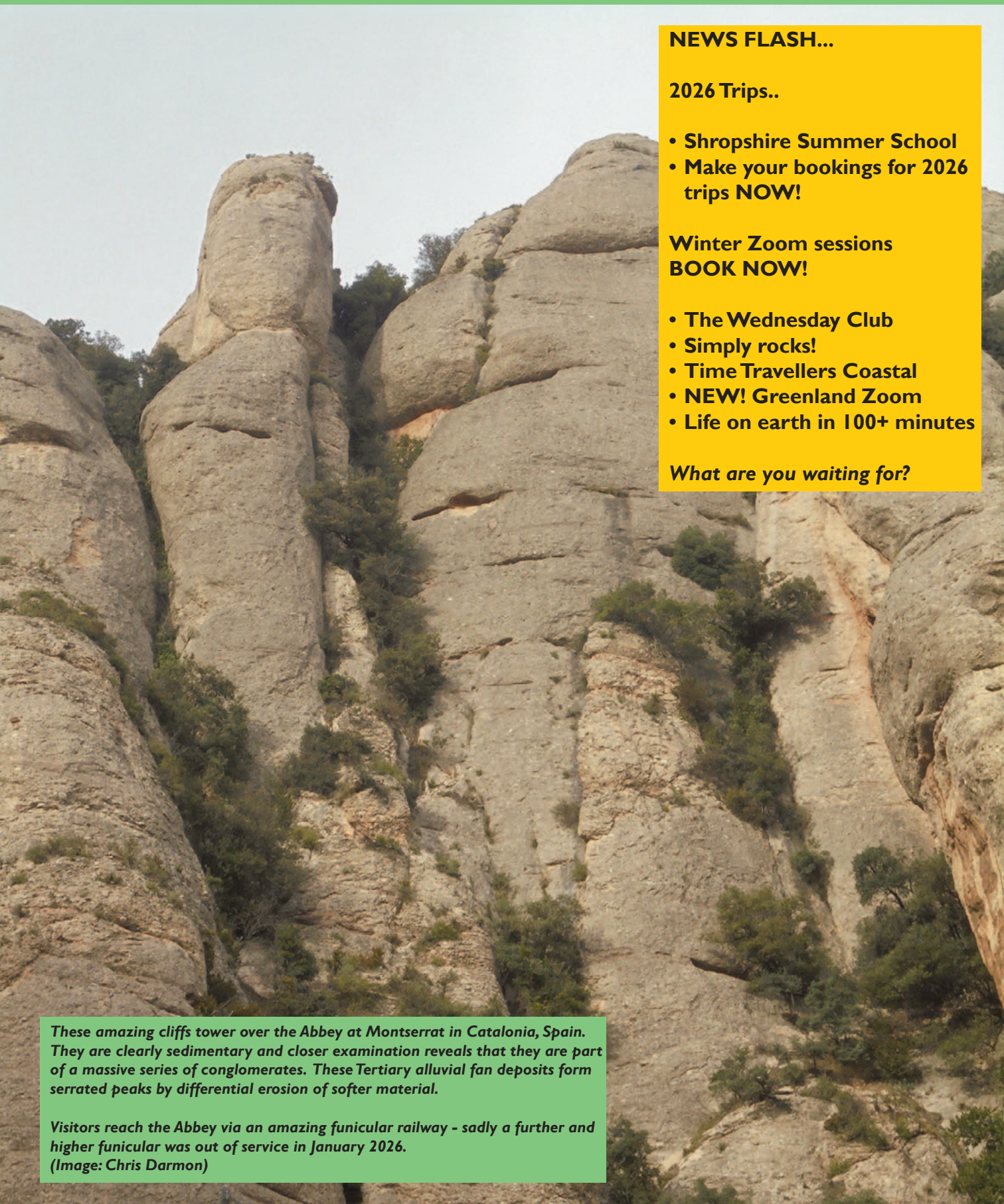
Down to Earth extra

Issue 158 February 2026



NEWS FLASH...

2026 Trips..

- **Shropshire Summer School**
- **Make your bookings for 2026 trips NOW!**

Winter Zoom sessions BOOK NOW!

- **The Wednesday Club**
- **Simply rocks!**
- **Time Travellers Coastal**
- **NEW! Greenland Zoom**
- **Life on earth in 100+ minutes**

What are you waiting for?

These amazing cliffs tower over the Abbey at Montserrat in Catalonia, Spain. They are clearly sedimentary and closer examination reveals that they are part of a massive series of conglomerates. These Tertiary alluvial fan deposits form serrated peaks by differential erosion of softer material.

Visitors reach the Abbey via an amazing funicular railway - sadly a further and higher funicular was out of service in January 2026.
(Image: Chris Darmon)

From the Editorial team...

So we are entering a world where artifical intelligence, or AI as we should call it, is becoming ever more common in our everyday world. For us, at the ***Down to Earth*** editorial desk, it has rapidly become a part of our everyday life.

There, at the very top of the search results, is an AI generated summary. For the vast majority of times it's absolutely sensible and correct. On a number of occasions you can see that it has been pretty well lifted from Wikipedia. To be perfectly honest, it doesn't by itself, seem to add very much to the body of knowledge that's available on Wikipedia that's been generated by the endeavour of human volunteers.

But there are occasions when it's possible to see how AI has mixed things up, sometimes with similar sounding or spelled terms. It's on occasions such as this that we have to remind ourselves that AI can make mistakes, much like us humans. At least there's honesty here, it is badged clearly as an "AI summary", so we should treat it as such.

At the moment AI is principally being used as a means of summarizing all available data, something that it can do quickly and accurately. But it can also be used to put forward a particular line of evidence, or push a particular theory over a rival one. What about AI in the hands of a six-day creationist for example? We should of course, treat all sources with the some degree of scepticism, or should we say scientific curiosity?

Treat AI just as you would any other source. Treat it as a friend an ally, unless and until you think it's letting you down or leading you down a path that you think is heading you towards bad conclusions. Remember that not all science is good, not all science is correct. Down through the ages people have been quite capable of coming up with theories that prove to be wrong and AI is no different. Importantly don't give AI a status that it doesn't deserve. Try and stay in control at all times!

Chris Darmon & Colin Schofield
The Down to Earth Editorial Team

Get a complete look at our trips for 2026 and the chance to book your place(s) now! See pages 9-11 for details.

news update

New hydrothermal field off Greece discovered...

