



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

OPROLITE

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GCG Committee

At a meeting of the Committee held at Burlington House on 27 January, Glenys Wass of the Natural History Museum was appointed to a vacant place on Committee, and Steve Thompson (Scunthorpe Museum) was coopted as BCG Representative.

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: Frank Osbaeck, Midtsoenderjyllands Museum, Denmark; Sheila E. B. Gould, University of Edinburgh.

1997 GCG subscriptions

Don't forget that subscriptions for this year were due at the beginning of the year. If you have not already paid, please do so as soon as possible using the form in *Coprolite* 22, to ensure your inclusion in the membership list to be published in the next issue.

e-mail *Coprolite*

The steady march of technological progress at the National Museum of Wales has finally brought the marvel of e-mail to the Editor of *Coprolite*. You can now send your contributions, news, reports, announcements, scandal and gossip to Tom.Sharpe@nmgw.ac.uk

Musical curators

Liz Hide, formerly on contract work at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge has been appointed *Invertebrate Palaeontologist* at the National Museums of Scotland and took up her post on 1 April; **Brian Atkins** has retired as Curator of the Mineral Collections at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History; **Brian Meloy** has been appointed Geology Curator at Dorset Museums Advisory Service based at Dorset County Record Office, Dorchester and took up his post last month.

Bristol loses a geological curator.

The continuing saga of reorganisations, restructurings and reviews at Bristol City Museum has resulted in the loss of one of the geology curatorial posts there. 'Stagnation and muddle' are the terms used in the latest review of the museum, but it is hardly surprising that the museum is in such a state as it has been subject to continual review and reorganisation for the best part of ten years.

The geology section of the museum currently has two curators for about 500,000 specimens, including over 600 type and figured specimens. In recent years the collections were greatly enhanced by the then Curator of Geology Peter Crowther's efforts to restore the collections to their pre-Blitz glory. Now it seems that the fine collection built up will have only one curator to look after then.

Suffering most, however, is **Jon Radley** who will lose his job as Curator of Geology. Jon moved to Bristol Museum from the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology just 18 months ago to a 'permanent' post at Bristol; fourteen months of this time has been spent under direct threat of redundancy. Bristol's collections and curators deserve better, and GCG Chairman has written to Bristol City Council's Acting Director of Leisure Services to express our concern.

All change at Leicester!

As from 1 April 1997, the geology collections and exhibitions (and all general geological enquiries and services) are at New Walk Museum (Leicester Museum & Art Gallery), postal address: Leicester City Museums, The Rowans, College Street, Leicester LE2 0JJ, tel 0116 255 4100 (switchboard). The Museum Service is now a Section of the Arts and Leisure Department of Leicester City Council. The Geology Sites Database (for all County of Leicestershire geological site-based enquiries) is at Leicestershire Museums, Environmental Services, Holly

Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4DG, tel 0116 267 1950. This service is provided by Leicestershire County Council.

The staffing situation is as follows: **John Martin** is Curator of New Walk Museum (Leicester Museum and Art Gallery) and will continue to provide geology services. The Head of Museums for Leicester City Council is **Sara Levitt**, a costume specialist lately Curator at Gunnersbury House, London Borough of Hounslow. **Gill Weightman** is Assistant Keeper of Natural Sciences (Geology) for the County Service. **Grace Deeks** is Assistant Keeper Conservation (responsible for all disciplines) in the County Service. There is a vacant post of Assistant Keeper of Geology at Leicester Museum.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

16-20 June 1997 Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester University of Leicester Natural Science Curatorial Course in association with Leicester / Leicestershire Museums.

A practical introduction to working with natural science collections including collecting, recording, identification, systematics, preservation, collection care, organisation, and enquiries.

Provisional Course Outline

Monday 16 June 10.30 Historical & contemporary context; 11.30 Collecting policies and strategies; 14:00 Biological and geological recording; 20.00 An evening stroll and a drink.

