



**DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP**

Coprolite is compiled by Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NP (tel 01222 573265, fax 01222 667332, e-mail Tom.Sharpe@nmgw.ac.uk) and produced by Monica Price, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW. It is published three times a year in March, June and November. Any material for inclusion should be sent to Tom Sharpe by the first of the previous month, i.e. by 1 February, 1 May or 1 October.

Coprolite is sponsored by Burhouse Ltd of Huddersfield, wholesale distributors of minerals, gemstones, gemstone products and jewellery components.

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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

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Andy Newman, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU tel/fax 0191 222 7426. e-mail andrew.newman@ncl.ac.uk

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the 23rd AGM of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at 15.45 on Thursday 27 November 1997 in the Seminar Room of the Mineralogy Department, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London.

Nominations for the posts of Officers and two Committee Members must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Amanda Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL by 6 November 1997.

New publication dates for *Coprolite*

Beginning next year, the publication dates of the first two *Coprolites* of the year will change to March and June, instead of February and May. The November issue is unchanged. This should help with the scheduling and reporting of seminars and committee meetings. Dates for submission of material are now 1 February for the March issue; 1 May for the June issue; and 1 October for the November issue.

Are you missing from the membership list?

The 1997 GCG membership list is published with this issue of *Coprolite*. It is based on the returns of the subscription renewal forms in the February issue. Unfortunately, it is far from complete, as many members have yet to renew their subscriptions or have failed to return the form. Nevertheless, we hope that it will be of use to members if they need to locate phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses of other geological curators. Please help to make next year's list more comprehensive by ensuring that you pay your annual subscription and return the renewal form in the March 1998 issue of *Coprolite*.

New Members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Liz Hide**, Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; **Camilla Nichol**, Leicester; **Andrew Ross**, Natural History Museum; **Andrew Mathieson**, Bristol; and the **Australian Museum**, Sydney.

Musical curators

Following a staffing review at Tyne and Wear Museums Service, **Steve McLean** is now Senior Keeper, Natural Sciences and Curator of the Hancock Museum, and **Alec Coles** is now Senior Curator at the Hancock; **Jon Radley**, formerly a Curator of Geology at Bristol City Museum, has taken up a post at the Postgraduate Research Institute for Sedimentology at the University of Reading to work on the Late Jurassic-Early Cretaceous Geological Conservation Review volume; **Alec Livingstone**, Assistant Keeper of Geology at the Royal Museum of Scotland retired in September; **Andrew Ross**, formerly in a contract post at the Natural History Museum has been appointed Curator of Arthropods in the Palaeontology Department there; as a result of the reorganisation at Bristol City Museum, **Andrew Mathieson** has lost his post as Education Service Manager and is now a freelance geology education consultant. **Paul Ensom**, Keeper of Geology at Yorkshire Museum, has been appointed Head of Palaeontology Curation at the Natural History Museum.

Geology and museums have lost several well-known figures this year. **Alan Charig**, Curator of Fossil Reptiles and Birds at the Natural History Museum from 1961 to 1987 died on 15 July aged 70. **Tom Fry**, the Bristol field geologist died on 2 April aged 95. **Emlyn Evans**, Assistant Keeper of Geology at the National Museum of Wales from 1958 to 1979 died on 12 January aged 82

Collections at risk

At its meeting on 2 October, GCG Committee decided to review the way in which it responds to threats to collections. This is being done as a result of the unsatisfactory outcome of the recent review at Bristol City Museum which

resulted in the loss of a geological curator's post and the redundancy of a GCG member. In that instance, although GCG responded to the review document, it was clear that the decisions had been largely made before we could make our objections. In addition, several points made by GCG in letters to Bristol City Council officers were not addressed.

