

LOCAL QUARRIES

“Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven”.
(Shakespeare)

Although one has to be quite observant in walking from end to end of Weare Giffard, it is not too hard to spot a considerable range of quarries. Not surprising of course, when one considers the nature of the valley and meander of the River as it strikes solid rock.

Inspecting the 1887 map we find numerous quarries and the following five are typical: -

1. on the right hand side beyond Mrs Owen’s garage, towards Halspill.
2. behind Mrs Howe’s house (River Cottage).
3. on the hill near the mobile phone mast (Little Hill).
4. the Weare Wood area where the recycling pavilion is now.
5. Along Copse Road (behind the wooden gate on land belonging to Southcott House) - stone was used to actually build this house.

Why so many?

Apart from obviously quarrying stone to build local houses after the use of cob, the stone was quarried and the larger stones cracked on site into smaller pieces. These were then purchased by the County Council who collected them and used them as hard core for roads in the area.

A Strange but true story.

The following article was found in the Bideford Weekly Gazette in January 1865.

“Strange if true. Concerning the quarry opened at Weare Giffard to provide stone for the widening of Bideford Bridge then being carried out. Some of the stones were too large to be moved so ‘The gads were applied to split them’. In the middle of the largest stone they found a large rat of great length from tail to snout, with whiskers six inches long.

Now frogs and toads encased in stone were not that uncommon though not accepted by most biologists, but a rat was really unusual. The animal was offered to the British Museum as a curiosity.”

EDITORIAL NOTE: We wrote to the British Museum asking for information and sight of our rat. They did reply, but indicated that they thought it very likely that the rat was actually a prehistoric fish. They also indicated they would continue to look for our “Weare Giffard Rat”!

