



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

COPROLITE

No.17
May
1995

Coprolite is compiled by Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NP (tel 01222 397951 ext. 265, fax 01222 667332) 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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Cooptees to GCG Committee

The following were coopted onto Committee at its meeting on 16 January 1995:

Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, editor of
Coprolite

Steve Thompson, Scunthorpe Museums Service, BCG Representative

Steve McLean, Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne

Nick Goff, Museum Documentation Association

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **David A. S. Smith**, Eton College, Windsor; **Matthew Stephens**, York; **Susan Crook**, Leicester; **Stuart Wagstaff**, Beaconsfield; **Kim Buckmaster**, Sandy, Bedfordshire; **Shmuel Meiri**, Tel-Aviv, Israel; **Nigel Hughes**, Cincinnati, USA; **John Simmons**, Oxford.

Musical curators

Peter Crowther, Curator of Geology at Bristol City Museum has been appointed Keeper of Geology at the Ulster Museum and took up the post in April; **Jane Mee**, Curator at Ludlow Museum has been appointed Principal Museums Officer at Scarborough Museum; **Bob Symes** has been appointed Keeper of Mineralogy at the Natural History Museum.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the AGM of the Geological Curators' group will be held at 15.30 on Wednesday 29 November 1995 at Ludlow Museum, Old Street, Ludlow. Nominations for the posts of Officers and three Committee Members must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Mandy Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL by 7 November 1995.

GCG Membership list - a reminder

It's still not too late to be included in the membership list due to be published soon by GCG. If you haven't yet sent in your entry, please do so as soon as possible. You'll find the form on the back page of the last issue of *Coprolite*. Please help us to make the list as complete and as useful as we can by returning the form to Andy Newman, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU tel/fax 0191 222 7426.

Write for *Geological Curator*

Now that *Geological Curator* is appearing on a regular schedule, the Editor, Patrick Wyse Jackson, is seeking papers on all aspects of the curation of geological specimens. If you have a paper to offer, please contact Patrick at the Department of Geology, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland, tel 00 3531 702 1477, fax 00 3531 671 1199.

Defaulting borrowers

At its last meeting, Committee discussed the subject of unreturned specimen loans and wondered if there was any way in which researchers who have failed to return material to the lending institutions could be 'blacklisted'. The aim would be to ensure that the names of those who have defaulted could be circulated so that no other institution will lend them material. There are obvious legal implications which would have to be considered, but Committee would be most interested to hear of any suggestions from members as how they have tackled this problem, whether they feel such information would be of value, and how they think any sort of blacklist might operate (within the law). Please send any comments to Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NP.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

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? The past, present and future of site documentation.

Programme

10.30 Registration and coffee

11.00 A 20 year perspective on site recording: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History

It seems hard to believe that 20 years ago, geological curators did not see themselves as providers of site-based information. Curation was about specimens. As one of the first to propose that a site documentation scheme could usefully help to organise country wide recording, I remain firmly convinced of the value of this work. Indeed being able to offer a locally focused information service to a wide and appreciative audience is of fundamental relevance to modern mission statements and performance

indicators. If I am correct in believing that this view is held by all of us, do we still need a National Scheme.

11.25 Progress with GD2, the Geological Sites Database: Charles Copp,

11.45 The conservation or desecration of mineral sites? Colin Sparrow, Royal Geological Society of Cornwall

This talk will concentrate on several important points particular to mineral sites: The scientific component relating to mineral sites where there is a dwindling material stock yet a burgeoning scientific resource. Site Integrity of both surface and underground locations. Risk elements including the negative results of derelict land clearance and loss through ignorance. The public awareness of the mineral heritage. Signposting of sites and publications. Interaction to create an infrastructure with local authorities, conservation bodies and landowners. The requirements for a national strategy on the surveys, site identification and management/usage of mineralogical sites.

12.05 Take to the roads: David Curry, St Albans Museums

Many of us are as far away from the sea as anyone can get and therefore lack any comprehensive natural geological exposures. We have to depend on man-made exposures such as quarries and road cuttings in order to study our underlying geology and create permanent exposures which have future scientific and educational value. There are however opportunities throughout the UK for enhancing the earth science resource by studying temporary exposures; motorway widening schemes, bypasses and gas pipelines. We as geological curators know best how to record sites, collect and curate specimens and make them accessible for education and research, but are we adequately prepared to respond quickly to temporary exposures?

