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COPROLITE

DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

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From the GCG Chairman

1994 has been a milestone for the Group, celebrating the 20th anniversary of its formation back in 1974. That was a time of many causes to fight for, and a very different museum culture to the one in which most of us operate today. The intervening years have seen great changes, many of a positive nature, though as John Martin summed up in his report of the Northampton Meeting in *Coprolite*, 'we still have as big a fight now as we ever had'. We must be as vigilant now as were those who set the Group on its course 20 years ago, ensuring that the geological collections for which we care, directly or indirectly, are not squandered by a headlong rush to embrace the marketplace economy in museums. Peter Crowther in his penultimate editorial (*Geological Curator*, 5(8), p.302) writes of the conflicts which exist and which ultimately 'rule our professional lives'. For better or worse we have to respond to change and with these conflicts in mind we look forward to the International Conference on the Value and Valuation of Natural Science Collections to be held in Manchester in April 1995. GCG is a

sponsor of the meeting and has agreed to provide financial assistance for a limited number of places (see *Coprolite* No 15, p.6) for GCG members.

For the present I return to the past. For the celebratory Northampton meeting I would like to pay special thanks to Simon Knell who undertook the onerous task of arranging both the meeting and the very successful Anniversary Dinner where we were pleased to see many senior members of the profession alongside those just setting out. It was a great pleasure to welcome Hugh Torrens as our guest and after dinner speaker - a task which he accomplished with great panache. There was a call for similar events in the future, to which your Committee will give due consideration. Sterling support was given by Dr Diana Sutherland who led the field trip the following day. We were hosted in style by the Northampton Museum and thanks to Sheila Stone and her staff for that. The venue was of course most apposite - the Northampton Museum had after all been a significant catalyst in the chain of events which saw the birth of our Group. The Group was pleased to see that real progress was being made on their important geological collections thanks to the positive attitude of the museum's management, the dedication of members of their staff and Rosemary Roden.

The day was the more memorable for the launch of the Group's latest publication, the *Directory of British Geological Museums* (Geological Society Miscellaneous Publication No.18), compiled and edited by John Nudds and published by the Geological Society Publishing House. John Cooper and Nigel Cunningham should also be thanked for their involvement in its production.

Collections without 'keepers' have continued to concern the Group, and here I pay tribute to Simon Timberlake and Steve Thompson who were closely involved with the 'Orphan Collections' seminar in Brighton. The Museums Association must also be thanked for their enlightened approach to hosting meetings like this. This theme is one which we hope will find further expression at the Manchester symposium in April while in the meantime continuing to tax members of Committee.

I am of course especially pleased that we have received 4 parts of the *Geological Curator* since the last AGM. My thanks go to Peter Crowther for seeing the last two parts of Volume 5 through, to Monica Price who has dealt with the page make-up, to Cath Bates who saw to their printing and to John Martin and his team at Leicester who have dispatched them to us for the last 10 years. (Peter acknowledges all those involved in his last editorial, *Geological Curator*, 5 (9)). At the Glasgow AGM Patrick Wyse-Jackson was elected Editor and we are delighted to see Volume 6, parts 1 and 2 issued already. I hope that you will all keep your ears and eyes open, watching for potential contributions and channelling them to our new Editor.

The publication of the new edition of *Thumbs Up* and the successful distribution of thousands of copies to museums around the country was the result of a great

deal of hard work by Colin Reid, and a most effective distribution system through our Secretary and Manchester University. The costs involved were generously met by British Gas Exploration and Production, The Curry Fund of the Geologists' Association, Rockwatch and the Geological Society. Our intention is to reprint this popular and important leaflet early this year taking account of the new telephone codes and incorporating any necessary revisions. During the year, and at remarkably short notice, Committee responded to the call for comments from the Department of National Heritage on their Policy for Museums and Galleries. We hope that the review they are undertaking will see the development of a more rational and supportive approach to museums by Central Government.

The aim to hold a meeting at the Senckenberg has lapsed - at least for the time being. There is still a desire by Committee to follow the road to Europe and the right opportunity is being watched for. Committee would like to thank John Cooper whose idea it originally was, and for his efforts to get it off the ground.

At the beginning of the year Committee invited Dr Bob Symes to join them as a co-opted member and were delighted when he accepted. During the year Rosina Down who had been BCG representative for at least the last 10 years handed over to Steve Thompson. We thank her for her loyal support and regular attendance during that time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Officers and Committee members for their support and hard work. The Group as a whole owes much to Tom Sharpe and Monica Price who continue to see that we are supplied with a wide variety of information through *Coprolite*. Thanks to all those who contribute voluntarily or have their arms twisted! The Terminology Working Party under the leadership of Roy Clements continues to deliberate and we look forward to their first offering. Kate Pontin has remained in her role as corresponding educationalist and has been a great help with the machinations over the National Curriculum. The Group is fortunate to have seen its last Chairman, John Cooper, invited to join the UK Systematics Forum where his presence will undoubtedly be of value. My final item on 'committee matters' is to pay tribute to Diana Hawkes who has resigned as our Minutes Secretary. Diana has given very loyal service to a succession of Chairmen over the last 14 years. On behalf of them all and Committee and Group I would like to thank her for dedication and patience in carrying out this work which is so vital to the success of the organisation.

I would like to record our thanks to Clinton Burhouse for his generous continued support of *Coprolite* during 1994.

The time has come in my chairmanship (*Geological Curator*, 5, (8), pp.331-332) to invite informal suggestions (with supporting written statement) for possible A G Brighton medallists to be sent direct to me. You will, I am sure, remember that the award is made on the basis of the 'counselled choice of the Chairman'.

