



OPROLITE

DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

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

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From the retiring Chairman

It is hard to believe, but my three years as Chairman of this Group have come to an end. We have had another successful year and go forward in strength. Last year, in my Annual Report, I outlined two main aims for GCG during my period in office, to strengthen our links with our parent body, The Geological Society, and to push back the European frontiers. Both of these have taken leaps forward during 1998 and I can "retire" satisfied.

On the first front, The Geological Society, as part of the reorganisation of its governance, reconstituted the Science Board, which in future is to include five representatives of the 23 Specialist Groups. The Specialist Groups have been organised into five "faculties", and GCG is grouped with HOGG, the GeoScience Information Group, the Remote Sensing Group, and JAGID. I am pleased to report that I, as retiring Chairman of GCG, have been "elected" to represent our faculty on the Science Board, and attended my first meeting in November. There have been some slight worries that in making this move, the Geological Society is attempting to influence the direction of the Specialist Groups. I take the reverse, optimistic, view that this is our chance to influence the Society and to have some

real input into its meetings, publications, medallists and lecture series. The five representatives on the Science Board will also sit on the Specialist Groups Committee along with the Group Chairmen, and so, from March, GCG will have two representatives on this important committee. I am gratified to learn that several of you have joined The Geological Society since my plea last year and hope that more and more will follow, especially when the fee structure is revised in 2000.

On the European front our visit to Brussels last year was followed up in October/November by a hugely successful visit to Holland. Nine members attended and those of you who didn't will never know what you missed! For four days we had a wonderful mix of stunning museums (Naturalis in Leiden, the Natuurhistorisch Museum in Maastricht and the Teyler Museum in Haarlem), superb field geology (type Maastrichtian and *Mosasaurus* type locality), plus some excellent social bonding (that's the PC term for what GCG used to call "drinking"). Our final evening in Amsterdam will go down in GCG history, and for all of this our Group owes a huge debt of gratitude to Steve McLean who once again masterminded the whole visit. We are also indebted to Ros Gourgey of KLM UK Airlines for her assistance with the flights and acting as our Dutch courier, and to Cor Winkler-Prins and John Jagt, for giving us so much of their time in Leiden and Maastricht respectively. In GCG tradition, both have been enrolled as members of the Group for a two-year period. Our European contacts are growing and we are beginning to see benefits both ways. My lengthy report of the meeting appears in this issue of *Coprolite*

If length of report is directly proportional to the success of the meeting, then Cindy Howell's 6 pages (in *Coprolite* 26) on the Tourism in geological landscapes meeting, held jointly with the Geoconservation Commission, in Belfast in April, testify that this was another GCG milestone. Unfortunately this was the one GCG meeting of my Chairmanship which I was unable to attend, due to a variety of other commitments, but from all accounts the 100+ delegates enjoyed first class speakers, useful discussion, and the usual Irish hospitality. I thank Phil Doughty, Ken James and others involved in this meeting for another huge success. Phil (as Chairman of the Geoconservation Commission) and John Thackray (as Chairman of HOGG) also deserve thanks for their organisation of the joint September meeting *Has the past a future?* attended by approximately 40 delegates. Sadly, however, our scheduled meeting to the Camborne School of Mines had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers, the second time that this has happened to our June meeting. Next year we will avoid that time of year, and hope to reorganise the Cornish Extravaganza in September. Thanks to Lesley Atkinson for putting together a mouth-watering agenda.

Once again support for museums and collections under threat occupied much of Committee's time this year and we have been involved in cases at Buckinghamshire County Museum, Queen's University (Belfast), the Barrack Street Museum (Dundee) and Derby City Museum, amongst others. A new policy

decision to approach the MGC and the Area Museum Councils in such cases, seemed to have a positive effect. GCG has also contributed from its vast databanks to various collection surveys being run by the MGC, SEMS, MDA and others.

I am indebted to all members of the Committee for their help in these and many other matters which have occupied our time this year and over the three years of my chairmanship. I must mention our secretaries Mandy Edwards and John Crossling, and also Alistair Bowden and Tiffany Foster, who willingly stepped in when John had to resign during the year; Andy Newman, for keeping our accounts in order at the same time as satisfying the Geological Society auditors; Patrick Wyse Jackson and Tom Sharpe, our editors, for another year of unbroken output of journal and newsletter; Glenys Wass, our Recorder, who has initiated her update of the Doughty Report, a mammoth task in itself; and finally, once again to Steve McLean, our Programme Secretary, who has organised all of this year's outstanding meetings and visits.

Finally I thank you, the members, for your support and kindness during my tenure; I know that you will give my successor the same support, and I leave you with the knowledge that as the Group prepares to celebrate its Silver Jubilee, it will be in very capable hands.

John Nudds, The Manchester Museum

From the incoming Chairman

Since its formation 25 years ago, GCG has been very fortunate to have as its Officers and Committee Members geologists who have brought to the Group a wide range of experience and expertise, and who have dedicated considerable time and enthusiasm to the Group and its activities. As a result, GCG enjoys an enviable reputation as one of the most active and successful specialist groups, both in the geological community and within the museums profession. Throughout his three years as Chairman, John Nudds has campaigned vigorously for the Group and for geological collections and I would like to express my thanks to him for all he has done to maintain the standards set by his illustrious predecessors.

Working in partnership is key to success today, and from our earliest days we have been a Constituted Group of the Geological Society. During John's time as Chairman we have strengthened our links with Geol Soc to our mutual advantage. We have a vital role to play here as the public face of our science. We have always had a very successful partnership with the Biology Curators Group, but there is scope for strengthening our relationship with the Museums Association and raising our profile with the Museums & Galleries Commission. Another of John's great successes is the contact we now have with our colleagues in museums in Europe; the new Committee will continue to broaden our membership base on the continent.

Despite the successes of the last 25 years, there remains much to be done. Collections are still at risk, including some which caused concern to the Group's founders a quarter of a century ago. GCG has gone a long way to increase our knowledge of collections and to raise standards of collection care. We now need to emphasise the value and importance of these collections by encouraging their use. Increasing electronic access to geological knowledge and new opportunities like the National Grid for Learning can be harnessed to improve both physical and intellectual access to collections. These are the new challenges which we need to address while maintaining our core concern for the well-being of geological collections.

Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales

A G Brighton Medal awarded to Roy Clements

At the Group's AGM at Wollaton Hall, Nottingham on Wednesday 2 December 1998, retiring Chairman John Nudds presented the A G Brighton Medal to Dr Roy Clements, Principal Curator in the Department of Geology at the University of Leicester. The medal is awarded to those who have devoted a significant part of their working lives to the actual care of geological specimens or who, through their example or by teaching, have inspired others to the better care of geological specimens. In making the presentation, John Nudds said:

"Your mentor, Bob King, himself a Brighton medallist, tells me that even when you were an undergraduate at Leicester he recognised your curatorial potential, all students being required to lodge a well-curated collection as part of their final examinations. After you completed your PhD at Hull (on Purbeck palaeoenvironments), Bob King was determined to bring you back to Leicester as his Deputy, to look after the palaeontology collections while he cared for the minerals and rocks. On Bob's retirement you took over as Principal Curator.

"If there was a defining moment in your career (and I suspect there have been several), I suggest it was that day in Leicester in 1974 when, over coffee with Bob and Mike Jones (of Leicester Museums), you talked of the parlous state of geological collections in this country and resolved to do something positive about it. Thus were the seeds of GCG sown. At its inaugural meeting on 17th May 1974, you were elected as the Group's first Chairman and guided the Group in its infancy through the first three formative years. In your Chairman's report in the very first *Newsletter* you expressed confidence that a 'lively group would emerge' - with a membership today standing at just under 500, I think, Roy, that your confidence was well-founded. For all that GCG has achieved since those days we have to thank you and the other founder members for your foresight and ground-breaking hard work.

"But your example and your teaching have inspired many others in yet another realm, and that is in your involvement with the Museums Studies course at the University of Leicester. Although not involved directly at the beginning, it was, of course, no coincidence that the first UK Museum Studies Course with a geological

component should have been set up at the University of Leicester. Rather, it was a response by Ray Singleton, then Director of the Course, to the high standards in collection care being practised in the Department of Geology by yourself and Bob. Again, on Bob's retirement, you took over the teaching on this course, and it must be a source of great pride and pleasure to you, Roy, to see your former students now established in prominent positions in our profession.

"Your students at Leicester talk of you with admiration, fondly remembering field trips and first year mapping in Skye and Arran, and your small room in the Leicester Department filled with the pleasant aroma of pipe tobacco! They describe you as being dedicated and meticulous, always looking for perfection and as a driving force in the curatorial training of all BSc students. They talk of high standards, of your constant encouragement, and of your wise council. We also know you, Roy, as a man always willing to speak his mind for the key values of curation and never one to duck the real issues.

"Roy, it gives me the utmost pleasure to make this presentation. You join an elite band of medallists, and thoroughly deserve to do so. You have given vast services to the subject of geology in museums through your teaching, your example, and your inspiration to younger members of the profession, and also through your huge contribution to GCG itself.

"Dr Roy Clements, I present you with the A G Brighton Medal of the Geological Curators' Group."

A full report of the presentation, with Roy's reply, will be published in *The Geological Curator*.

New GCG website

GCG's new web pages, hosted by Manchester University, are now up and running and can be found at www.man.ac.uk/Geology/geocurgrp/gcghome.html. They include abstracts of papers in *The Geological Curator*, the latest issues of *Coprolite*, a membership application form, details of the current Committee, and the *Thumbs up* leaflet. Pages on geological collections in the UK and overseas are still being prepared and will include links to the web pages of museums with geological material. We are keen to hear from people who would like details of their own collection's web sites to be included on the GCG site, but we can also offer to create and hold web-pages for any museums who are not on the web at the moment. If your museum has a web page, and you would like to ensure that a link is included in GCG's website, contact Mandy Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 3825, fax 0161 275 3947, e-mail Mandy.Edwards@man.ac.uk

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **C F Winkler Prins**, National Museum of Natural History Naturalis, Leiden, The Netherlands; **John**

Jagt, Natuurhistorisch Museum Maastricht, The Netherlands; **Caroline Hensley**, Natural History Museum; **Eliza Howlett**, Oxford University Museum of Natural History; **Ros Gouragey**, Great Bardfield, Essex; **Martyn Bradley**, Warwickshire Museum; and **Graham Tollock**, British Geological Survey.

New Officers and Committee 1999

Chairman: Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF1 3NP tel 01222 573265, 0976 430653 (mobile), fax 01222 667332, e-mail Tom.Sharpe@nmgw.ac.uk

Tom Sharpe BSc AMA FMA FGS CGeol was elected Chairman of the Geological Curators' Group for the next three years at the AGM held in Nottingham on 2 December 1998. Tom graduated in geology from the University of Glasgow in 1977, and went on to the Museum Studies course at the University of Leicester. After a brief spell in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, he took up his present appointment as a curator in the Geology Department of the National Museum of Wales in 1978. He served as GCG Treasurer from 1983-89 and has edited the Group's newsletter, *Coprolite*, since its inception in 1990.

