



Down to Earth *extra*

Issue 138 June 2024

NEWS FLASH...

- 2 Jersey Vacancies (Sept)
- Scottish Highlands October
- Iceland 2025 - book now!
- Additional 2025 trips now available to book!
- Raasay and Western Lakes trips for 2025



So who's this adorning the front cover of Down to Earth extra? Actually it's a Steppe mammoth, *Mammuthus trogontherii*. It was discovered by a couple out fossil hunting at West Runton on the coast of North Norfolk in 1990.

Extensive studies have been carried out on the bones which reveal it to be some 600,000 years old. It was old, and large and seems to have died from extensive injuries incurred in some sort of altercation with another animal. (Image: Chris Darmon)

From the Editorial team...

As many of you will be aware we organise and lead a programme of geological field trips both in the UK and overseas and have done so for a number of years. In recent years it has been getting harder and harder to find suitable hotels at which to base our activities, as small family run hotels either close or move up market.

In the post-Covid pandemic world that we now live in, habits have changed and in some of the more remote areas of the UK, particularly in Scotland, tourists are swamping the few facilities that still exist. It's not fun taking a large group of American geologists to find an acute shortage of public toilets! With hundreds of mobile homes moving around on small roads, parking becomes a nightmare.

The lack of affordable hotel beds has now got so bad that there are places that are now effectively 'off the map' so far as we are concerned. More than a year in advance it proved impossible to place a geology group for three nights on Skye. But the biggest existential threat to the future of our field trips is that hotel prices are going through the roof right across the country. We are seeing hotel prices, particularly for food, going up, not by the 10% of recent inflation, but anything up to 20% and more. This is being caused by a toxic cocktail of rising food prices and a lack of hotel staff meaning that wages have had to rise substantially to attract people to the industry. At the same time older people are trying to sell up and retire leaving younger and inexperienced people to run hotels.

We are committed to providing you with affordable, value for money trips, but we cannot now do that in some parts of the UK in the way that we have done in the past. We will have to think more outside the box and this will inevitably lead to there being rather less choice of field locations than in the past and prices will have to rise.

Chris Darmon
Down to Earth Editor

See pages 6-10 for details of our exciting 2024 programme of residential field trips!



news update

Iceland, here we go - again!

On the weekend that Icelanders go to the polls to elect their President, there's a new volcanic eruption taking place close to where there have been similar eruptions over the last five months.

As this issue of *DtoE extra* closed for press, lava was spewing up to 50 m into the air from a fissure some 2.9 km long, close to the Blue Lagoon and Svartsengi geothermal power plant. So far the defensive walls built to protect these installations and also the town of Grindavik have prevented any widespread damage.

On Wednesday May 29 the Blue Lagoon had to be evacuated and the power plant continues to run albeit automatically, without staff. Meanwhile on Saturday, June 1 residents were allowed to collect valuables from their businesses in Grindavik, though it looks increasingly likely that there is no long term future for the town in its present position.

This comes from Iceland Monitor of May 30th:

"The lava was flowing at a huge speed. It was flowing at a much faster speed than we've seen before," says Benedikt Gunnar Ófeigsson, director of deformation measurements at the Icelandic Met Office.

According to Ófeigsson, scientists estimate the current volcanic output at about 50 cubic meters per second. When the force was at its highest yesterday, scientists estimated the output at about 1,500 to 2,000 cubic meters per second, meaning that it would have been difficult to escape from the immediate area.



*A powerful fast flowing lava stream on May 30th.
(Image: mbl.is/Eggert Jóhannesson)*

Yesterday, lava flowed from the fissure toward Svartsengi over Grindavíkurvegur road at Mt Þorbjörn and along the defense walls that run north and northwest of Grindavík. The lava also ran up to the defense walls at the communications station of the US Navy, west of Grindavík, with the result that a wire was torn from the mast.

Down to Earth extra is designed & published by Geo Supplies Ltd.,
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“It wouldn’t have been possible to run away from this. It’s a lot faster than we’ve seen before. You’d have had problems getting vehicles out,” says Ófeigsson about the rapid spread of the lava.