This appeal is the start of the selection procedure which culminates in the presentation of the Medal at the 1995 AGM.

Finally, on behalf of the Group I would like to thank all our speakers, leaders, and hosting organisations who through their co-operation and contributions have made the last year such a good one.

Paul Ensom,
Yorkshire Museum, York.

GCG Committee 1995

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Committee: John Faithfull, Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, Glasgow
G12 8QQ tel 0141 339 8855, fax 0141 307 8059.

Gill Weightman, Leicestershire Museums Service, 96 New Walk,
Leicester LE1 6TD tel 0116 2473081, fax 0116 2473011.

Simon Timberlake, South Eastern Museums Service, 12 York
Street, Cambridge CB1 2BY tel 01223 300616, fax 01223 301479.

Bob Symes, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum,
Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD tel 0171 938 8850, fax 0171
938 9268.

GCG 1995 subscriptions

At the Annual General Meeting on 30 November 1994, it was agreed that the subscription rates be increased by £3.00. This is the first increase in subscriptions since 1989. The new rates are: UK personal subscription £10.00; UK institutional

subscriptions £13.00; overseas personal subscription £12.00; overseas institutional subscription £15.00.

If you are a personal subscriber, please complete the form on the backpage and send it with your payment as soon as possible to Andy Newman at the address above.

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Glenys Wass**, Braintree, Essex; **Jeanette Kaines**, Selly Oak, Birmingham; **Peter Boyd**, Shrewsbury; **Andrew Jeram**, Belfast; **Richard Hole**, Fareham, Hampshire; **Andrew Clarke**, London; **David N Lewis**, London; **Gordon Alchin**, Sevenoaks, Kent; **Mrs Wiebke Grote**, University of Pretoria, South Africa; **Gill Comerford**, London; **Alistair Bowden**, Edenholm, Bury; **Angela Houghton**, Leicester; **Helen Burchmore**, Elstow, Bedfordshire; **Christopher Andrew**, Sidmouth, Devon; **Andrew Tucker**, Devizes, Wiltshire; **R Wilkins**, Abingdon, Oxfordshire; **Steve Etches**, Ashfield, Dorset; **Dumfries Museum**.

Musical Curators

Anne Abernethy, Assistant Keeper of Natural Sciences at Perth Museum has been appointed Assistant Registrar at the Ulster Museum and took up her post on 1 February; **Jason Sutcliffe** formerly at Clitheroe Castle Museum has been appointed Curatorial Assistant (Geology and Natural History) at the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock; at the Natural History Museum, **Gillian Comerford** has moved from Anthropology to a post in the Palaeontology Laboratory; **Ed Jarzembowski**, Principal Policy Officer (Environment) at Brighton Borough Council (and formerly of the Booth Museum) has been appointed Keeper of Natural History at Maidstone Museum and takes up his post on 6 February.

New GCG Membership List

A number of you have asked that GCG publish a membership list which would serve as a handy reference for when you want to contact other geology curators. Committee has agreed that this should go ahead and we aim to produce it, *Coprolite*-style, in the spring of 1995. Since the address list currently maintained by the Group is, by the terms of the Data Protection Act, to be used solely for the purpose of mailing, it cannot be the basis of a published membership list. Therefore we have to ask you to complete the details on the subscription renewal form on the back page of this issue if you wish to be included in the list.

Please take this opportunity to publicise your whereabouts and help to make this a comprehensive and useful publication. Please complete the form as fully as possible and return it to Andy Newman by 1 April 1995. If the form is not returned, you will not be included. Remember - there are lots of people out there who want to get in touch with you, but who can't afford the *Museums Yearbook*!

Thumbs up leaflet

Last summer many of you will have received a supply of *Thumbs up* leaflets for distribution. Please distribute your quota as quickly as possible (including inserts in *Down to Earth* if you receive bulk supplies) as BT dialling codes change in April. If you need more leaflets, please contact Colin Reid (tel 01384 453574, fax 01384 453576) or Mandy Edwards (tel 0161 275 3825, fax 0161 275 3947) and fresh supplies will be sent to you.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

28 February 1995 Bristol City Museum, Queen's Road Bristol Museums Association Roadshow

A day of talks, discussions and presentations providing an opportunity to find out what the Museums Association is doing and how it can help you or your museum. It is also the Museums Association's opportunity to find out about you and your professional concerns

Contact: Samantha Evans, Marketing Officer, Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0PA tel 0171 250 1834 fax 0171 250 1929.

8 -9 March 1995 Natural History Museum, London

UKIC Natural Sciences Section: The good, the bad and the disaster. Adventures in natural science conservation

Contact: Clare Valentine, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD 0171 938 9252 fax 0171 938 8754.

18 March 1995 Keble College and University Museum, Oxford Russell Society: Mineralogy in the field 1995

This symposium, organised by Britain's leading topographic mineralogy society, will bring together speakers on a wide range of topics closely connected with field mineralogy or specimen-based research and curation. These aspects of mineralogy, which are at the heart of the Russell Society's activities, have often been overlooked in recent years despite being essential to the science of mineralogy.

Topics will include: 'Compiling a mineralogy for Wales' and 'Early mineralogy in Scotland', as well as papers on the minerals of the North Pennines, Southwest of England, Channel Islands and other parts of the UK. The symposium will be held in Keble College and non-members are very welcome to attend.

There will be a reception in the University Museum on the evening of the 18 March, and the University Museum will be having a special opening on Sunday 19 March with a variety of geological activities for members of the public and a special bus link to the Oxford Mineral Show - all part of the SET⁹⁵ programme of events.

