

## Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark

### Annual Report November 2025

#### Introduction

The highlight of this year has been the continuing programme of creating Geopark Visitor Information Points (GVIPs). These are dedicated areas within the existing visitor centres of Geopark Forum members. A new GVIP was established at Severn Valley Country Park in Shropshire, adding to those already in existence at Bewdley Museum and Malvern Hills GeoCentre. Each GVIP tells the story of the Geopark with particular reference to information about local landscape and history. A plan is underway to have a fourth one up and running at Forestry England's Wyre Forest within the next few months.

Funding for the Geopark was again generously provided by donations from Merlin Energy and Oracle Environmental Experts.

Throughout the year there were wide ranging programmes of events and activities provided by the Geopark members covering geology, landscape, wildlife, archaeology, heritage, science and art.

The flagship event GeoFest, again ran over June, July and August with plenty of events and activities, all drawn from the summer programmes of members, enabling a very comprehensive GeoFest programme to be delivered.

# GeoFest



**Three months every  
summer, every year for everyone**



**24th May to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025**

**From Bridgnorth to Gloucester and Worcester to Hereford; natural and man-made landscapes and places to visit. Talks, guided walks, exhibitions, rock and fossil hunts, dinosaur trails, pond dipping, wildlife expeditions, craft days, heritage events, history tours and much more.**

**What's on near you?**

**Details available in May each year at [www.geopark.org.uk](http://www.geopark.org.uk)**

GeoFest is kindly  
sponsored by



**Geofest 2025 Poster**

## The Geopark President's Report for 2025 – Chris Darmon

I'm sorry that it wasn't possible for me to join you all during the year, but I'm already booked in to make a visit next year. Despite not being able to be with you in person, I was kept abreast of what you've been up to thanks to Peter Oliver and also the excellent Geopark website.

I'm always amazed at how many events the Geopark puts on each year, I'm sure that with the 3-month GeoFest programme this is way more than any other UK Geopark. Remember that each event involves ordinary folk, individuals and families, who would otherwise probably have no other source of geological education.

The Geopark has also pioneered innovative ways to include geological topics in craftwork and the arts generally which brings in people who would not profess to be in any way scientific. I have to say, "carry on and keep up the good work", it's really appreciated.

The Geopark is totally dependent on the efforts of its own volunteers as well as the people in our partner organisations. As the years go by, some of us are all getting older and it's therefore harder to keep things going. To those who have volunteered in 2025, I say a big "thank you". During 2026 it would be good to see some additional people join the ranks to ease the burden on those of you who have put in such a good innings!

I end this note by saying how much I appreciate being your President and doing my little bit for the Geopark. But it's you the volunteers, to whom the biggest thanks should go.

## Reports from Forum Members

### Malvern Hills GeoCentre

The Malvern Hills GeoCentre has continued to operate throughout the year alongside Café H2O. On display are wall maps, iPad information, fossil samples, rock samples and the video wall showing information about the local and regional geology, geography and history. Fossil samples courtesy of local palaeontologist Dr Mark O'Dell are on show alongside an example School Fossil Box provided by the Earth Heritage Trust. Unfortunately, the centre no longer operates the Tramper. Information on long and short distance walks are available from the centre, including the 109 mile Geopark Way and the 80 mile Wyche Way. Plenty of shorter trails and walks near the centre provide good opportunities to explore the Hills, admire the views and walk to local villages in the valleys. The centre have also produced two interesting self-guided tours in collaboration with the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Malvern Hills Conservators. The hidden geocache at the site remains popular, attracting treasure hunters as they explore the area. The small shop area continues to sell souvenirs, books and guides, including the popular geology series that accompanies sections of the Geopark Way.



## **Bewdley Museum – Liz Cowley**

Our visitor numbers do not seem to have been affected by the closure of Bewdley Bridge. We received 131,662 visitors between April to the end of September.

