



Down to Earth *extra*

Issue 1 | 3 May 2022

NEWS FLASH...

- Autumn 2022 field trips available!
- Go to Iceland or La Palma in 2023!
- Many of our 2023 brochures are now ready for you to see!

This is one of those images that's normally seen from the opposite direction! It's looking north from above the entrance to Smoo Cave at Durness in Northwest Scotland.

That the inlet is caused by a N-S fault can be seen from the fact that there are several paler chert bands in the limestone that are at differing levels on either side. The Durness limestone formation dates from the Cambro-Ordovician.

(Image: Chris Darmon)

From the Editorial team...

I'm writing this Editorial a little later than would normally be the case, as Colin and I have just returned from two field trips to Scotland. The first was based on the Isle of Raasay, just off the larger island of Skye. The second was based at the Inchnadampf Hotel made famous in geological circles as the base for Ben Peach and John Horne's work on the Assynt area in the early years of the twentieth century.

The geology was excellent, as was the weather for the most part, and the company of our guests made the whole experience enjoyable for us all. That said, there were signs of problems that will possibly come back to haunt us as we plan for field trips next year. It's clear that Scotland is under great pressure from the volume of visitors it's receiving. This was especially true in the northwest of the country which seems to have suffered a 'mass invasion' from motorhomes which clog up its roads, especially the many that are single track. One kind motorhome driver took out the wing mirror of our minibus as we drove to Skye! Added to this, many of the roads are in an appalling state of repair, especially on Skye.

However, the main crisis, which is apparent right across the country, is the chronic shortage of staff in all branches of hospitality. This is impacting directly on what hotels and restaurants can offer and in extreme circumstances causing some hotels to close completely. Nobody can see any easy solution to the problem. In the short term it will probably cause price increases, but in the longer term it could lead to there being less hotels on offer.

The shortage of staff isn't of course, limited to Scotland and neither is it just a shortage of paid workers. We've also heard that volunteers are in short supply in some of our geoparks who depend on them to deliver their programmes. Perhaps you might consider offering your services in some capacity to a geopark near you?

Chris Darmon & Colin Schofield

See pages 6-9 for the full spectrum of our 'real' and virtual events!



news update

Finding a Megalodon tooth is just 'child's play'...

If you ever go fossil hunting, anywhere in the British Isles, you need to take an extra item of equipment with you - the eyes of a young child! They seem to be trained to spot the unusual, no matter what its size.

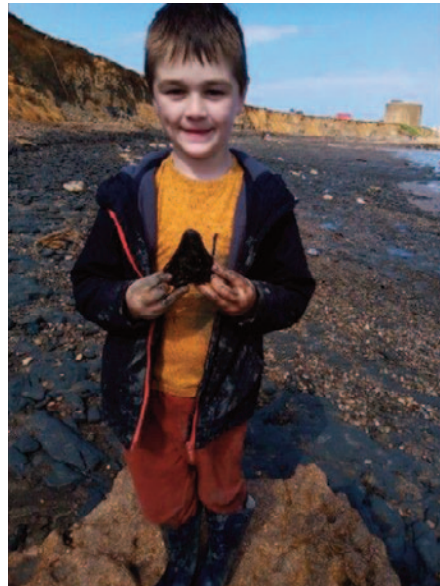
That's exactly what happened at Bawdsey Beach in Suffolk 6-year old Sammy Shelton went shell collecting with his dad.



This is Sammy Shelton's Megalodon tooth (Image: Peter Skelton)

The Metro, reports that his dad Peter Shelton, 60, said: "People have said it's a once-in-a-lifetime discovery. Really we were looking for interesting shells on the beach but instead we got this megalodon tooth. It was huge and very heavy. I knew what it was but it wasn't until I took it to others looking on the beach that I realised the

significance. There was one guy down there who's been looking all his life for a megalodon tooth and never found anything of this size."



This is one very proud 6-year old with his fossil tooth. (Image: Peter Skelton)

Whilst finds such as this are rare, they are known to have been found before in this area of Suffolk. The *UK Fossil Collecting* website

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reports: "The London Clay on the foreshore is rich in fish, bird and shark remains." What's unusual about this find is the size of the tooth, which must have come from a very large 3-million year old Megalodon shark.