Iceland’s Met Office made this assessment on May 31st:

“The volcanic eruption that began around noon on May 29 has been relatively stable over the past 24 hours. The activity on the eruption fissure extends from the location of the crater that erupted for the longest part of the previous eruption and to the north of it. Lava flows from the crater towards the area between Hagafell and Sýlingarfell, and it is also thickening near the crater. Lava from the northern part of the fissure flows mostly to the east. There has been no advance in the lava flow fronts west of Grindavík.

There has been limited seismic activity in the area, and the eruption tremor has remained stable since the day before yesterday. Significant subsidence was measured on GNSS stations in the Svartsengi area following the dike propagation on Wednesday, but since then, no significant changes have been recorded that indicate renewed magma accumulation there. Measurements in the coming days will provide further information on the development of magma accumulation beneath Svartsengi and the progress of the eruption.

The photogrammetry team of the Icelandic Institute of Natural History and the National Land Survey of Iceland has processed data from an aerial survey conducted about four hours after the eruption began, along with satellite images. Based on this data, it is seen that the area of the lava field was 8.7 km² and the volume 24 million m³ at 17:06 of May 29. The average discharge of lava during the first four hours of the eruption is estimated at ~1500 m³/s based on the same data. The estimate of the lava discharge from the craters has not been updated since then, but it can be assumed that it is now much lower than at the start of the eruption. For comparison, the average lava discharge during the first hours of the eruption that began on March 16 was estimated at about 1100-1200 m³/s (more information on the website of the Institute of Earth Sciences).”

Icelandic scientists are still divided in their opinions of where and indeed when this current phase of volcanic activity will end. What everyone is agreed about is that this is unlikely to be the end of the current activity. Some point to the past activity on the Reykjanes Peninsula where the end result has been a basaltic shield volcano. If this were to happen, it would pose a huge threat to Keflavik International Airport and the country’s top tourist attraction, the Blue Lagoon.

How much for a Stegosaurus skeleton - as it goes under the hammer in New York?

The world’s largest Stegosaurus named ‘Apex’ is set for a date at the auction house of Sotheby’s in New York on July 17th. Estimates vary widely as to what ‘Apex’ might fetch but estimates of up to \$6 million have been quoted.

The Stegosaurus was found by professional fossil collector Jason Cooper in the state of Colorado in Southwestern USA. It was pulled from the Morrison Formation of the Jurassic which has yielded other Stegosaurus remains previously, but none as large as this one which is 70% complete.

However not everyone is happy about the sale, particularly those in the world of academic palaeontology, who feel that it will go to the highest bidder, who may well be a private collector. This would mean that it could be excluded from further research.



This is what ‘Apex’ looks like - dwarfing the adult human here. (Image: Matthew Sherman/Sotheby’s)

This comes from the magazine of the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, the country’s premier Natural History Museum:

If you combine size, completeness and bone preservation, it is the best Stegosaurus I’ve seen,” Rod Scheetz, a curator at the Brigham Young University Museum of Paleontology, tells the New York Times’ Asher Elbein.



Jason Cooper with some of the bones of ‘Apex’ during his 2022 dig. (Image: Jason Cooper)

Stegosaurus was a slow-moving, herbivorous dinosaur that lived during the Late Jurassic period, between 145 million and 152 million years ago. Fossils belonging to the species have been found in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. The dinosaur had defensive spikes on its tail and distinct bony plates along its back, which may have

been used for species recognition or regulating body temperature. Stegosaurus could weigh almost 14,000 pounds and usually grew to a height of 9 to 13 feet and a length of 21 to 30 feet.

“Apex” is more than 30 percent larger than “Sophie,” the previously most intact Stegosaurus specimen, which is now in the collections of the National History Museum in London.

“Through the careful process of excavation, preparation and installation, ‘Apex’ sets a new standard for all future discoveries of this magnitude and further reinforces the enduring appeal of Stegosaurus and its vaunted status in popular culture,” Cassandra Hatton, Sotheby’s global head of science and popular culture, says in the listing.

Jason Cooper, a commercial paleontologist, discovered the specimen in May 2022 in the Morrison Formation on his private land in northwest Colorado; excavation was completed in October 2023. The paleontologist has unearthed various fossils previously, some of which are now located in institutions around the country.

Cooper and Hatton hope a scientific institution acquires “Apex” through direct purchase at the auction or from a private collector’s donation, writes the New York Times. But the auction format leaves this out of their control.

