



COPROLITE

No. 19
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1996

DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

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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From the retiring Chairman

During 1995, support for museums and collections has remained an important element of our work. We have been in correspondence with, or about, the following: Ipswich Museum, the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, Ludlow Museum, the Ulster Museum and the Smithsonian, the latter concerning the threat to the US Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines. We commented on 'Modern and Accelerated Apprenticeships in Museum and Gallery Heritage Sector', an independent report commissioned by the MTI, and the Museum Association's 'New ways to the AMA'. The latter was a joint response from GCG and BCG and I am very grateful to Steve Thompson for the role he played in this. Committee was asked by the Ethics Committee of the Museums Association to produce the text for the code of conduct for the field collection of geological specimens. On behalf of the Group I was interviewed by Countrywise (acting for English Nature) on 'the promotion of earth heritage conservation'. We still await the outcome of the DNH review of its Museum Policy to which we submitted evidence last year; watch this space! We have just received *Draft English Nature Position Statement on fossil collecting: Invitation to comment*.

The need for the Group to be consulted and to respond is of considerable importance. I would like to make a plea on behalf of my successor that, if you are aware of reports in the public domain on which the Group should be commenting, please inform the Chairman or Secretary as soon as possible. The Group's effectiveness and reputation are dependent on our submitting responses of a high standard. These take time and ideally should be the result of the involvement of your Committee. You, the members, are GCG's eyes and ears and have a vital job to do if the important work of protecting our geological resources is to be effectively pursued.

Earlier this year Committee approved the investigation of an Internet entry for GCG. As is the way with IT, no sooner said than done, thanks to John Faithfull and Mandy Edwards and their respective institutions who were responsible for this high-tech link-up. Please recommend this slot to any you know who surf the Net.

Tom Sharpe has valiantly pursued the elusive goal of the new GCG display. He has negotiated a generous sponsorship deal with Haley Sharpe Associates, the design is nearly complete and we now await construction. These new panels will replace our existing, quite aged, display with one which is up to date and versatile. Committee hope that the representation of the Group and its activities will be even more readily travelled to Geological Society Careers Days and other geological events, promoting the Group's aims and ideals.

The Group has had a full programme of seminar meetings during the year. Much work goes into the organisation of these at a variety of levels. I would like to thank all organisers, speakers and writers of reviews for their hard work. I would like to pay a special tribute to the organising committee of the Value and Valuation conference held in Manchester last April. Our Recorder and Chairman Designate, John Nudds, was on the organising committee and was the Conference Treasurer. As one of those who attended I can candidly report that the event was a great success and seems likely to colour much of the thinking of the museum community at many different levels. The abstracts for this were circulated to all our members through the good offices of Patrick Wyse Jackson. *The International Accord on the Value of Natural Science Collections* agreed at the end of the meeting was published in *Coprolite*, 17, pp. 15-16. The June seminar, *Down in the Dumps*, also produced resolutions which have since formed the basis of a wider discussion document and proposals for the future of the NSGSD. This will continue as a matter for discussion by Committee in 1996. As Chairman I have attended all but one of our programme of seminars over the last three years. I greatly regret that the attendance at the last two was disappointing. While appreciating the pressures of both time and finance on many, I do hope that for the well-being of the Group, and the profession as a whole, you will find the resources to attend from time to time. Perhaps the rather contentious matter of 'Continuous Professional Development' may provide suitable windows of opportunity?

Progress on the Building and Decorative Stones Initiative has been rather ponderous. However the last issue of *Coprolite* carried a questionnaire to which there was a dramatic but short-lived response. I hope many more will be returned as they certainly provide valuable data for the future development of the initiative, and in the short term could form the basis for a useful published listing of the basic details of museum holdings.

At the AGM, Colin Reid stands down as our Publicity Officer. I would like to pay tribute to Colin Reid's stalwart work on the *Thumbs Up* leaflet, a 3rd edition of which is imminent. Apart from the administrative aspects of updating the information (all the 'phone numbers have changed since the last printing) there has been the need for substantial fund-raising. The £3,000 required has come from the sponsors of the last edition, namely British Gas Exploration and Production, The Geological Society, The Curry Fund of the Geologists' Association, Rockwatch and, in addition, the Natural History Museum. We are immensely grateful to all our sponsors who have enabled this important work of outreach to continue. Their support speaks volumes for the product and I hope you will ensure that the new edition is distributed as widely and as wisely as possible.

I would like to point out that in the course of the last three years we have received £7,500 in sponsorship for *Thumbs Up* and *Coprolite*. The latter continues to attract generous sponsorship from Clinton Burhouse (Burhouse Ltd) to whom we accord what at present is an annual vote of thanks for this significant support of one of the Group's activities.