Contact: Roy Starkey, 15 Warwick Avenue, Fringe Green, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B60 2AH tel 01527 874101.

25 March 1995 Civic Theatre, Ayr

Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society: John Smith: geologist, antiquarian and natural historian - a symposium

This full-day symposium marks the centenary of the publication in 1895 of John Smith's acclaimed book *Prehistoric man in Ayrshire*. Tribute will also be paid to the work of Smith as a geologist and natural historian. Speakers on Smith's geological work will be Dr Ian Rolfe, Brian Jackson and Miss J Calder of the National Museums of Scotland; Dr R B Wilson; Dr J Pollard, University of Manchester; and Dr D Peacock, British Geological Survey.

Contact: Dr D Reid, Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 10 Woodend Road, Ayr KA7 4QR.

19-21 April 1995 Hulme Hall, University of Manchester

BCG/GCG/The Manchester Museum: International Conference on the value and valuation of natural science collections.

Natural science collections have scientific, cultural and monetary values. The conference will explore the nature of these various values and will reflect the experience of those involved in the care and use of such collections.

Wednesday 19 April

- 09.30 Keynote address: The scientific value of collections, The Earl of Cranbrook
- 10.30 What's important? Simon Kneil
- 11.30 The importance of systematics, Stephen Blackmore, Nicola Donlon & Emma Watson
- 11.50 The fundamental relationship between biological collections and scientific knowledge, Woody Cotterill
- 12.10 The Italian Association of Science Museums and its goals in regard to scientific collections, Guido Moggi
- 12.30 Archives of nature in natural history collections, Dumitra Murariu
- 14.00 Collections assessments and long range planning, Phil Doughty
- 14.20 The National Zoological Collection of Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, Roald Potapov & Vadim Zaitsev
- 14.40 Microbial genetic resources: their use and organisation, D Smith
- 15.00 Collections of the National Museum of Natural History in the Scientific Institute and environmental research in Morocco, O Himmi & M Mauna
- 16.00 Criteria for establishing the relative importance of natural history collections at international, national and local levels, Andrew Jeram
- 16.20 Depreciation, appreciation and inflation: the economics of botanical collections, David G Mann

- 16.40 Scientific and didactic valuation of moveable monuments of inanimate nature in museums geological collections, K Jakubowski
- 17.00 Notes on quality and economy of a natural history collection, Karel Sutory

Thursday 20 April

- 09.30 Keynote address: The cultural impact of collections, Max Hebditch
- 10.00 Keynote address: The cultural impact of natural science collections, C W Pettitt
- 10.30 Ethics of disposal, David Clarke
- 11.30 The educational value of university natural history museums, Jane Pickering
- 11.50 Canada's experience at valuing scientific collections, Peter G Whiting
- 12.10 Evaluating the earth sciences collections at the Royal Ontario Museum, Janet Waddington
- 12.30 A Dutch exercise in the valuation of natural history collections, J Krikken
- 14.00 A scientific/historical/educational heritage for whom? The value of geological collections in small museums, Simon Timberlake
- 14.20 Slaying the sacred cow, W J Baird
- 14.40 An attempt at valuing the zoological reference collection of the Department of Zoology, National University of Singapore, Kelvin K P Lim & C M Yang
- 15.00 From grave to cradle, the changing fortunes of the giant Irish deer, Nigel Monaghan
- 16.00 The effect of high market prices on the value and valuation of vertebrate fossils, Sally Shelton
- 16.20 Museums and the mineral specimen market, Monica Price
- 16.40 The evaluation of natural history collections, some remarks, Francesco Uribe
- 17.00 Targeting the user short term - who pays for long term storage and maintenance? Peter Morgan

Friday 21 April

- 09.30 Keynote address: The capitalisation of natural science collections as assets: a case of intellectual vulgarism, G Carnegie & P Wolnizer
- 10.10 Insurance implications of display of collections made up of unique items with little or no commercial market interest, Colin McBride
- 10.30 Valuing natural history collections, speaker to be arranged

- 11.30 Valuing, a professional's view, R Gowland
- 11.50 A public accountancy view of collections, Martin Evans
- 12.10 Valuation and title in law, Norman Palmer
- 12.30 The cost of collecting: collection management in UK museums, Barry Lord, Gail Dexter Lord & John Nicks
- 14.00 Debate on the value and valuation of natural science collections
- 16.00 Agreement of the 'Manchester Principles'

Registration fees: Full delegate £125.00. Members of GCG/BCG/unemployed / full time students £90.00. Accompanying person £20.00.

Contact: Valuation Conference Secretariat, The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 2634, fax 0161 275 2676.

2-6 June 1995 Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada

Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) 10th Annual Meeting: Preserving the record of nature through countless ages.

The programme will include papers and posters on natural history collections management issues. Within the world of 'natural history', SPNHC embraces the anthropological, biological and geological sciences; collection managers, curators, registrars, and all those who utilise natural history materials will find interesting and valuable topics on the agenda.

The Education and Training Committee of SPNHC is offering a training workshop on 'Managing the modern herbarium', on 5-6 June. The workshop may be taken independently of the meeting.

Contact: Janet Waddington, Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Canada M5S 2C6.

19-23 June 1995 University of Leicester

Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, in association with Leicestershire Museums, BCG and GCG: Natural Science Curatorial Course

Participants will discuss and take part in aspects of the curation of natural science collections including field collecting and recording, preparation, preservation, conservation and storage, identification, systematics and nomenclature, collecting policies and contemporary issues in natural science curatorship, historical research and more.