12.25 Discussion

12.45 Lunch

14.00 The National Scheme - Crossroads or Cul-de-Sac? Mick Stanley, Kingston upon Hull Museums and Art Galleries

Eighteen years after the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation was launched in 1977, the results of a questionnaire will answer the question posed in the title. 55 record centres have been contacted to provide data and to seek views and comments. Should records be held centrally? Is there a need for regional meetings? Has RIGS increased the use of records? Is there a future for NSGSD? All will be revealed!

14.30 Peaks and Pitfalls - 20 years of geological site documentation in Avon: Phillippa Burell, Bristol/Avon Regional Environmental Records Centre, Bristol City Museum.

Avon, North Somerset and Gloucestershire make up one of the most geologically varied regions in Britain. There is exposed here every geological system from the Cambrian to the Cretaceous (covering some 475 million years), with the exception of the Ordovician and possibly the Permian. The documentation of this rich diversity of geological sites has been a challenge which has taught us many lessons, some of which helped with the setting up of the RIGS system nationwide. A brief description of the history of geological documentation in Avon is followed by a précis of the current situation and our plans for the future.

- 14.50 A local authority's involvement in geological conservation: Julie Stobbs, Countryside Conservation Officer for Durham County Council

Durham County Council have published a Geological Conservation Strategy, the first to have been produced by a local authority. This was written with the assistance of a panel of local geologists who also recommended 67 'second tier' County Geological Sites. These have now been approved by the County Council and, within the new Structure Plan, currently at the draft stage, is a provision to safeguard these sites along with those designated for their wildlife interest. The talk will also cover the policies contained in the Strategy and arrangements which have been made for their implementation and monitoring.

- 15.10 Reinventing the wheel? the relationship between RIGS and the NSGSD: Dr Greg Carson, The Wildlife Trusts

The NSGSD was initiated in 1977, by professional geologists in response to a perceived need to document the many thousands of geological sites that warranted some form of protection, yet were not covered by GCR. RIGS on the other hand was set up some 15 years later to implement practical site conservation nationally, previously carried out by only a handful of local geological societies. Whereas the NSGSD focused on documenting existing sites important for scientific and educational purposes, RIGS is very much about site enhancement, involving a diverse range of professional and amateur people who share a common interest in the geological nature of their local environment. Do the NSGSD and RIGS have different aims? Or are they following separate paths towards the same goal?

15.30 Tea

16.00 Discussion

16.50 Closing remarks by the GCG Chairman.

Meeting fee: £2.00

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 Milsom, Lamont Cottage, Norton Green, Freshwater, Isle of Wight PO40 9RY.

20-23 September 1995 The Dental School, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

43rd Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy

Contact: David Brown, Department of Oral Biology, The Dental School, Framlington Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4BW tel 0191 222 8392, fax 0191 222 6137, e-mail d.s.brown@ncl.ac.uk

2-3 October 1995 Riverside Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight

GCG seminar and field trip: From field to display

The rapidly eroding coastline of the Isle of Wight provides one of the richest fossil hunting grounds in Britain and a popular training ground for a wide variety of earth science disciplines. These pressures present a unique challenge for staff of the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, who are attempting to conserve the island's geological heritage through active fieldwork, accession of donations and purchases and maintenance of good relations with local collectors. The purpose of the seminar is to bring attention to local and broader issues relating to collecting and curation of geological specimens. The field trip will visit several coastal localities (including dinosaur sites) and the local museum, to highlight collecting-related problems and issues.

Provisional programme

Monday 2 October

S. Hutt, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology:

Dinosaur happenings on the Isle of Wight

J. Radley, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology:

Role of local collectors on the Isle of Wight

M. Barker, University of Portsmouth: Colour preservation in fossils

D. Martill, University of Portsmouth: Fake fossils: personal experiences

M. Hunt, University of Portsmouth: title to be confirmed

R. Twitchett, University of Leeds: title to be confirmed

Tuesday 3 October

Visit to the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, Sandown (with discussion of practices and future prospects) and local exposures of Lower Cretaceous rocks. Here issues relating to collecting and conservation will be examined.

