

THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

# Geology

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## HOW TO START A GEOLOGY GROUP

If your U3A has just a small group of members interested in scenery, buildings, certain environmental issues as well as rocks, minerals and fossils it may be possible to form a Geology study group. If you have a convenor with a little knowledge of the subject these ideas may help. If you have no one to lead the group it is possible to arrange many meetings and activities with a geological flavour.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES

1. If you have no tutor or leader with expertise do not be too ambitious, settle for a term of varied activities meeting fortnightly.
2. Try to have one or two indoor sessions to make a start on recognising common rocks and minerals and perhaps fossils if you have an enthusiast in the group (see further on for ways and means)
3. Geology is a field science and local walks and visits can be a good introduction to Geology. Many U3As have a rambling group and walks can have a geological theme.
4. Visits can be included in the programme. Local museums are becoming more and more involved with modern methods of displaying material, and produce leaflets and booklets on the local area. As well as local museums it is worth taking day excursions to museums outside your locality.
5. Consult U3A Resource Centre for material in videos etc.
6. Outside speakers. Many U3As have monthly meetings with an outside lecturer; persuade your committee to provide a Geologist. (It was my lecture on a general geological topic given as a sweetener at an AGM that led to a flourishing group)

With these six types of activities you have the basis of an introductory course.

### INDOOR ACTIVITIES

In order to provide basic knowledge and to become acquainted with the most common rocks and minerals, the best place to look is the children's section of the public library. One of the curriculum changes of the last few years has been the inclusion of Earth Sciences into the primary school. Here you will find ways of identifying rocks and minerals. The problem is finding a supply of specimens.

Common minerals can be purchased not only from specialist suppliers but in an assortment of gift shops all over the country. Many people have a few, collected over the years, and will be pleased to loan them. Rocks can be found in most garden centres. Look out for the large bins or piles of rock sold at rather high prices for those wishing to build rock gardens. These are often from different regions of the British Isles and are conveniently labelled e.g. Cornish granite or Yorkshire gritstone.

Bags of small chippings are also on sale. It is worth looking round these displays to see if small bits of the rockery boulders have broken off or a bag is leaking specimens. You will only need a small sample to learn the characteristics of the rocks. If some of the group are good customers of the garden centre you may find the owner/manager very sympathetic to your needs.

In order to identify minerals, rocks and fossils the Field Studies Council have produced laminated cards which give a summary of major mineral, rock and fossil groups and a pictorial guide to their identity. This works out much less expensive than books. Contact F.S.C. Publications at Preston *Montford, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury, SY4 1HW*. Tel: 01743 852140.

## **WALKS AND TRAILS**

This may not be a very helpful section for some of you as I have only classic areas on my list. If there is nothing of use here try local tourist and information offices and the local museums. Town and City dwellers may well find geological trails featuring the use of a variety of local and imported building stones. If you are within easy reach of London and would like a geological walk in and around the City please let me know and I will lead a walk for you. Details of the building stones of the Cathedrals at Peterborough and Gloucester can be obtained from the Geologists' Association for a modest price and I believe that a guide to Winchester Cathedral is in preparation. These require no previous knowledge and have been tried with great success with U3As. Write to the *Association at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1V 9AG*. Send for Thematic Trails catalogue obtainable from Thematic Trails see under Commercial Material.

## **MUSEUMS**

National and larger local museums are well worth a visit. As well as the exhibits themselves much free publicity is provided. The following are suggested as being worth a journey to visit.

### **THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON**

1. Apart from an interesting visit the shop sells a variety of geology books but within the museum between the Earth Galleries and the Natural History galleries is the London office of the British Geology Survey. Here you can consult maps and buy many items as well as maps.
2. For those in easy reach of the Welsh Borders the museums at Ludlow and Much Wenlock are good. As with many of these museums make contact with the curator if you can as they are able and willing to give local advice.
3. The Peak District Mining Museum, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire.
4. The Jurassic Exhibition, Coombe Street, Lyme Regis, Dorset.

5. York. There is a new and permanent exhibition – TIME CLIMB – which is good but involves stair climbing.
6. Dudley Museum and the Wrens Nest Trail in the West Midlands.
7. The National Stone Centre, Porter Lane, Wirksworth, Derbyshire, DE4 4FY. Tel No: 01629 824833.
8. The Museum, Sandown, Isle of Wight. Small but very good.
9. Keighley Museum (Bradford City Museum). Superb mineral displays and a good introduction to the Geology of the Dales.

Please pass on information of any other museums you think would be helpful.

### **OTHER VISITS**

Local quarries, sandpits and brickworks may well assist you by providing guided tours and in some cases the firm may provide a speaker.

### **COMMERCIAL MATERIAL**

1. The ideal investment is to subscribe to DOWN TO EARTH. This is a newspaper/magazine published four times a year. Each issue will have reviews of inexpensive material such as geological trails costing around £2.00 to £3.00 and inexpensive books. These are ideal for planning field trips and visits. A phone call to *Geo Supplies, 49 Station Road, Chapletown, Sheffield, S35 2XE*, Tel No : 0114 245 5746 or [www.geosupplies.co.uk](http://www.geosupplies.co.uk) will give details of how to subscribe and they will send a catalogue. They are prompt at sending orders and are interest in the U3A.

Recent reviews include publications from the Wiltshire Geology Group, Shropshire Geological Society, Hereford and Worcester Earth Heritage Trust. Other areas of the UK have been covered. This is probably the best commercial site to start off a geology group.

### **THEMATIC TRAILS**

2. This is a small enterprise, they publish a wide variety of inexpensive booklets and cover building stone trails in Exeter, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, Oxford,

Huddersfield and coastal geology in Cornwall and Devon. Some deal with flooding and river management and some guides to Cumbria and Snowdonia.

They are at *7 Norwood Avenue, Kingstone, Bagpuize, OX13 5AD*, Tel No *01865 820522*.

### **BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

3. If you cannot get to London the address is *B.G.S. Keyworth Nottingham, NG12 5GG*. They will send a catalogue.

### **GEOLOGISTS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH WALES**

4. Some leaflets are published and can be contacted *c/o National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF10 3NP*.

### **LOCAL TOURISTS OFFICES AND INFORMATION CENTRES**

These often have relevant material, the offices in the Lake District have geological material as do those in the other National Parks

### **SPEAKERS**

The Geologists' Association is preparing a list of speakers and often no fee is required only expenses. See address given. There are many local societies with an interest in Geology. They may call themselves Natural History Societies, or Lapidarists; sometimes if they are old established societies, they may be Natural Philosophers. Seek them out as amongst the membership may be retired enthusiasts willing to lead local field trips or give talks on their subjects.

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