A new study in the journal ***Scientific Reports*** from the University of Bremen's Centre for Marine Environmental Science (MARUM) outlines s the discovery of a massive new hydrothermal field off Greece.

This comes from the University of Bremen's website:

A new study published in ***Scientific Reports*** details the discovery of a remarkably extensive hydrothermal vent field on the shelf of Milos Island, Greece. The vents were identified during the METEOR expedition M192, where the research team used a combination of different methods, including underwater technologies such as an autonomous and a remotely operated vehicles, to survey the seafloor. These approaches revealed previously undocumented venting between 100 and 230 meters depth. This makes Milos home to one of the largest known shallow-to-intermediate hydrothermal systems in the Mediterranean and substantially expands current knowledge of vent distribution in the region.

The study identifies three major vent areas — Aghia Kiriaki, Paleochori–Thiorychia, and Vani — all located along active fault zones that run across the Milos shelf. These faults belong to a large tectonic depression, the Milos Gulf–Fyriplaka graben, which has lowered the seafloor to depths of up to 230 metres. The close alignment of vents with these geological structures shows that tectonic activity plays a key role in determining where hydrothermal venting occurs: "We never expected to find such a large field of gas flares off Milos," says Solveig I. Bühring, senior author of the study and

Sampling fluids of 180 degree Celsius at the White Sealhound structure.
(Image: MARUM – Center for Marine Environmental Sciences, University of Bremen)

scientist at the MARUM – Center for Marine Environmental Sciences, University of Bremen, who led the expedition M192 during which the vents were discovered. "When we first observed the vents through the ROV cameras, we were stunned by their diversity and beauty — from

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shimmering, boiling fluids to thick microbial mats covering the chimneys."

According to first author Paraskevi Nomikou of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the spatial pattern of these vent clusters is closely controlled by the island's tectonic fabric: "Our data clearly show that the gas flares follow the patterns of the major fault systems around Milos," Nomikou explains. "Different fault zones influence different vent clusters, especially where several faults meet. These tectonic structures strongly control how and where hydrothermal fluids reach the seafloor."

During the METEOR cruise off the Greek island of Milos: The water sampler rosette and the AUV MARUM-SEAL on deck, with the volcanic island of Antimilos visible in the background. (Image: MARUM – Center for Marine Environmental Sciences, University of Bremen; S. I. Bühring)

According to first author Paraskevi Nomikou of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the spatial pattern of these vent clusters is closely controlled by the island's tectonic fabric:

"Our data clearly show that the gas flares follow the patterns of the major fault systems around Milos," Nomikou explains. "Different fault zones influence different vent clusters, especially where several faults meet. These tectonic structures strongly control how and where hydrothermal fluids reach the seafloor."

The findings demonstrate how active faulting and ongoing geological processes have shaped the evolution of these vent fields. This discovery establishes Milos as one of the most significant natural laboratories in the Mediterranean for studying the interplay between tectonics, volcanism, and hydrothermal activity.

The results are also relevant for the MARUM-based Cluster of Excellence "The Ocean Floor – Earth's Uncharted Interface." A follow-up expedition to Milos, the Kolumbo submarine volcano off Santorini, and Nisyros is planned. The research is the result of close collaboration between Greek and German institutions, including the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, MARUM – University of Bremen, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, ICBM – Institute for Chemistry and Biology of the Marine Environment Oldenburg, Carl-von-Ossietzky-Universität Oldenburg, and Constructor University Bremen.

Proposed new geological trail adds a 'new dimension' to the NC500...

Visitors to the North of Scotland cannot fail to see that they are entering the territory of the NC500, an internationally recognised 516 mile road route that takes in the landscape and scenery and starts and finishes in Inverness.

The proposal for the trail that will link the Gairloch Museum and Carn Dearg Youth Hostel, a distance of 2.8 miles (4.5 km) has come from interested local people. Some of the same local people published their own guide to the geology of Wester Ross a few years ago. Proposals have been lodged with the Highland Council for the trail with a total 18 markers representing different geological periods and other points of interest. If it gains approval from Highland Council, it could be opened by next year.

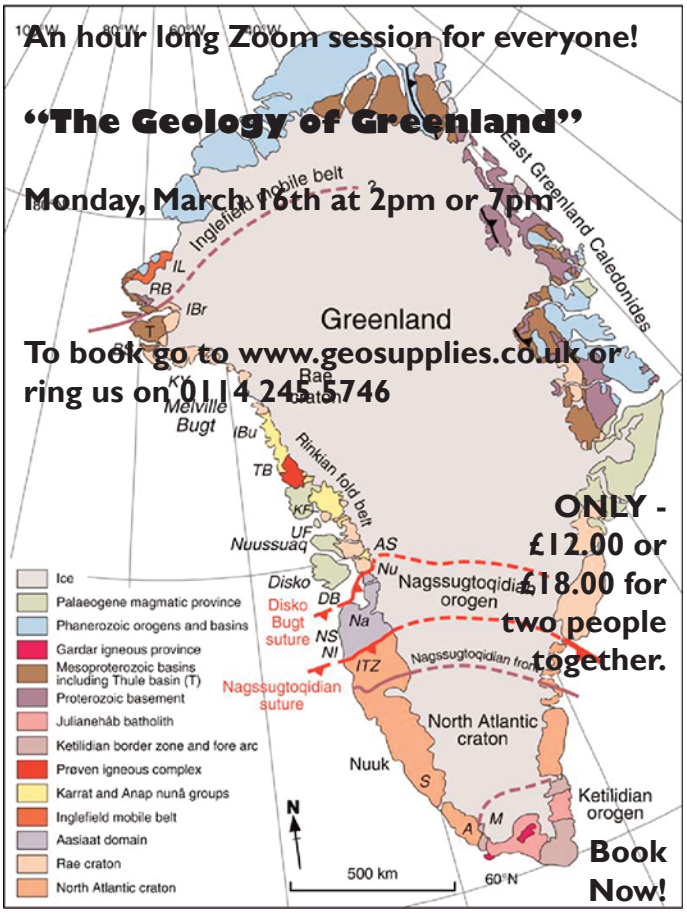
The proposal has picked up valuable publicity from the BBC and both local and national media. This comes from The National Scot:

"Roy Macintyre, a leading member of the project, said: "Gairloch is a favourite haunt for geologists. In Gairloch, Lewisian gneiss and its various associated rocks are mostly exposed on the surface so it's easy to interpret them."

