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Events

50th Anniversary Meeting: Geological Collections Past, Present and Future. 17-18th May 2024

2024 is the 50th anniversary of the founding of GCG! We are marking this momentous occasion with a meeting exploring the past, present and future of geological collections and those who work with and care for them. We will explore our main theme with a day of presentations and discussion at the University of Leicester. This will be followed by a special 50th Anniversary Dinner, which GCG is subsidising as part of our golden anniversary celebrations. We will then spend a day visiting classic localities in the nearby Charnwood Forest Geopark site, finishing the meeting with a viewing of Charnwood Forest fossils at the British Geological Survey.

Day 1: Presentations on the theme of past, present and future of geological collections at the University of Leicester. Reception at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, followed by an evening meal and after a dinner speaker.

Day 2: Presentations and tours at British Geological Survey Nottingham and Charnwood Forest Geopark

For more information: <https://www.geocurator.org/events/167-gcg-50th-anniversary-meeting/606-50th-anniversary-meeting-geological-collections-past-present-and-future-17-18th-may-2024>

Geological Curators Group
50 Year Anniversary
17-18 May 2024

**Geological Collections:
past, present and future**

Geological Curators Group
GCG

British Geological Survey
BGS

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

**CHARNWOOD FOREST
GEOPARK**



Anniversary

Megalosaurus

Curating a global icon in its 200th year

At a Geological Society of London meeting on 20th February 1824, William Buckland presented a new fossil animal to the world; *Megalosaurus*, the “great lizard”. This became the first ever scientific description of a dinosaur. Of course, that wouldn’t be known for another 18 years, when Richard Owen recognised and named the group ‘Dinosauria’ in 1842.

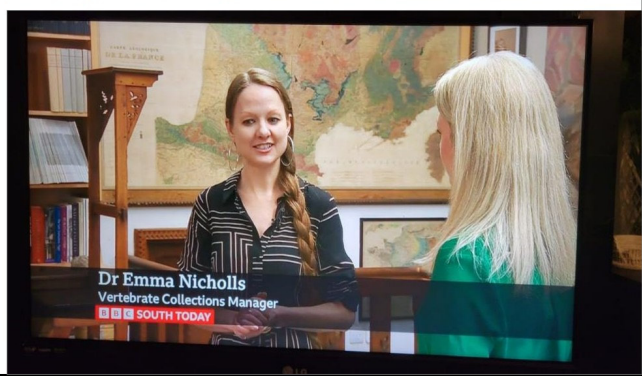
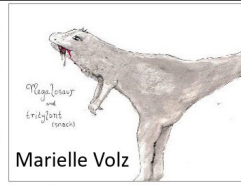
Buckland’s paper described numerous specimens from Oxfordshire and Sussex. However, the illustrations, by talented artist Mary Morland, figured only specimens now in the collections at Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

In 1990, the iconic jawbone was designated the lectotype (Molnar et al.). This charismatic dentary – with its single fully erupted tooth – represents not just *Megalosaurus*, but the start of 200 years of dinosaur science and fandom!

The Bicentenary is a global celebration; I have received emails from museums, researchers, institutions and enthusiasts across the world. It is a privilege to be the Collections Manager responsible for this extraordinary fossil during one of the biggest years of dinosaur celebration that most people alive today will witness. I have lost count of the radio, television and magazine interviews, and they’re still cropping up as the ripples continue to spread.

At OUMNH, we are celebrating throughout 2024. In January, we collaborated with the Natural History Museum to take the *Megalosaurus* jawbone and 1824 lithograph to their conference ‘200 Years of Dinosaurs’. As delegates entered the lecture theatre, a display case draped with black cloth sat on the stage whilst my colleague Duncan Murdock and I sat 10 feet away trying not to stare at it, but feeling very much on high alert. As the Director of the NHM announced “... our friends from Oxford Museum of Natural History have brought a very special treat for you...” I removed the black cloth and revealed the *Megalosaurus* type specimen to an audible gasp that gave me goose bumps as it reverberated around the room. Back in Oxford, the first signs of the bicentenary celebrations were starting to be visible to the public via our incredible *Megalosaurus* 1824-2024 logo, cropping up in various guises. A mini exhibition called 200 Years of *Megalosaurus* told the story of the ‘Oxford dinosaur that started it all’, with part of the Taynton Limestone that originally encased the dentary. This fascinating specimen includes bone and enamel so is part of the lectotype, but is rarely seen. It was great to get it on public display.





