





COPROLITE

Coprolite is the newsletter of the Geological Curator's Group, compiled and produced by Cinzia Ragni (Newsletter Editor). Contributions are welcomed, and should be sent to coprolite@geocurator.org by the appropriate deadline.

Spring edition issued in March - Deadline 15th February. Summer edition issued in June - Deadline 15th May. Autumn edition issued in September - Deadline 15th August. Winter edition issued in December - Deadline 15th November.

No. 110 Autumn 2024

Chair: Emma Nicholls (Oxford University Museum of Natural History) chair@geocurator.org

Secretary: Lu Allington-Jones (Natural History Museum, London) secretary@geocurator.org

Membership: Cindy Howells (National Museum Cardiff) membership@geocurator.org

Please log into our website and check that your contact details and preferences are correct and check whether you need to pay your subs (due from January 1st).



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<https://www.facebook.com/GeologicalCuratorsGroup>



www.geocurator.org

Events

List of shows (October 2024 – Feb 2025)

Please always check the dates of external activities with the respective associations!

Saturday 16th November 2024 – SUSSEX MINERAL SHOW. Haywards Heath College, Harlands Road, Haywards Heath, Sussex RH16 1LT. 10:00am – 4:30pm

Sunday 24th November 2024 - OXFORD MINERAL AND FOSSIL SHOW, Exeter Hall, Oxford Road, Kidlington, north Oxford, OX5 1AB. 10:30am – 4:00pm

Saturday 30th November 2024 – NORTH LONDON MINERAL, GEM AND FOSSIL SHOW, Trinity Church, Nether Street, North Finchley, London N12 7NN. 10:00am – 4:00pm

Saturday 22nd February 2025 - ESSEX GEM AND MINERAL SHOW

North Romford Community Centre, Clockhouse Lane, Collier Row, Romford, Essex RM5 3QJ. 10:00am – 4:00pm

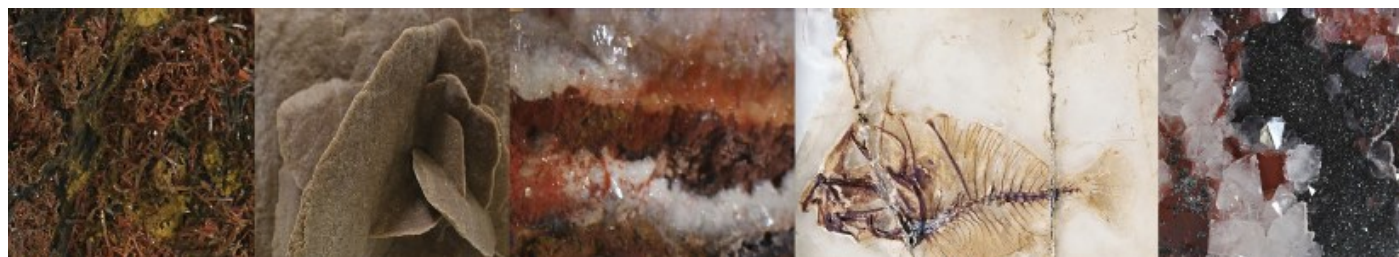
All around the world...

Thursday 24th—Sunday 27th October 2024 – THE MUNICH SHOW - Mineralientage München. Trade Fair Center Messe München

Friday 29th—Saturday 30th November and 1st December 2024 – MINERAL EXPO PARIS - Espace Charenton, 327, rue de Charenton, Paris, 12e arrondissement

Thursday 30th January—Sunday 16th February 2025 - Tucson GEM AND MINERAL SHOW — Arizona, USA

Thanks to *Gerald Lucy*





51st Winter Seminar and AGM

Reciprocal Relationships: how can partnerships help us and our collections develop?