It is likely that in future we would seek to make representations to the area museum councils and the Museums and Galleries Commission as well as to the governing body of the collection under threat. If any members have any comments or suggestions on what steps GCG should take in these circumstances, please 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

Collections surveys

Since Phil Doughty's 1981 publication on the state and status of geological collections, there have been a number of collections surveys and reports, both published and unpublished. As an initial step to revising the collections information gathered for *State and status*, we would be interested to hear of any unpublished surveys and reports on geological collections, either on individual museums or on the collections of a region. If you know of any reports that should be included, please contact Glenys Wass, Palaeontological Conservation Unit, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD e-mail g.wass@nhm.ac.uk

GCG Website

GCG's website, launched at the Liverpool meeting in June last year, is being updated. It is planned that the site will include the last three issues of *Coprolite*, with its meetings programme, meetings reports, exhibitions listings, and Committee details as well as the contents pages and abstracts of the *Geological Curator*. If you have any suggestions or ideas about what you would like to see on our site, please 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

GCG Display boards

Any members who visited the Dudley Rock and Fossil Fair in September will have had a preview of the new GCG display boards. The tabletop display comprises three colour-printed boards about the Group, its aims and activities. A fourth notice board will display news of forthcoming meetings, new publications and so on. The boards were produced and sponsored by the Leicester design company Haley Sharpe Associates.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

Thursday 27 November 1997 Seminar Room, Mineralogy Department, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London

GCG Seminar and AGM: New developments in earth science exhibitions

The meeting will consist of presentations on some of the new geological exhibitions under development at the Natural History Museum, with a contribution from the Netherlands where a similar project is underway. There will be opportunities to view the exhibitions already opened in the Earth Galleries.

10.30 Registration and coffee

11.00 Welcome to the Natural History Museum: Robin Cocks (Keeper of Palaeontology and President-elect of the Geological Society)

11.15 From the beginning: Brian Rosen (Palaeontology), Katie Edwards (Exhibition Research & Design) and Dave Smith (Mineralogy)

12.00 The Earth's treasury: Bob Symes (Mineralogy), Dierdre Janson-Smith (Exhibition Research & Design) and Alan Hart (Mineralogy)

12.45 Lunch and time to visit the Earth Galleries

14.00 Welcome to the Mineralogy Department: Andy Fleet (Keeper of Mineralogy)

14.15 Recent developments at Leiden: Dirk Houtgraaf (Head of Exhibitions and Education, Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum, Leiden, Netherlands)

15.00 The Earth Laboratory: Alan Timms (Adult Education, Department of Exhibitions and Education)

15.15 Break for tea

15.45 23rd Annual General Meeting of the Geological Curators' Group

Contact: Cally Hall tel 0171 938 8869, e-mail cjeh@nhm.ac.uk or Andrew Clark tel 0171 938 9282, e-mail amc@nhm.ac.uk

Meeting fee: £3.00 Please complete the booking form on page 11 and return it, with a cheque made payable to the Natural History Museum, to Shashu Lalji, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD by Thursday 20 November.

23-26 April 1998 Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast

GCG, Geological Society Geoconservation Commission, Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland: Conference on Geotourism

The programme will draw on all aspects of geotourism, including: geotourism and World Heritage Sites; the Giant's Causeway - a case study; current geotourism initiatives; geological and landscape heritage trails; the history of geotourism; the literature of geotourism; town trails; landscape, regional character and a sense of place. Papers are invited in these and related areas of interest. Preliminary planning suggests two days of formal sessions in the Ulster Museum and two

excursion days. The excursions will include a visit to the Giant's Causeway and its visitor centre via the Antrim Coast Road, and the limestone country of the Fermanagh/Cavan border, for which geotourism literature has been recently developed.

Contact: Kenneth James, Geology Department, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast BT9 5AB, tel 01232 383135.

June 1998 Camborne School of Mines, Redruth, Cornwall.

GCG Seminar and field trip

Contact: Lesley Atkinson, Camborne School of Mines Geological Museum and Art Gallery, Pool, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 3SE tel 01209 714866, e-mail L.Atkinson@csm.ex.ac.uk

21-25 September 1998 Portsmouth

Museums Association Annual Conference

Contact: Sue Robinson, Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0PA tel 0171 608 2933, fax 0171 250 1929

6-11 September 1998 University of Wales, Cardiff

British Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting

Contact: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 2NB

October 1998 Whitworth Art Gallery, Oxford Road, Manchester

GCG / Geological Society Geoconservation Commission Seminar: The geological heritage in British and Irish art

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 or 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.

December 1998 Nottingham Natural History Museum, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham and British Geological Survey, Keyworth.