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

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Programme Secretary: Steve McLean, Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 6765, fax 0191 222 6753, e-mail s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk

Editor of journal: Patrick Wyse Jackson, Department of Geology, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland tel 010 3531 702 1477, fax 010 3531 671 1199, e-mail wysjcknp@tcd.ie

Editor of newsletter: Tom Sharpe, address as above

Recorder: Glenys Wass, Wisbech and Fenland Museum, Museum Square, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1ES tel 01945 583817

Minutes Secretary: Tiffany Foster, Department of Palaeontology, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD tel 0171 938 9187 fax 0171 938 9277 e-mail tf@nhm.ac.uk

Committee members: Dale Johnston, North Somerset Museum Service, Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1PR tel 01934 621028, fax 01934 612526; Susan Crook, Ludlow Museum Offices, Old Street, Ludlow SY8 1NW tel 01584 873857, fax 01584 872019; Steve Laurie, Sedgwick Museum, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ tel 01223 333456 fax 01223 333450 e-mail sal11@esc.cam.ac.uk; Mark Evans, New Walk Museum, 53 New Walk, Leicester LE1 7FA tel 0116 255 4100, fax 0116 247 3005 e-mail markevans30@hotmail.com

Coopted members: Steve Thompson Scunthorpe Museum (BCG rep); John Nudds, The Manchester Museum

Corresponding members reporting to Committee

Tony Morgan (Geol Soc Geoconservation Commission) National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside; Sue Sladen (GCG Archivist) Ayschoughee Hall Museum, Spalding, Lincolnshire; Wendy Simkiss (NHCG), National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

Musical Curators

Matt Stephens has been appointed Assistant Keeper of Natural History at Hull and took up his post on 9 November; **Ros Palmer**, formerly Curator of King's Lynn Museum has taken up post as Curator of Torquay Museum; **Jeff J Liston**, currently a temporary curator at the Hunterian Museum, has been appointed Curatorial Technician there and takes up his post on 23 March; **Robin Cocks**, President of the Geological Society and former Keeper of Palaeontology at the Natural History Museum was awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honours List, for services to palaeontology.

ICT course leads to GCG website

During November and December 1998 I took part in an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) learning programme on behalf of GCG. The course was conducted by mda staff in partnership with the Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation and was grant-aided by the European Social Fund. 50 people from independent museums or specialist organisations like GCG attended the programme. The aim of the course was to form a network of people with *ICT knowledge and expertise which could in turn be cascaded down to others in the cultural sector.* The course was taught through a mix of self-study, visits, presentations and workshops, and all of the teaching and course materials were provided free of charge! The part of the course I was particularly interested in was the requirement to produce a web page for your own organisation - and I managed it. Check out the new GCG web page at www.man.ac.uk/Geology.

If anyone is interested in attending any of the courses which may run in 1999 they should contact mda (tel 01223 315760) or look at their web page at www.mda.org.uk

Mandy Edwards, GCG Secretary

Geol Soc Internet Bookshop

The Geological Society's Publishing House has launched its Internet Bookshop. This gives members the opportunity to buy Geol Soc and other publications with a credit card in a secure environment. The Bookshop can be found at <http://bookshop.geolsoc.org.uk>

Manchester galleries closed for redisplay

All of the geological galleries at the Manchester Museum have now closed in preparation for a major new display which is due to open in March 2000, in time for the Manchester Geoscience 2000 in April of that year. In the meantime, some

parts of the collections may become inaccessible. If you are likely to have a need to examine or borrow material from the collections during this period, please contact John Nudds, Keeper of Geology, as soon as possible. He can be reached at The Manchester Museum, Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 2660, fax 0161 275 2676, e-mail John.Nudds@man.ac.uk

Newish publications

Discover Dorset. Geology by Paul Ensorn, 1998. Wimborne: The Dovecote Press, 89pp. ISBN 1 874336 52 0, £4.95.

The geology of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly edited by E B Selwood, E M Durrance & C M Bristow, 1998. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, xx + 298pp, ISBN 0 85989 529 7, £42.50

John Gibson (1778-1840) manufacturing chemist and collector of Pleistocene fossils from Kirkdale Cave, Yorkshire and Ilford, Essex by William H George 1998. Barking: William H George Publications, 20pp, ISBN 0 95340 920 1, £1.40 (including postage, available from W H George 11 Sterry Road, Barking, Essex IG11 9SJ).

Proceedings of the First UK RIGS Conference edited by P G Oliver, 1998. Worcester: Herefordshire and Worcestershire RIGS Group, v+ 229pp, ISBN 0 9535054 0 5, £7.00.

Scotland. The creation of its natural landscape by Alan McKirdy and Roger Crofts, 1999. Edinburgh: British Geological Survey, ISBN 1 85397 004 2.

Leeds Museum to close

Museums Journal (January 1999) carried a disturbing report that Leeds City Museum is to close in the spring. The museum will vacate the building it shares with the library, but it seems that there are no firm plans for an alternative site unless the city council finds £12-£15 million for a new exhibition gallery and resource centre. GCG is trying to establish what this will mean for the museum's 28,000 geological specimens which include type and figured material, but no reply was received before *Caprolite* went to press.

A new dinosaur (geology) museum for the Isle of Wight

YES! It's happened, two years after the success of winning the Millennium Commission money, at the eleventh hour, the Isle of Wight Council has agreed a formula to provide the vital matching funding for the Dinosaur Isle project. This money has come from capital receipts from the sale of Council owned land. Obviously we are biased here at the Museum (and we hope you are too), but the implications for the Island surely make it all worthwhile; these are a few I can think of: a much needed all-weather attraction; employment during construction; employment of new staff at the museum; investment in Sandown; and increased use of other facilities in the town.

So there are clear benefits to the Island community of this project, but what are the benefits to geology and palaeontology? After all, could this museum be seen

as parochial regional geology? Well, I don't think that at all; if anything I believe that our new museum will firmly place the Isle of Wight and its palaeo-heritage on the international scene.

What will the new museum contain? What we hope to do is to bring out as much as we reasonably can. Clearly the emphasis will be the dinosaurs, but the introductory gallery will be a thematic geological history of the Island. We hope to retain our traditional educational role, whilst bringing to the audience modern museum styles of display and interpretation. The museum will be purpose built, about ten minutes walk from the existing one, it will have a display area ten times the size of the existing one, have a separate multipurpose room, labs, shop and some storage. Infrastructure work will begin in the autumn of this year with a proposed opening date in the spring of 2001. At some point in 2000, the existing museum will probably start to fade away, so if you have fond memories of the Island and its little fossil museum, you'd better come and say your farewells to the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology.

Martin C Munt, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology, Sandown

Sharing Museum Skills - Millennium Awards

The scheme was launched in October of 1998 as a result of a £1.2 million grant from the Millennium Commission. The aim is to benefit communities by improving the public experience of museums, art galleries and other allied heritage institutions, by enabling staff and volunteers working within museums to share, learn and apply new skills. It will operate over a three-year period and seeks to establish a series of six-week secondments in UK museums for individuals who are already working within the sector.

