

# Annual Report for 2019

For presentation at the 2019 AGM



[www.geocurator.org](http://www.geocurator.org)

*The Geological Curators' Group is a UK-based membership organisation and charity (no. 296050), founded in 1974 to improve the state and status of geological collections and curation. The group is run for its members, by volunteers elected from the membership. It is affiliated to the Geological Society of London as a Specialist Group, and recognised as a Subject Specialist Network by Arts Council England. Our constitution is available here <https://www.geocurator.org/13-gcq-committee/27-gcq-constitution>*

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## **GCG information**

**Committee for 2019 (from AGM 2018-AGM 2019)**

Previous years' Annual Reports can be found at

<https://www.geocurator.org/committee/management-documents/60-annual-reports-and-accounts>

## 1. View from the Chair

In a year when I have found myself struggling to have time to attend to GCG matters properly, I especially wish to acknowledge all of the GCG Committee, all of whom are superb at carrying out their roles unprompted and with great initiative. This year's AGM date is at our host venue in the Sedgwick Museum, where we have not held meetings for too long. So it is a pleasure to chair my last AGM in this fine public geological museum.

### Website

Simon Harris reports on the usage and operation of the website elsewhere in this report, and we are all indebted to him for the 'can do' manner in which he makes the website work for GCG, and his innovative and analytical development work on it. It is apparent that a significant cohort of members still do not use the online resources. I would urge all members to register themselves on the website to access GCG services.

### Resources

A revised 'Advice booklet' for geology students and their supervisors was brought to completion by Hilary Ketchum during the year. It is available online at <https://www.geocurator.org/researchbooklet> and we will be producing printed copies too for circulation, once some organisational endorsements have been sorted out.

### Organisation

Sarah King is to be thanked for her major work, not just pulling together all of the AGM materials for today, but throughout the past year. She has been progressing the proposed organisational changes for GCG governance, which you will be asked to support, but also building our liaison with the Geological Society, ensuring charitable organisation compliance and of course organising our committee meetings along with many other unseen tasks.

I want to thank Emma Bernard for managing our social media profile throughout the year. Unfortunately, Tony Morgan, who had been Minutes Secretary for many years, was no longer able to get museum support to attend GCG Committee Meetings. (It's worth mentioning that we are able to cover expenses for committee members who are unable to claim from their employers.) We are extremely grateful to him for his long service to GCG in a very important but unglamorous job. Alex Peaker and Lil Stevens stepped in until the new committee is fully in place. Lil Stevens has been working with Cindy Howells to tackle our own organisational archive in Cardiff as it has been somewhat neglected over the years.

### Accounts

Rachel Walcott reports on a reasonably healthy financial state for GCG, and it is the Committee's intention to operate more stringent control on costs of meetings, especially for joint meetings with other societies, in the future. This will mean that contingencies will be planned for and division of costs formally agreed beforehand. Having a good booking system on the website makes GCG an attractive option for some other groups in running a meeting. However, it is also the intention to make a modest surplus on all meetings in order to support other activities.

## Publications

I report on the journal status separately, but note that the future is looking good with a new Editor, Pip Brewer ready to take full control in 2020 after a transitional year of shared editorial work. The two issues published have been substantial and there are good prospects for future volumes.

GCG's other long-standing publication, *Coprolite*, has been delivered reliably by Emma Nicholls. The GCG blog, in two alternating companion styles, is now well-established, again thanks to Emma Nicholls. One, '*News from the Sector*' covers all sorts of information, whilst the GCG blog carries more personal contributions. Please contribute, if you have anything interesting to relate for both our members and the wider World.

## Collections

Unfortunately, as discussed later, the loss of posts and museum closures are an ever-present threat. Whilst GCG Committee will continue to support curators and collections in individual cases, if there is any practical steps we can take, it is frequently too late for interventions, as these plans often only become public knowledge when effectively signed off. As I stated last year, it is our collective belief that advocacy on behalf of collections and curators before they are under threat is the best use of our limited individual, voluntary capabilities. Providing a thriving support network, combining with other Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs), appropriate training and resources, and positive examples of the importance of collections is where our energies are best put.

## Programme

I thank Zoë Hughes for delivering the 2019 programme, which included an excellent training meeting on Fakes and Forgeries in Edinburgh in September, the 'Trading Nature' meeting in York in June which was very valuable and GCG's Symposium on Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation (SPPC) meeting at the Symposium on Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy (SVPCA) on the Isle of Wight in September, with Alex Peaker being one of our hosts, and Emma Nicholls and Nigel Larkin assisting with most of the logistics.

The 2020 programme details will appear very soon, allowing more time for planning your attendance and ensuring that you have budget allocations for them. Collaboration continues to be important. GCG will have a session within the wider meeting of SPNHC in Edinburgh 7-13<sup>th</sup> June <http://www.spnhc-icomnathist2020.com/> Following the SPPC meeting in Manchester in September, Nigel Larkin, Emma Nicholls and Cindy Howells will deliver a strongly GCG driven meeting for 2020, in this annual Symposium on Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation, which will be in London. Emma and Nigel have been heavily involved in the forthcoming Marine Reptiles <http://marinereptiles.org/> Conference in the Steve Etches Museum at Kimmeridge, Dorset in May, which is not a GCG event, but one which we are promoting. Other programme events or training workshops may be delivered, if there is capacity, but the Committee will always welcome approaches about ideas for hosting, delivering or supporting practical meetings or courses.

## Geological Society

Our relationship with the Geological Society is constructive and we have contributed to the Science Committee's works and policy in different areas. We continue to hold a minimum of one committee meeting in Burlington House, but with a strong bias of Committee members to the region we have made good use of the facilities this year.

### **Relationships with the wider world**

Isla Gladstone, who acts as the representative for NatSCA/GCG on each committee has worked well in maintaining our connection. Nigel Larkin has filled the same role for us with conservators and with other groups. I have attended almost all the meetings of the Geoconservation Committee of the Geological Society, and will do so in an informal link to GCG in the immediate future. A Consortium of Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs) has been formed over the last couple of years, and GCG has been involved.

### **Brighton Medal**

It is the gift of the Chairman to award the GCG's own Brighton Medal at the end of a three year term, and it is my pleasure to make the award to a most deserving recipient this year, as one of my final acts as Chairman.

