

SGG Update No 19: April 2026

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://somersegeology.org.uk/>



Dear all,

With our apologies for its late arrival here is our April 2026 SGG Update, reporting progress since our last Update. 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](#) was launched in April 2025 this year - to provide a gateway to information on the geology of Somerset – it has had over 4,000 visitors and over 12,000 views from 31 different countries.

Many of the items in this newsletter are now reported on the website under *the News and Updates* section. As you will have seen we are now 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 Somerset Earth Science Centre (SESC)

The next SGG network meeting will be on **Monday 5 October 2026** at SESC Stoke St Michael, Radstock BA3 5JU

During the meeting we will review SGG's past year and our future plans. We will complete the day with a local field visit.

If there are any topics you would like to be discussed at the meeting, please let us know at somersegeology@gmail.com

Watch out for further details of the meeting in our September Newsletter and on the website

Town Building Stone Trails

Following on from the publication of the Yeovil and Taunton Town trails earlier this year, work is progressing on town trails for Wells, Glastonbury and Milborne Port.

The Wells trail will be based on walks led for many years by SGG Members Dr Doug Robinson and the late Prof Chris King. It highlights a range on building stones including local Triassic and Jurassic stones and the fine carved stone seen in the Cathedral and Bishop's Palace.

The Glastonbury Trail will be based around guided walks which Val Graham has led in recent years for Mendip Rocks and other local groups. Buildings and walls of Blue Lias, Doulling Stone, Ham Hill Stone, Dolomitic Conglomerate, Bath Stone and Tor Burr (Beacon Limestone) can be seen around the proposed trail route.

Although some may think that Milborne Port is in Dorset, it is actually just in Somerset. There is a history of geologists visiting the town and surrounding area since the 19th century. It is underlain by Jurassic rocks – clays, silts, limestones and sandstones. The limestones and sandstones form a series of scarps which trend north-south around Milborne Port including the Poyntington Fault which is an excellent example of a strike / slip fault.

These trails continue our work as agreed at our October 2024 meeting, on town building stone trails. They will enable 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.

English Heritage (EH)

Our work with EH to provide guidance to their staff and volunteers on the geology of the building stones used on their sites continued with survey visits to Cleeve Abbey and Dunster in October and recently Glastonbury Tribunal, Meare Fish House and Nunney Castle. In addition to the Muchelney guide (see last Update) we have provided to EH, guides on the building stones for Cleeve Abbey, Dunster, Glastonbury Tribunal and Meare Fish House.

These guides are for EH's use only and will not be published but we will pass copies to the Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC) for retention in their archives.

To introduce these guides to EH staff and volunteers we gave a morning's training to 12 staff and volunteers at Muchelney Abbey last month. Further similar training sessions are planned for staff and volunteers at Cleeve Abbey and Dunster.

Surveying building stones

The building stones survey which has now been running for more than ten years has continued to make 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?

We are currently surveying the villages and towns to the north east of Wells and north of Bruton, remarkably the area of Somerset left to be surveyed has shrunk to such a degree that the end of the project is just in sight! See map below.

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.

We are not aware of any recent publications about Somerset geology but, if you come across that are not yet included in the bibliography, let Andy Gordon know.

Contribution to conferences and publications

Ussher Society

The 63rd annual conference of the Ussher Society (Geoscience in South-West England) was held in Exeter, 8th-10th January. Garry Dawson and Andy Gordon of SGG attended. Over 50 people in total attended this conference to celebrate the geology, geomorphology and palaeontology science on and in Southwest England. Twenty-two talks were given covering topics as diverse as AI mapping, fieldwork results from caverns, sea-grasses, climate change and local geological sites.

The conference agreed to set up a group to examine the management and access to geological sites. SGG will be represented on this group. During the meeting the different levels of progress in the SW with review of LGS (RIGS) were noticeable and other areas expressed interest in learning from Somerset's 2015-2021 review of its LGS.

Bicknoller Quarry

Garry Dawson (SGG) has published an article on the "Friends of the Quantocks" website entitled "Sandstones to roadstones" about deep-time and the human history of Bicknoller Quarry LGS which FoQ own. You can read this article click [here](#) .

In due course some interpretation/information is planned at the site.

Presentations

Since the last Newsletter Andy Gordon has given his popular Somerset Coalfield talk to Bath Geological Society and Barnstable U3A Geology Group.

2. LGS and building relationships with owners

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

We were pleased to hear when it was announced that Ian Egerton had been appointed as manager of SERC our partner organisation for work relating to Local Geology Sites (LGS). Ian will combine this role with his existing similar job in Devon which should enable useful LGS co-operation across both counties. Ellen Philpot who has been Acting Manager will continue her work as SERC Data Specialist providing the background knowledge and continuity needed to best manage our LGS.

SERC/SGG LGS Panel Meeting

The SERC/SGG LGS Panel met in February and discussed a range of topics. The designation of two new LGS, Easton Railway Cutting and Triscombe Combe Quarry was agreed. The former is a recent cutting on the Strawberry Line with excellent exposure of Dolomitic Conglomerate (see below) and the latter a small quarry adjacent to the inaccessible large former quarry in Devonian Hangman Sandstone. This quarry is owned by the National Trust.

