



COPROLITE

DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

Coprolite is compiled by Tom Sharpe, 49 Kelston Road, Whitechurch, Cardiff CF4 2AG and produced by Monica Price, University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW. It is published three times a year in February, May and November. Any material for inclusion should be sent to Tom Sharpe by the first of the previous month, i.e. by 1 January, 1 April or 1 October.

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Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Andy Newman, Department of Archaeology,
University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne Tel. 091 222 7419

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the AGM of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at 15.30 on Wednesday 8 December 1993 in the Upper Hall, Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow.

Nominations for posts of Officers and four Committee Members must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Simon Knell, GCG Secretary, Department of Museum Studies, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG by 11 November 1993.

New Blood Required - Glasgow AGM 1993

Yes, it's AGM time again and as usual the "New Committee Members Wanted" advert is placed in *Coprolite* only to be ignored by the membership. A quick browse through back issues of *Coprolite* and *The Geological Curator* will reveal certain names which occur more than once in the make up of the Group's Committee. Why? Primarily because few members are willing to volunteer their services. At many an AGM we have heard "in the absence of nominations from the membership, the

Committee have nominated the following..." . However, the rumour that no Committee members have ever been nominated from the membership is incorrect - there have certainly been three in my time! Clearly, though, this is an unhealthy situation for any democratic organisation, even if many of our longest serving Committee members have been as enthusiastic and active at their last meeting as they were at their first.

Why so few nominations? I know of no-one working in museums who is not already pressed for time and for whom any contribution to a specialist group would not be an additional burden. So I'm afraid that excuse holds no water here. Lack of finance also affects us all - but 100% attendance is not required, and we are doing all we can to arrange meetings which minimise travel costs. Most members at one time or another become local meetings organisers which is a far more time-consuming task. So come on - take one step forward! According to the constitution, members who wish to join the Committee need to be nominated by other members - but if you are interested in taking part (or "doing your duty"!) and can't find another member in your part of the country, contact someone on the Committee who will nominate you.

All four committee posts become vacant this year. Roy Clements, Chris Collins and Kate Pontin complete their 2 year terms. The remaining post has been temporarily filled by John Faithfull after Colin Reid moved to become Public Relations Officer (and Meetings Secretary) following Phil Doughty's resignation from the post. John will stand for one of the vacant Committee places at the AGM, as will Gill Weightman who was temporarily co-opted in the middle of the year.

Peter Crowther is also having to stand down as Editor of the *Geological Curator* and if you think you could contribute your editing skills to the Group's journal, or if you know of someone who would be willing and able to fill this important post, please send in your nominations. If you would like to know more about what this post entails, please contact Peter at Bristol City Museum, Queen's Road, Bristol, BS8 1RL. Tel 0272 223592.

In order to make way for new members, Mick Stanley, our long standing NSGSD Co-ordinator, and ex-Chairman John Cooper, who is currently organising a major GCG meeting in Germany, have both kindly agreed to become corresponding rather than co-opted members. This gives the Committee greater flexibility in co-option.

The composition of the 1992-1993 Committee is:

Chairman: Paul Ensom, The Yorkshire Museum. Secretary: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, Leicester. Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Andy Newman, Department of Archaeology, Newcastle upon Tyne. Editor: Peter Crowther, Bristol City Museum. Recorder: John Nudds, The Manchester

Museum. Public Relations Officer: Colin Reid, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery (to stand 1993). Minutes Secretary: Diana Hawkes, Haslemere Educational Museum. Committee: Roy Clements, Geology Department., University of Leicester 1991 (retiring member). Chris Collins, Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge 1991 (retiring member). John Faithfull, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow 1992 (to stand 1993). Kate Pontin, Uxbridge Central Library, Middlesex 1991 (retiring member). Co-opted: Rosina Down (BCG) Department of Zoology, University College London. Gill Weightman, Leicestershire Museums (to stand 1993). Tom Sharpe (*Coprolite*), National Museum of Wales. Simon Timberlake, Area Museum Service for South East England.

The Committee would welcome nominations (or volunteers!) for any of the above vacancies, and indeed for any of the other officer and committee posts - it would be *great to have our first contested election!* If you volunteer for one of the officer's posts (including mine) it will not be seen as an attempt to usurp the current holder or as a suggestion that you feel you could do the job any better (though you may well be able to), simply a volunteering of your services in the true spirit of the Group (and will probably be met with some relief!).

Simon Knell, GCG Secretary

Musical Curators

William Lindsay has been appointed Head of the Palaeontology Laboratory at the Natural History Museum in London and took up his post at the beginning of July. He succeeds **Ron Croucher** who retires in May 1994. **Andrew Newman**, GCG Treasurer, has moved from the Hancock Museum to the Department of Archaeology at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne where he is Research Associate in Museum Studies. From 1 May, **Phil Doughty** ceased to be Keeper of Geology and became Head of the Division of the Sciences Division at the Ulster Museum. **Steve Thompson**, Assistant Keeper (Geology) at Clitheroe Museum took up his post as Keeper of Natural Sciences at Scunthorpe Museum on 7 June. **Mike Taylor**, Assistant Keeper of Earth Sciences at Leicestershire Museums has been appointed Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology at the National Museums of Scotland and took up his post on 11 October. **Tristram Besterman**, Curator of Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery has been appointed Director of the Manchester Museum and takes up his post from 1 January 1994.

MDA Board representatives

At its meeting on 6 May 1993, GCG Committee appointed **Phil Phillips** and **Tim Pettigrew** to represent GCG on the Board of the Museum Documentation Association.