Cost, excluding meals and accommodation: £245.00

Contact: Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel 0116 2523963, fax 0116 2523960.

29 June 1995 Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London

GCG seminar: Down in the dumps: site documentation - the past, present and future

Contact: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA tel 01273 552586, fax 01273 563455.

11 - 15 September 1995 University of Leicester

Museums Association Annual Conference

Contact: Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0PA
tel 0171 250 1836 fax 0171 250 1929.

19 September 1995 University of Newcastle upon Tyne

4th Symposium for Palaeontological Preparators and Conservators

Contact: Eric Milson, Lamont Cottage, Norton Green, Freshwater, Isle of
Wight PO40 9RY.

2-3 October 1995 Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, High Street, Sandown
GCG seminar and field trip: From field to display

Contact: Jon Radley, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, High Street,
Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 8AF tel 01983 404344, fax 01983 825958.

11-14 October 1995, St Petersburg University, St Petersburg, Russia

**International Symposium on the history of mineralogy, mineralogical
museums, gemmology, crystal chemistry and classification of minerals.**

Contact: Prof Vladimir G Krivovichev, Faculty of Geology, St Petersburg
University, Universitetskaya Emb., 7/9, St Petersburg 199034, Russia tel
(812) 2189481, fax (812) 2181346, E-mail: Anna@dean.geol.igu.spb.su

29-30 November 1995 Ludlow Museum, Old Street, Ludlow

**GCG seminar, fieldtrip, and AGM: Geology for all - the role of the curator
in developing the public understanding of geology.**

Contact: Colin Reid, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, St James' Road,
Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HU tel 01384 453574, fax 01384 453576

10-13 June 1996 Budapest, Hungary

Third International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums.

Contact: M&M 3 Secretariat, c/o Department of Mineralogy, Eotvos
University, Budapest, Muzeum krt. 4/A, H-1088 Hungary fax (361) 266
7952, E-mail emin003@ursus.bke.hu

20-24 August 1996 St John's College, Cambridge

**Second International Symposium and World Congress on the Preservation
and Conservation of Natural Science Collections: Natural science collections
- a resource for the future.**

Contact: Chris Collins, Natural Science Congress '96, Geological
Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, Downing Street, Cambridge
CB2 3EQ tel 01223 62522, fax 01223 60779.

Exhibitions

**Dinosaurs from China: Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter
until 25 February 1995**

**Monsters of the deep Dudley Museum, St James's Road, Dudley 18 February
- 2 September 1995**

Living with minerals: National Museum of Wales, Cardiff until 4 June 1995

Time traveller: an exhibition of art in geology, concentrating on the fossil mammal illustrations of Michael Long. Bristol City Museum, Queens Road, Bristol until 23 April 1995

***Tyrannosaurus rex*:** The largest carnivorous land animal ever comes to Dorchester in this exciting new exhibition in Britain's only dinosaur museum. How did it live? Where and by whom was it found? Discover the real truth about *Tyrannosaurus rex*, and recent attempts by Jack Horner to extract DNA from its bones. Can fact so exactly match fiction? What of the future? The Dinosaur Museum, Icen way, Dorchester, Dorset 1 July - 3 September 1995.

Messel fossils: Town Docks Museum, Queen Victoria Square, Hull 25 February - 26 March 1995; Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh 5 April - 7 May 1995; Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne 12 May - end July 1995.

Mammuts aus Sibirien: Hessischen Landesmuseum, Friedenspladtz 1, 64283 Darmstadt, Germany until 19 February 1995

Dinosaurier - Originalfunde, Skelette und Rekonstruktionen: An exhibition of mounted skeletons, reconstructions of the original animals and fossil remains of dinosaurs. Skeletal construction, teeth, complete clutches of eggs, footprints and the structure of skin and armour provide a glimpse of the lifestyle of dinosaurs, especially concerning nutrition, parental care and social behaviour. Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Museum am Löwentor, Rosenstein 1, D-70 191 Stuttgart, Germany until October 1995.

Mineral and fossil shows

18 February 1995 Essex Gem and Mineral Show, North Romford Community Centre, Clockhouse Lane, Collier Row, Romford, Essex 10.00-16.00

Contact: Stuart Adams, 69 Westbury Lane, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 5PH
tel 0181 504 9422

19 March 1995 Oxford Spring Mineral & Fossil Show, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford, 10.00-16.30.

The 1995 show will be linking with the Russell Society Symposium on 'Mineralogy in the field 1995' (see p. 4) and a special day of geological activities at the University Museum. As usual, a bus service will link the Museum and Show.

Contact Paul Lowe, Endsleigh Nature Company, Endsleigh House, 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2DA tel or fax 01872 223227

22 - 23 April 1995 Rock 'N' Gem Show Kempton Park Racecourse, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex 10.00 - 17.00

Contact HD Promotions, tel 01628 21697 or 01494 450504.

New Geology Gallery at Leicester

A new geology gallery was opened in November at Leicestershire Museum in New Walk, Leicester. Dealing with the geology of the county, the exhibition includes a replica outcrop of the Precambrian of Charnwood Forest, complete with *Charniodiscus*, while the type specimens of the fossils from Charnwood are displayed nearby. Coal Measures and Triassic fossils and rocks are covered while special attention is paid to the Jurassic of Leicestershire, particularly the vertebrates. The Rutland *Cetiosaurus* is now accompanied by skeletal casts of *Plateosaurus* and *Megalosaurus* and dinosaur eggs. The exhibition also includes a display of minerals, emphasising their economic uses, and part of the Barwell meteorite.

