

Annual Report for 2021

For presentation at the 2021 AGM



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-qcg-committee/27-qcg-constitution>

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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

It has been another unusual and stressful year as the country and the world continues to grapple with the Covid-19 pandemic. For GCG it has largely been keeping things ticking over as we wait for things to settle down a little more. We have continued to meet as a committee online, although in the end we have only run one event (the Symposium for Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation) this year, mainly due to work pressures on committee and a degree of 'Zoom fatigue' from so many online events. As a small organisation, and with museum budgets seriously stretched, alongside changing restrictions and differing attitudes in public health, it is harder for us to put our heads above the parapet and run in-person events, although there is a desire to do this as soon as is practical. We can easily make a loss if the attendees aren't there, or a venue pulls out at short notice. This is reflected in the polling done for this year's AGM and seminar, at which over 75% of people would prefer to attend online, presumably for the ease of attendance and the much lower cost than for an in-person event. Although some flickers of the by-now clichéd 'new normal' have emerged, things are still very much in flux and show few signs of fully settling any time soon.

You will probably remember that almost a year ago now, the member votes that we asked for, in terms of adding a dissolution clause to the GCG constitution, and converting the GCG charity to a CIO (charitable incorporated organisation), were passed with overwhelming majorities. Thank you to everyone who took part in these and made your feelings known. The constitution has been updated on our website and on the Charity Commission GCG pages. The CIO conversion has been a little longer in the making. After crossing many t's and dotting many i's, the application was finally submitted to the Charity Commission in August. The CC is however very busy and is prioritising charities directly related to addressing the pandemic. Hopefully we are getting ever nearer the front of the queue and the application will be approved very soon. We will need to be pragmatic and flexible in this transitional period.

In the meantime, I have continued to take a broad look at the structure of GCG and the workload across committee. You will have hopefully seen the advertisements for four trustee posts prior to this AGM. Two of these are new posts: the Communications Coordinator and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator. The former will bring together all of our communication streams (blog, Coprolite newsletter, emails, social media) to get everything moving in the same direction and our messages getting out there more effectively. The latter I would hope needs little explanation. GCG made a statement in support of Black Lives Matter in June 2020 (<https://www.geocurator.org/committee/management-documents/58-how-the-committee-works/448-gcg-statement-on-black-lives-matter-june-2020>), and while progress is a little on hold as we transition to a CIO, Emma Nicholls has continued to gather relevant resources for us, and we take our platform seriously. I thank Emma for her work here. We hope the new EDI trustee will help us to focus on how we need to change and encourage us to have difficult conversations. We look forward to working together as a committee to push forward and be better.

We also co-signed a letter, via Prof Carrie Lear at Cardiff University, to NERC (the Natural Environment Research Council) last year, urging them to improve EDI across the geosciences, along with nearly 50 other individuals and organisations. They have been receptive, conducting research and producing a report (<https://www.ukri.org/publications/advancing-equity-diversity-and-inclusivity-in-the-environmental-sciences/>). The next step is the framework for joint action, due any time now, where NERC will set out how they plan to tackle the problems.

Alongside the CIO conversion we will be rolling out our 'new' mission statement (currently found here <https://www.geocurator.org/about-gcg>), which was actually thrashed out at a really productive committee away day back in 2019, some comprehensive bye laws to make sure the ins and outs of GCG are clear for the future, and the ability to recruit 'officers' (or 'volunteers' in Charity Commission speak). This is a flexible facility that replaces the ambiguous 'co-opted committee

member' status used in the current charity. In practice it is very similar to co-opting people, enabling us to recruit people as and when we need them, to feed into ongoing committee business, or on a shorter-term basis. There are 12 trustees who, in the way that GCG has operated for decades, are accountable for running the charity responsibly and ultimately delivering its outputs. (The alternative would be the arrangement of a typically larger charity, where the day-to-day running would be the responsibility of a management board.) Officer posts allow a more informal way of getting involved with GCG, and their status is recognised by the Charity Commission and is being written into the new bye laws. It should offer a more transparent system with agreed parameters and should also give us more capacity to deliver bigger and better things, as well as responding more quickly to things like funding bids and press stories. We have used working groups for a while now, where subgroups of committee will go away and work on specific projects as and when they arise. This is a natural succession to that, allowing a mixture of trustees and non-trustees to use their expertise and spread the workload to deliver GCG outputs. Most of the time, individual trustees are likely to be responsible for recruiting officers as and when they feel they need them, but there is a great deal of flexibility in this new system, and I look forward to seeing how it will be used. If you feel you might like to volunteer some time for GCG in a quite specific capacity, keep an eye out for callouts in the next year.

I have also been continuing to ponder GCG's finances and done some training in charity finance development. We are comfortable but not overrun with money, particularly if we want to do some new things in the future. The committee will be meeting about this in the New Year. In the meantime, if anyone has any thoughts about what we could or should spend money on, let me know. Member bursaries? Research grants? Careers fair attendance? Schools packs? Many possibilities.

I have continued to attend online meetings to keep GCG connected to relevant organisations, notably surrounding the Towards a National Collection digitisation scoping project (<https://www.nationalcollection.org.uk/>). This continues to rumble on, and while the research councils apparently leave anything that involves any sort of collection firmly to AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council), leading to a bit of a humanities bias, the Natural History Museum, London is solidly involved. A kick-off workshop on natural sciences was held on 4th October setting out their stall for the next few years, and museums with relevant collections can expect to hear more about the plans over the coming months. NatSCA (Natural Sciences Collections Association), with whom we have strong links, are working closely with the project leaders and I continue to meet with them and the consortium of regional natural science collections (UK Distributed Natural Science collections or UKDiNaS) to keep tabs on progress. We are led to believe that palaeontology collections are well catered for in prospective database designs, broadly using many of the same fields as for biological collections, but the same may not be true for mineralogy and petrology, and Rachel Walcott is our eyes and ears on this as part of her role in attending meetings on this and the broader CETAF (Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities) and DiSSCo (Distributed System of Scientific Collections). Thanks to Rachel for her time and work on this. As soon as we have any news we will let you know – and please ask if you have questions, although it's still quite intangible at the moment!

