

Community matters

A community newsletter from Heidelberg Materials

Whatley and Westdown quarries – Autumn 2025 | Issue 06

Welcome

It's been a busy time for our Whatley and Westdown quarries and we have a number of updates to share with you.

We've recently completed several upgrades to the Whatley loop, the circular walk around the quarry and have hosted another successful sponsored loop challenge (page 3).

As part of our commitment to supporting the local community, we have also continued to contribute to the success of a range of local initiatives by donating our time, money and materials. You can read more about the benefits of some of these projects opposite and inside.

We also continue to host our community liaison group meetings, addressing feedback on important issues such as blasting, HGVs and general quarry operations. Meeting minutes are posted on our Whatley quarry community webpage.

And, don't miss our Q&A section on page 6, where you can get to know Whatley Unit Manager, Kyle Smith.

Vincent Pitt
Area General
Manager



The much-loved tennis courts at Mells Sports and Recreation Grounds have been given a new lease on life, ready for the community to enjoy once again.

We donated materials worth more than £15,000 and the Heidelberg Materials Contracting team carried out the resurfacing works at no cost to the community.

"The facilities were in a terrible state of disrepair," said Tiff Pike, Chair of Mells Sports and Recreation Grounds. "We couldn't have raised the funds to make this happen, so are very grateful for the generous donation of time and materials from Heidelberg Materials."

Local volunteers helped prepare the site by clearing weeds, cutting back hedges, removing tree stumps and dismantling old basketball posts.

The free-to-use courts sit at the heart of a busy community space that is also home to football and cricket pitches, a pavilion and a children's playground.

The newly resurfaced courts will provide the local community with an opportunity for improved physical and mental wellbeing, and a safe place for children and adults to play and learn new skills.

Supporting local communities



We support projects that benefit local communities and were pleased to provide Great Elm Parish Council with a significant contribution towards repairs to the village hall following the accident that destroyed almost a third of the building last year.

Gemma Brooking, Great Elm Parish Council member, said: "We are incredibly grateful to Heidelberg Materials for its generous donation. Many of the repairs are already complete and the hall is once again open for bookings. This venue is the heart of our village, and we look

Area General Manager, Vincent Pitt, left, joins committee members outside Great Elm Village Hall

forward to seeing it bustling with events and gatherings once more."

In addition, we gave Friends of Chantry a donation to upgrade the lighting and purchase new seat cushions for **Chantry's Church of the Holy Trinity**, which is now used as a community space. The venue hosted the Brodsky Quartet this summer as part of the Frome Festival programme, also with our support.

Other community donations include:

- A material donation of two tonnes of aggregate and 60 tonnes of asphalt to resurface the entrance to the car park at the **Tithe Barn** in Mells.

It was in a poor state of repair making access difficult, so the donation has helped end puddle trouble.



"This venue is the heart of our village, and we look forward to seeing it bustling with events..."

Repairs to the interior of Great Elm Village Hall are almost complete

- A donation to local preschool **Mells Muddy Munchkins** towards the materials needed to build an outdoor classroom. The shelter will allow children to use the outdoor space in all weather, so they can tend their vegetable garden and enjoy messy play.
- An extension to our support to Southwest charity, **Donate IT**, which refurbishes donated tech devices for those in need. By repairing and recycling these devices, the charity helps provide tools for education, job searches and connectivity.
- Supplying stone from Whatley quarry to provide a new surface for the car park at the **Vobster allotments** and preparing the site for a compostable toilet and cabin following a request for support from Coleford Parish Council.



Mells Muddy Munchkins nursery children enjoy messy play in their new outdoor classroom

Upgrades to popular Whatley loop

We've made some upgrades to the popular Whatley loop around the quarry, improving access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

The walk has become a well-used route and, building on feedback from local residents at our liaison group meetings, our employees have used their annual paid volunteering days to repair the gates, remove overgrown vegetation and improve the footpaths. We have also installed a new viewing platform at the western end of the quarry, near Finger Farm, which

provides far-reaching views across the quarry. Andrew Bramston, Chair of Chantry Parish Council, said: "It's great to see improvements like this happening around the loop walk and they will certainly make it easier for parents with pushchairs and horse riders to access the route."