The grants are likely to be in the region of £2-4,000 to cover out-of-pocket living expenses and include a contribution to both the host and seconding museum. All types of museum-related work are eligible under the scheme and applications will be assessed on a quarterly basis until May 2001. Closing dates for 1999 are 10 May, 10 August and 10 November.

If you would like to hear more about the scheme, leaflets and application packs are available from Annie Hollobone, Millennium Awards Administrator, Sharing Museum Skills, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA tel: 0171 233 4200 e-mail a.hollobone@mgcuk.co.uk.

MTI becomes CHNTO

The Museum Training Institute has changed its name to the Culture and Heritage National Training Organisation to reflect the new, broader scope of its work as a provider of training for the cultural sector.

What on Earth is happening to RIGS?

The RIGS (Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites) initiative has been strongly supported by museums for the last 10 years, in many cases

building on the work of the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation. Museums closely involved in RIGS work include Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery, The Booth Museum in Brighton, Bedford Museum, Hull Museums, Manchester Museum, St Albans Museum, The Hancock Museum in Newcastle, Sheffield City Museum and the Ulster Museum among others. It would be great to see more museums involved in the RIGS initiative in the future.

In 1998 we saw a rise in momentum for RIGS with the first UK-wide RIGS Conference at University College, Worcester and the subsequent formation of a National RIGS Steering Group looking at ways of taking RIGS into the millennium. Vicky Mason the RIGS development officer is available to deal with day-to-day enquiries and issues regarding RIGS in England. Tony Rogers at the Countryside Council for Wales is available to deal with Welsh issues and there will shortly be a Scottish officer in post.

The Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) is now implementing the RIGS Development Strategy, with the help of a landfill tax award from the ARC Environment Fund and Shell UK Limited. One of the main outputs of this year's funding will be a RIGS Handbook - a user-friendly, practical guide for RIGS groups across the UK. Vicky Mason would welcome any items for inclusion in the handbook, particularly regarding contacts for organisations, suppliers of interpretation materials and good advice and case studies for RIGS groups. This would be helpful before April 1999.

Please contact Vicky Mason (Development Officer), The Wildlife Trusts' UK National Office, The Green, Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln, LN5 7JR tel 01522 544400, fax 01522 511616 e-mail vmason@wildlife-trusts.cix.co.uk

Scottish beginnings

The Museum of Scotland, Scotland's new national museum opened on St Andrew's Day 1998, clad in superb Permian sandstone from Clashach Quarry, near Elgin. The *Beginnings* gallery traces landscape and life in Scotland over the last 650 million years, with large and small rocks, fossils and minerals, some from the old collections but many freshly collected by NMS staff ranging from Lewisian gneiss from South Uist to Quaternary conglomerate from Perthshire. The gallery is aimed very much at the general public, with a heavy emphasis on presenting and interpreting actual specimens as the evidence for the past. There are new reconstruction paintings by John Sibbick, and new reconstruction models by Richard Hammond, Jeremy Hunt, John Holmes, and Chase Studios Inc. The section dealing with the Holocene has a huge lifesize diorama of Scottish wildlife showing the transition from tundra to Scots Pine and oak forests. There are also small displays on James Hutton and Hugh Miller in the *Innovators* gallery elsewhere in MoS, and the *Discovery Centre*, used by school parties but also by the public when available, features geological items.

Mike Taylor, National Museums of Scotland

Siccar Point goes to New York

The American Museum of Natural History in New York will open a new geology gallery, the *Hall of Planet Earth*, in June 1999. The gallery, which has an area of 840 square metres, will include replicas of key geological sites from around the world. In a paper in the latest issue of *Earth Heritage* (no.11, January 1999), Heather Sloan of the AMNH describes how a team from Research Casting International used over 300 kg of latex to take a huge peel of Hutton's unconformity at Siccar Point for the exhibition. Other sites cast include a trench across the San Andreas Fault, Hawaiian lava flows, and an ash deposit from the 79AD eruption of Vesuvius.

Dorset code of conduct launched

The Jurassic Coast Project has launched a pilot Code of Conduct and Fossil Recording Scheme for fossil collecting on the West Dorset Coast. The pilot project began in the winter of 1998 and will run until spring 2000, after which it is hoped that a full scheme will be established. The code is a voluntary initiative agreed between a number of different partners with the aim of bringing benefits to all those with an interest in West Dorset's fossils.

For collectors the code will have little effect on those who adopt a common sense approach to their activities. It does bring real benefits to local collectors and therefore it is in their interest to see the code succeed. For researchers, the code presents an opportunity for research interests to be communicated to collectors. Many collectors are knowledgeable about many aspects of the local palaeontology but there are areas of work that they may not be aware of. If collectors are made aware of these interests they can contribute to the research of others.

Parallel to the code is a Key Scientifically Important Fossils Recording Scheme which asks collectors to record their important finds in a register. This register will allow museum curators and researchers to see what is being found, and, importantly, to communicate their interest to the collectors who are in an ideal position to look out for specimens that may be of great scientific importance to their research. The scheme will help to promote better communication between all parties. Such a spirit of understanding is bound to lead to increased donation of important specimens to museums for study and research. The scheme does not attempt to control the value of fossils offered for sale, but collectors wishing to sell key scientifically important specimens will allow registered museums, initially within the UK, first choice of purchase. In addition, collectors will consult with curators on the methods of preparation in appropriate cases.

The scheme identifies two categories of fossils. Category I, Key Scientifically Important Fossils, including new species, or those specimens which may represent new species; fossils which are extremely rare such as the Charmouth dinosaur *Scelidosaurus*; and fossils that exhibit exceptional preservation.

