

SGG Update No 18: September 2025

Working in partnership with Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC), Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) and others to encourage appreciation, conservation and promotion of the geology of Somerset. See our SGG web site at <https://somerseogeology.org.uk/>



Dear all,

Here is our Autumn 2025 SGG *Update*, reporting progress since our last *Update* in April. As a reminder, our overarching themes over the next few years are:

1. Working to encourage good quality interpretation on the geology of Somerset, in a wide range of different ways, including town trails and where appropriate for Local Geology Sites (LGS).
2. Building relationships with owners of LGS to help with them understand the interest of their LGS and to advise on any conservation management desirable.

1. Encouraging good quality interpretation

SGG Website

Since the [SGG website](https://somerseogeology.org.uk/) was launched in April this year - to provide a gateway to information on the geology of Somerset – it has had over 500 visitors and over 2,000 views from 24 different countries.

Many of the items in this newsletter are now reported on the website under *the News and Updates* section. In September, we will start sending out periodic short updates to all via email supplementing this newsletter. If you do not wish to receive these emails, it will be very easy for you to unsubscribe.

This is **your** website, so any feedback or assistance is greatly valued. We hope it accurately reflects the wonders of Somerset geology.

SGG autumn meeting at Ham Hill Country Park

The next SGG network meeting will be on **Monday 6 October 2025** at Ham Hill Country Park, where ranger Geoff Rowland (who is also a SGG network member) will update us on the latest progress with the Country Park's Lottery-funded project.

The building works for the new visitor centre started last March and one wall will cover the interpretation of Ham Hill's geology. The Country Park, which includes an LGS, a geological SSSI and a geology trail in memory of SGG's late secretary Hugh Prudden, is owned and managed by Somerset Council.

During the meeting we will review SGG's past year and our future plans. We will complete the day with the choice of two guided walks, to see either Ham Hill's geology or Yeovil's building stones.

Space is limited – please email Garry Dawson (before Monday 29th September) at somerseogeology@gmail.com if you wish to attend the meeting.

Town Building Stone Trails

As agreed at our October 2024 meeting, we have been working on town building stone trails, enabling visitors and locals alike to understand the geology of building stones used in old buildings (many of which can no longer be safely examined in natural outcrops or quarries) as they walk around Somerset's historic towns and villages.

The first two guides have been completed - Yeovil and Taunton. These can be downloaded from our [Geo-interpretation page](#). We are keen to hear any comments you may have about either of

these two guides and any thoughts on future guides which could be added to the series.

The Yeovil trail has been physically published - hundred copies in booklet format - after a grant from Yeovil Town Council and was officially launched on "Yeovil Super Saturday", 5th July. We have funding to print a further hundred. Free copies will be available at our October meeting or are available for cost of postage by emailing somersetgeology@gmail.com. It is also available to the public in the Ninesprings country park café in Yeovil.

Our next focus town trail focus is on Glastonbury and Wells. In April, SGG member Val Graham took SGG and Dorset Geologists Association Group (DGAG) members on a tour of Glastonbury to look at the building stones. Older buildings and walls were of Blue Lias, Doultling, Hamstone, Dolomitic Conglomerate, Bath and Tor Burr (Beacon Limestone).

On the way up to Glastonbury Tor, we passed Pennard Sands (Dyrham Formation) and an interpretation board which stated that the Tor was underlain by "a batholith"! Val has contacted the local council to point out the error. The Tor itself is capped with Bridport Sands.

English Heritage

In June, SGG met English Heritage (EH) staff at Muchelney Abbey. EH is interested in forming local groups of geologists to record the stone used in their properties. SGG are happy to assist and look forward to surveying and documenting their properties in [Somerset](#). A draft for Muchelney Abbey has been prepared. Properties in the Cleeve and Dunster area will be surveyed on 9th October.

After these visits, we will have enough material to present to English Heritage and get their initial feedback. If you wish to get involved, please let us know.

Surveying building stones

SGG members - led by Garry Dawson - met at the Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC) in May with Nic Wall to discuss progress on the documenting of the building stones used in [Somerset's towns and villages](#). This survey, which is a partnership between SGG and SHC, to date has identified 40

different building stones in Somerset.....we wonder what the next one will be?

See the [Local Building Stones](#) section on the *Geo-conservation* page for further details.

If you wish to get involved, please let us know.

Latest publications on Somerset geology

The Somerset geology bibliography now lists almost 1700 sources. Recent publications in 2025 are:

- R. Chandler and S. Cresta. New records of ammonites from the Lower Bajocian (Middle Jurassic) of England and Italy. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*. In press.
- Weeks, O.J. Cooper, R.C. Whiteside, D.I. Duffin, C.J. Copp, C. Hildebrandt, C. Hutchinson, D and Benton, M. 2025. Microvertebrates from a Rhaetian neptunian dyke at Holwell, Somerset: Dating the fissures. *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, Volume 136, Issue 4.

Let Andy Gordon know of any references you come across that are not yet included.