Spreading the word

A copy of GCG's new publicity leaflet comes with this edition of *Coprolite*. At last GCG has an eye-catching and informative leaflet to distribute to prospective members, a real boon to anyone answering enquiries from interested people. Please feel free to pass your copy to anyone who might like to join the Group. With a print run of about 30,000, there are plenty more copies obtainable from John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton, BN1 5AA Tel. 0273 552586.

GCG Meetings survey

Thank you to those who replied to the questionnaire. Gordon Chancellor (Peterborough Museum), Sylvia Humphry (British Museum) and Steve Laurie (Sedgwick Museum) were the first three names drawn from the postbag. Each wins a year's free membership. Members of *Coprolite's* editorial team should be congratulated on their honesty and restraint.

There were 48 replies altogether; two from overseas members, one from an institutional member and the rest from UK personal members. This represents only 16% of the total membership, a disappointing response. The answers to the questions were entered onto a spreadsheet and the results analysed. A general summary of the results is given below.

70% of those who replied attend no more than one GCG seminar a year. 35% don't attend any. Only 25% have ever attended a GCG workshop.

Of the 18 meetings listed, spanning the last two and a half years, the three Annual General Meetings attracted substantially more participants than any of the others (25-31% of replies). Other popular meetings were the October 1990 seminar in Cromer (on Pleistocene material); the June 1991 seminar in Perth (on geology displays) and the July 1992 seminar in Sunderland (on documentation standards). Joint meetings with the UK Institute for Conservation, Group for Education in Museums, and Biology Curators Group were also well attended. 25% of the respondents had been to none of the meetings listed.

About 30% of the respondents attend the field meeting if one is held in conjunction with a seminar. The main reasons given for not attending were finding or justifying the time, and expense.

40% of the respondents did not express problems with attending meetings on a particular day. The most favoured days for meetings are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. 58% expressed no problems with particular months. Of those that did, nearly 30% found September difficult, with March, July, August and October difficult for 10-12% of respondents.

The main reasons given for not attending seminars were lack of time and financial constraints, the least common reason being transport difficulties. 29% of the respondents felt they would make use of a British rail conference discount scheme.

10% were not members of any other specialist group. Of the groups listed, the most popular (in order) were the Geologists' Association, Museums Association, Palaeontological Association, Geological Society, Biology Curators Group, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, and the Russell Society. 35% of the respondents were members of groups not listed, including the Society for the History of Natural History, Gemmological Association, Palaeontographical Society, and History of Earth Sciences Society.

75% of the respondents were in favour of more joint meetings with other groups, in the following order: Palaeontological Association, Biology Curators Group, Geologists Association, Museums Association, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, Geological Society, UK Institute for Conservation, Earth Science Teachers Association, Mineralogical Society, Russell Society, Group for Education in Museums, and Museum Professionals Group.

On the question of the Group's seminar schedule, although only 33% favoured the current programme of 4 seminars a year, it still remained the most popular option overall. 25% felt that the number of seminars should be reduced to three a year. 20% favoured having an annual conference, either combined with an AGM, or with two further meetings a year. Another suggestion was to retain a seminar programme, but with a conference every 2-3 years.

Only 20% of the respondents felt that they would be able to attend a five-day GCG conference in Frankfurt. 30% felt they could not attend and 55% could attend only with grant aid.

Moving to the final question about issues that should be addressed at future meetings, 90% of respondents listed curatorial and educational issues, followed in order of popularity by exhibitions, specimen conservation and public relations (all over 77%), site conservation, research (over 50%), taxonomic identification and field meetings (over 30%). 12% of respondents listed other topics, including documentation and the commercial market.

A number of members suggested potential topics for future meetings and specific improvements to the GCG meetings programme. These are all being considered and will help in the planning of future meetings. There will be an opportunity to discuss the results of the questionnaire at the AGM on 8 December.

Thanks to Kate Andrew for collating the results of the questionnaires.

Colin Reid, GCG Meetings Secretary, Dudley Museum.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

18 November 1993 Geological Conservation Unit, Cambridge.

GCU Workshop: Conservation and care of sub-fossil bone. Fee: £15

Contact: Chris Collins, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0EZ. Tel. 0223 62522 fax 0223 60779.

**8 - 9 December 1993 Upper Hall, Hunterian Museum, The University, Glasgow
GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip: True confessions - learning by our mistakes.**

Relatively few museums could claim that their collections are in a largely, or wholly desirable state of curation. Few curators spend all their time running a smoothly operating system. Often, the daily work of the curator is dogged by problems, ranging from the niggling to the catastrophic. This meeting will provide an opportunity to scrutinise some of these, and the factors which gave rise to them.

Wednesday 8 December

09.30 coffee

10.00 Welcoming remarks: Prof M McLeod, Director, Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery

10.10 Introduction: a classification of curatorial cock-ups: John Faithfull, Hunterian Museum

10.35 Ten conservation nightmares: Kate Andrew, Geological Conservator

11.00 Moving university collections in Scotland: never again!: Graham Durant, Hunterian Museum

11.25 coffee

11.40 Skeletons in the closet (spying on other people's confessions): tales from a travelling curator's notebook: Simon Timberlake, AMSSEE

12.05 The Perth flood of January 1993: Ann Abernethy, Perth Museum

12.30 Discussion

12.45 lunch

13.45 Minibus trip to Fossil Grove or free time to visit Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery and/or Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery

15.15 coffee

15.30 GCG Annual General Meeting

16.15 depart, or stay on for reception in Hunterian Museum

Thursday 9 December

Field trip to Boylestone and Loanhead quarries to examine Carboniferous lavas and associated zeolite mineralisation. Meet outside Visitor Centre, University of Glasgow at 09.30.