Over the past couple of years our 'Currents of the Past' project has collected the photographs, film and oral histories of people whose lives were impacted by floods in Bewdley. These were displayed in an exhibition during the summer.

Our annual Cherry Fair took place on 19/20 July and received just over 3000 visitors

Ask the Expert and Create our Own Geology Collection days on took place on 26 and 27 July, thank you to the Geologists in the Geopark for running these activities.

674 children took part in activities over the Summer holidays

To commemorate Jane Austin's 250-year anniversary the museum held a Georgian Weekend on 20/21 September, we hope for this to become a regular annual event.



**Ask the Expert and Create our Own Geology Collection Day at Bewdley Museum**

## **Hartlebury Castle – Sarah Davey**

It has been a pleasure to be a member of the Geopark Forum for the last twelve months. We've loved having a wide range of information boards on display in our Old Kitchen since September, which were generously lent to us by the Geopark. Visitors have been learning about fossils, dinosaurs, wildlife and the local landscape, as well as following a fascinating Geology trail around the Castle.



**Geology and Landscape Displays of Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle.**

Thanks to funding from Natural Networks this year\*, we were excited to be holding a community event in November to plant 6000 native wild bluebell, daffodil, wild garlic and snowdrop bulbs down the Castle driveway. We're looking forward to working with green-fingered members of the community and seeing the area transformed by colour in the spring. We were also grateful to welcome a dedicated team from Worcester Bosch for a volunteering session in the grounds this autumn, and they did a wonderful job refreshing the Orchard Terrace for visitors to enjoy.

As always, we've enjoyed a jam-packed year of events, including several celebrating National Children's Gardening Week – such as a new May bank holiday event called 'What's in Your Garden' and a free community event where local families got stuck into discovering nature. We also put together a new 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Day' where the Castle team had fun dressing up and getting children engaged with the beloved story.

During GeoFest, we saw a successful return of the Beer and Bat Walk, two well-attended summer theatre performances, and a thrilling Battle of Hartlebury re-enactment with The Sealed Knot.

Everyone at the Castle looks forward to another year of celebrating the world around us – thank you to the Geopark Forum for their support.

*\*This project is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. It is delivered on behalf of Wychavon by Natural Networks, a partnership programme between Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.'*

## **Geologists in the Geopark – Peter Oliver**

The main purpose of the Group is to provide geological expertise, ideas and activities to other Forum members. All are provided free of charge.

During GeoFest this year contributions included sessions based on geocrafts, 'Ask the Expert', make your own geology collection, specimen displays, detective trails, textile displays, colouring and information sheets, and table top panel displays. All this was supplied to seven fellow Forum

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members; sometimes as single day events but also as longer sessions covering many weeks. Free Geopark information leaflets were made available at all locations.

Specimens for 'Make your own geology collection' included pyrite (fools gold), gypsum, granite, oolitic limestone, red sandstone, grey sandstone, dolerite, slate, mica schist, quartz, ammonites and brachiopods. It has proved to be a very popular activity and hopefully has started a lot of young people on a quest to find out more.



*One of the many locations in the Geopark which are described in various geology information leaflets. In this case the quayside at Arley on the River Severn; constructed with red Carboniferous Alveley Sandstone.*

## **Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Services – Carol Wood**

It has been another exciting year for Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

The Archaeology Field team have been extremely busy! We recently finished 14 months of excavations at Broadway and continued uncovering 8000 years of human occupation. Tours and talks relating to the site are still proving very popular. We are also running a series of blogs and talks relating to the evidence found at the Southern Link Road site that shed light on the last battle of the English Civil War.

We have taken part in the British Festival of Archaeology with storytelling and finds handling, focusing on the excavations at New Farm Nature Reserve, Evesham. In addition, we attended an event showcasing Archaeology at the Blaise Museum, Bristol. It was great to meet so many people who were very interested in all aspects of Archaeology.