Category II fossils include vertebrates such as reptiles and fish, partial or

complete, especially where the horizon of origin can be identified; nautiloids and certain ammonites; and unusual assemblages of fossils

The register is kept at the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, Lower Sea lane, Charmouth, Dorset DT6 6LL tel 01297 560772 and can be accessed at <http://members.aol.com/charhercen>. If you have a research interest that can benefit from better local awareness or wish further details regarding the code, please contact Richard Edmonds, Jurassic Coast Project Officer, Environmental Services Directorate, Dorset County Hall, Dorchester DT1 1XJ tel 01305 224477 fax 01305 224875 or the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre.

Mineral, fossil and gem shows 1999

4 March Oxford Mineral Fossil & Gem Show. Oxford Conference Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford 10.00-16.30. Tel 01508 531014

13-14 March Rock & Gem Show York Racecourse, York. 10.00-17.00. Tel 01628 621697

20-21 March Rock & Gem Show Cheltenham Racecourse, off Evesham Road, Prestbury, Gloucester. 10.00-17.00. Tel 01628 621697

27-28 March BLMDA Gem & Mineral Fair. Regents Park Marriot Hotel, Swiss Cottage, London. 10.00-17.00 (Sat), 16.30 (Sun)

17-18 April Rock & Gem Show, Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East (A308, Junction 1 M3), Sudbury, Middlesex. 10.00-17.00. Tel 01628 621697

Exhibitions 1999

Voyages of discovery Natural History Museum July 1999-summer 2000.

Tracking dinosaurs Yorkshire Museum 12 March-19 September 1999; Ulster Museum 25 September 1999-31 January 2000.

Claws! South Shields Museum, Ocean Road, South Shields 8 March-6 June 1999.

Fossils & Feathers City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield until Easter 1999.

Dinosaurs. Big, bold and dangerous Museum of Science and Industry, Liverpool Road, Manchester M3 4FP until 27 June 1999.

GCG study visit to Leiden and Maastricht

29 October - 2 November 1998

The European Adventure (and what an adventure it proved!) began this year at Stansted Airport where ace organiser, Steve McLean and I were met by Ed Jarzembowski (Maidstone) and Paul Clasby (Oxford), survivors from Brussels 1997, and by Tony Morgan (Liverpool), Helen Fothergill (Sunderland) and Ros Gourgey of KLM (UK) Airlines, acting initially as our courier, but later as one of us. Our apprehension at flying into the teeth of the gale that was sweeping the UK that week was unfounded and after a short delay were met at Amsterdam Airport by Cor Winkler-Prins and his colleague from Naturalis Museum who had delivered the 2 Vauxhall Vectra Estates that were to convey us around Holland for the next 4 days.

A half-hour drive took us to our smart hotel in Leiden, where we enjoyed a civilised meal before the independent Welsh Assembly of Steve Howe and Tom Sharpe arrived from Cardiff Airport. Ed and Tony then began the sampling of a selection of strange Belgian beers that seemed to continue all weekend. Ed tried to tell us he was just collecting the labels for a colleague in Russia.... Tony was more honest and just drank it! The "were-wolf" brand, with, oddly, a picture of a hamster on the label, proved to be the favourite!

On Friday an early start saw us at the new National Museum of Natural History, Naturalis, for 9.30am, where we were met by Jan Krikken, Associate Director of Collections and Research. Jan, whom we had met previously during the Valuation Conference in Manchester in 1995, gave us a fascinating description of the planning, building and opening of this state-of-the-art museum, that had first been illustrated to us by Dirk Houtgraaf at the 1997 GCG AGM in London.

Opened by Queen Beatrix in April 1998, the museum comprises the 5 departments of vertebrates, invertebrates, entomology, palaeontology and mineralogy/petrology. Each department has 4 or 5 curators plus 2 technicians. In its previous guise as the Rijksmuseum van Geologie en Mineralogie this was a State Museum under the Department of Cultural Affairs, but in 1995 it became a semi-privatised chartered trust which now receives a grant equivalent to 24 million guilders (£8 million) p.a. The new building cost 120 million guilders (£40 million) with a further 20 million guilders (c. £7 million) going on displays.

The main entrance is in an ancient plague clinic which now houses the bookshop, cafeteria and natural history centre, and a glass bridge takes visitors across a dual carriageway into the brand new building, a 20-storey, 60 metre high, purpose-built tower block, the majority of its windowless floors being devoted to storage. Designed with space for 20 years' growth, the lower floors are given over to displays which were designed in-house by the museum's Productions Department which has its own geologists and biologists, the research staff being little involved.

Cor Winkler-Prins, the Head of Palaeontology, and our generous host for the day, then took over from Jan Krikken and gave us a talk on the collections which comprise 15 million objects in total. These include large vertebrate collections including type material of *Homo erectus* from Indonesia; a Japanese collection including some geological material; the Styring Collection; and an extensive collection made by the Commission to produce the first geological map of the Netherlands. Research collections by current staff include Winkler-Prins' Spanish Carboniferous brachiopods; Fruedenthal's collection of Miocene rodents; Hoedermaeker's collection of Jurassic/ Cretaceous ammonites; Janssens' collection of Palaeozoic molluscs; plus microfossils, minerals and gemstones.

After a welcome coffee we were at last let loose on the displays, which I can only describe as stunning. Any natural historian must see this museum. The central

focus on the ground floor (palaeontology) is a huge Tree of Life, which attempts to show phylogenetic lineages from the origin of life to all of today's biodiversity. From a central control computer one can chose any lineage, click the mouse, and watch the tree light up from the bottom tracing the lineage of your choice. Some lineages, of course, become extinct before reaching the ceiling, but all extant lineages continue through the ceiling, to appear as discs of light on the floor above. Here was the ingenuity, because on going upstairs, all of today's extant animals and plants were placed in this gallery exactly above the point at which their lineage had penetrated from the ground floor. The planning behind this must have been immense, and although we enjoyed playing around with it, we were unsure how many of the visitors appreciated its meaning.

Back on the ground floor the geological specimens were impressive, although few were bought in especially for the new gallery. Fossils were displayed from successive geological periods and information panels explained the position of the continents, climate, ocean temperature etc. for each period. Particularly impressive were the Cretaceous turtles (of which more later...), some beautifully prepared trilobites, and 2 Black Hills dinosaurs, *Edmontosaurus* and *Camarasaurus*, towering up on hind limbs to the floor above and peering into the bird gallery, again suggesting a continuous lineage.

