

**43rd Annual General Meeting of the Geological Curators' Group.
M Shed, Princes Wharf, Bristol.
9th December 2016.**

1. Apologies for absence.

Alex Peaker, Helen Kerbey, Matthew Parkes, Tom Sharpe, Mick Stanley, Sue Turner.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the 42nd AGM held at the Natural History Museum, London.

Agreed. Proposed: Emma Bernard, Seconded: Cindy Howells.

3. Matters arising.

No matters raised.

4. Chairman's report.

Circulated.

4.1. Committee.

Giles Miller thanked the GCG Committee for their hard work over the last three years, with special thanks to those who are stepping down after long periods on Committee. John Nudds has been on committee almost continuously since 1989 as Recorder, Chairman and for the last ten years as Treasurer. Hannah Chalk has been on committee since 2009 and has been our webmaster since the post was created in 2011.

4.2. Subject Specialist Networks.

We were again unsuccessful in a joint application with NatSCA to the Arts Council England resilience Fund. The exercise has strengthened links between GCG and NatSCA in what can only be a positive way. The application was to provide support for non-specialists by creating on-line resources. The long-term GCG project of republishing the Guidelines for geological Curation fits well with this and is something Matthew Parkes wants to take further during his Chairmanship.

4.3. Geological Society.

Our relationship with the Geological Society is unique and gives us a firm identity as a subject specialist network. I would like to thank our Geological Society rep. Sally Thompson particularly for her help in developing links between the groups over the past year. We have applied to the Geological Society Specialist Group Activity Fund but are still waiting to hear the outcome.

4.4. Museums around the country.

I'd like to highlight three success stories. Firstly the Etches Collection, a new museum opened this year at Kimmeridge featuring the collection of long time GCG member Steve Etches. Secondly, I have been closely following the progress at Ludlow Museum and Resource centre this year, both as Chair of GCG and as NHM representative overseeing the £250,000 Libor fund grant that they received. It has also been great to see the new Lapworth Redevelopment open.

4.5. GCG meetings.

Our policy of choosing engaging subjects for our AGM meeting, holding them in accessible locations and the booking of one or two key invited speakers to help pre-advertisement seems to be bearing fruit. We have had a steady rise in the numbers of members attending AGM meetings over the last three years. Having three Programme Secretaries in three years has hampered our aim of planning at least a year in advance. I hope that in the future we can have some stability and arrange meetings with other groups such as HOGG and NatSCA as well as provide details of our programmes well in advance. If you have any ideas of engaging subjects for workshops or AGMs then please let us know.

4.6. Outreach.

Our "Be a Curator" stand has been used at Lyme Regis and Scarborough Fossil Festivals this year. Thank you to Emma Bernard and Luanne Meehitiya for co-ordinating things at Lyme and Simon Harris for working at Scarborough. It costs GCG to run these activities and final delivery is dependent on the support of members who are also thanked for helping out with these festivals. We applied unsuccessfully to the Palaeontological Association for money to develop this activity and hope the GA can help us out in the future. We have advertised to see if other institutions or groups would like to borrow the activity for outreach events. A short article describing the activity will appear in the journal soon.

4.7. Electronic outreach.

The Committee has been working on a set of criteria that we would like to see implemented in our new website. Simon Harris will be leading on the redevelopment of the site from the New Year. We have gone electronic with the journal this year. Paper versions of both *Coprolite* and *Geological Curator* are still available on request. I'd like to ask members to think carefully if they need paper copies as postage and printing costs are rising. I'd like to thank Matthew Parkes for developing the electronic version of the journal. Finally, I'd like to thank Emma Bernard for all her hard work on maintaining our Twitter and Facebook feeds. We have around 800 Twitter followers and if you don't already follow us on either of these forums then please consider it. It's a great way to keep in touch and to engage with a wider audience.

Giles Miller.

5. Secretary's Report.

Circulated.

5.1. GCG to the future

In the light of updated guidance from the Charity Commission I have been looking into reviewing how we operate to ensure that we are meeting our objectives as fully as we can. In particular, I hope to be able use the new advice on charity reserves to inform on future planning. We may also be able to clarify our position by adjusting the Constitution.

We will look at invigorating the organisation over the next year, and you may notice a few tweaks coming in. As a member organisation, we exist to serve our members, for the good of geological collections in all forms. If you have any comments or suggestions at any time, please get in touch with me or any member of the committee. We have already committed to a website redesign, and hope to make it easier to use.

5.2. Matters arising.

We were asked to support the Progressive Palaeontology meeting in Leicester in May 2017, and we offered a sum of £1000. We hope to provide some inserts for conference packs.

