

REVIEW

Farrant, Andy (with contributions). 2008 *A walkers' guide to the geology and landscape of eastern Mendip*. Book and geological map at 1:25 000 scale. Keyworth, Nottingham: British Geological Survey. 68 pp. £12.00 ISBN 978 085272 575 7

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These two books and maps together cover the Mendips from grid easting 38 (Crook Peak is the westernmost limestone outcrop) to easting 78 which bisects Frome. The book and map in each case are supplied in a weatherproof plastic wallet.

Each book has brief introductions to rocks of Mendip, the ice age, and geology and man. These are almost identical in each volume, as is the geological glossary. The main part of each book consists of about a dozen sections, mostly of four pages each, describing the geology and natural history of individual areas. Where relevant there is information about active quarries and industrial archaeology; there is much of the latter in eastern Mendip. Caves are not described but the course of underground drainage is shown for a number of areas.

Localities of interest are numbered and the corresponding numbers are printed on the maps. The descriptive pages are well illustrated with specially drawn geological maps and diagrams. For example, the area around GB and Charterhouse caves shows, at a scale of 1:4000, the surface features superimposed on maps of the cave systems. The maps of the Vobster area and the Nettlebridge Valley, both in east Mendip, do not show the geology but indicate very clearly the quarries, mines and other features of industrial archaeological interest. The east Mendip book includes for two areas, Great Elm/Vallis Vale and Holwell/Nunney, sets of three diagrams showing the geological development of the areas.

While these books and maps are published as walkers' guides they include in fact a great deal of geological information. The mapping is that of the mid C20 revision of the Somerset coalfield, but some geological annotations have been added. The positions of caves, stream sinks and springs are shown. Several geological cross-sections are given for each map. Previously only the geology of the Cheddar sheet (10 km square ST45) was published on the 1:25 000 scale. We now have the geology of almost the whole of the Mendip cave area at this scale.

Each map also has five selected areas enlarged to a scale of 1:20 000. However the geological detail is the same, apparently enlarged from 1:25 000. This enlargement represents an increase of area by about 26%. It is questionable whether this degree of enlargement was worth while, especially as no extra detail is shown. It would have been better to enlarge fewer areas by a greater amount, and add extra detail from the original six-inch mapping, or to utilise the space occupied by rather dim pictures of fossils which are not really appropriate to a map.

The stratigraphical names have been updated from the original British Geological Survey maps. In general this is OK, but why has Oxwich Head Limestone Formation crept in, in place of Hotwells Limestone? The name was not used on the latest (2004) reissue of the Bristol (264) geological sheet. This is stratigraphical correctness gone mad.

Maps and diagrams are good. So generally are photographic illustrations, but the same cannot be said of the small (40 x 50 mm or smaller) figures which illustrate the 'Rocks of Mendip' pages. That for Portishead Formation is the worst, a brown blur which is possibly a

close-up of the rock but as there is no scale it is impossible to interpret. Others range from close-ups to general views of exposures, but as there is no scale to any of them they will not help the budding geologist very much.

Coverage is systematic and exhaustive. A curious omission is the Gurney Slade 'dyke' (ST 6235 4995), described in detail by Pamela Robinson (1957, 267-269; Savage 1977, 90) and surely visited by generations of geological parties. It is a Mesozoic fissure filling left standing by the quarrying away of the Carboniferous Limestone into which it intruded.

Finally, there is a list of the main literature references and a list of useful websites. These are the same in both books.

Our member Andy Farrant has clearly put a great deal of work and enthusiasm into these publications, not only planning and writing them but also persuading the British Geological Survey to publish. We owe him our thanks.

Desmond Donovan

REFERENCES

- ROBINSON, P.L. 1957. The Mesozoic fissures of the Bristol Channel area and their vertebrate faunas. *Linnean Society's Journal – Zoology* **43**. 260-282.
- SAVAGE, R.J.G. (editor) 1977. *Geological excursions in the Bristol district*. Bristol. University of Bristol. xvi + 196 p.