Geological Museum closed

The Natural History Museum closed its Earth Science Galleries (better known as the Geological Museum) on 9 January for major refurbishment. The work, which will last eighteen months and cost £12 million, involves the redevelopment of all three floors of the Geological Museum - an area of 5 400 square metres.

An imposing new entrance will be created with a vast hall of rocks extending 17 metres up to a vaulted glass roof. A central atrium will entice people to ascend by a giant escalator to the second floor where the exhibitions will begin. These will combine the Museum's outstanding collections with the latest interactive techniques to explain the wonders of geology and the benefits of minerals to mankind. Geology, mineralogy, geomorphology and climatology will be interpreted by erupting volcanoes and boiling lava, fluorescent rocks, mysterious caverns, shimmering crystals, underground treasures and a section through a mountain, calling on all the senses by using a range of smells, heat, wet and arid conditions.

The Director of the Museum, Neil Chalmers, said, 'Our audience research shows that the public sees geology as dry, static and dreary. The challenge is to create exhilarating exhibitions which will inspire visitors of all ages to take a fresh look at the science of the earth and present geology as a dynamic contemporary subject vital to our very existence'

In addition to the Museum's own resources, £1 million support for the project has already been committed by The RTZ Corporation plc, and a grant of £300 000 has been received from the Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund. With this private sector support and other partnership funding in place, the Museum will be applying to the heritage sector of the National Lottery Fund for the further funding required to realise the full redevelopment programme.

The exhibitions will be designed to appeal particularly to non-specialists, and great attention will be given to ensure that they support the needs of the National Curriculum

There will be six main exhibition areas: *The power within*: volcanoes, earthquakes, mountain building and the dynamic structure of the Earth; *The Earth's restless surface*: how external processes have shaped the landscape; *From the beginning*: the formation of the Earth, the beginnings of life and the fossil record, and changing environments; *The useful Earth*: energy and materials - oil, natural gas, coal and nuclear fuel; mineral resources and mineral surveying techniques; *The Earth's treasury*: the Museum's renowned collection of minerals and gemstones, and the basics of mineral and crystal structure; *The Earth lab*: a resource area where visitors can discover how to follow up their interest in earth science by looking at specimens and investigating ways in which they can see geology for themselves in the field.

The first phase of the redevelopment, including the RTZ central atrium and the exhibitions *The power within* and *The Earth's restless surface*, will open to the public in the summer of 1996.

GCG/BCG Seminar: Orphan collections, a strategy for the future Museums Association Conference, Brighton, 12 September 1994

This meeting was organised by Simon Timberlake and prefaced by an introduction by Steve Thompson; John Cooper was the local meeting secretary. As speakers have been asked to prepare papers for *Museums Journal*, the following is a personal summary of the day.

The meeting was well attended by natural science collection staff with a sprinkling of senior staff from Area Museum Services and the Museums & Galleries Commission. It was held in the Brighton Conference Centre as one of the pre-conference sessions: the other choice for the day was 'The artist as Curator'.

After a welcome from John Cooper, the day started with a session entitled 'The nature of the problem, collection surveys and research'. Mark Simmons gave the first talk on his work between January 1991 and March 1993 on surveying and hands-on curation of natural history collections in the north east. Delegates were provided with a copy of Mark's excellent final published report, *Discovering Green Treasure, the findings of the works of the NEMS Peripatetic Biology Curator*. Mark summarised by saying that the North of England Museum Service project had encouraged awareness of biological collections in the region and had resulted in the report and in training for non-specialist curators. However, because of the short-term nature of the project, collections outside of museums and geological collections had not been included. Peripatetic assistance was still required in the region, both in museums with and without specialist staff.

Simon Timberlake spoke next on geological collections in the south-east. He mentioned the findings of SECRU (South East Collections Research Unit) and

his own surveying and cataloguing work in 180 institutions in the south east. He estimates that there are 3.5 million geology specimens in the south-east outside of the Natural History Museum cared for by only twelve geology curators, only six of whom are in the local authority sector. 1.5 million specimens are without specialist curators and 186,000 specimens require conservation treatment. SECRU had recommended three peripatetic biology curators as a result of their findings.

What Simon did not say was that the South East Museum Service (SEMS) do not appear to be renewing the single existing contract for a peripatetic geologist and are no longer providing a natural science conservation service. This seems strange in the light of SECRU's findings.

Sarah Lamb spoke next in place of Jane Arthur on the history and work of the West and East Midlands Archaeology Collections Research Unit, a project supported in revised form since 1991 with West Midlands Area Service funding. Findings have not been published because of cost but the unit has found museums in the region varying from those with international collections to those with items of local interest and overall a general lack of conservation provision. The unit would like to see a peripatetic archaeology conservator in the region.

Mike Graham, who should have spoken about north west natural science collections, was unfortunately indisposed and his script was read by John Cooper. The collection research unit was set up in 1971, a register was published in 1981, and the unit was reactivated in 1991 to update the information. The policy of the unit was that every natural science collection in the region should be cared for, accessible and used, in line with Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) guidelines. Institutions were classed as A to E and X (no longer with a collection) depending on the type of institution and collection care staff available. One of four recommendations was made for each surveyed collection: 1) appointment of a natural science curator; 2) advice by a consultant; 3) transfer to a class A institution; 4) no action because of an adequate situation existing. Of 8 million specimens, 19% require re-housing (estimated cost £1 million), 87% require computer documentation (£1 million), 10% require conservation (£844,000). In total £4.1 million would get natural science collections up to standard in the North West. Interestingly enough, 85% of the collections and 94% of the re-housing and documentation costs are in class A museums, those with permanent trained natural history curators - a very different figure from the 57% figure for geology collections in the south-east.

