



THE WOOLHOPE NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

Registered Charity No. 1212600

NEWSLETTER NO. 53, AUTUMN 2026

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We are now approaching a third of the way through our 175th Anniversary Year (2026-27), and I'd like to start my brief set of reflections here, by noting the outstanding success of the events that have already taken place early in the programme of celebrations. Our thanks to everyone whose efforts have produced this outcome.

Having opened proceedings back in March with Dave Green's highly apposite lecture providing us with a resume of what we currently understand about the geology of the Woolhope Dome, we then held the remarkable conference (our first I think in a long while) on 'Herefordshire Parklands', organised chiefly by past President Professor Rachel Jenkins. This conference brought together specialists of many kinds to consider the status of, and threats to, our county's historic parklands – and, in particular, the plight of our ancient oaks. The conference was held at the NMiTE Rotherwas campus and included a whole suite of field visits to individual parks, courtesy of their enthusiastic owners. Most recently, we joined the Museum of Cider staff and supporters on 11th September to launch the exhibition, 'The Orchard Revived', – and its accompanying programme of talks (details in this Newsletter, and at <https://www.cidermuseum.co.uk/exhibition/the-orchard-revived/>)

We now look forward to the unfolding of our Winter Programme of talks, which started on Saturday 12th September with Edward Clive's explorations into the history of Whitfield House, whose mansion and park are now his family's home. On the same afternoon we held our first AGM as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), following Charity Commission advice and guidance. This 'migration' of the old Club into its new existence involves very little outward change, but it does reduce our liabilities legally and financially. It also confers other potentialities – such as the ability to enter formally into leases, to own property and to employ staff (not that we have any immediate plans to do any of these things). At the first AGM of the CIO we were also very pleased to welcome as new Trustees Allan and Dorothy Davies, who shall henceforward act in concert as our new Treasurer.

Preparation for the 'Our Heritage and Future' exhibition celebrating our anniversary is now very far advanced, thanks especially to Dr Jane Adams, our former Club Secretary, who has both drafted text and (with help from Terry Morgan, Chris Fear and others) has sourced and designed the integration of suitable illustrations. We expect to be able to open that exhibition, initially at

the Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre, Rotherwas, sometime in October. We are continuing to develop the events programme and agenda for the remainder of 2026 and into 2027, with meetings of our sub-committees and liaison with partner organisations underway. We look forward to seeing you at future events as the programme continues to unfold.

Keith Ray, WNFC President

REPORT FROM THE AGM OF THE WOOLHOPE NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB OF HEREFORDSHIRE

The first Annual General Meeting of the Club's new legal structure as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), with registration number 1212600, was held on 12th September 2026 at 1.30 pm in the Town Hall, Hereford.

Apologies were received from J. Adams, J. Cole, J. Comber, A. Eaton, R. Hall, D. James, R. Jones, L. Parkes and T. & V. Philp.

President Keith Ray welcomed the 63 members attending, and reminded members of the reasons for changing the Club's charity structure from an unincorporated charity to a CIO. He was pleased to report that Club membership had now grown to a record 702 members.

Secretary Chris Milton then reported on progress with transition to the CIO, and reassured members that it would not affect the spirit and purpose of the Club, simply representing a more modern administrative framework. Registration with the Charity Commission is now complete, and the charity's details are shown on the Commission's website, with some further updating required by October. The majority of the policies required by the Commission are now established, and, while the Museum building is being renovated, the Club's business address will be the Secretary's house in Hereford. Registration with HMRC for Gift Aid is in progress, and two bank accounts (one current, one deposit reserve) have been opened to replace the seven bank accounts in the Club's present arrangements. Management accounts and financial reporting are also in place. The next step would be to transfer the Club's funds from the 'old charity' to the CIO, but this requires Charity Commission authority which has been applied for, but will take up to 16 weeks for a response. Following the transfer of all funds, the former bank accounts can be closed, and the unincorporated charity, registration number 521000, wound up.

Currently also the Acting Treasurer, Chris Milton went on to report on the CIO's finances, with £10,756 in the bank, partly loaned from the unincorporated charity to enable bank accounts to be opened and tested. Any new income for the Club, such as membership subscriptions and field trips, is now going into the CIO's account. Although the CIO has had no money or activities during the financial year to 31st December 2025, Financial Statements and an Annual

Report have been drawn up, albeit as 'dormant accounts' with zeros showing that no transactions have taken place. The Financial Statements were approved.