This comes from The Natural History Museum:

"The earliest megalodon fossils (*Otodus megalodon*, previously known as *Carcharodon* or *Carcharocles megalodon*) date to 20 million years ago. For the next 13 million years the enormous shark dominated the oceans until becoming extinct just 3.6 million years ago.

Otodus megalodon was not only the biggest shark in the world, but one of the largest fish ever to exist. Estimates suggest it grew to between 15 and 18 metres in length, three times longer than the largest recorded great white shark.

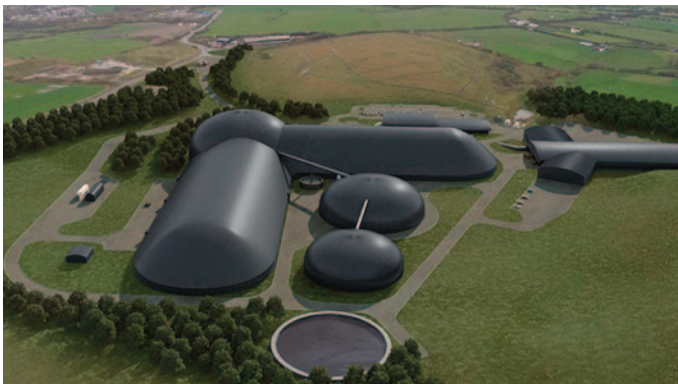
Without a complete megalodon skeleton, these figures are based on the size of the animal's teeth, which can reach 18 centimetres long. In fact, the word megalodon simply means 'large tooth'. These teeth can tell us a lot, such as what these massive animals ate."

Government under pressure over West Cumbria Mining project...

Over the past two years we have regularly reported upon the West Cumbria Mining Project that has been seeking to open a new coal mine offshore from Workington. This was approved back in 2021, only to be sent back for a public enquiry by Government.

This was completed towards the end of 2021, with a report sent to Michael Gove in April of this year. Now the Planning Inspectorate has set Government a deadline of July 7 to make the final decision.

The decision was never going to be easy. Even the economic case isn't without controversy. Woodhouse Colliery was never intended to be an ordinary coalmine with conventional customers. Demand for coal for power generation in the UK is low and coal markets have disappeared. However the output from this mine was intended to serve the requirements of steel making, especially in South Wales.



Will it ever get beyond the drawing board?
(Image: West Cumbria Mining)

The promoters of the new mine stated that coal was in high demand for steel manufacture, but the industry is split on this. Some agree that this is the case whilst others state that there are no supply issues.

Whatever decision Michael Gove makes, it's bound to please some and dismay others. The fact that Scotland recently hosted the COP26 climate conference is bound to weigh heavily on the decision makers.

Edinburgh skywalk - now that's a radical solution...

We've previously reported on the 3-year long closure of Edinburgh's 'radical road', the path that provides access to Hutton's famous section in Holyrood Park. The problem is a health and safety one. There has been a landslide on a part of the route (ironically nowhere close to Hutton's section) but currently geological access is limited to a vantage point about 20 metres away. Locally this has become something of a hot potato given the history of the radical road and its place in Edinburgh culture.



Not a welcome sign - The Radical Road barrier
(Image: Angie Brown)

Options in a new report include reopening the path at users' own risk, installing avalanche-style shelters or wire mesh, or permanent closure.

But a huge sky walkway is also being considered. Managers of the site, Historic Environment Scotland have yet to make a final decision. Given the upcoming tercentenary of James Hutton's birth in 2026, this could be an exciting opportunity to put him centre stage!

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Progress at Whitby's Woodsmith Mine...

The last time we reported on the Woodsmith Mine, the deep mine that will be Britain's main source of the fertilizer polyhalite, it was to report the takeover of the company by Anglo American.

In the year or so since then there have been conflicting stories in the media. Owners Anglo American have invested around £500 million in the project as the costs of construction rise and are set to invest even more as they change some of the design elements of the two deep shafts and the 23-mile long tunnel that will transport the ore to the Wilton on Tees-side.



The Woodsmith Mine construction site south of Whitby. (Image: International Construction/Anglo American)

All this comes as Anglo has also carried out an in-depth look at all aspects of the massive project. The new board thinks that the construction phase will be longer than previously thought and future revenues may have been somewhat optimistic. All this amounts to a write down of around £535 million.

That said, Anglo American are still committed to completing the project and are optimistic about its prospects as the largest such mine in the world.