A list of accommodation in Sandown is available from the local organiser. Transport will be available to and from Newport on Monday and to and from field localities on Tuesday.

Sandown is easily reached by train from the 'Wightlink' passenger ferry terminal at Ryde. Trains and coaches connect with the mainland terminal at Portsmouth Harbour. Alternatively, car ferry services to the island are available from Southampton (Red Funnel), Lymington and Portsmouth (Wightlink). For details of services contact Wightlink tel 01705 827744 or Red Funnel tel 01983 292101.

Meeting fee: £7.

Please complete the form on back page and return it to: Jon Radley, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, High Street, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 8AF tel 01983 404344, fax 01983 825958 by 1 September 1995

**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.lgu.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.

The museum is the shop window for our science, providing 'geology for all'; that is, for all ages, levels of interest, ability and disability. As a 'frontline' for our science the way in which the curator presents geology is crucial in formulating the public's perception of the subject. Are we succeeding in this task? What is being done by curators to make our science more accessible? This meeting will look at the problems of communicating geology, the needs and expectations of our visitors, review the museum's changing role and examine new and innovative schemes to bring 'geology to all'.

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

April 1996 University of Newcastle upon Tyne

GCG Seminar: Training

Contact: Andrew Newman, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU tel/fax 0191 222 7426.

June 1996 Liverpool Museum

GCG Seminar: New technologies

Contact: Phil Phillips, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN tel 0151 207 0001.

10-13 June 1996 Budapest, Hungary

Third International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums.

Contact: M&M 3 Secretariat, c/o Department of Mineralogy, Eötvös University, Budapest, Múzeum 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.

July /August 1995 GCG Workshops

If there is sufficient interest, a series of workshops will be held this summer. If you are interested in any of the workshops offered below please contact the local organiser.

A guide to geology and museum resources available on the Internet. A workshop on the different sources of information available on computers at the moment, and how to become an information provider on the Net - plus plenty of hands on time with the computers in the Geology Department at Manchester University. Contact Mandy Edwards 0161 275 3825 e-mail aedwards@fs2.ge.man.ac.uk

Basic mineral curating A workshop on assessing your mineral collection and preliminary identification of minerals at the Oxford University Museum. Contact Monica Price 01865 272950 e-mail monica.price@oum.ox.ac.uk

An introduction to advanced mineral identification techniques at the Manchester University Museum Contact Mandy Edwards 0161 275 3825 e-mail aedwards@fs2.ge.man.ac.uk

Exhibitions

Monsters of the deep Dudley Museum, St James's Road, Dudley until 2 September 1995

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

Tyrannosaurus rex: The Dinosaur Museum, Icen way, Dorchester, Dorset 1 July - 3 September 1995.

Messel fossils: Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh until 7 May 1995; Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne 12 May - end July 1995.

Here be dragons: Bath June 1995- January 1996

Dinosaurier - Originalfunde, Skelette und Rekonstruktionen: Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Museum am Löwentor, Rosenstein 1, D-70 191 Stuttgart, Germany until October 1995.

Mammoths and the Ice Age: Snowdonia Museum, Llanberis until end November 1995

Norton geological gallery opens in Ludlow

After many months of hard work by Jane Mee and her remarkable team of volunteers, Ludlow's new geological gallery was opened in the town's Assembly Rooms on 20 February. The occasion was one that will be long remembered by those present. The dedication plaque was unveiled by the Earl of Plymouth, Chairman of the Friends, to reveal the name 'Norton Gallery', in honour of John Norton, OBE who retired as curator seven years ago after 30 years' distinguished service. John, who had not been party to the secret, was quite overwhelmed. It was a fitting reward for a lifetime's dedication to geology.

The gallery itself, though small in size is both visually attractive and extremely practical. Superb murals painted by art college lecturer Ron Downing, depict the changing marine environments locally during Wenlock and Ludlow times. These are complemented by an excellent Ludlow sea bed reconstruction by Dudley-based model maker Ian Hughes. Beneath this display a drawer built in to an artificial rock face contains the fossil remains of various fish and crustacea from the Ludlow Bone Bed depicted in the scene above.