Contribution to conferences

As a follow-up to the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS) 175th year conference earlier this year, Andy Gordon is providing an article for the *Proceedings* on his talk given at the event – "SANHS and Geology in 1849" – the story of Dr. William Buckland.

History of Geology

[The Shoemakers Museum](#) in Street is celebrating 200 years of shoemaking, but as they say, at Street there is over 200 million years of history in the rock beneath our feet. The ichthyosaurs, ammonites, and fossil plants in their collections are being rearranged for the new Under the Sea gallery. Conservator Nigel Larkin is an expert in the excavation, preparation, conservation and curation of palaeontological collections and is helping to mount these unique and very heavy objects for display. The gallery will be built around them recreating life in Jurassic Street.

2. LGS and building relationships with owners

This is the second topic that SGG is currently focusing on.

SERC, our partner organisation for work relating to Local Geology Sites (LGS), has continued to be short staffed, with discussions in hand on how it might best be managed in the future. Ellen Philpot became Acting Manager for the interim last autumn.

SERC Executive Group

SERC has recently revived its Executive Group. Representing SGG, along with representatives from other SWT Specialist Groups, Garry attended its May 2025 meeting. SERC's work and future plans/organization were discussed.

Whilst SWT as employer retains legal responsibility for staffing and finances of SERC, the role of the Executive Group is to work with SWT management and SERC staff to advise on future direction and development, to review progress and to identify survey and monitoring priorities across the county.

LGS Site Updates

Yeovil and Taunton Trail LGS

With the publication of the updated Yeovil and Taunton trails, additional information will be added to the SERC records to reflect the changes to the LGS.

Shepton Mallet Railway Cutting LGS

The outcrop at this LGS is largely obscured by thick vegetation and difficult to access due to a deep, steep ditch. It is outside our capabilities to undertake the clearance. This will require assistance from outside of SGG.

Additional information will be added to the SERC records to reflect the current condition of the LGS.

Getting information to owners/managers

The Panel has previously agreed that new LGS should be a relatively low priority in the future, and that we would concentrate in the coming years on building relationships with owners to achieve greater understanding, including making

contact where this had not been possible during the main LGS Review (2016 -2022).

Conservation/Interpretation

- One of Somerset's treasured geological sites is Ham Hill. See the latest update on the new visitor centre here on ["Uncovering Ham Hill's Past for its Future"](#)
- In June, Friends of the Quantocks recently purchased Bicknoller Quarry LGS from Somerset Council. As you will see from their latest [Newsletter](#), it has some publicity for SGG as well information on the quarry geology itself. In due course they plan some interpretation information at the site.
- No practical conservation work has been completed since April.
- Also in June, The [Mendip Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030](#) has been launched for consultation. The Plan is an important document because it describes the special qualities of the National Landscape; and provides a framework for working across organisations to support its protection, enhancement and enjoyment in line with an agreed vision.

SGG is pleased with the geological focus in the plan – there are around 20 Local Geological Sites (LGS) in the Mendip Hills National Landscape – and has shared some minor feedback.

Obituary – Dr. Eric Robinson

We are very sad to report the death of Eric Robinson, aged 95, a well-known geologist, who in recent years lived near Watchet. Before retiring to Somerset, Eric spent his academic working life on the staff of the Geology Department at University College London (UCL) mostly teaching paleontology and stratigraphy. He was the Geologists' Association President 1991-1994 and his practical approach to geology and enthusiasm for leading and documenting building stones walks were nationally renowned. In retirement his interest in all aspects of the local geology and community engagement were seen in many ways including the construction of a geological wall at Watchet Station, many field trips in the area and a guide to the Minehead's building stones. In recent years, although struggling with declining health, he was always keen and happy to help the Somerset Geology Group with its review of Local Geological Sites.

Dr Andy King of the Watchet geological and environmental consultancy Geckoella, hosted a meeting last year to celebrate his life. See [News June 2024](#)

Eric will be sadly missed, and we pass on our condolences to his family and friends.

Future SGG organization

After Wendy Lutley recently stepped back from her role as SGG Joint Co-Ordinator with Garry, who is now the SGG Co-Ordinator. He has been involved with SGG from its formation, so is well

placed to ensure it continues into the future. He was the geology volunteer for Somerset Wildlife Trust, before it invited the late Desmond Donovan to become chair of a new Geology Advisory Group.

Sheila Alderman, Val Graham, John Kirby and Andy Gordon are assisting Garry with the co-ordination of SGG.

As you can see, we are very active!

How you can help in the future

- **SGG web site and Bibliography** – please let Andy Gordon have any new or updating information via Somersetgeology@gmail.com.
- **Practical conservation** - email Garry via Somersetgeology@gmail.com, if you would like to be notified of any opportunities. A small number of us are also signed up as **SERC volunteers for LGS survey** (but with limited activity at present).
- Please also get in touch with Garry if you think you may be able to contribute to **SGG's Co-ordinating group and organization**. We need to draw on a width of skills, ideas and interests to function most effectively.