I thank all those who have served on the Committee, not only in 1995, but over the last three years and for the tasks they have so readily tackled. They have been an outstanding team, dealing with the production of the *Geological Curator* and *Coprolite* (the membership list in the latter was no mean feat), matters financial and to do with membership, with seminars, administration and publicity for the Group. We have welcomed new faces bringing new expertise and ideas. I report with sadness that Simon Timberlake resigned both as a Committee member and as a member of the Group. Simon's contribution to the documentation of collections in south-east England has been outstanding. The Geologists' Association recognised his achievement in 1991 when he was awarded the Foulerton Medal, an event which went unmentioned in our own annals, and which belatedly I put right now. He was one of those 'silent warriors' in the cause of the neglected collection, an often thankless task, and yet one which is so close to the Group's aims. The profession has lost a champion of the orphan collection. We wish him well. Thanks also go to Monica Price for her work on *Coprolite*, to Roy Clements for chairing the Terminology Working Party, to Sue Rainton our archivist, to Kate Pontin for feeding us information on the education sector, John Cooper for representing us on the Conservation Committee of the Geological Society and to Mick Stanley who has continued to report on the NSGSD. He has given loyal service over more years than he cares to remember. There is a rumour which, if believed, would suggest that this will not be for much longer.

Committee has instigated a review of the Group's constitution. No major changes are envisaged but some minor amendments and improvements will be put forward which should make Committee and the Group more effective. Any changes will have to be approved by the Geological Society and Charity Commissioners, and of course our members as well. A revised constitution will be circulated to all members and voted on at an appropriately advertised EGM (probably at a seminar meeting) in the course of 1996.

As 1995 draws to a close, I am pleased to report that GCG continues as a vigorous and effective specialist group. Interest in the Group and its aims remains high, judging by the response shown by geological curators in Japan, and students and others attending the Geological Society Careers Day.

In conclusion I thank the Group for all their support and interest while I have been Chairman, thanks I extend to the officers and staff of the Geological Society as well. You have made my three year term a most enjoyable one. The presentation, earlier today, of the A G Brighton Medal to Dr Bob King, has been an especially pleasant way to bring my Chairmanship to a close. Shortly I will have great pleasure in handing over to Dr John Nudds who comes with an excellent track-record, a wealth of experience and his proven ability at timekeeping in committee meetings! He will be a great asset to the Group over the next three years. I wish him, the Committee and the Group as a whole every success in the challenges which unquestionably lie ahead.

Paul C Ensom,
Yorkshire Museum, 28 November 1995.

From the incoming Chairman

Firstly I must say that I am very honoured to have been elected Chairman of GCG and to follow such illustrious names as Clements, Torrens, Brunton and Doughty *et al.*! Three years ago Paul Ensom's opening remarks as incoming Chairman (*Coprolite 10*) dwelt on the uncertain times in which we then lived. Things have changed little since 1992 in terms of the future of museums in this country - local government reorganisation is still threatening museum services in several counties, and November's budget did little to encourage museums in our universities.

And so the GCG message, at least for the moment, is 'business as usual' - rather than rest on the laurels of 21 years endeavour, the Group must continue to fight our corner, to take every opportunity to publicise our subject (hopefully *Jurassic Park 2* will help in 1997!) and to inform our politicians, pay-masters and administrators of our value. Realistically there will be further cuts to our funding (from Government at any rate) - it is up to us to minimise their effect, both by our own campaigning and by attracting additional funding from alternative sources, including the private sector.

But at the same time we must move forward. The last few years have seen several new and exciting displays of geology in Dudley, Cardiff, Glasgow (to name just a few) and yet others on even larger scales are planned for Edinburgh and London. Let's all strive to emulate these and to ensure that geology does not get outmanoeuvred by other, more "popular" subjects. Ours is such a varied subject - let's make full use of that variation, which is, after all, the key to survival of the fittest in a competitive world.

Your editor has asked me to outline my manifesto and to describe the direction which I would like to see the Group take during my tenure of office. I am not a political animal and have spent all my life in academic departments. I will attempt to remain an academic, despite the pressures, and that means that the things which I regard as the most important are the specimens, the collections for which we care. Everything else flows from that basic belief.

Finally, I would like to repeat my thanks, expressed at the Ludlow AGM, to our retiring Chairman, Paul Ensom, who has worked tirelessly for us for the last three years. It will be a hard act to follow, but I will do my best for the Group, and having served under Stanley, Cooper and Ensom, I can at least promise that the length of committee meetings will now fall dramatically!

John Nudds
The Manchester Museum, December 1995

New Officers and Committee 1996

Chairman: John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 2634, fax 0161 275 2676, e-mail john.nudds@man.ac.uk

John Nudds BSc, PhD, FGS, CGeol, Keeper of Geology at The Manchester Museum, was elected Chairman of the Group for the next three years at the AGM held in Ludlow on 29 November 1995. John graduated in geology from the University of Nottingham in 1972, and spent five years completing his PhD at Durham before accepting a post-doctoral fellowship at Trinity College, Dublin. What was intended as a three-year 'holiday' in Ireland turned into an 11 year 'romance' when John became Curator of the Geological Museum at TCD. In 1988 he was tempted back to England, taking up Michael Eagar's old post at The Manchester Museum. He has served as the Group's Recorder for the last six years and edited the *Directory of Geological Museums*, published in 1994.

Secretary: Mandy Edwards, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 3825, fax 0161 275 3947, e-mail aedwards@fs2.ge.man.ac.uk

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Publicity Officer: (post vacant)

Minutes Secretary: John Crossling, Warwickshire Museum, Market Place, Warwick CV34 4SA tel 01926 412481, fax 01926 419840.