A fee of £1.50 per person will be charged to cover the cost of refreshments (pay on the day)

Please complete the booking form on the back page and send it to Dr J.W. Faithfull, Hunterian Museum, The University, Glasgow G12 8QQ Tel 041 330 4221 fax 041 307 8059 by 3 December 1993.

11-12 April 1994 Keble College, Oxford

BCG/GEM joint meeting: Using natural history collections - focus on education.

This meeting is for all those who use natural history collections for education in its broadest sense. The aim is to bring together curators and educators, and the meeting will include presentations, workshops, visits to a variety of museums, and also the BCG AGM and Annual Dinner.

Contact: Jane Pickering, The University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW Tel. 0865 272950 fax. 0865 272970.

17-18 May 1994 Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

GCG 20th Anniversary Meeting

A seminar celebrating 20 years of the GCG - the first and still the best! An occasion to examine what we have achieved and to discuss what we ought to be doing now and in the future. Also an occasion to renew old acquaintances - we hope all extant Founding Members will be able to attend. The programme has yet to be finalised and offers of papers on issues of concern to the Group or its development would be welcomed.

An Anniversary Dinner with a guest speaker will be held on the evening of the 17 May.

18 May at a location in the East Midlands to be announced, 20th Anniversary field meeting.

Over the last 20 years, the Group has taken every opportunity to get out into the field, even in the middle of winter. A chance for you to make up for all those fabulous outings you have missed.

Contact: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG Tel 0533 523969 fax 0533 523960

13 July 1994 Lapworth Museum, Birmingham University

GCG Seminar: The university collections

Has the reorganisation of university geology collections been a success? How are university curators coping with their additional responsibilities? What new facilities exist for the maintenance of the collections? This seminar will review the situation with case studies by the protagonists.

Contact: Paul Smith, School of Earth Sciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT Tel 021 414 6147.

4-9 September 1994 Pisa, Italy

International Mineralogical Association 16th General Meeting

Includes a symposium on the mineral heritage, with sessions on the history and teaching of mineral sciences, mineralogical museums and science, and mineral classification and mineral databases.

Contact: Dr R.F. Symes, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD

September 1994

GCG Seminar to be arranged.

30 November-1 December 1994 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip: The geological display - new directions in interpretation.

In recent years museums have been moving away from traditional static and factual displays to a more interactive and interpretative approach. Is this the way ahead or should we return to more specimens and less button-pushing? This seminar will review developments and look at new techniques and technology to aid geological interpretation in the museum environment.

Contact: Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NP Tel 0222 397951 ext 265, fax 0222 667332.

Science and Natural Science Courses

University of Leicester, Department of Museum Studies

For the first time, the Department of Museum Studies is inviting applicants wishing to take individual one week science and natural science modules. These modules form part of the University of Leicester Diploma/M.Sc. in Museum Studies. Students wishing to go on to take the other modules which make up the course will be credited with the modules they have already taken. Other modules look more closely at the non-discipline based aspects of curation, for example, preventative conservation, documentation practice, collection management policies etc.

28 February to 4 March 1994 Sciences 1: Science collections

This course will take a wide look at science collections in museums, and is aimed particularly at students interested in the history and philosophy of science. The course will examine the nature of these collections, practice in collecting and conservation, directions for research and the basics of collection management.

7 March to 11 March 1994 Sciences 1: Natural Sciences Curatorial Course

In collaboration with the Biology Curators' Group, the Geological Curators' Group and Leicestershire Museums.

A practical look at collecting and field recording techniques, preservation, conservation, storage, documentation, taxonomy and research. The course will discuss those aspects of curation which are specific to the natural sciences. The course will include field and laboratory work, lectures, and seminars. It will discuss in equal measure good practice in biology and geology.

This one-week course replaces BCG/GCG/University of Sheffield Natural Sciences Curatorial Course. It aims to build upon the success of the Sheffield course particularly in its continued commitment to practical work but with the added incentive of potentially contributing to a recognised qualification in museum studies. The course is also on a firmer footing as it no longer depends on student numbers to run.

14 March to 18 March 1994 Sciences 2: Communicating Science.

A look at how museums communicate science. This wide ranging course will examine techniques used in science and discovery centres, in exhibition, site interpretation, publication and education. Again the focus will be on developing techniques and knowledge which can be applied directly in the museum. It is for scientists of all disciplines.

The cost is £220 per course. B&B accommodation is available at £13-£20 per night. I am afraid the Department is no longer able to provide University accommodation for its part-time students; however, private accommodation lists will be sent on request.

Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester,
105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG Tel. 0533 523963 fax 0533 523960.

Newish publications

Metal mines of Southern Wales by G W Hall. Griffin Publications, 1993. £9.60

Held in trust. Museums and collections of universities in Northern England by Kate Arnold-Foster. HMSO, 1993, 132pp. ISBN 0 11 290489 0, £14.95.

Paleobotany and the evolution of plants by Wilson N Stewart and Gar W Rothwell. Cambridge University Press, 1993, 672pp. ISBN 0 521 38294 7, £29.95.

The periglaciation of Great Britain by Colin K Ballantyne and Charles Harris. Cambridge University Press, 1993, 350pp. ISBN 0 521 32459 9, hardback, £44.95; 0 521 31016 4, paperback, £19.95.