A case study about Persistent object Identifiers also emerged earlier this year based on NHM collections (linked on this page: <https://tanc-ahrc.github.io/HeritagePIDs/resources.html>). The Collections Trust are also thinking towards the practicalities of large-scale data management, and released some new research in May, aimed at crystallising some more practical solutions to the enormous task of dealing with museum collections data. Their report can be found here <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/tapping-our-collections-potential/>. All in all an exciting time to be working in collections management, and we look forward to being able to help our members engage fully with the process.

All that remains is for me to thank everyone on the committee for their time and engagement, and for keeping GCG running to the high standards we have all come to expect. I would like to extend special thanks to Pip, who is stepping down this year after fully reinvigorating our journal in a very short time. Our next Editor has some very big shoes to fill. Finally, I hope that you are all managing to keep well in these strange times, both mentally and physically. Covid-19 is still very much with us and continues to affect so much of our daily lives. If there is ever anything we can do for you, please don't hesitate to let us know.

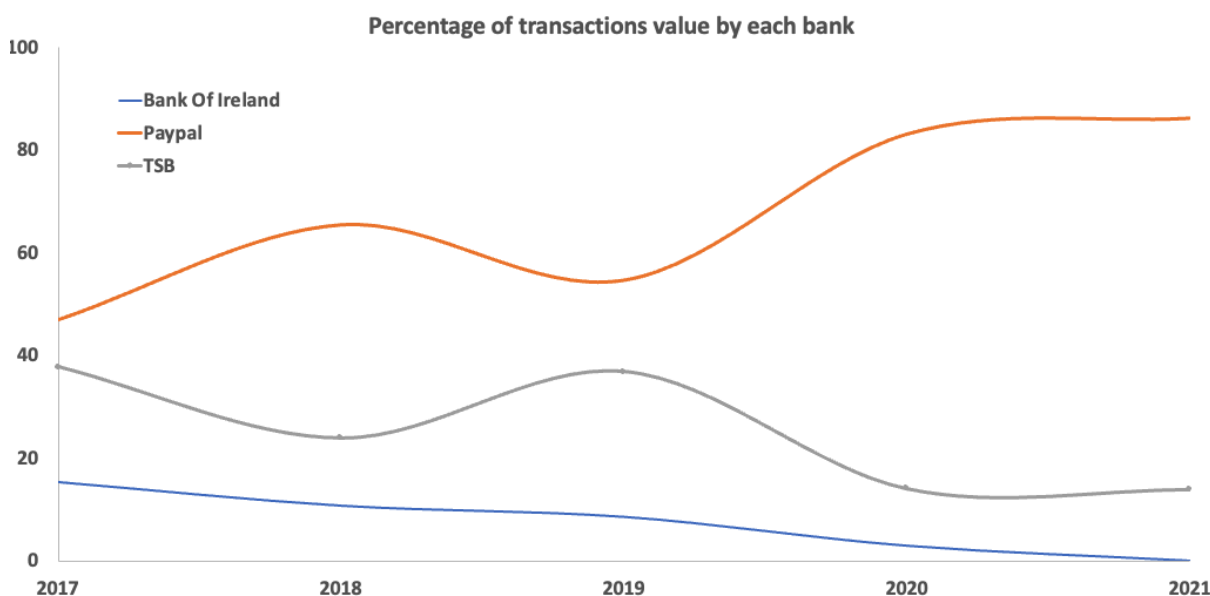
Dr Sarah King

2. Accounts

There is not much to report from this year due to the ongoing pandemic. We ran one event which was cancelled so we reimbursed people who signed up for it. (Although some offered the sign-up fee as a donation – thank you). Due to Covid-19, we delayed the printing and distribution of the physical journal (see Section 5 – Publications), so most of the expenditure was related to that as there were three issues to be printed. This will be my final Financial Report. I will stay on as a trustee to oversee the winding down and closure of the current accounts that we used, and to support the new Treasurer as he sets up system for the new Geological Curators Group CIO.

Here some notes about how things have changed since I started.

Firstly, paying by PayPal has become very popular. When the account was opened in the 2016-2017 financial year, 50% of the transactions were done by PayPal (mostly related to the events we ran that year). Now 80% of transactions are in PayPal (mostly subscriptions)



Secondly, PayPal doesn't come cheap. It syphons off a small percentage with each payment, currently 0.48 per £20 subscription. Rather more for international payments. We are already paying more bank fees than we did when we ran the Bank of Ireland euro account (which was closed last financial year). See table below

	PayPal	Boi+TSB
2017	£22.05	-£29.08
2018	-£74.66	-£43.71
2019	-£152.33	-£68.53
2020	-£93.74	
2021	-£64.89	

Table 1. Bank fees over the last 5 years.

Finally, the anticipated closure of the TSB account will involve encouraging 14 International and 24 UK Institutions to pay into another account, along with 62% (or 110) of our UK Individual membership.

Thank you to Andrew Ross for checking the accounts.

Geological Curators' Group

48th Annual General Meeting, Online

2021 Accounts

28/10/2020 - 27/10/2021

Income			Expenditure		
	This year	2019-2020		This year	2019-2020
Workshops - AGM & GCG-run	£30.00	(£2,185.25)	Geol Curator 11	-£3,455.62	(-£1349.66)
Workshop - Co-sponsored	£0.00	£0.00	Workshops - AGM & GCG-run	-£30.00	(-£1021.74)
Subscriptions	£5,536.20	(£5,717.03)	Workshops - Co-sponsored	£0.00	£0.00
Donations	£15.88	(£90.58)	Committee expenses	£0.00	(-£682.9)
Publications	£0.00	(£43.00)	Website fees	-£256.79	(-£273.21)
Bank payments (for using debit card)	£0.00	(£9.61)	JISC GB/3D payments	£0.00	£0.00
			Brighton Medals [£1214.86 in fund]	£0.00	£0.00
			Sponsorship	£0.00	(-£125)
			Bank Fees	-£64.89	(-£93.74)
			Other	-£924.41	(-£1713.81)
	£5,582.08			-£4,731.71	
Balance as at 27/10/2020	£21,017.18		Balance as at 27/10/2021	£21,867.55	

Auditor:

Andrew Ross

Rachel Walcott, Treasurer 12/11/2021

Rachel Walcott

3. Membership and networks

3.1 Membership and reach

2021 has proved to be another challenging year for many curators and museums, and this can be seen reflected in our membership figures, with several institutions having problems sorting payments earlier in the year. We have had 16 new members sign up with us this year, but as always this can be balanced by the loss of a few subscriptions, some through moving out of the sector or retiring, whilst some have unfortunately failed to renew, and we have to remove them from our records before the end of the year. We still gain most of our new subscriptions through online payments, and we will be reviewing payment options over the next year.