He also said the trail's length was also significant as "the age of the solar system is generally accepted to be 4.0 to 4.5 billion years," adding to the feeling that you are walking through Scotland's rich natural history. He added that the project would be a celebration of "deep time," the geological history of Earth over billions of years."

Assuming that the proposal, or something similar, does go ahead, it will greatly add to what is already available in the area. Crucially, it will draw an ever increasing number of people away from some of the popular 'honey pot' locations in the Assynt area and spread the impact over a wider area.

We at Down to Earth wish everyone concerned with the project good luck. We look forward to walking the trail in the non too distant future!



Groundwater heat sources are nothing new in the Outer Hebrides...

This comes from The Hebridean Hostellers newsletter, Autumn 2025:

"Boreholes plunging 75 metres into the solid Lewisian gneiss and bringing inexpensive heating to the Garenin blackhouse village settlement, in general, and to the hostel, in particular." (from 2005).

The Editor comments: I wonder how successful it was and whether it still brings 'creature comforts from below'!

Northern Ireland joins the 'dinosaur party' with some fossils of its own...

If you were asked about the chances of finding any dinosaur fossils in Northern Ireland. I guess that most people would think it either 'impossible' or 'improbable'. At the same time thinking of places like the Isle of Wight or even the Isle of Skye in Scotland, where there have been many such finds.

That said, the Antrim Coast does boast significant exposures of Jurassic rocks, rocks that are exactly the right rocks for dinosaur remains. To put the record straight, there has been only one dinosaur find in Northern Ireland the story of its discovery goes back more than four decades.

Ulster Museum' Geology Curator Dr Mike Simms with the two dinosaur bone fragments in 2020.
(Image: Ulster Museum)

The fossils were found in 1980 and 1981 by the late Roger Byrne, a school teacher from Carrickfergus who was a keen fossil collector. They were found on Islandmagee in County Antrim, close to the famous location known as The Gobbins, in rocks from the early Jurassic and dating to about 200 million years.

Roger Byrne donated the two fossils to Ulster Museum. Where they were worked on by Dr Mike Simms the Curator of Geology. For the past five years they have been on display at the Museum, but have recently travelled to Cork where they are being displayed at the Glucksman Gallery in University College Cork (UCC), where the public can also see nearly 300 fossils from elsewhere.

Mike Simms, who has met Roger Byrne on several occasions, told BBC News NI that Ireland is an unlikely candidate for dinosaur related discoveries because "we have the wrong sort of rocks. Most of the rocks that would contain dinosaurs that would be of the right age, we don't have," he said. "They were eroded away long ago, so we're very, very lucky to have these. Most of the rocks we have that are the right age for dinosaurs were deposited out at sea."

The fossils are normally on display at the Ulster Museum but they are being loaned to UCC. "There will be big, spectacular, skeleton casts in this exhibition in Cork but alongside them will be these little bits of bone," said Dr Simms. "I think it's a great opportunity because Cork is quite a long way away, so it's great that they get down to Cork for six months and people can appreciate them there."

Dr Mike Simms is curator of geology at National Museums Northern Ireland (Image: Courtesy of BBC NI)

The two water-worn bone fragments (Image: University of Portsmouth)

Originally it was assumed the fossils were from the same animal, but the team were surprised to discover that they were from two completely different dinosaurs. The study, employing the latest available technology, identified the type of dinosaur from which each came. One is part of a femur (upper leg bone) of a four-legged plant-eater called *Scelidosaurus*. The other is part of the tibia (lower leg bone) of a two-legged meat-eater similar to *Sarcosaurus*.

The University of Portsmouth team, researcher Robert Smyth, originally from Ballymoney, and Professor David Martill, used high-resolution 3D digital models of the fossils, produced by Dr Patrick Collins of Queen's University Belfast, in their analysis of the bone fragments.

Robert Smyth said:
"Analysing the shape and internal structure of the bones, we realised that they belonged to two very different animals. One is very dense and robust, typical of an armoured plant-eater. The other is slender, with thin bone walls and characteristics found only in fast-moving two-legged predatory dinosaurs called theropods. Despite being fragmentary, these fossils provide valuable insight on a very important period in dinosaur evolution, about 200 million years ago. It's at this time that dinosaurs really start to dominate the world's terrestrial ecosystems."

Professor Martill said:
"*Scelidosaurus* keeps on turning up in marine strata, and I am beginning to think that it may have been a coastal animal, perhaps even eating seaweed like marine iguanas do today."

So could there be more fossils on Islandmagee beaches, or anywhere else in Northern Ireland? "Quite a few other people and Roger scoured it pretty carefully," Dr Simms said. "I don't think there was really that much left after Roger had been back. He went back many times and his collection was donated to us after he died."

So important are these bones that they can attract import people like Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Micheál Martin, who opened the ***Domain of the Dinosaurs*** exhibition in November of last year, called it "a fantastic collaboration of science and the arts that truly captures the imagination".

You can visit the exhibition now at the University of Cork.

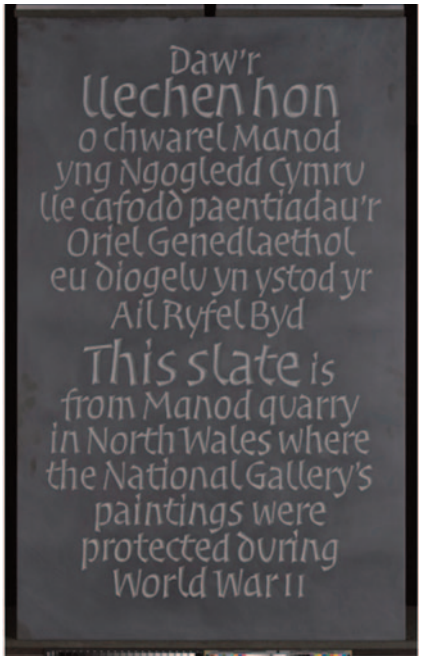
Get Down to Earth - by e-mail...

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 2026 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.

World War 2, a Welsh slate quarry and the National Gallery...