As the CIO's Constitution requires all trustees, except the four Vice-Presidents, to retire from office at its first AGM. Four trustees (William Bullough, Jonathan Comber, Janet Cooper and Anne Harbour) have chosen to step down and will not seek re-election. They were all heartily thanked for their service over the preceding years. The four Vice-Presidents (John Eisel, Rachel Jenkins, Howard Tomlinson and David Whitehead) will continue in office and as trustees.

The meeting then proceeded to re-elect all the remaining trustees and Officers to their previous positions. This was done on an individual basis, with proposers and seconders, as required by the Constitution, and each trustee was in turn re-elected unanimously by the membership, with no abstentions.

Lastly, Chris Milton proposed, seconded by Keith Ray, that Allan and Dorothy Davies be elected as new trustees and Joint Treasurers. This was agreed unanimously, with no abstentions.

The officers serving and Committee members (trustees) of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club of Herefordshire CIO for the coming year are therefore:

President	K. Ray
Vice-Presidents	J. C. Eisel, R. Jenkins, H. Tomlinson, D. Whitehead
Hon. Secretary*	C. Milton
Hon. Treasurers*	A. & D. Davies
Hon. Editor*	T. Morgan
Hon. Field Secretary*	S. Olver
Hon. Mem. Sec.	T. Cusworth
Hon. Librarian	M. Percival
Ordinary Trustees	C. Fear, J. Goldsmith, D. James, M. Jenkins, D. Thomson, W. Watson

(Those marked * are ex-officio members of the Committee.)

The meeting closed just after 2 pm and was followed by a fascinating talk on 'The Haphazard Building History of Whitfield' given by Edward Clive.

Chris Milton

MEMBERSHIP

The move to become a CIO has necessitated a change in our bank account details. I am sorry that this will cause some further inconvenience to members, soon after putting subscription rates up last year.

As I sorted through this year's payments, some members were uncertain about standing orders. Please note that **only the person making the payment can cancel, amend or set up a standing order** - banks don't allow the Club to do this.

2027 Subscription Payments (£20 for individual members, £25 for joint)

To pay or renew your subscription by standing order (the easiest way for all), please cancel your existing standing order (if you have one) and set up a new one, preferably for payment on 15 January (though any date in December or January is fine), using the following account:

NatWest Bank

Account name: Woolhope Nat Field Club

Sort code: 53-50-41

Account number: 62686283

Reference: please write 'Sub' followed by your initial and surname.

Please also use this account if you prefer to make a one-off payment by online banking. Alternatively, from December 2026, members can pay for 2027 by credit or debit card through the MemberMojo software. Cheques are still accepted.

Further communications about the bank account and payment methods will follow nearer the year end. I can be contacted by email at membership@woolhopeclub.org.uk; or by post at: Membership Secretary, Middlewood Farm, Middlewood, Dorstone, Hereford. HR3 5SX

Toby Cusworth

WOOLHOPE ROOM: UPDATE

As we celebrate our 175th anniversary it is unfortunate that we cannot centre our celebrations on our room in the Broad Street building, where we have been based for almost 150 years.

Members will have seen in the press the projected development of the Hereford Museum and Library has been paused for a reassessment of its scale. The results will not be known until next year, and we are advised that work will commence in Summer 2027.

Fortunately, our library is in safe storage, but sadly not available to those who wish to use it in research on Herefordshire, which is a great loss to the intellectual life in the city and beyond.

John Eisel

175TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

HEREFORDSHIRE PARKLANDS CONFERENCE, 1-3 JULY 2026



For three days, 1-3 July 2026, 180 people attended a conference organised by the Woolhope Club to celebrate Herefordshire parkland and to bring the scientific community together with landowners and land managers and the general public to explore its geology, archaeology, history, landscape art, and biodiversity, and to consider how best to restore the parkland habitats to their full potential.

Part of the club's 175th anniversary celebrations, the event was supported by DEFRA, Natural England, Historic England, Ancient Tree Forum, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, Forest Research, Action Oak, Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire County Council, Nature Scotland,

University of Cardiff, University of West of England, University of Birmingham, Royal Holloway University of London, University of Nottingham, Royal National College, Holme Lacy College, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Gardens Trust, Colwall Orchard Group, CPRE, Urban Forestry, Treecosystems Ltd, Plantlife International, Woolhope Club, Jackson Property, Duchy of Cornwall, House of Commons and House of Lords. Delegates had the



Restored lime kilns, Kentchurch



Jack o' Kent Oak, Kentchurch

opportunity to visit the rarely accessible local parklands of Brampton Bryan, Gatley Park, Moccas, Eastnor, Bromesberrow, Kentchurch and Holme Lacy, by kind permission of the owners.