Tuesday 17 June 8.00 Biological fieldwork; 14.00 Geological fieldwork; 20.00 A drink, bats and moths.(

Wednesday 18 June 9.30 Beetle carding, preparing botanical material, study skins, video; 14.00 Interpretation of graphic log, identification of collected materials; 8.00 Course curry.

Thursday 19 June 9.30 Conservation, preservation, organisation and management of biological and geological material; 14.00 Systematics & nomenclature; 15.30 Dovedale nature walk and pub.

Friday 20 June 10.00 Enquiries workshop; 13.00 Pub lunch and end of course.

Course Fee: £275 which covers all tuition, transport, equipment and insurance but not accommodation. Please ensure you bring suitable footwear and clothing for fieldwork. Please make cheques payable to the 'University of Leicester'.

Contact: Simon Knell, Lecturer, Department of Museum Studies, 103-5 Princess Road East, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7LG e-mail: sjk8@le.ac.uk (or sjk8@leicester.ac.uk) web: <http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/>

25-26 June 1997 Hull and East Riding Museum, 36 High Street, Hull
GCG Seminar and field excursion: Disability and geological displays

Museum curators are becoming more and more concerned about equal access for all visitors. The subject is particularly relevant at the moment considering the introduction of the new Disability Discrimination Act in 1996 and its further planned implementation in 1997. Geological curators and educationists have, at their fingertips, an excellent collection resource for people with disabilities. How can this be further exploited? This seminar will look at ways in which museums are tackling disability issues and, in particular, examine case studies of how geology displays can be made more physically and intellectually accessible.

Wednesday 25 June

10.30-11.00 Coffee

11.00-11.15 Introduction by Mick Stanley, Assistant Director of Museums Division

11.15-11.45 The Disability Discrimination Act: Zem Rodaway, Humberside Law Centre

11.45-12.15 Auditing your present displays and services: James Holmes-Fiedle, Access Consultant, All Clear Designs

12.15-12.45 Physical access and listed buildings: Lisa Foster, Access Consultant

12.45-1.00 Questions

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-2.30 Tour of Hull and East Riding Museum geology displays

2.30-3.00 Intellectual and physical access by design: Heather Rayfield, Kingston upon Hull City Museums, Art Galleries and Archives (Assistant Keeper of Natural History / Disabilities Access Coordinator)

3.00-3.30 Consultation with groups and marketing: Christine Thompson, National Museums of Scotland (Education and Disability Liaison Officer)

3.30-4.00 Education programmes: Jean Cooper, Natural History Museum (Education Officer)

4.00-4.15 Questions.

Thursday 26 June Field excursion.

10.00-10.30 Meet at South Cave Quarry, near South Cave SE 918327. The site is an SSSI exposing Upper Jurassic Kellaways Rock, Kellaways Sands and Oxford Clay.

11.00-11.15 Convene at Rifle Butts Quarry, Goodmanham SE 898426. This exposure, both an SSSI and a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reserve, exposes Lower Jurassic rocks at the centre of the Market Weighton

block and Lower/Upper Cretaceous Red and White Chalk lying unconformably on top.

- 12.00-1.00 Lunch en route to next destination. Bluebell pub at Burton Agnes: vegetarian and vegan meals available.
- 1.30-2.30 Flamborough Head / Selwicks Bay TA 254708. This is the classic exposure of the Flamborough-Howerdian Fault (shatter) zone. The cliffs form the well known Flamborough Upper Cretaceous Chalk coastline with its caves, stacks and arches.
- 3.00-4.00 Sewerby buried cliff TA 201686. This coastline has evidence of the Ipswichian Interglacial fauna which lived on top of the Chalk cliffs during this warm period. Devensian till is exposed alongside Chalk.

Meeting fee: £4.00.

Please complete the form on page 15 and return it to Heather Rayfield, Museums, Art Galleries and Archives, Monument Buildings, Ferens Art Gallery, Queen Victoria Square, Hull HU1 3RA tel 01482 613902 by **18 June 1997**.

20-26 July 1997 Liege, Belgium

20th International Congress of History of Science: Development and cultural influence of geological sciences in an age of technological and industrial expansion.

