

# Muirshiel Country Park

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2018

Leader Iain Allison

Report Margaret Greene

Participants 15

We gathered at the Visitor centre at Muirshiel Country Park before setting out on this sweltering June day.

The area is of Lower Carboniferous volcanic rocks, close to the base of the Clyde Plateau Volcanic Formation.

The first locality we were led to was a section of the River Calder at Grid Ref NS 310 632.

Here was a prominent band of volcanoclastic conglomerate crossing the river. The clasts were part rounded: some were vesicular, all are igneous. The deposit is clast supported,



suggesting a water-lain environment. This section consists of volcanic conglomerate sandwiched between trachyte lava flows. - some of which are vesicular.

Cutting the lavas are a series of WSW-NNE oriented dykes, the majority of which are felsic alkaline or trachyte types. One such dyke was investigated a short distance further upstream, and further on still was an example of water-laid tuff with layering of the ash deposits.

We all then went back to the track and carried on along towards the barytes mine.

Part way a number of the party headed of up the moorland to seek out an exposed band of barytes while some of us carried on to the mine,



and one or two who had had enough of the sun headed back to the Visitor Centre.

Barytes, a hard pink rock, has many uses. Converted into barium sulphate, it was employed in hospitals for barium meal x-rays. It was also used as a constituent of paint and in the paper and cosmetic industries. More recently, it has been incorporated in oil-drilling muds pumped down through drill pipes for lubricating purposes.

In its early years the barytes was excavated by open cast working; later on, adits were struck to open up new seams of the mineral.

A number of veins of barytes cut the Trachyte on Queenside Muir; the main vein was up to 6 metres wide and could be traced for 800m in a NNE-SSW direction. At the northern end the main vein is diverted in an E-W direction. The mine was worked from around 1750 and finally closed in 1969. The entrances to the mine are now heavily fenced of although fragments of barytes can be found at the workings and on the track.



The party who had headed up the hill found an exposed vein on the side of the Berryglen Burn, at tributary of the Calder water at NS286643.



Some of the party lunched next to the fenced of section before heading back to the visitor centre where the group who had gone of cross country caught up. The centre thankfully not only provided teas and coffees but also ice lollies!