

**34th Annual General Meeting of the Geological Curators' Group.
3rd December 2007.
National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin, Ireland.**

1. Apologies for absence.

H. Brunton, H. Chalk, D. Craven, T. Cross, P. Crowther, D. Johnston, S. McLean.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the 33rd AGM held at Plymouth Museum, December 2006.

Agreed.

3. Matters Arising.

None raised.

4. Chairman's Report.

The three years that I have spent as Chairman of the Group have passed by very quickly. Looking back at the other reports that past Chairmen have written I have noticed that this thought is a very common one, perhaps it is related in part to the successful way that GCG Committee works with everyone sharing the work load and bringing their different skills and interests to the attention of the Committee and the membership. I am pleased to be leaving the Committee in a very healthy state with committed officers and younger members of the profession on board. May I also encourage anyone who is thinking that it would be of interest to them to consider standing for Committee – after all what have you got to lose by putting your name forward?

One of the successful outcomes for 2007 has been the rationalisation of the holdings of the back issues of the *Geological Curator* kept in Manchester. We have made sure that there are complete runs at the national museums, large regional museums and in our own archive. Over twenty of our members received near complete sets of the journal for the price of postage. Work has started on the digitisation of the journal and I hope that this would be available from our web site for anyone to read and download for their own use.

Dynamic rationalisation of the collections held in our institutions is a topic that has been discussed in 2007. Geological collections are not easy for a non specialist to assess and it is here that the extensive datasets and expertise that GCG can quickly access that have proved very useful in our dealings with other institutions responsible for geological collections. I am sure that this is an area that will be of concern to the Committee in the future as well.

One way that we can add to the knowledge of our members and the museum profession as a whole is through our provision of meetings and training days. The training days we have organised this year have been very successful and we intend to build on this success and offer more of these courses to everyone. However our general interest meetings have struggled to attract sufficient numbers to make them viable to run. The Committee spend a lot of time trying to make the venues and topics of our meetings relevant to the members of GCG and I must thank Steve McLean who has worked very hard in his role as Programme Secretary. On a personal note I hope that GCG will be visiting further a field again on our study trips.

I am very pleased with the way our web site works now and we are publishing more content on our site all the time. The web site is a very important tool in communicating the group's aims to a wide audience.

On a final note I would like to thank all of the people who have helped GCG by serving on the Committee or its smaller working groups and have helped to keep GCG relevant in today's museum profession and I wish my successor a fulfilling, busy and enjoyable three years.

Mandy Edwards (Chairman 2005 – 2007).

Questions from the floor.

Phil Doughty: What is "Dynamic rationalisation"?

Mandy Edwards: The ability to dispose of collections or items from collections in a planned way. A general discussion took place on specimen disposal. It was generally agreed that institutions need to know as much as possible about their collections before they are de-accessioned as many will be of historic and scientific value. GCG could be used as a way of accessing specialist expertise in researching collections and giving advice on methods other than disposal.

Acceptance of report: Proposed - Susan Cooke. Seconded - Christine Thomson.

Agreed.

5. Secretary's Report.

Three Committee meetings have been held during the year: 24th January in the Geological Society, London; 24th April and 5th September in the Manchester Museum. Attendances have been good with most Committee members attending all three meetings.

In order to enhance our profile within the Geological Society, and to promote geological curation more widely, Mike Howe has attended several Science Committee meetings and reported back to the Committee to keep us up to date with developments within the Geological Society as a whole as well as representing us in the development of the Geological Society's Science Strategy and other areas. An intention to try to improve our publicity and communication through the Society channels in 2007 was not really achieved, due to lack of time on the Secretary's part.

Very limited progress has been made with the proposed revised Guidelines for Geological Curation, but it is expected that the editorial team of Patrick Wyse Jackson, Tom Sharpe and Matthew Parkes will give this more attention during early 2008.