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

Bob Symes, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD tel 0171 938 8850, fax 0171 938 9268, e-mail rfs@nhm.ac.uk

Wendy Simkiss, Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN tel 0151 478 4212, fax 0151 478 4390

Steve McLean, Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 7418, fax 0191 222 6753, e-mail S.G.McLean@Newcastle.ac.uk

Bob Symes OBE

Members of the Group will be delighted by the news that Dr Bob Symes, Keeper of Mineralogy at the Natural History Museum, and GCG Committee member, has been awarded the Order of the British Empire in the New Year Honours List. The congratulations of GCG were extended to Bob at the January Committee meeting.

Cornish accolades

Congratulations go to Colin Sparrow who has been awarded life membership of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall and the Society's Gold Medal in recognition of his work in restoring the Society's Museum in Penzance. Following successful receipt of lottery funding, the Museum is now scheduled to reopen on 15 March 1996.

New Members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Andrew Garbutt**, Leicester; **Mary Spencer Jones**, Natural History Museum.

Musical curators

Ian Rolfe, Keeper of Geology at the National Museums of Scotland, retired on 20 November. **Karen Ritson** is currently Documentation Trainee at Sunderland Museum. **Rosina Down**, formerly BCG Representative on GCG Committee, has retired as Curator of the Zoology Museum at University College London; **Professor William Sarjeant** of the University of Saskatchewan, Canada has been elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada.

News of some of last year's Leicester Museum Studies students comes as follows: **Chris Andrew** has been appointed Project Leader Natural Sciences at Haslemere Educational Museum and took up his post on 20 November; **Angela Houghton** has been appointed Museum Assistant (Documentation) at the Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth from 1 November; **Helen Burchmore** has been appointed Keeper of Natural Science at Plymouth City Museum and took up her post in October, and **Glenys Wass** is now a freelance geological curator and can be contacted at 2 Northfield, Great Bardfield, Braintree Essex CM7 4TF tel 01371 810498.

GCG 1996 subscriptions and membership list

Subscriptions for 1996 are now due. These remain at last year's levels: £10.00 for a UK Personal Subscription, £12.00 for overseas. Please complete and sign the form on the back page and send it with your payment by **31 March 1996** to the Treasurer at the address on the form.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

16 February 1996 Geological Society, Burlington House, London

History of Geology Group / Society for the History of Natural History: Geological collectors and collecting

The programme, commencing at 14.00, will include:

Rumphius, Plot and Scheuchzer (17-18C) aspects of their collections and interpretations: Neville Haile

Linnaeus and Thomas Pennant: collectors and collaborators: Michael Bassett

William Buckland and his 'Instructions for conducting geological investigations and collecting specimens' 1821: Patrick Boylan

The Thomas Hawkins' collection of fossil vertebrates at the Natural History Museum: John Thackray.

Contact: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 5AA

25-27 March 1996 Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge

Conservation of geological collections

Contact: International Academic Projects, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, fax 0171 388 0283 or Chris Collins tel 01223 362522, fax 01223 366860

11-12 April 1996 Wadham College, Oxford

10th International Conference of the Society for the History of Natural History: Empires of nature.

Contact: Jane Pickering, The University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW tel 01862 272950 fax 01865 272970 e-mail jane.pickering@oum.ox.ac.uk

14-17 April 1996 University of Leicester

4th International Conference in Museum Studies: Carry on collecting? Developing a strategy for the future of collecting

Contact: Simon Knell or Kevin Moore, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG

**30 April 1996 University of Newcastle upon Tyne
GCG/BCG Seminar: Training - the way forward**

Speakers will include: Simon Knell, University of Leicester; Dr Bob Huxley, Natural History Museum; Chris Newbery, MTI; and Chris Collins, Sedgwick Museum

There may be a modest charge for tea and coffee on the day.

Please complete the form on the centre pages and return it to Andrew Newman, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU tel/fax 0191 222 7426, e-mail andrew.newman@ncl.ac.uk by 22 April 1996.

**26 June 1996 Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool
GCG Seminar: Promoting museums with new technology and the official launch of GCG's Home Pages on the World Wide Web**

The phenomenal growth of the Internet, which shows no sign of stopping or slowing down, will provide museums with a great opportunity to increase access to the collections and the services they provide. What opportunities are available and who is taking them? What are the opportunities for small museums with limited budgets? This meeting aims to provide a forum for people to describe their experiences and provide guidance on joining the information superhighway.

Contact: Mandy Edwards, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 3825, fax 0161 275 3947, e-mail aedwards@fs2.ge.man.ac.uk

**10-13 June 1996 Budapest, Hungary
Third International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums.**

This meeting follows the very successful meetings held in London and Toronto and brings together curators of mineral collections from all over the world. Papers are invited on all aspects of mineral collections curation, documentation, research and use in museums and there will be an opportunity for participants to contribute posters introducing their museums or collections. A number of pre- and post-conference fieldtrips to localities in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are also being organised.

