

SOMERSET GEOLOGY GROUP

SUMMER 2015 (25 August 2015)

Firstly, a warm welcome to (*those who have*) asked to join the Group and become involved. I attach (*below*) some background information about SGG, how it was formed, and the main functions of the Group.

SGG has renewed our annual membership to GeoConservation UK.

SGG has objected to a planning application at Pen Selwood in South Somerset to stabilise existing areas of landslip using imported sub-soil and construction & demolition wastes. The proposal would completely obscure and permanently destroy a Local Geological Site and one of the best examples of an active geomorphological site (exhibiting a range of classic landscape features) in Somerset. Thank you to those members who responded to the internal SGG consultation about this.

SGG and SERC are planning to approach the Geologists' Association to seek Curry Funds to undertake a joint project that would review and reappraise the suite of Local Geological Sites selected in Somerset.

Work on compiling and creating the Hugh Prudden Archive at the Somerset Heritage Centre is ongoing, and should be completed by Christmas 2015.

SGG Open Meeting - 9pm, Thursday 17th September

As many of you will be aware, traditionally SGG has adopted a fairly quiet '*modus operandi*', with the Secretary operating as the main contact point and co-ordinator. Whether the Group wishes to maintain this style and approach or to 'revamp' and adopt a more active, higher profile stance is something that needs discussion by the members .

SGG hasn't met for a considerable period of time, and I would like to convene an Open Meeting for members to get together, have a major 'catch-up' and discuss and agree how the Group should go forward in the future. Somerset Environment Records Centre have kindly offered us the use of their office for an evening meeting on **Thursday 17th September**. Some parking is available at the SERC premises on a 'first-come first-served' basis.

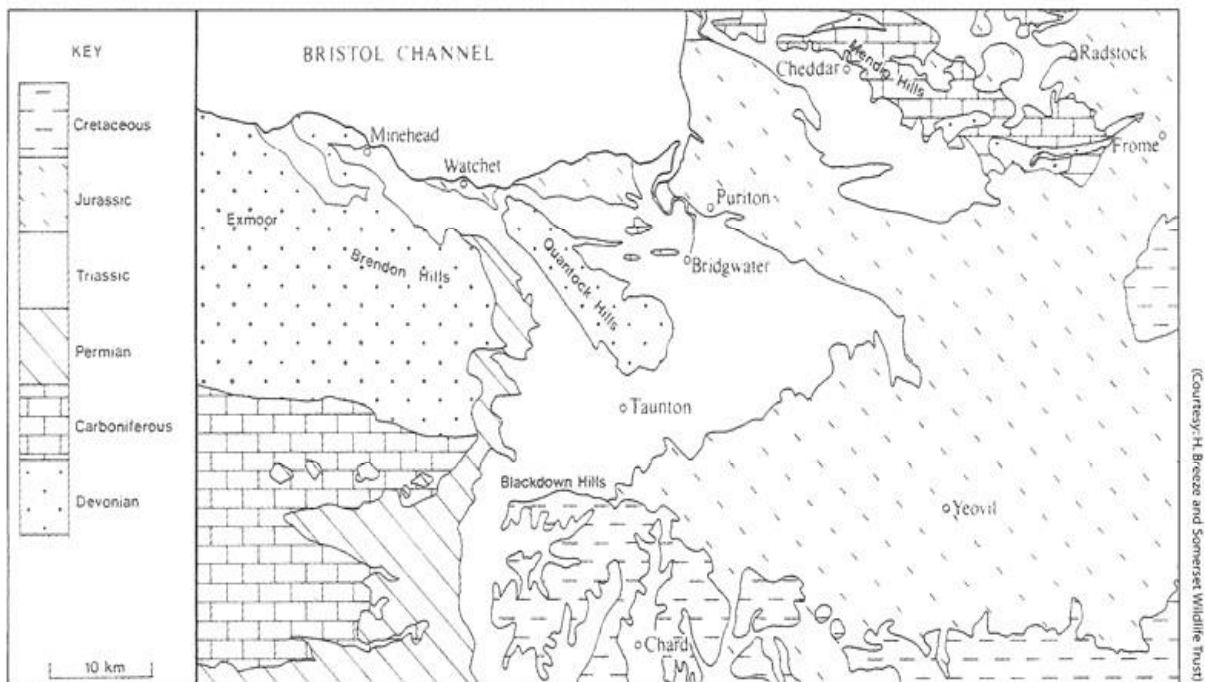
Can you please e-mail me confirming if you can attend the planned meeting on Thursday 17th September so I can finalise logistics and arrangements with SERC. Alternatively, if you are unable to attend but would wish to offer suggestions or ideas about how you feel the Group should go forward, then please e-mail these through to me, and I will ensure they are heard at the meeting.

