

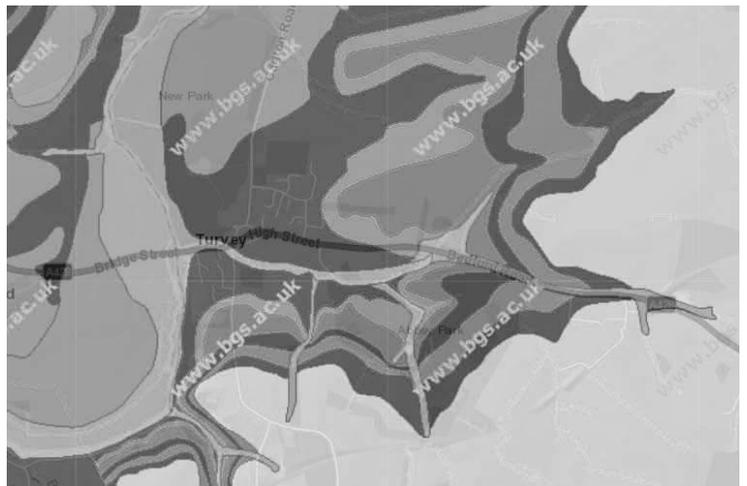
JURASSIC PARK, TURVEY

Sometimes, as I walk from the Abbey to the chapel around midday, the sun shines on the stone wall at an angle and my attention is drawn to a little shell. It's not the only shell to be seen, there are dozens of them in the stone walls of the Abbey, and many other similar shells, ammonites and so on, in the gravel paths. They are, of course, fossils. John Higgins made a sketch in his Turvey Abbey Scrapbook of a big ammonite found on his land (p184)—you can see it on the Turvey History Website.

I once saw a chapel where they had mounted a fossil in the front of the altar to represent the Bible text: 'The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people: Christ among you, your hope of glory'. (Colossians 1:26)

Fossils are awesomely old. Apparently it is hard to date them, you have to go by the age of the rock they are found in. It seems that the ammonites finally died out approximately 66 million years ago—somewhere in the Book of Job God asks Job if he was there when God assembled the earth and sea and sky, and gave them their orders—adding that Job must be very old now if he was there at the time.

'Awesome'. I think that best describes the geological time scale. Geological maps can look very pretty, but read the details, and oh dear, they are not simple. According to the British Geological Survey, Turvey limestone is: 'Blisworth Limestone Formation. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 166 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow carbonate seas.' (picture: geological map of the Turvey area, from www.bgs.ac.uk)



Better to go for a walk to appreciate the diversity of our local geology. Drive from here to London—not recommended unless via the Hertfordshire countryside—and you travel through a surprising number of different geological regions. (Drive from here to Ipswich, and it's the same all the way!)

Back to our chapel here at the Abbey, definitely built on limestone. When, in our liturgy, we turn our hearts and minds to God as 'Lord God of all creation', maybe we should remember and include the little creatures whose shells are now in our chapel walls. How awesome creation is, and how awesome the God who created it!

'Then sings my soul, my saviour God to thee,
how great thou art, how great thou art.'

Sr Benedict, Turvey Abbey