

# Geology of the Bath area: Survey history

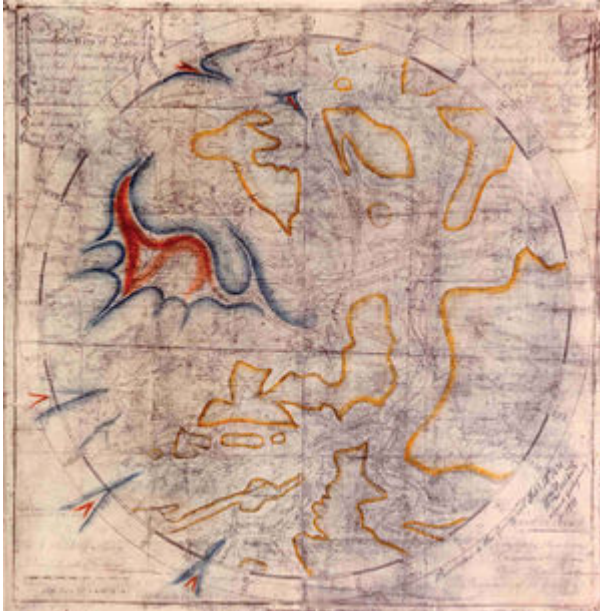
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**This topic provides a summary of the geology of the Bath area - covered by the British Geological Survey**

**1:50k geological map sheet 265.**

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Geological map of Bath drawn by William Smith in 1799. P786837.

The Bath district has a special place in the history of geology. The first known British geological map, drawn by William Smith in 1799, was of the area around the city (**P786837**). Smith is sometimes known as ‘Strata’ Smith or ‘the Father of English Geology’. He was the first to appreciate the significance of fossils in identifying beds of rock, thereby enabling him to place them in a succession, or ‘Order of strata’ (Torrens, 2000)<sup>[1]</sup>, and to deduce the probability of the presence of minerals, including coal.

The entire district was first surveyed at the scale of one inch to one mile and published as hand-coloured and engraved 1:63 360-scale ‘Old Series’ Geological Survey sheets 19 (1845), 14 (1857), 34 (1857), and 35 (1866). These surveys were largely the work of the Geological Survey’s founder and first Director, Sir Henry de la Beche, who also published an account of parts of the geology (De la Beche, 1846). The district was resurveyed at the six-inch to the mile scale (1:10 560) in 1944–48 and 1957–59 by D R A Ponsford, G A Kellaway, R Cave, F B A Welch, W Bullerwell and G W Green, being published as 1:63 360 Geological Survey Sheet 265 in 1965. No memoir was produced to accompany this map, which was reconstituted without revision on the 1:50 000 scale in 1990. However, the memoirs describing the Bristol 1:63 360 Special Sheet (Donovan and Kellaway, 1984<sup>[2]</sup>; Kellaway and Welch, 1993<sup>[3]</sup>) include a strip 7 km wide covering the west of the Bath district. The present survey incorporates the addition of artificial deposits and amendments to the bedrock, superficial and mass movement geology at the 1:10 000 scale by A J M Barron, R A Edwards, R A Ellison, A R Farrant, P R N Hobbs, K R Royse, T H Sheppard, P J Strange, R K Westhead and R J Wyatt in 1985 to 2007. This work was published as a combined bedrock and superficial deposits map at the 1:50 000 scale in 2011.

# References

1. [↑](#) Torrens, H S. 2000. Timeless order: William Smith (1769–1839) and the search for raw materials. William Smith Lecture, Geological Society of London.
2. [↑](#) Donovan, D T, and Kellaway, G A. 1984. Geology of the Bristol district: the Lower Jurassic rocks. Memoir of the British Geological Survey.
3. [↑](#) Kellaway, G A, and Welch, F B A. 1993. Geology of the Bristol district. Memoir of the British Geological Survey

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