An accompanying exhibition of 31 panels describing geology, estate maps, history and biodiversity was produced for the conference and is now on display at the

Herefordshire Archives and Records Centre before moving to libraries and other venues around the county. A book, comprising chapters authored by speakers based on their conference presentations, is being compiled for publication with the benefit of generous sponsorship.

The conference was made possible by grants from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Gardens Trust, Herefordshire Community Foundation, Hereford Council, Howard Bulmer Charitable Trust, The Mumford Memorial Trust and the Scottish Forestry Trust.

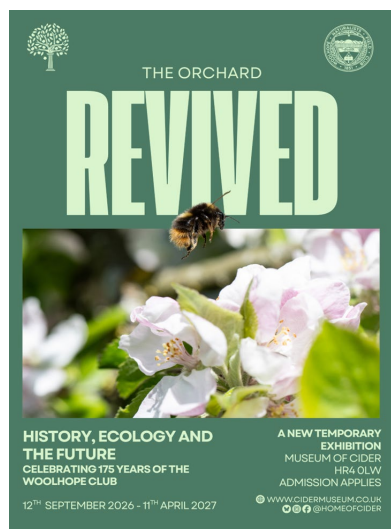
Rachel Jenkins

(The extensive Herefordshire Parklands Conference exhibition can be viewed until 24 September at HARC (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm).

'THE ORCHARD REVIVED': HISTORY, ECOLOGY AND THE FUTURE

12 September 2026 - 27 April 2027, Tuesday to Sunday 10.30am-4.30pm

Museum of Cider, Pomona Place, Hereford, HR4 0EF.



This exhibition and programme of associated events is developed in collaboration with the Museum of Cider. Themes of 'heritage, ecology and the future' explore Herefordshire's long standing reputation for traditional orchards, apple varieties and cider-making. Along with the permanent galleries in the museum, it allows us to showcase the Club's important contribution to pomology in the nineteenth century and the internationally acclaimed achievement of the *Herefordshire Pomona*, published in the 1880s.

Talks and orchard-related events will be held throughout the period of the exhibition but capacity is limited, so book as soon as you can, online via the events page of the Museum of Cider website.

The first of these events was held as a joint event at the museum on the evening of 11 September, when members had the opportunity to enjoy a glass of cider or apple juice and view the new exhibition, including such treasures as the original Hereford Pomona and the medals awarded for cider competitions, on loan from the club. Trustee Will Watson's excellent photographs enhanced the display and were enjoyed by all.



“The Orchard Revived” speaker programme:

23rd September 2026 6.30pm - Ainsleigh Rice & John Teiser: 'Sleuthing for Heritage Apples with Pomona in Hand and DNA in Lab'

18th October 2026 2.30pm - Toby Fountain (Herefordshire Wildlife Trust): 'Orchard Ecology & the Greater Spotted Woodpecker'

11th November 2026 6.30pm - David Whitehead: 'Viscount Scudamore (1601-71) of Holme Lacy: A Reluctant Royalist and Orchardist'

13th January 2027 6.30pm - Barny Butterfield: 'DNA and the Lost Orchards of Devon'

17th February 2027 6.30pm - In conversation with James Crowden (cider historian) & Tom Oliver (key cider maker)

Further talks and events will be notified in due course.

Apply the promotional code - woolhope175 - to claim a £2.00 discount and pay just £3.50 per person per talk.

OUR HERITAGE AND FUTURE

An exhibition of 14 panels celebrating the past, present and future of the Woolhope Club will be on display at Hereford Archives and Records Centre (HARC) in Rotherwas from the 29th September until 29th January 2027 (see back page). The exhibition will be supported by two members' events for which **tickets are free** but **bookings must be made through the Club website**.

3rd November 2-4pm – ‘Networks of Influence: exploring women’s contribution to the early Woolhope Club’

Join Nicola Kearton and Jane Adams as they discuss how women influenced and participated in the research and publications of early field clubs. Although not admitted to the Woolhope Club as members in their own right until 1954,

many women had been actively involved long before then – as artists, naturalists, partners and patrons.



Ayestrey Quarry 1842 E J Woodhouse Lewis

Nicola will examine how the local, regional and national networks of Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis and Frances Stackhouse Acton enabled them to engage in field research and contribute to seminal publications, including Murchison's Silurian System.



**Our Heritage and Future
The Woolhope Naturalists'
Field Club
Celebrating 175 Years
1851-2026**

Free Exhibition: 29 September 2026 – 29 January 2027
HARC, Fir Tree Lane, Hereford, HR2 6LA
Tuesday to Friday 10am-4pm



Jane will celebrate the work of Herefordshire naturalists, Emma Hutchinson (butterflies) and Eleonora Armitage (mosses) which brought them national recognition. She will go on to consider what led Alfred Watkins to propose the admission of women as members of the Woolhope Club in 1919 – and why this was rejected.

