

GLA 67 Summerhouse Lane Chalk Pit, LIGS

London Borough of Hillingdon, TQ 043 916

Ownership: Coppermill Lock Management Company Limited

Summerhouse Lane Chalk Pit was one of several chalk pits along the River Colne and was marked as 'Harefield Lime Works' and later 'Distemper Works' on old large-scale Ordnance Survey maps. The pit was in existence by the 1860s as shown on OS 6 inch and 25-inch maps and was served by a short arm of the Grand Union Canal and later a tramway to the Canal. The distemper works, which were within the quarry, closed in 1939 and its site is now occupied by a housing estate and commercial units. Of the chalk pits along the Colne, this is the only one that is still accessible apart from the Harefield SSSI that only exposes 2 m of chalk (GLA 34). There were other pits running north along this stretch of the Colne, principally the Springwell Chalk Pits adjacent to the Springwell Lane Bridge over the Grand Union Canal beside the lock.

Other than the accessible section, small exposures can still be seen high up in the wooded slopes above the adjacent 'Water Meadows' at the extreme end of Summerhouse Lane, in part of the same quarry, but are not accessible. The quarry is described with a logged section in the Geologists' Association Guide 68 *The Geology of London*. The Colne Valley Chalk pits provide details of the Chiltern succession.

The geology

The quarry exposes some 20m of Chalk overlain by an unknown thickness of Paleogene Lambeth Group and Pleistocene (pre-Anglian) Gerrards Cross Gravel. The lower part of the succession is a continuous section in the White Chalk Subgroup comprising the topmost metre of the *Micraster cortestudinarium* Zone and the basal 20m of the overlying *Micraster coranguinum* Zone. The boundary between these Zones is defined by the Shoreham Marl 2 (Mortimore, 1986) and at the top of the Chalk section is the Seven Sisters Flint Band (Mortimore, 1986). Between these horizons there are additional flint bands and marl seams, together with iron-stained horizons and two shell beds. The Chalk section corresponds to the Belle Tout Beds at the base of the Seaford Chalk Formation and extends upwards the succession exposed at the top of Riddlesdown Quarry (GLA 26) near Coulsdon.

Also seen are solution hollows or 'pipes' first described by Whitaker & Hopkinson (1882) who considered that this pit contained the best examples in the area. They result from acidic rainwater having percolated through the overlying sand and gravel slowly dissolving the chalk down lines of weakness allowing the overlying deposits to sink gradually into the cavity.

Access

Reach Summerhouse Lane via Park Road from the centre of Harefield or leave the A412 at West Hyde (small roundabout) and follow Coppermill Lane, crossing the Grand Union Canal past the 'Coy Carp' PH. There is limited parking in Summerhouse Lane, but it is narrow in places. The lane then becomes a private road. Parking is also available in the 'Coy Carp' PH car park (pay and display) but it is unsafe to walk along the road from here as it is narrow with blind bends and no footway. The only part of the quarry that is accessible is reached by following Canal Way (off Summerhouse Lane) through the housing estate and walking behind the right-hand (S) end of the commercial units. Here, there is a surfaced area with several commercial rubbish bins behind which are trees and undergrowth partly obscuring the face. The locality is best visited in the winter/early spring, but access to the face is obstructed by the undergrowth.

Further information

GA Guide 68, pp 25-28.

References

- Mortimore, R. N. 1986. Stratigraphy of the Upper Cretaceous White Chalk of Sussex. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*. **97**, 97-139.
- Whitaker, W. & Hopkinson, J. 1882. Excursion to Rickmansworth. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, **7**, 397-399.



2005



2013

Photos D. Clements



2019 (Photo: Allan Wheeler)

Site Map

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