



## **A History of the West Yorkshire Geology Trust**

### **Starting to find geological sites in West Yorkshire**

The plan to form a group to promote geological conservation in West Yorkshire was first suggested in 1994, following the example of other regional or county-based groups. A committee with interested parties from the public sector, museums, university departments, local geology groups and interested individuals was set up. We launched the organisation in Dimples Quarry, Haworth, with a school visit with activities and displays. Dimples Quarry was one of the first sites to be worthy of designation as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS). Shortly afterwards, we met to designate five sites as RIGS, which started the process of creating an audit of geological sites in West Yorkshire.

In 1995, a group of volunteers, largely from the Huddersfield Geology Group, started with a literature search and then began to survey likely sites, a process that was completed in 2000. Leeds was surveyed by Bill Fraser of the Leeds Geological Association, Kirklees was surveyed by members of the Huddersfield Geology Group and Wakefield, Calderdale and Bradford were surveyed by three very enthusiastic volunteers who devoted most weekends for several years to locating and recording sites.

This group established the criteria on which to base the selection of sites at a time when there were no national guidelines. The present national guidelines are very much in line with the criteria used in West Yorkshire in the early surveys. Later work has shown that the sites chosen at that time were the best sites of their type in the area and very few additions have been needed, which is a tribute to the work of the first volunteers. However, a few geographical gaps have been identified and new sites are designated where needed.

RIGS information was circulated to the five local authorities as large and detailed booklets and began to be incorporated in planning documents. The process of digitisation of the RIGS records took place in 2003/2004 and digital copies were then circulated to the local authorities. Following a suggestion from Natural England in 2009 the term RIGS was replaced by Local Geological Sites (LGS). Work has continued on the RIGS/LGS data base and the designation sheets are updated on a regular basis.

### **Promoting geology for the general public**

After the completion of the audit of sites, plans were made to develop and promote geological sites. However, this required money and time and the members at that time were short of both. But a small group in Huddersfield wrote a leaflet about the rocks and landscapes in the area around Castle Hill, Huddersfield at the suggestion of Kirklees Council. This process took three years to complete and the resulting leaflet won a national award for geological interpretation in 2006.

Richard Bell, the wildlife illustrator, who was involved with the group from its inception, designed a promotion leaflet in 1995, followed with an updated version in 2008. This has been distributed throughout West Yorkshire and is a very useful addition to our

publicity. Richard also designed and ran the website for many years, only relinquishing it in 2011. The website informs the public about the local sites in West Yorkshire and is much valued.

By 2006, it was clear that the organisation needed some guidance in order to move forward, so we entered into an arrangement in September 2007 with the North East Yorkshire Geology Trust who had experience in geoconservation. Finance was raised from the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund to provide funds to employ a project officer and to produce an action plan for the organisation, as well as survey sites and run geological activities for the general public. It was also decided to change the name to West Yorkshire Geology Trust (WYGT), which would be more readily understood by the general public.

For the small group of volunteers, the new venture was somewhat of a culture shock, as we had money to produce materials and events for the first time, but very little time to plan our activities. At the end of the period of the project, WYGT had an up-to-date LGS data base which included 20 LGS that had been recently surveyed, expertise in running events for the general public and had written a Local Geodiversity Action Plan. WYGT had also made contact with many individuals and bodies in West Yorkshire who had an interest in local sites and geology.

### **The present**

Since then WYGT has concentrated on promoting geology for the general public in West Yorkshire. Since 2008 we have taken about 10/15 guided walks each year around the best geological sites, mostly under the aegis of the five local authorities. We are frequently asked by local groups for guided walks around their nearby LGS, so there are probably another half dozen geological walks each year in addition.

WYGT has developed good relationships with local countryside centres and other venues and we hold Geodays around the county, usually in school holidays and at weekends. There are usually 6/7 events per year, with exhibitions, activities and displays for the general public.

WYGT is asked for assistance with geological information by many organisations and individuals and answering these queries takes up much voluntary time. The new website is being developed to provide more geological information on the county.

In 2010 a geology trail for Otley Chevin was completed, in association with the Friends of Chevin Forest, with large stone carvings on a geological theme to mark interesting points. There is also a leaflet and audio trail to help interpret the rocks and landscapes.

The most recent project is to develop geological interpretation materials for six sites in the South Pennines, as part of the 3 year Pennine Watersheds Project. Leaflets, interpretation boards and website information will be provided in the near future.

Alison Tymon June 2011