### **Acknowledgement of employer support**

As it is the end of my rather lengthy period of being on GCG Committee in various roles, and finally as Chairman, I cannot let the moment pass without a massive thank you to Nigel Monaghan, Keeper of Natural History and the National Museum of Ireland for the really critical support that I have received to participate in GCG activities, both in time and financial terms. Whilst I have no doubt that involvement in a subject specialist network like GCG brings back benefits to the employer as well as the individual, not every GCG Committee Member enjoys the same support that I have had from both my Manager and the Museum, and I am very grateful to both.

So, I close by thanking all of the Committee, both from this year and from all previous years that I was Chair, each of whom have made important contributions to the vitality of GCG. I hope that we will see you involved in meetings or activities in the coming year. It has been a pleasure to serve on Committee and I wish the organisation and the future committee all the very best.

*Matthew Parkes*

## 2. Accounts

We finished this year with a small surplus of £1594, which is about half the last year's profit. The surplus is due, in part, to an increase in membership subscriptions. We made some additional savings this year by no longer paying for publishing Coprolite which saved about £350. We also didn't pay for any additional equipment (last year we bought £250 pounds worth of equipment).

We were involved with a very well-attended workshop, co-sponsored with the Society for the History of Natural History (SHNH), 'Trading Nature', but that didn't return a profit. The small Geological Fakes workshop made a small profit (after the catering invoice which we are still waiting for).

This year I explicitly included the fees paid to PayPal (£152). The fees seem high as we were managing the accounts for the 'Trading Nature' co-sponsored meeting. At the time of writing this report we have not received the rebate for Gift Aid.

Finally, this year we spent £350 supporting two causes; the student conference of the Palaeontological Association, 'Progressive Palaeontology', and the funding drive for building a new bridge to the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs.

As of 9<sup>th</sup> November the finances have yet to be signed off by our auditors, Andy Ross and Neil Clark.

*Rachel Walcott*

Geological Curators' Group  
46th Annual General Meeting, Cambridge 10/12/2019

**2019 Accounts**

28/10/2018 - 27/10/2019

Income			Expenditure	
Workshop income	£7,165.04	(£2,785.37)	Geol Curator 10.7, 10.8	(-£1356.14)
Subscriptions	£5,861.48	(£5,307.16)	Coprolite	(-£358.00)
Donations	£0.00	(£1373.48)	AGM & Workshop expenses	(-£2964.99)
			Committee expenses	(-£635.05)
			Website fees	(-£116.07)
			JISC GB/3D payments	(-£0.00)
			Sponsorship	(-£247.98)
			Equipment	(-£126.70)
			Acct Bank Fees	
				<u>£11,432.35</u>
Balance as at 27/10/2018	£16,637.60		Balance as at 27/10/2019	£18,231.77
<b>Euro Account</b>	<b>€ 772.66</b>		<b>Euro Account</b>	<b>€ 462.91 (0.87 exchange rate)</b>

**Auditors:**  
Neil Clark

Andrew Ross

Rachel Walcott, Treasurer 09/11/2019

### 3. Membership and networks

#### 3.1 Membership and reach

Once again we've had a good year for membership with 28 new members joining the group, although this isn't well reflected in the figures below as we have had a fair number of deletions as well. Our new online registration and payment option means that it's now very easy to sign up for the group, but it seems that many more people than before are paying for just one year and then not renewing. Do stay with us; we have a lot to offer!

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Personal UK	173	175	160
Personal overseas	34	28	20
UK institutions	37	38	46
Overseas institutions	20	21	20
Honorary	7	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>253</b>

Subscriptions are now due for 2020, with all rates remaining the same. All personal subscribers should now have their own online registration, even if you have not yet looked at it. I'd encourage everyone to try to log in, and this will show if you've paid for the current year or not! Let me know if you have any problems logging in, or wish to know your subscription status at any time.

If you already pay by Standing Order then your account will show this, and I'll activate your account as soon as we get your payment each year – don't try to pay online as well. If you don't pay by SO, then do please log on in January and pay for 2020, or send me a cheque. Remember we do have an optional concessionary rate for any unemployed/retired subscribers, but if you wish to pay this amount please let me know, so that I can make a note of it, and don't hassle you for underpayment!

Please remember to keep your details up to date on our website, or by emailing me if you prefer. If I don't have your current email or postal address then I can't send you anything. All your details are of course kept securely; please see our Privacy Policy here:

<https://www.geocurator.org/committee/management-documents/58-how-the-committee-works/337-privacy-policy>

*Cindy Howells*

#### 3.2. Correspondence and networks

As an affiliated specialist group, we continue to meet annually with the Geological Society (GSL), and throughout the year we have been consulted, alongside the other specialist groups of the GSL, on the impact of the government's proposed immigration system, and the scientific and cultural value of our work as part of a conversation with the government on the GSL's tenure of Burlington House.

A new group, the Early Career Network, was launched at the GSL in February. We were invited to attend but felt that it wasn't directly relevant to us, although we will monitor their activity. We also attended the inaugural GSL Environment Network event in November, and again, the scope of this

group appears for now not to be directly relevant to us, although it may be appropriate for us to engage in the future.

We were pleased to write a letter of support for Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery in June. Off the back of their recent Designation award for their Natural Science collections, they are planning to apply for Arts Council England's Designation Development Funding to catalogue and improve overall access to their geology collection. We offered support to their initial planned steps, to hold a conference, and suggested it was modelled on our successful joint conference with the History of Geology Group in September 2018, 'Collectors, collections and the geology of South West Britain'.

Sadly we were unsuccessful in our funding bid to ACE's Subject Specialist Network Fund, jointly with the Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA), but it was a very useful process and the feedback will help us in our future work. Thanks to everyone who worked on this, especially Isla Gladstone. We also continue to work with the relatively newly-formed SSN Consortium as it develops its remit. NatSCA also asked us for advice on a possible conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, something that we have been looking into for some time.

As ever, most correspondence and discourse is through our general JISCmail list (see elsewhere in the report for detail on this), but a few emails were received across the year. We had two requests for identification of material, and one for conservation advice. One person emailed for careers advice, after seeing our representation at the GSL careers fair held at the British Geological Survey in November 2018. We had an offer (to the Group as a whole) of some cores and cuttings, and several requests to post items to the JISCmail list.