The first floor of zoology and botany, called *Nature Theatre* also displayed minerals and rocks. Again displays were stunning, but we wondered how they would look in 5 years time when dust would attack the suspended birds and the amusing bat-mobile! Dust was already spoiling the mineral display due to a lack of seal between glass and cabinet. But the best thing here for me was the botany. No longer can any botanist tell me that pressed plants can't be displayed. Huge sheets of double glass formed a corridor with a similar double-glazed ceiling and on all 3 surfaces large pressed plants were displayed between the glazing so that walking through the tunnel was like walking through a forest. Occasionally, specimen jars would be placed on the ceiling containing a fruit or cone, or sometimes in the floor beneath another heavy glass panel, so that plants were literally all around, and illuminated cleverly so that shadows of ferns and conifers etc danced on the floor.

A quick dash round the Earth Gallery explained dynamics, plate tectonics, ocean currents, erosion, sedimentation etc., much better, I have to say, than the new Earth Galleries in London, with some clever software showing plate boundaries and continental drift. But before we had time to see it all we were treated to a sumptuous lunch in the museum cafeteria, a quick browse around a very well-stocked bookshop, and then a tour of the stores. Whizzing up and down the tower block in the huge lift we only had time to sample a few stores, but most impressive was the one given entirely to fossil mammoths, and another of Tertiary molluscs ("gardening", according to Ed, but loved by Paul). My impression, however, was that here was another case of the money running out before the stores were finished, old furniture from the previous museum being

utilised in the new rooms (Directors, please note!).

We left, exhausted but exhilarated at 4.30pm ready for the long drive to Maastricht. Steve's petrol Vectra proved to be far nippier than my diesel, but our race down the motorway was interrupted by a huge traffic jam near Eindhoven. Despite an attempt by Steve to lose me, we all eventually arrived safely at our pleasant country hotel in Berg-en-Terblijft just outside Maastricht by about 8.45pm, where again we were treated to a superb dinner, followed by more Weiss beers.

Another early start; our host for the day, John Jagt, Cretaceous biostratigrapher and echinoid specialist from Natuurhistorisch Museum Maastricht, was due to meet us at 9.00am. GCG, however, were the victims of a clever practical joke by John and his colleague, who had arrived early at the hotel and sat, *incognito*, adjacent to us at breakfast without letting on that they were our guides. At 9.00am on the dot, they came clean, and we embarrassingly wondered what we might have been saying! Nice one, John!

The morning was spent in the field at the famous St Pietersberg Cement Quarry, south of Maastricht, the type area for the Maastrichtian, the uppermost stage of the Cretaceous, also famous for its large turtles and the infamous mosasaur skull, stolen by Napoleon and now resident in Paris. This huge working quarry shuts down for 13 days each year purely for collectors, and this was one such day. We arrived at the quarry amongst dozens of others from far and near who were armed with pick-axes, spades, nasty-looking knives and saws and the "Maastricht wheelie-bin", specially doctored to carry these implements and the day's spoil.

John took us first to the base of the section, which is not actually the base of the stage, this having been redefined nearby. Here, in the muddy chalk of the Gulpen Formation we collected fish, echinoids, belemnites and oysters, before moving up to a more sandy chalk horizon at the base of the overlying Maastricht Formation, where John pointed out in whispered tones the site of a recently discovered and yet to be excavated mosasaur! This horizon corresponds to the original definition of the Maastrichtian as defined by Dumont in 1849, the boundary with the underlying Gulpen Fm being an irregular, undulating erosion surface.

Our party, not really equipped to collect, were successful in finding a small mosasaur tooth while some local collectors showed us a nice shark tooth and a huge *Pinna* which they were in the process of sawing out of the soft sediment. Then up to the top of the quarry to the Nekum Member, which has been quarried using pillar and stall creating a vast labyrinth of tunnels extending into the hillside. Here, just 10m from the top of the Cretaceous and the K/T boundary, we collected more echinoids, scleractinian corals (*Isastraea*), gastropods and brachiopods, and observed numerous *Dentalium* shells aligned in current direction. Apparently the post-cranial skeleton of the Paris mosasaur lies somewhere in this labyrinth, awaiting excavation!

It was half past twelve, beginning to rain and GCG were thirsty! We left John at the quarry, after arranging to meet him later at the museum, and drove back to Maastricht in search of beer and food. A pleasant meal in a roadside cafe-bar replenished our appetite for geology and we met John at his Museum at two o'clock.

The Natuurhistorisch Museum Maastricht ranks amongst the largest natural history museums in the country and houses extensive collections of geology, flora and fauna of the province of Limburg. The collections naturally centre on fossils from the Maastrichtian of which there are over 105,000. From a research point of view the zonal ammonites and echinoids are important, but most spectacular are the huge turtle carapaces and, of course, the mosasaurs. Even without the holotype, lost to Napoleon, these are impressive, especially the 8 m long replica skeleton and some fine jaws and teeth. A cast of the holotype, set under glass in the floor has inspired me to conserve and redisplay our identical cast in Manchester.

Other displays include Devonian and Carboniferous fossils, Cretaceous gastropods and bivalves showing colour banding, Tertiary molluscs and a huge mammoth tusk. The neat basement storage of new pine cabinets is currently accommodating John Jagt's extensive research collection.

Before leaving and over coffee, beer and biscuits, John presented each of us with a superb echinoid (*Hemipneustes striatoradiatus* from the Nekum Member of the Late Maastrichtian) and we in turn gave John a 2-year membership of GCG as we had done with Cor Winkler-Prins the previous day, and with Annie Dhont in Brussels last year. Our European contacts are growing !