4th December 5-8pm, talks at 6pm – 'Lives with a Legacy'

Keith Ray and David Whitehead on the legacy of Alfred Watkins and a talk on the Herefordshire Flora in the 21st century. There will also be a display of historical artifacts held by the Herefordshire Archives.

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR CLUB'S FUTURE

We are pleased to announce that, following the recent news email about contributing to running our Club, four people expressed interest in communications and the website, event organisation and helping with membership administration. We are sure that all will find these roles enjoyable and rewarding. Thank you very much to those who came forward.

1. Following Anne Harbour's retirement, we now need someone to fill the key position of Meetings Secretary. The Meetings Secretary sets the programme of Saturday meetings (assisted with suggestions and support from trustees and others), and liaises with speakers and venues. Anne has established the programme for 2026-27, but work on the schedule for 2027-28 needs to start soon. The Meetings Secretary also participates in the Club's events committee. This role would be especially rewarding for anyone who would enjoy engagement working with others, both inside and outside the Club.

2. As we seek to strengthen the Club's operating email used by officers, secure storage of policy, procedural and administrative documents in the Cloud, and other systems matters, we would especially welcome interest from anyone with IT experience. This is not a demanding role but does need particular expertise.

If any of these roles appeal to you, or if you would like further information, please Chris Milton (secretary@woolhopeclub.org.uk).

If you have some time to offer, we would love to hear from you.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Work has been continuing in the preparation of the 2025 volume of our *Transactions*. However, calls on the digital skills of our editor in helping to prepare material for our 175th anniversary celebrations have impacted on the schedule, and will inevitably delay publication to some extent. If there are members who could help with any digital aspect of the Club's work, I would be delighted to hear from them. (tel. 01432 271141 or email jceisel@btinternet.com) For the volume of *Transactions* in preparation, there is a wide range of material of high standard, and when it is published it will be a credit to the Club - I hasten to say, "as usual", because our *Transactions* are of exceptional quality and highly regarded.

As part of the highly successful Parklands Conference, held at beginning of July, it has always been the intention to publish proceedings, and grants have been obtained towards this. Contributions will be submitted by the end of September, and it is likely that the proceedings will be a similar length to a volume of our *Transactions*. The text is to be edited by Professor Rachel Jenkins and Suzy Craddock. It is anticipated that the layout will be different to that of our *Transactions*, and we are enquiring about professional help with respect to the design of the book.

Once again, I express the Club's gratitude to Terry Morgan for all the work that he does on behalf of the Club, both in his editor's capacity and in the wider field.

John Eisel

G.W. SMITH FUND

Of the two grants from the Fund towards publications, notified in the Spring newsletter, the book on the Hereford Gospels by Bishop Thompson has been published and well received, and we offer him our congratulations. I understand that work on the book on Lady Brilliana Harley is proceeding well, although it was always seen as a long-term project. Professor Jackie Eales, the lead in this project, is speaking to the Club during our winter programme to give a tantalising foretaste of what is to come!

An application has been received for a grant towards a book on Herefordshire timber-framed houses, written by our own Duncan James, and a grant of £3,500 towards the cost of production and publication was agreed at the August meeting of the Trustees. This will be a substantial work whose publication is important to the history of the county, but it is not a commercial option. Its realisation will depend upon other funding which we hope will be forthcoming.

John Eisel

REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS 2026

Many thanks to John Eisel, Don Evans, Janet Cooper, Sue Olney, Moira Jenkins, Terry Morgan and Graham Saunders for their reports. Full versions will appear in the *Transactions*.

First Field Meeting: Hampton Bishop, 29 May 2026

The Club's first field trip of 2026, to Hampton Bishop, saw 9 members and 1 guest meet our leader, Moira Jenkins, at The Bunch of Carrots Inn. Arriving at Mordiford Bridge, we proceeded down to the River Lugg, noting the spire of



On the "Skank"

Holy Rood Church with its legend of the Mordiford Dragon painted on the walls. Nearby Sufton Court was built from Bath Stone. Both church and bridge have been repaired many times after flooding, since between the Rivers Lugg and Wye is a large lowland area. Following disastrous floods in 1960, a flood defence barrier, the "Skank", was constructed, and we followed this to walk along the Lugg bank. Numerous insects, especially mayflies and dragon flies,

white butterflies and a few bees were feeding on the emerging flowers among the many riverside willow trees.