*Sarah King*

#### **4. Events and participation**

Our 2018 winter seminar and AGM was held 4-5<sup>th</sup> December at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, entitled 'Inspiring volunteers - Promoting collections'. 33 Delegates attended, down on 2017's figure of 50. In part this is likely to be down to the late advertisement of the seminar. There continues to be positive feedback for the new approach to the second day of the meeting (holding workshops, rather than an outing to a local geological heritage site). Feedback was positive about both days of the meeting. More details on this event can be found here:

<https://www.geocurator.org/resources/79-past-workshops-and-seminars/inspiring-volunteers-promoting-collections> A blog post on the event can be read here:

<https://geocollnews.wordpress.com/2019/03/12/where-working-with-rocks-can-take-you/>

Following a successful full programme in 2018, GCG has run fewer solo events, but we had a very successful meeting in collaboration with the Society for the History of Natural History held in York at the King's Manor on June 4-5<sup>th</sup> entitled 'Trading Nature'. There was a great turnout with 75 delegates who were very enthusiastic about the meeting in "lovely surroundings". This is another good example of GCG collaborating with other specialist subject networks to produce well-received events. There is more information on this event here: <https://www.geocurator.org/resources/87-past-workshops-and-seminars/trading-nature>. There is also a report in the SHNH newsletter (page 13): [https://shnh.org.uk/assets/uploads/116-SHNH-NL-SHNH\\_Issue116\\_00619\\_web.pdf](https://shnh.org.uk/assets/uploads/116-SHNH-NL-SHNH_Issue116_00619_web.pdf)

The final event of the year was the Fakes workshop held at the National Museum of Scotland on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. 18 delegates attended another well received GCG event. As with Trading Nature, no formal evaluation was done on the event, however general consensus from attendees spoken to, was that it was an excellent and useful event. Details of the event can be found here:

<https://www.geocurator.org/resources/85-past-workshops-and-seminars/fakes-workshop>

In terms of attracting non-members to our events, we did not do as well as in 2018. The programme in 2018 had more conservation themes than 2019, which appeared to appeal to the non-members. In percentage terms the Winter seminar 2018 had 88% member attendance (12% were non-members), 'Trading Nature' had 92% member attendance (membership of either SHNH or GCG) and 'Fakes' had 67% member attendance.

The 2019 AGM and Winter Seminar will be held December 10-11<sup>th</sup> at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge University, entitled 'How can we make our precious collections available to researchers?'

We thank all hosts, facilitators and contributors to our events this year, without whom GCG would not be able to run its programme.

We also have an events policy, which details all aspects of our events procedures, including booking and cancellations. This document is updated regularly. It can be found here

<https://www.geocurator.org/events/81-gcg-events-policy-and-other-forms/343-geological-curators-group-events-policy>

We have exciting plans for 2020 and the forthcoming years so watch this space!

*Zoë Hughes*

## **5. Publications**

### **5.1. *The Geological Curator***

In 2019, one part of *The Geological Curator* was published (Volume 11, Number 1, pages 1-110; 13 articles), containing papers stemming from the GCG event in May 2018, 'Pyrite oxidation: where are we now?'. The second part will have papers both the joint meeting with the History of Geology Group (HOGG) in September 2018, on collections of South West Britain, as well as the 2017 GCG AGM on collections moves. These have been processed, edited and dealt with by Pip Brewer as a transition of editors in this past year. We both thank all those who have contributed papers, book reviews, reports and material for the journal, but especially the referees, who are largely unsung in their valuable contribution.

We welcome paper submissions for our peer-reviewed journal at any time. There is no page limit or word limit on submissions to *The Geological Curator*, but the Editor and referees will require changes if your submission is not concise and includes excessive 'padding'. We expect the text to follow *Geological Curator* style.

Members are reminded that receiving the journal electronically rather than in hard copy saves GCG money in admin, printing and postage, and are encouraged to consider this option. Notification of preference should be made to the Membership Secretary.

Lastly, I wish to thank Pip Brewer for taking on the bulk of the second issue for 2019 which will hopefully be with you at the AGM if not before. I wish her all the best with future issues and her exciting plans to develop the journal.

*Matthew Parkes*

## **5.2. Coprolite newsletter**

Since the beginning of 2018, *Coprolite* has changed from a multiple page newsletter issued three times a year, to a four page quarterly publication. In order to keep down costs of printing the newsletter (with a view to maintaining low membership rates for GCG subscribers) we have attempted to move to a digital-only format. We currently send out around 220 digital copies of *Coprolite* to members with internet access. We respect that some subscribers don't have access to a computer and so we do still offer a printed copy upon request. At present, we are sending out around 75 printed copies of each issue; 10 to individuals and 65 to institutions.

The Newsletter Editor has worked to attract short excerpts from external authors for inclusion in the 2019 issues. So far these have included (but are not limited to) the designation of Tullie House for its outstanding natural sciences collections, the crowd-funded bridge for Crystal Palace Dinosaurs, the Object in Focus fossil and mineral loans project at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, and the Early Career Network of the Geological Society of London.

Looking forward to 2020, the Newsletter Editor will continue to strive towards creating an interesting and engaging newsletter with a balance of internal and external content. If anyone has anything they would like to see included in the newsletter, please get in touch with Emma Nicholls at [blog@geocurator.org](mailto:blog@geocurator.org).

*Dr Emma Nicholls*

## **6. Collections support**

### **6.1. Collections monitoring**

2019 has been an especially challenging year for collections and museums across the UK, largely as a result of the continuing austerity regime imposed on local councils. At the start of the year, Leicester City Museums Service, including the flagship New Walk Museum, the original home of GCG, carried out an internal review of the structure of the division. A council spokesperson said:

“The proposal under consultation is to create some new posts, and to change others, to achieve this.

“The review also aims to find around £320,000 of savings to contribute to the overall savings the council must make because of Government funding cuts. Almost half of these savings have already been found by deleting five vacant posts within the service

“The aims of the review are to find ways the service can increase its income to make it more self-sufficient in the future, and to make sure the resources available are used in the most effective way to provide excellent services for a large number of people.”