Excursion guide to the geology of East Sutherland and Caithness edited by N H Trewin and A Hurst. Geological Society of Aberdeen and Scottish Academic Press, 1993, viii + 183pp. ISBN 0 7073 0731 7, £8.50.

Quaternary of Scotland edited by J E Gordon and D G Sutherland. Geological Conservation Review Series, 6. Chapman and Hall, 1993, c720pp. ISBN 0 412 48840 X, £95.00.

Quaternary of the Thames by D R Bridgeland. Geological Conservation Review Series, 7 Chapman and Hall, 1993, c400pp. ISBN 0 412 48830 2, £70.00.

The complete T rex by John R Horner and Don Lessem. Souvenir Press, 1993, 239pp. ISBN 0 285 63162 4, £12.99.

Classical areas of British geology. Moffatdale and the upper Ettrick Valley by B C Webb, A W A Rushton and D E White. HMSO, 1993, 58pp. ISBN 0 11 884464 4, £5.50.

Fossil record 2 edited by M J Benton. Chapman and Hall, 1993, c864pp. ISBN 0 412 39380 8, £85.00.

Discovering green treasure. The findings of and work of the NEMS Peripatetic Biology Curator by Mark Simmons. North of England Museums Service, 1993, 66pp.

Preserving natural science collections: chronicle of our environmental heritage by W Donald Duckworth, Hugh H Genoways and Carolyn L Rose. 1993 National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, Washington DC, 1993, 140pp. \$16.50.

Geological Excursions in Powys, Central Wales edited by N H Woodcock and M G Bassett. University of Wales Press/National Museum of Wales, 1993, 366pp. ISBN 0 7083 1217 9, £12.95.

The book of life edited by Stephen J Gould. Ebury Hutchison, 1993, 256pp. ISBN 0 0917 7749 6, £19.95.

The hidden landscape by Richard Fortey. Jonathan Cape, 1993, 310pp. ISBN 0 224 03651 3, £19.99.

The Natural History Museum book of dinosaurs by Tim Gardom with Angela Milner. Virgin Books, 1993, 128pp. ISBN 1 85227 486 1, £12.99.

Exploring earth and life through time by Steven M Stanley. Freeman, 1993. ISBN 0 7167 2339 5, £22.95.

Museum basics by Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine. Routledge, 1993, 336pp. ISBN 0 415 05769 8 hardback, £40.00; ISBN 0 415 05770 1 paperback, £19.99.

Museum security and protection. Routledge and ICOM International Committee on Museum Security, 1993, 256pp. ISBN 0415 05457 5 hardback, £45.00; ISBN 0415 07509 2 paperback, £22.50.

Towards the museum of the future edited by Roger Miles and Lauro Zavala. Routledge, 1993. ISBN 0 415 09498 4, £22.50

Storage of natural history collections: ideas and practical solutions edited by Carolyn L. Rose and Amparo R. de Torres. SPNHC, 1992, ISBN 0 9635476 0 7. US\$30 + US\$17.50 shipping, available from SPNHC c/o Suzanne B. McClaren, 5800 Baum Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15206-3706, USA.

Setting standards

Standards for the museum care of geological collections 1993 was published by the Museums and Galleries Commission in September. It is one of a new series which sets standards for collections care in different subject areas. Written by a group of practising curators, conservators and other 'experts', it represents a consensus of current professional opinion of best practice.

Standards comprises two parts. The first covers all aspects of collections management from acquisition and disposal, curation and conservation to research and other collections use. The second covers the protection of collections including standards for security, fire and flood protection, environmental control, and protection from physical damage.

Each section specifies the standards in unambiguous terms, giving guidelines and notes, and listing sources of advice and help. As the introduction states, all museums should be *aspiring* to reach these standards. Some may be challenging to attain in the short term, others will already have been met by all registered museums.

All museums notified to MGC by the AMCs as having significant geological collections will have received a copy free of charge. Other copies may be purchased from MGC for £6 each, but if your museum has relevant collections and has not received a complimentary copy, please contact Georgie Stagg at the Museums and Galleries Commission, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA, tel. 071 233 4200.

English Nature's Strategy

On 8th June 1993 English Nature launched its conservation strategy, *Strategy for the 1990s* which describes how it plans to attain a number of major goals for the year 2000, including "Maintaining a range of sites representing the diversity of rock type, landforms and geological history of England". If you would like a copy, please contact the English Nature Publicity and Marketing Branch at Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

Turf out your archives

Sue Rainton has volunteered to become Group Archivist and will be sorting GCG material in Scunthorpe. If you have ever been an Officer of the Group or a Committee Member with particular responsibility for an aspect of the Group's activity and have records relating to your GCG work, please contact Sue at Scunthorpe Museum (0724 843533) to discuss how they can be got to Scunthorpe. It would be useful if you could do a preliminary sort-out of the material. The Group now has an archiving policy and will collect and collate information in the following categories:

Constitution: all papers relating to original and revised constitution. Priority given to official papers and correspondence with Charity Commission etc (chronological storage).

Committee Agendas and Minutes of committee and printed reports from officers (chronological).

Finance and membership lists, ledgers and bank records (chronological)

Publications: a full set of publications - *Geological Curator*, *Coprolite*, *Guidelines*, etc; one further set to be kept with editor. Camera-ready copy of all issues of *Geological Curator* and other publications including leaflets; correspondence with authors and referees. Three copies of each of the leaflets produced.

Meetings: Group meetings - programmes, etc (chronological)

AGM business: Agendas and papers (chronological).