At Mordiford Lock we noticed a large island of silt and sand. The River Wye is only tidal from Chepstow to Bigsweir, and the work of the millers and fishermen, and navigation, was made difficult during summer months because of low water levels. Before 1811, when a towpath for horses was made along the riverbanks, gangs of men pulled empty flat-bottomed barges along the river and its rapids, and later returned them laden with hay or coal. The former "Ox Ford" is a shallow section where animals could be driven across before the Holme Lacy Bridge was built.



The Ox Ford



Red Bank Cliff

On the opposite side and outside the River Wye meander is Red Bank Cliff, its red mudstones and greenish grey sandstone bands forming part of the Raglan Mudstone Formation, the first Old Red Sandstone rocks, now classified as the uppermost Silurian. Overlying Red Bank Cliff are gravels, the oldest River terrace deposits, laid down on a former valley floor before the River Wye, swollen with melt

water during the Ice Age, cut a deeper channel. Beside the cliff a landslide has taken away the footpath that used to run on the other side of the river. To the east of the low-lying area between the two rivers lies the Woolhope Dome, an upfolded area of marine Silurian rocks, separated from us by the Woolhope Fault. Gravels deposited on the inside of the meander bend, and rock ledges outcropping on the far bank beneath Dinedor Hill, cause white water.

Revived by lunch at the Bunch of Carrots, the party began our return to Mordiford. Across the road, the houses are built on higher land, with lower River terraces that keep them above flood levels. Traversing the fields towards the River Lugg, we walked along another section of the “Skank”, returning to the cars at Mordiford Bridge. The party thanked Moira for an enjoyable day.



The Woolhope Dome

Second Field Meeting: President’s Meeting at Highwood, 13 June 2026

From Yarpole, where we were greeted by swallows hunting low over the adjacent field, the party proceeded to Bircher Common, a gently sloping area of grassland with low gorse areas. The swallows were replaced by skylarks and a cuckoo as we crossed what appeared to be the boundary ditch, but was actually dug by the National Trust to prevent cars driving on to the common.

Further on, a large “archaeological” bank was explained to be covering the carcasses of cows from the last foot and mouth epidemic. It became apparent during the day that distinguishing between old and new landscape features required an expert eye, and this was provided by Prof. Keith Ray.

In the middle of the common, members were formed into a rectangle outlining



FHuge view from Bircher Common

an iron age enclosure, the original bank and ditch having been severely eroded over time. During WW2, potato growing on the common caused significant damage through ploughing. Two other enclosures lie on the same contour, the spring line giving vital access to water. On the upper side of the farmsteads was a bank, or lynchet, where centuries of ploughing along the contours of the land had moved soil to the downhill edge. Farming ceased

due to depopulation during the Black Death in the 14th century.

Nearby Oaker Wood was planted to satisfy the demand for charcoal for iron ore smelting in the 17th and 18th centuries. A few rows of scots pine were planted around the outside of the wood in 1875, when Queen Victoria proclaimed a love for all things Scottish. The two perimeter banks marked the limit of recent ploughing and the old boundary, and following these led to a flattish area where charcoal was produced, with a ditch marking the extraction route for trees using horses, after the end of charcoal burning. At the bottom of the hill were scattered the houses of the workers, some built on the boundary of two parishes to allow two payments of poor aid. Prof. Ray presented a picture of an active and busy countryside.



Bank on Bircher Common

Retracing our steps, we visited the best-preserved farmstead half inside the Croft Castle woodland. The banks and ditches are still visible to a good height and outlines of buildings have been found. A flat area, identified as an ancient rabbit warren, is roughly oval and has a stone tunnel with side chambers in which the rabbits had their young. Evidence of early stone quarrying was seen in a wide trench running down the hillside, with a more impressive quarry where stone was cut by steam powered saw, to be used in the renovations at Croft Castle.

Third Field Meeting: Arthur's Stone, 22 July 2026

On a clear, hot day, our President, Prof. Keith Ray, welcomed two parties to this year's excavations near the Neolithic dolmen of Arthur's Stone. Everyone enjoyed this extraordinary access to leading archaeologists working on nationally significant discoveries. The President reviewed work since 2021, identifying the development sequence of the Scheduled Monument; an avenue leading to it was revealed, and the remains of Herefordshire's first confirmed stone circle has been investigated. New discussion had taken place about the upright 'portal stone' towards the southwestern end of the dolmen, apparently re-erected by the Woolhope Club in 1901, but incorrectly. It was likely to have been laid horizontally, perhaps as a capstone to a chamber.



