



« Stars from the centre of the Earth »

Since prehistoric times man has been fascinated by the treasures in the earth beneath his feet and has been constantly delving for stones in varying shapes and forms. And some of these; like our multifaceted crystal, have aroused his curiosity.

A multitude of shapes and colours

Some of these stones resemble plants or animals, others evoke pillars or bushes, berries, bunches of grapes, kidneys... Others are even more surprising. Their surfaces are flat. These angular shapes are natural. They can be found in the lining of underground cavities called geodes, «crypts» or «kilns».



Fluorite on quartz, Yaogangxian mine, China
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Transparent angular rocks

It took man ages before he was able to create anything similar. Man-made glass remained opaque until well into the Middle Ages. Transparent stone was considered particularly precious as a material for sculpting. Quartz, in particular, was interesting for its relative abundance, variety and solidity.

The use of quartz in early manufacturing

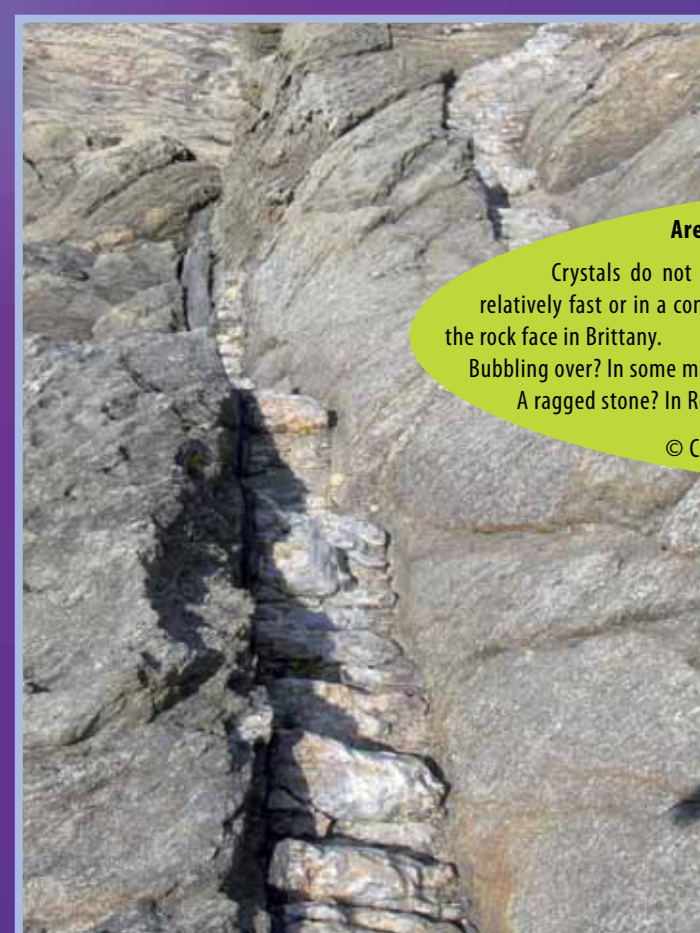
Prehistoric man used the rocks he found around him to make tools. This was especially the case with quartz and the more abundant flint.



Calcite crystals in a cave on the Causses in France © Institut Néel CNRS



Gypsum, Saragosse, Spain. © Coll. Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Grenoble



Are they crystals?
Crystals do not all have facets. This is true, for example, if they grow relatively fast or in a confined space. It's the case of the quartz found in the clefts of the rock face in Brittany.
Bubbling over? In some materials crystals can take on blister shapes.
A ragged stone? In Rectorine, crystals can even resemble dried skin.
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Rectorite or « mountain's skin » La Rochette, Savoie, Aragonite, Dulong mine, China.
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