I look forward to seeing you on the 17th September.
Best wishes,

Andy

Dr Andy King, Acting Secretary, SGG

Background on past SGG activity



Simplified Geological Map of Somerset

Somerset Geology Group (SGG) is one of the natural history groups that operate within Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) and maintains close links with Somerset Environment Record Centre (SERC). The Group was formed in 1984 under the leadership of Professor Desmond Donovan to advise SWT and others on geological matters relating to planning and development. In the following years SGG has broadened its approach but remains principally concerned with the conservation and promotion of Somerset's geodiversity. The latter may be defined as the totality of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, soils and water resources. The Group also contributes to the SWT *Newsletter* and provides environmental information on SWT reserves.

All members of SGG are volunteers. The Group normally meets twice each year; an e-*Newsletter* follows each meeting and is distributed to some 70 recipients. There is no subscription or constitution. To become involved or find out more about SGG, individuals simply register their interest by contacting SERC or the Group Secretary.

Activities

Recording Somerset's Geological Heritage

One of the main functions of SGG is to record geological and geomorphological sites in the County, and identify Local Geological Sites (also called Regionally Important Geological or Geomorphological Sites, RIGS). Site of Special Scientific Importance ... are selected and notified by Natural England. There are approximately 215 Local Geological Sites in Somerset; site records are held at SERC in Taunton along with flora and fauna data for the County. Summaries of LGS are also held by the relevant District Authorities. LGS do not have any statutory protection, but the sites are recognised in local planning policies, and help serve as

a 'warning light' 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. They are the geological equivalent of the County's Sites and Monuments records.

A second important function of SGG is to record and publish observations of temporary geological 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, the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff and the Somerset County Museum, Taunton.

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 the County or specific areas such as Exmoor, Blackdown Hills, Mendips, Ilminster and Yeovil, the Vale of Taunton Deane, the Somerset Coast, or specific geological interests such as the Blue Lias, building stones of Somerset, and Somerset's fossil heritage. Members also attend various conferences, such as the Ussher Society which is a regional group specialising in the geology of Southwest England. The Group attracts a wide range of enquiries from building conservation organisations, the archaeologists, students, researchers, teachers, village groups, local government/planning officers and members of the public.

Raising awareness

An increasingly important role of SGG is to promote greater awareness of the importance of Geodiversity in Somerset to county and district officers and councillors, naturalists, teachers, geologists, tourist information centres, local people and visitors. SGG has created a '*Good Rock Guide*' giving information of 50 localities with open access, and produced several publications on Somerset's geology including guides to Exmoor, Mendip, Taunton Deane, Yeovil, Ham Hill and Hestercombe Gardens. In summary, SGG endeavours to conserve the geodiversity of Somerset and to promote this to a wide audience. The rocks, fossils, minerals and landforms of Somerset reveal some 400 million years of Earth history, and are also a major contributor to the local distinctiveness, natural heritage and character of Somerset.

Publications

A bibliography of publications relevant to Somerset geology is maintained on a card index arranged by authors and topics. Also '*Somerset geology: a miscellany*' contains seven geological field guides, a conservation statement, several items on County building stones and the '*Good Rock Guide*' to 50 localities worth visiting. Copies are available electronically from the Secretary.

Andy King, August 2015