The two main themes of the conference, for which papers are invited, will be Geology and mining in the Old and New Worlds, and Use of non-written sources for the history of geological sciences.

Contact: XXth International Congress of History of Science, Centre d'Histoire des Sciences et des Techniques, 15 Avenue des Tilleuls, B-4000 Liege, Belgium. Tel 32 041 66 94 79, fax 32 041 66 95 47, e-mail chstulg@vml.ulg.ac.be

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.

9-13 September 1997 School of Environmental and Applied Sciences, University of Derby

45th Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy

Contact: Dr Don T J Smith, School of Environmental and Applied Sciences, University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1HT, fax 01332 622747, e-mail D.T.J.Smith@derby.ac.uk

15 -21 September 1997 City Hall and National Museum of Wales, Cardiff Museums Association 103rd Annual Conference

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

17 September 1997 City Hall and National Museum of Wales, Cardiff GCG/BCG/SMA session: An endangered species? The future of the specialist curator

In recent years, and especially over the last year or so, we have seen the gradual loss of specialist curators around the UK, partly due to loss of posts, and partly due to redefining of posts. It is generally perceived that this is mainly due to financial restrictions, but is this in fact the case? The institutions and collections still exist, and so presumably does the associated specialist work. What then is happening to the roles of managing, researching and using collections, and how are museum services reacting to or influencing the loss of specialist curatorial services? This session will look at the issues surrounding these questions, addressing specifically the following areas:

i) **A historical perspective.** This will set a context for the discussions by looking at where the specialist curator has come from, and how the past and present shed light on what the future may hold.

ii) **The future.** Traditionally, the specialist curator, armed with an in depth knowledge of his or her subject, region and collections, has been able to develop, research and interpret the collections for the benefit of the users of the museum service. Many museum services feel that this is still fundamental to a museum service and is the way to see the future. On the other hand, collections management and the use of specialist knowledge is being seen by some as technical support for the wider range of services provided by a museum. Two speakers representing these views will present alternative visions of the future.

iii) **Nationals versus provincials.** It could be suggested that the national museums should be the real sources of specialist knowledge, with the provincial museums being seen as collectors and maintainers of the local heritage. This view and the alternatives will be discussed.

iv) **The specialist groups.** To what extent should, and do, the specialist groups provide a specialist service to the museum profession. This will be looked at from an outside point of view.

This session will discuss what is a central issue of the museum world, and one that is currently in a state of rapid change. It is clearly of interest to museum professionals at all levels and in all disciplines, particularly managers as well as trustees and councillors, and we can expect a lively period of discussion and debate in the second half of the session.

For further information and full programme see details in Museums Association literature or contact Sue Robinson, Conference Organiser, Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1R 0PA. fax 0171 250 1929

24 September 1997 Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge

Palaeontographical Society and the History of Geology Group of the Geological Society: The history of palaeontology in Great Britain.

Contact: Stuart A Baldwin, Fossil Hall, Boars Tye Road, Silver End, Witham, Essex CM8 3QA tel 01376 583502, fax 01376 584480

1-3 October 1997 Churchill College, Cambridge

Museum Documentation Association SPECTRUM Workshop.

Contact: MDA, Jupiter House, Station Road, Cambridge CB21 2JD, tel 01223 315760, fax 01223 362521, e-mail mda@mdocassn.demon.co.uk

13-14 October 1997 Maidstone Museum, Maidstone, Kent and Royal Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels

GCG Seminar and excursion: Lost worlds, iguanodons and the European perspective

Monday 13 October: Brussels

A daystudy visit, departing from Maidstone and travelling by rail to Brussels to visit the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences. The visit includes a tour by museum staff with special emphasis on the famous *Iguanodon* skeletons discovered in 1878 in the former coal mining village of Bernissart in south-western Belgium. For further details of the itinerary and travel costs, please complete the form on page 15.

