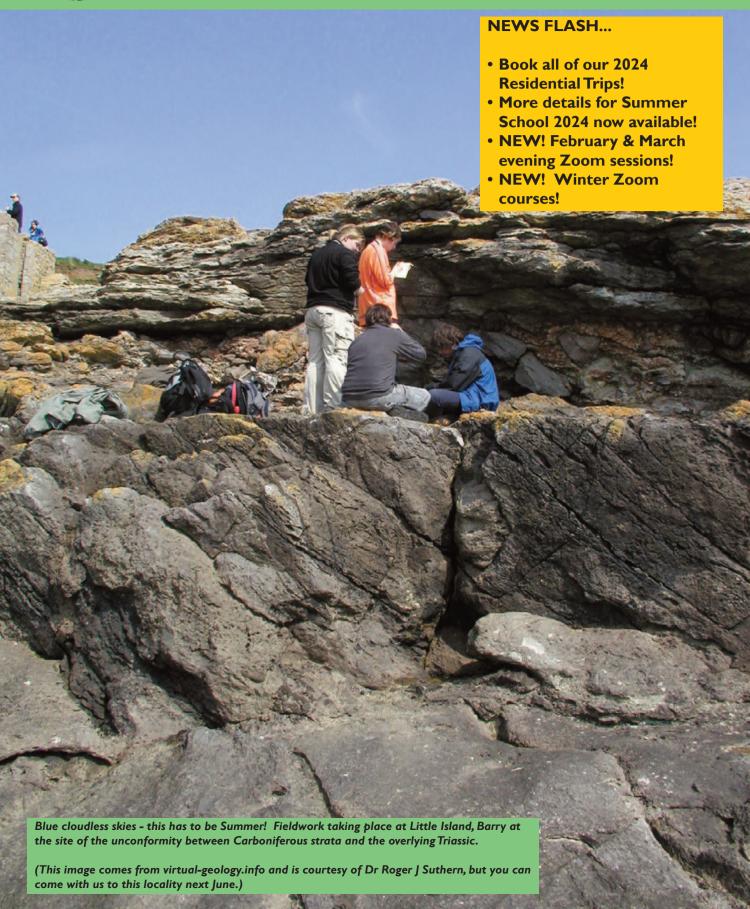


Down to Earth exera

Issue 133 January 2024



From the Editorial team...

Just as we might have thought that 2023 was going to go out in a whimper, nature had other ideas and Iceland's latest volcanic eruption sprang into life, after what seemed liked ages playing around with the Icelandic geologists and volcanologists.

It's a timely reminder that despite all the advances that geoscientists have made over the past fifty or more years - and we have made many - we are still not the directors of the show! It now seems that when the show was about to begin, it took a mere 90 minutes from the opening salvo to the full sound and fury of the full blown eruption to break the surface. Within hours, it had developed to a 4 km rift and by the morning of December 19th, it would be flashed around the world.

Now, just a few days later the once violent eruption has died down considerably. Lava is only breaking forth at just a couple of points along the rift. As Ingi our Icelandic guide put it, the eruption was just "Christmas decorations", by which he meant that it would soon be gone. It looks like he was correct.

At almost the same time as Iceland's volcano was gushing forth lava and a little ash (please not smoke!) Northwestern China was experiencing a magnitude 6.2 earthquake which has claimed more than 100 lives. Luckily it occurred in a sparsely populated area, otherwise the loss of life would have been far higher. Both of these are a reminder, if one were needed, that volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are common phenomena on the Earth's surface. A stage on which we humans are mere observers. We don't direct the show we have to live with the consequences.

Happy New Year to you all!

Chris Darmon & Colin Schofield
The Down to Earth editorial team

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

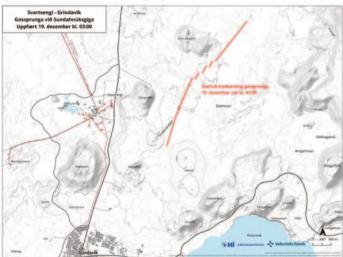


news update

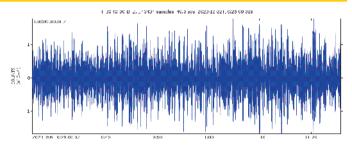
Iceland - finally we have a dramatic event - but how long will it last?