In addition to the skeleton, the “Apex” buyer will receive a copy of the dinosaur’s scan data and a full license to use its 3D data. The listing explains this “will allow primary information about the dinosaur to remain with the specimen and promote collaboration in future research and education.”

“If what the auction house is saying is true, and what I’m seeing in these photos is genuine, then this skeleton really does belong in a museum, where it can be conserved, studied by scientists, and put on display to inspire people from all walks of life,” Steve Brusatte, a paleontologist at Scotland’s University of Edinburgh, tells CNN’s Lianne Kolirin.

The Editor comments: Fingers crossed that someone will come up with the cash and that ‘Apex’ will find its way into a museum collection. Either way, we’ll keep you informed.

An unusual find thanks to coastal erosion. near Filey, but what was being mined?

The Jurassic rocks of the Yorkshire coast have historically been mined for several different minerals, jet, alum shale and ironstone to name but three. But when a beach walker found wooden supports resembling pit props below the cliffs at Speeton, I have to admit defeat!

The ‘rock’ here is Lower Cretaceous Speeton Clay that has the consistency of deep mud when wet. What could anybody want to mine from this material?

To understand what might have been mined, we need to go back some 100 million years to the environment that existed back in the Lower Cretaceous. We appear to be dealing with a shallow marine environment in which there was little oxygen on the seabed. The Speeton clays have a fairly high mineral content with pyritic and phosphatic nodules.

The fossil content is high and very variable with unusual ammonites, including some that are either loosely coiled or even

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Former mine workings uncovered on Speeton beach.
(Image: Terri-Leigh Broadhead)

straight. We believe that life was struggling to survive in what were harsh conditions.

So, the most likely material being mined was the Speeton Clay itself, possibly. It's unlikely to be for its iron content because iron sulphide isn't an ore of iron. Equally with calcium carbonate available from the chalk on the same stretch of coast, lime would not be a target.

But what would the clay be used for? One suggestion, made by local expert Trevor Brigham was that it was mined in the early 1800s to make Roman cement. A boat would come up onto the beach and be loaded with its cargo of clay.

A second line of enquiry however, has now been opened up with the bizarre suggestion that it was a fossil hunting exercise. Trevor has found evidence from 1868 that makes reference to these workings being made for dinosaur coprolites!

Apparently these 'coprolites' (or dino dung) were taken to Hull and crushed to create phosphate manure. Trevor goes on: "Small wagons running on tramways were used to remove the material and it was then sent to Hull by rail from Speeton Station, which opened in 1847 on the Scarborough to Hull line and closed in 1970.

The industry developed after the Napoleonic Wars, when the country's food supply needed to increase in line with the population and demand for fertiliser rose. Towards the end of the Victorian period, international competition sent the mines into decline, but there was a revival during World War One when imports were reduced."

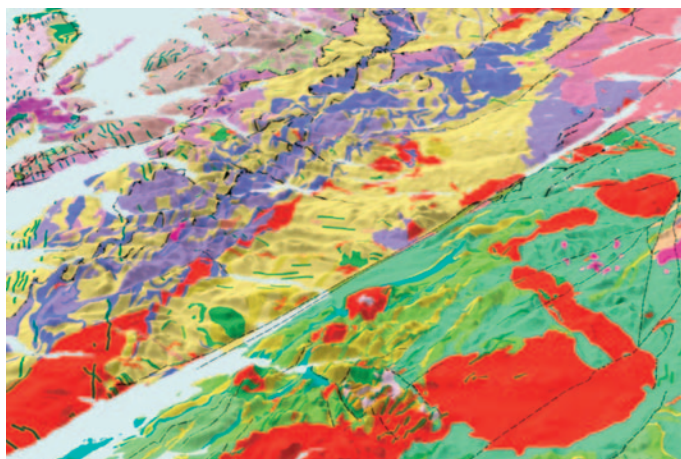
Whilst this does all seem a likely suggestion, what doesn't ring true is that these sources of phosphate can be attributed to dinosaur faeces. The Speeton Clay is a marine deposit, so dinosaurs are unlikely to say the least. Much more likely is that this is attributable to the unusual chemistry of the sea bottom.

The Editor comments: If anyone has further information about the mining, do get in touch with us.

BGS to collaborate with Ordnance Survey (OS) to share datasets...