The Panel discussed but didn't resolve two long-standing issues. For the review of LGS SGG volunteers were covered by SWT insurance. This is no longer the case and if we wish to undertake site clearance, we need to find appropriate cost-effective insurance. Without this insurance clearance work cannot be done by SGG and we are reliant on other organisations to work on Somerset's LGS. As this problem affects other SWT Specialist Groups SERC have agreed to investigate possible insurance cover. For SGG, without any sources of finance, this may well remain a problem.

The Panel also discussed the problems around Planning Applications that affect geology and

geological sites. At present no-one is monitoring applications for those that require a geological input. SWT do not have the resources to make SGG aware of applications that may require a response on behalf of geology. Ideally, we are looking for one or more volunteers to scan planning applications on behalf on SGG. Let us know if this is something that you could help with!

LGS Site Updates

Shepton Mallet Railway Cutting LGS

One of over 200 LGS in Somerset, the site at Shepton Mallet Railway cutting has been overgrown for a few years. With the help and practical assistance of Barbra Lakin (Biodiversity and Landscape Officer for Somerset Council), council staff and volunteers, a section of this LGS was cleared in February.

This LGS has been important since the 19th century as it shows Lower Jurassic Downside Stone/Bowlsh facies as opposed to the classic Blue Lias of the area.

Strawberry Line LGS

With the designation of the new Easton Cutting LGS there are now five LGS on the route and future route of the Strawberry Line traffic-free path. SGG are having discussions with Strawberry Line about documenting the LGS with leaflets and interpretation to provide five accounts of Mendip Geology along the line, from Shepton Mallet to Clevedon - for more information click [here](#).

As part of the work to open the path clearance will be done on two of the LGS where we hope outcrop will be revealed which, due to dumping and cutting collapses, have not been seen for decades

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. The new Ham Hill Visitor Centre is now

open. For more information - watch the video on Facebook by clicking [here](#) or to read a newsletter, click the link [Uncovering Ham Hill's Past for its Future](#).

3. SGG activities

SGG Poster

Over the years SGG have been invited to contribute to meetings and conferences, such as the Ussher Society and the annual Geofest in Dorchester, but have not had a way to easily contribute. For use in the future, we have compiled an A0-sized poster about SGG and its activities. We are now looking for sponsorship to print several copies for display at forthcoming meetings.

Granite Mileposts

SHC recently asked SGG for help with confirming the stone used for a series of mileposts on the road from Chard to Winsham. It had been reported to SHC that the posts were of granite sourced from Snowdon Hill Quarry at Chard (as you will know there isn't any known granite in Somerset). SGG members Robin Cloke and Bill Kelly photographed the mileposts for us and from the photos they are clearly granite probably from Dartmoor or Bodmin. More investigation is required into why granite was transported from Dartmoor. The SHC's Historic Environment Record (HER) lists numerous milestones but, as it does not specify the stone used, we cannot tell

how to what degree local stone is for used milestones.

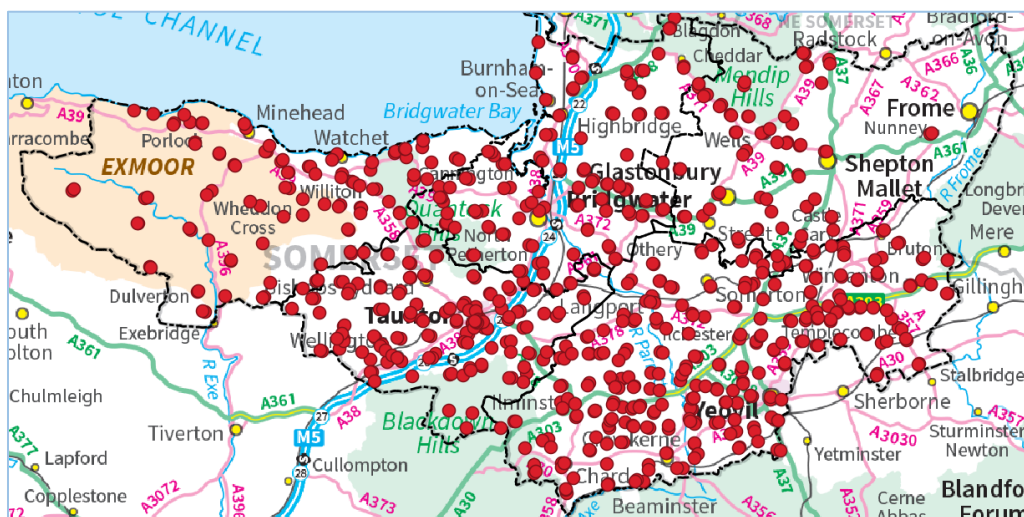
SGG organization

Garry Dawson is now the SGG Co-Ordinator with Sheila Alderman, Val Graham, John Kirby and Andy Gordon forming co-ordination group.

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 without insurance we cannot do any clearance at present – see above
- 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.



Map showing the locations where building stones have been surveyed. Note the only remaining area in the NE of the county