Tuesday 14 October Maidstone Museum

10.30 Arrival and coffee

11.00 Welcome

11.05 Lost Worlds : Ed Jarzembowski, Maidstone Museum

11.30 Tracking Dinosaurs : Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales

12.00 Spiny Dinosaurs : Bill Blows

12.30 The problems of naming a new dinosaur : Steve Hutt, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology

13.00-14.30 Lunch and behind the scenes museum tour

- 14.30 Early discoveries of *Iguanodon* in the Wealden of southern England.
Alan Charig, Natural History Museum
- 15.30 Tea Break
- 15.45 Did dinosaurs get toothache? : Temporary dinosaur exhibitions in a small museum. Jeremy Knight, Horsham Museum.
- 16.15 Meeting ends.

For the Maidstone seminar only there is a meeting fee of £3.00 which should be made payable to the Geological Curators' Group. Please complete the booking form on page 15 and return it to Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 7418, e-mail s.g.mclean@newcastle.ac.uk.

Local contact: Ed Jarzembowski, Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery, St. Faith's Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1LH tel: 01622 754497.

27 November 1997 Natural History Museum, London

GCG Seminar and AGM: New developments in Earth Science exhibitions and collection management.

The seminar will include contributions from the two teams working on phase 2 of the redevelopment of the Earth Galleries at The Natural History Museum. These exhibitions, 'From the Beginning' and 'Earth's Treasury' are due to open late in 1997. There will be an opportunity for contributions from other museums engaged in redevelopment of their exhibitions and associated collections.

For further information please contact Dr Andrew Clark (tel 0171 938 9282; e-mail amc@nhm.ac.uk) or Cally Hall (tel. 0171 938 8869; e-mail cjh@nhm.ac.uk).

Exhibitions

Dinosaurs - a new generation 9 May - 31 August 1997 Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast

Tracking dinosaurs until 31 August 1997 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

Dinosaurs then and now until 30 August 1997 Dudley Museum, St James's Road, Dudley

Dinosaurs of the Gobi Desert 18 May - 31 August 1997 Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London

Carnosaur! until 31 October 1997 Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York

Rock and fossil roadshow until 11 May 1997 Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley, West Yorkshire

Living with minerals until 22 June 1997 Leicester City Museum, New Walk, Leicester

27 June - 24 October 1997 Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford

Missing links alive - 4 million years of hominid evolution 24 May - 2 November
1997 Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool

Claws: from sabre-tooth to Siamese 14 April - 14 June 1997 Warrington Museum
and Art Gallery, Bold Street, Warrington

Dinosaurs of the Gobi Desert

On 18 May, the Natural History Museum opens a new temporary exhibition of dinosaurs from Mongolia. The superbly preserved fossils include adults, juveniles, babies, embryos and nests of eggs as well as a specimen of *Oviraptor* crouching over its nest of 22 eggs, the first evidence of parental care in meat-eating dinosaurs. Set against a red desert backdrop are a skeleton of *Tarbosaurus*; a family of four *Gallimimus*; a nest of ten *Therizinosaurus* eggs; an *Oviraptor* egg containing an embryo; and a *Psittacosaurus*.

Over 40 fossils will be on display, all found in the remote mountain ranges of the Gobi Desert. Many of the dinosaurs from the Gobi are more primitive forms of North American dinosaurs, suggesting that the major groups evolved in Asia and later spread to North America. The majority of specimens in the exhibition are from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

The exhibition, designed by London-based design company Casson Mann, and sponsored by the Discovery Channel, runs until 31 August.

Mineral and fossil shows

24 May 1997 BLMDA Gem & Mineral Fair, Winter Gardens, Ilkley 10.00.

Contact: Jonathan O'Dell tel 01270 875775

6-7 June 1997 13th Iver Heath Mineral and Fossil Show 1997, Iver Heath Community Hall, Iver Heath near Uxbridge, Friday 6 June 3.30-19.00, Saturday 7 June 9.00-14.00.

Contact: Tony Brittain, Endsleigh Book Company, Burma House, Bentley Road, Forncett St Peter, Norwich NR16 1LH, tel 01953 788169, fax 01953 788470.