Prof. Keith Ray explaining the sequence of development at Arthur's Stone

Prof. Julian Thomas showed remarkable images from a multi-spectral drone survey, carried out in 2025, of the field north-west of the Scheduled Monument. There appeared to be a ditched, rectangular enclosure, 120 metres long, with numerous postholes inside it, suggesting perhaps an early Neolithic building or buildings, even larger than those found previously on Dorstone Hill. Two small trenches, several feet deep, had been opened to check whether physical evidence confirmed that features indicated by the survey existed.



Looking from the excavations to the mountains beyond the Golden Valley



New excavations in the stone circle

Results are been promising and could inform targeted investigation in the future.

Also in 2026, the half of the stone circle not excavated in 2024 was investigated. Dr Tom Elliot confirmed that the circle continued, with new complexity from additional holes. Some have yielded Neolithic pottery with potential for testing and research. In the avenue approaching Arthur's Stone from the valley, unexpected postholes have been found, crossing it part way down the hill; these are to be investigated further. A little to the east, the postholes of a small wooden circle have emerged, a

considerable surprise. It once featured a palisade, finally surrounded by a ditch, and was most likely to date from the mid-3rd millennium BC, thus showing activity hereabouts for approaching 1,500 years.

New discoveries demonstrate the extent of Neolithic activity in the area. All who participated thanked the President wholeheartedly for his efforts and for the insight that he, Prof. Thomas and Dr Elliot shared so freely.

Fourth Field Meeting: Timber-framed houses in Orleton, 6 August 2026

Orleton Manor, previously called Orleton Court, was last visited by the Club on 27 May 1909. Conservation architect, Christian Montez, discussed the multiple rebuildings, extensions, and alterations, carried out into the twentieth century. The current structure is of several building phases, beginning with the grand close-studded front section incorporating a fine moulded and panelled ceiling in what would have been the hall, with the east wing an addition based on its junction with the main front. The current restoration seeks to remove later accretions and filler in the studding, preserving as much of the original timber as is practicable. The replacement slate roof is being returned to stone slabs, split and shaped on site and, half complete, already affords a more pleasing texture; this despite the additional weight. New breathable limecrete floors have also allowed the installation of underfloor heating to maintain a more consistent temperature.



The Woolhope group and leaders at Orleton Manor



Duncan James addressing the group at Orleton Manor

The house likely dates from the sixteenth century, but sample timbers have been removed for dendrochronology. In the 1620s the manor passed to the recusant Blount family, the best known of whom was Thomas Blunt, the author of a manuscript history of Herefordshire. A number of legends have arisen about Orleton Manor, including that Charles II slept here after the battle of Worcester and that

Alexander Pope stayed there while courting a Miss Blount. Unfortunately, neither is likely to be based in fact.

After a group photograph, and vote of thanks to Christian, the party made its way to Orleton House, a cross-wing parallel to the road, with a long four-bay wing at right-angles to the rearm - originally two bays with a later two-bay extension. Duncan James described the development of the house, with its splendid gable for rooms in the roof of the rear wing. We were privileged to be able to inspect a 12-panelled counter-change ceiling dated to the late sixteenth century.



Orleton House

A short distance along the road is Old House, the surviving upper cross-wing of a mediaeval hall house. The hall, which abuts on the north-east side, has been rebuilt but the remaining part is built from timbers felled in 1467. A pronounced jetty towards the road has a large chimney stack with the remains of a bread oven, a later addition. In the main room at the front of the house the timbers of large section which formed the jetty could be seen. With a vote of thanks to our leaders the party dispersed, some taking advantage of the fact that the Old House is across the road from the Boot Inn.

Fifth Field Meeting: Craig-y-Nos Geotrail and 'Wealth of Water' landscape, 15 August 2026

Twelve members met at Craig y Nos (the crag of the night) in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and Fforest Fawr Geopark. Alan Bowring, the geoparks development officer, led us on a theme of 'Wealth of Water'. Geologically the park is on Carboniferous Limestone, with Upper Old Red Sandstone to the north and the Marros Group grit series underlying coal measures to the south.



Crossing a small bridge over the Afon Tawe, we could see, upstream, the confluence with the Afon Llynfell which emerges from the extensive caverns of nearby Dan yr Ogof caves and is milky with suspended calcium carbonate particles.

The Tawe's floodplain showed the damage from the storms of recent years, with a 90% loss of beech and pine trees and the likelihood that the remaining



Milky waters of the Afon Lynfell

large trees, now more exposed, will be lost in future storms. Alan suggested that their replacement by native species, hazels etc., would suit the thin alluvial soils while maintaining the Country Park landscape. Exposed bedding plains in the limestone Craig y Rhiwarth crags above, typically dip 10° southeast, with an acute 90° fold in the bedding due to the Tawe Valley Disturbance, a major fault zone carrying the Afon Tawe to the coast at Swansea. This formed during the

Caledonian orogeny, over 400 million years ago, with significant movement continuing during the Variscan orogeny some 320 million years ago.