Following the review, the four existing museum curator posts were removed. Seven new posts were created using funding from Arts Council England, including an exhibitions and displays manager, a

digital project manager, a children and young people's officer, a community engagement officer and collections access officer. The review was leaked to the Leicester Mercury, and GCG and the Guardian highlighted the loss of 170 years+ of curatorial knowledge. I understand that a Leicester University employee who wrote a letter of concern to the Council, received an admonishment from the university authorities, immediately followed by a phone call from Sir David Attenborough (who has often cited the museum as a childhood inspiration) telling him to continue the good work. Since the staff replacement, I have already heard of two scientific enquiries that have gone unanswered.

Further threats emerged during the year. The Falconer Museum, Forres, is a delightful museum with important palaeontological and other natural history collections. A Moray Council spokeswoman said: "The Falconer Trust transferred ownership of the museum to the council in 1996. At the same time the council signed an agreement with the remaining trustees, that the council would assume responsibility for the management, administration and financing of the museum, but nowhere does the agreement state that the museum must remain open and functioning - that is a matter for the council to decide." The museum closed for the winter on 31<sup>st</sup> October and whether it reopens in April 2020 may depend on a legal challenge.

Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro, which houses important mineral collections, including that of Philip Rashleigh, has recently announced partial closure from January 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 to deal with structural problems. Eight staff will be made redundant, and when the museum reopens, it will be "in a different format". The Stockport Museum, which also has important geological collections, is similarly facing closure in 2020 as part of a council cost cutting exercise. Concern about museums is such that the Russell Society's (Central Branch) March 2020 Symposium is "Museums" – a one day meeting to discuss what is happening to them. To address the sector wide concern, in October, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced plans to invest an additional £50m per year in regional museums and galleries in England over the next five years.

There is some good news. The new £2m Sedgwick Museum storage facility at their west Cambridge site, the Colin Forbes Building, is now complete and work in underway to transfer 150 tonnes of samples from various old stores around west Cambridge.

There may also be a really important shift in funding to reflect the importance of natural history collections in many areas of current science research. UKRI (UK Research and Innovation – the overarching UK Research Council) is reviewing the UK's research infrastructure and has already published a number of reports, including 'UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap: Progress Report' and 'The UK's research and innovation infrastructure: opportunities to grow our capability'. It seems likely they will invest in the significant UK natural history collections, largely by improving digital access, possibly through the EU DISSCo Project.

Work at BGS on the database to hold UK IGSNs (International GeoSample Numbers) is continuing. The basic make-up of IGSNs will be:

UK <MDA Code> . <internal museum registration number>

The selected format is thus exemplified by:

**UKBGS.E1234** and **UKBGS.Geol.Soc.Coll.567**

IGSNs are likely to be required relatively soon by a number of journals, including those published by Elsevier, AGU and the Geological Society. Adopting a system based on MDA codes should make archiving cited specimen with a recognised collection as the default option, and an important example of impact for museums.

*Mike Howe*

## 6.2. Care of collections

The 28<sup>th</sup> Symposium of Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation (SPPC) took place as two half-day events on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of September on the Isle of Wight, immediately preceding the 67<sup>th</sup> Symposium on Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy (SVPCA). The workshop on the afternoon of Tuesday September 10<sup>th</sup> at Dinosaur Isle Museum consisted of a 4-hour session titled 'Field to Lab'. This began with a presentation by Nigel Larkin on preparing and jacketing specimens in the field, drawing on his experience and expertise, whilst also encouraging input from the audience and facilitating discussion. We then had a practical session, demonstrating how to successfully jacket-up a specimen in the field using plaster and hessian, and how to de-jacket the specimen once in the lab. The second half of the workshop examined the various mechanical preparation tools people use to remove matrix from fossils. Chemical preparation was also discussed. The afternoon session finished with a presentation from Mark Graham, discussing the prep lab at the NHM, and talking through some of his work there. Again input from the audience was encouraged and discussion facilitated. We had approximately 30 delegates in attendance at the practical session. The afternoon practical session was run concurrently with an SVPCA pre-conference field trip to the Cretaceous succession between Yaverland and Culver Cliff, which may have affected numbers. The morning of Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> consisted of SPPC platform presentations, with six talks of 20 minutes each, including questions. Approximately 55 delegates attended the SPPC platform presentations.

*Nigel Larkin and Emma Nicholls*

## 7. Online activity

### 7.1 Website

2019 has been another successful year for the website ([www.geocurator.org](http://www.geocurator.org)) – the amount of content continues to grow, and the steep learning curve we were climbing during 2017 and 2018 has started to level out somewhat. Particular successes this year have included:

- We have concluded a small review of the methods the committee uses to communicate – the options available ranged from simple paper and e-mail based approaches, through collaborative file-sharing systems, to so-called “electronic boardroom” software. Whilst impressive, we concluded that the cost of a full electronic boardroom software package was beyond the reaches of our budget and did not represent value for money for our membership, and also affirmed that our use of a secure file-sharing platform offers us the best compromise of high flexibility at a very modest cost. Off the back of this, we continue to consolidate our digital holdings of GCG’s past work, scanning copies of past documents as well as maintaining digital copies of new ones.

- There was a surprisingly large response to our advert to engage a freelance journal indexer, with six people applying. The committee selected Daniel Lockett (Also of the “[Fossils in Shropshire](#)”

digitisation project) from the anonymised applications, and he undertook training during June. Work is progressing extremely well, and to date all issues of the Geological Curator have been indexed from the start of Volume 7 to the latest issue.

- A change in Google's terms and conditions<sup>1</sup> suggested that it would be a good idea to port our collections map (<http://www.geocurator.org/collections/>) to a different platform, and we did so by the end of April. The new map is hosted on ArcGIS online, and although our database does not support geospatial data directly, through a series of queries and scripts, point data is exported from the web server and consumed directly by the map. In addition to being easier to update, we are able to hold data specific to collections, for instance linking news stories to museums. We hope to augment this data over the coming year.