We can now count members from 22 countries, including: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Denmark, Faroe Islands, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, USA and the UK.

I am sorry to report a few sad losses this year with the deaths of Paul Sowan and Stuart Baldwin, both very long-standing members of GCG, and Colin Huller, who we met much more recently. All will be sadly missed. More information can be found on the news pages of our website (<https://www.geocurator.org/news>).

Breakdown of membership figures for this year (October 2020 – October 2021)

Full individual subscriptions paid to date	174 (132 UK, 42 OS)
Concessionary subscriptions paid to date	30 (27 UK, 3 OS)
Honorary Subscriptions	8
Institutions paid to date	35
Total	247

	2021	2020	2019	2018
Personal UK	159	169	173	175
Personal Overseas	45	39	34	28
UK Institutions	19	26	37	38
Overseas Institutions	16	19	20	21
Honorary	8	8	7	7
Total	247	261	271	269

To find out more about membership and to renew online, please visit the website:

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

As always, I thank those who pay promptly each year, and also those who let me know when their address, email or place of work changes. We will be changing to a new bank account and alternative payment options within the next year, so I'd like to encourage all members to stick with us during this period, keep an eye on emails from us, and to ensure your subscriptions are kept up to date to guarantee you don't miss out on our journals, newsletters, blogs, meetings or workshops.

Finally, I'd like to thank Rachel for all her hard work each year in helping sort out various anomalous payments.

Cindy Howells

3.2. Correspondence and networks

As an affiliated specialist group of the Geological Society (GSL), we receive regular communications and support from them. Over the last year Dr Duncan Murdock has been our Geological Society Science Committee Rep. Duncan has been kept informed of our committee meetings, the agenda and a brief overview of the meetings are sent to him to pass onto the Geol Soc. There has been a slight change to the make-up of the Science Committee and how specialist groups are represented. GCG will now report solely to the Science Committee. The Science Committee will now be five or six rolling reps from special interest groups. GCG is in the applied family as an affiliated group. Two to three reps from each family sit on the Science Committee meeting. We will still have Duncan as our rep, but also specialist group members (who are yet to be announced).

A couple of affiliated specialist groups of the Geol Soc contacted us during the last year for advice on converting to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Thank you to Sarah King, who was able to offer them advice based on our experience.

As Secretary I represented GCG at the Geol Soc Specialist Groups AGM on 15th June 2021 via Zoom. A variety of subjects were discussed including a new book series called Geoscience in Practice (<https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/gip>), which will cover the applications of geological techniques. GCG are looking to submit a proposal on the theme of geological curation, so look out for more information about this in the next year.

The Geol Soc have kindly agreed for us to use Burlington House as a 'PO Box' address for the GCG, which will be beneficial for the small amount of physical mail we receive and have for official documents.

I have also attended a few meetings of the Subject Specialist Network Consortium (SSN - <https://www.subjectspecialistnetworks.org.uk/>) during the past year. This network has representation from all SSN's similar to GCG (e.g., NatSCA). A few emails have come through via the SSN Consortium and I have passed these onto the relevant parties.

There has been discussion about organising a SSN Consortium conference and inviting representatives from the Museum Association, Collections Trust, Arts Council etc. Dates and format are still being discussed, but I will circulate when I hear more. There was a meeting about discussing the impact Covid-19 has had on museums and collections, outside of the normal pressures the cultural heritage section faces. Notes were taken about these along with some potential solutions. I hope the notes can be circulated in due course. There is still a desire for the SSN to be a place where the various groups can share knowledge and expertise, which is a good thing. GCG has been able to share some of our knowledge of governance with other SSN's and build relationships with others.

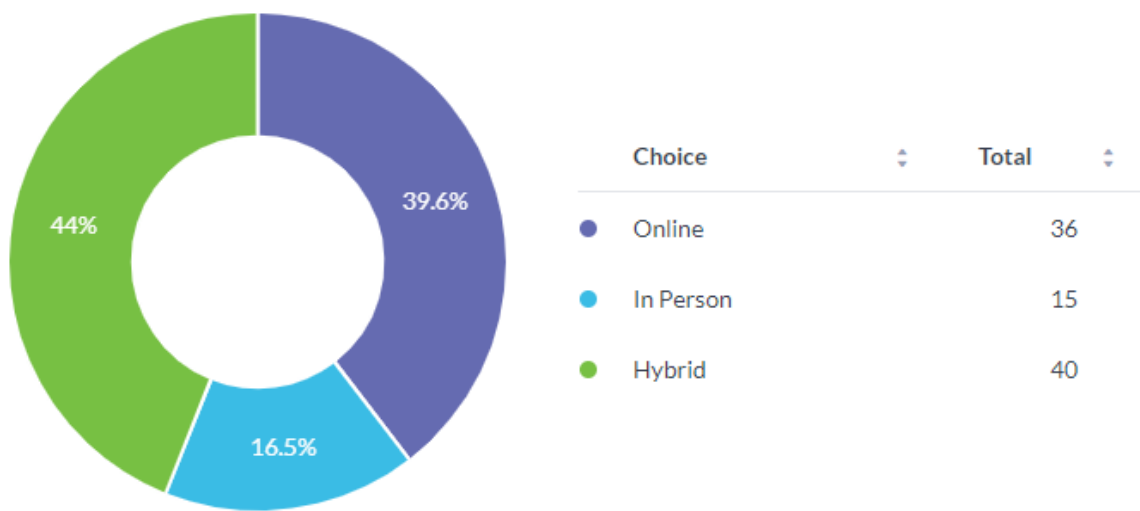
Most of our correspondence is by our general JISCmail list (see point 7.4 below). A few direct emails arrived in the inbox. As usual these have been for advice on how to get into the sector, assistance with identification, requests to post items to the JISCmail list and information about the journal. Queries are either answered by myself or re-directed to the most appropriate person.