After several weeks during which there were thousands of earthquakes and swelling of the ground surface, late on the evening of December 18th. the Reykjanes latest volcanic outburst began.

All along the Iceland authorities, had been cautious. In early December they evacuated some 3000 people from the fishing village of Grindavik, which was deemed to be too close for comfort. Although so far at least it has not seen any lava, the town has suffered quite considerable damage to properties and infrastructure.



The location of the current fissure, just Northeast of Grindavik (Image: mbl.is)



Seismic trace from December 22nd. indicates that this remains a very active area. (Image: Volcano Discovery)

So far at least the eruption has followed a pattern that is very familiar to us. An initial powerful basaltic eruption with a 'curtain of fire', died down after about 48 hours and then became restricted to just a couple of active spots. As of December 22nd. lava is no longer being erupted, although steam is still rising from a couple of places.

The Icelandic authorities remain cautious and are warning that the rift could open up again, possibly even in new places with little or no warning. In the meantime, the residents of Grindavik are unable to return to their homes in time for Christmas.

During the period of the eruption, Iceland has once again had to deal

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The current eruption, shortly after it began on December 18th. By the morning of December 19th. there was a fissure 4 km long.

Note the rift is offset by faults along its course.

(Image: Courtesy of Visit Iceland)

with the now familiar issue of 'volcano tourists' who flock to the area to see the action. At least one person has had to be airlifted from danger after getting lost!

The search and rescue teams have meanwhile been practicing rescues from the ground, just in case in future days new areas are affected. The eruption has had a negative impact on tourism however with the number one tourist attraction The Blue Lagoon remaining closed until further notice.

This comes from Iceland Monitor December 22nd.

"No eruptive activity is visible at the fissures north of Grindavík and the activity in the vents seem to have gone out. This is confirmed by scientists from the Icelandic Met Office who flew over the eruption site at ten o'clock today. Then there is an employee of Efla present at Sýlingafell monitoring the site."

The Icelandic Met Office reports this in an announcement on Facebook.

It also says that the presence of glow is still visible in lava fields and also the proximity to Grindavík.

"The activity seems to have fallen down late last night or very early this morning. However, it is still possible that lava flow is in closed channels and it is therefore premature to declare a volcanic eruption closing," the report states.

To find out more, there's plenty to be found on the internet. We recommend that you go to mbl.is for the most up to date and comprehensive coverage.

A magnitude 6.2 earthquake strikes northwestern China...

On the same day that the Iceland volcano was spewing forth basalt lava over a 4km rift, a magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck a remote part of northwestern China. As of December 22nd, it had claimed at least 127 lives, and caused damage over quite a large area.

Aljazeera reported:

"An overnight earthquake hit northwestern China in a remote and mountainous region while many were asleep at home. The earthquake

was the most deadly China has experienced in nine years.

Authorities quickly mobilised several emergency responses, but their work has been complicated as the earthquake wrecked roads and infrastructure, triggered landslides, and partly buried a village in silt. The rescue work has also proved challenging in subzero temperatures, with most of China grappling with below-freezing conditions after a powerful cold wave swept across the country.

"The mountainous, remote, arid regions are not easy to get to, and they are more underdeveloped and poor than the rest of China and that is reflected in the quality of the construction," said Al Jazeera's





Almost total devastation close to the epicentre of the earthquake. (Image: South China Morning Post)

Katrina Yu reporting from Beijing, adding that the government said about 4,000 homes have been destroyed and some villages have collapsed entirely.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for "all-out efforts" in the search and relief operations. Nearly 1,500 firefighters were deployed with another 1,500 on standby, according to state media. More than 300 officers and soldiers were also mobilised for disaster relief.