Committee business relating to issues: major issues - papers, correspondence etc relating to Review of University Geology Depts, Collector of the Year, etc - (in alphabetical order of issue, chronologically within issue).

Geology in Museums (CING etc) archive: museum archive - files of material relating to museum services in county order, chronologically within file - includes material from Recorders, and that concerning museums that have become major issues - Natural History Museum, Chester etc. Doughty report data also included here. Data from peripatetic curators might be added to this.

Officers' correspondence with individuals: important correspondence with individuals not fitting into above categories (alphabetical order of addressee then chronological order)

To lose: editor's correspondence with printers and author's first papers; chequebook stubs, paying in books, membership forms; correspondence relating to simple exchange of information with other groups, arranging meetings, general enquiries, publications received, agendas and minutes of other groups. With further rationalisation if archive becomes too large.

Archiving to take place at each change of Chairman.

Simon Knell, GCG Secretary

Exhibitions

Prehistoric Sea Monsters: Dinamation's robotic sea monsters, ancient and modern.

National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff until 27 February 1994.

The Evolution of Wales: a new, permanent geology gallery

opened 15 October 1993. National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Dinosaur Mania:

Dudley Museum, St James's Road, Dudley until 8 January 1994.

Sea Dragons: the spectacular marine reptiles from south west England acquired by the museum in recent years.

Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol.

Here be dragons: recent dinosaur discoveries in the South West.

Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol 28 December 1993 to 10 April 1994.

Dinosaurs Alive: robotic dinosaurs from Dinamation.

Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne until 13 March 1994.

Earth...Life: from the origins of the earth to the explorations of Captain Cook and the voyage of HMS Challenger.

Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow.

Plants conquer land: Devonian land plants from famous localities in northwestern Germany and Bear Island, Norway.

Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Museum am Löwentor, Rosenstein 1, D-70 191 Stuttgart Tel. 0711 89360 fax 0711 8936100, until April 1994.

New galleries at the National Museum of Wales

A new gallery complex at the National Museum of Wales was opened by HM The Queen on Friday 15 October 1993. As well as a new restaurant and art galleries, the building houses a new permanent geology gallery called *The Evolution of Wales*. The gallery tells the story of the geological evolution of Wales from the origins of the universe to the present day. Gaps in the record in Wales are illustrated by specimens from other parts of the world. As well as material from the museum's collections, none of which has been on display since 1986, many new specimens have been acquired for exhibition. These include a 300kg meteorite from Namibia; 3.9 billion year old Acasta gneiss from the Canadian North West Territories; a femur of *Apatosaurus*; and a metre-wide cluster of quartz crystals. The exhibition, which covers an area of over 1100 square metres, was designed by Haley Sharpe Associates of Leicester.

Future fossils

If you have visited Oxford's University Museum in the past year, you may have been surprised and puzzled to see a display of 'fossils' from the Pliocene Era. It seems there is scant information about *Homo insolutus* which disappeared at a time of mysterious fiery explosions about 48 million years ago, and much speculation about how these large mammals became extinct. The 'fossils' in the display are actually sculptures, imprints and casts of human parts and late twentieth century objects, made to look as if they were fossilised remains, tens of millions of years old.

The artist, Katie Maverick McNeel studied both the Museum's collections and labelling style. The result is a thought-provoking exhibition which blends in so well with the surrounds that many visitors are taken in momentarily by the hoax. The display will be retained in its entirety for another year, and an abridged version will eventually go on permanent display.

Katie McNeel has shown her paintings and assemblages in various galleries in London. She will be running a series of workshops at Leicestershire Museums leading up to an exhibition there in the spring of 1995, and she would welcome opportunities to collaborate with other museums and galleries. If you would like to know more, please write to Ms Katie McNeel c/o The University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW.

Dudley Rock and Fossil Roadshow

Following the tremendous success of last year's Dudley Rock and Fossil Roadshow, a similar extravaganza will be held 24-25 September 1994. In the interim, Dudley Museum will be hosting a smaller Roadshow event on 27 November 1993, featuring a diverse range of activities to whet the appetites of child, layperson and enthusiast alike - including hands-on demonstrations, display stands, exhibitions, film shows, competitions, geological excursions and of course the obligatory identification stand. For more information, contact Colin Reid at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, St James's Road, Dudley DY1 1HU.

On the other hand, if you are considering holding a roadshow yourself, but don't know where to begin, Colin has written an article on the subject for the July/August edition of *Geology Today*.

Mineral shows

13 November 1993 Sussex Mineral Show Clare Hall, Perrymont Road, Haywards Heath, Sussex. Open 10.00 to 16.30.

Contact: Sussex Mineral and Lapidary Society Tel. 0444 233958

20 November 1993 Sidcup Mineral Society's Annual Fair Adult Education Centre, Alma Road, Sidcup Kent. 10.00 to 16.00

Contact Mr K. Luff Tel. 081 300 2405

13 March 1994 The Oxford Mineral Show Oxford Conference Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford

Contact Paul Lowe, Endsleigh House, 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2DA Tel. 0872 223227

Rock Solid

If you missed BBC Radio 5's earth science programme, *Rock Solid*, which starred a number of GCG members, during its midday, midweek broadcasts and had hoped to catch the advertised repeats in November, then you may have a long wait. The repeats have been postponed for 'logistical reasons' but, in a letter to GCG Chairman, the BBC says it hopes to transmit them next year.