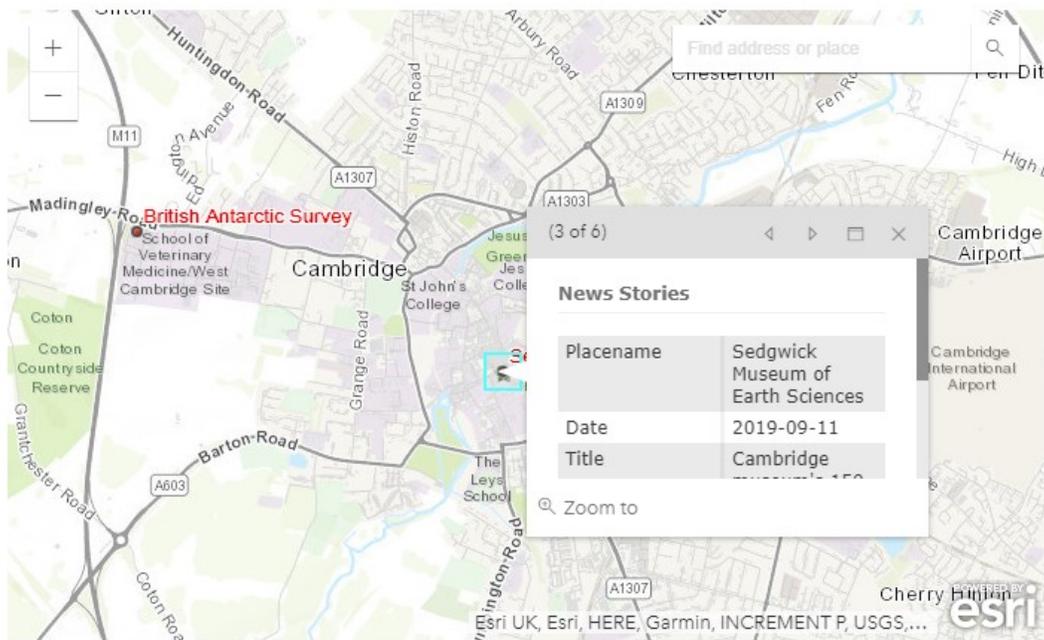


Figure 1- Read all about it! - we are able to link to news stories and information about locations which our users might find interesting

- We were caught somewhat by surprise when **The Guardian** newspaper linked to our statement on the removal of curator posts from Leicestershire Museums service (see elsewhere in this report), which almost overnight propelled the page containing our statement to the top of our website ranking. This has been an interesting lesson in interactions with the media, and one which the committee hopes to learn more about in the future.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cloud.google.com/blog/products/maps-platform/introducing-google-maps-platform>

### Website statistics – how many people have visited the website?

Readers should refer also to the Annual Report for 2017<sup>2</sup> and 2018<sup>3</sup> as they read this report. The list of the top 20 most accessed pages below contains many of the same pages that have featured in previous years, and on the whole, visitor numbers to specific pages are still increasing.

Page title	Section	Hits
GCG homepage	Main	26465
About the Geological Curators Group	Main	2171
The GCG blog	Main	1504
Thumbs-up leaflet	Promoting good curation	1159
Privacy Policy	How the Committee works	955
GCG Constitution	How the Committee works	755
Geological Curators' Group statement on loss of specialist curators at Leicester City Council Museums and Galleries	Collections	692
Coprolite 81 - March 2017	Previous issues of Coprolite	483
Registrations now open for Trading Nature	Events	477
GCG useful links listing	Useful links	469
Committee Profile: Dr Emma Louise Nicholls	Committee member profiles	455
Geological Collections map and news	Collections	446
Committee Profile: Simon Harris	Committee member profiles	443
Committee Profile: Nigel Larkin	Committee member profiles	440
Committee Profile: Emma Bernard	Committee member profiles	439
Coprolite 11 - May 1993	Previous issues of Coprolite	430
Membership of GCG	Membership	426
Obituary: Howard Bartlett	News	426
Committee Profile: Matthew Parkes	Committee member profiles	424
Committee Profile: Rachel Walcott	Committee member profiles	419

*Table 1 - Top 20 pages served by the website between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 14th October 2019. The number of hits to the homepage is extremely high probably as a result of visits from search engines which are indexing the content of the site.*

Also spare a thought for all the pages which did not make the top twenty – the website content imperfectly approximates a long-tail distribution with some pages only seeing one or two visits a year.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.geocurator.org/images/committee/mgmtdocs/AGM2017/GCG\\_annual\\_report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.geocurator.org/images/committee/mgmtdocs/AGM2017/GCG_annual_report_2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.geocurator.org/images/committee/mgmtdocs/AGM2018/GCG\\_annual\\_report\\_2018.pdf](https://www.geocurator.org/images/committee/mgmtdocs/AGM2018/GCG_annual_report_2018.pdf)

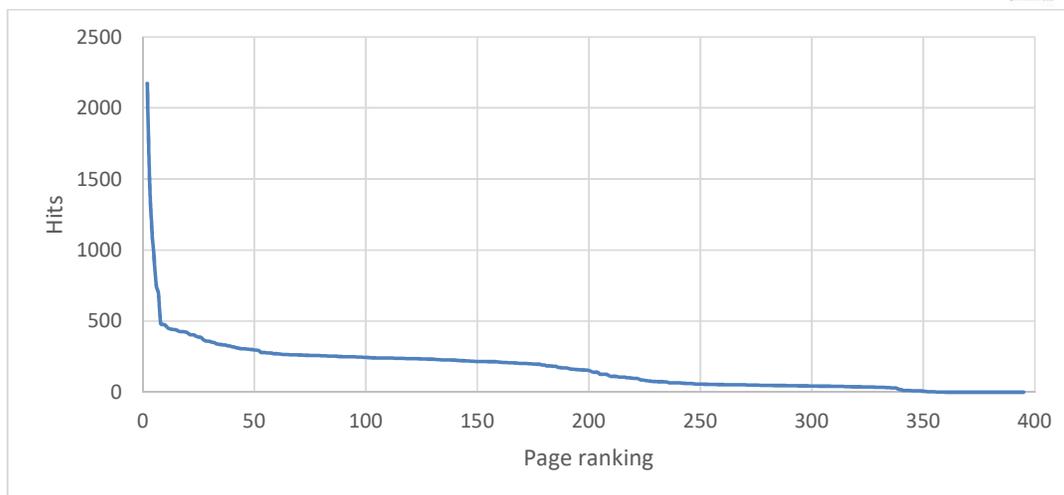


Figure 2- Viewing distribution of nearly 450 pages on the website

In total, up to mid-October 2019, and factoring out visits probably made by search engines and web crawlers, the website has registered over 32,000 individual visitor sessions – seven thousand more than this time last year. This is in line with the general overall increase we see in pages visits above.