If you want to find out more about the Woodsmith Mine Project, there are a couple of YouTube videos that you can watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gjir6e20r7w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muBCOejFt0s>

Where is coal still being mined in the UK?

In the last issue we asked you about opencast coal mining in the UK amid comments that it has now stopped in each of the home nations of Scotland, Wales and England.

Sadly, nobody has come back to us with definitive news that ether agrees with that comment or give contrary information. It seems that the problem comes from the fact that several sites are still being 'reclaimed or restored' and may, or may not still be producing coal.

The best prospect does still seem to lie at the Ffos-y-Fran opencast coalmine in South Wales. If you live near the site, perhaps you can tell us what's going on.

More geology from your sofa...

Throughout the Covid pandemic the Geologists' Association (GA) has been producing some superb material under the heading of 'Geology from your sofa' (or GFYS for short).

Here's a selection from the latest batch which concentrates on the Palaeogene:

The GA's April Lecture on The age of sea lilies and rainforests is now available to view.

YouTube lecture from the Backpacker's Guide to Prehistory on The Palaeogene.

Online course from EdX (not the Palaeogene!) on Foundation Field Skills for Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Virtual Field Trip by Earth Parts to the Cretaceous-Palaeogene boundary, Trinidad State Park, Colorado.

GeoFun enter The Etches Collection - Museum of Jurassic Marine Life Inaugural Children's Fossil Competition.



Go to: <https://geologistsassociation.org.uk/sofageology/>

Did you catch the Building Stones of Birmingham?

These three colourful leaflets are your guide to the building stones of Birmingham and can be yours for free!

You can download them as pdf files at:

<https://bcgs.info/pub/local-geology/building-stone-trails>





Still no resolution to the Suunto problem in sight...

We've been regularly reporting to you on the news that a major shake up is going on at Suunto, the supplier of the popular MC2 compass clinometer. It now looks likely that we won't be stocking this instrument going forward. That said, we have stocks of the global variant of the MC2 that features a unique pivot that enables it to be used anywhere in the world.

Silva Expedition S a popular compass clinometer



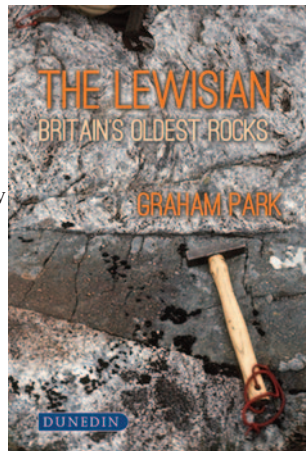
For those of you looking for an alternative to the standard MC2, there's the Silva Expedition S and the Tru-Arc 15 from Brunton in the USA.

An amazing bit of publishing - "The Lewisian"...

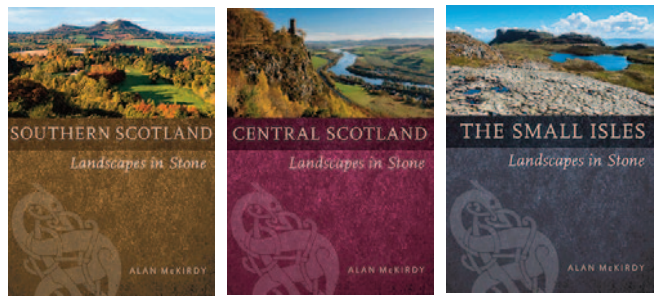
When Graham Park first began to study *The Lewisian, Britain's oldest rocks*, we knew remarkably little about them. Worse still we had few tools to help us to find out more.

More than 60 years later we now know a lot more. This amazing book tells *The Lewisian* story. It's not an easy read, but neither is this a dry textbook or series of academic papers.

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Three new McKirdy titles from Birlinn...



Thanks to the talents of Alan McKirdy, formerly of Scottish Natural Heritage, we have a series of inexpensive guides to many parts of Scotland. Publishers Birlinn have now released three more titles in the series covering: *The Small Isles (Rum, Eigg etc.)*, *Central Scotland* and *Southern Scotland*.

The titles cost £9.00 each or £25.00 for all three (postage included)

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Extra May 2022



Great geo-adventures in 2022/3 begin here...

A spirit of adventure - members of a 2015 field group on the way out to Ailsa Craig, one of the lesser known Clyde Islands of Scotland.

(Images: Chris Darmon)



Availability Autumn 2022 & 2023 (so far)...

