrated on the detail of the project and what it will consist of on the ground.

The team has only just begun to share their ideas externally – DIGS is the 2nd organization – prioritized because of its clear involvement through the Portland RIGS. This is an opportunity for DIGS to hear about what the Jurassica team are doing and to make comments/suggestions. This is part of a much wider consultation process that is just starting.

4.2 Main themes of the project

Jurassica wants to recreate the “lost world” of the Mesozoic in a way that is intended to be something amazing and incredible in scope and ambition. The desire is to be a leading attraction/educational/imaginative project fit to represent the World Heritage Site and the extraordinary changes in life that occurred during this period in the history of life. This is a lot more than just a museum or a theme park but it is intending to entertain and educate.

Jurassica also wants to be a centre to advance science and share research as well as to amaze and inspire within an immersive environment. The aim is to bring to life the “Lost Jurassic world” to foster understanding of the past and show how the past informs the present and the future. There will also be sections about how the Earth supports our current and future lifestyles i.e. to analyse sustainability issues through the lens of geological time. These are real issues that face us today and this is a fantastic opportunity to explore them. There will be nothing like it anywhere else on the planet!

4.3 Key Differentiators

What makes Jurassica stand out from other projects is:

- **Scale**
 - Ambition on a huge scale
 - The site is the massive Broadcroft Quarry (on SE side of the Isle near the young offenders’ institution) which is about 88 acres. Roland’s Quarry is at the centre of the site.
 - The building includes a roof by the world famous Architect Renzo Piano (based in Paris). The plan is to enclose about ¼ of the site with a 120m dome which itself will be a unique architectural creation.

- **Place**
 - Located in a World Heritage Site, the birthplace of geology and one of the most famous geological areas in the world.

- Geologically the site includes both the Purbeck and Portland beds. At the intersection of the two, the dirt bed is present but the fossil forest does not seem to have been developed here
 - The Quarry itself will also be restored as an archaeological monument. This will reflect the site's grandeur and significance.
- **People**
 - Bring together local collectors (and collections), researchers, local people and the general public

4.4 Achieving the vision

The plan is for the site to be partly free and partly fee-paying. The entrance to the site will incorporate the center for the Jurassic World Heritage group that tell the story of the Jurassic coast world heritage site.

The quarry will be divided up into many different areas including permanent/temporary exhibitions, artwork, dioramas, sculpture, 3D displays, animatronics, and a "lagoon". There will also be lots of fossils including several leading collections and many very fine examples like the 12' long Plesiosaur "Kristen" that is perhaps the most complete Plesiosaur fossil ever discovered and which has taken 27,000 hours to prepare.

There are so many excellent stories to tell about the Jurassic Coast, the lost world and the future world, extinction, evolution, what this tells you about the present and sub themes about the Earth and our existence. There are almost too many stories to tell.

4.5 The forward plan

The next stage is to apply for planning permission. The cost of preparing this is about £2.2 million to the end of 2017. At the moment the board are not looking for lottery funding but instead wealthy individuals and organisations with perhaps the possibility of some crowd funding. Part of the planning permission work will require transport studies. There are planned to be up to 600,000 people visiting each year (with a working number of 360,000). At present there are 1800 cars per day through Portland in the peak season so the increased traffic is a significant issue.

The target date for completion of the project and opening of Jurassica is 2022.

5. Recent happenings

5.1 Coast meeting Plymouth University 19th April

This meeting consisted of a day of talks by a variety of speakers including researchers from the university, Miranda Crestovnikoff (from BBC's Coast program), people from NT, local councils and lecturers from Plymouth University's coastal a management research group. The Plymouth Coast Observatory was celebrating 10 years of activity and covers the SW from Portland to the Severn Estuary. The meeting was very interesting and free. Alan has written a report in the DGAG newsletter and a copy can be sent electronically to any member who is interested.

5.2 Fossil Festival Lyme Regis 29th April-1st May

Alan represented DGAG but wore a DIGS hat as well. He had help from Kelvin, John Scott, Geoff Townson and Pat Snelgrove. Mostly young families came with children so the event is not really suitable to attract people to DIGS. The weather was appalling and the Fossil Festival was less successful than previously because of the change away from a single marquee to several venues. (Alan's opinion).

The event is run by local people but with no significant financial support from the local council despite it bringing many visitors to the town. After last year there was a financial deficit and the organisers experimented with three smaller pavilions and other venues around the town rather than one large one as they had last year. The visitors were much more dispersed and there was some disquiet from contributors as a result. The GA had only 1 person present and no one from Rockwatch. So, there is a question whether the festival will continue in its present form and there is a meeting scheduled soon to plan the next event.