**Sources of referrers – where do people visit the website from?**

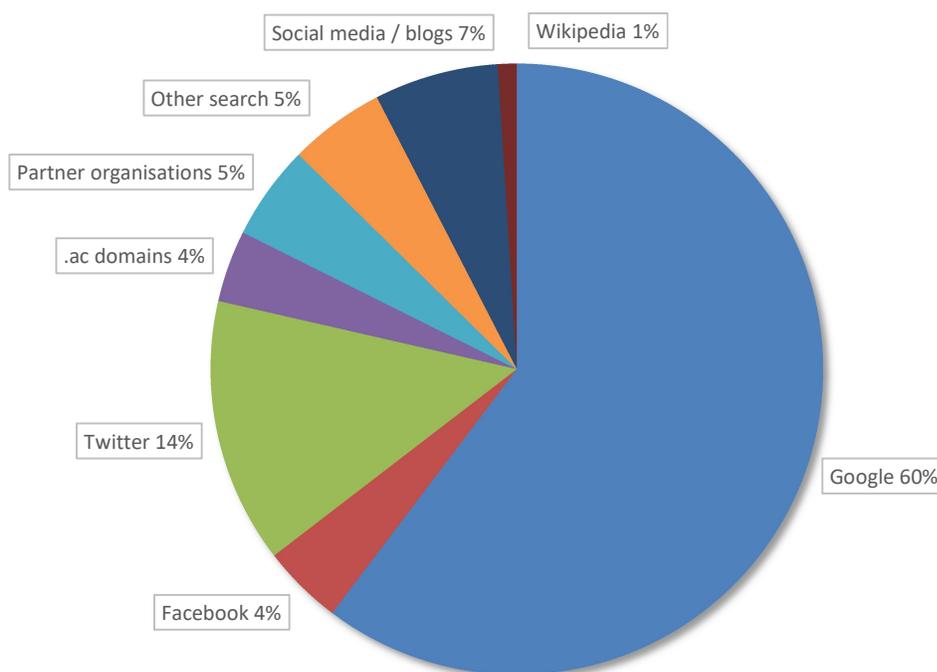


Figure 3 - Sources of traffic (where available) January - October 2019

Again the search giant Google dominates the source of our traffic, but it is also encouraging to see our social media channels driving traffic to the website. Mapping the locations of our visitors shows they come from all around the world, with visitors from the UK, Germany, US, France and China

again taking the top five positions, however we recorded visits from at least 126 different countries overall.

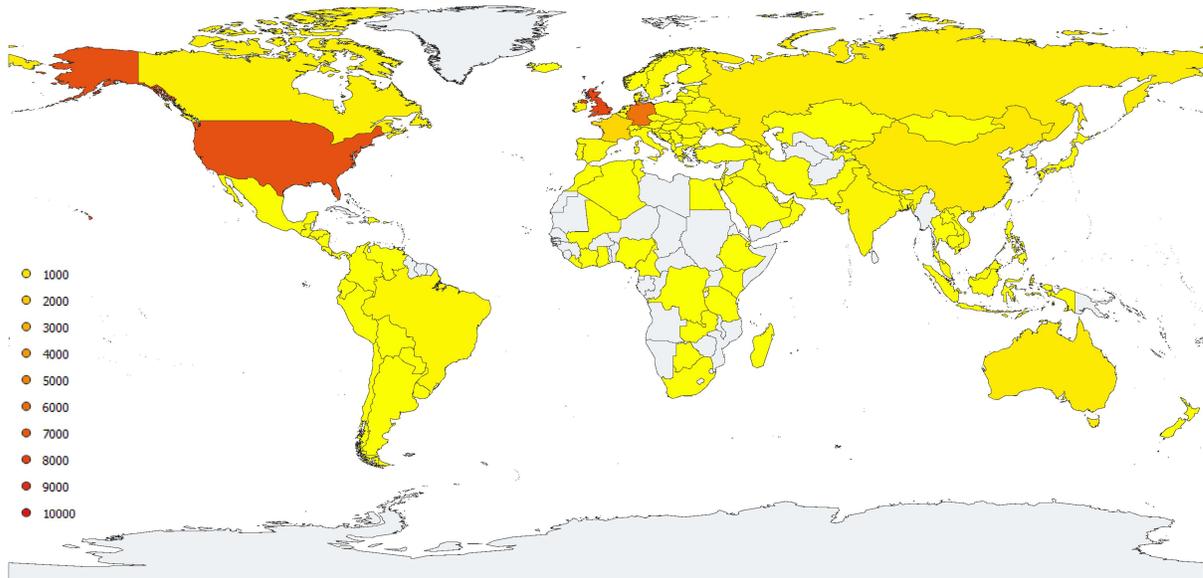


Figure 4 - Choropleth map showing location and number of visitor sessions, when it can be determined. Countries with no visits are shown in grey, countries with visits are coloured yellow to red, with hotter colours indicating larger numbers of visitors

### Moving forwards

During the next year, we aim to continue adding information to the website. There are still significant amounts of historic data that will need to be scanned and indexed for inclusion, and we hope that the website will become the distribution vehicle for the newly updated “Guidelines for the Curation of Geological Materials”.

As always we welcome any suggestions on new features for the website, or offers of help in generating content. These can be sent to [webmaster@geocurator.org](mailto:webmaster@geocurator.org).

Simon Harris

### 7.2. Blog

A total of 33 articles have been published on the blog (<https://geocollnews.wordpress.com/>) since 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018. Last year the blog received 4,538 hits. Within 2019, the blog received 7,760 hits, showing an increase of 3,222. It is believed that regular content, high quality material, and good advertising are the secrets to a successful blog site.

As Blog Editor, Emma Nicholls is responsible for ensuring a constant flow of good quality material. Two regular slots are featured on the blog; A monthly contribution from a committee member (who contribute on a rotating schedule), and the monthly *News from the Sector* written by Emma Nicholls, which is a round-up of forthcoming exhibitions, events, conferences, workshops, and job vacancies.

