

# Long Mynd Conglomerates around Darnford

## Rockhop: Peter Toghill: 11th May

On May 11<sup>th</sup> 2013 nine hardy SGS members and one young lady assembled at GR SO426974 near Darnford with the intention of examining late Pre-Cambrian sedimentary rocks of the Wentnor Group, Bayston-Oakwood Formation, specifically two of the Long Mynd conglomerates, the Darnford conglomerate and the Stanbatch conglomerate.

It was a very cold blustery start to the day and showers were frequent but fortunately we were not quite soaked to the skin! Many thanks are due to Peter Toghill who led this walk and to our coordinator Keith Hotchkiss. The time and effort put in by these two gentlemen to make this a most informative trip was greatly appreciated.

The Darnford valley is situated on the western side of the Long Mynd. The nearby Ratlinghope church was the starting point of Rev. Donald E Carr's fateful journey on the Long Mynd; a journey which was to become an ordeal when he became lost in a particularly violent snow storm on the night of 29<sup>th</sup> January 1865. He later published his account of that night under the title "*A Night in the Snow*".

### Locality 1

We set off and walked the short distance to our first locality which was Darnford Brook where we descended the valley side to an outcrop above the brook. Here we managed to get out of the wind a little and so were able to hear Peter's excellent explanation of the deposit. Darnford Brook is the type locality of the Darnford conglomerate which forms part of the 2000 m thick Bayston-Oakwood formation of the Wentnor Group.



*Locality 1 - Darnford Conglomerate merging upwards into coarse Sandstone*

The conglomerate consists of river gravels with some pebbles as large as 7 cm. There is an interesting mix of pebbles including, Quartz, Quartzite, Rhyolite and also pebbles of eroded Ercall Granophyre (an intrusive Granitic rock type) which was emplaced some 560 million years ago and eroded to form these rocks. The pebbles are set in a sandy matrix and at this exposure it can be seen that the conglomerate merges upwards into coarse sandstone. The Darnford conglomerate was deposited in the Ediacaran Period 635–541 million years ago but clearly after the Ercall Rhyolite was emplaced 560 million years ago. While we were examining the outcrop it was delightful to hear a Curlew calling nearby. Fingers crossed that they have a successful breeding season.

### Locality 2

The weather became somewhat worse as we walked to our next locality which was an outcrop of the Stanbatch Conglomerate above Catbatch brook. This conglomerate is also of Ediacaran age, however it is younger than the Darnford conglomerate. It contains pebbles of Uriconian and metamorphic origin embedded in a purple sandstone matrix. The pebbles are generally smaller than those we saw in the Darnford conglomerate. We also noted that the matrix appears to be much stronger than the pebbles many of which can be seen to have sheared completely.

At this locality we were also able to examine a slickenside along the lateral tear fault in the Stanbatch Conglomerate and there was much discussion about this. We also noted that there is a siliceous flint like material directly under the conglomerate. These conglomerates were deposited in braided river environments as indeed were the sandstones which accompanied the conglomerates.



*Locality 2 – Slickenside, Stanbatch Conglomerate (Note Keith's brolly included for scale!)*

Altogether a most interesting Rockhop and an enjoyable day despite the weather!

*Verity Jackson*