Project Manager Kirstie Gibbon said: "We have further improvements planned for this autumn, including nature information boards and even some outdoor exercise equipment."



■ We supported Friends of Whatley and Chantry by hosting another successful Whatley quarry loop challenge on Sunday 13 July 2025.

More than 100 local residents completed the 4.5-mile walk. Heidelberg Materials made a donation for each lap completed, with £2,000 now going towards community projects.

A fresh look for Nunney playground

The newly renovated children's playground in Nunney, Frome, has officially opened, offering a fantastic space for local families and children to enjoy.

Nunney Parish Council received £20,000 in funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, plus a further £5,000 from local resident Angela Yeoman and the same amount from Whatley quarry.

The playground has new swings, a climbing frame, rollover bars and safer surfacing for the play area and surrounding pathways. To celebrate its opening, Emma Robbins, Area Clerk, and Jamie Reddin, who joined our Higher Apprentice programme when he left school, attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"Having grown up in the area, it's great to see how the quarry's presence here goes beyond the site," said Jamie. "It's providing local jobs and delivering benefits to the wider community."



Higher Apprentice, Jamie Reddin, attends the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new playground

■ Information on our community support programme, including how to make an application for funding, materials and/or volunteer support, is available on our community website: heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/whatley

Bringing the quarry to the classroom

Hard hats and hi-vis aren't your usual classroom attire, but that's exactly what students at St Louis Catholic Primary School in Frome experienced when Martin Symons visited as part of STEM Week.



Martin, our Community Support Co-Ordinator, spoke to students about the many different job roles within a quarry and discussed how operatives, engineers, geologists and more all play

an important role in contributing to the day-to-day operation of Whatley.

Students also learned how the aggregate produced is used to shape the built environment around them, helping to build roads, schools and other essential infrastructure. It was a fantastic opportunity to highlight the many different career paths available in the sector and encourage interest in STEM subjects.

Leah Battle, Science Lead at St Louis Primary, said: "It was a wonderful visit. The children were absolutely transfixed and loved listening to Martin tell them all about the quarry. Many of them are now saying they'd like to work there one day."

Ongoing investment in the East Mendips

We are continuing to invest in our operations at Whatley quarry to improve efficiencies, reduce carbon emissions and minimise impact on our neighbours.

Following last year's successful trial of a battery-powered shunting train, we have ordered our first one, which is due to be delivered soon.

Chesterfield-based Positive Traction is converting one of our existing diesel-powered Class 08e locomotives into a fully electric train, replacing the diesel engine with six battery packs providing a total of 600kWh of energy. This investment in zero emission shunting trains is part of our efforts

to reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability and help to reduce noise for our neighbours.

We have also revamped and upgraded the wash plant on site, including installing its own crusher and increasing the capacity of the 20-metre filter press that recycles materials and water from the wash process.

At nearby Westdown quarry, proposals to update existing operating conditions were approved by Somerset Council at committee last year. We are now working with the council on the details and will provide a full update in due course.



Above: the new crusher at Whatley
Below: a crane repositions a conveyor belt as part of the quarry revamp



Meet the team: Kyle Smith

Meet Kyle Smith,
Unit Manager at Whatley
quarry



Kyle began his quarrying career as a higher apprentice with Tarmac, where he worked his way up to Quarry Manager. In August 2023, he joined the Whatley team as Recycling Project Manager and, after just eight months, his skills and expertise led him to his current role.

Q. Why did you want to work at Whatley quarry?

KS. Whatley is one of the largest limestone quarries in the UK and I was drawn to the challenge and the potential to contribute to such an important site.

