FOREST OF DEAN MEETING FEBRUARY 26 2011

Nine members visited Gloucestershire on 26 February 2011. Paul Austin Sargent arranged the trip, drove the minivan, and tactfully made sure we kept to the timetable; we were much in his debt. Dave Green, who met us outside Westbury Court Gardens, was an excellent local guide, who provided a full handout, explained the phenomena slowly and lucidly, took our questions seriously, and made no claim to knowing all the answers. He teaches at two local schools, and indeed taught Paul 25 years back. We could not have been in better hands.

We started on the beach below the Garden Cliff at Westbury-on-Severn. The tide, as arranged, was low, and the weather, also as arranged, improved as the day went on. The cliff is at first largely composed of Mercia Mudstones, the red face varied by pale, greenish bands. The rock is very frail; hand specimens break up easily. The dip was very apparent, and as we went on westwards the Tea Green Marls and then the Penarth Group took over. We walked along the beach to where the prominent projecting Pullastra sandstone bed comes down to water level; further back, large slabs of it had fallen off on to the beach, beautifully marked by ripples and horseshoe crabs. Other darker pieces from the Bone bed above the Pullastra bed gave pleasure to the fossil seekers, and there was much pyritic material.

We lunched well at the pub in Blaisdon, where the celebrated fault lies nearby, and went on a little way to Huntley. We saw two small quarries in the woods near the road. One (Acker's) has an exposure of Triassic Bromsgrove Sandstone. The other (Huntley) has a complex face much affected by the fault, which runs just to the side. The rock is mysterious, much older than Triassic, perhaps early Silurian. There are two related kinds of rock, both containing volcanic fragments. This Huntley Quarry Formation is unique to this location.

Further on, we drove up a narrow lane, and walked a little way to a striking view of the face of Hobb's Quarry. Here there is a remarkable series of 'ballstones', conical structures (not coral reefs) over which the Silurian Wenlock Limestone has 'draped' itself in buckled beds. Down on the floor of the old quarry, almost every fallen slab yielded fossils, including fragments of trilobite.

The Group at Westbury Garden Cliff

Mercia mudstones at Westbury Garden Cliff