I would especially like to acknowledge the support of Nigel Monaghan, Keeper of Natural History, National Museum Ireland, and also the National Museum itself, for the invaluable support to undertake GCG activities and attend committee meetings over the past 2 years.

Matthew Parkes.

Questions from the floor:

Mike Taylor (National Museums Scotland).

GCG Committee should bear in mind certain new and forthcoming legislation and related matters.

1. The Scottish Fossil Code, required by the Scottish Parliament to cover the disposition as well as the collection of fossils, is now imminent, and accordingly includes sections on collections care and on museums and other repositories. It does not have the force of law but is supplementary to the *Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004* and will have the effect of defining good practice.

2. Possible changes to import-export law, comprising a forthcoming review of the export control regulations for cultural objects, and an apparent review of the English legislation which effectively makes it illegal to deal in or handle antiquities which were collected illegally abroad. If this is extended to fossils and other objects it will be highly relevant to museums.

Acceptance of report: Proposed – Phil Doughty. Seconded – Steve Thompson.

Agreed.

6. Treasurer and Membership Secretary Reports.

Hand-over of the GCG accounts to the new Treasurer took place at last years AGM, and thanks go to Helen Kerbey, our previous Treasurer, for passing them on in good order, and for the willing advice, often sought in the early months of my reign.

I am pleased to report that income has gone up, and expenditure down, in almost all the categories on the accounts. Subscriptions have risen by over £1100, and while this was in part due to the increase in subs agreed at last years AGM, it is mainly due to the tenacity of the Membership Secretary, Cindy Howells, who has ensured that every member is now fully paid up. Thanks to Cindy, our membership list has at last been tightened up, and every member who had not paid for the past 3 years has been contacted and has either now paid the arrears or has been struck off the records.

Non-payers in future will receive prompt reminders.

Income from workshops is up by £900, such that these are no longer loss makers, and a further substantial income of almost £1400 has resulted from three retrospective Gift Aid payments. Please ensure that you have filled in the Gift Aid form if you are a tax payer, as this brings in c. £500 to the Group.

Expenditure is also down, largely due to a reduction in printing costs for the *Geological Curator*, for which we are indebted to Matthew. The only expenditure which continues to rise are the travel costs for members attending Committee meetings. As reported by Sara Chambers in 2004, this is largely due to the continued unwillingness of our paymasters to value the work of the group by supporting staff attendance on Committee.

Balance in hand now stands at £8628, compared with £6258 this time last year. In addition our US Dollar account now stands at \$1687, while our new Euro account currently stands at €163.

Grateful thanks are due to Caroline Buttler (Cardiff) and David Green (Manchester) for the onerous task of auditing the accounts, and to Tiffany Adrain for looking after the US Dollar account from her base in Iowa.

Cindy Howells, as Membership Secretary, has dealt with all membership enquiries and reports the following current membership totals (2006 figures in brackets):

UK Personal	172	(170)
Overseas Personal	18	(13)
UK Institutional	62	(69)
Overseas Institutional	27	(27)
Honorary	8	(8)
Total	287	(287)

(We have had 18 new members during the year, balanced by some cancellations).

Questions from the floor.

Patrick Wyse Jackson: There appears to be a general downward trend in the Groups balances. Would it be better to distribute the newsletter and journal by electronic means such as pdf format or publish in Meta-subscription format? This latter could provide income from downloads.

Mandy Edwards commented that electronic formats have been discussed in Committee and that all forms have advantages and disadvantages.

Acceptance of report: Proposed – Nigel Monaghan. Seconded – David Gelsthorpe.

Agreed.

7. Programme Secretary's Report.

None received.

8. Journal Editor's Report.

Since taking over editorship of the journal from Patrick Wyse Jackson, Volume 8 Part 7 was issued with a thematic set of papers arising from last years Seminar on Learning with geology collections organised by Helen Fothergill in Plymouth. Thanks to all the contributors for promptly responding to my queries. The small delay in issuing this arose from a printing problem. Volume 8 Part 8 is largely ready to go to the printers in December and should be issued soon.