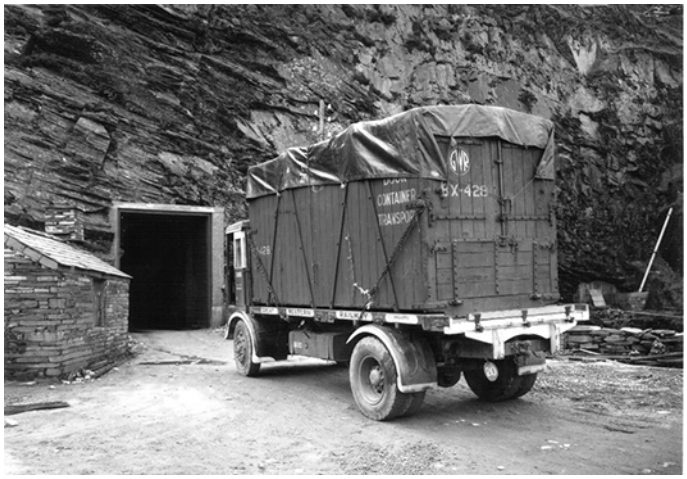
The part played by a Welsh slate quarry in securing some of the nation's finest art treasures during World War two has been commemorated in a new piece of artwork.



An inscribed tablet made from slate from the landscape of North Wales has been unveiled at the National Gallery to commemorate Manod quarry in Eryri (Snowdonia) which kept many of the nation's pictures safe during the Second World War.

The inscription in Welsh and English reads: 'Daw'r llechen hon o chwarel Manod yng Ngogledd Cymru lle cafodd paentiadau'r Oriel Genedlaethol eu diogelu yn ystod yr Ail Ryfel Byd.' (This slate is from Manod quarry in North Wales where the National Gallery's paintings were protected during World War II.')

The tablet conceived by the artist Jeremy Deller and designed and carved by letter-carver John Neilson was commissioned by Mostyn, Llandudno, supported by CELF, the national contemporary art gallery for Wales,and presented to the National Gallery on the occasion of The Triumph of Art a nationwide performance by artist Jeremy Deller.



A Great Western Railway truck loaded with some of the nation's finest paintings enters the Manod Slate Mine (Image: The National gallery)

'Manod Slate Tablet', on permanent display from Tuesday 2 December in the Portico Vestibule of the National Gallery – close to Boris Anrep's floor mosaic of Sir Winston Churchill depicted in war time – is a legacy of 'The Triumph of Art', a project that rounded off the Gallery's Bicentenary celebrations in 2024-5. After a year-long celebration of festivals, gatherings, and art in the public realm throughout Britain and Northern Ireland 'The Triumph of Art' culminated in a day-long public celebration in Trafalgar Square, London on Saturday 26 July 2025, where the 'Manod Slate Tablet' was first revealed.

In May 1940 when the outlook seemed bleak for the Allies in mainland Europe and an invasion of Britain looked imminent, a plan was needed to protect the national art collection which was already in temporary hiding places in Wales where it had been since the beginning of the war in 1939. One proposal was for the paintings to be evacuated by ship to Canada, but the possibility of U-boat attacks worried the Gallery's director, Kenneth Clark. He went to see Prime Minister Winston Churchill who immediately vetoed the idea.

The Manod slate mine in north Wales fitted the bill perfectly. Explosives were used to enlarge the entrance to accommodate the largest paintings and several small brick 'bungalows' were built within the caverns to protect the paintings from variations in humidity and temperature. A special 'elephant' case was constructed to transport the paintings safely on trucks to Wales. By the summer of 1941, the whole collection had been reunited in its new subterranean home, where it was to remain for four years.

Editor's footnote: ***What happened next?***
"Although the masterpieces were removed when peace returned, the Department of the Environment was strangely unwilling to vacate the site. Following a long court battle by a local quarry owner, the Government finally surrendered control of the caverns in the early 1980's. The long awaited unveiling of the "secret mountain" was a curious anti climax, many rumours had circulated over the years as to what was still hidden there, the truth however was rather more mundane - just some old packing cases and long disused shelving."

Volcanic experiences 2026

Alan Clewlow has now been arranging "Volcanic Experiences" escorted group tours to volcanically active areas of the world for over 25 years. These tours are open to all adults but offer particular interest to members of local geology societies and those with some knowledge of geology, with the chance to see recently formed rocks and features and for some of the tours, the possibility of viewing an erupting volcano.

One of their most popular tours takes place in early September, covering much of the South of Iceland. After arrival and one night in Reykjavik, the group follows the main route along the south coast to the east, spending one night at Skaftafell, close to the huge Vatnajökull ice-cap, visiting the Jokulsarlon glacier lagoon and sites in the Skaftafell National Park. They then return westwards to be based at Hvollsvollur for four nights, covering many of the classic sites of the south, including the boundary between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates at Þingvellir, hot springs and geysers at Geysir and the huge waterfall at Gullfoss.

The Svinafellsjokull glacier in the Skaftafell National Park fed from the huge Vatnajokull ice-cap in south-east Iceland.

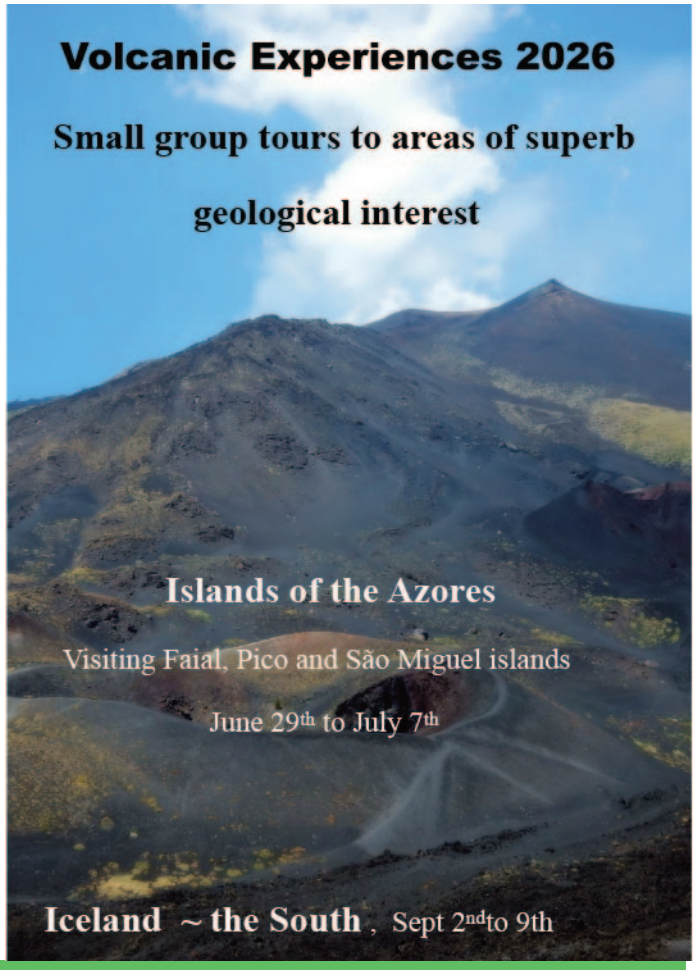
There is time spent at the Solheimjökull glacier and a ferry excursion to the island of Heimaey, site of a major eruption in 1973. One day is spent in the south-west on the Reykjanes peninsular, viewing the new features created by the ongoing eruptions near the Blue Lagoon and Grindavik, which have been taking place at regular intervals since 2021. There is a final night and morning back in Reykjavik, giving the chance to explore the city, before returning to the UK. The trip is timed to enable a possible viewing of the Northern Lights, which previous groups have often been able to witness when visiting at this time of year.