Over the past year we have been asked to pass on details of three separate sets of journals offered for donation: the Zoological Record (Sue Lynam of Baldwin's Scientific Books), Tertiary Research (Luanne Meehitya of Birmingham Museums Trust), and a range of journals from Scotland and the north of England (Bill George, Essex Field Club).

5.3. JISCmail.

There are currently 276 members on the GEO-CURATORS mailing list. This is separate from our membership list, as anyone can join it, but there is a huge amount of overlap.

Giles Miller noted that GCG aim to revise the S P Tunnicliff "*Note of advice*" paper on research and geological specimens" (NERC June 1983).

6. Treasurer's Report

This is (hopefully) my last Treasurer's Report, having been in this post for 10 years, and having been on committee as recorder, Chairman and Treasurer (with only one small gap) since 1989. I think you will agree that I deserve a break.

Committee voted last year to increase subscription rates, the first such rise during my time as treasurer, since our annual balance was beginning to fall*. Happily, now, our balance is much healthier, and I hope that we can go another decade before we need to make a further increase. Prudent accounting is the key.

*Year end accounts since 2006 (not including JISC money):

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2006 - £6,258 | 2010 - £10,875 | 2104 - £8,270 |
| 2007 - £8,628 | 2011 - £10,681 | 2015 - £9,140 |
| 2008 - £10,924 | 2012 - £11,024 | 2016 - £11,106 |
| 2009 - £11,202 | 2013 - £10,972 | |

Subscription income this year has thus increased significantly, workshop income has more than covered our workshop expenditure, and Gift Aid is on a par with recent years.

Expenditure was gratifyingly down on the previous year especially in relation to committee expenses, which is good to see, although this is mainly a result of our having had a number of London-based committee members this year. Most of the remaining JISC money has now been spent, with just £316.87 left in the

GCG accounts; this will most probably be used to fund our attendance at the Lyme Regis Fossil Festival next year.

Since closing these accounts I have taken advantage of the favourable post-Brexit US\$ rates, and have transferred £2,500 (c. US\$3,300; rate \$1.31-£1) from the US account to this Sterling account.

Thanks to Tiffany Adrain for assistance with this transfer, and to Caroline Buttler and Christian Baars (NMW) for their careful auditing of the accounts.

2016 Accounts 14/11/15 – 14/11/2016.

| Income | | | Expenditure | | |
|------------------|-----------|------------|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Subscriptions | £4,867.45 | (3,635.46) | Geol Curator 10.4, 10.5 | £1,870.00 | (1,635.00) |
| Working income | £980.00 | (1,518.25) | <i>Coprolite</i> 78, 79 | £621.00 | (841.00) |
| Gift Aid | £499.92 | (598.72) | Workshop expenses | £810.26 | (578.78) |
| Uncashed cheques | £55.85 | | Committee expenses | £916.15 | (1,207.72) |
| | | | Web site fees | £100.03 | (95.98) |
| | | | JISC GB/3D payments | £463.56 | (1,376.78) |
| | | | Prog Pal 2017 sponsorship | £100.00 | |
| | | | Error on last accounts | £20.00 | |
| | £6,403.22 | | | £4,901.00 | |

Balance: 14/11/2015 £9,921.06

Balance: 14/11/2016 £11,423.28

American account: \$3,315.42

European account: €387.42

J.R. Nudds, Treasurer. 14/11/2016.

7. Membership Secretary's Report

Adding up the membership totals each year is always a very interesting exercise, as I start with the number who have actually paid, then have to estimate how many of the non-payers I have just forgotten and will pay me double next year. I would urge you all to pay promptly in the New Year, or to set up a Standing Order that will do it for you every year. I do have a periodic purge of members who don't pay me after being reminded several times, so be warned!

Once again, our total membership is fairly stable with 7 new members during 2016 (not including anyone who joined today).

| | <u>2016</u> | <u>2015</u> | <u>2014</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Personal UK | 155 | 155 | 154 |
| Personal Overseas | 22 | 20 | 25 |
| UK Institutions | 44 | 36 | 49 |
| Overseas Institutions | 23 | 24 | 24 |
| Honorary | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Total | 250 | 241 | 258 |

Please promote the group and encourage all natural science and geology curators to join, in order that they, and their collections, might benefit from our support. Funding for geological posts is still under severe threat, and we need to do everything we can to promote our group, and make it visibly relevant to the issues of our profession. So please let us know if you have a great idea of a seminar or workshop, or would like to offer to host either, especially if you have a new gallery or project that you would like to promote. Mainly, just keep in touch with me (and the rest of the committee), as we do like to feel that we get to know you and what you are up to. Don't forget to sign up for JISCmail if you haven't already, and also our Facebook page.