It is important to acknowledge that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes within the GCG committee throughout the year, which is not always seen by our members. I wish to thank all committee members for their hard work and dedication of the last few years, through some trying times.

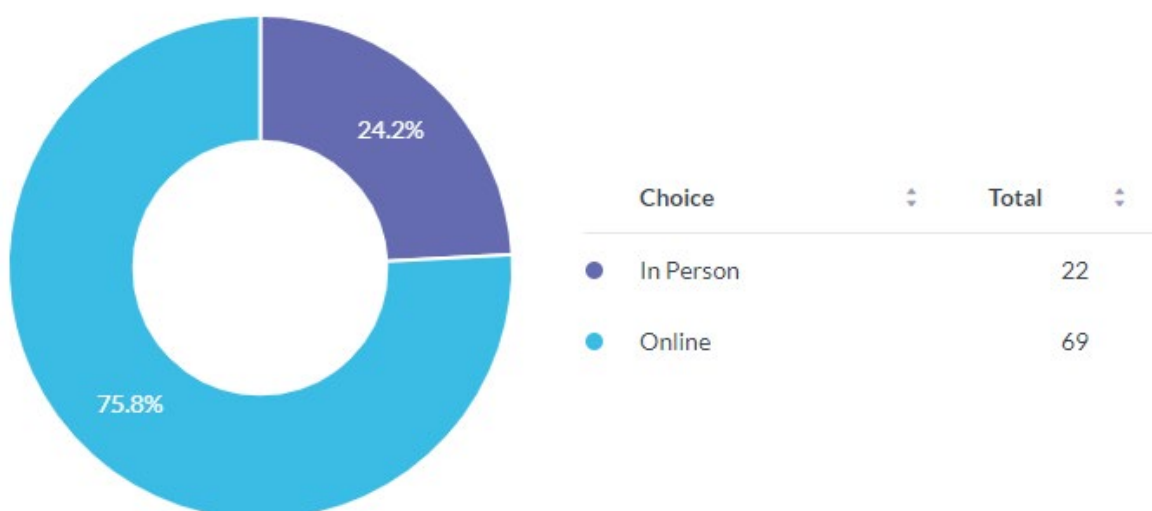
Emma Bernard

4. Events and participation

2021 has been quiet in terms of events. Emma Nicholls put together a games night which was scheduled as an online event on April 13th, however due to the re-opening of the UK economy, ticket sales were poor. We decided to postpone the event. This will now run as the post AGM social on November 30th.



Interestingly, when asked if they would attend a hybrid event online or in person, most responded with online.



As we run into 2022, depending upon the situation with the pandemic, we need to keep asking these questions of our members on how they would like events to be run. I do not believe that we should

return 100% to in person events. The pandemic has provided us with the opportunity to engage further with our overseas members and serve them better in terms of our event programme. However, running a hybrid event as opposed to a purely “in person” event presents further challenges and we will need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages carefully as we move forward, as there will be additional work in running hybrid events with our current resources.

In 2022 we are keen to test out several “geological drop ins”, events on a theme which allow people to ask questions and have discussions on issues affecting geological curators and those curators who care for geological collections, but may be lacking support or expertise in caring for them. Please do get in touch if you are interested (events@geocurator.org).

Zoë Hughes

4.1. The Symposium on Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation (SPPC)

SPPC was held online due to the continuing Covid-19 pandemic and organised by Nigel Larkin, Emma Nicholls, Simon Harris and Lu Allington Jones. The host institution was Oxford University Museum of Natural History and Roger Benson at the Museum organised the SVPCA online. It made sense to continue with tradition and hold the SPPC the day before the SVPCA commenced (on Monday 6th September). ‘Gather Town’ was the conference platform decided upon by the SVPCA committee, though there were no actual committee meetings that I am aware of, just informal discussions between myself (NL) and Roger Benson. Gather Town seems to be the next best thing to being there, as you can chat informally within the space with friends and colleagues in Zoom calls before the presentations start, or during breaks etc – or even if you don’t want to listen to the main talks, you can simply find a space outside the conference room and chat. You can also bump into people and make new contacts. Roger Benson built the layout for SPPC and SVPCA and put the posters in place for people to read – he was also there to trouble-shoot on the day (thankfully!). As a backup, Simon Harris put the posters and abstracts up on the GCG’s SPPC 2021 webpage and organised a mass Zoom call for delegates in case it was required.

The meeting was a posters-only event with no platform presentations. Doors opened at 3pm, and people wandered around and chatted and looked at the posters for up to an hour. Then, starting at 4pm, each poster had a ten-minute slot. A member of the GCG committee introduced each presenter, then give the presenter a few minutes to describe their project, followed by questions. We allowed the Gather Town conference space to remain open for about an hour after the last presentation so that people could hang around and chat if they wanted and ask further questions of the presenters.

126 people from all around the world registered for the event. I kept the details of the geographical spread of the first 100 as that was our original capacity and I had to work out the most effective timing of the talks to reflect the various time zones presenters and delegates were in.

26 people were placed on the waiting list after the first 100 registrations, but we then decided to register these people as well and give them access too as we knew that – being a free event – probably fewer than half would actually turn up. On the day, the maximum number of delegates in the room at one time was 41. This unfortunately, seems to be the way with free online events. Lots of people register, but some do not turn up.

There were 11 posters – not all about fossils! - including one by Lu Allington-Jones about the benefits of being a GCG member. Most were from presenters in the UK but there were also one each from Argentina, Canada and the USA.

If you were not able to attend the event, the posters are still available on the GCG website, <https://www.geocurator.org/events/143-sppc/previous-years-of-sppc/sppc-2021-virtual>

Nigel Larkin

5. Publications

5.1. *Geological Curator*

Delayed hard-copy issues

Due to obstacles created by the Covid-19 pandemic the printing of hard copies of issues 11(3), 11(4) and 11(5) were delayed, please accept our apologies about that and we hope you understand why. The issues have recently been sent out to UK members who are registered for hard copies. Issues for international members will be sent out shortly.