There is a new itinerary for the tour to the Volcanic islands of the Azores, which takes place in late June / early July. The base for the first three nights is Horta on the island of Faial, a favourite stopping-off point for yachts crossing the Atlantic. The island last saw major activity in 1958, when a major eruption took place, burying settlements and building new land out to the south-west. There is time spent on the rim of the main crater of the island and at the visitor centre devoted to the eruption. The group then uses the local ferry to move on to the nearby island of Pico, dominated by the volcano of the same name.

They spend two nights there, covering a variety of locations, including spectacular basaltic lava flows which have flowed down to build out the coastal platform. After an inter-island flight to Ponta Delgada, the group spends the final three days covering a range of sites on São Miguel, the largest of the the islands. It includes spectacular viewpoints, calderas with crater lakes, hot springs, bubbling mudpools and the chance to bathe beneath a hot waterfall!

Crater Lake at Lagoa do Fogo, one of the many volcanic centres on Sao Miguel Island in the Azores.

In addition to the two trips described above, Alan has also arranged tours to Sicily & the Aeolian islands in June and to the Bay of Naples area in October, but these are already fully booked. To find out more about all the 2026 tours,
including a full day-by-day account of each itinerary, accommodation and travel arrangements go to the Volcanic Experiences website at *www.volcanicexperiences.co.uk* **.**



Down to Earth
'Earth science learning for all'

The learning zone

Great geo-adventures in 2026 begin here...

Portreath lies on Cornwall's north coast, just a couple of miles from Redruth. It's home to some fine cliffs and fabulous rocks and structures.
(Image: Chris Darmon)

We have a late single or double vacancy on the Dorset Coast trip (March 27-April 1) due to a cancellation - contact us for details NOW!

Following a confirmation of the booking situation, we now have 2 vacancies on our September 2026 Iceland trip. There's a male and a female vacancy in two twin rooms. Several other 2026 trips are either full or nearly so. Remember that there are plenty of single rooms on our Summer School to Shropshire.

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

Remember that booking forms are only available direct from us:
Email: downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk

Residential Field trip programme 2026...

2026

- The Jurassic Coast of Dorset, March 27-April 1
- Northwest Highlands of Scotland, April 14-22 FULL
- Central Cornwall, May 1-8
- Teesdale & Northern Pennines, May 16-23
- Minehead & North Somerset, June 7-12
- Shetland, The Northern Isles, June 17-25 FULL
- Anglesey, July 5-10
- Summer School, Shropshire, August 8-15
- Iceland, September 13-22 - see panel opposite
- Melrose, the Scottish Borders, October 18-24

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

Before you book on one of our trips...

We are always pleased to welcome new people along on our trips. So if you are thinking about it, what do you need to know before you 'take the plunge'?

Who are the trips aimed at?

The short answer is that they are not aimed at any particular group of people. Our participants are mainly older retired people who want to keep their minds and bodies active, but younger people are welcome.

Some people have lots of geological field experience whilst others are complete beginners. As one person put it to us "I've forgotten all I once knew and need to come along to hear it again." Our UK trips are all small groups of 15 to 20 people maximum so we can make lots of what we say personal to you.

In recent years we've run several special trips for American geologists and now some of them join us on our regular trips, adding greatly to the character of our field experiences.

Will I be able to manage the walking?

We always try to keep walking to a minimum, but, almost by definition, some walking will be involved. If you can't manage a particular walk, just tell us and it will never be a problem for you not to do it. We have one person who really enjoys sketching - she's done some amazing sketches while the rest of us visit a quarry!

How do we get about on trips?

It varies a lot from trip to trip. Sometimes we hire a minibus, on other occasions we use public transport and at other times we'll make use of shared cars. Look at the details for each trip to find out.

What about accommodation?

We always try to use hotels or guest houses that have ensuite rooms as standard. Most of our accommodation will provide breakfast and evening meals, but sometimes we eat in local restaurants. We include the cost of all food, including a packed lunch for each field day.

We prefer to use small family run hotels and guest houses but they are getting harder to find, so sometimes we use larger hotels such as Premier Inns and hotels in the Leisureplex group. Once again, see the individual trip brochures for details.

Are your bookings safe with us?

Yes indeed they are! We've been in the business of running trips a long time and ensure that all the money you pay us is safe in a client trust account until your trip is completed.

The 2026 programme...

We are delighted with how well our programme of field trips for 2026 has been received. That said, we still have vacancies on most trips especially for couples or people willing to share a twin room.

If you haven't been with us before, you are particularly welcome, but please don't leave it too long before making your booking. Over the past year we've lost count of the number of people who have left it too late and we have had to decline their booking.

The Jurassic Coast of Dorset, March 27-April 1 £995

Believe it or not, we have not visited the famous Jurassic Coast of Dorset since 2017, so it's high time that we put that right! As on the last occasion, we're basing our trip at the seaside town of Weymouth which is well connected in terms of public transport and also has suitable accommodation for us to use. We're going early in the season so that we can offer you a good value trip, but with the recent pattern of mild winters, we hope that by the end of March it will be reasonably warm.