Terre, modeles, musées - Dijon 17-18 May 1993

This meeting, jointly organised by the Palais de la Découverte, Paris, and Office de Coopération et d'Information Muséographiques (OCIM) brought together geologists from museums and universities throughout France. As the token Englishman, I had been asked by the organisers to present an overview of the earth sciences in British museums - this I attempted to do in French, causing some hilarity. I also attempted to address the specific question of the links between earth sciences in research establishments and museums which was the focus of the conference. The aim of the organisers was to examine how the most recent research of geophysics and geochemistry could be transmitted to the public through museum exhibitions. What pathways of communication existed between universities and museums and how might such links be encouraged? how might the often complex research techniques and new concepts in earth sciences be made accessible to the general public?

The papers given by our French colleagues ranged from pure scientific accounts of recent research to descriptions of new earth science exhibitions. If you have a chance to visit Paris in the near future, look out for the new display at the Palais de la Découverte. A series of workshops on the second day widened the discussions into geological heritage, especially collections care and site conservation. The latter discussions indicated that the situation in France mirrors our British experience - too few curators for geological collections, too little money. France also lacks any GCG equivalent, consequently there is no voice for geological collections or geology in museums generally.

At the end of the day, I was unsure of the outcome of the meeting, other than that there seemed to be a lot of goodwill on both sides. With a meeting laced with Gallic charm and extensive hospitality in the wine capital of Burgundy, this should not be surprising. My thanks to GCG for asking me to represent them at this meeting; all papers presented at the conference will be published in *La Lettre de l'OCIM* later this year.

Peter Davis, Museum Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Fakes and forgeries: a GCG Seminar Geological Society, London, 15 July 1993

A compact group of some 20 members convened for an illuminating session on one of the quirkier corners in a geological curator's purview. The purpose of this note is not to report on the contents of the meeting, merely to make public a few of the thoughts which emerged from the useful end discussion. However, it was generally agreed that the excellent introductory session, entitled 'Fossil fakes and forgeries: an overview' presented by Steve Maclean of Sunderland Museum, should be published in the *Geological Curator*. I trust that Steve will be able to see this through.

The interesting session by Roger Harding of the Gemmological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory in London prompted the view that GCG should have a closer working relationship with this organisation. The Group was invited to visit the laboratories at some future date and I hope that this is taken up by our meetings secretary.

Andrew Ross described his recent discovery of a fake amber fly in the collections of the Natural History Museum. The question arose as to whether the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature can be called in to adjudicate in cases of taxonomic claims and counter claims based on such fakes or forgeries. Readers may have some knowledge of this and are urged to reply.

Patrick Boylan discussed the famed Piltown and Moulin Quignon forgeries and concluded that if only investigators had been allowed to consult the 'real thing' (access was only allowed to casts), then the forgeries would have been detected much earlier. The discussion later reiterated the pre-eminence of the specimen and the role of the curator in its care.

Terry Manning's thoughtful and personal remarks concerning experiences of restoration versus fakery in the current fossil market served to introduce the International Association of Palaeontological Suppliers, an organisation which GCG should be more aware of. I hope that the IAPS will keep us informed of developments.

Finally, Terry's exhortation to Group members to keep abreast of current markets by attending mineral and fossil fairs was enthusiastically agreed with. To this end, the meeting suggests to GCG Committee that funds be set aside annually to finance the visits of one or more younger members of our profession to a major European fair.

John Cooper, Booth Museum, Brighton.

GCG seminar on Building stones - are collections relevant today? Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge, 21 September 1993

This seminar attracted a large, diverse and argumentative audience to Cambridge, where John Watson's historic collection of building stones, decorative marbles and granites grace the Earth Science Department's coffee lounge. The general consensus of the seminar was a big yes to the question in the title.

Bob Reekie opened the day with a fascinating tour of building and decorative stones in buildings in Scotland, from the earliest stone buildings, the brochs, up to modern day constructions. We heard about the new gallery about to open in October, in the Royal Scottish Museum. Real life stories about how buildings like Stirling Castle are put together, will help to bring the subject to life for the visitor.

Ian Thomas from the National Stone Centre at Wirksworth followed with a resume of the aims and achievements of the Centre. The Centre is within easy reach of a large proportion of the UK population, and Ian reported rising numbers of visitors, against falling or static numbers for comparable establishments. It is good news to know that earth science is attracting rising numbers, but not really surprising, as the Centre has so much to offer. It is situated right in the stone-quarrying heart of the UK, with six quarries actually in its grounds, and many famous ones just beyond the periphery. The exhibition hall, treating the origins of the material goods of everyday life, complements the visitors' outdoor experience on the quarry trails.

The gracious buildings of Dublin, and the building stones collections in Dublin were outlined by Patrick Wyse Jackson. He reports that the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) has set up a Stone Task Force to look at the stone trade and its potential in Eire. Irish granites have already been surveyed; the aim is to locate those sites where there is adequate granite, whose petrography and jointing make it suitable for use, in locations close enough to a competent road, where quarrying will have minimum impact on the environment. Colour illustrated reports of the survey are available. Samples collected for this work now form the basis of the GSI National Stone Collection. The news that samples are being cut and varnished, rather than polished, was met with some consternation, on the basis that the varnish always yellows with time and so obscures the natural colour of the stone.

Following lunch, the meeting reconvened in the coffee room to view Watson's collection. The merits of easy accessibility to this collection were aired with enthusiasm, along with admiration for the display method, which allows all specimens to be seen without unlocking glass cases. There was heated discussion about funding and research potential. In relation to the value of collections of material from quarries which have long-since closed down, it was pointed out that there is often the potential to re-open old quarries; it only needs the right economic climate. So Watson's collection, old though it is, maintains its relevance in the modern day.