GCG Seminar and AGM: Little and large

A two-day seminar looking at the similarities, differences and historical links between the smaller geology collections of the Nottingham Natural History Museum and the large national collections at the headquarters of the British Geological Survey. The first day will look at the history of the geology collections at Wollaton Hall and how research and documentation of the collections over the last ten years has increased their significance. There will be talks on aspects of the collections, including details of the Victorian palaeontologists who collected parts of them, followed by a tour of the displays and collections. The day's proceedings will conclude with the 24th GCG AGM.

On the second day there will be a visit to BGS headquarters at Keyworth where there will be a tour of the collections and a chance to see geological maps being created.

Contact: Neil Turner, Natural History Museum, Wollaton Park, Nottingham NG8 2AE, tel 0115 915 39000, e-mail nnhm@notmusnathist.demon.co.uk or Steve Tunnicliff, British Geological Survey, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG, tel 0115 936 3100.

Exhibitions

Tracking dinosaurs Electric Mountain, Llanberis until 5 January 1998

Dinosaurs alive! Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne until 26 April 1998

Dinosaurs generate success at Ulster

The Ulster Museum's summer exhibition, *Dinosaurs - a new generation*, attracted 111,000 paying visitors during its 17 week run from May to August. This doubled the visitor numbers over the same period last year. The museum more than recovered the £190,000 cost of the exhibition, and the exhibition's Dinosaur Shop sold over £100,000 of goods. The museum's main shop also saw its takings rise by 15%.

The world will turn again

The (in)famous, (non)revolving globe in the atrium of the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum in London is set to turn again. Specialist examination of the structure has identified faults with its design, and structural changes are planned for January.

Display cases for sale

The Natural History Museum has a number of mahogany display cases for sale from the old Geological Museum. The cases date from the late 1920s - early 1930s and comprise a removable central raised graphic panel flanked on either side by slanting hinged cases above a plain frieze, on square section legs with brass block feet. Approximate measurements are 44 inches centre height (plus 17 inch graphic panel height), 37 inches high at front, 49 inches deep, 72 inches long. Price : £200.00 per case, buyer collects. Various other display cases are also available. For further information, contact Jacqui Staerk at the Natural History Museum, tel 0171 938 8938, fax 0171 938 9038, e-mail jms@nhm.ac.uk

***T. rex* for Chicago**

The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago has purchased the most complete *Tyrannosaurus rex* ever found. The specimen, which has been the subject of a long-running ownership dispute since its discovery in South Dakota in 1990, was

sold for \$8,362,500 at Sotheby's in New York on 4 October after eight minutes of intense bidding. The museum, with financial support from McDonald's and the Disney Corporation, outbid the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and the Dallas Museum of Natural History. The two companies will receive casts of the specimen; Disney's will go on display at the Walt Disney World Resort's Animal Kingdom in Florida, while McDonald's two casts will be used in an international travelling exhibition. Two years of preparation will be necessary before the specimen goes on display in Chicago in 2000.

Mineral and Fossil Shows

22 November 1997 Sussex Mineral Show, Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, Sussex 10.00-16.00.

Contact: Sussex Mineral and Lapidary Society tel 01444 233958.

29 November 1997 Sidcup Lapidary and Mineral Society's Mineral and Jewellery Fair. Emmanuel Church Hall, Hadlow Road, Sidcup, Kent 10.30-16.00.

21 February 1998 Essex Gem and Mineral Show North Romford Community Centre, Clockhouse Lane, Collier Road, Romford 10.00 - 6.00.

Contact Stuart Adams tel 0181 504 9422.

7-8 March 1998 York Rock 'n' Gem Show, York Racecourse, 10.00-17.00

Contact The Exhibition Team Ltd., tel 01628 21697 or 01494 450504

15 March 1998 Oxford Spring Mineral and Fossil Show Oxford Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford 10.00-16.30 with guest lecture by Dr Bob Symes, and special Sunday opening of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History 12.00-16.00 (free bus service between venues).

Contact: Tony Brittain, tel 01953 788169.

GCG/BCG/SMA seminar: An Endangered Species?