Back to the hotel, an hour to ourselves (phew!) and then taxis were ordered to take us to *Le Petit Bonheure*, a beautiful Maastricht restaurant, booked for us by Ros and the head of the local tourism office who had ordered champagne to commence our meal. It was one of those places where it would have been impolite to ask the prices and instead of a menu the *Chef de Maison* simply offered us his dishes of the day. As a delicious *hors d'oeuvre* the majority went for smoked salmon filled with a cream goat cheese and served on crispy lettuce and red cabbage, except, I think, for Ed, who tried the Lake Victoria trout, though only after a lengthy discussion with our poor proprietor as to which Lake Victoria it had come from! The main course of venison went down very well with the constant flow of red wine and when we eventually left to explore Maastricht we were oblivious to the rain....

The sensible members taxied back to the hotel, but the Bad Boys (McLean, Sharpe, Nudds, Morgan, and our guide, Ros) foolishly tried to explore all of Maastricht's reputed 365 bars. With 360 to go, our final stop for the night was a very dubious place, where, however, we felt quite at home when we found the table football in the basement. The Chairman's select (a Liverpool, Man U

combination of Morgan and Nudds) took on a Scottish select of McLean and Sharpe, whose ball skills left a lot to be desired compared to the dribbling and fine defence of the Reds. Ros was an excellent impartial referee (when not in hysterics) and, at the suggestion of the Scottish team, a piece of cardboard blocking the goalmouth ensured that the guildier piece would last us most of the night. The photographs have yet to be developed, but at one point the Programme Secretary was literally underneath the table! Bed at 3.15am, and I had be up at seven for a run!

After a light breakfast (!) and feeling decidedly delicate we set off on Sunday morning for the long drive north to Haarlem. Helen had taken over driving from Steve and I was glad to follow her much steadier driving! Our destination was the Teyler Museum, established in 1784 by a rich merchant of Haarlem, which has survived as a curiosity cabinet to the present day in its original state. The Oval Hall is a fine example of the neo-classical style of the late 18th century, while the 1880's extension has all the characteristics of Viennese classicism. But apart from the fine architecture and the original cabinets, we were enraptured to see a number of the most important specimens known to palaeontology. The fossil salamander from the Miocene of Switzerland, described in 1726 by Scheuchzer as *Homo diluvii testis et theoskopos* ("the man who witnessed the flood and has seen God") left Tom quite speechless, while Steve absolutely drooled to see his first examples of Beringer's *Lugensteine*. One of only 6 *Archaeopteryx* specimens was recently discovered in the collections of Teylers by John Ostrom and in the evening light we could just make out the give-away traces of the feathers. Even the wonderful mosasaurs, including the first skull to be found, had to compete for our attention amongst these glittering prizes. Tony lingered over the German *Chirotherium* and I was amused to see Blue John from Castleton, just 15 miles from my home in Derbyshire. We are very grateful to John de Vos and Joop van Veen who were our excellent guides.

On the evening drive to Amsterdam we pondered over what had been the highlight of the visit. For some it was the hi-tech Naturalis, for others the chance to collect from the elusive Maastrichtian, and for many it was the time-warp of Teylers and just seeing those oh-so-famous specimens. But for others perhaps the highlight was yet to come....

Our hotel in Amsterdam, the Lancaster (!) was just opposite the zoo and the geology museum, but by Sunday evening we were saturated with science and needed some relief. The Happy Corner Chinese Restaurant fed us well and feeling ready for another night out, Ros insisted that we couldn't come to Amsterdam without seeing the lights (red ones, that is). A tram ride took us to the famous canal-side which brings a whole new meaning to "window-shopping"! We passively smoked all manner of things and Steve and I were propositioned by a huge bloke on a bridge who simply said, "How much?". I replied that it was £10 a year for which he would receive 3 issues of *Coprolite* and *The Geological Curator*!! There is no room for more in this report, but suffice to say that the Bad

Boys stayed out late again....

Monday was a free day and Amsterdam, wicked at night, becomes respectable during the day. And so we did the things that tourists do; we took a boat-ride on the canals, we bought cheeses and tulips for our wives, we enjoyed coffee and apple cake by the riverside and Ed bought some cannabis (-flavoured pastels!).

At the airport we said our farewells to the Welsh boyos and with Tony's rucksack clinking with more Belgian beers we collapsed onto the plane for our homeward flight. It was a wonderful trip and Paris awaits GCG with bated breath....
John Nudds, The Manchester Museum

**GCG Seminar Little and Large: local treasures with a museum
and national treasures without
Nottingham Natural History Museum and British Geological
Survey, Keyworth
2-3 December 1998**

Wollaton Hall is one of the finest Elizabethan mansions in the country and, on a brisk December's morning, was the setting for the first half of this two-day meeting. Forty-two delegates attended the day's meeting, which started with a welcome by Neil Turner, standing in for a delayed Graham Whalley. Neil then started the programme off with a run through the 130-year history of the geology collections at Wollaton. One of the collection's strengths is in Pleistocene mammals, including the first British lynx, from cave deposits near Mansfield. In his historical tale, Neil outlined some of the recent research carried out on historic specimens. Beris Cox (BGS) followed this up with the tale of her pursuit of local hero Rev. J.F. Blake (1839-1906). Known today for his classic work on the Kimmeridge Clay, Blake's local association started with his appointment as the Curate at Lenton Parish Church, Nottingham, in the 1860's. Later, in 1880, he was appointed Professor of Natural Science at University College, Nottingham, and Curator of the Nottingham Museum. Blake was later elected President of the Geologists' Association (1891-93), and in 1895 he was awarded the Lyell Medal of the Geological Society. Blake died in 1906 of dementia and exhaustion, leaving a major work on the Cornbrash unfinished.

During the lunch break we had the chance to tour the geology stores in the nearby courtyard buildings. The afternoon began with Graham Whalley who welcomed us in his capacity as Site Manager. Mick Cooper (Nottingham Museums) then demonstrated the documentation and database system at Nottingham. He described the pitfalls and horrors of converting file formats and tidying up data, work supported by an EmmS grant. The next step is to convert it to MultiMimsy 2000. Meanwhile, the long process of checking the data is under way. Mineral species names have been checked against dictionary files, and the locality information and fossil terminology are next on the list. Vicky Hards (BGS) followed this by describing the petrology and mineralogy collections of the BGS.