The top five most popular articles of the past year, beginning with the most read, were: *Good Collections Practice is a Shared Responsibility* by Pip Brewer at the Natural History Museum,

*Managing Personal Natural History Collections* by Nadine Gabriel at the Natural History Museum, *Dinosaur Croutons and Feathered Pterosaurs* by Emma Nicholls at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, *Up Inside Historic Dinosaurs* by Emma Nicholls at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, and *Printing a Dinosaur* by Alex Peaker at Dinosaur Isle. The statistics seem to show that opinion pieces are the most well-received, along with 'how to guides' on collections management practices.

The social media 'campaign' for Earth Science Week, Geoscience is for Everyone, went really well. The hashtags on Twitter really gained momentum as the week went on. Thank you to everyone who joined in with this event. The schedule on Twitter was as follows:

Mon 14th Oct - #ShowUsYourMug  
Tue 15th Oct - #ShowUsYourJewellery  
Wed 16th Oct - #ShowUsYourClothes  
Thur 17th Oct - #ShowUsYourCuddlyToys  
Fri 18th Oct - #ShowUsYourCrafts

If you have anything you would like to advertise in the News from the Sector blog, or you would like to contribute an article of your own, please get in touch with Emma at the following email address: [blog@geocurator.org](mailto:blog@geocurator.org).

*Dr Emma Nicholls*

### **7.3. Social media**

Our social media presence remains healthy, and we thank everyone who has engaged with us over the last year. Contributors are reminded of our social media policy, which can be viewed at: <https://www.geocurator.org/committee/management-documents/58-how-the-committee-works>.

We are represented on Facebook and Twitter, and most news, stories and events are shared on both platforms.

#### **7.3.1. Facebook**

We are represented on Facebook in two ways: a group and a page (both called Geological Curators' Group). All content is posted to both. 1035 people have liked our Facebook Group (985 in 2018; 912 in 2017) and we have 350 members of our group page (292 in 2018; 225 in 2017). Posts typically reach 2000-3000 people every week.

#### **7.3.2. Twitter**

We currently have 1227 followers (1068 in 2018; 961 in 2017) on our Twitter account (@OriginalGCG). During November, we had 165 profile visits, 33 mentions, and 10,200 tweet impressions. These numbers vary monthly.

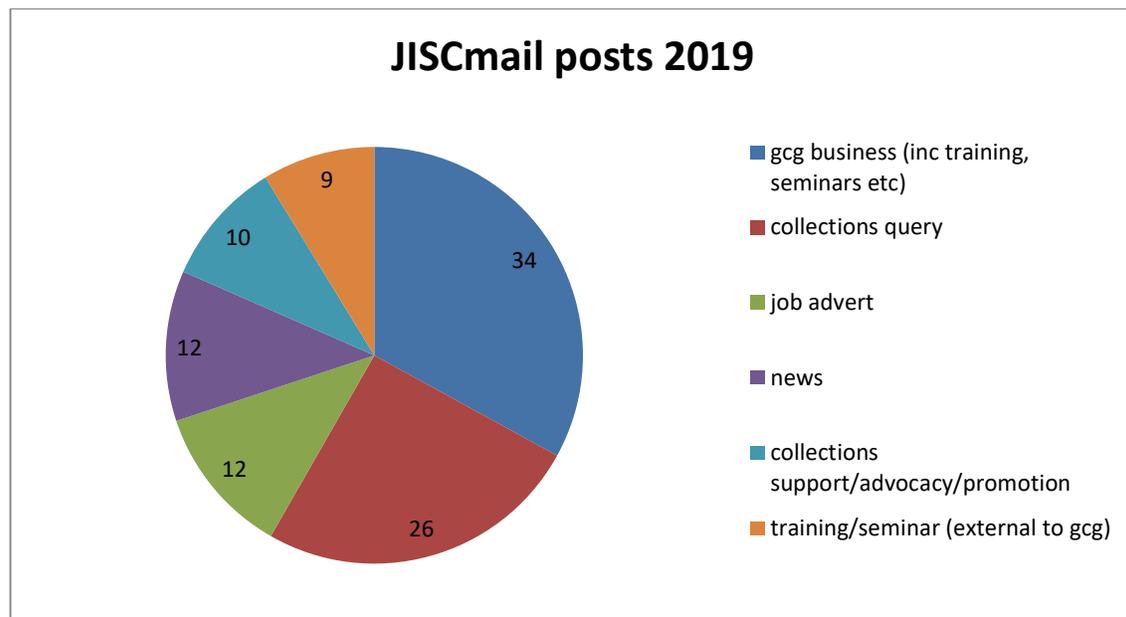
*Emma Bernard*

### 7.4. JISCMail

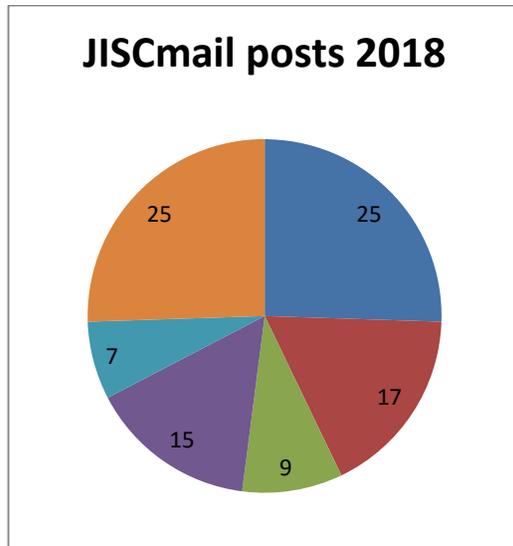
As noted in previous years, the vast majority of correspondence that would once have been addressed directly to GCG now comes into the GCG JISCMail list, GEO-CURATORS@JISCMail.ac.uk. Anyone is welcome to sign up and post to this list, whether a GCG member or not, although we do of course encourage you to join! See our website for a link through the list with sign-up instructions.