We have now run our first trips of the 2022 season and so far, everything has gone very well. We are now looking forward to filling the final places on Autumn trips, ahead of an exciting 2023 season.

We would welcome your enquiries for the trips listed opposite and will send you a booking form just as soon as each trip is released. If you wait for brochures to appear on our website, single places may already have gone.

To view a 2022 brochure, go to our website at: www.geosupplies.co.uk or Tel: 0114 245 5746
Booking forms and 2023 brochures are only available direct from us.

Email: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk

- Berwick & the Borders - September 1-8
- Minehead, Somerset - September 14-21
- Malvern Hills - September 28-October 2
- Yorkshire Coast - October 10-15

2023

- La Palma, Canaries February 23-March 2
- Iceland, March 27-April 6
- Ifracombe, Devon tbc
- Islay, Gigha & Mull of Kintyre, May 2-11
- Ayrshire Coast & Islands, May 12-19
- Porthcawl, Gower Coast June tbc
- Isle of Wight June tbc
- Isle of Man, September 23-30
- Guernsey, Channel Isles, October 7-14

Get in early for 2023 for your favourite trip and limited single rooms!

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If you haven't joined one of our residential field trips before, what can you expect?

- *Our residential field trips are suitable for adults of all levels of interest and geological knowledge.*
- *Our trips are friendly and informal and mainly comprise 15-20 people. Overseas trips are usually larger.*
- *We usually use comfortable small hotels and guest houses and all meals are included.*
- *You have the services of Chris Darmon and Colin Schofield as field leaders. Both are highly experienced and knowledgeable field geologists.*
- *During the current period, even if we have a minibus you will be able to use your own car if you wish.*
- *Dates shown in this listing are the start and finish dates.*

If you still have any questions or queries, don't hesitate to email us at: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk or tel: 0114 245 5746



Participants on a trip to the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve where fossil trilobites can be found in the Silurian limestones.

The 2022 Residential Trip programme...

We're now into the swing of the 2022 field season with lots of people enjoying themselves on our trips. As you read this we'll already have been to Bude in North Cornwall and two trips to Northwest Scotland one to Raasay and the other to Assynt.

We still have vacancies on several trips this Summer and during the Autumn. For the latest vacancy situation email us at: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk or ring: 0114 245 5746



Don't worry, we don't bite!

All our educational classes and courses are friendly, informal and open to all.

**Come and join us!
If you have any questions - please ask us.**

Northeast Scotland July 20-27

This trip examines the coastline of Moray and Nairn, along with some of the inland outcrops. It's known to geologists as the 'kingdom of Dalrardia' because it's dominated by the metamorphic rocks of the Dalradian formation. That said, we'll also see sediments from the Old and New Red Sandstones and even a little Jurassic. Come and explore an area of Scotland that lies between Inverness and Peterhead, we promise that you will not be disappointed!



Bow Fiddle Rock on the Moray Coast of Scotland

University of Worcester Summer School August 13-20

Our annual summer school is beginning to feel a bit like the Tokyo Olympics! We first tried to run it in 2020 and then the University could not accommodate us in 2021, so we have finally made it in 2022! We are sure that it will have been worth the wait as we bring you a varied programme of field visits across the Midlands and Welsh Borders, from our bases in Worcester. Accommodation at the University is mainly in en-suite single rooms. Come and join our group of more than 30 people as we explore the geology of the area.

Berwick & the Borders September 1-8

This trip includes a visit to the 'holy grail of geological time' at Siccar Point and lots of other amazing places. From our base at the comfortable Castle Hotel, we'll be taking in both coastal and inland locations from Northumberland and Berwickshire. Marvel at folded Carboniferous sediments at Scremerston, the granite scenery of Cheviot and volcanics at St Abbs. In short, there's something for everyone on this week. There are just a few vacancies remaining on this trip.



Lundy Island, home to the eponymous Tertiary granite

Minehead, Somerset September 14-21

The coast of North Somerset is the 'other' Jurassic Coast with similar geology to that of Dorset, but without the crowds! We'll be taking in the Devonian rocks of Lynmouth and the landscape of the Exmoor National Park. Take in the slower pace of life aboard a West Somerset Railway steam train as it travels between Watchet and Blue Anchor. Weather permitting, we'll also take a day trip to the fabulous Island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel where you can examine a Tertiary granite and marvel at the fabulous birdlife.