Contact: M&M3 Secretariat, c/o Department of Mineralogy, Eötvös University, Budapest, Muzcum 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 World Congress on the Preservation and Conservation of Natural History Collections: Natural history collections - a resource for the future.**

The Second World Congress builds on the success of the first Congress held in Madrid in 1992, from which resolutions were taken to the UNCED meeting in Rio de Janeiro. The role of the Congress is to raise the profile of natural history collections, and the work undertaken on them, as cultural, scientific and economic resources of world-wide importance in developed and developing countries, The

practical initiatives to be discussed include: the use and development of collections in industry, research and education; accessibility of collections using information technology, databases and international data exchange; current techniques in the care and management of collections; current condition of collections in developed and developing countries; the public, political and industrial image of natural history collections; economic and fund-raising aspects; the establishment of a World Council on Collections Resources to act as an umbrella organisation for collection-based institutions and groups; the management of collections in developing countries as a resource for socio-economic benefit, and as a record of the world's natural heritage.

Contact: The Administrator, 2nd World Congress, Department of Earth Sciences, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ tel 01223 333421, fax 01223 333450

27-30 August 1996 Ulster Museum, Belfast

Linnean Society: Systematics and biological collections

Traditionally, systematics has relied heavily on the existence of collections of plant, animal and fossil material. This is still the case, but the range of collections studied and applications emerging is increasing. This conference will examine the increasing importance of biological collections in the widest sense, including: museum collections of modern and fossil biota, including Man; zoological and botanical gardens and arboreta, culture collections of bacteria, fungi, protozoa, microscopic algae and other micro-organisms; seed banks; botanical, zoological and palaeontological illustrations and photographic collections; archival material. The developing requirements of taxonomists and evolutionary biologists must be reflected in the conservation and preservation of these collections, which should also be seen as living or preserved records of genetic diversity.

Contact: C R Tyrie, Department of Botany, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast BT9 5AB, tel 01232 381251, fax 01232 665510

30 September-4 October 1996 Harrogate

Museums Association 102nd Annual Conference

Contact: Sue Robinson, Conference Organiser, Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0PA fax 0171 250 1929

27 November 1996 The Manchester Museum

GCG Seminar and AGM: Geological Models

Contact: John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 2634, fax 0161 275 2676, e-mail john.nudds@man.ac.uk

30 July - 9 August 1997 Geological Society, London and Royal Society, Edinburgh Celebration of the bicentenaries of Charles Lyell and James Hutton

The first part of the conference in London (30 July - 3 August) will be concerned with the achievements and impacts of the work of Lyell. The second part (5 - 9 August) in Edinburgh will deal with the past, present and future relevance of Hutton's theories. The lectures will include contributors of international renown

and will be interspersed by periods of discussion. The will be followed by visits to classical sites linked with Hutton and Lyell. The programme is being arranged to catch the interest of all, whether geologists or historians.

Contact: Lyell/Hutton Conference Office, Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0JU tel 0171 434 9944, fax 0171 439 8975.

Exhibitions

Dinosaur Roadshow: Oxford University Museum 20 January - 24 February 1996

Messel fossils: Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast until 25 February 1996

The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester 24 April - 25 May 1996

Leicester Museum, New Walk, Leicester 2 June - 21 July 1996

Here be dragons: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, Queens Square, Bath until 29 February 1996

Prehistoric animals from East Anglia: fossil mammals from the J Lightwing Collection. Diss Museum, The Shambles, The Market Place, Diss, Norfolk until 30 April 1996

Crystals: an exhibition by the British Association for Crystal Growth, Oxford University Museum 10 March - 30 April 1996

Newish publications

George Victor Du Noyer (1817-1869). Hidden landscapes edited by F Croke. National Gallery of Ireland, 88pp.

Mineral books, five centuries of mineralogical literature edited by W E Wilson, 1995. Mineralogical Record, 26 (4), 1-192pp, \$24.00

British Regional Geology. The Grampian Highlands by D Stephenson and D Gould, 1995. 4th edition, HMSO, x+262pp. ISBN 0 11 884521 7, £12.00

The Geological Society of London and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists have published a colour poster reproducing William Smith's 1819 sections. The poster, 610mm by 1219mm, is accompanied by a booklet "*Strata Smith" and his stratigraphic cross sections, 1819* by J G C M Fuller and is priced at £16.10 including VAT and postage and packing.

Pockets: rocks and minerals by Sue Fuller, 1995. Dorling Kindersley, 160pp. ISBN 07513 5178 4, £4.99.

Mineral and fossil shows

17 February 1996 14th 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.

17 March 1996 Oxford Spring Mineral and Fossil Show, The Exeter Hall, Oxford Road, Kidlington (just north of Oxford) 10.00-16.30.

The Oxford Show moves this year to a new larger venue, and once again there will be a free bus service to a special Sunday opening of the University Museum.

Contact: Paul Lowe, Endsleigh Book Co., Endsleigh House, 50 Daniell Road, Truro TR1 2DA. tel/fax 01872 223227.

24 March 1996 Rocky Roadshow, Cornwall Geological Museum, Penzance

Contact: Colin Sparrow, Royal Geological Society of Cornwall tel 01736 330183.

20-21 April 1996 Rock 'n' Gem Show, Grand Hall, Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex

HD Promotions tel 01628 21697 or 01494 450504.

