

THE SILURIAN OF 'SILURIA' AND THE IDEA OF A PALAEOZOIC ERA

Self-guided Supplement to the Field-Trip Guide

Summary of the itinerary

The following notes are designed to enable historians of geology to replicate all or part of this field trip in their own time and with their own transport. The notes should be read in conjunction with the description of the itinerary (and reproductions of parts of Murchison's 1839 map) on pp. 4-7 of the Field-Trip Guide. A topographical map to use while navigating the countryside is the Ordnance Survey 'Landranger' [1:50,000] series, sheet 137, "Church Stretton and Ludlow"; at one point the route goes briefly north on to the adjacent sheet 126, "Shrewsbury". Alternatively, the itinerary can be followed in greater detail on the 'Explorer' [1:25,000] series, "Ludlow" (sheet 203), "Welshpool and Montgomery" (sheet 216), and "Longmynd and Wenlock Edge" (sheet 217). Grid references, which are given below, can be read from any of these maps (three-figure East-West coordinates, from the top or bottom margins, followed by three-figure North-South coordinates, from the left or right margins). Note that many of the country lanes are narrow, and unsuitable or even impossible for large vehicles. The itinerary can of course be divided up, or reversed, to suit individual circumstances, but these notes follow the field-trip's actual route over two days in July 2013. Geological comments are, as in the Guide, in terms of mid-19th-century, *not* modern knowledge. Hotels, pubs with rooms, and B&Bs, for evening meals and overnight accommodation, can be found in the towns of Ludlow, Church Stretton and Bishop's Castle, further afield in Shrewsbury and Leominster, and elsewhere in the Marches. Distances given below are approximate.

DAY ONE.

Drive on A49 north-south main road (Shrewsbury to Hereford) to the **Ludlow** bypass. At the roundabout at 513 756 turn east on A4117 (signed to 'Cleobury Mortimer') After 6km, at 579 758, turn left into narrow lane ('Titterstone Clee summit'), follow for 2.5km, and park in large parking area (with fine view) on left of lane at 593 776, where lane bends sharp right. Walk a few metres further up lane beyond this bend, then up rough footpath on left for 500m, passing above large disused quarry in prismatic basalt, to reach summit of **Titterstone Clee** hill, at 592 779, for all-round views.

Drive back to **Ludlow**, keeping straight ahead at A49 roundabout, into town centre. Park in Castle Street car park (paying) to visit Ludlow Museum (on south side of open market space) and especially its 'Geology' room.

From museum entrance, turn left and walk towards castle entrance, then turn left and follow street down to **Dinham Bridge** over River Teme at 507 744. Cross bridge and walk up path to left for 600m, passing exposures of highest Silurian and lowest Old Red Sandstone strata. Follow path down to join a lane. At nearby junction (at 513 742) with old main road out of Ludlow, strata visible at junction formerly included thin Ludlow Bone bed (now buried at base of exposure). Turn north, cross nearby **Ludford Bridge** back into Ludlow, and walk up through gateway in town wall. At top of Broad Street, turn left back to Castle Street car park.

Follow road signs to leave town centre to drive north (towards Shrewsbury) and rejoin A49 main road north. After 500m turn right on B4365 ('Bridgnorth') and after 7km turn right again on to B4368. On approaching **Diddlebury** after less than 2km, turn left at 502 855 up narrow lane ('Pinstones'). After 600m, at 496 861, private track forks right, down and up again 400m to **Delbury Quarry** in Aymestry Limestone (permission should be obtained in advance from quarry manager Andy Farnell on 07970 844 094).

Return to B4368, turn left and continue towards Bridgnorth. After 8km, turn left on B4378 ('Much Wenlock'). After 2.5km, at **Brockton** 578 938, turn left on lane ('Easthope') for 3km, then right on B4371 ('Much Wenlock'). After 500m, park on verge on left at 573 967, a few metres from precipitous crest of Wenlock Edge (take care!), for Wenlock Limestone underfoot and fine view north-east. Continue on B4371 to 1km short of **Much Wenlock**. Park on left at 602 991, immediately beyond gated entrance marked conspicuously 'Wenlock Site'. Walk along rough path through wood, emerging into large disused quarry in Wenlock Limestone, with good fossils in spoil (no permission needed: commercial storage area on former quarry floor is fenced off from quarry face).

Drive back on B4371 (towards Church Stretton) for 8km, down long hill off Wenlock Edge. At **Longville-in-the-Dale** 539 937 turn right on minor road ('Cardington'). At crossroads after 500m, turn left. At **Cardington** 506 952 turn left, keeping church on right; then turn left and then right. At **Willstone** 491953, lane turns sharp right, but instead continue straight ahead on rough but broad track for 400m up to parking area at 486 952 (small old quarry) on right. Walk on, to highest point on track and just beyond, to see Caradoc strata with fossils, exposed in bank on right of track. Return towards parking, but go through gate on left and walk up to nearby hilltop, for good views of Caer Caradoc (west) and The Lawley and parallel scarps of Hoar Edge and Yell Bank (north-east).

Drive back down track to Willstone, and turn left. Keep straight ahead at crossroads 497 963, past **Enchmarsh** on to **Yell Bank**, and park on left verge at 507 970 (look for lane-side bench): views north-west to Hoar Edge and The Lawley, south-east to Wenlock Edge and Clee Hills; small quarry in Caradoc strata just inside field on right side of lane. Continue along lane 500m to **Chatwall**. On left of lane, on left side of private entrance drive at 513 974, exposure of Caradoc strata dipping steeply to north-west (no hammering!).

