

Croscombe Field Trip June 25th 2018.

The Field trip was really a completion of the Beacon Hill walk only nearer to Croscombe and Shepton Mallet.

Stop #1

North of Croscombe we walked over a couple of fields and started with a much needed résumé of what we had already seen at Beacon Hill a few weeks earlier.



We then literally clambered down into Ham Woods, essentially along the top of a deep valley concealed by densely packed trees. Here the horizontal Lower Jurassic, Chilcote stone unconformably overlies the southerly dipping Carboniferous Black Rock

limestone that is found at a lower level.



The Chilcote beds, seen in Ham Woods, were a shoreline deposit of the Jurassic seas lapping against the Mendip Hills. The rock is quite fossiliferous with the dead bi-valves being washed in by the tides and covered by sediments which eventually rotted away leaving their impressions such as the large round holes in the rock. As the rock was compressed and hardened, fluid + other chemicals were able to pass through the matrix which further dissolved the bi-



valve shells and other materials to Exposed face of Chilcote Stone after quarrying leave gaping holes as shown to the right.



The Chilcote stone is roughly the same age as the more well-known Blue Lias, and represents the former shoreline of the Jurassic seas, whilst the Blue Lias represent deeper water conditions some 2 km offshore.

The Chilcote beds and the Blue Lias beds in Bowlish are both roughly of the same age and were laid down in the same sea. Regarding the Blue Lias most of it was situated about two kilometres further out to sea where the water was deeper and so finer material was deposited thus depositing rocks of a different nature and interestingly these were containing different fossils. For the Blue Lias we would have to wait and see in Bowlish Village on the outskirts of Shepton Mallet a short distance away. .



Stop # 2.

Bowlish Village.

This exposure of Blue Lias aged about 195 million years of age and is believed about the same age as the Chilcote stone that we had just seen earlier. We found it slightly above the main A371 road facing the opposing ridge to Ham Woods barely only about 2 kilometres away as the proverbial crow flies.

The Blue Lias has the typical well-bedded character that makes it so suitable for building with inter-bedded fine sand and mud rather like inferior mortar delineating the strata. The slabs of this material happened to be about 9 inches thick and therefore very good for building purposes.

Stop # 3.

Historically we know that both Wells Cathedral and Glastonbury Cathedral are mostly built with an Oolite stone called locally Doulling stone. This is relatively soft building stone is perfect for the carving of statues, pillars and arches, sadly time did not permit us to see the Doulling stone in-situ today.



The final stop was to look at the Croscombe church, which included seeing some relics of Norman arched slabs on either side of the main altar and central window at the eastern end. Chilcote stone as seen below is the puckered stone that you can see in parts of Wells Cathedral but is also beautifully shown here in the walls of the Croscombe Church.

Close up of the Chilcote stone making up Croscombe Church Wall.

The outside of Croscombe church showed the Chilcote stone particularly well in spite of the extra weathering it gets. Stephen aptly summarised the church when he commented; "so it really is a holey church" !! Inside the stone was better quality, some of the door and window framing was of Doulling Stone which had been quarried locally for many years.

Walford