11(4) December 2020

This issue featured 6 articles and an obituary for Matthew Parkes, former Chair, editor, and long-term member of GCG.

- Treasures in Tins
- The Arroyo del Vizcaíno collection
- The preparator Richard Hall (b. 1839)
- Historical collections in museums
- The palaeontological collection at Folkestone Museum
- The long walk from the Carboniferous
- Obituary: Matthew Alastair Parkes

11(5) June 2021

This issue included 6 articles

- Rocking the boat: geological collections and social change
- Conservation and photogrammetry of subfossil Quaternary walrus
- The importance of correct mineral identification for correct storage
- Mechanical and chemical preparation techniques applied to Frasnian Cephalopods from Lompret (Belgium)
- A brief history of natural history museums in the Ottoman Empire
- Digitising the historical archives of the Conservation Centre at the Natural History Museum, London

11(6) December 2022

Due to the loss of our editor Pip Brewer, the GCG has advertised for a replacement. Lu Allington-Jones is acting as editor in the interim. There has been a low number of articles submitted for this issue (possibly due to a reduction in projects undertaken over the last 2 years caused by Covid-19) so the submission deadline has been extended to the end of November. The publication of this issue is therefore likely to be delayed until February and the issue itself may be quite short.

11(7) June 2022

Dr Jeff Liston has kindly offered to be the guest editor for a special ethics edition containing an estimated 8 manuscripts.

Author agreement

A new author agreement has been drafted following legal advice.

DOIs

The possibility of assigning Digital Object Identifiers using CrossRef is being investigated by the interim editor and webmaster. A DOI is a persistent identifier or handle used to identify digital objects uniquely and will serve to increase the value of the journal articles.

Editorial Team

Many thanks to the team this year: Dr Pip Brewer (Editor); Dr Chris Dean (Associate Editor, Palaeontology, particularly Vertebrate Palaeontology); Nicolas Baird (Production Assistant); Emily Carlisle (Production Assistant); Lu Allington-Jones (Associate Editor, Conservation and Preparation).

Vacancies: Editor; Associate Editor History of Science; Associate Editor Mineralogy; Associate Editor Micropalaeontology. If you are interested in potentially fulfilling any of these posts, please contact: journal@geocurator.org

Issues per year

The journal has continued to increase in quality this year, but this has made the standardisation of issue size extremely difficult. The article turnaround is extremely rapid compared with other peer-reviewed journals and it is felt that this should be extended to allow reviewers and authors more time to undertake high quality revisions. Considering these points, it is proposed that the journal be changed to a single yearly edition in June, rather than 2 editions per year.

Submitting a manuscript

All submissions should be sent to journal@geocurator.org and should follow the [Instructions for Authors](#). They should be in English, appropriately structured, clear and concise and fully referenced. Please carefully read through our [Journal Policies and Guidance](#) before submitting a manuscript for consideration.

Issues of Geological Curator

The most recent four issues can only be accessed by current members through logging in to the website. Issues older than that are made freely available via the website. Back issues of some printed editions are still available. <https://www.geocurator.org/journal>

Lu Allington-Jones

5.2. Coprolite newsletter

This year saw the re-design of the newsletter (from issue 96 onwards) to incorporate colour and its expansion to 4 pages of A4. The newsletter still incorporates notices of upcoming events relating to geological collections but now has a larger featured article (including images) and a new light-hearted feature “guess the coprolite”.

Coprolite issue 95 December 2020 featured an article by Dr David Gelsthorpe (Curator of Earth Science Collections, Manchester Museum) entitled “Decolonising Manchester Museum’s Minerals”. Issue 96 March 2021 included an article by Mike Rumsey (Senior Curator in Charge, MPS Division and Principal Curator, Minerals, The Natural History Museum, London, UK) “Discovery of Kernowite: A new mineral discovered in a 220-year-old sample exemplifies the importance of our historical collections”. Thanks to Helena Bates (Curatorial Assistant, Meteorites, The Natural History Museum, London, UK) for “The Winchcombe Meteorite: The first meteorite fall to be recovered in the UK for 30 years” in the 97 June 2021 issue and to Dr Angharad Jones (Curator, Cresswell Heritage Trust) and Rebecca Morris-Buck (Engagement and Programmes Manager, Cresswell Heritage Trust) for “Cresswell Crags: A Phoenix Rising” in the September 2021 issue number 98.

Next year will see the 100th edition of the newsletter.

If anyone has anything they would like to see included in the newsletter, or would like to volunteer as the next editor, please get in touch with us at coprolite@geocurator.org.

Lu Allington-Jones

5.3. Thumbs Up leaflet

The 'Thumbs Up' leaflet was first produced in the 1990's as advocacy for good collecting practices. It is still being re-written and designed to provide better, current advice, and be more user friendly. Discussion has involved how to incorporate best practice whilst also taking safety into consideration (many conservation products can be unsafe for use by minors).

The new leaflet would benefit with input from a graphic designer and so to cover costs of design and printing, space for sponsorship has been allowed. The leaflet is advocating best practice for beginners in collection, curation, conservation and preparation. Sponsorship could include the incorporation of relevant weblinks, logos and specific products into the leaflet that would be of use to the avid geologist. If you would like to sponsor the leaflet, please get in touch info@geocurator.org

Alex Peaker

5.4. Advice booklet

As a subject specialist network, GCG is dedicated to furthering the use of geological collections worldwide as well as advocating for better care, maintenance, and use. One way we do this is by publishing guidelines. We have updated our guidelines which are predominantly aimed at students who are starting out on research projects as well as anyone at any career stage or interest level. This is a live document and the current version is available on our website (www.geocurator.org/researchbooklet) which we will update as best practice changes. We have endorsements from leading geological groups as well as NERC.

Please do share this link with anyone who may benefit from it. It is an excellent resource. The committee wishes to thank Dr Hilary Ketchum who was paramount in the redrafting of this document.

Emma Bernard

6. Collections support

6.1. Collections monitoring

In my 2020 report, there was some cause for optimism in the autumn and early winter as museums reopened after the lockdown, but sadly this was misplaced as we re-entered lockdown in late 2020. We need to hope that the current reopening of society and the growing confidence continues, but sadly the growth in redundancies also goes on, as recorded by the Museums Association Redundancy Tracker (<https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/workforce/redundancy-tracker/>). This covers all museums, not just natural history.