Continue on lane 200m. With Chatwall Hall on left, turn left at 515 975 down narrow lane, off Yell Bank, and then up on to **Hoar Edge**. Continue down steep wooded scarp to parking area on right at 509 979, where lane bends to left. Walk up track through wood 100m to overgrown old quarry on right, in Hoar Edge Grit (Caradoc).

Drive on along lane 1km to small parking area on left at 506 991. Walk up good footpath south-west for 400m on to lower slopes of **The Lawley**, for views north over north Shropshire plain (New Red Sandstone), south-west to Long Mynd ('Cambrian') beyond Stretton valley, and south-east back to Hoar Edge and Yell Bank.

Continue along lane 1km to crossroads; turn left (Roman road) for 2km, then turn right through **Leebotwood** to join A49 at 475 985.

DAY TWO

From traffic lights at **Church Stretton** on A49 at 457 936, drive west 500m into town centre, turn left into main street and continue on B4370 for 2km to **Little Stretton**. Turn first right into side lane. [Shorter route, if starting from anywhere south of Church Stretton: drive north on A49 from Ludlow, turn left at 443 912 on to B4370 ('Little Stretton') for 700m and take *second* lane on left.] Follow lane for 150m, turn right (dead-end) at junction, and park.

Walk on along lane, over footbridge and cross stile on right. Follow footpath through fields (first field may be in use as camp site). At 439 926, just before another footbridge (with isolated house on far side of stream), outcrop of near-vertical Longmynd shales (pre-Silurian, Sedgwick's 'Cambrian') on left. Cross footbridge and follow path (and stream) into **Ashes Hollow**. After 400m, just after crossing small stream from right, take faint sheep track (may be overgrown with bracken in summer) diagonally up hillside to right. Persevere for 300m to reach old quarry high above valley floor, with near-vertical Longmynd shales with controversial trace fossils (organic or not?). Return by same paths to parking place.

Drive back to rejoin B4370, turn right on it and right again on to A49, then southwards for 7km. Turn right on to A489 ('Welshpool') at 433 848. After 500m, at right turn at 429 853 ('Wistanstow'), park off road (but not in private parking in front of cottage). Cross main road and walk down track to west for 200m. Cross footbridge and stile on right. Follow footpath along south bank of little **River Onny** for 300m to view rock exposure on north bank (landowner prohibits crossing river, let alone hammering!): famous slight unconformity between Upper and Lower Silurian (Wenlock and Caradoc), though strata look similar (fossils differ). Return to parking on main road.

[**Longer option**, mentioned in Guide but not followed on field trip for lack of time: continue on footpath along south bank of Onny for 1.5km; later part runs in woodland close to line of old railway. Traversing down sequence, occasional small exposures of steep-dipping Caradoc strata with fossils. 100m beyond footbridge over river on right, climb into old quarry on left at 412 863, with steep-dipping basal Caradoc strata (left) overlying pre-Silurian rocks (right); unconformity between them now much overgrown. Return 2 km to parking on main road. Alternatively, if a non-walking driver is available, ask him/her to drive back to A49, then south (towards Craven Arms) for 500m, then first right on lane ('Cheney Longville') over railway line and on through **Cheney Longville**. At 412 955, 1km beyond village, turn right down dead-end lane for 400m and park where tarmac ends at 413 859. Party on foot should double back (from quarry with unconformity) for 300m, then turn right over old railway bridge at 414 860 and continue up track for 200m to meet parked vehicle, which should then take party back by same route to A489.]

Drive west on A489 12km (skirting south end of conspicuous treeless Long Mynd) to **Lydham**. Turn right on A488 ('Shrewsbury') north for 7km to **White Grit**. Turn left at 319 979 on to lane (which briefly enters Wales and leaves it again!). After 1.5km, at second sharp bend (to left), drive straight ahead on rough track for 400m to parking area at 303 981. Walk across cattle-grid and on along footpath for 400m to prehistoric stone circle of **Mitchell's Fold** on west slope of **Stapeley Hill**, for good views west towards distant Berwyn Hills in Wales (composed of Sedgwick's 'Cambrian' rocks), and east to Stiperstones (rocky crags on skyline). Return to parking area.

Drive back to A488, turn left (north) for 1.5km, then right ('Shelve') at crossroads, and drive through Shelve village. At junction after 3km, turn left for 3km to **Stiperstones**

village, and park in centre. Walk to junction at 364 005 with lane into **Mytton Dingle**, and view fine bedding plane of steep-dipping Lower Silurian slate (in a private backyard). Walk up lane (to *right* of that signed to Mytton Dingle) for 300m, then turn sharp left up private drive (but public footpath) past houses and through into field beyond. View of thick steep-dipping Lower Silurian strata, outcropping on far (north) side of Mytton Dingle (basal strata of Stiperstones quartzite outcrop on skyline to right). Return to parking.

Drive back, past junction with lane to Shelve; continue ahead 1km to **The Bog** field centre (tea etc; toilets; parking) at 356 979, and a further 1.5km (bearing left at a fork), to parking area on left at 369 976 for **Stiperstones** nature reserve. Walk left up rough but well-marked footpath 500m to natural outcrops of quartzite on ridge, with views west to Berwyn Hills and east to Long Mynd. (The largest and best outcrops are further north along footpath, at highest point of ridge at 367 986; worth visiting if time permits.) Return to parking.

Continue east down lane 3km to junction with wider (but unclassified) road at 394 966; good pub nearby at **Bridges**. This is the end of the field trip. Turn left (north) for Shrewsbury; *or* turn right (south) through Wentnor to rejoin A489 back to Craven Arms and Ludlow (or right, off A489, by B4383 to Bishop's Castle); *or* turn left-and-then-right (past pub on right) for steep and narrow lanes (follow road signs; not for nervous drivers) over top of Long Mynd and down into Church Stretton.

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Bishop's Castle
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