GCG Seminar: From field to display Sandown, Isle of Wight 2-3 October 1995

Jon Radley (Museum of Isle of Wight Geology) opened the meeting with a talk on fossil collecting and the museum. The Museum of Isle of Wight Geology is a small museum, situated in a tourist location on an island where fossils - including those public favourites, dinosaurs - are dropping out of the cliffs. Around the island, the rocks are superbly exposed along a rapidly eroding coastline - up to 1 metre a year in some places - and they contain lots of very collectable fossils. There are few other places in the country where holiday-makers can readily find dinosaur bones on the beach. These factors lead to a high degree of public contact for the museum staff, with two distinct audiences: a tourist clientele in summer and serious collectors and university parties in the winter. This means that the museum is very much field oriented, and that the staff have to be ready to respond immediately to new discoveries.

The Museum maintains close informal contact with local collectors, of whom there are many on the island, as well as continuing to collect through its own fieldwork. Local collectors help with Museum excavations, especially where, because of rapid coastal erosion, specimens must be collected quickly. The collectors also help the Museum by keeping an eye on sensitive sites and reporting any damage or vandalism.

Despite 150 years of research on the island's geology, there is still a lot to be done, and much work is in progress. New discoveries are regular occurrences - in recent years we have seen reported a new sauropod, a new theropod, and the discovery of insects in Cretaceous amber.

The Museum has also been trying to educate the local collectors, many of whom are after the vertebrates, to improve their documentation of their finds, and to collect associated invertebrate material to help an understanding of the palaeoenvironment. To this end the Museum has recently published a booklet,

Guidelines for collecting fossils on the Isle of Wight, in consultation with the local collectors. Another positive step in encouraging liaison has been the formation of the Geological Society of the Isle of Wight, now a local GA Group. Despite some problems, the collecting culture on the island is in good shape, and lots of important material is being found and properly worked on. From Jon's talk, it seems that 'carry on collecting' is the Museum's motto.

Steve Hutt, Curator of the Museum, followed with a talk on 'Dinosaur wars' in which he described some of the recent discoveries and some of the problems which the Museum has encountered. Many people are aware of these through stories in the geological and national press, and it is clear that many of them stem from the activities of one collector. The Museum has, in these cases, tried to present an objective view to the public in response to some of the nonsensical stories that have appeared in the papers.

Steve then described the excavation of some particularly exciting recent finds such as a *Polacanthus*; the first European allosaurid; and a large sauropod which presented particular difficulties as it was found 30m up a 50m high cliff. Logistically this presented a number of problems, and even post-excavation, there remained a need for a location to store and work on the specimen and to respond to the huge public and press interest in the discovery. This has been solved by an exceptional relationship with the enlightened local landowner, who has made a 17th century barn available where visitors can see the specimens being prepared and reconstructed and talk to the volunteers doing the work. Over 35,000 people have visited the barn since it opened.

Continuing the theme of collecting, David Sole, a professional collector, described how groups of local collectors have been coordinated to work on specific sites such as the Charmouth bypass, and in a Frodingham ironstone quarry near Scunthorpe, and the mutual benefits that ensue. For example, Scunthorpe Museum now has ammonite material of international importance.

We then moved on to hear two talks on the use of fossil material by Mike Barker of Portsmouth University who was working on colour preservation in fossils, and Jane Clarke who admitted she destroys fossil in her histological studies of iguanodon and pterosaur bone.

Ed Jarzembowski of Maidstone Museum spoke on the recent discovery of insect-bearing amber from the Wealden of the Isle of Wight and passed some specimens around for us to see. He also described his work on infra-red spectroscopy of amber and how some sources produce characteristic IR absorption spectra. He also pointed out the need for botanists to do more on the plants found in amber-bearing beds. In discussion Ed was asked about how Cretaceous amber could best be looked after. 'Give it to me', was the response.

Martin Munt from Portsmouth University spoke on his work on Tertiary molluscs and great interest was expressed in the tank system he had developed for washing

and sorting his material. In his work on predation, he showed that as curators we need to be on the lookout for specimens damaged by predation as well as the perfect specimens for our collections.

Jonathan Larwood from English Nature reviewed the range of problems posed by collecting to both inland and coastal sites and described how arrangements work at some sites. At Dudley, for example, the site is warded (although he also showed how, in the case of Salthill near Clitheroe, damage can still be done to patrolled sites); at a site in the Tertiary of London, the Tertiary Research Group is allowed to open a pit twice a year to collect material to work on; and how arrangements have been made with a quarry operator in Shropshire for quarrymen to look out for specimens of rhynchosaurs. He explained that English Nature will be producing a position statement on fossil collecting which aims to make clear English Nature's stance, to reduce the negative aspects of fossil collecting and enhance the positive by encouraging partnerships. As a long term aim, they are looking at more closely managed export controls and will seek to establish a common international approach.

Finally, we were addressed by the Mayor of Sandown, Alan Insole, formerly Curator of the Museum and now a freelance geologist. In a short, entertaining talk on biases in collections, he gave examples from the Isle of Wight, Ireland, and Portishead to emphasise that what you see in a museum drawer cannot not be taken as a representative sample of a fauna, but is in fact a series of collectors' biases. Time and resources are needed for careful sampling and preparation to collect for a representative fauna.