5.3 East Dorset Heritage Trust Fieldtrip to Lyme Regis on 6th April

The fieldtrip to Lyme Regis looked at the coastal protection and was excellent.

5.4 Vallis Vale 2nd April and 7th May

Geoff, Andy and Alan carried out conservation work. There was an illegal rave at scout camp at Tedbury nearby in May. There were lots of problems with noise and a big mess but the police were not prepared to break it up. Hansons have helped with the clear up.

5.5 Fossils of the Jurassic Coast published.

Sam Scriven's book "Fossils of the Jurassic Coast" has been published costing £14.95. It includes several contributions from DIGS including the Carol Roberts illustrations from the Purbeck Project.

5.6 Spring tide event (Geoff Rowland)

This is a food event that took place at Burton Bradstock at the Hive Beach. DIGS had a stand at the original event a few years back. It absolutely tipped down on the day but it was a success and arguably more people turned up than at the Lyme Regis fossil Festival.

5.7 Conservation

Alan received a request for conservation help related to a beach hut in Christchurch.

6. Future events

6.1 Swanworth Quarry Liaison Meeting 14th July 5.30.

This is an annual meeting set for 14th July at 5.30 to discuss the activity and plans at the quarry. Giles might be interested in attending. Anyone interested in attending please contact Alan

6.2 Rockwatch at Leeson House 1st-5th August.

Alan, Sam, Richard, Barry Cullimore (principal at Leeson House) will be present. The theme is will be on geological conservation. The Thursday programme will include visits to DIGS sites in Purbeck for the young people and their parents. Details are not yet finalized but there will probably be trips to the Agglestone on 4th August and a walk along the ridge at Corfe to Rollington pit. There are no plans to visit Keats' quarry this year as it was on the programme last year.

6.3 Architectural Heritage Week Blandford is 8th to 15th September

No further information available.

6.4 G.A. Conference Portland 21st-22nd October.

There will be a day of lectures on geological conservation on Friday and a fieldtrip on Saturday led by Sam Scriven including Keat's Quarry. Alan will contribute a fieldtrip on Portland. Alan is hoping to sell some CDs and walks leaflets. Lectures only open to members of the GA (but that means that DGAG members may be able to attend is it is affiliated to the G.A.).

6.5 Fieldtrip to Keat's Quarry. 17th June (Geoff Rowland).

This trip clashes with a DGAG field trip to Frogmore Quarry.

7. Website

The website has recently generated some interesting requests including:

- Geologist from London wants to propose to his girlfriend in Keats' Quarry
- Enquiry from GQ magazine to have a photoshoot with an Aston Martin in Swanworth Quarry.
- Request to visit DIGS sites from staff at Lyme Regis Museum. Alan to accompany them.

8. Sites and conservation

There have been a number of visits since the last meeting

8.1 Report on Ridgeway Cutting 9th April

The weather was filthy but the section at the top of Dorchester Road was cleared. We need to go back and finish off the work.

8.2 Report on Bincombe Site

The Snelgroves looked at the Bincombe site but only needed to cut down one small tree. Unfortunately, the sign has been lost. We were last there 2013 and it does not need more conservation work for the moment.

8.3 Report on Vinney Cross 3rd May

This was a successful session and all went well. Pat reported that it was a more difficult site than anticipated. For example, it was not easy to stand close to the low rock faces and there were lots of brambles to get rid of. There were some good fossil finds too

8.4 Report of Quarr Lane, Sherborne 18th May

This clean-up was organized by ECAN – European Conservation Action Network and included some friends of Quarr Lane and a Geoff from DIGS. The scrub was cleared – with plentiful hogweed and cow parsley. The group tried to open up an area of 3m in front of the rock face so that the council could get access and sort it out properly. However, Nigel Spring (one of the ECAN leader), wanted to leave the nettles for the wildlife. The rock face needs weeding and cleaning. This will require ladders up to 7m tall. In addition, two ash trees need removing planned by ECAN.

8.5 Evershot Pit 16th May

Geoff and Andy went there last Monday for some general cleaning.

8.6 Red Lane

We visited this DIGS site last year. The issue is that a garden has been extended into the upper part of the Red Lane site including a gate and fence making access more difficult. There has been no response from the Ilchester Estate. Alan will take a look and decide if any action is required.

9. Future conservation activity

9.1 Upwey

9.2 Quarr Lane, Sherborne.

Weeding required

9.3 Poxwell

Brush cut last July. The face needs some work and more brush cutting. The site will need attention shortly.