13 July 1997 The Oxford Summer Mineral and Fossil Show, The Exeter Hall, Kidlington. 10.00-16.00.

Contact: Tony Brittain, Endsleigh Book Company, Burma House, Bentley Road, Forncett St Peter, Norwich NR16 1LH, tel 01953 788169, fax 01953 788470.

16 August 1997 Dorset Geological Association Group's Mineral and Fossil Fair, Allendale Centre, Wimborne, Dorset 10.00-16.30. There will be sales, displays, demonstrations, roadshow and a swap-stall. Admission: adults £1, children free.

Contact: DGAG Events/Publicity Officer tel 01300 320811.

23-25 August 1997 BLMDA Gem & Mineral Fair, Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate 10.00.

Contact: Jonathan O'Dell tel 01270 875775

20 September 1997 Southampton Mineral and Fossil Fair Avenue Hall, The Avenue, Southampton. 10.00-16.30. Admission 50p, half-price for under 12's.

Contact: Southampton Mineral and Fossil Society tel 01703 865567

18-19 October 1997 Rock 'n' Gem Show, Cheltenham Racecourse

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

25-26 October 1997 BLMDA Gem & Mineral Fair, Regents Park Marriott Hotel, Swiss Cottage, London 10.00.

Contact: Jonathan O'Dell tel 01270 875775

Manchester's jackpot

The Manchester Museum has been successful in its bid for £12 million of Heritage Lottery funding towards a £17 million development. The project includes a new store, shop, restaurant, lifts and disabled access, new temporary exhibition areas, and the redisplay of all of the geology galleries. Work is expected to last five years.

Scottish Geology Week

To mark the bicentenaries of James Hutton and Charles Lyell this year, and to heighten the public profile of geology, Scottish Natural Heritage is organising a programme of events from 11 to 18 August on the theme of Life, landscapes and how the Earth works. For further information, contact Alan McKirdy, Scottish Natural Heritage, Earth Science Branch, 2 Anderson Place, Edinburgh EH6 5NP, tel 0131 554 9797, e-mail ESB@RASDSNH.demon.co.uk

GCG Seminar: Quaternary collections 16-17 April 1997 Torquay Museum

Torquay Museum, housed in a fine, purpose-built building, was opened in 1845 by Torquay Natural History Society, and is still run by the Society. A prime mover in the founding of the Museum was William Pengelly who quickly filled it with the products of his excavations in nearby Kent's Cavern. The Quaternary link is continued by the current Curator, Mike Bishop, who welcomed 32 members to this meeting on Quaternary collections.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the collections, which now total around 500,000 have expanded to cover a wide range of subjects. Mike is conscious of the need to make the museum and its diverse collections more relevant to the huge numbers of summer visitors to Torbay, and plans to look for £4-5 million of Heritage Lottery funding.

The first speaker was Andy Currant of the Natural History Museum who described his work on the Quaternary collections at Taunton Museum. The collection comprises around 15,000 specimens from five Mendip bone sites, and is the work of two 19th century collectors. The collection seems to represent total assemblages, rather than trophy collections of the best specimens, and therein lies its importance. The material features in the Pal Soc monographs on Quaternary mammals, and was studied by Owen, Falconer and Boyd Dawkins. However, at the start of this century, a period of neglect began and the collection ended up in a coal shed behind the curator's house. Now rescued by Andy and Taunton Museum staff, the collection has survived remarkably well. Andy attributed this, at least in part, to the fact that the bones had been dipped in glue, or sized, by the early collectors, and suggested that this tried and tested technique, which went out of fashion with the arrival of modern consolidants, should be revived. The disadvantage, however, is the effect of such a process on C14 dating.

The next speaker was Roger Jacobi from the British Museum who spoke on the archaeology and palaeontology of Cresswell Crags. He described the history of excavation, and how Boyd Dawkins had laid out his excavated material to show faunal assemblages. Material from this site is now scattered among a number of museums, and Roger demonstrated how specimens from three collections belonged, and indeed fitted, together.