On the second day of the meeting, we viewed the Museum's cramped facilities above the Library in Sandown. The displays, opened in 1985, make superb use of an extremely limited space, and in telling the story of Isle of Wight geology, includes mounted casts of *Megalosaurus* and *Hypsilophodon*, and a wall-mounted *Iguanodon*. In the stores we saw the magnificently-preserved new theropod currently being worked on by Steve Hutt. This illustrated the Museum's major problem - it is a small museum, dealing largely with big specimens. The space is fine for invertebrates, but not for dinosaurs.

We then drove out to Sutton Farm to visit the barn where the new sauropod is being prepared and met the landowner with whom the Museum is working closely. A walk to the cliff top to view the site of the sauropod discovery gave us an appreciation of the practical difficulties of its excavation.

At Grange Chine, we saw the Wealden beds which have produced a number of *Hypsilophodon*, the allosaurid site, and the amber-bearing plant bed, although none was found by our group.

This meeting provided an opportunity to see the sites and specimens that have been in the news in recent years and to experience at first hand, the peculiar local difficulties facing the museum and its staff. They have big specimens and a small

museum. It really is hard to credit that the Isle of Wight does not make more of its superb geological resources, and in particular its status as one of the foremost dinosaur localities in Europe. Such short-sightedness deprives the Isle of Wight and its many summer visitors, and indeed the whole of the UK, of a wonderful attraction. The potential is there for someone with vision and foresight (and finance) to establish what would certainly become one of the major dinosaur museums of the world. The sad thing is, the council either doesn't realise this, or for some unfathomable reason ignores it. The council has a responsibility to provide the facilities for the proper maintenance, care, research and display of the material, by providing a major, new, purpose-built dinosaur museum. Such a project is surely a more worthy way to mark the Millennium than countless waterfront projects and opera houses.

Jon and Steve deserve our thanks for their organisation of an excellent and extremely interesting seminar, and our congratulations for performing such a superb job on such limited resources and in such cramped facilities.

Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales

GCG Seminar: Geology for all Ludlow 29-30 November 1995

With gloom and despondency the general rule, it was pleasant to visit a museum which is most definitely on the up. Since GCG's last visit to Ludlow in 1984, the geological collections have been rehoused and the stores upgraded. This year, the venue was the Assembly Rooms, where the Group was welcomed by John Hirst (Shropshire Museum Service). The Assembly Rooms (first opened in the 1840's) now house the main museum displays including the recently opened Norton Geological Gallery - a fitting tribute to John Norton's many years of devoted work on the collections here. New displays have also been set up in the small branch museum at Wenlock. Even more encouraging was the news that core funding had been obtained for a Geological Resource Centre for the county and an application to the National Lottery was being prepared. We wish them every success.

The lunch break provided an opportunity for members to visit the new galleries, but the main business of the day was the seminar 'Geology for All'. As the subject for a one-day meeting, this was ambitious to say the least. To quote the calling notice:

Geology... is for all ages, levels of interest, ability and disability. The meeting will look at the problems of communicating geology to a wide selection of user groups - particularly the young. It will also examine the needs and expectations of our visitors, review the museum's changing role and examine new and innovative schemes to bring geology to all.

Any one of these topics could, one suspects, provide sufficient material for a rich and varied day's programme. The six scheduled speakers had been reduced to five

when Diana Hawkes was forced to drop out. Each was restricted to 20 minutes, with the obvious danger that, having outlined their particular topic and its traditional treatment in museums, there would be too little time to examine radical means of improvement. To their credit, they managed to evade this particular pitfall.

Colin Reid (Dudley Museum) introduced the seminar stressing that, for the young in particular, the museum often provided the first point of contact with earth sciences. The primary way in which curators communicated with the public was via the displays and exhibitions they produced. These might have four aims:

- 1) Opening the minds of visitors by exciting their imagination.
- 2) Conveying often complex concepts in a clear and simple way.
- 3) Communicating with visitors of all educational levels.
- 4) Progressing from applied geology to theoretical concepts.

Illustrations were provided by slides of the Sedgwick Museum's nineteenth century displays and their more contemporary mineral gallery, and of the redesigned displays at Dudley Museum.

Tom Hose (Buckinghamshire College) discussed public perceptions of geology and how these could be enhanced by visits to geological sites. From the scientific point of view, promoting access to such sites could both raise the public profile of earth sciences, and also stress the importance of geological conservation. 'Geotourism' might take the form of geological trails, guided walks, displays - either on site or in a visitor centre - or publications.

Visitor surveys at such sites showed, perhaps predictably, that many visits were unplanned (snap decisions taken when a sign was spotted from the car), that visitors had little knowledge of geology and were unaware of the importance of Britain's earth heritage, and that guided walks and the opportunity to talk to an 'expert' were very popular. If there is a site shop, hammers, minerals, real and replica fossils and plastic dinosaurs all sell well but publications, even when cheap and relevant to the site, do not. Much more encouraging was the conclusion that parents who themselves had little scientific knowledge would willingly visit such sites for the sake of their children's education. (This conclusion would surely also apply to museums and it may be one of our profession's failings that we do too little for the needs of this group - providing displays which demand a degree of scientific understanding that they do not possess.)

Kate Pontin (Hillingdon Heritage Service) concentrated on the young, in particular the primary school child. She described an EMAMS project evaluating the school use of museums and the efficacy of: 1) education packs, 2) work-sheets, 3) museum objects for handling, and 4) galleries (specifically those of the Snibston Science Centre and Coventry Museum). Kate is herself carrying out PhD research on children's use of Earth Science galleries and also commended the American work of George Hines on exhibition evaluation related to learning theory. Her talk was

complemented by slides from Diana Hawkes showing children and family groups in the field and at Bristol Museum's Road Show.