Proceeding upstream, invasive Japanese Knotweed was evident along the riverbank. We recrossed the Tawe and over an old river channel to where an old alluvial fan had caused a broad crest in the man road. On the return walk we recrossed the river and followed the Beacons Way to Pwllcoediog, a large sinkhole or doline formed by the collapse of the surface rocks into a limestone cavern. Then on to birch and ash woodland, with the remains of a derelict lime kiln and evidence of coppicing for charcoal.



Sinkhole at Pwllcoediog

At the foot of the slope, Far Lake is fed by Pistyll y Rhiwarth, or Hospital

Rising, a large perennial spring resurgence from a subterranean stream in the limestone cave system, its English name derived from a TB hospital. Successive glaciations have eroded and lowered the valley floor, the levels of the extensive cave systems showing correlation with changing valley levels and descending in steps from one ice age to the next. Post glacial scree can be seen on the steeper slopes, with a recessional moraine below the castle and various deposits of head, till and boulder clay seen on the drive down to Craig y Nos, where the trip finished at the café with tea, ice creams and thanks to our trip leader.

6th Field Meeting: Geology of Wenlock Edge, 8 September 2026

Fourteen members gathered at the National Trust Presthope Car Park to meet our guide, Andrew Sims, for a day exploring the Much Wenlock Limestone in great detail and collecting fossils and rock where possible. We began at Knowle Quarry, a three-acre site designated as an SSSI for its ancient coral reef structures, brachiopods, crinoids and trilobites that could be seen embedded in the rock or found in the loose scree. For centuries, until its closure in 1928, the thick-bedded limestone was quarried and burned to produce agricultural lime for local farms. We were able to visit the restored bank of four lime kilns.



The party examining a quarry face of the Silurian Much Wenlock Limestone Reef

The party then made its way to Ballstone Quarry where lens-shaped, flat-bottomed patch reefs or reef cores, made of massive limestone up to 24 metres thick, contain prominent rounded and domed masses called ballstone, which represent localised



Geological features produced by dramatic flash floods and gentle, quiet conditions



Different aspects of Wenlock Limestone in the final quarry

carbonate build-up of calcified microbes, coral and stromatoporoids. Since the early Middle Ages, the gray limestone was quarried for use as building stone for Wenlock Priory and other local buildings, to serve as an iron-smelting flux for the Ironbridge furnaces from 1750, and to condition lime-deficient agricultural soil.

The day finished around 5pm with a vote of thanks from Don Evans and Moira Jenkins to Andrew for a splendid day. With bags bulging we left for home.

WOOLHOPE CLUB MEETINGS 2026-27

The programme of Saturday lectures and Friday geology meetings was attached to the news email of 23 August, and sent by post to members who prefer a paper version. It is also available on the website at <https://www.woolhopeclub.org.uk/meetings>

The Saturday lectures will again focus our attention on research of great interest to Herefordshire, covering topics from ecology and environmental conservation to historical insights and new archaeology. For convenience, the programme is included again below

The Geology meetings, at 18.00 on Friday evenings, will once again feature high-quality speakers and will have much to offer, both to the seasoned geologist and to those who would like to know more.

Our thanks to Anne Harbour and Sue Olver for organising two such promising programmes. This is Anne's last season of organising the programme and we thank her for her excellent service to the club.

If any member has a suggestion for a lecture that might be suitable for the Club programme, please get in touch with a committee member.

Saturday Meetings Programme—Winter 2026-27

Meetings in the Hereford Town Hall starting at 2.15pm, non-members welcome.

2026

- 10 October – The F. C. Morgan Lecture.** 'Rev. William Samuel Symonds, a Woolhope Club polyhistor' **CHRIS FEAR**
- 14 November** – 'A woman of masculine spirit': Brilliana, Lady Harley, and the Royalist siege of Brampton Bryan' **JACKIE EALES**
- 28 November** – 'The BGS Geological Materials Collections: over 200 years in the making and going strong' **MIKE HOWE**

2027

- 2 January** – 'John Venn and the Society for Aiding the Poor & Industrious' **FIONA RAWLINSON**
- 23 January** – 'The Great Oak of Ross & other ancient trees' **JERRY ROSS**
- 13 February** – 'Paved with living colour: The Godwin tiles of Lugwardine' **RHYS GRIFFITH**
- 13 March – Presidential Address:** 'Writing a landscape history of Herefordshire in the 2020s' **KEITH RAY**

Friday Geology Meetings—Winter 2026-27

All meetings will take place on Fridays, in Hereford Town Hall, from 18.00 to 20.00. Non-members are welcome.