Major landslide at Ventnor on the Isle of Wight threatens a number of homes and road infrastucture...

The Isle of Wight's south coast has been crumbling for a number of years with places like Blackgang Chine disappearing at an alarming rate however, it was the more populated town of Ventnor that has taken the brunt of the latest landslip.

Local and national media were quick to point out that this was not due to coastal erosion by the action of the sea, but an event driven by water saturated ground from recent heavy rainfall inland. The Lower Cretaceous rock sequence hereabouts has the deadly combination of

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An unusual present idea...

'The Cream of the Crop 2023'

As part of their work for Geo Supplies, your editorial team, Chris Darmon and Colin Schofield go to some very interesting places around the British Isles. Whilst they are in these places they often pick up rock specimens, most of which go to students and institutions both here and even around the world.

However there are also some rare or unusual rocks that don't form part of our regular stock and it is these that we've gathered together into a limited edition collection that we are offering as our 'Cream of the Crop 2023'.

The set comprises I2 carefully chosen igneous rocks from around the British Isles. They include The Foxdale granite from the Isle of Man, the Lundy Granite, Diorite from Guernsey, the Ailsa Craig Riebekite and Cumbraeite from Great Cumbrae. Each set comes boxed with notes and costs £49.95 including postage.

Purchase online at: www.geosupplies.co.uk or ring us on: 0114 245 5746.

alternating porous and impermeable layers and steep slopes. In short a recipe for disaster at some point.

In the event, disaster did indeed strike on December 11th with little warning. The Isle of Wight local council acted swiftly by closing roads and ordering the evacuation of affected properties. In total the large slip has deemed about 20 properties in imminent danger.



The close proximity of these poverties to the landslip is obvious for all to see. This gives some indication of the size of the problem (Image: Island Echo)

Local Media outlet "On the Wight" said:

At an Isle of Wight council (IWC) media briefing on December 12th, the day after the slip took place, the Service Director for Waste Environment and Planning said the landslide that is taking place in Eastern Bonchurch is the largest she's seen in more than 20 years.

Natasha Dix explained that the areas sits on the largest urban landslide complex in Northern Europe and that the levels of rainfall we have seen in the last few months are the greatest since recording began in the 1940s.

The Bonchurch landslide is a result of heavy rainfall in the summer, and given the heavy rainfall in October and November, Natasha warned that more landslides could take place over the coming months.

Colin Rowlands, Director of Neighbourhoods at IWC reiterated that the situation is very dangerous and that the main message to Islanders

is to stay away from the site. All footpaths through the Landslip have been closed.

The Isle of Wight Council will now have to consider what, if anything, can be done about the situation going forward. It would seem that they have few options other than to closely monitor what happens going forward.

Meanwhile in Norfolk, more Hemsby homes are lost to the sea...

After storm damage and a tidal surge in late November, new drone footage has revealed the extent of damage to homes and a road in the Norfolk village of Hemsby.

The Eastern Daily Press reported:

The images come after the high tide and wind battered the stricken community yesterday evening (November 25th), further eroding cliffs and property, including 30 metres of road along The Marrams which completely fell away.

Hemsby Gap and dunes to the north and south also suffered collapses, creating "very dangerous" conditions as emergency services rushed to restrict access to the area.

Find out more at: https://www.edp24.co.uk/

Down to Earth readers welcome!



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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.

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Extra January 2024





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The learning zone



We're gearing up for a final push to fill all the remaining places on our 2024 trips! We have a couple of late vacancies on Norway, contact us now!

If you're looking for something different next year, why not join us in South Wales, the Welsh Borderland or venture up to Scotland's Fort William?

To view a brochure, go to our to website at: www.geosupplies.co.uk or Tel: 0114 245 5746

But remember that booking forms are only available direct from us:

Email: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk

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Final Residential Field trip programme 2024...