Other visual highlights are a display of the oldest land animal remains in the world - discovered in bone bed horizons above the Ludlow Bone Bed at Ludford Lane, and a large hand-painted geological section of Shropshire produced by Sir Roderick Murchison, and recently restored with the aid of a grant from the Curry Fund of the Geologists' Association.

Due to limited space, only a small portion of Ludlow's sizeable geological collection is on display. However, many specimens are stored in a low cabinet system with glass-topped drawers, similar to that at Liverpool's Natural History Centre. The cabinet tops provide a sizeable working surface/hands-on area for visiting schoolchildren while an excellent video microscope is proving an invaluable teaching aid.

The Norton Gallery is Jane Mee's legacy to Ludlow. She has since been appointed Head of Museum Services at Scarborough and will be greatly missed in Shropshire. However, her successor can look forward to enthusiastic support from the Friends of Ludlow Museum and indeed, the local authority. GCG members will have a chance to view the Norton Gallery at this year's AGM at Ludlow on 27 November.

Colin Reid, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery.

Natural Curiosity: a new display at the Royal Museum of Scotland

Natural Curiosity is a new permanent exhibition which traces the story of the National Museums of Scotland's collections of natural history specimens. Beginning in the 1680s, the tale includes university professors and aristocratic ladies, poor Scots naturalists and missionaries all over the world.

When King Charles was down in London with Nell Gwynne, Sir Robert Sibbald was up in Edinburgh inventing the Scottish medical profession and collecting flowers, gannets and whales. All that's left of his efforts is a dried whale penis.

Professor Robert Jameson created the world's finest museum in Edinburgh University's Old College in the 1820s. A 'Greek Doric temple inside out', it had hot-air heating (which the tame puma surely adored), and ultra-modern interactive technology in the form of plate glass display cases. Here Charles Darwin was taught the rudiments of his future career.

Remember Burke and Hare, who murdered people to sell to 1820s anatomy schools? Their customer, Robert Knox, was forced by the scandal to dissect whales rather than people, hence the River Ganges dolphin in the exhibition (and the 78-foot whale skeleton hanging above the elephant display).

Lady Eliza Gordon Cumming, hard-working as well a beautiful, died in 1842, injured when dealing with a runaway horse. She collected the brightly hued fossil fish of Lethen Bar, Morayshire, and painted pictures of them for the scientists of the day. Scots all over the world sent home fossils and stuffed animals. Colonel Lindsay of the 39th Regiment found fossil kangaroos in Australia.

A tiny fraction of the millions of natural specimens in National Museums, this display shows how even the oldest specimens are still being used by scientists. Some are forever the type specimens for animal species, and others record the changing environment, like the now-extinct Scottish beaver's jawbone from Cupar Angus. Above all, many specimens can never be collected again; some came from now-vanished mines like the fossil plant from Burdiehouse near Edinburgh, and others from now-worked out sites, like Professor Heddle's beautiful 'Blue Hole' agates from near Montrose.

Mineral and Fossil Shows

9-10 June 1995 Iver Heath Mineral Show, Iver Heath Community Hall, Iver Heath near Uxbridge, Middlesex 15.30-19.00 (Fri), 10.00-16.00 (Sat).

Contact: Endsleigh Nature Company, Endsleigh House, 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2DA tel/fax 01872 223227.

23-25 June 1995 Ste Marie-aux-Mines International Mineral, Gem and Fossil Show, Alsace, France 9.00-19.00; open to dealers, curators and other

professionals only on the Friday, and to the general public on Saturday and Sunday. This is one of the largest shows in Europe with around 400 dealers selling fossils, minerals, gemstones and jewellery. It is also one of the most enjoyable, with lots of fine geological specimens, hot sunshine and those cooling alcoholic refreshments for which the Alsace is renowned!

Contact: Michel Schwab, 21 rue de Baldersheim, F-68110 Illzach, France tel. 89.57.44.33.

16 July 1995 Oxford Summer Mineral Show, at the Oxford Conference Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford 10.00-16.00.