Let Cindy Howells know if you change your address, job or email address, so that we can continue to contact you and send out publications.

Cindy Howells, Membership Secretary.

8. Programme Secretary's Report.

Circulated.

The current format for organising the AGM presents a panoply of different methods for delegates to register and pay, and I would urge the incoming post-holder to investigate if there are any ways that this can be simplified. One obvious example is Eventbrite, which is already used by groups similar to this one, although I am aware that a small fee is levied by the service. One clear advantage however would be the ability to register online and receive confirmation of your payment immediately.

The meteorites course in Cardiff in October was well reviewed by attendees although numbers were not as high as I had hoped. One reason may well be that many people were unable to find the time and/or funds to go to the event, and as we move forward in redeveloping the website I would be happy to contribute to the development of digital resources which can be consumed by our members regardless of their location.

The “Be a Curator” stand went to Scarborough Fossil festival in September, and was staffed by a number of committee members who were able to draw upon the generosity of their own institutions to spend some time on the GCG stand. We borrowed a selection of fossils from the Natural History Museum’s handling collection, but would like to have our own set – if any members are able to supply anything, then we would like to hear from you.

Finally, we had planned a “webinar” for the summer but this never materialised due to a number of factors, principally finding participants who had the time to spare and also technical limitations (GCG does not have its own hardware or software, so we would have had to borrow this from our institutions and ensure it was fit for the task). There may be other options more suitable, e.g. using pre-recorded content rather than relying on alive broadcast scenario.

As always, the committee welcomes the input of the membership in shaping the future events programme.

Simon Harris. 4th December 2016.

9. Web Officer’s Report.

No report received.

10. Journal Editor’s report.

Apologies received from Matthew Parkes. Report read by Sarah King.

Volume 10, No. 5. Comprising 4 papers, was published in July. It was distributed in paper and digital form. Volume 10, No.6. is in production and will be published before Christmas 2016. It is likely to be a slim volume since some papers in progress have been delayed. Plans for the future are not fully settled but two thematic issues are likely to appear in the next year or two. One is a long awaited “special” on Hugh Miller and the other will include proceedings from this ethics AGM Seminar combined with papers from an ethics session convened by Jeff Liston at the European Vertebrate Palaeontology meeting in the summer of 2016. All submissions are welcomed, as are expressions of interest in taking over the editorship of the journal to allow the current editor to focus on the Guidelines second edition and related development/training ideas developed by committee.

Matthew Parkes.

11. Newsletter Editor’s report.

Three editions of *Coprolite* were published this year. There has been a fall in reports and information coming in for publication. Any items of news can be sent to Helen Kerbey and anything will be considered including exhibition notices and reviews, gallery renewals, staff changes and new acquisitions.

Cindy Howells commented that a report of this seminar will be written up for *Coprolite* but if anyone would like to write their own impressions of the meeting, feel free to submit a report.

12. Collection Officer’s report.

Circulated.

2016 has been another year of continued ongoing threats to collections, with local authority budgets under further increasing pressure. The British geological Survey lost two and a half collections posts earlier this year and the National Museum of Wales Cardiff is cutting posts again, with the possible loss of the Natural Sciences Conservator.

Torquay is under threat, despite designation, and the Natural History Curator at the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro, is being replaced by a general collections position. Other collections under threat include:

Stockport, Reading and Derby. The geology collections in Dudley will move to the archives building, much nearer to other visitor attractions, including the zoo and the Black Country Museum.

In Ludlow, the Friends of Ludlow Museum are now making good progress with their “FISH” (Fossils In Shropshire) project, which now has its own website: <http://fishproject2020.wixsite.com/news>. The project was funded with a government grant of £250k. The project eventually gained access to the funds in April and commenced soon after, led by a team of three consultants and ten volunteers. So far, attention has been focused on scoping the collections and acquiring the digitisation equipment. Systematic digitisation will commence in January. Access to the collection, housed in the Resource Centre at Ludlow, has been agreed with Shropshire Museums Service for the duration of the project, until April 2019 (it had been feared until recently that access would not be possible after March 2017).

The movement to digitise and database collections at an international level continues to grow. The Lyell meeting in London in March focussed on Palaeoinformatics, and the underlying theme was the growing interconnectivity of international databases. The theme was highlighted even more strongly at the APNHC meeting in Berlin in June, where GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility – <http://www.gbif.org/>) and the iDigBio portal – <https://www.idigbio.org/portal/search> - appeared to be the two main aggregators for palaeontological data. IGDN (International Geosample Numbers) provide a similar facility for petrology, borehole and palaeontological collections.

