

Corton Road Cutting.

We were asked by Jonathan Cox of English Nature, via Jo Thomas, to look at the proposed widening of the road access to Corton Farm, SSSI Site and, together with the small disused quarry at the top a RIGS Site. The problem was that the original access was dug in the days of horse and cart and with the advent of multiwheel articulated lorries (artic) the narrow opening, although very beautiful, had become virtually impossible to negotiate as well as dangerous to other roads users. It had become necessary to load the pigs produced on the farm on to a short wheelbase lorry and then cross-load on to an artic in Portesham . As well as unnecessary expense this is very stressful to the pigs.

Our brief was to examine and record the before and after and to discuss with the contractors ways and means to leave the site as attractive as possible, as well as a classic example of the local strata.

The contractors PB Earthworks of Bridport were excellent, and sympathetic to the proposals. The owner said that he thought he had met me before, and we eventually worked out that he had been one of my students at the Agricultural College many years before.

The cutting was photographed, see below, and for comparison, Arkells photo of 1935 , which although not the same angle does show similarities.



Fossils were collected and identified as work progressed; at one time the digger driver had to construct a platform so that he could reach the upper levels so as to leave a safe gradient.



Specimens collected include *Glaucolithites sp* (several apparently differing), *Myophorella sp*, *Nanogyra nana*, *Thracia depressa*, *Modiolus sp*, Serpulid worms, *Protocardia dissimilis*, *Musculus autissodoriensis* and frequent fragments of *Camponectes*.

At first we had identified the section as Portland Stone, and not until later corrected this to Portland Sands. In this we are in good company as Arkell records in the Proceedings of the

Geologists Association (Vol XLVI of 1935, part 2), that Buckland and De la Beche had done the same. To Adrians credit he made the correction before seeing Arkells' work



Fossils collected during the dig

We described the section as containing dolomitic siltstone and sandstone with Calcite and secondary mineralisation. There was evidence of dendrite.

We returned to the site after about four weeks during which period there had been sufficient weathering to give a good exposure of the finished work. In our opinion the site has not suffered aesthetically due to the necessary works, but the reader can form opinion from the pictures.

Despite the very blustery conditions, Michael Houses' measuring rope was thrown over the new cutting, and measurements taken 17 and 30 metres from the edge of the road.



The new exposure is clearly seen; there appear to be minor erosion surfaces between the main beds, as well as lower down the track what appears to be a repetition of the sequence due to the steep dip. The upper blue grey siltstone (which contains small clay clasts) appears at road level about 10metres further down the farm road.



The view from the road, in our view, has not been much harmed, and road users will be able to see lorries leaving the farm. We suggested that a convex mirror be placed on the post on the opposite side of the road which advertises Mr Lasseters B&B. This would allow lorry drivers to see oncoming traffic.

It has to be noted that Mr Lasseter was very reluctant to alter the opening at all as it was so attractive.

The sections measured are shown below.



At 17m from the road we measured Dark grey weathered broken sand stone to 500 mm

Dark blue siltstone, with clay clasts and mineralisation
up to3.00m

Rubbly sandstone with casts, and showing an apparent
erosion plane on its upper surface to.....1.00m

Broken , hard limestone with fossils including serpulid
worm to.....1.00m

Further down the farm road, at 30m from the public road broadly the same section occurred,
but due to the northward sloping dip with massive sandy limestone to.....2.00m
Followed by massive greeny-grey limestone to.....1.00m
Below the track follow dark grey siltstone and 3-4m limestone down to the farm as in Arkells
photo.
Further west along the footpath there is the soft sand mentioned by Arkell. These crags of
limestone are the scarp face of the northern limb of the Weymouth anticline.

Our thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Lasseter for their help and hospitality

References...Arkell W.J. 1935: The Portland Beds of the Dorset mainland. Proceedings of the
Geologists' Association, vol 46, pp 301-47, particularly 329-332.
Wilson V et al 1958: Geology of the Country around Bridport and Yeovil.
Memoir of Geological Survey of Great Britain.