The unit has drawn up an action plan for 1993/94: to complete the database, publish the report and get help for natural history collections. It is investigating the possibility of annual visits, costs and retainers and has received £8,000 from the North West Area Museum Service.

After a break for coffee the next session entitled 'The stakeholders story - a view from enablers, strategists and recipients of help' began with a talk by Crispin

Paine on the MGC Standards in the Care of Museum Collections. Crispin described how the standards were devised using a specialist group, the layout of the publication, and the progress of the series, Standards two and three being biological and geological collections respectively. He mentioned the main criticism, that the Standards appeared to be out of reach of impoverished museums, but reminded us of the many escape clauses present allowing museums to aspire to the standard rather than experiencing enforcement. On the staffing front, the recommendations for geology and biology were rather different: advice and a programme of inspection were recommended for geology collections, but staff appointments were recommended for large biological collections.

In the future, these standards should fit in with other museum standards, for example, registration requirements and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). An implementation and support programme is required, possibly graded basic to excellent along the lines of Yorkshire & Humberside's 1-5 scale for documentation. Collection audits and nationally important collections were mentioned in passing.

Tim Ambrose of the Scottish Museums Council (SMC) then spoke about collection research in Scotland. The SMC has commissioned a series of four surveys to date: natural science collections; conservation; university collections; and ethnographic collections. Visual images will be surveyed next. The methodology of the ethnographic survey was discussed in detail, the first ever survey project to attract university research council funding. The advantages of surveys were listed as providing a good overview, specialist input, enhanced documentation, comparative research and awareness raising, allowing forward planning, establishment of preventative conservation priorities, strong arguments for resources, improved access, opportunities to use collections and development of accountability and value for money. From an Area Museum Council point of view, funding cannot be prioritised without a collection research programme.

Graham Walley, the chair of FENSCORE then spoke on the role of FENSCORE as a co-ordinator of regional collection research units and the FENSCORE database. The database consists of records of 3768 collections (between 100 and 200 million specimens) currently held, maintained and archived by the Museum Documentation Association (MDA) and accessible via ASCII or the cataloguing programme, MODES. Less than 1% of the records have needed to be changed in five years but the future of funding for updates and maintenance is uncertain. The database is being used for research and future options for access and improvements to data are under consideration. However, at the moment, there is no linking of orphaned collections to recognised natural history curators.

The final speaker before lunch was Len Pole of Saffron Walden Museum on 'Knowledge of ignorance - fulfilling the potential of collections in small-scale museums'. Len worked from the premise that every museum curator is a specialist in some field but must be able to recognise and admit the limits of their

own expertise, rather than hide the significance of a collection. In order to operate successfully, a back-up pool of additional expertise from large national museums and universities is needed.

Collection evaluation was described as an essential prerequisite to all collections management, not an option to be undertaken when time or money allows. A curator should assume that additional resources can't necessarily be bought in. Instead, expertise should be traded or the possibility of finding an unusual specimen be used as a carrot to encourage visits by specialists. At Saffron Walden Museum the collections have been worked through area by area with limited funds, and the importance of particular collections or specimens has been emphasised to the elected members and governing bodies.

The final structured session on 'Some practical solutions - existing models and new ideas on peripatetic curation and region wide collection care' began with Rosemary Roden on her work as a freelance geological curator.

Rosemary summarised the events leading to the creation of the four Area Museum Service Travelling Geological Posts in 1984 and the change in emphasis in 1987 in the West Midlands to ethnography which meant accepting geology curation work on an agency and self-employed basis.

Rosemary spoke about the types of work she undertakes: regional surveys, collection surveys, assessment reports, collection management policies, rescue curation, museum registration, documentation and preventative conservation. Finished projects, long-term improvements, displays and educational material prepared were also shown.

The stimulating yet tiring nature of widely spread out contracts (both in time and space) was stressed. Other curators had prophesied a flood of unsuitable workers following Rosemary into self-employment; this has not happened as self employment is not a rosy path to riches.

In asking whether the objectives of the peripatetic scheme initiated in 1984 had been realised, the answer was a sad no. By 1995, all of the posts will have gone and despite progress and investment in targeted collections, the surface of this immense problem of poor curation and storage has only been scratched. A new approach for long term provision for the future care of geological collections, fully supported by all Area Museum Services and with proper funding was urged.

John Harrison of the Borders Museum Forum spoke on his newly created permanent post covering four of the border counties with responsibility for pastoral care, curation and use of natural history collections in this region. The post was created by co-operation between four councils with encouragement and grant aid from the Scottish Museums Council. He cares for twenty thousand specimens, is responsible for biological recording, a temporary touring exhibition programme and a new permanent natural history gallery at Hawick Museum. Grants for exhibits have been available with the aim of improving tourism to the area.

Simon Timberlake spoke a second time on low cost schemes for providing specialist curatorial help on a local or regional basis. He proposed three schemes: the tried, tested and relatively low cost peripatetic curation option; a pastoral care scheme using exiting posts or consultants on a central register through which an orphaned collection could buy in work, with a free help-line; and a skills exchange scheme operating in a local area.

Finally, Steve Thompson spoke on the initial report of the Orphan Collections working party. The working party's aims had been to review activities in the field, to organise this meeting and to bring about a useful action. Activities to date have been short term and much of the effort has been voluntary and dependent on the goodwill of institutions, so continuity has therefore been poor. AMC efforts have been thinly stretched.