Q. What are your top priorities?

KS. Health and safety is a big focus for me. It's been a fundamental part of my training from the start of my career. Every morning, we conduct a pre-start meeting to discuss any potential health and safety risks for the day as well as ways to mitigate them.

Q. What is the most rewarding part of your job?

KS. I enjoy seeing younger people get involved in the quarrying sector and follow a similar path to mine; it's great to be in a position to help shape other people's careers.

We currently have two higher apprentices, and I enjoy providing regular one-to-one support to ensure they are moving in the right direction and developing their skills.

Q. What's something about the quarry or your work that you think the community would find interesting or might not be aware of?

KS. I think many people would be surprised by how sophisticated the industry is. Many assume it's all about manual labour and heavy machinery, but there's so much more happening behind the scenes.

We have logistical experts, engineers, environmental specialists and geologists that are all really

technical roles and play a huge part in the workings of a quarry, but they often go unnoticed by the public.

Blasting notification service

Local residents can sign up to receive our blast notifications, which include a weekly update setting out planned blast times for the week ahead, plus a follow-up approximately half an hour before each blast takes place.

To receive the free notifications, email us at: **whatley.quarry@uk.heidelbergmaterials.com** and advise if you would like to receive a text message (please provide the number) and/or an email.

Protection for the environment

Our ongoing ecology work around our landholding at Whatley and Westdown is guided by long-term plans to protect and enhance local habitats and species.

At Vallis Vale, scrub clearance has helped boost biodiversity and preserve historical and geological features. We're close to finalising new information boards to encourage visitors to learn more about the area's ecology, history and geology.

Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect, also welcomed Great Elm residents for another guided walk to share our plans and ongoing work, such as the installation of tawny owl boxes.

In addition, we're working with the Wild Trout Trust to repair footpaths along the riverbanks to improve access, prevent further bank erosion and enhance the watercourse for invertebrates and fish.

In Asham Wood, we're developing a comprehensive management plan to protect the woodland in the face of ash dieback disease. The plan,



Ongoing footpath maintenance along the riverbanks to improve access

which is being developed alongside key stakeholders, will ensure that the woodland is actively managed to diversify the trees and shrubs for the benefit of protected species such as dormice and bats.



Apprentices kick-start their careers

We have welcomed three new apprentices at Whatley, who are all taking advantage of the opportunity to earn while they learn the skills to build a rewarding career.

Ben Freeman-Hole, 17, from Frome, joined as an Engineering Apprentice last November.

Luke Griffiths, 19, who lives in Bleadon, Somerset, and **Jamie Reddin**, 25, who now lives in Warminster, both joined our higher apprenticeship programme and are studying for a foundation qualification through the University of Derby.

Once they have completed the three-year apprenticeship, they will all have the opportunity to top up to bachelor's degree in mineral management or another specialism.

For more on apprenticeships and career opportunities go to careers.heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/en



Rising to the challenge

A team from Whatley quarry took on the Three Peaks Challenge to raise funds for The British Heart Foundation in memory of their colleague Pat Orman, an electrician at Whatley quarry for over 20 years, who died suddenly last December.

The team turned their grief into positive action, climbing Ben Nevis, Scotland, Scafell Pike in the Lake District and Snowden, Wales, within 24-hours. They raised over £7,000 through donations from family and friends, as well as customers and suppliers, and Heidelberg Materials' charity matching scheme.

Vincent Pitt, Area General Manager, said: "We are proud to honour Pat and are extremely grateful for all the support we received."

This fundraiser builds on ongoing efforts by the team to support heart health in the community. Whatley quarry has also installed defibrillators in several local villages, ensuring life-saving equipment is available in emergencies and improving the chances of survival for someone suffering from sudden cardiac arrest.

A team from Whatley quarry took on the Three Peaks Challenge, one of Britain's toughest outdoor trails



From left, Dan Billing (driver), Chris O'Connor, Shaun Eaton, James Veakins, Vincent Pitt, Kyle Smith and Dan Welch