The future of the Specialist Curator

17 September 1997 City Hall, Cardiff

This meeting, organised by GCG, BCG and the Society of Museum Archaeologists was arranged as a session within the Museums Association Annual Conference held in Cardiff. Chaired by Robert Anderson of the British Museum, the meeting began with Nick Merriman of the Institute of Archaeology who set the role of the curator in an historical context and examined how a negative image of the curator had developed in recent years. The importance of research by curators was followed up by Eric Greenwood of Liverpool Museum who emphasised the need for good taxonomy and by David Gaimster of the British Museum who expressed a very traditional view of the role of the curator. It was left to Stephen Douglas of Hertfordshire Museum Service to put the case against specialist curators,

especially in small museums. The subsequent discussion focussed very much on the place of research in museums, and generally did little to tackle the problem of the diminishing role of the specialist, and even of collections, in museums.

Andrew Newman, University of Newcastle

Disability and geological displays Hull and East Riding Museum, 25 June 1997

Unfortunately, this meeting was cancelled due to a lack of bookings. I would be interested to learn why this seminar was not successful and your comments would be appreciated. Is it simply a bad time of year, and should we not hold seminars in June? Was the subject not of interest, or was there some other reason? Regardless of the lack of turnout, I would like to record my thanks to Heather Rayfield who put together what I thought was an excellent programme and field trip, and I do hope that GCG will get another chance in the near future to visit Hull.

Steve McLean, GCG Programme Secretary
The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT
tel 0191 222 6765, e-mail s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk

Newish publications

James Hutton - the founder of modern geology by Donald B McIntyre and Alan McKirdy, 1997. HMSO 64pp. ISBN 0 11 495 8122, £7.99.

Dana's new mineralogy. The system of mineralogy of James Dwight Dana and Edward Salisbury Dana, 8th edition by R V Gaines, H C W Skinner, E Foord, B Mason & A Rosenzweig, 1997. Wiley, 900pp. ISBN 0471 19310 0, £110.00.

Encyclopedia of mineral names by W H Blackburn & W H Dennen, 1997. The Canadian Mineralogist Special Publication No 1. Ontario: Mineralogical Association of Canada, v + 360pp. ISBN 0 921294 45 X.

Opals by A W Eckert, 1997. Wiley, 275pp. ISBN 0471 13397 3, £45.00.

Dictionary of earth sciences. English-French/French-English by J-P Michel & R W Fairbridge, 1997. Wiley-Masson, 320pp. ISBN 0471 96603 7, £45.00

Discovering geology. The Lake District. PC/Macintosh CD-ROM. British Geological Survey, £39.95.

Type catalogue catalogue

Valerie Deisler and Mike Bassett of the National Museum of Wales have recently published a listing of type, figured and cited fossil catalogues produced by museums in Britain and Ireland. The list comprises a bibliography, taxonomic index, stratigraphical index, and museums index. GCG's activities in tracking down lost specimens and collections since 1974, as well as Phil Doughty's 1981

State and status report, are credited with stimulating the publication of type catalogues during the last 20 years. VK Deisler & MG Bassett, 1997. Bibliography and index of catalogues of type, figured and cited fossils in museums in Great Britain and Ireland (Supplement 1975-1996). *Palaeontology*, 40(2), pp.597-617.

Geological Curator special offer

Special offer!! - Back issues of the *Geological Curator* (formerly the *Newsletter of the Geological Curators' Group*) for a limited period only, while stocks last, at these special prices, including postage and packing: Volume 1 complete £15.00 (usual price £25.00) Volume 2 complete £15.00 (usual price £25.25) Volume 4 complete £20.00 (usual price £27.50) Volume 5 complete £20.00 (usual price £25.00) Individual parts (including double issues) are £3.00 except volume 4 number 7 which is £5.00. All parts are available except for volume 3 numbers 7, 8 and 9.

Please send your orders, with payment (cheques payable to the Geological Curators' Group) to John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester M13 9PL.

SPECTRUM second edition

The second edition of *SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard* is now available from the Museum Documentation Association. Procedures, information requirements and supporting notes have been updated and enhanced to incorporate the feedback from *SPECTRUM* working groups. A supporting handbook of *SPECTRUM* Guidelines was due for launch at the MDA Workshop at Churchill College, Cambridge in October. The new edition of *SPECTRUM* is on sale now for £75 (£55 to MDA members).