The magnificent Durdle Door (Image: Visit Dorset)

As for the magnificent geology what can we say? We hope to take in some of the area's 'gems' including Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove and Swanage. It would also be good to call in on Mary Anning's favourite stomping ground of Lyme Regis. We also hope to take in the amazing fossil collection on show at Dorchester Museum.
We have a single and a double vacancy for this trip!

Welcome to our exciting world!

The Northwest Highlands of Scotland, April 14-22 £1695
Ask Colin and Chris what their favourite trip is and they will answer "the Northwest Highlands". It combines their favourite hotel with their favourite geology and landscape! Accordingly we are once again offering this 8-night gem even though we were last there in 2024. On this trip we pay homage to Britain's oldest rocks in the form of the 3 billion year old Lewisian Gneisses, along with the overlying Torridonian Sandstones and the Cambro-Ordovician sediments. These all came together as a result of the Caledonian Orogeny some 420 million years ago.

In much more recent times, the Ice Ages of the last 2 million years have given us the most beautiful and unspoilt landscape that we can enjoy today.
This trip is now fully booked, ask us about cancellations.

Central Cornwall, May 1-8 £1595
We discovered Tricky's at the Tolgus Inn in Redruth in time to take two groups of Americans during 2025. Now we are offering the location to our regular clients! Redruth is centrally located on the main railway line from London Paddington and allows us to reach most of the main parts of Cornwall without long journeys.

Old mines and magnificent coasts.
(Image: Into Cornwall)

During this week we'll be taking in the granites of Lands End, the ophiolites of the Lizard, the china clays of St Austell and the amazing folded rocks of North Cornwall around Tintagel and Boscastle. We'll also go down a tin mine and visit Wheal Martyn China Clay Museum. We'll have the use of a locally hired minibus or coach to get around on this trip, making it possible for everyone.
We still have some double and twin rooms available!

Teesdale and the North Pennines, May 16-23 £1395
We've been looking to visit this area for some time and have never quite got around to it until now! Finding the wonderful family run Teesdale Hotel was the final piece in the jigsaw and hey presto - here we have a new location! We'll be taking in the wonderful Upper Teesdale with its Lower Palaeozoic inlier along with High Force, Lowe Force and Cauldron Snout. There's great limestone scenery as well as the Great Whin Sill. Over in Weardale we'll take in the lead mines around St John's Chapel and Killhope as well as the Frosterley Marble and the fossil tree at Stanhope.
This trip is now fully booked, ask us about cancellations.

NEW! Minehead & North Somerset, June 7-12 £995

The fabulous coastal cliffs at Watchet in North Somerset.
(Image: Chris Darmon)

Everyone knows about Dorset's 'Jurassic Coast', but similar fossiliferous rocks also outcrop to the east of the seaside resort of Minehead, around Watchet & Blue Anchor on Somerset's North Coast. During this 5-night trip we'll be taking in these rocks, as well as fabulous coastal scenery to the west around Ilfracombe and the Valley of Rocks at Lynton which are carved in Devonian strata. We will also take in some great Carboniferous limestone strata around Weston-super-Mare and Portishead that also includes rare basalt.

Private minibus transport will be provided each day allowing everyone to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Exmoor National Park. We stay at a 4-star guest house in Minehead and enjoy excellent food in local restaurants for our evening meals. All this with the added bonus of a ride on the Lynton cliff railway!
We can still accommodate a few more people in twin or double rooms.

Shetland - the North Isles, June 17-25 £1895
Everyone should visit the Shetland Isles at least once in their lives, so says Chris, who's been there around a dozen times over the past 40 years. The best time to visit Shetland is around mid-Summer when it never really gets dark.

We invite you to join us as we take in the North of Mainland and the Northern Isles of Unst, Fetlar and Yell, home to some of the most amazing geology in the entire UK. Visit the Moho in a small quarry in Unst and get yourself a sample of serpentine to rival any from Cornwall.Why not begin our Shetland adventure with an overnight boat trip from Aberdeen?
This trip is now fully booked, ask us about cancellations.

Anglesey, July 5-10 £995
We love going to Ynys Mon, or as the English know it, Anglesey. As a long established geopark it's geology is superb and also unique as the main location to see rocks of the Mona Complex.Based at the former copper port of Amlwch in the north of the island we will explore some of the best sites on the island, many of which are close to our base.

The Dinorben Arms Hotel, our base on Anglesey

Come with us to see some very rare rocks and also experience some fine coastal scenery. On this trip you get to see sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks of many types!
We have double and twin rooms available for this trip.

Come and join our Summer School!
Our Summer School is modelled on those that used to be run by the Open University a number of years ago. All are based on a campus of one sort or another where we can sleep in largely single, en-suite study bedrooms and enjoy on site meals. They are also more than just field trips with dedicated transport each day. There's an evening programme of talks from local experts and also social events. In short - something for everybody, including those with limited mobility!

Summer School at Harper Adams University in Shropshire
August 8-15 £1495
For our ever popular Summer School week, we are returning to the campus of Harper Adams Agricultural University which sits in lovely grounds in Shropshire. We last visited in 2018 and have a packed itinerary planned including some new localities.

Shropshire is home to a wealth of geology spanning many time periods and covering many types of rocks and landscape. We'll be taking in the Precambrian rocks of the Church Stretton area, the Lower Palaeozoic sediments of Wenlock Edge and the Lickey Hills as well as later rocks in Cheshire and the Black Country.

Highly fossiliferous Silurian limestones at the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve in Dudley.
(Image: Visit Birmingham)

Yes, there's something for everyone and that's before we add in the evening talks and activities as well as the excellent company.
We have plenty of single rooms available on this trip!

Iceland - the North & East Fjords, September 13-22 £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 Akueyri 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 Eystri to see Iceland's most colourful rhyolitic rocks. The last time we were here we did see the Northern Lights in all their glory! Iceland is an amazing place but these days much of it is over visited by tourists. This cannot be said for some of the places that we will be visiting on this trip. This is the real Iceland, where natural wonders and beauty are able to shine without the smell of hamburgers!To complete our trip we travel back from Hofn to Keflavik completing our circuit of Iceland. There's an option of an additional night at the end to have a day looking at the most recent volcanic activity on the Reykjanes peninsula and viewing the recent - and still hot - lavas.
Two places in shared twin rooms available - one male & one female

Melrose in the Scottish Borders, October 18-24 £995
We end the year with a good value 6-night trip to a new area of the Scottish Borders. Melrose is in the heart of an excellent area of fine geology, with sediments from the Ordovician, Silurian and Devonian along with a fine array of igneous rocks, both extrusions and intrusions that mainly date from the Carboniferous.

