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The Wootton Bassett mud springs (Wiltshire, UK): an unusual Lagerstätten for Jurassic Foraminifera.

M. Hart (1), A. Henderson (2), C. Harrington (1) and T. Frayling (3)

(1) School of Earth, Ocean & Environmental Sciences, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AA, UK (mhart@plymouth.ac.uk / Fax: +44 1752 233117 / Phone: +44 1752 233122, (2) Department of Palaeontology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, UK, (3) English Nature (Wiltshire Team), Prince Maurice Court, Hambleton Avenue, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2RT, UK.

On the 6^{th} January 1997 the mud springs at Templars Firs, Wootton Bassett (Wiltshire) were designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The springs are notified as an SSSI on the basis of their hydrogeological interest. Water seeping through the Lower Calcareous Grit and Coral Rag (of Oxfordian age) liquefies the Ampthill Clay Formation (lowermost Kimmeridgian) which then migrates to the surface in a series of mud springs. Many of the fossils brought to the surface still display their aragonitic shells and are quite beautifully preserved. In Autumn 2003 and again in Spring 2004 we collected a series of samples with the permission of English Nature (Wiltshire Team) and these have been washed for foraminifera and ostracods. The microfauna has been described in a BGS report, although it is much more extensive and yields all the taxa associated with this stratigraphical interval. Many aragonitic taxa (epistominids) are beautifully preserved, including some of the stratigraphically significant taxa. Large agglutinated foraminifera appear to dominate one of the five active vents and are in an exceptional state of preservation. In the literature, many of these taxa have been referred to modern, extant taxa, although this is almost certainly incorrect. The material from Wootton Bassett should allow for a more appropriate determination of these taxa. Also recorded are small planktic foraminifera which extend our knowledge of the early evolution of the poorly-known Jurassic plankton.