Nine of BGS's primary datasets will now be included as open data in the OS Data Hub. This development will enable customers to access and combine OS and BGS data on a single platform, making it easier than ever to create value from geospatial data.

The inclusion of datasets will introduce OS Data Hub users to a selection of the detailed data that is available from BGS. The datasets



Data from BGS Geology 625k showing rock type and lithology which helps us understand the diverse geology present at a regional scale and how this has shaped the land we see today. Overlaid with OS Terrain 50 and Surface Water from OS Open Zoomstack. (Image: BGS © UKRI.)

will provide access to large-scale overview maps of ground hazards where there could be, for example, landslides. The maps can inform further assessment and highlight potential hazards that either need to be regraded or investigated in more detail.

Garry Baker, director of BGS Informatics said:

"We are excited to continue to build our relationship with Ordnance Survey as a Geo6 partner and make nine primary BGS datasets available to users via the OS Data Hub. The OS Data Hub presents a superb opportunity for new, differing user communities to access BGS geological data and we are eager to see what impact this will bring."

John Kimmance, OS Managing Director of National Mapping Services, said:

"I am delighted that we have extended the OS Data Hub to include data from the British Geological Survey. Ordnance Survey is constantly looking to provide a greater and richer variety of data to customers whether above or below ground, so adding the BGS datasets — which is a first for us — will extend our offering to our customers significantly. As we explore this new territory for the OS Data Hub, we really hope to encourage other third parties to collaborate with us and for new and existing customers to explore the new data available to support their own challenges."



Down to Earth - in print...

If you've enjoyed reading this Down to Earth extra, you'll love our quarterly Down to Earth! It's a 32-page quality magazine in full colour that's packed with up to the minute geological news and articles. You can get your hands on this either in print or electronic formats. Why not request a FREE sample electronic copy of the current issue?

For 2024 why not treat yourself or a loved one to a gift subscription? Go to: www.geosupplies.co.uk and enter the online shop or ring us on 0114 245 5746.

Down to Earth is published quarterly. Subscribe now for 2024.5 for just £16.00 in the UK. We'll send you the next 6 issues, to the end of 2025 and back issues from 2023/4. For an additional £25.00 (UK only) we'll send you a parcel of back issues - around 50! Alternatively, take a 2023/4 e-subscription for £10.00. Additionally, all subscribers will get DtoE extra FREE each month.

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Extra June 2024



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Iceland - the North & East Fjords September 1-10 2025

Colourful rocks in the East Fjords with
rhyolites and basalts
(Image: Chris Darmon)

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Great geo-adventures in 2024/5 begin here...



The North face of Ben Nevis, the UK's highest mountain and close to Fort William.
(Image: Lochaber Geopark)

We know that nobody likes having to cancel a trip, but it sometimes happens. As a result we've got two places available on our Jersey trip and two on the Welsh Borderland.

For 2024, we do still have limited availability on the trips shown opposite. Our plans for 2025 are now more advanced - see opposite. To see a brochure visit our website at: www.geosupplies.co.uk or Tel: 0114 245 5746.

Aside from the Summer School that can be booked via our website, for all other trips, booking forms are only available direct from us:
Email: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk

CONTACT US NOW!

Residential Field trip programme 2024/5...

- The Welsh Borderland, July 14-19
- Summer School - Stirling, August 10-17
- Llyn Peninsula, Wales, August 31-Sept
- Jersey, September 21-28
- The Highlands of Scotland - Fort William, October 4-14
- The Yorkshire Dales, October 21-26

2025

- Isle of Arran, March 30-April 6
- Troodos Mountains, Cyprus, April 24-May 1
- Isles of Raasay & Skye, May 31-June 7
- Western Lake District, June 21-28
- Heart of Wales, July 9-16
- Summer School Peak District, August tbc
- Iceland, North & East Fjords, September 1-10

Early booking is advised, especially if you are looking for a single room.

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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 usually comprise 15-20 people. Overseas trips are usually larger.*
- *We usually make use of 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.*
- *For some trips we have a hired minibus but on other trips we will use shared cars, or even public transport.*
- *Dates shown in this listing are the start and finish dates.*
- *Where prices are quoted, they are per person in a shared twin/double room.*

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

The 2024 programme...