Contact: Endsleigh Nature Company, Endsleigh House, 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2DA tel/fax 01872 223227.

9 September 1995 Southampton Mineral and Fossil Fair, Avenue Hall, The Avenue, Southampton 10.00-16.30.

Contact: Southampton Mineral and Fossil Society tel 01703 865567.

27-29 October 1995 Munich Mineral Show, at the Messengelände, Munich, Germany. This is *the* largest mineral show in Europe, and fluorite is the theme mineral this year. The show includes displays by museums and has minerals for sale by dealers from all around the world. Entry on the first day is reserved for curators, dealers and other professionals.

Contact: Mineralientage München Fachmesse GmbH, Postfach 60, 82032 Oberhaching, Germany, tel 089/6134711, fax 089/6135400.

4-5 November 1995 Kempton Park Rock 'n' Gem Show, Grand Hall, Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex 10.00-17.00.

Contact: HD Promotions tel 01628 21697 or 01494 450504, fax 01494 450245.

25 November 1995 Sussex Mineral Show, Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, Sussex 10.00-16.00

Contact: Sussex Mineral and Lapidary Society tel 01444 233958.

Any sharks?

Dr Oliver Hampe of the University of Mainz, Germany would like to know of any significant holdings of Carboniferous and Permian Xenacanthid shark material. This would include the genera *Orthacanthus*, *Xenacanthus*, *Diplodus*, *Pleuracanthus*, *Anodontacanthus* and others. If you have not been contacted directly by Dr Hampe and hold this type of material, please contact him at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Institut für Geowissenschaften, LE Paläontologie, 55099 Mainz, Germany. Alternatively, contact Steve Mclean at the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 9SL tel 0191 222 7418, who will pass on the information.

New RIGS group for Tayside

Following discussions between interested parties including the three district council museums, planning authorities, local universities, British Geological Survey and Scottish Natural Heritage, a new RIGS group has been formed to cover Tayside.

Initial site listings have already been prepared by a contractor employed by Scottish Natural Heritage, for Dundee (the smallest area), with a view to gaining information on potential RIGS sites. Field surveys have now begun on some of the sites. The group is also seeking to identify a 'flagship' site to aid publicity and raise awareness of the RIGS concept in the area. Surveys in the other two districts will follow as soon as time and funding becomes available.

If anyone is interested in joining the group or has information that might be of interest, they should contact Anne Brown at the SNH Area Office, West Lodge, Lindertis, Airlie, By Kirriemuir, Angus, tel 01575 530333.

David S Henderson, Dundee Museum

International Mineralogical Association

The 16th General Meeting of the International Mineralogical Association was held on 4-9 September 1994 at the University of Pisa, Italy where a full programme of lectures, fieldtrips and social events was enjoyed by a large international audience. The programme included three technical sessions under the heading of *The Mineral Heritage*. These were *History and teaching of mineral sciences*, sponsored by the IMA Commission on History and Teaching; *Mineralogical museums and science*, sponsored by the IMA Commission on Museums; and *Mineral classification and mineral databases*, sponsored by the IMA Working Group on Databases and Computer Applications and the Commission on Classification of Minerals. Abstracts of the papers presented at these sessions may be obtained from Dr R F Symes at the Natural History Museum in London.

At the meeting, national representatives attended two meetings of the Commission on Museums. The major items to report are:

1. Following Dr Paul Henderson's talk *A developing scientific role for mineralogy museums*, a Subcommission was formed charged with obtaining ideas to further develop this scientific role. Membership of the group comprises Bob Symes (Chair), UK; Curzio Cipriani, Italy; Michel Deliens, Belgium; and Carl Francis, USA. The group would welcome ideas and contributions on this subject. This group will report to the Mineralogy in Museums Conference 3 in Budapest in 1996.
2. Catalogue of type specimens. Toni Stalder (Naturhistorisches Museum, Bern), speaking as Chairman of the Subcommission on Type Minerals, reviewed

the status of the project to prepare a second edition of the *Catalogue of Type Mineral Specimens*. Three new publications were distributed to the international representatives. These were:

Mineral species first described from Italy and their type mineral specimens prepared by H A Stalder, C Cipriani and A Holzel. (Spiral bound, 57pp. Order from A R Holzel, Ulmring 11 D-55270 Ober-Olm, near Mainz, Germany, price DM12 + postage)

'The type mineralogy of Belgium' by Vaughan D C Daltry and Michael Deliens. *Annales de la Société géologique de Belgique*, 116, 15-28.