Henry Buckley gave an outline description of the collection known at this meeting as the London Collection, a new name for what essentially has been the National Collection of Building and Decorative Stones. This collection now comprises some 20.000 specimens. It results from the combination under one establishment of the 17 000 specimens transferred from the British Geological Survey in 1985 with 3000 of the Natural History Museum's collection. The general content of the collection, method of storage and means of accessing specimens was explained. No research is currently being undertaken, though technical enquiries are undertaken on a fee-charging basis. The collection is considered to be a valuable and relevant research archive.

Finally, John Houston spoke about research and the collections at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) at Watford. He explained the nature of the collections there and their relationship to BRE's publications on the Building Limestones, Sandstones, Magnesian Limestones and Slates. This led to a discussion of the value of the BRE categories of stone quality, from the point of view of the Stone Federation, who keep in mind the needs of the stone trade itself. The salt crystallisation test, the reports of which provide the basis for the BRE categories in their reports, is a standard. The problem arises from tests being done on small samples, which can never be more than a guide to the behaviour of large blocks placed in their 'working location' within buildings.

Lively discussion terminated a fascinating day, and included the importance of buildings themselves as an archive. It was pointed out the buildings provide large-size samples of material in use, giving a valuable guide to the pattern, colour and variability, as well as the durability and suitability of stone types. The interest and value of building stone collections to the archaeologists and historian were discussed. The meeting was much enjoyed by all present, particularly for bringing together professionals from many walks of life whose common interests is building materials.

Susanna van Rose

Geology Unlimited

GCG Committee have been considering how a nationwide series of geological events might be arranged along the lines of those the Group coordinated in the early summer of 1989.

The initiative taken by Chris Darmon and the Nationwide Geology Club this year in organising Geology Unlimited is one which I believe deserves our support. I understand from Chris Darmon that it is intended to run these events every other year - the next will be in 1995, and August is the likely choice of month.

The potential for nationwide publicity which Chris is able to offer through a free newspaper and the pooling of separate events which currently run with little or no

liaison should see a much better use of resources, wider publicity for event providers and above all a greater impact on the general public whom we are trying to reach.

Please mark this in your diary and start considering ways in which you might contribute. There is of course nothing to stop events being held at any time but let's hope that August 1995 will be a Geomonth to remember. If you require any further information, contact Chris Darmon on 0742 455746.

Paul Ensom, GCG Chairman.

Jurassic Perks.

In a summer which saw geology in the news with the destruction of Scarborough's Holbeck Hall Hotel as it slipped over the cliff, and the much-hyped arrival of *Jurassic Park*, the opportunity for people to get their hands on the rocks came with Geology Unlimited - a month long celebration of British geology throughout August. With the financial backing of the Nationwide Geology Club and additional support from the Earth Science Teachers' Association and the Geological Society, some 60 events were organised.

With a brief to provide field events accessible to as many people as possible, the geological world rose to the challenge. In all, some 20 local societies, 14 museums and 5 commercial suppliers as well as a number of individuals became involved as event providers. The events stretched from Edinburgh to Cornwall, Anglesey to Kent.

Of the 60 events planned, over 50 ran, attracting around 500 people, of whom many were in family groups. Without exception, they seemed thoroughly to enjoy the experience. Numbers attending varied enormously from trips that attracted nobody or only a couple people to the most popular, Colin Reid's *Trilobites and Trogloodytes* at Dudley which had 30.

The choice of August meant that many people were able to avail themselves of mid-week and evening events. There was some evidence of people joining events during a holiday in the locality. It is these factors, especially the light evenings, which make August the most likely repeat month.

The more unusual trips - with exciting titles - were the ones which fared best. For example, a graveyard geology trip run by Paul Ensom in York was far more popular than traditional building stone walks elsewhere. Welsh events, with the exception of the Wrexham area, were generally poorly supported. Possibly a factor operating here as in some parts of England was the remoteness from major centres of population.

The publicity Geology Unlimited attracted far exceeded our expectations with at least seven BBC local radio stations carrying interviews with leaders and organisers. One station, Radio Sheffield, even sent a reporter along on one of the trips - a look at the geology of Meadowhall Shopping Centre - the outcome of which was a mention on the

main morning news bulletin! Local newspapers also carried the events, though often as a tiny story tucked away in a corner.

Bookings came via a number of sources, from the special edition of the newspaper *Down to Earth*, from leaflets and posters distributed to Tourist Information Centres, libraries and museums, from a leaflet to Nationwide Geology Club members and from radio and newspaper publicity. The effect of *Down to Earth* was particularly pleasing and must form an earlier part of any future plans.

Clearly, Geology Unlimited was never going to be anything but a loss maker financially, but even with a full-time administrator for some six weeks plus leaflets, posters, insurance etc, the entire cost is not likely to be much above £2000, against which about £400 came in through the modest charges. These charges were not resisted by anyone; indeed people were often willing to pay more, feeling it to be excellent value for money.

The help and support of everyone is appreciated. Without the event providers, it could not have happened. If you were not involved this time around, pencil in August 1995 and be with us when once again Geology goes Unlimited.

Chris Darmon, GeoSupplies Ltd,
16 Station Road, Chapeltown, Sheffield S30 4XH Tel 0742 455746

Unreturned loan specimens

On the death of Dr Archie Lamont (1907-1985), his large geological collections came under the care of the National Museums of Scotland. Amongst Dr Lamont's own specimens were numerous fossils forming parts of loans borrowed by him from many institutions both here and abroad. Most loans had enough paperwork or titled labels to allow them to be returned to their rightful owners. There were, however, several groups of specimens which we have until now been unable to match up with their parent institution.