	Institutions announcing redundancies	Total Redundancies
November 2020		3600
15 th December 2020	59	3997
28 th April 2021	65	4100
5th August 2021	74	4690

It does look as if there will be funding to digitize natural history collections (including geology) through UKRI support of the DiSSCo (Distributed System of Scientific Collections) Project. The Natural History Museum, London has already been funded for a pilot UK project, and to build a £180m science, collections and digitization centre at Harwell and these developments are progressing and they have selected the collections for transfer. More information about the project is on the NHMUK website (<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/about-us/harwell.html>). They have also received funding from Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to run a project with the goals to identify:

- The business case and strategic plan for digitising UK natural science collections
- The underlying data from our regional collections to evidence the business case
- A network of institutions aligned to this digital mission and pilot activities demonstrating this cooperation (e.g., digitisation and training).

The first virtual meeting was on the morning of October 4th, was well attended, and I believe generated an air of optimism.

Today, many areas of geoscience research are database driven. A growing number of papers are based on analyses of downloads from publically available databases such as GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility), iDigBio, PBDB (Paleobiology Database) and the Natural History Museum, London, data portal. Many of these draw heavily on data from publications, but there is a growing realisation that museum databases (“dark data”) are a critical resource – the challenge for many of us is how to make this easily accessible and useable.

Mike Howe

7. Online activity

7.1 Website

This year, as last, the website has continued to be a major tool in the way we conduct our business. As such there have been no major changes to the structure or content of the website, although we have successfully used it to disseminate information and for booking events, such as SPPC in early September.

The overall visitor numbers to the website continue to increase, and although this is only a very crude measure of the people using the site, it can only be a good thing. For instance, in the top 25 most requested pages shown below (which was taken on 15th October 2021), we see that for the homepage, impressions (‘hits’) are approaching 38,000, up from 31,000 last year, membership 1223 up from 955 and much increased viewing of committee member profiles.

Rank	Page title	Hits
1	GCG homepage	37784
2	Coprolite 85 - Summer 2018	13364
3	SPPC 1997 Derby	2225
4	The GCG blog	2006
5	The Geological Curators Group mission statement	1811
6	Thumbs-up leaflet	1386
7	Voluntary Roles on the Geological Curator editorial team	1279
8	Sign up for membership online	1223
9	Make a donation	980
10	Committee Profile: Simon Harris	961
11	Committee Profile: Zoë Hughes	879
12	GCG statement on Black Lives Matter - June 2020	806
13	Geological Curator 11(4)	743
14	Geological Curator 6(7)	739
15	In memoriam - Dr Matthew Parkes	731
16	The A G Brighton Medal	679
17	Privacy Policy	664
18	Coprolite 80 - November 2016	652
19	Geological Curators Group Events Policy	639
20	Geological Curator 10(8) : RTI paper extra content	603
21	GCG Constitution	562
22	Committee Profile: Dr Emma Nicholls	530
23	Geological Curator 6(1)	491
24	Earth Sciences degrees	438
25	Committee Profile: Nigel Larkin	413

It is also still encouraging to see continued popularity of our legacy resources which appear in the list. Planned work with the journal team over the next couple of years will allow us to better track the usage of these legacy articles.

The server on which the website resides has also been upgraded by our suppliers, meaning that it is now substantially quicker than it was before. I am also informed that the datacentres are all being run on renewable energy.

Moving into 2022 it seems likely we will continue to hold virtual meetings and will use the website to support this. As ever we are open to contributions of content or ideas for features which we can implement, please do get in touch.

Simon Harris

7.2. Blog

A total of 31 articles have been published on the blog (<https://geocollnews.wordpress.com/>) since 1st November 2020. Between November 2020 and October 2021, the blog received 7,358 hits, which is a slight decrease on the previous year, no doubt due to a combination of five less articles

published this year (due to pandemic-related chaos) and the fact that museums turned *en masse* to online engagement and events, meaning the internet for our sector essentially became more crowded.

WordPress has changed the statistics pages, so we can now also report that the blog site has been visited by people in 91 countries, encompassing every continent bar Antarctica. Unfortunately, we don't have the previous year's data to compare, but either way, we are most certainly reaching an international audience with our articles.

Two regular slots continue to feature on the blog: A monthly contribution from a committee member (on a rotating schedule), and the monthly *News from the Sector* (a round-up of forthcoming exhibitions, events, conferences, and workshops) written by Blog Editor Emma Nicholls. We have published ten articles by committee members, and 10 *News from the Sector* blogs.

The remaining 11 articles were written by authors external to the committee, some of which are GCG members, others are not. The Blog Editor also currently has a rich collection of new articles from external authors, due to be published throughout the last couple of months of 2021.

The top five most read articles between 1st November 2020 and end October 2021 are:

- 1- [Six Questions for a Geological Curator – Matthew Parkes](#), by Matthew Parkes
- 2- [The Geological Record is Full of Cr*p](#) by Nigel Larkin
- 3- [Tendaguru: A Decolonisation Perspective](#), by Matthew Porter
- 4- [The Mineral Collection of the Royal Institution of Cornwall](#) by Roy Starkey
- 5- [Two Weeks Inside a Cabinet: Random Notes from the Time I Spent at the NHM Collections](#), by Martín Batallés.

If you have anything you would like to advertise in the monthly *News from the Sector* blog, or you would like to contribute an article of your own, please get in touch with us at 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>. Please note, this is a live document, and we will continue to update it as things progress.

We are represented on Facebook and Twitter, and most news, stories and events are shared across both platforms. Please do get in touch if you have content you would like us to distribute via our social media channels at info@geocurator.org or send us a direct message (DM).

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. 1178 people have liked our Facebook Group (1035 in 2019 and 2020; 985 in 2018; 912 in 2017). We have 629 members on our group page from over 65 countries, predominately from the UK, Europe, and North America (502 in 2020; 350 in 2019; 292 in 2018; 225 in 2017). Approximately three quarters are active members who will interact with the content posted.