Malvern Hills September 28-October 2

Great Malvern is world famous for its spring water that flows from fissures in the Precambrian rock of the hills made famous by Elgar. Aside from these ancient igneous rocks there are also nearby exposures of Lower Palaeozoic limestones along with sediments from the Carboniferous and Permo-Trias. We'll also be including a trip along the Severn Valley railway to view Coal Measures and dunes.



Chalk cliffs and raised beach caves at Flamborough Head

The Yorkshire Coast October 10-15

This trip is based at the small North Yorkshire village of Hunmanby, just to the south of Filey. From our comfortable guest house base, we'll get to see Jurassic and Cretaceous rocks from Scarborough down to Flamborough. We'll also take in the fine Quaternary cliffs of Holderness and the unique inland scenery that is the Yorkshire Wolds. A great way to round off the 2022 field season!

You can view brochures for all of our trips at our website:

www.geosupplies.co.uk

Booking forms are only available from us at:

downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk. or ring us on 0114 245 5746

Day Trips...

We're pleased to bring back a few of our ever popular day trips for 2022. These normally commence around 11.00 in the morning and end around 16.00 in the afternoon. Walking distances are moderate and should be within everyone's capabilities.

The cost is £10.00 per person. Currently we are ready to accept bookings on the trips shown below.

June 1 Wednesday, The Lickey Hills Country Park

This lovely site is on the south western edge of the City of Birmingham and is something of a favourite of ours. It's a great place to discover the relationship between the underlying geology and the landscape and topography of the local area.

The Lickey Hills were visited by Charles Lapworth with his students from Mason College (later Birmingham University) in the 1880s and you will discover that there's a curious connection with him to this day.

Meeting: Outside the visitors' centre at Lickey Hills Country Park at 11.00

June 22 Wednesday, Rocks of Charnwood Forest

Charnwood Forest in Northwest Leicestershire is a great place to study igneous and metamorphic rocks of the Precambrian. During this day we'll visit several different places and may also see a fossil. Don't worry that it's a Bank Holiday, we'll be avoiding the crowds!

Meeting: Markfield, Altar Stones at 11.00

July 6 Wednesday, Manifold Valley & Brown End Quarry, Staffs.

Away from the hordes of visitors that visit some of the honey pots of the Peak District lie some of the hidden gems that offer superb geology in some of the quieter spots. The Southwest Peak District is one such place.

We'll tour the amazing Brown End Nature Reserve before venturing up the Manifold Valley a little to see some of the local Carboniferous and its structures.

Meeting: Brown End Nature Reserve, Waterhouses (by cycle hire centre) at 11.00



Coal seam and fireclay at Saltwells NNR (Image courtesy of Twitter)

August 3 Wednesday, Saltwells National Nature Reserve, Dudley

Saltwells is one of the best geosites in the newly designated Black Country UNESCO Geopark.

Saltwells is a complex of 3 different geological sites, all designated SSSI, that include a former Carboniferous claypit, known as Doultons and also local coal bell pits and the unconformity with the underlying Silurian.

Meeting: Saltwells NNR car park, off Coppice Lane adjacent to Saltwells Inn at 11.30

We are always happy to talk to you if you have any concerns about booking a field trip especially if you have not been with us before. Just give us a call!

To enrol onto these Day Trips, or to find out more, go to our website, and enter the online shop: www.geosupplies.co.uk

Alternatively, please ring us on 0114 245 5746, where you can pay using any major credit/debit card.

The 2023 Residential Trip programme...

We're working on the assumption that whilst Covid will still be with us in 2023, we'll be able to travel pretty much unhindered. With this in mind, we're returning to our previous pattern of a trip to a warm country in February, followed by one to a cold one in March/April.

Highlights of the year include, a 10-night visit to Iceland and a trip to see the site of recent volcanic activity on La Palma. As for new places, we're taking in Porthawl on the Gower Coast of South Wales and the Mull of Kintyre.

Not all of the trips shown below are ready to book right away, but some are, so our advice is to get in touch with us NOW to register your interest. Then, as soon as the brochure is ready, you can book! This is especially important if you are looking for a single room as these are always available in limited numbers.

La Palma, Canary Islands (7-nights) - February 23-March 2

We want to be amongst the first people to take a look at the geology after the 2021 volcanic eruption! Whilst the island is most definitely open, certain roads and trails are currently closed, but they are being worked upon and everyone is keen to see the tourist trade back to where it was. Currently there aren't a lot of flights from the UK, aside from TUI, but that is expected to change in 2023.