Adrian Doyle of the Natural History Museum then spoke on the conservation of Quaternary collections, and reviewed the range of materials, adhesives, and consolidants that have been used over the years. He emphasised the importance of monitoring and controlling the environment in which the collection is stored, as well as recommending polybags and Stewartboxes for storing specimens in a controlled microclimate.

After lunch, Patrick Boylan of City University spoke on reconstructing the cave fossil assemblage of Kirkdale Cave. This is made more difficult by the fact that the material is spread over 18 museums, although specimens from Kirkdale can be recognised by their characteristic yellow coloration. One cannot rely on early published accounts: George Young, for example, illustrated a mammoth tooth said to be from Kirkdale when it was from the Yorkshire coast.

The next speaker was Gill Cook of the British Museum who described the work of Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826-1897) of the Department of British Antiquities at the BM. A contemporary and colleague of Richard Owen, Franks addressed the problem of the antiquity of humans, and their contemporaneity with extinct animals.

Using an example of a 1669 publication of a rhino tooth found in Canterbury and his recent work at Cheddar, Andy Currant's second contribution to the meeting discussed the importance of the presentation and accessibility of information on Quaternary collections.

The final contribution, from Kate Scott of the Baden-Powell Quaternary Research Centre at Oxford, described the Stanton Harcourt Mammoth Excavation in Oxfordshire and the wealth of material this remarkable site has produced. Sixty mammoth tusks, remains of straight-tusked elephant, bison, reindeer, bear, hyaena, lion and horse, as well as wood, insects, freshwater molluscs and even mammoth footprints have been found in the 200,000 year old gravels. Eighteen artefacts have also been discovered, although whether they are contemporaneous with the mammoth material is still an open question. The excavation will close this summer as the site is due to be used for landfill.

The meeting had several recurring themes brought out by the speakers: the first was how material from one Quaternary site can be very widely distributed, with collections and even parts of specimens scattered over a large number of museums; and secondly, the familiar tale of how material once thought lost or damaged can be resurrected if the right people are in the right place at the right time.

The following day, 16 members met at Kent's Cavern for a tour led by Alan Straw who has worked on the cave for many years. Alan showed us the sites of William Pengelly's excavations, and demonstrated the stratigraphy of the cave deposits and the evolution of the cave system. After lunch, the group moved to Berry Head on the south side of Torbay where Chris Proctor of Bristol University described the Quaternary features of the coast, and how solution caves there are related to marine erosion platforms.

Thanks are due to Mike Bishop and Steve McLean for putting together an excellent meeting.

Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales

Newish publications

An Irish geological time capsule. The James Mitchell Museum, University College, Galway edited by David A T Harper, 1996. Galway: James Mitchell Museum, ISBN 0 952 9571 0 8, v + 67pp.

Postcards from the past by Anna Grayson and Roger Jones, 1997. BBC Education, ISBN 1 86000 309 5, 56pp, £4.95. Available from BBC Education, Postcards from the past, PO Box 7, London W5 2GQ. Retail enquiries: Vanda Warhaftig, Room G417, BBC Educational Developments, White City, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TS tel 0181 752 5370.

The Chalk of Sussex and Kent by Rory N Mortimore, 1997. Geologists' Association Guide No. 57, iii + 139pp, ISBN 0 900717 83 1.

Earthquakes - our trembling planet by Susanna Van Rose and Roger Musson, 1997. British Geological Survey, 72pp, £6.50.

Fossils - the story of life by Sue Rigby, 1997. British Geological Survey, 64pp, £6.50.

Holiday geology guide: Trafalgar Square by E Robinson and M Litherland, 1996. British Geological Survey, ISBN 0 85272 277 X, £1.95.

Sharpening stones

Chris Green, Museum of St Albans, would be grateful to learn of any geological literature specifically on the subject of hones or sharpening stones. The Museum holds the Salaman Collection to trade tools, and seeks authoritative identification of the less-common stones, especially those used before the 1870s. This information is not, so far as we know, to be found in the literature on tools. Since hones were produced at recognised centres, it is hoped to be able to produce a brief identification guide to these neglected but vitally important tools, for the use of curators and tool collectors.