The afternoon session opened with Andrew Mathieson (Bristol Museum) on 'Geology for the second childhood'. He noted that the demand for teaching school groups had declined since the introduction of the National Curriculum. By contrast, adult education - whether through the WEA, teacher training courses or family activities - was on the increase. Ice-breaking activities were recommended for adult groups. Using Kate Pontin and Tom Sharpe as volunteers Andy demonstrated three such activities - the use of feely boxes, describing specimens blindfolded and then identifying them when the blindfold was removed, and picking the 'odd man out' in groups of specimens.

Andy's contribution provoked some enthusiastic audience participation but the talk that stimulated most discussion was that by Ann Tynan (Science Museum). 'Let Me Show You' was a project which she originated at the Hunterian Museum for groups with special needs. These ranged from the slightly and severely handicapped to teenagers with behavioural problems. The project was based around the Hunterian's collections of 17th Century art - clearly not the easiest of options. The success of this pilot scheme led to Ann's move to the Science Museum to run a similar one year project there. All departments collaborated on this and all levels of staff took part - cleaners and attendants as well as curators and conservators. Staff were encouraged to attend five training sessions: 1) disabled visitors' needs 2) types of illness 3) communicating with the mentally handicapped and hard of hearing 4) visual disabilities 5) legislation.

Ann suggested that geology would be well-suited to such projects: it dealt with exciting topics (meteorites, dinosaurs, volcanoes), it could be related to everyday life (building stones), and it provided robust material for handling. She also pointed out some of the downside aspects: that, for the mentally handicapped, geological time had no meaning - the past was the past and 340 million years could be confused with last week; that exciting topics could over-excite, turning handling specimens into dangerous projectiles; and that attractive specimens might awaken the magpie instinct for acquisition.

The afternoon culminated with the 21st Annual General Meeting with the customary bitterly contested elections, slanging matches between floor and platform, accusations of fraud and corruption, and general mayhem. OK, that last sentence was just wishful thinking and, in actual fact, the meeting was bland and uneventful as it always is. The officers reported that meetings had been held, *Geological Curators* published and there was more money in the bank. John Nudds succeeded Paul Ensom as Chairman in a bloodless palace coup, his former post of Recorder being taken over by John Faithfull. Colin Reid resigned as Publicity Officer but was appointed to the Committee along with Steve McLean and Wendy Simkiss.

One of the last of Paul's official duties must have been among the pleasant - the presentation of the Group's Brighton Medal to Bob King. Bob joined the staff of Leicester Museum as a student assistant in 1939. He became Leicester University's first geological curator in the 1950s and, for almost 20 years helped with the training of students on the Leicester Course. He founded the Russell Society and became its first President in 1973 and the following year, with his colleague Roy Clements, played a key role in the setting up of GCG. In 1983 he left Leicester, joining the staff of the National Museum of Wales to curate his impressive mineral collection which the Museum had just purchased. In 1989, he became curator of the John Moore Museum in Tewkesbury and is now, nominally at least, in retirement. His long service to museums and his close links with GCG since its inception, make Bob a worthy recipient of the Brighton medal. The group will look forward to his continued support for many years to come.

On the following day, about 20 people met at the Museum Offices for a tour of the stores and then departed on the field trip which visited some of the classic localities around Ludlow. Andrew Jenkinson led us round a number of sites in Mortimer Forest in the morning, including the famous Ludford Lane section of the Ludlow Bone Bed. After lunch on Wenlock Edge, we visited Coates Quarry to examine the Wenlock Limestone, where our enthusiasm for finding fossils was soon sapped by the bitter cold.

Geoff Tresise
Liverpool Museum

**International Symposium on the history of mineralogy,
mineralogical museums, gemmology, crystal chemistry
and classification of minerals,
St Petersburg University, Russia. 11-14 October 1995**

The symposium was well-planned, with concurrent sessions with different themes in the mornings, excursions to museums and galleries on three afternoons and ample time for formal and informal discussions. In spite of current economic hardships the Russian hosts provided a wealth of traditional hospitality most evenings after the formal proceedings. Though I was the only native-English speaking delegate at the Symposium many participants made their contributions in English. Translations from Russian were handled fairly successfully although this did lengthen the time required for papers.

The historical sessions were exceptionally helpful and it was extremely interesting to learn of mineralogical museums in far off mining areas whose origins and evolution paralleled that of the Camborne School of Mines Museum. I was surprised to discover that, in spite of their low salaries, curators of university museums in Russia enjoy far greater prestige than their counterparts in the West and are much more closely involved in the educational process.

I visited the Museum in the Department of Mineralogy, the museums of the Mining Institute and Geological Institute. I was impressed by the outstanding variety and quality of the specimens and especially by their international flavour. For example, in the Mining Institute there is a whole showcase devoted to British fluorite and it is doubtful if finer specimens can be seen anywhere in the UK.