2026

25 September – ‘A Century of researching ‘Woolhope Country’ (by coach, carriage, cycle and car)’ **THOMAS A. HOSE**, University of Bristol

16 October – ‘The Knighton Geological Map – an update’ **ARTHUR TINGLEY**

11 December – Christmas nibbles. Bring a rock, fossil or antique.

2027

19 February – ‘Norwegian geology – ‘A view from Baltica’ **Sue Hay**

19 March – ‘A history of the geological maps and accounts of ‘The Woolhope Valley of Elevation’ **DUNCAN HAWLEY**

Field Meetings Programme—Summer 2027

Details of the summer programme of field meetings will follow in spring 2027.

GEOLOGISTS’ ASSOCIATION FESTIVAL OF GEOLOGY

7–8 November, Burlington House, London.

Once again the Woolhope Clib will be represented at this national event with a stand presented by Sue Olver and Toby Cusworth.

The event includes exhibits, sales of rocks, minerals and fossils, and a great line-up of speakers. There is the chance to get involved in citizen science and a display of real moon rocks.

The GA also offers a programme of Evening Lectures, beginning with Professor Kirsty Edgar, on Thirty years of discovery at the UK’s largest dinosaur track site in north Oxfordshire. Members and non-members must register in advance if attending via zoom.

NEW BOOKS

The following new books have been notified to the Club. Full reviews will appear in the *Transactions*.

***Railways of Herefordshire and the Southern Marches*, by Heather Hurley, (Logaston Press, 2026) x + 246. ISBN 978-1-910839-85-0, soft cover, £20.**

This book has just been published (July 2026), and is a summary of all the railway lines in the given area. There is more than a touch of nostalgia for those of us who can remember the steam trains running before the advent of diesel, and the Beeching axe, and the loss of such stations as Withington and Stoke Edith. There is a superb set of photographs of the latter, taken by A. U. Zimmerman c. 1910, and the illustrations in general are of a very high standard, and extensive.

***Leominster's First Canal*, by David Slater (published by the author, 2026), xii + 47, A4, illus., ISBN 978-1-0369-8821-0. Orders to folc@btopenworld.com, cost £9.99 and £13.99 with delivery. It is also in major outlets in Leominster including the museum and tourist information.**

David Slater's new book covers in detail the history of the River Pinsley, canalised in mediaeval times to serve the priory. It is well illustrated with annotated maps and historic photographs which are compared to the current situation, and puts the canal into context with other examples. An interesting aspect of the history of Leominster which has been neglected in the past.

***Downton: Exploring the Church of St Giles*, by Mark O'Hanlon (published by the author, 2026), iv + 88, A5, illus., ISBN 978-0-9528059-8-4. Available to purchase at the church, at Castle Bookshop (Ludlow) and online through eBay from 10/10/2026, cost £10 with proceeds going to St Giles' Church at Downton.**

Author Mark O'Hanlon explains: "This new book aims to welcome visitors to St Giles', exploring the historical and architectural features of the church whilst also discovering the 'hidden gems' and splashes of scarce colour throughout the building. The current church was built in 1861, but the book also includes an appendix exploring the old twelfth century church of St Giles nearby, along with a long forgotten tale of 'Mystery, Romance and Intrigue'. It aims to contain something of interest for everyone!" All proceeds from the sale of this new book will go to St Giles' Church at Downton.

LAUNCH EVENT

Downton: Exploring the Church of St Giles will be published on Saturday 10 October with first copies available to purchase through a launch event being held at 10:30 am in the church at Downton, with a 'musical interlude' by Paul Cooper-James.

***Fossils & Faith. The Victorian Struggle for Science and the Surprising Story of a Worcestershire Rector*, by Christopher Fear, (Logaston Press, 2026) viii + 247. ISBN 978-1-910839-90-4, soft cover, £20. Available from local bookshops, Amazon, Logiston and direct from the author.**

A biography of Woolhope Club founder, geologist, educationalist and novelist, Rev. William Samuel Symonds, to be published on 8 October 2026. The book draws on five volumes of unpublished letters from all the major figures in Victorian geology, including Lyell, Murchison, Strickland, Prestwich and Huxley, as well as personal correspondence and Symonds' own natural history books and novels. It considers Symonds as an Anglican clergyman at the centre of the evolution debate. Much of this was played out through meetings of the Woolhope Club and other local naturalist's field clubs. Illustrated throughout.