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11.01.1993

Dear Colin,

Pudding Stone Recording Scheme

Just a note to let you know that I, my wife Jean, and my colleague Paul Jeffery have been on your "turf" during the latter half of 1992, in the Radlett and St. Albans areas.

We are recording the occurrence of Hertfordshire Pudding Stone: it looks like concrete, with flint pebbles in a hard sandstone matrix. Good examples of it can be seen on the green opposite the mill at Kingsmill (St. Michael's Bridge) and round the trunk of a tree within a raised bed outside the Seventh Day Adventist Church in St. Peter's Road/Carlisle Avenue. Outside the porchway entrance to the Museum of St. Albans, Hatfield Road, is a large block of sandstone, with a mammellated surface containing just a few pebbles: this is a transitional type between Sarsen Stone (no pebbles: the big stones at Stonehenge) and the very pebbly Hertfordshire PS.

One of the reasons we are gathering all the old published records as well as those in manuscript form is to map the find-sites of HPS so that we can match the pebble-types of querns (rotary hand millstones) made from HPS, and so find the "factory" sites of the Romano-British workshops. Likely sites are within St. Albans itself, the Townsend Farm area to the North-west of St. A, and pits east and south of Radlett, near known Roman pottery kilns. See the enclosed "Plea for Information" sheet for an illustration of a quern.

In Autumn 1993, RockWatch will launch a recording scheme based on our work, so that schools in the area Berks/Oxon/Bucks/Herts/Middx/Essex (roughly the occurrence of HPS) can search for and record HPS and Sarsen stones. We will process the records and include them in a computer data-base. David Curry of the Museum of St. Albans will act as the co-ordinator. Some of the stones listed in old records (boundary stones, wayside markers etc) may have been "tidied away" or lost during road widening, but this is where schools and youth groups (scouts, cubs, guides etc) can help, by checking the grid references we can supply, to see if the stones are still there, after 50-150 years.

We do not know how long you have lived in the St. Albans area, but we are sure that you have made many friends and contacts who might be able to assist in this Recording Scheme, amongst local Councillors, school teachers, youth leaders, etc., who might be able to aid us with the ground work and by providing records, however vague, old or folkloric. For instance, we are having difficulty in finding the name of the current owner of Newberries Park, Radlett. In 1975 this was Michael Richards, of Wood Hall, Shenley, St. Albans - have you come across him? We need permission to visit pits on this land, as we are leading a coachload of geologists on a tour of sites on June 5th, 1993.

This is just a preliminary note to let you know what we are doing at the moment: the scheme should develop and we may need local (St Albans area) publicity later this year. We have the nucleus of a Mailing List for a Newsletter which will doubtless expand as time goes on. Most of the people on the List are in the Hemel Hempstead area, thanks to the zeal of Mrs. Ada Lambert there.

There is no need for you to reply in writing to this letter unless you have urgent or interesting information: we can discuss it further next time we meet.

Yours sincerely,

John Cooper

PLEA FOR INFORMATION
CONCERNING LAPIDARY SPECIMENS OF
PUDDING STONE SOLD BY THE LATE MR.
JOHN APPLEBY OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Further to an ongoing study of the occurrence and use of Pudding Stone, John Cooper and Paul Jeffery are seeking information on the whereabouts of polished lapidary slices of Pudding Stone formerly sold by the late Mr. John Appleby (d. 1984) from a small shop in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

It is believed that the sawn and polished specimens of Pudding Stone were often mounted on a plaque, possibly with an explanatory label of some sort attached.

Information is also being sought concerning the whereabouts of several tons of unworked rock believed to be held by Mr. Appleby before his death.

Any information, no matter how general or anecdotal, would be greatly appreciated.

John may be contacted today at his book stall, otherwise he, or Paul Jeffery may be contacted at:

Department of Palaeontology,
The Natural History Museum,
Cromwell Road,
London, SW7 5BD.

Telephone: (JC) 071 938 9450 \
> 10 am to 4 pm weekdays
(PJ) 071 938 8793 /

Costs of postage/phone-calls will be refunded if required.

John is also seeking information on the whereabouts of Pudding Stone Querns (Hand-powered rotary grain mills). Details as above.



ROMANO-BRITISH QUERN

Discovered at Finchingfield, Essex, July 1950. Probable period A.D. 50-150

The quern was the earliest mechanical device employed domestically for the grinding of grain. The first rotary querns were developed in the Iron Age. The specimen illustrated is of a later type, made from Herts conglomeration. It was operated by pressing the nether stone into the earth at a slight angle so that the grinding surfaces were out of the horizontal plane. The upper stone was rocked in a rotary motion, and the meal spilled out from the lowest part of the edge.