On the Explore the Past floor on level 2 of The Hive we were lucky to have an exhibition relating to the Worcestershire Hoard of coins. Many images have been put onto our interactive touch table and is still available to view. We currently have a display about St Martin's Quarter in Lowesmoor with a leaflet to accompany it available to pick up at the Hive.



This year has seen new online resources being made available to researchers. The release of the 1921 census, free to access at any Worcestershire library, has really triggered a renewed interest in family history. Archive staff have created a series of blogs outlining how the release has aided their personal research. Thanks to our partnership with [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) our newspaper collection has been digitised and is free to access at The Hive. Now stories are accessible via a simple keyword search. Staff have run a drop in sessions to show the public how to use this valuable resource.

The cataloguing of the Sandys of Ombersley Archives is continuing apace and the public events, for both adults and children, are proving very popular. We are working very hard to put our collections on our online catalogue making them easier to search for.

Our annual Worcestershire Archaeology Day took place on 22nd November, where there was a series of talks by guest

speakers celebrating and sharing recent investigations in Worcestershire. For details of all our blogs and events please see our website: <https://www.explorethepast.co.uk/events/>

## Forestry England at Wyre – Richard Wilkinson

Our annual GeoFest visit by Geologists in the Geopark was well received from start to finish. As usual, Forestry England staff helped us to set up the 'Geo-craft' activities and facilitated the running of the forest trail to the quarry.

Many families stayed quite some time so that they could experience all of our arty activities. Children enjoyed getting messy, creating colourful wildlife themed artwork using paints, stencils and gel plates.

Further fun was had, decorating large pebbles and wooden discs, and colouring our geology themed sheets. Finally, the ever-popular stamping activity, saw people of all ages, getting busy making greetings cards, bookmarks and pieces of art to hang on walls.

A great day was had by all!

## Severn Valley Country Park – Susie Comaish

In 2024 we secured the funding from Tomlinson Brown Trust to install a Geopark Visitor Information Point (GVIP) at Severn Valley Country Park. This year we were able to complete the



project. The information point contains an informative interpretation panel with a hands-on collection of rocks, leaflets for the Geopark, Country Park Geology Trail and descriptions of the hands-on rock collection. We have also re-sited a monitor so that our 'A Changing Landscape' video can play. This shows the development of the landscape at Severn Valley Country Park from the Carboniferous Period to today.

Thank you to Mike Brooks from Brooks Designs for the use of his very eye-catching map of the Geopark. Thanks to Geologists in the Geopark for guidance with the text on the panel and also the provision of the hands-on rock collection.

Our geologically themed textile art workshops continue to be popular. Once again, we were able to hold a summer exhibition on the visitor centre from the works completed by the ladies who take part in the workshops. This year's theme was 'My Map'. The group found inspiration from the park, where they live and other places they enjoy and stitched representations of places they love. We would like to thank Georgia Jacobs from Geologists in the Geopark for leading these enjoyable sessions and for co-ordinating the summer exhibition (as well as all the other support she provides the park).



**The new Geopark Visitor Information Point (GVIP) at the Severn Valley Country Park.**

Our school visits continue to go from strength to strength with our Rock and Fossil Hunt and River Study being among the most popular session for the children. We have recently looked at updating the river study by adding flow rate experiments.

The café in the visitor centre has been recently leased to No. 92 Coffee Lounge. They are a family run business and our café will be their 4<sup>th</sup> location. They have a delicious breakfast and lunch menu. It is great news for the park, and the café and visitor centre can now be open 7 days a week all year round.

Elsewhere in the park, our resident kingfisher has been making regular appearances and has become the cover star of Severn Valley Country Park Four Seasons Calendar. The calendar is the result of a photograph competition which started in May 2024. It was devised and delivered by a dedicated team of our visitors with a passion for photography. The calendar went on sale in September 2025 and all funds raised will support a project to enhance photographic opportunities at Severn Valley Country Park.