Iceland, beyond the Golden Circle (10-nights) - March 27-April 6

For 20 years from 1997 we took groups almost every year to Iceland, but have not been since 2017. So why are we returning? Tourism has undergone something of a revolution and whilst the country is still expensive, it does offer decent value for money. Crucial for us, as geologists, there's been a recent volcanic eruption and finally we still have the services of our fabulous guide and driver Ingi! We'll be taking in the area around Reykjavik, including the Snaefellsnes Peninsula and Mount Fagradalsfjall, the site of the most recent eruption. We'll also travel along the south coast to Vik and then onto the Vatnajökull Glacier. The highlight of the trip is a 2-night stay on the Westman Islands, that were almost destroyed in a 1973 eruption. *We are ready to take bookings for this trip NOW!*

Ilfracombe, North Devon (7-nights) - April dates tbc

We last visited this area about 4 years ago and found it be quite amazing. We want to re-visit some of those places, but also take in so much more! The rocks come from the Devonian and Carboniferous, but they show some amazing structures. We'll visit places like Hartland Quay in the west along to the Valley of the Rocks at Lynton in the East. We'll also venture south onto Dartmoor to take a look at the granite and the varied minerals.

Islay, Gigha & Mull of Kintyre (9-nights) - May 2-11

This 3-centre trip takes in a group of islands and mainland Mull of Kintyre that are dominated by metamorphic rocks from the Dalradian. These varied rocks (along with others) are all set in some beautiful countryside. We'll also visit the island of Jura with its famous Paps made from quartzite. All this and even an unusual Carboniferous coalfield! A great trip for anyone looking for variety in landscape and geology. *We are ready to take bookings for this trip NOW!*

Ayrshire Coast & Islands (7-nights) May 12-19

We break new ground on this trip as we take in the varied geology of the island of Great Cumbrae and the Ayrshire coast around Largs. The second centre is Girvan from where we can take in the amazing geology of the Ballantrae Igneous Complex and, weather permitting,

take a trip to the granite island of Ailsa Craig. *We are ready to take bookings for this trip NOW!*

Anyone booking for both the above Scottish trips gets the intervening night's accommodation free of charge.

Porthcawl, The Gower, South Wales (7-nights) - June dates tbc

If you've been to Pembrokeshire, the Gower is a little further to the east along the coastline of South Wales. Porthcawl is a traditional seaside resort that give us access to a stretch of coastline that takes in some rich and varied geology. Upper and Lower Palaeozoic outcrops will be taken in, that all show the effects of the Variscan Orogeny.

The Isle of Wight (7-nights) - dates tbc

Often called 'the dinosaur isle' the Isle of Wight has some of the country's most recent geology. There are fine exposures of Cretaceous and Tertiary rocks, that give us some fine coastal scenery. Places like the Needles, Alum Bay, Shanklin and Ventnor will all be taken in. All this and some fine Alpine structures, including vertical beds! We'll be getting around using the island's intensive bus network, including open top double deckers! If previous visits are anything to go by, this trip will fill up quickly.

Summer School, Sunderland (7-nights) - August dates tbc

Our annual Summer School for 2023, takes us to the coastline of Tyne and Wear and Durham with some excellent geology from the Carboniferous and Permian, with sedimentary and igneous rocks. Inland we will be taking in Weardale and Teesdale and visiting some great places along the way. All of this and the great friendship of a summer school, set in a hall of residence at Sunderland University.

Isle of Man (7-nights) - September 23-30

If you've never been to the Isle of Man to study geology before, you have been missing a treat! There's igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks in great variety, along with mineral and even a few fossils! Crucial evidence for the closure of Iapetus Ocean can be found here, along with pillow lavas and limestone from the Carboniferous. For those more interested in recent deposits, there's also some of the UK's finest Quaternary in the north of the island. All this and our favourite hotel, the Welbeck! *We are ready to take bookings for this trip NOW!*

Guernsey (7-nights) - October 7-14

The Channel Islands have a rich and varied geology that bears little or no relation to the geology of England. In the case of Guernsey there are ancient metamorphic and igneous rocks, some of which go back more than 2 billion years. There's also evidence for an orogeny, known as the Cadomian, that occurred in the late Precambrian. We have secured the excellent Peninsula Hotel that we've visited twice before. It's on the NW coast in a quiet bay. *We are ready to take bookings for this trip NOW!*

In addition to this list, we are also looking at trips to:

- The Yorkshire Dales
- Cromer

To express an interest in a trip that's shown as 'ready' email us at: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk or ring us on: 0114 245 5746.