11th –13th November 2024

Oxford University Museum of Natural History
Website and Registration: <https://www.geocurator.org/events/180-agm51#>

By working together and sharing knowledge, we benefit from collective experience. But what works and what doesn't? How should this knowledge be disseminated? The seminar will have presentations covering the following topics:

- Citizen Science
- Cross-department endeavours
- Collecting networks/local groups
- Community outreach
- Multi-museum partnerships
- Research collaborations
- Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs)
- Volunteer projects



Programme

Day 1: Evening ice breaker in Museum, with collections tours (£10 members/£15 non-members)

Day 2: Winter seminar with workshops, AGM, and informal networking pub dinner (£35 members/£45 non-members)

Day 3: Field trip to classic Jurassic sites famous for dinosaurs, other reptiles and early mammals, plus exquisite examples of Banbury ironstone and local industrial history (£25 members/£30 non-members)

* AGM is free to attend. Only paid-up members can vote

Programme

Monday 11th November 18:30-20:30: *"Drinking with dinosaurs"* - An evening icebreaker in the spectacular central court of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (home to the original specimens of *Megalosaurus*, amongst many other treasures), plus the chance to go on behind-the-scenes tours of the collections.

Tuesday 12th November: *"Reciprocal relationships"* - Our main seminar, where we will discuss building and maintaining relationships between individuals, institutions and networks, what works, and what doesn't. The last order of the day is to hold our 51st AGM, where the committee will update you on our activities over the past year.

After wrapping up the AGM, we will be venturing into central Oxford, a 10-15 minute walk away, for an informal networking dinner together. Mains will be between £15 and £20 depending on what you order. Payable directly to the venue. Alternatively, there is a wide array of pubs and restaurants where you can get food.

Wednesday 13th November: *"Bathonian beasts and building stones"* - In provided transport, we will explore some of the geology of Oxfordshire, classic Jurassic sites around Kirtlington to examine the limestones and clays of the Great Oolite Group (Middle Jurassic, c. 165 Ma) famous for dinosaurs, pterosaurs, marine reptiles and especially early mammals. After lunch, which will be provided, there will be a guided walk around Hook Norton to look at some of the best accessible examples of Banbury ironstone as well as the fascinating local industrial history.

The day will start and end at Oxford University Museum of Natural History, with all other travel included.





Mineralogy and Museums Conference (MM10)

Cardiff, UK. 11 - 13 August 2024

The MM10 was organised by staff from the National Museums Wales (NMW), representatives from the International Mineralogical Association, and the Mineralogical Society of the UK and Ireland.

It was open to abstracts with everything ready to go when the National Museum of Wales announced the end of the Mineralogy section, and the loss of the three staff on the planning committee. Emergency meetings were held, statements of support sent, the Welsh assembly contacted – but to no avail. Two of the staff quickly got other jobs, but were now unable to attend the full conference. Another was given a redundancy scheme with access to the museum. We had to cancel all field trips.

We considered cancelling or holding the event elsewhere, but in the end decided to carry on (with some emergency backup plans), in part to keep mineralogy alive at NMW. So it was with trepidation that I attended the registration at the Temple of Peace – not knowing quite how it would all go. It turned out I need not have worried about the attendees. A good number of people attend from all over the world. I was disappointed that the opening welcome was delegated downwards, so the Director, was not there to meet us, though with hindsight, perhaps that was a good thing!

The museum itself hosted us very well, the technology (hybrid conference) worked with barely a hitch, and food and drinks were all proved at the right times. Several geology staff still at NMW were on hand to help.

The talks were fascinating. Roy Starkey has written about each one here (<https://www.mindat.org/article.php/4953/Mineralogy+and+Museums+10+-+Cardiff%2C+UK.+11+-+13+August+2024>).

Please go and read it, especially the summary of John Faithful's talk on **"The State and Status of Mineralogy in UK Museums"** Each talk was by someone trying to explain minerals to the world. They shared common problems, and some novel solutions. There was a common theme of minerals being seen by Directors and Governing bodies as too complicated to explain, or too harmful to endorse (e.g. products of harmful mining practices). It is a shame those people were not at the talks to see how displays can be written, how the public can be engaged, and how education in mineralogy can help people understand where their resources come from, and what we need to do for a sustainable, environmentally friendly future. As such, many talks touched on displays about essential critical elements, and those minerals sought for the burgeoning green, sustainable economy.