## Geological Society West Midlands Regional Group – Andrew Harrison

Inaugurated at the Freemason's Tavern, Covent Garden, on 13 November 1807, the Geological Society of London (GSL), is the oldest geological society in the world and a registered not-for-profit charity (no. 210161). Today, from its base at Burlington House, Piccadilly, the Society acts as a leading voice in the geosciences for both industry and academia through publishing, library and information services, cutting-edge scientific conferences and training, education activities, and professional and academic accreditation. The Society also provides impartial scientific information and evidence to support policy-making and public discussion about the challenges facing humanity.

The GSL is the UK's professional body for Earth Science with worldwide, over 12,000 members. The West Midlands Regional Group (WMRG) is one of 15 Regional Groups, making up the GSL, covering the UK, Northern Ireland and Hong Kong. The group covers all Society fellows living in post code areas within Birmingham and the Black Country, Herefordshire, Mid Wales, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Like all regional groups, WMRG organises scientific, technical, professional and social events locally. Professional matters are high on the group agendas and are an essential means of disseminating information and gathering opinion. Representatives meet at least once a year through Regional Group committee meetings, which report to the GSL's Professional and Chartership Committee.

Since joining the Geopark Forum in 2021, we have held stalls aimed at promoting the GSL and other local geological societies, in conjunction with other events. In 2025, we had a display at Bewdley Museum along with the 'Ask the Expert' and 'Make Your Own Geology Collection' team. We also had a display at the Severn Valley Railway Engine House, along with Georgia Jacobs - whose geologically inspired fabric artwork added to the steam locomotives on show. Once again, we managed to choose the weekend when the Engine House was holding its annual choir competition.

More information on the GSL and the regional groups can be found on our website at [www.geolsoc.org.uk](http://www.geolsoc.org.uk).



GSL West Midlands Regional Group Displays alongside others at Bewdley Museum and the Severn Valley Engine House



## Other news from members

Merlin Energy Resources were proud to continue being a main sponsor of the Geopark and GeoFest and indicate that 'It is great to see what good work the organisations do providing fun, educational activities for hundreds of people for three months every year'.

Hereford Museum participated in GeoFest 2025, despite the main Hereford Museum and Art Gallery still building being closed for major redevelopment works. Events were held at the Old House Hereford, a preserved Jacobean timber-framed building, or The History Store, which houses the museum collection during the main building's closure. As part of the 2025 programme, Herefordshire Museums & Galleries offered several specific events, including Oak Apple Celebrations (May 24 to June 1); Exploring Contentious Narratives (June 7); Creatures of the River Wye (June 9); Hoard Family Adventure (June 14); Discover Hidden Treasures (July 17); Festival of Archaeology (July 23); Castles and Palaces LEGO workshop (July 30); A 'Load' of Fun session for children (August 6); It's About Time session for children (August 13) and Ask the Expert Object Identification (August 21). For the current status and future events, you can check the Herefordshire Museums & Galleries Facebook page or the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark website for updates.

Other great museums are Worcester and the Lapworth at the University of Birmingham. Centres offering inspiring outdoor experiences for visitors are the National Trust at Dudmaston, Cob House Countryside Park and Arley Arboretum.

The Geopark Way continues to be strong with the Geopark Way Officer coordinating 20 Geopark Way Wardens whilst they perform their biannual checks of the entire 109 mile stretch in Spring and Autumn. The 2025 Autumn checks are currently in progress to keep the footpaths in the best possible condition with the help and support of county PROW Officers and local PCCs.

Following their 10 year anniversary, in 2024, Oracle Environmental Experts have continued to design and operate water treatment systems for clients across the country on sites from Kent to Dundee.

The Geo-crafting sessions at National Trust, Croome during the May half term were popular and well received by visitors. The knowledge and expertise shared by Geopark members on event days was greatly received. They continued to have open days associated with the Panorama Tower and were very grateful for the AMH Geopark information sheets provided.