During this trip we'll be taking in the famous localities of Dob's Linn near Moffat where Charles Lapworth established the Ordovician and Silurian boundary and also James Hutton's famous inconformity at Jedburgh. We'll also have a day in Edinburgh exploring some of the famous sites in Holyrood Park.

The Waverley Castle Hotel on the outskirts of Melrose is our base for this 5-night trip.

Our base for the trip is the comfortable Waverley Castle Hotel which sits in beautiful grounds on the outskirts of the small town. Unusually, we have been offered a number of single rooms, at a very modest supplement - but get in quickly to secure your place!
We can still accommodate people in double or twin rooms.

To make a booking email us at:
downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk or ring us on: 0114 245 5746
BOOKING FORMS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE BY CONTACTING US!

Welcome to our Zoom world!

This Winter why not join in one (or more) of our friendly online learning sessions?
There's bound to be something that suits you...

Yes, we've been hosting live online Zoom sessions since 2020 and since then hundreds of people, from the UK and abroad have joined our online community. All of our live sessions run at 2pm or 7pm and you choose when to attend. The prices quoted here are for one person, but two people on the same computer always make big savings.

It's easy to register, just go our website *www.geosupplies.co.uk* and enter our shop. Then choose 'educational courses' followed by 'virtual talks' and make your choices!

Alternatively ring us on 0114 245 5746 to pay by card - we're here to help you!

Winter events

One very wet, windy, dry and cold day... Sedimentary Rocks and Processes
A 10-week course (a continuing course), Mondays commencing November 10th - February 16th . Price from £80.00

Simply Rocks!
A 6-week course designed to introduce you to the world of rocks with an emphasis on the practical study of specimens. Tuesdays from February 3rd. Price from £65.00 includes a basic set of specimens.

Time Travellers Coastal British Isles
An 8-week course taking in some of the finest coastal geology of the British Isles with examples from all four home nations. Thursdays from January 22nd. Price from £65.00.

The geology of Greenland, a Zoom special event Monday March 16th
With Greenland in the news as US President Donald Trump seeks to take control, what is the real geology of the world's largest island? Zoom sessions at 2pm or 7pm Price £12.00 or £18.00 for 2 people on the same computer.

Life on Earth - the ups and downs of the Fossil Record in 100-minutes! Wednesday March 18th
Another mammoth live Zoom 'special' as we take a look at how life has faired over the past 600+ million years. We take in all the main mass extinctions and much more. Join us at 2pm or 7pm. Price £15.00 or £22.00 for 2 people on the same computer.

The Wednesday Club
Join us as we meet to enjoy an eclectic mix of very different subjects on a Wednesday. A new series commences January 21st. either in the afternoon or evening - it's your choice!

January 21	**The geology of the North Sea**
January 28	**The Ultramafic rocks**
February 4	**Rocks beneath the pavements of London**
February 11	**A new look at the geology of the Peak District**
February 18	**The North Wales slate industry**
February 25	**The geology of the Scottish Island of Raasay**
March 4	**The China Clay industry of Cornwall**
March 11	**Fabulous plants of the Rhynie Cherts of Aberdeenshire**

Take the eight talks for £65.00 (£95.00 for 2 people) or book them individually for £11.00 each.

We look forward to seeing you on one of our Zoom sessions - soon!

Learning with us is FUN...

We've been offering online and distance learning since before Covid and over that time hundreds of people have taken part in our learning programmes from the UK and around the world. All our learning programmes are created and delivered by our in-house team of Chris Darmon and Colin Schofield. Both are experienced teachers of distance learning over many years.No one is required to carry out any sort of assessment and there's no entry requirements or formalities. Just sign up and go!

There's still time to join an Autumn class, but hurry! See below for details of these and the new courses commencing in early 2026.

IMPORTANT:

We are getting concerned at the number of people who leave it to the very last minute to book onto a Zoom session. We urge everyone to book at least 24 hours before a session and be aware that late bookers may not be accepted.

What's on offer this Winter?

Simply Rocks! - a course aimed at people wanting to know about the basics of rocks, sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic. What are they and how are they formed?
This 6-week course is supported by a set of basic rocks, the cost of which is included in the course fee. You will be shown how to study rocks for yourself in a practical way. By the end you should be able to describe and identify many different rocks.

Course dates: Starts Tuesday February 3rd - March 10th
Cost: Six hour-long Zoom sessions with electronic background papers and a set of basic minerals £65.00 for one person or £85.00 for 2-people studying together. Printed background papers cost an additional £15.00. Zoom sessions on Tuesdays at 2.00 pm and 7.00 pm (you choose).

Time Travellers Coastal Britain
We first presented these topics back in 2021 so it's high time that we looked at them again. The UK's geology often presents itself at our rich coastline. We'll be taking in 8 great areas, including North Cornwall, Berwickshire & Northumberland, County Antrim, North Somerset, the Orkney Isles, Suffolk, Mull & Iona and Pembrokeshire.

Course dates: Starts Thursday January 22nd - March 12th
Cost: Eight hour-long Zoom sessions with electronic background papers £65.00 for one person or £85.00 for 2-people studying together. Printed background papers cost an additional £20.00. Zoom sessions on Thursdays at 2.00 and 7.00 pm (you choose)

The Wednesday Club
We started this eclectic mix of subjects on Wednesday afternoons and evenings last year and they've proved to be highly successful. We hope that you like this new selection - they are all designed to bring you up to speed on some of the very latest ideas.

Wednesday Club members are as eclectic as the subjects we study, they are of all ages and backgrounds and come from all over the UK and even beyond. You will always be made welcome - come and join us!

January 21	**The geology of the North Sea**
January 28	**The ultramafic rocks**

Blue Anchor fault on the North Somerset coast (Image: Chris Darmon)

February 4	**Rocks deep beneath the pavements of London**
February 11	**A new look at the geology of the Peak District**
February 18	**The North Wales slate industry**
February 25	**The geology of the Scottish island of Raasay**
March 4	**The China Clay industry of Cornwall**
March 11	**Fabulous plants of the Rhynie cherts**

Cost: Individual talks £11.00 or £16.00 for 2 people.
Take all 8 sessions for £65.00, or £95.00 for 2 people.
Timings: Wednesdays at 2.00 or 7.00pm - your choice.