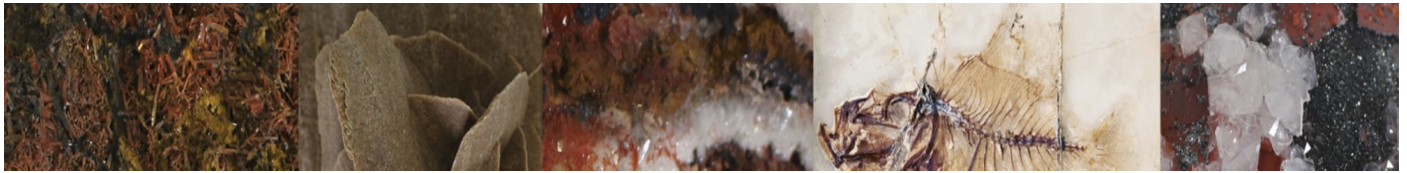
At the related European Mineralogical Conference in Dublin a few days later I attended a public lecture by Dr Karen Hanghøj, the Director of the British Geological Survey **"Perspectives on the Energy Transition – Everything starts with a rock"**. If you have a chance to see this talk, I recommend it, an abstract is here: <https://emc-2024.org/public-lecture/> and an older video from a previous talk of similar content is here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC2kVUc4QFU>

In the end I thoroughly enjoyed two relaxing days with fantastic, interesting talks, from a wonderful eclectic group of people. I left feeling inspired - I am so glad we did not cancel, and I am grateful to the MinSoc that I got to go. A big thank you to all the attendees who made it work so well. As John Faithfull says – "its not all bad everywhere") .

By Helen Kerbey, Mineralogical Society of the UK and Ireland

See also: [Roy Starkey - Mineralogy and Museums 10 - Cardiff, UK. 11 - 13 August 2024. \(mindat.org\)](https://www.mindat.org/article.php/4953/Mineralogy+and+Museums+10+-+Cardiff%2C+UK.+11+-+13+August+2024) for other informations!





The National Museum of Ireland – Natural History (‘Dead Zoo’) Shuts its Doors for 5 to 10 Years

By *Patrick Roycroft*

A momentous event in the history of the National Museum of Ireland took place at 17:00 on Sunday 1st September 2024. At that time, and on that date, the doors to the Natural History Museum on Dublin’s Merrion Square - known affectionately as the ‘Dead Zoo’ - closed to the public.

Why?

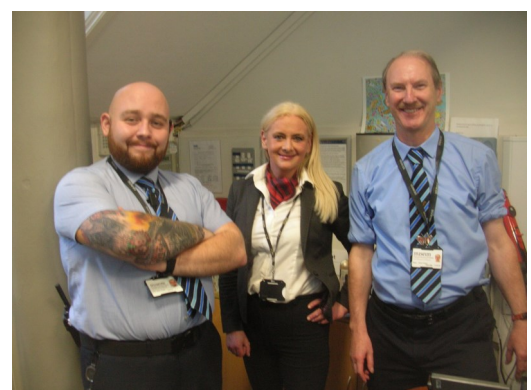
Because essential refurbishment and conservation work is needed to the fabric of the building and to almost all its contents. This means that everything has to come out and be conserved (tens of thousands of objects, including the display cases), and a team of specialists (architects, engineers, electricians, etc) brought in to see how the building is put together in order to define solutions to its problems. The building has not been given much attention since it was quickly built around 1856.

To add to the difficulty, there seem to be no original plans extant. So, not an easy task to make it safe and accessible for the next 150 years. Staff from the Natural History Division and the Education Division will be re-located in the museum’s Beggar’s Bush and Collin’s Barracks facilities (both in Dublin) and Visitor Service Officers - the staff who act as security and who look after the public - will be re-deployed to other buildings.



How long will it be closed for? Nobody knows, because solutions to the problems have yet to be fully defined. But somewhere between 5 and 10 years is the best guess. Will it look essentially the same after the refurbishment and conservation works? Yes. We do not want to change the fundamental character of the building or the exhibition style of having ‘a museum of a museum’.