On the Bicentenary day itself, OUMNH held numerous behind-the-scenes ‘Meet the *Megalosaurus*’ sessions for the public to see the type specimens, and related material from the newly acquired Buckland archive. An introduction by myself and Librarian and Archivist extraordinaire Danielle Czerkaszyn set the scene, then visitors were able to view the material and ask us questions to their heart’s content. Out in the Gallery, Collections Manager Duncan Murdock and some super volunteers facilitated ‘Digital Dinosaurs’; a pop-up table showing visitors how we create 3D models of fossils, including handleable mini 3D printed versions of the *Megalosaurus* jaw. At OUMNH, we are blessed with the Gardens, Libraries and Museums volunteer team and we received numerous incredible creative responses to the bicentenary by them, to enhance our web content.

Staff fuelled up on a huge dinosaur adorned ‘200’ cake in the afternoon, before we threw open the doors to the public for a *Megalosaurus* birthday party in the evening. The type specimens, more treats from the Buckland archive, ‘Digital Dinosaurs’, and handling table were all part of the activities. As passionate museum professionals, we felt as strongly about engaging the public with the *Megalosaurus* material as we are about ensuring collections safety. This fine balance meant that although there was a bar (it was a party!), the fossils and archive material were ensconced in glass cases and an army of staff and volunteers were on standby with eagle eyes peeled, to ensure all “no drinks near the specimens” signs were observed. Two huge cardboard *Megalosaurus* and a matching selfie-photobooth were the perfect additions to the party décor.

The following day – running on enthusiasm, 2 hours sleep and a lot of falafel in my case – we hosted a Symposium, organised in collaboration with the History of Geology Group. The aim was to bring together fresh perspectives on the history of *Megalosaurus* and *Plesiosaurus dolichodeirus*, both first announced at the 1824 Geol Soc meeting. Again, the passion and enthusiasm of my colleagues was out in full force as we managed to facilitate 90+ delegates in viewing sessions of various parts of the collections, despite the max capacity of most spaces being 15. It went without a hitch and according to numerous reports, was immensely enjoyed by all.

There is still a lot more to come at OUMNH throughout 2024! Do keep an eye on our website for further Bicentenary events and exhibitions as information becomes available.

For more information: <https://oumnh.ox.ac.uk/visit-us>

Emma Nicholls (Oxford University Museum of Natural History), GCG Chair



The History of Geological Discovery in Polar Regions: 16-17th July 2024; Cambridge

A joint meeting of the History of Geology Group and the Geological Curators Group.

Tuesday 16 July & Wednesday 17 July, (joint meeting with HOGG - History of Geology Group).

16th July: is a day conference at the British Antarctic Survey Headquarters, with papers on geological discovery.

17th July: will include visits to polar archives of geological material at the Sedgwick Museum, and Scott Polar Research Institute.

Member fee = £30 conference + £5 Visits day (see instructions below).

It is possible to register for the conference day only.

The meeting aims to explore aspects of geological discoveries in the polar regions from the 19th and 20th centuries. It is planned to arrange participation for both days or one day only. Participants will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation arrangements.

For more information: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/historyofgeologygroup/1073420>