Catalogue of type mineral specimens in The Natural History Museum, London, now with an appendix listing mineral species and varieties originally described from the British Isles. (Spiral bound, 60pp. Order from Dr A M Clark, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum, London, price £10 + postage).

3. Publication by the *Mineralogical Record* of the IMA's Comprehensive World Directory of Mineral Collections (3rd edition) assembled under the direction of Ole Petersen. It provides essential data on 444 mineral museums worldwide. The Directory has 293 pages, a hard cover, and includes 24 UK entries. Copies are available at \$16.00 +\$2.00 postage from Circulation Manager, Mineralogical Record, PO Box 35565, Tucson, Arizona 85715, USA.

4. Officers 1994-98: Carl Francis (Chairman), Harvard University - Harvard Mineralogical Museum; Michel Deliens (Secretary), Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Science. Bob Symes will continue as UK Representative to this Commission.

The next meeting of the IMA will be in Toronto in 1998.

R F Symes, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum

**International Conference on the
Value and Valuation of Natural Science Collections
University of Manchester 19-21 April 1995**

The conference was attended by a total of 135 delegates representing 31 countries, with 34 papers and 13 posters given by a range of scientists, users and accountants of natural science collections. The geological sciences were well represented both in the papers given and the delegates present.

The conference aimed to explore the various values of a natural science collection, in scientific, cultural and economic terms. It opened with an address by the Earl of Cranbrook, Chairman of English Nature, setting the context. He stressed the scientific value and importance of collections and their necessary use in many governmental policies.

Simon Knell, in his paper, concentrated on collection evaluation, and how collecting processes may limit the potential use of material. He made the point that the scientific value of a collection or specimen is not always immediately known. Collections may become more valuable in the future when hidden potential may come to light, and this type of value is impossible to calculate in monetary terms.

The cultural value of collections was discussed in keynote papers by Max Hebditch of the Museum of London and Bill Pettitt of Manchester Museum. They raised the main point that the cultural value of a collection is more than just its display potential. It includes use in identifications and in commerce. Both papers agreed that there needs to be an increase in public and governmental awareness of the cultural value of collections.

There were excellent representations from several European countries, on the state and perceived value of their collections. It became evident that institutions were required increasingly to value their collections, and that this process has been carried out in a variety of different ways, taking into account realised and potential scientific value, social and cultural value, commercial market value etc. Most speakers fought shy of putting a financial figure on their collections - but not all. David Mann from the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh worked out costs for the acquisition and replacement of herbarium specimens (around £25 a piece, which he pointed out could be recouped by about 1 hour of efficient and productive study on that specimen by a scientist earning c. £20,000 p.a.). Gerry Fitzgerald of the Canadian Museum of Nature outlined methods adopted to try to put a financial value on the Museum's fish collections using three different approaches. The first was 'replacement cost', ie the cost of time staff and resources to re-collect the specimens. This would take no account of scientific value or use to the Canadian economy of the collection. The second method was based on past expenditure, the costs of caring for the the collection but not for acquiring it. The third method, based on benefits of the collection (past, present or potential), proved beyond any sort of calculation without extensive research.

It was becoming very evident that no single method of valuation could cover all the different kinds of value a specimen or collection may have; and that the very process of valuation was expensive and time-consuming for an institution. On the other hand, there were potential benefits for collections management.

Concern was expressed about the growing role of trade fairs and dealers within the profession. Monica Price and Sally Shelton, in their papers, illustrated the differing effects that increased dealing in geological specimens may bring - from specimens being marketed with no data or proof of provenance, to the benefits of curators attending trade fairs in order to gain realistic knowledge of the commercial value of geological specimens.