The Geology of Greenland - a one-off live Zoom special
Greenland, the world's largest island is home to some of the planet's oldest rocks dating back to almost 4 Ga. It also has a rock record that includes basalts similar to those found at the Giant's Causeway. Come and join us as we explore Greenland's fascinating geological journey.

Monday, March 16th at 2pm or 7pm (you choose) £12.00 or £18.00 for 2 people studying on the same computer.

Life on Earth - the ups & downs of the Fossil Record in around 100 minutes!
Join us on this extended live Zoom session to take in all of the major extinction events that have taken place during Phanerozoic time. In around 100 minutes you'll get the feel of the fossil record and how it has been rocked by massive external events ranging from asteroid impacts to sudden changes in tectonics and environments.

Cost: £15.00 or £22.00 for 2 people on the same computer.
Wednesday, March 18th at 2pm or 7pm

To find out more or to enrol, email us at:
downtoearth@geosupplies.co.uk or ring us on: 0114 245 5746
You can enrol via our online shop at: www.geosupplies.co.uk
by entering our online shop and then choosing courses.

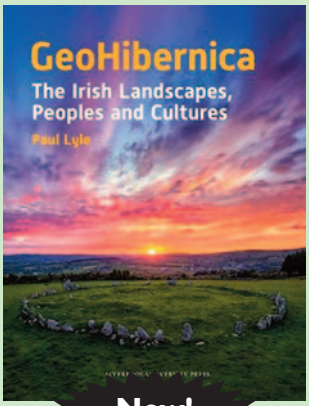
Don't worry, we don't bite!

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

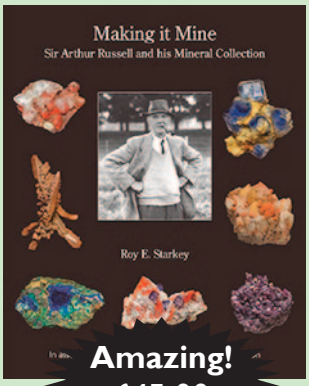
Featured books for February 2026

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 February 2026 provided that stocks are available. This month we feature a variety of different books. Please note, all prices include UK postage.

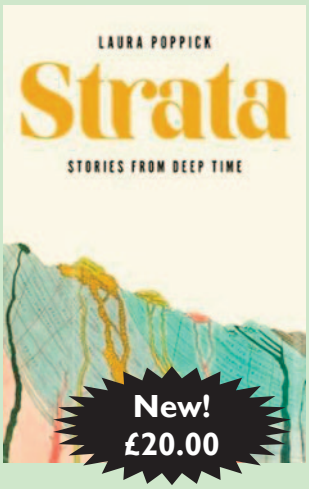
New! £33.00



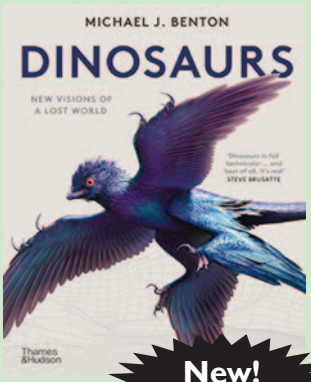
New! £50.00



Amazing! £45.00

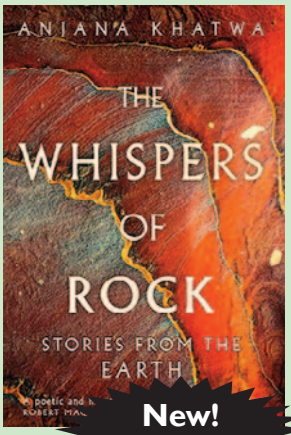


New! £20.00

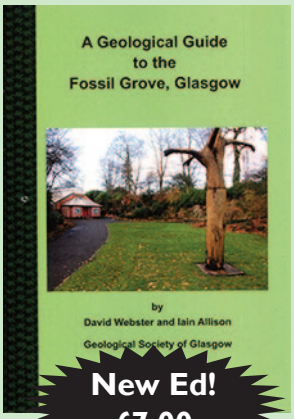


New! £22.00

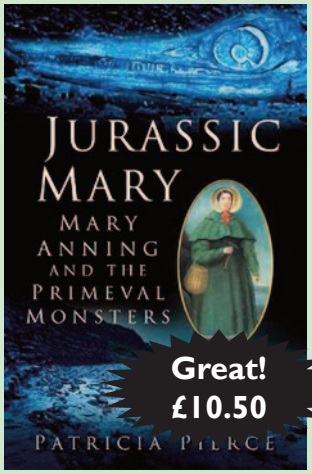
New! £15.00



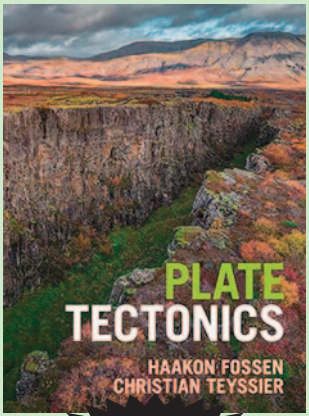
New! £25.00



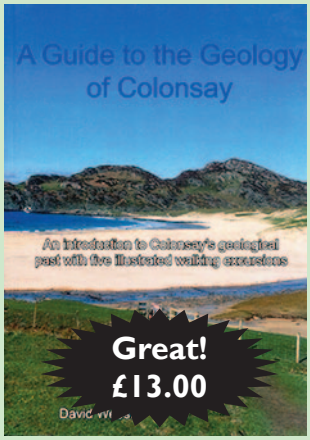
New Ed! £7.00



Great! £10.50

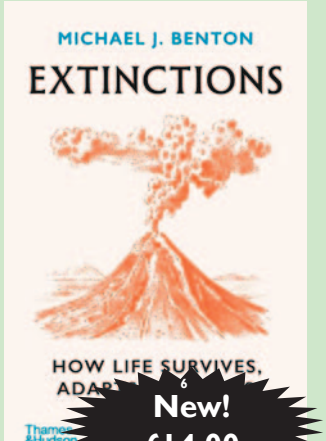


Terrific! £50.00



Great! £13.00

Ask about new guides to Islay & Jura!



New! £14.00

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