List membership is still roughly in line with our GCG membership, although it doesn't match completely. There are currently 275 list members. (2018: 276; 2017: 272). It's worth pointing out that this is purely a list of email addresses – it's perfectly possible for one person to have two (or more) email addresses signed on to the list. The list tends to balance itself out as a few people unsubscribe themselves, but most that leave the list are stripped out automatically when their email addresses bounce in the JISCMail monitoring mechanism (see below). If an email address bounces for 5 or so days in a row, JISC will remove it from the list. So, if you know there have been problems with your email address, it's worth checking you're still subscribed! For example, a raft of btinternet and related addresses were monitored for several days recently, as were some clearly originating from the National Museum Wales. These problems appeared to solve themselves before the emails were removed. I have no control over these JISC mechanisms, I just get notified when they are in action. If you have any queries or problems, drop me a line on [secretary@geocurator.org](mailto:secretary@geocurator.org) and I will look into it for you.

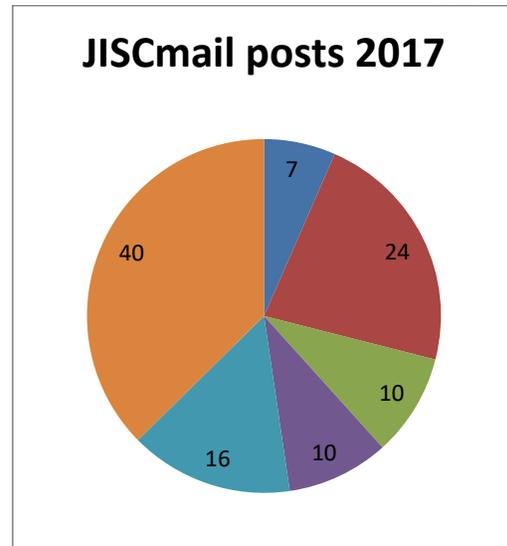
New JISCMail subscriptions during 2019	15 (2018:18)
Removals (self sign-off)	4
Deletions (JISC automated)	12
Net total cf. 2018	-1



Total original posts 2019 (not including replies): 103 (NB – only includes the first couple from December).



Total posts 2018: 98



Total posts 2017: 107

Compared to previous years, the number of original posts on the list in 2019 concern GCG business, sent out by GCG committee members – mainly notification of new blog posts, and GCG events. Most of the news posted over the last year was also the monthly ‘News from the Sector’ GCG blog series. The number of collections queries is also up to 2017 levels once again – about a quarter of all the posts concerned identification questions, collections looking for a home, or collections care and museum practice queries. This works out at a couple such posts a month on average. The majority of these came from list members who are not on committee.

Total figures are not directly comparable as they don’t cover the exact same dates each year. Also, with a relatively small number of posts, small fluctuations are amplified, but it is clear that alongside our fantastic blog posts being sent out a few times a month, those working with collections are happy to trust the GCG hive mind with collections-based queries of all sorts.

This year, it is noted that about 60% of posts are sent in the latter half of the year – from July onwards (inclusive).

As always, we thank everyone who has contributed to the conversations over the past year, especially those who have offered their expertise.

*Sarah King*

## 8. Outreach and profile

We once again had informal representation at the Munich Mineral Show in October, and supported the Palaeontological Association’s student conference, Progressive Palaeontology (Birmingham, 6-8<sup>th</sup> June). At our AGM in 2018, members approved a motion to offer £250 towards the building of a new bridge to access the islands on which the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs reside. Happily, the crowdfunder was a success, and £70,000 was raised in total by December 2018. The plans have recently been approved and construction should begin soon.

We are continuing to consolidate our modus operandi, which means that for the foreseeable future we are unlikely to attend events such as fossil festivals with a dedicated stand. However we are working on our identity and profile in other ways. In January we held our first ever (to our knowledge) committee Away Day, which resulted in a revised mission statement, and a decision to proceed with investigation of the conversion of GCG from an unincorporated charitable association to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). This model of running charities has come about in the last decade, and offers liability protection for trustees (committee members), as well as a ready-made structure through its standard constitution which will flesh out and tighten our current procedures considerably.

As part of a review of our organisation as a whole, we launched a survey in September. We had 101 responses, from members and non-members, and the answers will help us shape our future plans and ensure that GCG continues to offer the facilities that members want, and nurtures and supports the geological community that has been at the heart of the Group since its inception in 1974. We thank everyone who took the time to contribute – your answers are so valuable to us.

We do still have supplies of GCG fliers that we can send out if you would like to help us promote GCG, and we also would love to hear from anyone who might be interested in sponsoring a GCG event. Drop us a line at [info@geocurator.org](mailto:info@geocurator.org) and we will take it from there.

*Sarah King*

## GCG information

The Geological Curators' Group can be found at:

- [www.geocurator.org](http://www.geocurator.org)
- <https://www.facebook.com/GeologicalCuratorsGroup/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/376700195784835/>
- <https://twitter.com/OriginalGCG>
- <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=296050&subid=0>

Contact details:

[info@geocurator.org](mailto:info@geocurator.org)

National Museums Scotland  
Chambers Street  
Edinburgh  
EH1 1JF

## Committee for 2019 (from AGM 2018-AGM 2019)

- **Chair:** Matthew Parkes (*National Museum of Ireland*)
- **Secretary:** Sarah King (*York Museums Trust*)
- **Treasurer:** Rachel Walcott (*National Museums Scotland*)
- **Membership Secretary:** Cindy Howells (*National Museum Wales*)
- **Programme Secretary:** Zoë Hughes (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Minutes Secretary:** Tony Morgan (*National Museums Liverpool*) (resigned January)
- **Journal Editor:** Matthew Parkes
- **Newsletter Editor, Blog Editor:** Emma Nicholls (*Horniman Museum and Gardens*)
- **Collections Officer:** Mike Howe (*British Geological Survey*)
- **Web Officer:** Simon Harris (*British Geological Survey*)
- **Ordinary Member:** Hilary Ketchum (*Oxford University Museum of Natural History*)
- **Ordinary Member:** Emma Bernard (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Ordinary Member:** Alex Peaker (*Dinosaur Isle*)
- **Co-opted member** (NatSCA representative): Isla Gladstone (*Bristol Museum and Art Gallery*)
- **Co-opted member** (Conservation Officer): Nigel Larkin (*Natural History Conservation*)
- **Co-opted member** (journal editor handover): Pip Brewer (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Co-opted member** (archive support): Lil Stevens (*Natural History Museum*)

***\*Please print your own copy of this document if you need it; GCG is working to reduce paper waste. Thank you\****