Standards of conservation and labelling appear to have deteriorated. Colleagues attributed their difficulties to staff shortages, low salaries and the declining status of academics in Russian society as a whole since the social and political upheavals of recent times. In spite of their obvious problems all of the Russian curators are full of enthusiasm for their subjects and they are very proud of their buildings and the collections they house. They are desperate to establish links with museums in the West after so many years when foreign travel was difficult. These curators and academicians expressed a great deal of interest in exchanging information, specimens and visits.

The Symposium was a very worthwhile experience. The plenary sessions were an excellent introduction to the mineralogical and artistic treasures of St Petersburg and provided essential background information for a series of stunning visits to museums and galleries around the city.

Dr R L. Atkinson
Camborne School of Mines

New permanent geology displays in Hulland East Riding Museum

A major refurbishment of the Hull and East Riding Museum will provide a permanent geology exhibition for the first time in 50 years. The £750,000 project involves extensive building alterations, including the installation of a mezzanine floor. When completed the Museum will tell the story of the geological, archaeological and environmental history of our region. The idea behind the Museum is not to see these disciplines as separate, but to view them as interlinked and interdependent.

The geology displays which have a budget of £90,000 will occupy 61m² and will be the first permanent geology exhibition since the old museum was bombed during enemy action in 1945. This has strongly influenced the way in which the geology will be interpreted. The displays, designed by Hull City Council Design Unit, will utilise a range of media to explain the rock and fossil evidence for the 4 geological periods found in our region: the Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous and Quaternary. The types of media include graphic panels, audio interactives, models, videos and sound effects. Information will therefore be accessible through a range of senses including sight, hearing and touch. Provision will be made for people with visual and hearing impairments, including thermoforms, Braille and large letter labelling, touch specimens and induction loop facilities.

The displays will be divided into 2 areas. The first will interpret the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods for our region with the main focus on the marine Jurassic and Cretaceous. Visitors will walk into a dome which is 5m high and 6m across in which scenic construction, lighting, sound effects and models will recreate the Mesozoic marine environment. As well as illustrating the palaeontology of the animal/plant communities, the displays will show how the rock types influence the landscape and how the rocks are used commercially.

The second section interprets our ice age geology, based on sub-fossil bone remains from glacial and interglacial animals, and glacial erratics. The displays will discuss the palaeoecology of the glacial and interglacial periods and the process of glaciation. The main scenic focus of this area is a representation of a retreating glacier.

The mezzanine floor will house a handling area for booked groups. This will include geological material, an open storage system, and a display on the collections, on how to collect responsibly and local societies. A temporary exhibition space will take travelling geology exhibitions.

Heather Rayfield
Assistant Keeper of Natural Sciences,
Hull City Museums, Art Galleries and Archives.

UK Systematics Forum

The UK Systematics Forum, an initiative set up with the aim of promoting the coordination of UK systematics has published its *1994-95 Review*.

The Forum was set up in February 1994 with funding from the Office of Science and Technology, and has since been involved in several projects, all with the aim of promoting communication and coordination within the systematics community. These activities include: setting up a database of UK systematic expertise and current research; a national workshop to discuss criteria for priorities in systematic research and training; and a series of meetings aimed to coordinate the care of natural history collections nationally. As well as summarising these activities, the report considers specific issues important to systematics and natural history collections in a series of articles.

For a copy of the *Review*, contact Emma Watson, Secretary of the UK Systematics Forum, at the address below. Information on the UK Systematics Forum will shortly be available on the Internet, accessible from the Natural History Museum's Home Page (URL: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/index.html>), or by contacting E Watson, UK Systematics Forum, c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, e-mail (Internet) ew@nhm.ac.uk

Geology and the World Wide Web

Those of you seeking out GCG's Home Page on the World Wide Web may also be interested in other geology web sites, many of which are listed in three papers in the latest issue of *Teaching Earth Sciences, Journal of the Earth Science Teachers' Association*, volume 20, number 4, 1995. The papers are: 'Earth science on the World Wide Web' by John Gratton; 'Some Web sites' by Dee Edwards; and 'A digest of some of the planetary and space science sites on the Internet' by Nicholas Pearce. ESTA itself has prepared a home page accessed via the Open University Department of Earth Sciences Home Page at <http://exodus.open.ac.uk/index.html>

SMMP's 'Caring for collections in the home' workshop

The Society of Mineral Museum Professionals held a successful workshop 'Caring for collections at home' at the Denver Mineral Show last September. The workshop was aimed at private collectors and took place in a large meeting room at the Merchandise Mart near the dealers area. Presentations were given by group members and lasted 15-20 minutes each. They covered the subjects 'Introduction and the importance of collection data', 'storage and handling of specimens', 'labelling and conservation materials', 'cataloguing', 'toxic minerals' and 'radioactive minerals'. Other group members joined in the general discussion. The workshop was well-attended with a number of people staying the entire 2 hours and beyond, and the Group plan to repeat the workshop at the Tucson show in February.

Terminology update

A request for limericks in the Russell Society's newsletter resulted in one or two submissions perhaps more appropriate to this publication, for example this offering from Peter Tandy:

Huge dinosaurs eating all night
Made piles of steaming hot sh***
To refer to it thus
Causes too much fuss
So we give it the name 'Coprolite'

Needless to say, Peter's contributions on mineralogical themes are far more technical...

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