Copies of the first edition are available from MDA at a reduced price of £30 (including postage within the UK).

For copies of *SPECTRUM*, contact: Kym Edwards, MDA, Jupiter House, Station Rd, Cambridge CB1 2JD tel 01223 315760, e-mail kym@mdocassn.demon.co.uk.

The British Association Millennium Awards

The British Association for the Advancement of Science has announced plans for its Millennium Awards. These will go to individual scientists, engineers and others with a scientific background, such as teachers and science centre staff. In partnership with a community group, you can work together on a project to bring science alive for the community. Awards will range from £1,000 to £10,000, or exceptionally, £15,000 for groups, but will normally be in the region of £3,000. The money will help you develop the skills or acquire the resources or equipment you need to put winning ideas into action. Closing dates for the completed

proposal forms are 31 December 1997 and 30 June 1998 and 31 December 1998. Contact Jane Mole, Millennium Awards Administrator, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 2NB, tel. 0171 973 3069, e-mail ba.talk.science@mcr1.poptel.org.uk for more information.

Acquisition and conservation grants

What do a fossil starfish in York, an early geological map of the British Isles in Cornwall and a collection of lepidoptera in Luton have in common? The answer is that all three have benefited from the support of the MGC/Science Museum PRISM Grant Fund. PRISM can offer grants of up to £20,000 towards the cost of acquiring and/or conserving all kinds of industrial and scientific material, including biological, geological and palaeontological specimens as well as archives and rare books.

The Fund is keen to encourage more applications from natural history collections, particularly for conservation projects. PRISM covers the whole of England and Wales. Museums that are registered with the Museums and Galleries Commission are automatically eligible for the Fund. Applications from other organisations, including university collections, charitable trusts engaged in the preservation of historic material, record offices and archives can also be considered.

If you would like more details of the Fund, or if you think you have a project which would be eligible for support, please contact the Fund Manager, Simon Chaplin, or the Assistant Manager, Sam Evans, on 0171 938 8005, by email at s.chaplin@nmsi.ac.uk, or by post at the following address: MGC/Science Museum PRISM Fund, Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2DD.

Torquay lottery success

Torquay Natural History Society has been awarded £26,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a feasibility study into improvements and facilities and access to Torquay Museum.

What floors your pub?

The affinity of geologists and pubs is well-known, and no doubt many of us have had the opportunity, on occasion, to examine pub floors at close quarters. Tony Morgan of Liverpool Museum brings to our attention a request for information which appeared in the July 1997 edition of *What's Brewing*, the newspaper of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale. Jenny Huggett of Ashted in Surrey is writing a geological guide to stone floors in pubs and would be interested in hearing from any museum geologists with information about the stones used in their locals. So, dig out those records from your site databases, or better still, get some winter fieldwork in. If you can help, contact Jenny Huggett at 15 Gladstone Road, Ashted, Surrey KT21 2NS.

Claim to fame

The fame of GCG and its newsletter continues to spread. Earlier this year *Coprolite's* header graced the diary section of Scotland's national newspaper, *The (Glasgow) Herald* (not *The (Edinburgh) Scotsman*). Quite how *Coprolite* came into the hands of *The Herald* diarist isn't clear, but fortunately no material was forthcoming.

Tom Sharpe



COPROLITE

■ GREAT Magazines of Our Time, Contd. For your delectation we offer *Coprolite*, a museums journal. Our dictionary defines coprolite as a piece of fossil dung, a fact which may be gleaned from the magazine's logo reproduced here. We are impressed by their bit about "droppings from the Geological Curators Group". The editor, one Tom Sharpe, says that "any materials for inclusion" should be sent to him at the National Museum of Wales.

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cut here

**GCG Seminar and AGM
Natural History Museum, London
27 November 1997
BOOKING FORM**

I will be attending the seminar on 27 November and I enclose a cheque for £3.00 (payable to the Natural History Museum)

Title Name

Address

Telephone e-mail

Please return this form to Shashu Lalji, Department of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD by **Thursday 20 November 1997**

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