The morning session of the final day concentrated on papers by the 'finance professionals': accountants, insurers, valuers etc. These proved to be particularly interesting in that they concluded that collections should not be seen as assets for audit purposes, and that to put a purely financial value on them would be meaningless except in special circumstances such as insurance.

The Conference concluded with a discussion session and the drafting of an International Accord (see below). The importance of the need to assist and support museum collections in third world countries was especially recognised. The International Accord and Conference Proceedings will be published in the autumn of 1995.

In addition to the main papers, there were also some very informative and well presented poster papers addressing different aspects of valuation. Kate Andrew detailed the logistical costs of the conservation of geological specimens, and Geoff Hancock from Glasgow Museums highlighted the importance of valuation for insurance purposes. This was illustrated by a fossil specimen damaged whilst on loan, but to which a financial valuation had not been attached until after the damage had occurred.

The Manchester Museum hosted a reception on the Wednesday evening, and delegates were invited to a reception in the Town Hall by the Lord Mayor on the Thursday evening. Sally Shelton gave a highly amusing after-dinner talk that evening entitled 'Murder in the Museum'. She is rather an expert on 'crime writing and warns that 'curators who have recently finished a PhD, wear safari clothes and study pre-Columbian pottery should beware' as they tend to be the victims... that would seem to rule out most GCG members!

The conference appears to have been a considerable success, obtaining useful media coverage. The Organising Committee are to be congratulated on this most smooth running, interesting and enjoyable conference.

Glenys Wass

International Accord on the Value of Natural Science Collections

Natural science collections held in museums and similar institutions are an irreplaceable world resource used for the long-term benefit of society.

The International Conference on the Value and Valuation of Natural Science Collections, held in Manchester, UK in April 1995, calls upon all governments to support museums and other institutions which provide for the use, care and development of natural science collections. Governments should implement strategies that will:

- 1. recognise the value of natural science collections to society in scientific understanding, education, interpretation, public enjoyment and inspiration, environmental protection, cultural identity, generating prosperity and encouraging sustainable development.**

2. develop facilities that **extend and improve the beneficial use** of natural science collections in the long term.
3. identify the important role that natural science collections play in assisting them to **achieve governmental policy objectives**, including international obligations.
4. ensure that natural science collections are accessible, cared for and documented, to **internationally agreed standards**.
5. develop and support training programmes and educational opportunities that will improve the **level and continuity of expertise** upon which the use of natural science collections depends.
6. recognise that the **value of natural science collections lies in their scientific and cultural importance**, and that, although in certain circumstances it may be possible to place a verifiable financial value on such material for accounting purposes, there appears to be no demonstrable benefit in doing so.

The conference delegates expressed concern about the particular requirements of areas of special need such as eastern Europe and Africa. Because of the global significance of natural science collections, governments in the developed world have international responsibilities to provide support through established aid programmes.

Manchester, UK
April, 1995

GCG Terminology working party

Following its inaugural informal get-together at the Glasgow AGM in 1993, the word gang had its second meeting at the Northampton meeting in May 1994. A third attempt at a meeting in Cardiff in December 1994 was less successful despite the excellent local hospitality; rumours that the Working Party is turning into a peripatetic drinking club are not entirely without foundation!

We have now clearly identified four initial projects, all of which have produced some initial 'thoughts on paper'. The projects are as follows:

1. Nomenclature for *types* and *other status materials*. John Nudds will concentrate on palaeontological/biological types, John Faithfull on type minerals. I will contribute on other status terms.
2. Terminology for *derivative materials* (sections, powders, peels, mounts etc.) John Nudds will again be in charge of this project, but I will also contribute to this burgeoning field.
3. *Mineralogy terminology* and sources for *mineral classification*. Monica Price is already well-advanced towards producing provisional recommenda-

tions, which will be useful, even though there are of course many unresolved problems with regard to mineral classification.

4. *Meteorite nomenclature/classification*. This is again a field which is in flux, with many unresolved problems. It is also a field that I am sure is relatively inaccessible to many of us. John Faithfull is sure some preliminary recommendations and information sources can be provided.