As a result of a couple of late cancellations we can accommodate 2 extra people on the trips to the Welsh Borderland in July and also Jersey in September. We also have places available on our other Autumn trips - see below.

Email: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk or ring: 0114 245 5746

The Welsh Borderland (5-nights) - July 14-19 £895

The English county of Shropshire and the adjacent parts of Wales provide us with some of the most varied geology in the entire UK. We will be sampling rocks from the Precambrian right through to the Triassic with just about everything in between! There will be igneous plutonic and volcanic rocks, sediments galore and maybe even the odd metamorphic rock! There are fossils and minerals too - indeed something for everybody.

If you've never been on a geological field trip before then this is definitely one for you, as well as for the seasoned attender! Based at a comfortable guesthouse in the historic town of Bridgnorth, we'll be travelling around the area, including a trip on the Severn Valley railway.



Permian rocks at Bridgnorth (Image: Wikipedia)

Summer School, Stirling (7-nights) - August 10-17 £1295

This will be the first time that we have taken our famous Summer School north of the border to Scotland. What better place could we have chosen than Stirling with its highly rated university set in a historic town with an ancient castle sat on top of a massive sill? With all the usual elements that go together to make a great Summer School experience we'll bring you great geology with trips and study sessions combined with an enjoyable social experience. Accommodation is in en-suite single and shared rooms in modern student flats.



Onion skin weathering of dolerite in Stirling (Image: Open University Geological Society)

The Llyn Peninsula (5-nights) - August 31-September 5 £995

The Llyn Peninsula of North Wales is a very special place, where Welsh is the first language of most of its inhabitants and we enjoy local hospitality at its very best at the Nanhoran Hotel in Nefyn. Some of the geology is similar to that seen on Anglesey, but with lots of added extras! We see elements of an ophiolite complex, some excellent Cambrian sediments along with rare intrusives such as diorites. A highlight of this trip is a steam train ride on the Welsh Highland railway that takes in some of the magnificent scenery of Snowdonia, viewed at a slow pace from the comfort of your train seat. See the scenery of North Wales from a wholly different perspective.

See the brochure online - get the booking form from us.



The Llyn Mèlange with its amazing blocks. (Image: Geology Wales)

The Channel Island of Jersey (7-nights) - September 21-28 £1250

With Guernsey visited in October of last year, it seemed only logical to follow it up with Jersey in 2024. Jersey is the more popular of the two large Channel Isles and although close to Guernsey on the map,



*On the Jersey geological trail.
(Image: Jersey Geology Trust)*

its geology is quite different. There are lots of late Precambrian volcanic rocks from the Brioverian, as well as later intrusive rocks. These combine to give us lots of interesting coastal sections.

To complete the geology, there are some excellent Quaternary sediments that give us an insight into the more recent history of the island.

Take a look at the brochure online and get the booking form from us. Last two places available due to cancellation!

The Fort William area (10-nights) - October 4-14 £1595

This is one of the undoubted highlights of the entire year. We've gone to the max to bring you a comprehensive 10-night itinerary based in this iconic Highland locality, at the comfortable Croit Anna Hotel.



*The fabulous scenery of the Lochaber Geopark
(Image: Lochaber Geopark)*

We'll be taking in the local geology of Glen Nevis, the volcanics of Glencoe the slates of Ballachulish and also more distant places such as Mallaig and Ardnamurchan. The trip will also include an excursion by boat on Loch Linnhe and a train trip to Mallaig which includes the famous Glenfinnan viaduct. This trip offers excellent value at 10-nights. Don't let the Autumn date of this trip put you off, at this time Scotland is at its very best and the midges have gone for the season!

See the brochure online - get the booking form from us.

The Yorkshire Dales (5-nights) - October 21-26 £895



The magnificent Malham Cove in the Yorkshire Dales

Amazingly, we've never managed to base one of our trips in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. We had planned this trip for 2020, but it never happened due to Covid. Our base for the week is the small village of Gargrave, just to the west of Skipton. From here we'll take in some of the highlights of the National Park, including the ancient rocks of Ingleton and Horton in Ribblesdale, the magnificent Carboniferous limestone with its show caves and the younger rocks of the Yoredales and the Coal Measures. It's the perfect way to end our field season.

The brochure for this trip is now available, booking form from us!