7.3.2. Twitter

We currently have 1445 followers (1355 in 2020; 1227 in 2019; 1068 in 2018; 961 in 2017) on our Twitter account (@OriginalGCG), which as you can see has been steadily increasing. Content with good images tends to have more interactions.

Emma Bernard

7.4. JISCmail

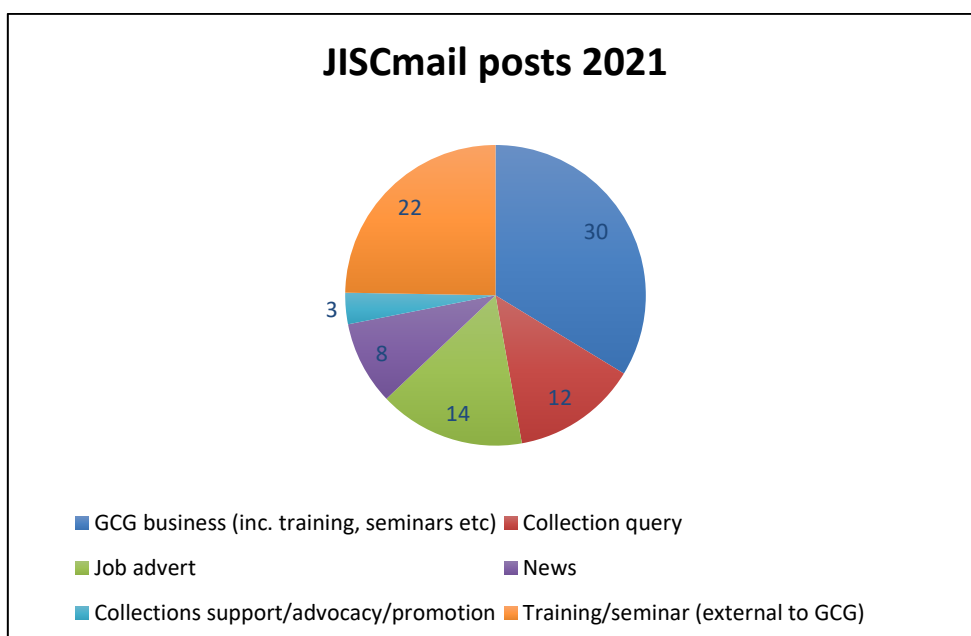
The vast majority of general correspondence goes via our JISCmail list: (GEO-CURATORS@JISCmail.ac.uk).

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 (<https://www.geocurator.org/membership>)! See our website for sign-up instructions.

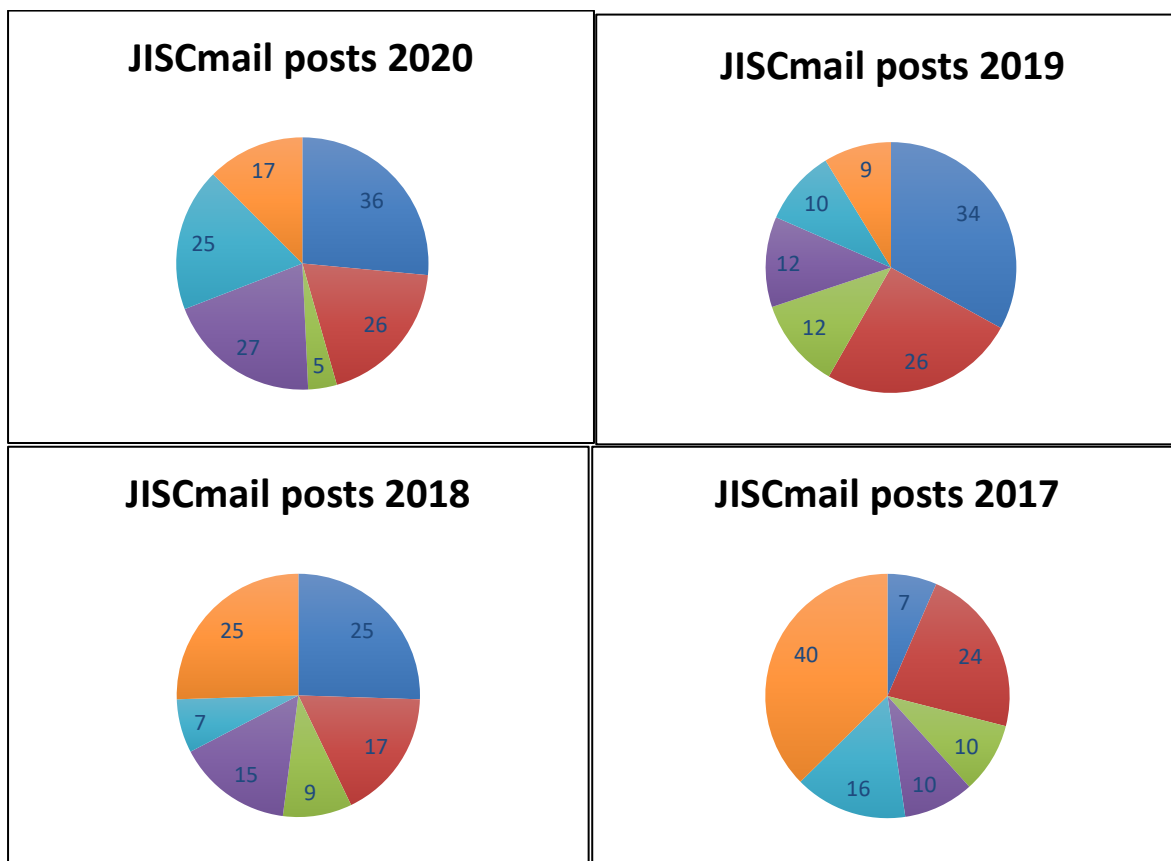
List membership is still roughly in line with our GCG membership, although it doesn't match completely. There are currently 278 list members. (2020: 272; 2019: 275; 2018: 276; 2017: 272), this varies during the year with some people joining as others leave, but overall remains constant. Sometimes this is because they have left the sector, changed email or had signed up for information about a specific topic and had it answered.