We have agreed that after producing one or more drafts, each project should produce a formal write-up of its recommendations etc. This write-up would be made more widely available for comment by appropriate 'experts', and using the medium of *Coprolite* etc., any other interested parties. Final amended versions would then be published (normally) in the *Geological Curator*. We have set ourselves the target of producing first drafts for our next meeting (at the Group's AGM in Ludlow).

Again, if there is anyone with comments to make, either in general, or on one or other of the particular projects, we would be very pleased to hear from him/her. Contact me, Roy G. Clements, Department of Geology, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH (tel 0116 252 3800), or individual project coordinators.

Roy G Clements

Catalist for Natural Sciences

MDA Services will be releasing Catalist for Natural Sciences in summer 1995. Designed for those new to documenting their collections on computer, Catalist helps museums meet MGC Registration guidelines, create and search simple records and to print a wide range of catalogues and indexes, including labels and accession register listings.

Catalist is easy to use, avoiding technical jargon and comes with a Getting Started Guide and example records. The software is designed to make tasks such as making security copies of your data as easy as possible.

Catalist for Natural Sciences is intended for all types of collection and has been developed in consultation with a number of museum professionals with specialist knowledge and an active interest in computer documentation. Records created in Catalist can easily be used in Modes Plus.

Catalist for Natural Sciences will cost £320 plus VAT. You can get off to the best possible start with a half day training course in our fully equipped training room for just £40.

For more details and a free demonstration disk, contact David Dawson, MDA Services, Lincoln House, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH, tel 01223 518126 fax 01223 213575.

Town trails and building stones: a bibliographic opportunity

There is (or seems to be) a lack of a list of references on the above subjects, perhaps not surprisingly as they are not generally advertised beyond their immediate area of interest. John Cooper (at the Natural History Museum - beware of imitators!) maintains a computerised list of *past* as well as *current* titles of books, guides and pamphlets on **Town trails** (geological walks) and **Building stones**. He invites you to send him your list on these subjects, and, in return, he will send you his, and add yours to his, thus building a cumulative bibliography. If you wish, please specify a future 'send-by' date, so as to gain a bigger list (which will of course depend on how many responses he receives). If you have no information to send, but just want the list, please send an A4-sized, stamped, self-addressed envelope to receive John's list, which at the time of writing comprises eight A4 sheets. Contact: John Cooper, Department of Palaeontology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD. Tel 0171 938 9450, fax 0171 938 9277, Internet: jco@nhm.ac.uk

Newish publications

Geological and landscape conservation edited by Des O'Halloran, Chris Green, Mike Harley, Mick Stanley and John Knill. 1994, 544pp. The Geological Society. ISBN 1 897799 09 8, £35.00.

Vertebrate paleontological techniques Volume 1 edited by Patrick Leiggi and Peter May. 1994, xvii + 344pp. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0 521 44357 1.

Glossary of mineral species 1995 by Michael Fleischer and Joseph A. Mandarino. 1995, 288pp. The Mineralogical Record. Obtainable from Endsleigh Nature Company, Endsleigh House, 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2DA, £12 + £1.50 p&p.

World directory of mineral collections by the International Mineralogical Association. 1994, Hardcover, 293pp. The Mineralogical Record. Obtainable from Endsleigh Nature Company (address above), £11 + £2.50 p&p.

Natural Science Collections in Scotland

The work of the Natural Science Collections Research Unit of the Scottish Museums Council resulted in the publication in 1988 of this catalogue of geological, botanical and zoological material in museums, institutions and private collections throughout Scotland. When it was first published, it sold for £25.00; it is now on offer for the **bargain price of £5.00 (including postage and packing)**. The A4, 404 page volume includes 8 microfiche of indexes. Send your orders to Publications Office, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF tel 0131 225 7534, fax 0131 220 4819.

GCG Seminar and field trip
RIVERSIDE CENTRE, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
2-3 October 1995
BOOKING FORM

cut here

- I will be attending the seminar on 2 October
- I will need transport to Newport
- I will be attending the museum/field trip on 3 October
- I will need transport for the field trip
- I would like details of local accommodation

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

Address.....

Tel.....

Please return this section to Jon Radley, Museum of Isle of Wight
 Geology, High Street, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 8AF tel
 01983 404344, fax 01983 825958 by 1 September 1995.

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