Here, I offer a timeline of photos showing the last hour that the Dead Zoo was open to the public, including the last two members of the public to leave, and its final closing ‘ceremony’. The end of one era (1856 to 2024), but the symbolic start of the next.





For a Few Dollars More

Redevelopment of the Rashleigh Gallery at the
Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro – An Opportunity Missed (again!)

Roy Starkey roy.starkey@gmail.com



In the poster, displayed at the MM10, **Roy Starkey** explained what happened at the Royal Cornwall Museum. Below is a little summary, but if you want to know more, follow this link:

[\(13\) \(PDF\) For a Few Dollars More Redevelopment of the Rashleigh Gallery at the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro -An Opportunity Missed \(again!\) THE RUSSELL SOCIETY \(researchgate.net\)](#)

See also: [Roy Starkey - Mineralogy and Museums 10 - Cardiff, UK. 11 - 13 August 2024. \(mindat.org\)](#)

The redevelopment of the Rashleigh Gallery at the Royal Cornwall Museum highlights ongoing issues in museum display design, particularly for natural history and mineral collections. A poster from the 2012 M&M7 conference warned of repetitive mistakes in museum displays, but the situation has worsened. Many museums now lack specialized curators, leading to poorly executed exhibits by generalist staff. The Rashleigh Gallery's recent redesign has drawn criticism for inadequate lighting, reduced labeling, and overcrowded cases. The reliance on QR codes instead of clear labels has decreased the educational and scientific value, despite claims that the exhibit aims to engage more visitors.

Similar problems were observed in the refit of The Box in Plymouth, where a mineral collection is poorly displayed alongside irrelevant elements like a model mammoth. These issues stem from a focus on "wow" displays rather than clear, informative exhibits. Concerns about the loss of scientific integrity and the failure to utilize available expertise persist, exacerbated by financial pressures. The mineralogical community is urged to engage with museum directors to address these concerns and push for the restoration of specialist curatorial roles to preserve the educational value of these collections.

Cinzia Ragni—Newsletter Editor



Dear Readers,

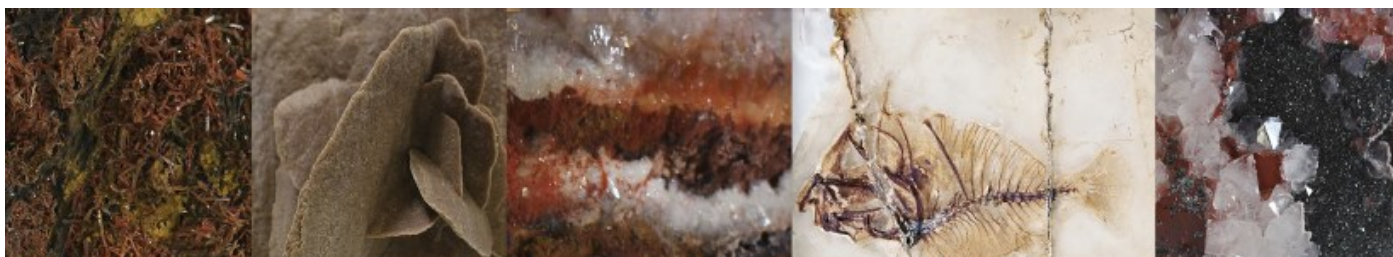
In order to provide you with a better and more lively newsletter, we would like to know what you would like to read in the next issue!!

Give us ideas, suggestions, or if you would like to participate you can simply write to coprolite@geocurator.org!

Don't forget our blog, where in September the article '*Controlled exsiccation of fossilised remains in waterlogged marl: Slowly slowly dryee squiddie*' was written by Lu Allington-Jones (Principal Conservator), The Natural History Museum, London UK

Thank you a lot!!

Cinzia Ragni—Newsletter Editor





Coprolite of the Quarter

Answer to last quarter's mystery coprolite:

Stratigraphy:
Lower Cretaceous

Location: Whitby coast

Nodule 175 mm diameter with
small coprolite in the centre

Image: ©Nigel Larkin



Guess the Coprolite

Image: ©Cinzia Ragni
From: Museo Civico di Storia
Naturale, Trieste



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.