A short history of Dr Lamont's career may be able to give some guide as to which institutions the borrowed specimens may have originally come from. After graduation in Glasgow, Dr Lamont moved on to a lectureship at the University of Birmingham. At Birmingham between the years 1936 and 1944 he carried out palaeontological work on material from the Welsh Borders, North Wales and the Midlands of England. He visited many institutions to examine relevant fossil material and borrowed large numbers of specimens. Unfortunately, at the time of his death Dr Lamont had still not completed certain papers on some of this material and as a result it had not been returned.

One particular group of fossils is causing us some concern as it consists of several hundred small numbered specimens. The age and locality of this material is given as the Wenlock Limestone of Dudley. The specimens are mainly small brachiopods but include a few trilobites. Examples include a large phacopid trilobite cephalon,

no locality, with printed number '1176' attached to specimen, and *Spirifer crispus* from the Wenlock Limestone at Dudley with handwritten label and printed numbers attached to specimens '271' to '274'. If you have found that large numbers of such specimens are listed in the catalogue of your collection but at present are missing, please get in touch and I will be delighted to return this material.

Bill Baird, Department of Geology, Royal Museum of Scotland
Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF

Museum news, please.

Dr Richard Bevins is the co-ordinator for a new section of the *Mineralogical Society Bulletin* entitled 'Museum News'. This is a forum for promoting various aspects of museum work, bringing it to the attention of mineralogists throughout the country. He invites notes, comments, reviews, reports and the like on any aspects of mineralogy in Museums. Please send your contributions to him at the National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NP Tel 0222 397951 ext. 281, fax 0222 667332.

Parlez-vous Deutsch?...

At a recent GCG Committee meeting, it was felt that it would be useful to know if any members could converse or lecture in French or German. If you have such a skill and would be interested in representing GCG in these languages if the opportunity arose, please contact GCG Secretary, Simon Knell, (Address on p.1)

...or English?

As part of a COPUS/British Association initiative to improve communication of science to the public, Jane Mole is setting up a database of speakers on subjects which fall under the broad categories of Science and Technology. The service is intended for use by organisations throughout the country who need a speaker either on a particular subject or a general theme, from local school or WI to scientific institutions. This could be an excellent opportunity for you to promote your institution or geological interests to a wider public. If you can give interesting, informative or topical talks (or know of someone else who can), please contact Jane at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB, Tel. 071 494 3326, fax 071 734 1658.

MDA Cards free!

Scunthorpe Museum has lots of the following MDA cards and sheets available free of charge: Locality Field Cards, Geology Cards, Geology Locality A4 Summary Record Sheets, Natural Science Cards, Mineralogy Cards and some for other disciplines. Contact Sue Rainton or Steve Thompson, Scunthorpe Museum, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe South Humberside DN15 7BD. Tel 0724 843533/280444 ext 864 fax 0724 281705.

**Katherine J Andrew, Geological Conservator and Collection Care
Consultant
First year of trading**

I would like to thank all the curators and museum authorities who have commissioned work from me during my first year in business. I am pleased to report that I have survived this difficult period with assistance from the government New Business Scheme and an equipment grant from the Conservation Unit of the Museums and Galleries Commission which is gratefully acknowledged. With the continued support of the museum community, I hope to offer my services on a freelance basis for many years to come.

During my first year, I have worked regularly in Dudley and Birmingham, as far north as Kendal, as far east as Cambridge and Kettering and as far south as Canterbury and Chichester with three longer contracts undertaken on site. Smaller specimens are usually collected and worked on at my rented lab space in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. During the coming year I hope to undertake at least one further-flung contract.

In the last few weeks I have moved, and enquiries should now be directed to me at 59 The Common, Abberley, Worcestershire WR6 6AY Tel. 0299 896 625.

Kate Andrew

Back issues of Natural History Museum titles

Intercept publications have recently acquired the scientific backlist of the Natural History Museum and the distribution for the Ray Society. Their list includes: *The Discovery reports, the ancestry of vertebrates, Owls, caves and fossils, Permian to Palaeocene calcareous algae, Benthic foraminifera from Ecuador*, and the entire backlist of geology bulletins. For further information contact Intercept at PO Box 716, Andover, Hants SP10 1YG Tel. 0264 334748 fax 0264 334058.

Where there's muck...

It may have been that cluster of 10 Mongolian sauropod eggs that had the television cameras rolling, and the telephone bids rolling in, but at a sale of ethnographic and natural history specimens held at Bonham's Knightsbridge auction rooms on 15 September, it was surely Lot 235 that caught the eye of all serious *Coprolite* readers. To quote from the catalogue, "Twenty three pieces of fossil Dinosaur droppings, agatised, cut and polished... From Hanksville, Utah, U.S.A." Those of you who missed the excitement may be interested to know that all those skeletons in your cupboards are worth a small fortune. Even coprolites, it seems, command a lofty price, with Lot 235 coming under the hammer for £2,000. As for those sauropod eggs, a mere £46,000 and they could have been yours!

GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip
HUNTERIAN MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
8-9 December 1993
BOOKING FORM

I will be attending the seminar/AGM on 8 December
I will be attending the field trip on 9 December
I would like details of local accommodation

From: Name.....Title.....

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Please return this section to Dr J W Faithfull,
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