A long term formal plan is required to achieve good quality work. Topical issues are registration phase 2, the Department of National Heritage review of museum policy and Local Government Review: all of these need to be discussed and influenced. Short term funding is not sufficient. Only the North West Area Museum Service (NWAMS) continues to fund natural science projects at natural science initiative fund levels now that the three year project has been completed. Staffing options have been discussed but valuation of collections must also be considered in order that effort and funds are not wasted.

After a tea break, a discussion session followed. This was chaired by Professor Susan Pearce, President of the Museums Association. The discussion was very wide ranging but was not as decisive or informed as it could have been since at least two of the morning speakers did not stay for the discussion and the chair of this session had only been present for a small part of the afternoon session. The possibility of centres of excellence was floated for the first time by the chair. This issue and funding for Nationally Important Collections seems to be the approach that funding bodies are planning to follow and was not properly covered in this meeting.

A summary and six points for action were then suggested by Simon Timberlake:

1. MGC Standards to be equipped with teeth rather than being guides to best practice.
2. Papers given at the meeting to be published in *Museums Journal* in order to reach a wider curatorial audience.
3. A broader working party to be set up, with funding and assistance, in the shape of a meeting place, to be sought from MGC. Collection Research Units to discuss issues raised, and other specialist curators groups to be asked to take action in their collection fields.
4. Working party to consider natural science orphan collections first or else the task is too large.

5. Working party to produce a summary document for MGC to be a basis for funding of orphaned natural science collections.
6. Another meeting convened to present working party findings.

Many thanks go to the original working party and those that organised and spoke at this meeting. Now that options and views have been aired and representatives from the Museums and Galleries Commission have gained an understanding of the nature and size of the problem of orphaned collection in the natural sciences, the working party should be able to ensure that any nationwide plans for centres of excellence or identification of Nationally Important Collections include the natural sciences. The new working party's attention was drawn to the Dutch Government's Delta Plan for all collections in the Netherlands, a scheme discussed and demonstrated during the recent BCG study trip to Amsterdam and Leiden. BCG visited Holland one week after a team from the Museums and Galleries Commission.

K J Andrew
Geological Conservator and Collection Care Consultant

**GCG Seminar: The geological display
- new directions in interpretation**

30 November - 1 December 1994, National Museum of Wales

Ian Rolfe of the National Museum of Scotland presented the meeting with an account of the background to the new £30 million extension to the Chambers Street museum which will have an exhibition focus on 'showing Scotland to the world and the world to Scotland'. The geological element of the new gallery will take up 5% of the exhibition with displays taking the visitor from the familiar ground of Scottish scenery through into an appreciation of the geological basis of the landscape and its role in shaping human history. Other aspects of earth sciences will be covered in parts of the older building.

The role of the designer was clearly expressed by Alisdair Hinshelwood who was involved as a consultant in the new *Evolution of Wales* gallery in Cardiff. Here a specimen based approach to the geological history of Wales was the brief for an exhibition which makes substantial use of interactive techniques demanding a commitment from the visitor towards the learning process. Geologists are apparently fortunate in having a good story to tell which is actually contained in the specimens which we put on exhibition. The challenge is to reach a good understanding with the designer before you can explain novel or complex ideas to the average visitor.

David Willrich who also worked on the *Evolution of Wales* gallery demonstrated some of the lighting and sound techniques which are amongst the waves of new technology now available to exhibition designers. As costs of technology such as computer interactive multimedia tumble annually, some of the more advanced technologies are now within the budget of museums (or at least some of the larger state-supported museums!)

An excellent buffet lunch was available in the lecture theatre which allowed for

the most important elements of a good GCG meeting - interacting and networking (gossip). There was also the opportunity to look at the exhibitions about which so much had been said by the designers, and to learn about the details which rarely get mentioned in talks or publications!

Mike Bassett of the National Museum of Wales gave the background to the planning of the new Cardiff gallery which was carried out in the space of a single year, albeit at a cost of £2M. Previous years spent setting up temporary and travelling exhibitions had helped the staff with the planning of such a challenging adventure.

Colin Reid of Dudley Museum spoke from the heart about the realities which face most of us, looking into our own hearts for the facets of geology which hit us 'like Cupid's arrow' when we first were bitten by the geological bug. We have to identify the exciting and the amazing aspects of our discipline and present them in exciting ways to our visitors. The exhibitions at Dudley (*Geology Today* 10, pp.68-69) are a commendable example of what can be achieved with very modest budgets.

The interactive approach of the National Stone Centre was described by Ian Thomas. While there are limits to the geological processes which can be demonstrated (high temperature metamorphism being somewhat risky) the exercises of gem panning, fossil casting and rubbing are all very popular. Other activities include mineral sorting, stone wall building and outcrop examinations. In all, the talks provided a useful opportunity to see what some of the most active geological centres are doing or planning at present. Hopefully all will monitor visitor responses so that we can develop an appreciation of which become the real successes.

The meeting was followed by the AGM which will be covered in a future issue of *Geological Curator* and by a cool December outing to Triassic dinosaur footprint localities. This was led by Tom Sharpe and Steve Howe who like all of the Cardiff staff contributed towards an excellent couple of days in Wales.

Nigel Monaghan, National Museum of Ireland

Prestige grant awarded to Gloucester City Museum

The Natural History and Geology Department at Gloucester City Museum is set to benefit from a £5000 grant awarded by the Pilgrim Trust to produce an illustrated catalogue of the best geology specimens in the museum. The museum's Deputy Curator, David Dartnall, said that he was delighted with the trustees' generosity and far-sightedness. This would enable the museum to employ a consultant geologist to research and write the manuscript for the catalogue during the next year or so.