Conservation planned for Thursday 30th June at 10.30.

9.4 Portesham

The GA Chairman's picnic will be at Portesham on 23rd July and the site is not in too bad a state. Fossil log is also getting overgrown and in need of attention.

Roger Snelgrove and Peter Bath agreed to brush-cut about 2 weeks before the event. No need to clear the lime kiln.

9.5 Crack Lane and Rock Pit Farm

Also need some attention.

9.6 Ridgeway Cutting

DIGS Conservation at Ridgeway Cutting to take place on Tues 14th June at 10.30.

10. Any other business:

10.1 Date of next meeting

Next meeting set for Tuesday 26th July

10.2 Whiteway Hill Quarry near Marnhull (contribution from Peter Bath)

1.) The main idea was that we as the DIGS Group. could perhaps do a **Geo. stratigraphy of the Whiteway Quarry, Marnhull** and add it to our website, together with photos we have taken since this quarry was established and open to business. I am making thin sections of some interesting Whiteway beds as well as most other Corallian ooidal building stone beds in the north Dorset area. This could lead to our adding macro and micro images to our website. The quarry owner & Manager both fancy adding some of this to their website if it turns out to be at all useful to them.
(It seems that the folk who showed interest will be more than are needed and Alan & I are in process of getting a date sorted.)

2.) Quite separately, as a consequence of us giving Mike le Bas some help in composing his *The Building Stones of Blandford* - a **Geo. Walk around Blandford** - some of us spent time visiting the **C. 19th. Blandford Cemetery chapels** there on several occasions but failed to name the stone or determine its provenance, despite a few fossils suggesting *Clavellata* Corallian. Given we could see no ooids in this stone and that it was mostly a yellow/orange or blue hearted micrite with a bland texture - mostly devoid of fossils we were a bit at a loss. Given the Sturminster railway cutting may have been created at about the right time we looked at this possibility but not finding such a rock/stone in the stratigraphy there and problems of dates as well as transport the idea was dropped by Mike le Bas and he published his little book without mentioning the subject.

My invitation was to run one or two **"Church stone I.D." trips** that both explores the Hazelbury Bryan and Mappowder area of the *Clavellata* Corallian and

allows others to see how making rock thin sections seems to have found a provenance for this stone and another chapel built of it. I shall circulate a description and interested folk can list their own preferred dates in order that the maximum No can join in.

3.) Dean Harris the Whiteway Quarry Manager was manager of the Chilmark RAF Quarries for many years and along with Geoff Townson they have helped me with the **Chilmark Building Stones**. These stones were used out of preference at Kingston Lacy and right from the original brick build. The 1830's cladding and extensions have required some help from both Dean and Geoff. to confirm my suspicions regarding some extensions used **to convert Kingston Lacy from a brick built Hall to a Palazzo stone mansion**. Geoff has also worked with Jo Thomas on the Chilmark given that she has always wished to know more about this Wiltshire stone used a lot in N. Dorset. Given Geoff's expertise in sedimentary petrography and his willingness to help DIGS members, all my work can be confirmed or corrected - so there's good reason to continue joining in any of these pursuits if the skills or interests of others would apply. What the **Corn Exchange/Town Hall at Blandford is built of** has also been of interest to many of us - again between the Portland and Chilmark ooidal / superficial ooidal stones.

4.) That the Dorchester History Centre / Records Office has been awarded enough Lottery money to employ three full time staff and utilise volunteers to "Unlock the Bankes (Family) Archive" over maybe only two years - the N.T. will be in need of a re-write for their brochures and the Visitor's Guide. This will likely make them more willing to accept my interpretation(s) of their decorative and building stone that I'm thinking of putting out on a website given the N.T's. lack of interest over six or so years to date. So essentially what I intended to say was; that Dean, Geoff and others have applied their Chilmark and Corallian know-how to all these matters and some recognition via further activities/participation on our part might be nice for us all to join in if still interested?

There was interest from Alan, Geoff, Pat and Kelvin to visit Whiteway Quarry in Marnhull to measure the faces and make a stratigraphic column that can be displayed on the web site. Anyone else interested please contact Pete.

10.3 Printer

Charles Jackson reported that the printer has become unserviceable again. The printer is an Epsom R800. It is expensive to repair and not of great quality. It is used for printing directly on to CDs.

Kelvin to talk to Sprint in Dorchester (or another printing company in Poundbury) and see if they can provide this printing facility instead.

The meeting concluded at 20.56.
Giles Watts