It's worth pointing out that this is purely a list of email addresses and some people have signed up with more than one email. If an email address bounces for 5 or so days in a row, JISC will remove it from the list. If you know there have been problems with your email address, it's worth checking you're still subscribed! If you have any queries or problems, please send me an email secretary@geocurator.org.

Over the last few years, we have been grouping the posts into 6 different headings; GCG business (inc. training, seminars etc.); Collection queries; Job Adverts; News; Collections Support/advocacy/promotion and Training/seminar (external to the GCG offer).



Total original posts 2021: 89 (NB – Nov 2020 until 28th Oct 2021).



Total original posts 2021: 89

Total original posts 2020: 136

Total original posts 2019: 103

Total original posts 2018: 98

Total original posts 2017: 107

Please note, that the time range for each year can vary as it ties in with the scheduling of the AGM.

As expected, most posts in 2021 concern GCG business, sent out by GCG committee members – mainly notification of new blog posts, GCG notifications, journal and GCG events. All of the news posted over the last year was also the monthly ‘News from the Sector’ GCG blog series. There are some specific posts relating to identifications or requests to assist in locating specific collections.

Interaction over JISC mail has varied over the past year along with the content. Overall posts are down when compared to previous years, but this might be due to people being furloughed earlier in the year. The majority of posts came from list members who are not on committee, which shows there is a good sense of community and the need for the group and email list. On average there are seven or eight posts per month.

Total figures are not directly comparable as they don’t cover the exact same dates each year. 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.

It is noted that there are fluctuations each year depending on seasonal events e.g., more messages from committee around August and September due to SPPC and in the lead up to events like the AGM in November.

As always, we thank everyone who has contributed to the conversations over the past year, especially those who have offered their expertise which is greatly appreciated by all.

Emma Bernard

8. Outreach and profile

Unfortunately, due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty about restrictions and planning for events, all events GCG were due to sponsor and or host had to be cancelled again this year. It was good that we were able to provide some GCG events this year like SPPC and continue to advertise virtual meetings and events by allied groups.

We do still have supplies of GCG fliers that we can sent out if you would like to help us promote GCG. As a charity we would love to hear from anyone who might be interested in sponsoring a GCG event, there are even costs in hosting an online event.

Do let us know if you would like to get more involved in GCG, whether that is writing a blog, assisting with the journal, becoming a Trustee or running an event. We are a friendly group, and it would be great to hear from you!

Please drop us a line at info@geocurator.org and we will take it from there.

Emma Bernard

9. GCG – SPNHC Rep

Hello there! My name is Andrew Haycock, and I am a Curator of Mineralogy & Petrology at Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales (AC NMW). Over the forthcoming year, I will be looking towards building on our relationship with the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC). By reporting back on the business and activities of SPNHC that are relevant to GCG, as well as promoting our own activities to SPNHC in return.

SPNHC is an organisation devoted to the preservation, conservation and management of natural history collections. Meetings are generally held in north America, but we are very lucky to have meetings in the UK and Europe every few years or so. The June 2022 AGM will be held at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and National Museums Scotland. The meeting will be co-hosted with The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) and Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA) under the theme of '*Through the door and through the web: releasing the power of natural history collections onsite and online*'.

I will be reporting back on GCG activities at the annual business meeting, so please do contact me if you feel there is something that you would like me to report. Rachel Walcott will be presenting a GCG workshop named "Fakes, Forged, or the real Deal" at the conference. GCG are also planning to

have some other form of physical table presence to promote the work we do and encourage new members to join!

Further details can be found here: <https://spnhc2022.com/> and <https://spnhc.org/>

GCG information

The Geological Curators' Group can be found at:

- www.geocurator.org
- <https://www.facebook.com/GeologicalCuratorsGroup/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/376700195784835/>
- <https://twitter.com/OriginalGCG>
- <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=296050&subid=0>

Contact details:

Email: info@geocurator.org

Address: Geological Curators Group
(c/o Becky Goddard)
The Geological Society
Burlington House
London
W1J 0BG

Committee for 2021 (from AGM 2020)

- **Chair:** Sarah King (*York Museums Trust*)
- **Secretary:** Emma Bernard (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Treasurer:** Rachel Walcott (*National Museums Scotland*)
- **Membership Secretary:** Cindy Howells (*National Museum Wales*)
- **Programme Secretary:** Zoë Hughes (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Journal Editor:** Pip Brewer (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Newsletter Editor, Blog Editor:** Lu Allington-Jones (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Collections Officer:** Mike Howe (*British Geological Survey*)
- **Web Officer:** Simon Harris (*British Geological Survey*)
- **Ordinary Member:** Alex Peaker (*Dinosaur Isle*)
- **Ordinary Member:** Lu Allington-Jones (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Co-opted member:** Robert Lowther (*Imperial College, London*)
- **Co-opted member (Conservation Officer):** Nigel Larkin (*Natural History Conservation*)
- **Co-opted member (archive support):** Lil Stevens (*Natural History Museum*)

Proposed Committee for 2022 to be voted on at the AGM (T = trustee)

- **Chair (T):** Sarah King (*York Museums Trust*)
- ***Vice-Chair (T):** Emma Nicholls (*Horniman Museum and Gardens*)
- **Secretary (T):** Emma Bernard (*Natural History Museum*)
- ***Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator (T):** TBC
- ***Collections Coordinator (T):** TBC
- **Treasurer (T):** Robert Lowther (*Imperial College, London*)
- **Membership Officer:** Cindy Howells (*National Museum Wales*)
- **Programme Coordinator (T):** Zoë Hughes (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Journal Editor (T):** TBC
- **Web Coordinator (T):** Simon Harris (*British Geological Survey*)
- **Trustee:** Lu Allington-Jones (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Trustee:** Rachel Walcott (*National Museum of Scotland*)
- **Newsletter Editor:** Lu Allington-Jones (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Blog Editor:** Emma Nicholls (*Horniman Museum and Gardens*)
- **Officer:** (Treasurer support) Alex Peaker (*Dinosaur Isle*)
- **Officer:** (Conservation Officer): Nigel Larkin (*Natural History Conservation*)
- **Officer:** (archive support): Lil Stevens (*Natural History Museum*)
- **Officer:** (SPNHC Rep): Andrew Haycock (*National Museum Wales*).

* Denotes a new role in the CIO.

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