*The unconformity at Helwith Bridge, near Horton in Ribblesdale.
(Image: Upper Wharfedale Field Society)*

If you would like some help or advice before making a booking, we'd be delighted to talk with you - either pick up the phone or email us.

All prices quoted above are per person in a shared room.

***To get a booking form, email us at:
downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk
or ring us on: 0114 245 5746***

The 2025 programme...

We are now taking bookings for the first tranche of trips in 2025. The programme will be slightly shorter than in previous years because we have two trips already booked in for American guests. As usual, we strongly advise early booking, especially if you are seeking a single room.

Whilst the brochures are, or will be, available on our website, booking forms are only available from us.

To make a booking email us at:

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

You can then arrange to pay the deposit and we'll send you the booking form.

Isle of Arran, March 30-April 6

£1395

Welcome to the Isle of Arran that is the original geologists' paradise. James Hutton was probably the first person to study the geology of Arran in 1786 when he described an unconformity at Lochranza. Since then, thousands have trod the paths to examine the rocks! Arran is currently going down the path to become a full geopark.



Arran on a beautiful day showing the landscape and a magnificent raised beach. (Image: Scottish Geology Trust)

This trip is based at the very comfortable (and warm) Best Western Kinloch Hotel at Blackwaterfoot on the Island's quiet west coast. We spend a leisurely week examining most parts of Arran, making full use of unlimited travel on the local buses - the terminus of the main route is right outside our hotel.

At this time there are vacancies for single and twin/double rooms.

Troodos Mountains, Cyprus April 24-May 1

£1795

We released this trip some three weeks ago and have been amazed by the response. We have 30 people booked and this trip is unfortunately currently full. However we are able to accept a few people onto a waiting list. When we have confirmation of the transport being used we may be able to accept a few more people.

The brochure is available on our website - take a look before contacting us.

Isles of Raasay & Skye, May 31-June 7

£1795

I first visited Raasay more than 40 years ago. In those days there was only a tiny guest house and simple Youth Hostel. Whilst all that has

changed and we now have the beautifully converted Raasay House, the fabulous geology remains.



Jurassic sediments topped by a Palaeogene basalt - this is Raasay's east coast.

In an island that's little more than eleven miles north to south and four miles east to west there's a wealth of geology. There's ancient Lewisian Gneiss, Torridonian Sandstone, Mesozoic sediments with fossils from the Triassic and Jurassic and lots of Palaeogene igneous rocks. We'll also be spending at least one day exploring the rocks of nearby Skye.

The brochure for this trip will soon be available.

Western Lake District, June 21-28

£1495

The Lake District is renowned for its superb landscape and scenery, but access to the central part is limited and accommodation is very expensive. We have previously stayed at Summergrove Halls in Whitehaven, but this is no longer available to us. Accordingly we've turned to Workington and the comfortable Premier Inn.

From Workington we'll be able to access all of the Western Lakes, with trips to see places like Eskdale, Lake Windermere, iron mines of West Cumbria and St Bees Head.

The brochure for this trip will soon be available.

Iceland - the North & East Fjords, September 1-10

£2595

These days a lot of people go to Iceland, but they very rarely visit the north and east of country. In this trip with our usual guide and driver Ingi, we'll begin at Keflavik near the airport and then travel to Akureyri before working our way clockwise to Myvatn to the volcano Krafla before heading to the beautiful east Fjords.

We'll stop in the amazing geo-village of Borgarfjarðar Eystrí to see Iceland's most colourful rhyolitic rocks. The last time we were here we did see the Northern Lights in all their glory!

We fly back from Egilstaddir to Reykjavik and then to Keflavik where we started. There's an option of an additional night at the end to see have a day looking at the most recent volcanic activity on the Reykjanes peninsula.

This trip is open for bookings!

