

Ledbury district, 23 April 2023

Twenty members of the Society visited the Ledbury area to examine a complicated inlier of highly folded and faulted Silurian marine rocks west of the Malvern Hills.



Above: Andy Sims describing the geology to the group in Loxter Quarry

We first visited Wellington Heath, a couple of miles north of Ledbury where we were met by Mandy and Andy Sims who are responsible along with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust for the upkeep and access to Loxter Ashbeds Quarry in the village. Most of the studies on the area were done in the Victorian period and Andy, a retired geologist is currently mapping and studying the area with a view to updating and improving the knowledge of the inlier. The group had an interesting short walk with Andy pointing out small exposures that illustrated the complexity of the area before arriving at the quarry where we examined a small



anticline in the Aymestrey Limestone. The limestone here was actually more of a siltstone with bands of limestone nodules, themselves very silty. Andy explained there was also 4 thin beds of Bentonite Clay derived from volcanic ash from volcanism associated with the closure of the Iapetus Ocean prior to the Caledonian Orogeny. It is unclear if they are primary ash fall out sinking to sea bed or washed into the basin along with muddy sediments from elsewhere.

Left: a member of the group examining a bentonite bed sandwiched in Aymestrey Limestone.

After leaving Andy and Mandy we met up at the Old Market hall in Ledbury for lunch before going on a 3 ½ mile walk through Ledbury and its outskirts, looking at the building stones and 3 further quarries. Lots of Crinoid fossils could be seen within the cobble stones of Church lane and there was a wonderful mix of Silurian and Devonian Old Red Sandstone building stones seen in St Michaels and All Angles Church.

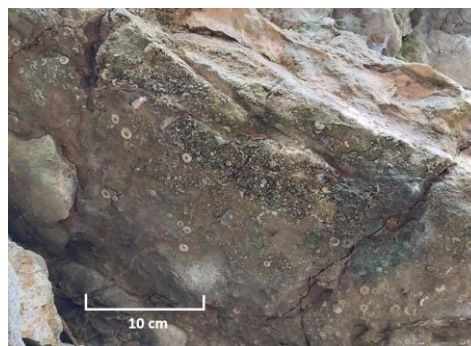


Above: the group takes lunch at The Old Market in Ledbury.

The first quarry we came to outside Ledbury was Knapp Lane with an exposure of Wenlock limestone in a tightly folded anticline and a good exposure of the crinoidal limestone seen in the cobbles of Church lane.

Right: crinoids at the Knapp Lane site

We then walked along a steep ridge where we could see the influence of geology on the landscape to a viewpoint of the extensive Upper Hall Farm Quarry where we could see the junction of the Wenlock Limestone and Lower Ludlow siltstones. An extensive fossil assemblage is present in the Much Wenlock Limestone at this locality and includes brachiopods, bryozoans, stromatoporoids (reef-forming organisms), corals, algae, trilobites and crinoids. Unfortunately, as it's an SSSI access is not permitted.



Above: the near-vertical limestone beds in Dogs Wood Quarry.

The final quarry off Cut Throat Lane was Dogs Wood Quarry where again the Aymestrey limestone was exposed – a purer limestone than seen at Loxter. The beds are largely vertical in places where the beds have been dragged into a steep anticline by the Ledbury fault to the west and appeared to faulted on the north side of the quarry.