Many view scientific research increasingly as the multidisciplinary combining of large datasets. With rigorous curatorial procedures and standards developed over more than a century, geological collections are well placed to be part of this. We already use most of the principles of good practice that the digital world is only just discovering - “MDA” codes (*unique object identifiers*) are an excellent example.

With regard to the Tunnickliff “Note of advice” paper on research and geological specimens (NERC June 1983), research councils are tightening up on procedures and see well curated research collections as an important factor in allocating funding

Mike Howe.

13. NatSCA Representative’s Report.

I have chosen to step down as the GCG/NatSCA (Natural Sciences Collections Association) rep as my workload has increased and felt that it was better for someone else to take over who could fully commit to the role. Isla Gladstone will be the new link and I am sure will do a great job of helping the two societies work together for the benefit of their membership. I have enjoyed my time working on both committees and I want to thank NatSCA for their help and support over the last few years.

We have been looking at how our societies cross over and where we can work together, such as hosting joint meetings. We hope to run the successful “Hazards in Natural History Collections” workshop again. If our membership can think of workshops/meetings that you would like to see, then please do let us know. Over the last few years both societies have been working closer together and helping each other progress.

I am responsible for the GCG’s social media, which continues to grow with members engaging with us from Australia, America and Europe. Please help to spread the word and share stories about collections and exhibitions, links, jobs etc. on these platforms.

Twitter @OriginalGCG (<https://twitter.com/OriginalGCG>)

The Facebook Groups (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/376700195784835/>) and page (<https://www.facebook.com/GeologicalCuratorsGroup>).

14. ICON Representative’s Report.

No report available as GCG currently has no representative from ICON. Giles Miller has contacted ICON but has had no reply. Nigel Larkin has been approached to take on the role and agrees, subject to approval by ICON committee.

**Acceptance of all reports. Proposed: Emma Bernard. Seconded: Cindy Howells.
Agreed.**

15. Election of officers and Committee for 2016 and election of Auditors.

Election of officers.

Nominations for new Officers and Committee are:

Chairman: Matthew Parkes (National Museum of Ireland).

Treasurer: Rachael Walcott (National Museums Scotland).

Programme Secretary: Zoë Hughes (Natural History Museum).

Web officer: Simon Harris (British Geological Survey).

Ordinary Members: Emma Bernard (Natural History Museum, Alex Peaker (Dinosaur Isle).

Co-opted member: (NatSCA representative; Blog editor): Isla Gladstone (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery).

All other post holders remain.

Retiring members, Giles Miller, John Nudds, Hannah-Lee Chalk and Tim Ewin were thanked for their contributions to running GCG.

Election of auditors.

The current auditors, Caroline Buttler and Christian Baars have agreed to continue in this role. **Agreed.**

15. Any other business.

No points raised.

16. Date and venue of the next Annual General Meeting.

To be decided at a future committee meeting.

17. Presentation of the Brighton medal.

At the end of their time in office, the outgoing GCG chair chooses an individual to be the recipient of the "Brighton Medal", which acknowledges the importance of good curation in advancing geological science, for example by:

- Devoting a significant part of their working lives to the actual care of geological specimens.
- Introducing innovations which have led to significant improvements in the care of geological specimens.
- Inspiring others to the better care of geological specimens, by example, teaching, or writing.
- Fostering an increased awareness of the value of geological collections, e.g. through collections research.

The medal is named for A.G. 'Bertie' Brighton (1900-1988) Curator of the Sedgwick Museum from 1931 until 1968. His career was characterised by prodigious cataloguing, recording on average 10,000 specimens each year. It is estimated that in his lifetime he was responsible for documenting 375,000 fossils. He was the epitome of the dedicated, professional, geological curator.

The outgoing Chairman takes advice from a small, invited, working group of experienced curators independent of the GCG committee, but ultimately the choice of recipient is the decision of the Chairman.

This year the Brighton Medal is awarded to Graham Worton of Dudley Museum and Art Gallery.

Giles Miller cited the following as the most compelling reasons for his choice; Graham has a 35-year association with Dudley as volunteer, professional geologist and keeper, spending 17 years as Keeper of Geology, he is currently the Museum Manager at Dudley. In that time he has led on a number of projects that have opened geology to the wider local community, and all of those projects have community involvement as an underpinning factor with an emphasis on inspiring young people. Graham is one of the leaders of the Black Country Geopark project, has published several webinars on geological topics, and advocated the value of geology collections to MPs at meetings in the Houses of Parliament. On top of this, Graham has overseen the move of the Dudley geology collections to their new home in the Dudley Archives building.

Unfortunately, Graham is not able to be present to receive the medal in person so he will be presented with the medal at a later date and full details published in *The Geological Curator*.

Giles Miller thanked all today's speakers and the organisers for a very interesting seminar and AGM.