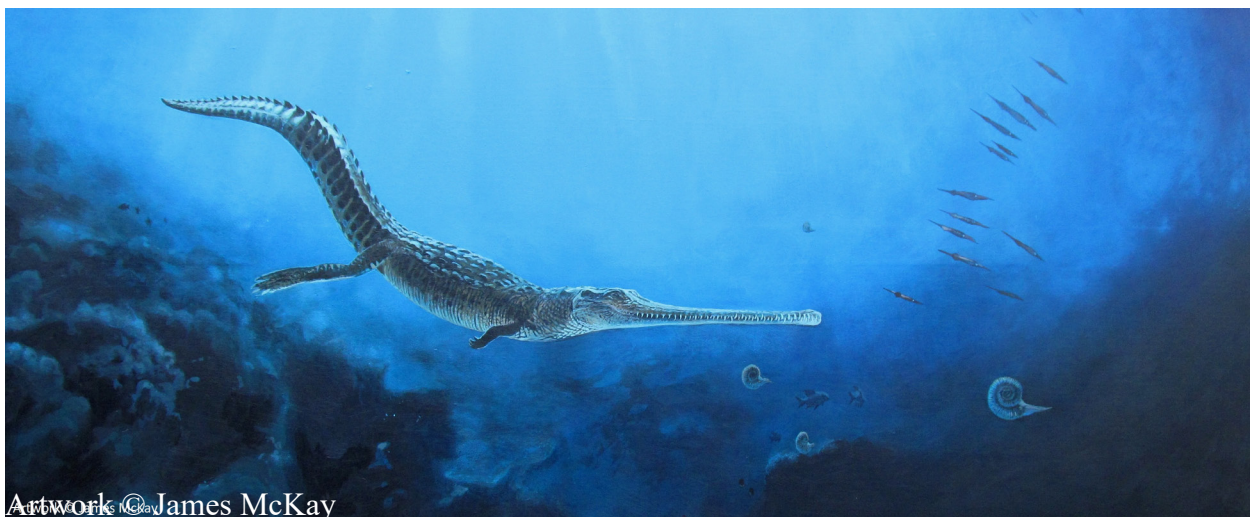
Symposium on Toarcian Palaeobiology - 17th – 20th June 2024



We are pleased to announce the forthcoming conference dedicated to all aspects of Toarcian palaeobiology, at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (UK).

The symposium on Toarcian Palaeobiology is an opportunity to platform the diversity of global Toarcian palaeontological research by spotlighting underrepresented fields such as the marine Benthos, the terrestrial realm, and the ecological impacts of the Toarcian Oceanic Anoxic Event, alongside popular fields including ammonites and marine reptiles. We have a range of keynote speakers covering topics including exceptional preservation of Strawberry Bank material, crocodylomorphs, insects, and foraminifera extinction.

More information here <https://www.geocurator.org/events/168-symposium-on-toarcian-palaeobiology>



Artwork © James McKay



UZH new opening.

The Natural History Museum of the University of Zurich brings together topics from zoology, palaeontology, anthropology and botany under one roof.

The main attraction of the new permanent exhibition are four dinosaurs donated to the University of Zurich in 2019: a 17-metre-long *Diplodocus*, an *Allosaurus*, a *Hesperosaurus* stegosaur and a two-metre-long *Nanosaurus*.

The grand opening on 18 March 2024 began with an introduction in the large auditorium (directly above the exhibition rooms), with a comparison of the variability of Covid-19 mutations and the variability of dinosaur species as the main image. Of course, thanks were due to the Siber family (of the Aathal Dinosaur Museum) for donating the specimens. It should be remembered, however, that although dinosaurs can certainly entertain a large audience, part of the exhibition is still dedicated to the fossils of Monte San Giorgio, a UNESCO heritage site.

For more information:

<https://www.uzh.ch/cmsssl/de/explore/museums/natural-history-museum.html>



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are now due for 2024. Many members have already paid through annual Standing Order, and we thank you for that. Before paying any other way, please do check either on our website, or with me, that you don't already have a Standing Order set up. At some point soon, we will be sending round details of our new bank account. We hope that it will be easy for many of you to swap your regular payment to this instead, and we'll send out instructions. If you prefer to pay online through PayPal, then this option will still continue.

Please note that we have changed the pricing structure of our membership, so that if you wish to continue receiving our printed journal - the Geological Curator, there will be an add on cost, which will vary depending on where you are in the world. This is to compensate for the increased cost of postage.

As always I'd like to assure GCG members and supporters that I'm happy to respond at any time if you have queries about membership.

Cindy Howells (National Museum Wales) GCG membership secretary



Coprolite of the Quarter

Answer to last quarter's mystery coprolite:

Megabeast communal latrine

Stratigraphy:

Cassina Beds,
Ladinico, Middle Triassic

Location:

Monte San Giorgio, CH

Likely culprit:

Reptile's coprolite with bones

Collection: Museo Cantonale di storia naturale di Lugano, Swiss

© Museo cantonale di storia naturale Lugano (Swiss)



Guess the Coprolite

Please send guesses to
coprolite@geocurator.org
The answer and winner will be
announced in the next quarterly
newsletter. The winner will also
receive a small prize.
If there are several correct answers,
one winner will be selected at
random.



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<https://www.geocurator.org/coprolite>