- Scotland Northwest Highlands, April 10-18
- Southern Norway, April 24-May 3
- Edinburgh & Scottish Borders June 10-17
- Geology of South Wales, June 23-30
- The Welsh Borderland, July 7-12
- Summer School Stirling, August 10-17
- Llyn Peninsula, Wales, August 31-Sept 5
- Jersey, Channel Isles, September 21-28
- Highlands Fort William, October 4-14
- The Yorkshire Dales, October 21-26

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

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The learning zone

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 normally 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 most trips we have our own minibus but on some trips we may also have the use of an additional car.
- 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

Our 2024 programme...

With 2024 now upon us, we are still taking bookings so you will not be surprised to hear that a number of trips are already filling up fast - but most still have vacancies for couples or people willing to share.

Take our advice and make your bookings NOW! Remember that you can only get a booking form direct from us, they are not available on our website.

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

On a negative note, following the recent news of more fires on the Canarian island of Tenerife booking for our trip in February have dried up and we have taken the difficult decision to cancel our planned trip.

Northwest Highlands of Scotland (8-nights) - April 10-18 £1495

We spend the whole of the trip based at the iconic Inchnadamph Hotel in Assynt. This is where the pioneers Peach and Horne were based when they surveyed the rocks and structures of the area. There's no better place from which to explore this great area. We take in the ancient Lewisian Gneisses, the Torridonian Sandstones, the sediments of the Cambrian and Ordovician and the Moine Schists. There are so many classic localities on our extensive itinerary that takes in sites right across the Geopark.

View the brochure at our website - get the booking form from us! This trip is close to being full.



This is the magnificent Quinag in Winter

Norway, land of fjords (9-nights) - April 24-May 3 £1995

At long last we are set to return to southern Norway following our last visit in 2019. This trip begins with the fjords of the Bergen area and then moves to the tiny resort of Flam, set at the bottom of a fjord and reached by a world famous railway. We take a fabulous train trip to Oslo and then spend 5-nights as guest of the Geo Norvegica Geopark to the south of Oslo. There we see a huge range of different rocks from Proterozoic gneisses to fossiliferous Palaeozoic sediments to the home of Larvikite the famous decorative facia stone.

View the brochure at our website - get the booking form from us! We have enough people booked to run this trip already.



One of the highlights of the trip is a geological excursion on the Scenic Telemark Canal aboard a vintage boat. (Image: TripAdvisor)

Edinburgh and the Borders (7-nights) - June 10-17 £1095

The historic capital city of Edinburgh and its environs represent one of the cradles of geology. Back in the 1780s, James Hutton and other members of Scottish Enlightenment, toured the area on Horseback and by boat making amazing geological discoveries.

From our comfortable hotel base in Dunbar we'll take in Hutton's Section, Hutton's Rock, Arthur's Seat volcano and the amazing Siccar Point - and they are just for starters! We'll also take in sites on the Firth of Forth and over in Fife as well as the Southern Uplands.

View the brochure at our website - get the booking form from us!

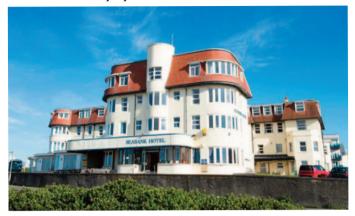


The famous Siccar Point. (Image: Colin MacFadyen)

The Gower area of South Wales (7-nights) - June 23-30 £1195

This is an exciting new area for us with excellent geology covering mainly the Devonian and Carboniferous with amazing structures and fossils. We'll be going down the Big Pit coalmine and hopefully seeing some reptilian footprints! This is a great area that we will be covering for the first time.

Brochure available online - booking form from us. We can accommodate more people in twin and double rooms.



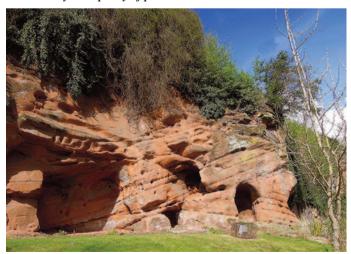
The Seabank Hotel - our comfortable base in Porthcawl, from where we can access all our field localities.

The Welsh Borderland (5-nights) - July 7-12 £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.

