

## NEW USES FOR FORMER MINERAL WORKINGS IN SOMERSET

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The vast majority of small local pits and quarries have disappeared without trace. However, the public have benefited from the rehabilitation of some former mineral workings in Somerset where a number of clay pits, peat workings and stone quarries have taken on a new life with public access. Their diverse uses are reviewed.

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### INTRODUCTION

Former opencast mineral workings are often viewed by local authorities and the public as both eyesores and places to dump inert landfill. Yet the Broads in East Anglia remind us that former pits left by medieval peat digging can provide opportunities for recreation and the enhancement of wildlife. The recent emphasis on geodiversity, has raised the profile of geology with the result that local authorities should be much more aware of the need to consult the geological community with respect to future reclamation schemes.

uniform and elevated plateau of the Inferior Oolite spreads over its whole surface, furrowed by valleys about 150 or 200 feet deep which expose the Mountain Limestone. The character of many of these valleys (particularly of that between Mells and Frome and its lateral branches) is highly romantic: the streamlets that flow through them being skirted by bold and rocky banks overgrown by feathery woods.' Vallis Vale is lined with abandoned quarry faces and is becoming very much overgrown. A stream, car park and footpath make it a popular, peaceful venue for walkers. The famous De la Beche section shows the unconformity where the Upper Inferior Oolite (Doulting Stone) overlies Carboniferous Limestone (Vallis Limestone) and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (ST 756491). The exposed ledge of the unconformity shows a bored surface and oysters. There appears to be minimal management and vegetation is taking over some of the faces.

### FORMER MINERAL WORKINGS IN SOMERSET (FIGURE 1)

#### Vallis Vale

Vallis Vale (ST 757 488), 2 km NW of Frome, is part of the incised drainage system flowing northeast-wards in steep-sided narrow valleys. Conybeare and Phillips wrote in 1822 'an

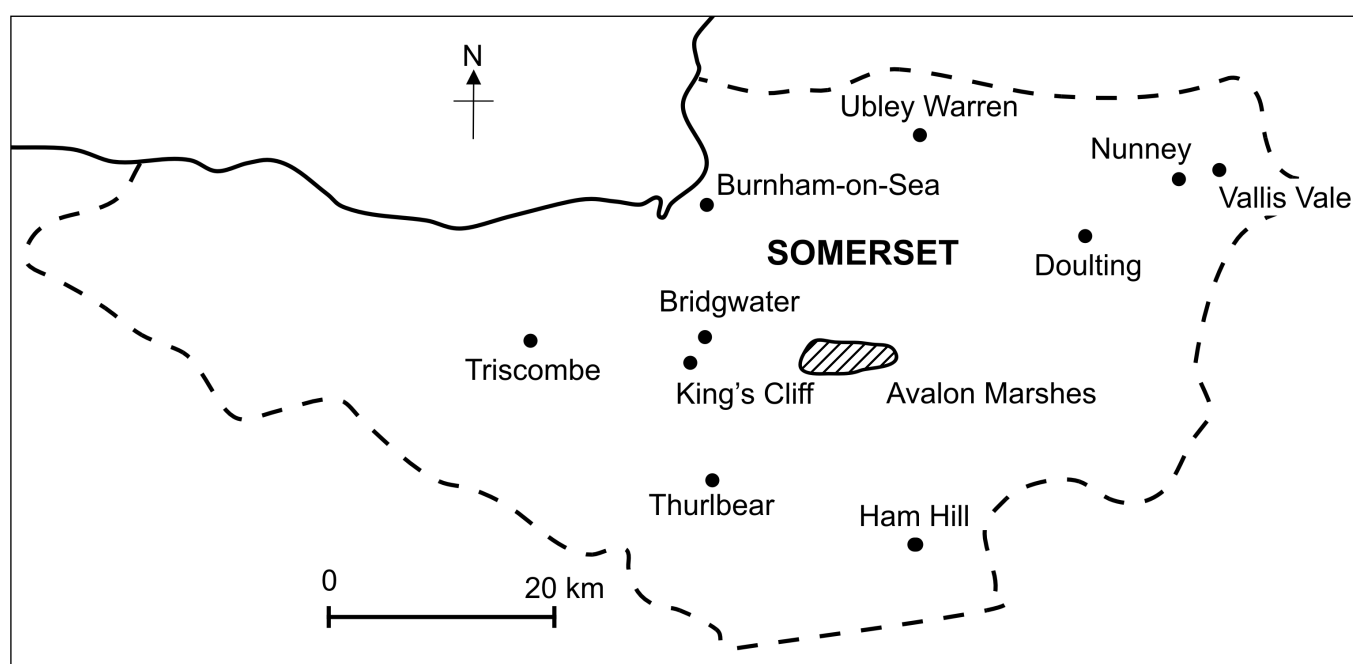


Figure 1. Map of Somerset showing locations of the former mineral workings.