Please contact Chris Green, c/o Museum of St Albans, Hatfield Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 3RR, tel 01727 819339 or 819340.

Dealer's labels

Mick Cooper has been carrying out extensive research into British mineral dealers and he is compiling a comprehensive collection showing the different styles, contents and handwritings of dealers' labels, letter heading etc. There are still some gaps in his collection and he would be glad to hear from any museums who have dealers' labels and correspondence, and may be able to provide him with copies. Please contact him at 15 Oakland Street, Nottingham NG7 5JQ tel 0115 970 4053 e-mail minerals@mpcooper.demon.co.uk.

Naming those amphiboles

The International Mineralogical Association Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names has just published a revised nomenclature for amphibole minerals. The first nomenclature, IMA 78 (Leake, 1978), laid down criteria for naming amphiboles. It also recommended the formal abandonment of 193 names, some such as amosite, barkevikite and carinthine, in relatively common use in museums. The extreme complexity of the nomenclature proved most unpopular and in 1986 the IMA set up a new Amphibole Subcommittee to simplify it. The Subcommittee has just published its recommendations.

Although the recommendations for naming amphibole minerals in hand specimen, which have not undergone detailed analysis, are largely the same as in IMA 78, it is perhaps timely to reproduce them here. The use of these terms clearly indicates that the specimen has not been fully characterised, the status of most amphiboles in museum collections.

'For amphiboles of which the general name only is known, for instance from the optical properties without a chemical analysis, it is not generally possible to allocate a precise name. The nearest assigned amphibole name should then be

made into an adjective followed by the word amphibole. Thus anthophyllitic amphibole, tremolitic amphibole, pargasitic amphibole, glaucophanitic amphibole and richteritic amphibole. The familiar word hornblende can still be used where appropriate for calcic amphiboles in both hand specimen and thin section, because hornblende is never used without an adjective in the precise classification, so no confusion should arise between colloquial use and precise use.'

'As in IMA 78, asbestiform amphiboles should be named according to their precise mineral name in this report, followed by the suffix -asbestos: eg anthophyllite -asbestos, tremolite-asbestos. Where the nature of the mineral is uncertain or unknown, asbestos alone or amphibole-asbestos may be appropriate. If the approximate nature of the mineral only is known the above recommendations should be followed but the word amphibole replaced by asbestos eg anthophyllitic asbestos, tremolitic asbestos.' (Leake *et al* 1997 p.301)

This paper includes full details of the new classification (including new amphibole species discovered since IMA 78), basic information about end-members, and lists a further 27 names which should now be abandoned.

Leake, B.E. (1978) Nomenclature of amphiboles. *Mineral.Mag.* 42, 533-63

Leake, B.E. *et al* (1997) Nomenclature of amphiboles: Report on the Subcommittee of the International Mineralogical Association Commission on New Minerals and Mineral Names. *Mineral. Mag.* 61, 295-321

Monica T. Price, Oxford University Museum of Natural History

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GCG Seminar and field excursion

Hull 25-26 June 1997

BOOKING FORM

I will be attending the seminar on 25 June

I will be attending the field trip on 26 June

I will be able to provide a car for the field trip with space

for the following number of passengers

I need a lift for the field trip

I would like details of accommodation

I enclose a cheque for

Title Name

Address

Telephone e-mail

Please return this section with a cheque for £4 (payable to 'Geological Curators' Group') to Heather Rayfield, Museums, Art Galleries and Archives, Monument Buildings, Ferens Art Gallery, Queen Victoria Square, Hull HU1 3RA tel 01482 613902 by **18 June 1997**.

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GCG Seminar and study trip

Maidstone and Brussels 13-14 October 1997

BOOKING FORM

I would like further details of the Brussels study trip on 13 October

I will be attending the seminar on 14 October

I would like details of accommodation

I enclose a cheque for £3.00

Title Name

Address

Telephone e-mail

Please return this section with a cheque (payable to 'Geological Curators' Group') to Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT, Tel : 0191 222 7418, e-mail s.g.mclean@newcastle.ac.uk.

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