David will then be looking for further financial support or joint sponsorship with a publisher to publish the work, which hopefully will be available in 1997. This

will be the first account of the museum's important geology collections to be published since the museum was founded 134 years ago. It is particularly appropriate that this is happening now as the museum has recently been involved in some major geological projects such as the Hornsleasow dinosaur excavation and the Blockley plesiosaur discovery, both of which will feature in the new book.

Ammonite acquisition

The National Museum of Wales has recently purchased a collection of over 1600 ammonites from Martin Foster, a collector in Uplyme near Lyme Regis in Dorset. The majority of the specimens are from Jurassic and Cretaceous localities in southern England, but there is also material from northern England, Scotland, Germany and France. Some of the specimens were collected by Martin while others have been purchased or exchanged with collectors around the country. Apart from the scientific value of the material, a major feature of the collection is the number of specimens of exhibition quality. Many are superbly prepared, largely by Peter Langham in Lyme Regis.

The collection complements the NMW's large and important Mesozoic collections from southern Britain and it is hoped to put part of the collection on temporary display.

Richmondshire Museum

Malcolm Jenyon, a consultant geologist from Richmond in North Yorkshire, would like to draw the attention of GCG members to the Richmondshire Museum, Ryders Wynd, Richmond.

The museum is quite small and manned mainly by volunteers, being open between Easter and end October each year. To a great extent it is a collection of by-gones and material related to the history of this area of the Dales around the town of Richmond. However, there is a small, but interesting mining and geological exhibit covering in the main the erstwhile lead and copper mining industries in the area. The exhibit includes rock and mineral specimens, photographic records of the mines and miners in the 19th century, together with implements, equipment and clothing used by the miners. Diagrams, illustrations and text clearly explain how the ores were located, got out, and processed.

Apart from the geological and mining section, a very popular exhibit in the museum, which draws visitors from as far away as North America, Australia, and Holland, is the vet's surgery set from the first of the renowned James Herriott *All creatures great and small* television series.

The volunteer staff at the Museum will give a friendly welcome to all visitors. There is a small entry fee to help with overheads (currently 80p for adults, 60p for children, students, and UB40 holders).

Malcolm K Jenyon, Richmond, North Yorkshire

Stuart Baldwin retires

After 680 million and 25 years, Stuart Baldwin is retiring from his fossil replica manufacturing business and fossil/zoology museum at the end of March 1995. These are being purchased by the Open University and will be run from Milton Keynes from April.

Stuart would like to thank all those who have helped him with advice, hospitality, specimen loans and orders over this period and assures all GCG members of a warm welcome at Fossil Hall at any time. The Museum will be open every Saturday up until the end of March from 9am to 4pm.

There are many items to be disposed of: fossils, zoological specimens, minerals, cabinets, equipment and a sectional building. If you are unable to call and/or would like a list of these, please send a stamped, addressed envelope marked 'FH Sale'.

Stuart is retaining his secondhand book business which will continue to operate from Fossil Hall.

For further information, please contact Stuart on 01376 583502 or Dr Dave Williams of the Open University on 01908 653738

Australian women palaeontologists sought

Dr Susan Turner, Honorary Research Fellow at Queensland Museum in Australia is seeking any information, anecdotes and photographs of any Australian women palaeontologists who may have worked in or visited museums here. She is interested in, for example, Dorothy Hill, Isabel Cookson, Elizabeth Ripper, Nell Ludbrook, or more recently, Mary Dittman and Mary Wade.

She is preparing a database on the women in Australian palaeontology and recently gave a talk at Dave Branagan's INHIGEO Conference in Sydney in July (see S Turner, 1994, Women in palaeontology in Australia. In D Branagan and G H McNally (eds) Useful and curious geological enquiries beyond the world. Pacific-Asia historical themes. INHIGEO, Conference Publications: Sydney, pp.248-250).

If you can help, please contact Sue at Queensland Museum, PO Box 3300, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101, Australia.

Newish publications

Hunting dinosaurs by Louie Psihoyos with John Knoebber. 1994, xvii + 267pp. Cassell. ISBN 0 304 34485 0, £18.99.

Prehistoric life. the rise of the vertebrates by David Norman. 1994, 247pp. Boxtree. ISBN 1 85283 400 5, £19.99.

Sir Hans Sloane. Collector, scientist, antiquary. Founding Father of the British Museum edited by Arthur MacGregor. 1994, 308pp. British Museum Press. ISBN 0 7141 2085 5, £50.00.

Sir Joseph Banks: a global perspective edited by R E R Banks, B Elliott, J G Hawkes, D King-Hele and G Ll Lucas. 1994, 239pp. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. ISBN 0 947643 61 3, £12.00.

The history of mineral collecting 1530-1799. With notes on twelve hundred early mineral collectors by Wendell E Wilson. 1994. *The Mineralogical Record* volume 25, number 6, pp.1-243, \$24.00.

Manual of heritage management edited by Richard Harrison. 1995, Butterworth-Heinemann. £65.00 (Available to Museums Association members at £58.00 (post and packing free) from Book List Sales, Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0PA.)

By popular demand - a strategic analysis of the market potential for museums and art galleries in the UK by Stuart Davies. 1994, Museums and Galleries Commission. Available from The Finance Officer, Museums and Galleries Commission, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA, £15.00 including postage and packing.

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Share your news with the rest of us: we want to hear about your new exhibitions, new developments, new acquisitions, new museum publications, events, meetings, and staff changes; or even your comments on the state of museum geology today and how to put it right. News from our overseas members, especially in Europe, is particularly welcome. Please send your contributions to Tom Sharpe at the National Museum of Wales (address above).



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