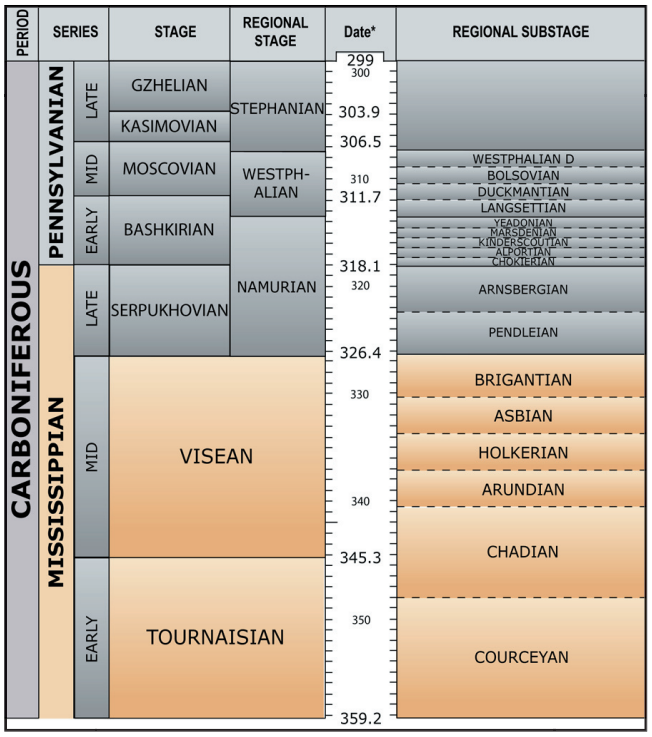
REPORT

BGS OpenGeoscience

The British Geological Survey has recently launched a website that offers a mass of information, maps and photographs as free downloads. This is a great step forward within our modern digital age, and many Society members will find interesting and useful geological material here. The site openly encourages non-commercial use of the material, so personal research, school projects and private presentations are going to find it invaluable (there are also access programmes for commercial, institutional and educational use).

There are many routes around and branches within the website, and they are likely to evolve through usage and experience. But the home page offers four notable routes that are great starters.

Data: includes a lexicon of stratigraphic terms, links to various publications on mineral statistics, and also an excellent suite of rock classifications that are comprehensive and hugely detailed reports available as pdf downloads. It also has a splendid Geological Timechart that can be followed into individual tables with considerable detail, such as that for the Carboniferous as reproduced here.



The Carboniferous page of the stratigraphic chart; resolution of the file copied off the website is adequate to print at twice this size, thereby making the smallest text more legible.

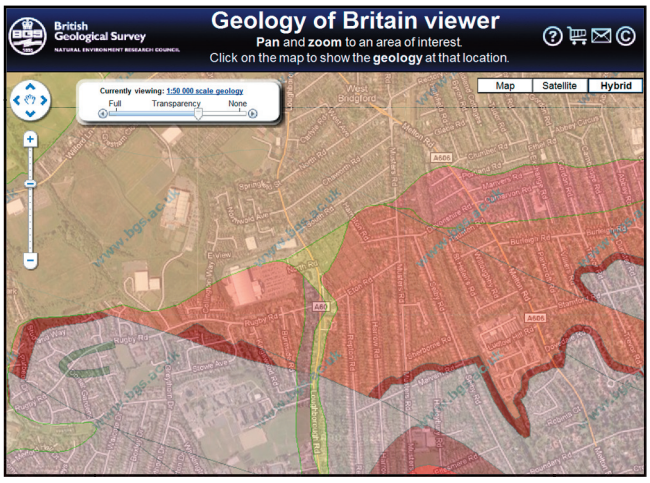
Maps: has a wonderful "Geology of Britain viewer" where you can zoom in to see bedrock and superficial geology down to the level of 1:50,000 detail superimposed on a satellite image, a street map or a hybrid. A slider allows transparency of the geology layer to vary over the satellite or map view; the halfway stage is very good where there are roads to identify through the geology, but open country is a little difficult to see in a single view. Map images can only be saved as a screen-grab.

Pictures: profers a huge selection of geological photographs, mainly but not exclusively of Britain, in a searchable archive. There are some excellent images of so many of the classic sites, though many are in black-and-white because they are the original BGS records photos. Though presented as free downloads of 1000x1000 pixel images, they only download at a smaller size just 800 pixels on their maximum dimension. A little frustrating, but still a marvellous resource.

Reports: includes a route into the searchable NERC Open Research Archive, where hundreds of reports are available as pdf downloads. So much material, so useful on so many projects.

Go to http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/ and have a browse when you are next on-line. Commercial awareness means that a lot of geological material cannot be reached through this website, but the missing bits are the maps and major publications that are available in paper form at reasonable prices. This website is a welcome resource that should be held and used in parallel with the BGS publications on paper.

Tony Waltham



A screen grab from the map viewer showing the geology of West Bridgford superimposed with about midway transparency on the hybrid satellite image and street map.