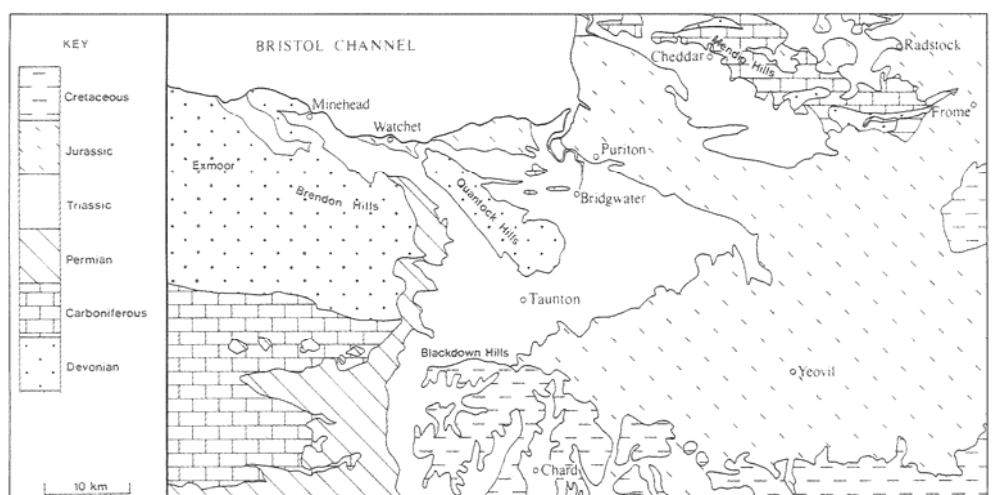


# SOMERSET GEOLOGY GROUP

(part of Somerset Wildlife Trust)

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Simplified Geological Map of Somerset

The Somerset Geology Group is an informal group within Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT). It was formed in 1984 under the leadership of Professor Desmond Donovan to advise SWT on geological matters pertaining to planning and development. In the following years SGG has broadened its approach and is principally concerned with the conservation and promotion of Somerset's geodiversity. The latter may be defined as the totality of rocks, landforms, soils and water resources. We contribute to their *Newsletter* and provide environmental information on SWT reserves. All members are volunteers. The Group meets twice each year; a *Newsletter* follows each meeting and is distributed to some 70 recipients. There is no subscription or constitution. To find out about the group's activities and get to involved simply register you interest.

## Activities

### Recording Somerset's Geological Heritage

One task has been to record the many hundreds of sites where the geodiversity may be observed. These are graded as follows on a scale of 1 to 4 where 0 = nothing to observe up to 3 = Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and 4 = Site of Special Scientific Importance. The latter have been determined by Natural England. These records are held at the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) in Wellington along with the County records of flora and fauna. A second list is kept by Hugh Prudden. There are some 350 RIGS (=Local Geological Sites) and summaries of these are held by the Districts. RIGS do not have any statutory protection at the moment but serve as a warning when development proposals are being considered. These records are an invaluable inventory of sites for describing, interpreting and creating an awareness of the geodiversity of Somerset. It is the geological equivalent of the County's Sites and Monuments records.

Working quarries have not been included. Note that RIGS sites may or may not be suitable for general publication as some are sensitive to damage. Not all are accessible *sensu lato*. A separate short list of sites was made of those suitable for school use. We sometimes get queries from the planners regarding sites. RIGS are fun to survey, require a person with catholic interests and a good knowledge of the literature.

A second important task is to record and publish observations of temporary exposures such as pipeline trenches and building sites. Over 170 miles of roadworks (e.g. the A303 from Horton to Wincanton) and gas and water trenches have been recorded since 1960. These observations have been made available to the British Geological Survey and incorporated in recent memoirs and used in the revision of various local 1:50,000 geological maps. Collections of fossils have been deposited in the Natural History Museum in London, BGS headquarters at Keyworth and the Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

### **Learning and exploring**

Members have led many field trips for visiting groups e.g. the Dorset coast, Ham Hill, Yeovil, Glastonbury, the Mendips, Kilve and Watchet. Members are available to give lectures on a variety of topics: the geology of Ham Hill, Exmoor, Blackdown Hills, Mendips, the Yeovil area, plus the Blue Lias, building stones of Somerset churches, Taunton Deane, trace fossils and soils. Members attend the annual conference of the Ussher Society which is a regional group specialising in the geology of Southwest England. However, we do not *organise* lectures or field trips.

The Group attracts many enquiries from building conservation organisations, the County archaeologist, students, research workers, local village groups, local government officers and members of the public.

### **Raising awareness**

An increasingly important role is that of creating a greater awareness of the importance of Geodiversity in Somerset. This includes bringing it more to the notice of county and district officers and councillors, naturalists, teachers, tourist information centres, local people and visitors. To this end we have created the 'Good Rock Guide' that gives concise details of some 50 localities with open access and worth visiting, and several publications on Somerset geology, Exmoor, Mendip, Taunton Deane, Yeovil and Ham Hill and Hestercombe Gardens.

To sum up, the Somerset Geology Group endeavours to conserve the geodiversity of Somerset and at the same time promote its geology for a wide audience. The rocks and landforms of Somerset reveal some 400 million years of earth history and are also a major contributor to the local distinctiveness of Somerset.

### **Publications**

A bibliography of publications relevant to Somerset geology is maintained on a card index arranged by authors and topics and kept by Hugh Prudden. It is also available in the Somerset Studies Library in Taunton, and a selected list of publications and other resources can be downloaded from the Somerset Environmental Records Centre website [www.somerc.com](http://www.somerc.com). The CD-ROM *Somerset geology: a miscellany* contains seven field guides, a conservation statement, several items on County building stones and the *Good Rock Guide* to 50 localities worth visiting. Copies are available for £5 from Hugh Prudden.