For other trips contact us and we'll put you on a list to receive the brochure and booking form as soon as it's available.



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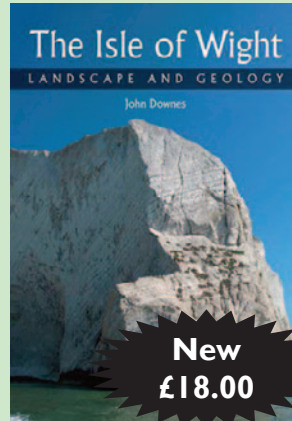
In each issue we are pleased to be able to introduce you to a range of featured books. Where they are being offered at reduced prices, these will be current to the end of May 2022 provided that stocks are available. Please note, all prices include UK postage.



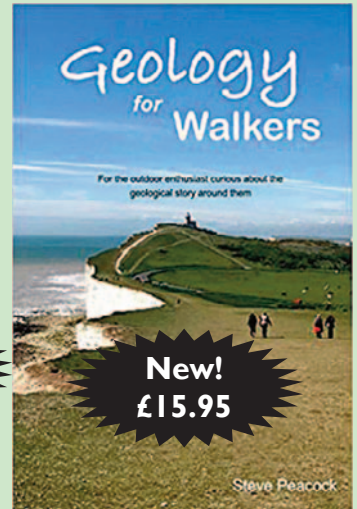
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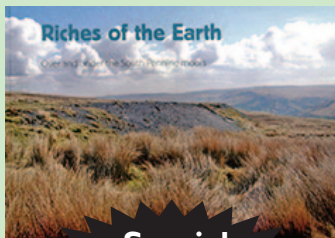
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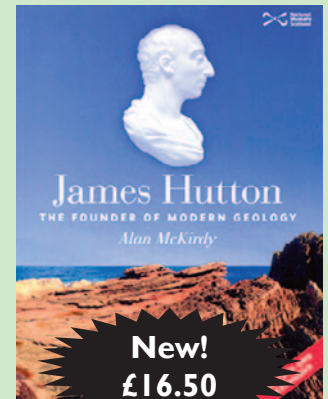
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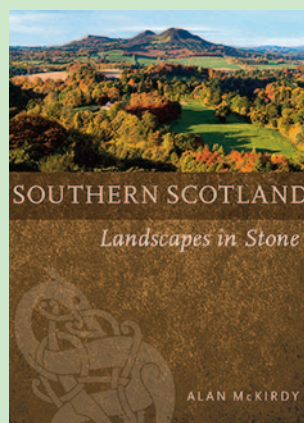
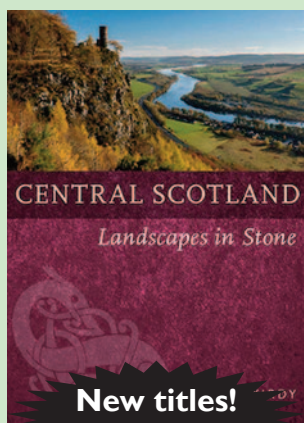
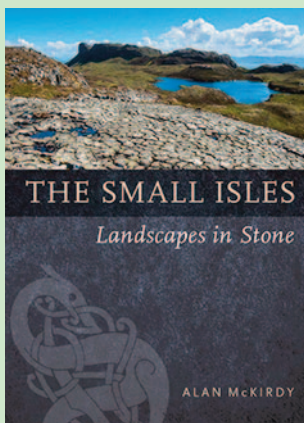
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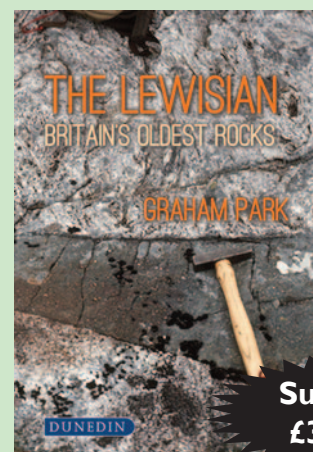
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