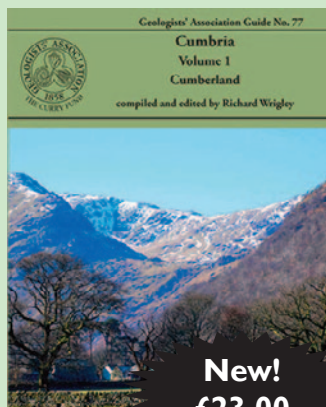
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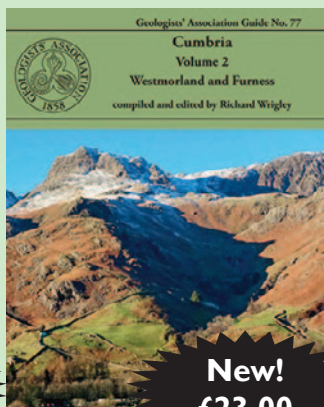
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Featured books for May & June 2024

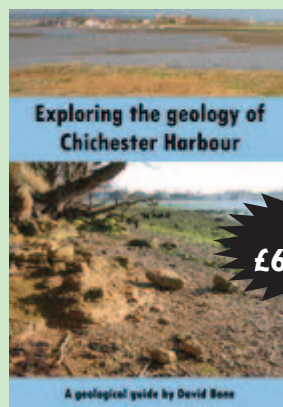
In each issue we are pleased to be able to introduce you to a range of featured books. Where they are being offered at reduced prices, these will be current to the end of June 2024 provided that stocks are available. Please note, all prices include UK postage.



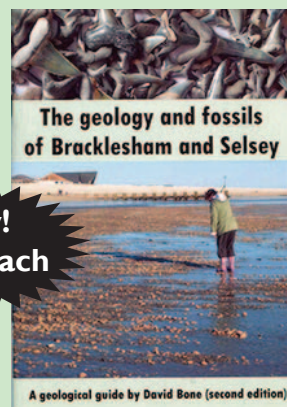
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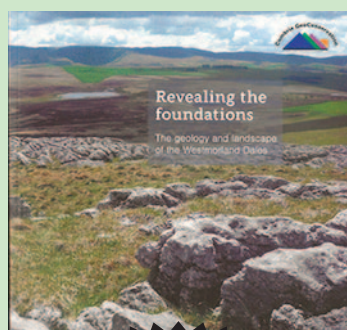
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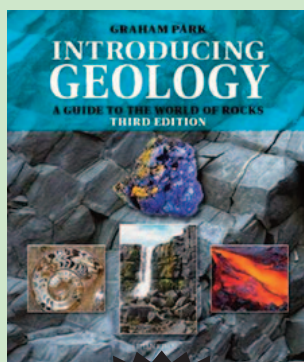
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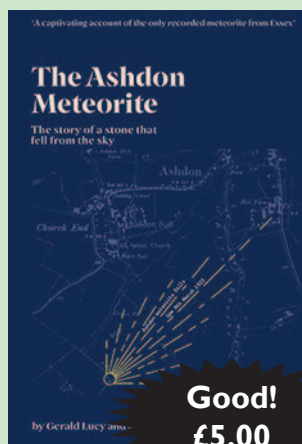
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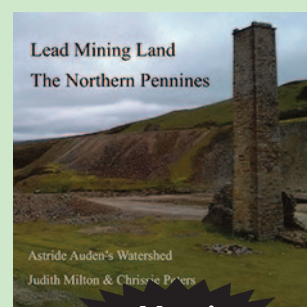
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New Ed!
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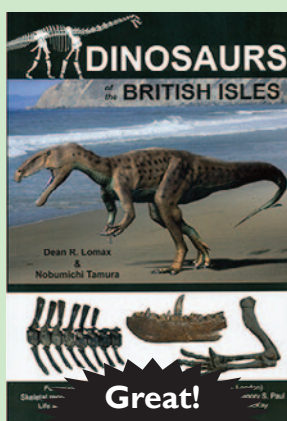
Good!
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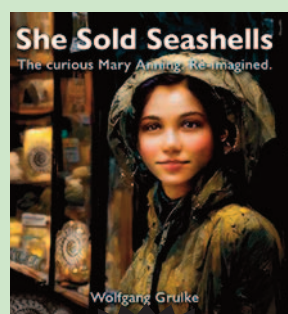
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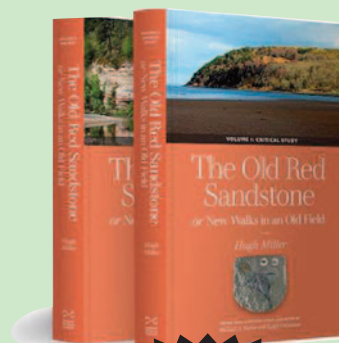
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