Brochure online - get the booking form from us. We currently have plenty of places available.



Permian rocks at Bridgnorth (Image: Wikipedia)

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

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?

£1295

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.

Brochure available online, booking form from us!



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. This trip is already filling up.



The Welsh Highland Railway (Image: TripAdvisor)

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

With Guernsey visited in October of this year, it seems 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, 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. This trip is filling up fast!

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.

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 steam train trip to Mallaig aboard the famous Jacobite train which crosses Glenfinnan viaduct. Don't let the Autumn date of this trip put you off!

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



Fabulous geology of the Lochaber Geopark.

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

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 forms from us!

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

Zoom courses for this Winter...

We've got two Zoom courses available for you this Winter, commencing in January. These courses are suitable for all and are presented through hour long, live Zoom sessions.

Geology and landscapes of the Geoparks of the UK

Is a 10-week course that covers all the areas of the UK that are currently designated as UNESCO Geoparks, plus two other Geoparks that are outside that network. In short, some of the finest geology and landscapes of the British Isles.

The areas to be covered are: The Northwest Highlands of Scotland, Lochaber (Scotland), Geo Mon (Anglesey), Fforest Fawr (Brecon Beacons), English Riviera (Devon), Abberley & Malvern Hills, Cuilcagh Lakelands (Northern Ireland), North Pennines, Shetland, Black Country (West Midlands).

The course will begin on Monday, January 8th. and end on Monday March 25th. Zoom sessions are at 14.00 or 19.00, you choose which to attend.

Geoparks of the UK costs £70.00 per person or £90.00 per couple.

World geological adventures!

This is a 10-week course that will examine the geology of a number of places around the world. Some will be places that you are familiar with, whilst others will probably not be so familiar. All have a fascinating story to tell!

Areas to be covered are: Iceland, the Channel Isles, China, the Himalayas, the Canary Islands, Cyprus, the Rockies, New Zealand, the Grand Canyon, Montserrat & the Caribbean.

The course begins on Tuesday, January 9th. and ends on Tuesday, March 26th. Zoom sessions are at 14.00.

World geological adventures costs £70.00 per person or £90.00 per couple.

For both the above courses, you can also enrol for individual sessions at £10.00 each.

Evening talks at 7.00...

A series of evening talks with background notes. Enrol for them all, or just the odd one or two, it's up to you!

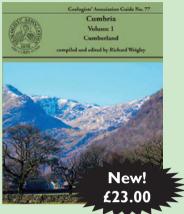
Wednesday evening at 7.00pm via live Zoom. Cost: £10.00 each, or £90.00 for all 11 sessions, and are suitable for anyone with an interest in geology.

Winter Series	
January 10	"Serpentine - what is it and what does it tell us?"
January 17	"The geology of spa towns in the UK"
January 24	"Charles Lapworth - an amazing geologist"
January 31	"Geology along the Settle-Carlisle railway"
February 14	"Icelandic volcanoes - the latest news'
February 21	"Gideon Mantell - the UK's dinosaur man"
February 28	"The South Pennine Mineral Field"
March 6	"The geology of Charnwood Forest"
March 13	"The rise and fall of a Lake District mine"
March 20	"The geology of the Isle of Rum"
March 27	"Mapping England & Wales with William Smith

You can enrol via our online shop at: www.genospecies.co.uk or ring us on: 0114 245 5746

Featured books for January 2024

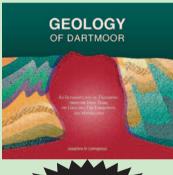
In each issue we are pleased to be able to introduce you to a range of featured books. Where they are being offered at reduced prices, these will be current to the end of January 2024 provided that stocks are available. Please note, all prices include UK postage.





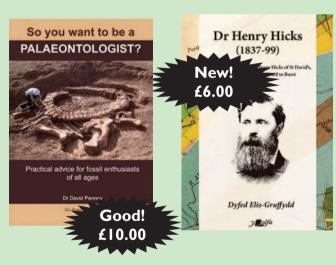


















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