All contributors to this Local Heroes Seminar have been asked to submit their papers in written form for the journal and the next issues in 2008 should include a number of contributions from this meeting. Papers are always welcome, as would be more use of the journal for lost and found items, book reviews, collection label series, fact file, notes and so on. All members are encouraged to contribute. Thanks are due to David Craven for agreeing to deal with book reviews and I would encourage anyone with books to review, suggestions for new titles that would be of interest to reviewers to contact David directly. Thanks are also due to the printers at Leinster Leader.

Acceptance of report:

Proposed – Tom Sharpe. Seconded – Cindy Howells.

Agreed.

9. Newsletter Editor's Report.

2007 saw the completion of the 18th year of publication of *Coprolite*. As usual, three issues (Number 52, 53 and 54) were published, in March, June and November, totalling 42 pages (compared with 34 last year and 52 in 2004).

For *Coprolite* to fulfil its role as a newsletter, it needs to have some news. Any news of events, meetings, exhibitions, new acquisitions, publications, staff changes and job moved, or anything at all relating to geology in museums would be very welcome. Do tell us what you and your museum are doing.

Thanks are due to Barnes Print Group of Nottingham who print and distribute *Coprolite* and always send it out on time.

Acceptance of report:

Proposed – Alan Howell. Seconded – Jean Archer.

Agreed.

10. Website Editor's Report.

The GCG website has continued to develop over 2007 with a new easy to navigate design. New issues of *Coprolite* are available on-line and a wide range of geological resources are now included. The number of website visits is progressively increasing month on month, with 1205 visits from around the world in 2007. New developments in the coming year will include making *Geological Curator* available on-line and the ongoing development of the resources.

Please let me know if you have anything you would like to include on the website.

Acceptance of report:
Proposed – Cindy Howells. Seconded – Lyall Anderson.
Agreed.

11. Recorder's Report.

Education Survey.

GCG conducted a survey into the relationship between natural history curators and education staff in museums. The survey was posted on the GCG, NatSCA and GEM discussion groups, and the results published in *Geological Curator*. The results suggest that curators and education staff could work more closely to help each other and to share skills. The study also highlighted the disparity in the provision for natural history between the Key Stages, with KS1 to KS3 being widely catered for while fewer museums cater for KS4 and KS5.

Back issues.

We have used the list of institutions who responded to our “*State and Status*” survey as a basis for informing organisations and people about the availability of back issues of the *Geological Curator*. If you have not received such a mailing then please contact Helen Fothergill.

Workshop Survey.

In order to determine what type of workshops members wanted us to run, a list of possible topics was circulated. The responses were interesting, with general topics rather than specialised ones being most popular at the moment, for example; imaging for geological collections, storage, collections and on-site conservation.

Other suggestions include: vertebrate palaeontology, identification of bryozoans, and guidelines on where to go for historical research. Many of those who responded asked for more events to be held in Scotland or the North of England.

Current work.

Work is continuing on revising the *Directory of British Geological Museums* (Nudds, 1994).

SPNHC have asked us to produce a document on specimen conservation as part of their “How-to” series of leaflets.

Agreement of report: Proposed – David Gelsthorpe. Seconded – Steve Thompson.
Agreed.

12. Election of Officers and Committee for 2008.

No nominations have been received from the wider membership for any posts.

The Committee propose the following: Chairman – Helen Fothergill. Recorder – Mike Howe.

Both changes agreed by the meeting.

All other Committee members and co-opted members have agreed to continue for 2008.

13. Proposal to confer Honorary Life Membership on Philip Powell.

All previous recipients of the Brighton medal have subsequently become Honorary members of GCG.

The Committee needs the approval of the AGM to confirm this for Phillip Powell.

Agreed.

14. Any other business.

None.

15. Date and venue for the next AGM.

Monday 1st December 2008.

University of Portsmouth.

Seminar theme: “*A new look at old fossils*”.