

EXCURSION

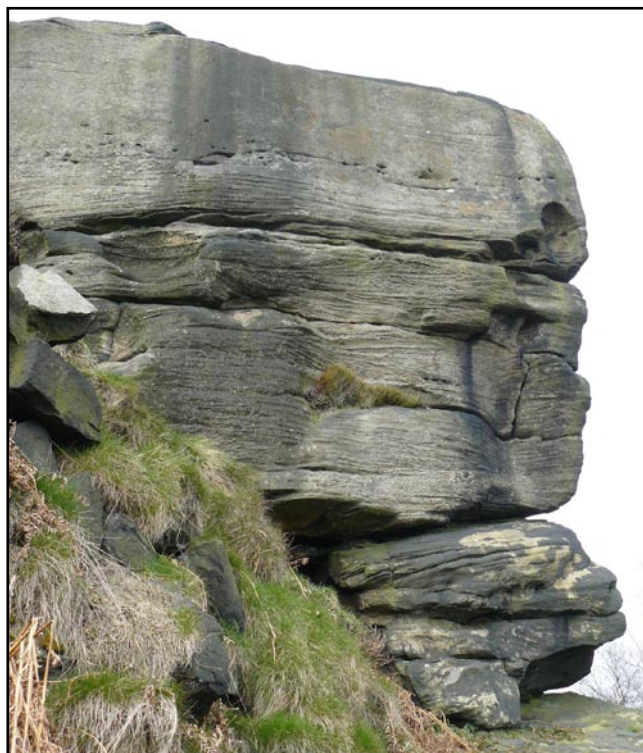
Ashover

Leader: Tim Colman

A dozen members took part in an evening walk, on Wednesday 6th July 2011, to visit the Carboniferous rocks of the Ashover area. These included limestones and volcanic ash of Carboniferous Limestone (Visean) age and sandstones and shales of Millstone Grit (Namurian) age. Ashover was an important centre for lead and fluorspar mining and also for stone quarrying, though all activity has now ceased.

The walk began through the village past the parish church, which has a lead-lined font dating from the 12th century, one of only thirty in the country. At the Poets' Corner Inn the path down Salter's Lane was taken towards Overton Hall. After crossing the River Amber, outcrops of dark grey Ashover Tuff with calcite veining occur in the path, dipping westwards at a shallow angle. The volcanic centre was at Milltown about a kilometre to the southeast, down the Amber valley. Overton Hall was once the home of Sir Joseph Banks. Salter's Lane was followed uphill past gently westerly dipping limestone outcrops, past Overton Hall and then onwards towards Cocking Tor.

The path crosses the Gregory Vein where galena, calcite, fluorite and sphalerite samples were found, as well as limestone and black shale as the host rocks. The Gregory Mine was a major lead producer in the late 18th century, with an annual output of over 1000 tons of lead; in 1772 the profits were over £15,000. The vein was mined over a distance of more than a kilometre under the gritstone escarpment; it was drained by a Newcomen steam engine and then the only Boulton and Watt engine to work in Derbyshire. The mine was



Ashover Grit at Cocking Tor.

abandoned in 1803, when the forehead was 300 m deep, due to water problems and the poor quality of the ore.

Some of the party then took the steep track up to Cocking Tor, capped a large unjointed bedding surface in Ashover Grit that demonstrates why it was used for millstones. It was also an excellent viewpoint over the Gregory Vein tip and the Ashover anticline.

The party then returned to Ashover with a detour to inspect the old lime kilns below Hockley Quarry, which show an exposure of several metres of Ashover Tuff dipping eastwards on the eastern side of the anticline.



View down the old open-cuts and waste dumps left from the workings for lead in the Gregory Vein.