The original aim of the collection was to assemble a suite containing every known rock type from the British Isles, and the collection now numbers some 300,000 specimens. In 1851 the Museum of Practical Geology opened in Jermyn Street, London, and in 1935 was superseded by a new museum in Exhibition Road (later the Geological Museum). In 1985, control of the museum passed to the BM(NH), and the collection was divided up. The BGS has a working collection housed, but not on display, at Keyworth. This includes the Sliced Rock Collection of 72,100 Anglo-Welsh specimens. Scottish specimens, including samples of the Stone of Destiny, are kept in Edinburgh. The Museum Reserve Collection consists of hand specimens, and contains some historic material such as specimens collected by Darwin from the Galapagos Islands.

Chris Wheatley (BGS) then delivered a talk with the marvellous title of "A national collection of boring material". Borehole material has been collected since the Survey's inception, with the oldest being from Portsmouth Dockyards in 1825. Cores were stored at Jermyn Street, and later in the basement at Exhibition Road. The present core store opened in Keyworth in 1985. There is space for just over 4000 pallets, representing about 200 km of core. The store is now over three-quarters full, and so a Borehole Material Review Panel has been set up to rationalise the collection.

The BGS collections were rounded off by Steve Tunnicliff (BGS), who described their palaeontological holdings. These are of Anglo-Welsh fossils derived from the Survey's mapping, its *raison d'être*, and form a permanent stratigraphic database. Collecting has mostly been through the Survey's mapping activity although there have been a number of donations over the years. The most important donation was the collection of the Geological Society in 1911-1912, which, in 1902, had been catalogued by our local hero J.F. Blake. Unfortunately, John Thackray was unable to attend owing to illness and so we missed hearing about the Geological Society collections in detail. The day's meeting was followed by the AGM and the award of the A.G. Brighton Medal to Roy Clements.

On the following day, 20 delegates met on an even brisker morning at the BGS headquarters in Keyworth, south of Nottingham. Whilst we were assembling in the foyer, Steve Tunnicliff pointed out the only public display of BGS material, in a couple of overhead cabinets above the reception desk. After a welcome cup of coffee (or tea for awkward people like me) we were welcomed by Alan Dobinson (Group Manager, Information Services). Martin Litherland then introduced us to the forthcoming *Tourist Map of the Fossils, Rocks, and Minerals of Great Britain*, which will provide tourists with details of our museums. With Jo Thomas, our guide for the day, we then embarked on the grand tour. First stop was Cartography where Mike Ledgard (1:50K), and Kevin Becken and Tony Myers (1:250K) took us through the process of creating maps digitally in the computer. Not a drawing board to be seen!

Next was the Library where Graham McKenna, Chief Librarian, gave us an

introduction to the services available. At the moment, half of the library catalogue is available over the World Wide Web. Graham also had a selection of historic geological photographs on display, including many from the BAAS collection. Steve Tunnicliff then led us through to the palaeontology stores, starting in the Type and Stratigraphic Collection. This collection is essentially the display material from the old London Museums and contains a quarter of a million specimens. Steve had an old cabinet that he was trying to find a good home for; Paul Davis and the Surrey geology curation project were the lucky winners. We then carried on to the Survey Collection, which numbers some 2 million specimens. We carried on through the Min. & Pet. store, noting the official "Jermyn Street" boxes, the size of which was fixed by the width of the chimney alcove in the Chief Geologist's office in the Jermyn Street Museum. Stuart Hollyer was waiting for us in the vast borehole collection, in front of the aisles of 9 m high shelving. The store was designed to minimise manual handling, and we were treated to a demonstration of precision forklift truck driving. The last port of call was the Records Room where Rod Bowie briefed us on the Survey's holdings of geological records. After lunch, those of us who didn't have to dash back home had an opportunity to revisit specific stores.

Thanks are due to Neil Turner, Steve Tunnicliff, and their colleagues for a most enjoyable and informative meeting.

Mark Evans, Leicester City Museums.

Dinosaurs, ammonites & asteroids - Life and death in the Maastrichtian

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Belgian geologist and stratigrapher André Dumont, defined his 'système maestrichtien' at the St Pietersberg, south of Maastricht in The Netherlands. This type section of the Maastrichtian Stage is within the grounds of the cement plant of ENCI-Maastricht BV, being located right next to the main office building there. In close co-operation with Romanian and Polish institutions, the Natuurhistorisch Museum Maastricht is currently preparing a series of travelling exhibitions, entitled *Dinosaurs, ammonites & asteroids - Life and death in the Maastrichtian*.

Starting at Maastricht in July 1999, these exhibitions will illustrate Maastrichtian palaeontology, stratigraphy and palaeobiogeography on land and in the sea, and focus on the very end of the stage as well. Intended for the general public, these exhibits will demonstrate that the rocks in the type area of the stage are but a piece of a huge, worldwide puzzle, with *T. rex* being a contemporary of our marine lizard, *Mosasaurus hoffmanni*. Each of the three exhibitions will remain in Maastricht for a period of three months, and then travel, as a whole, to Poland, the Sultanate of Oman, Romania, France and the United States, until the first half of 2001. After that, it will be possible for British museums to host these exhibitions, depending on duration of loan of specimens and other factors. Any UK museums interested in taking the exhibitions should contact John Jagt or Anne Schulp at the address below.

In recent years, a lot has happened in the Maastricht area. Amongst the highlights is the discovery (in 1992) of the enigmatic Cretaceous-Tertiary (K/T) boundary sequence at Geulhemmerberg, just east of Maastricht. In addition, a sequence stratigraphic interpretation and a strontium isotope curve are now available for the type Maastrichtian. Moreover, the section at the ENCI quarry has now been extended downwards to expose the Lower/Upper Maastrichtian boundary for the first time, and, finally, a skeleton (preserving the skull) of a mosasaur is currently being excavated at the site.

To complement the anniversary exhibitions, we are now organising a scientific, state-of-the-art conference, which will focus on these developments, as well as on progress made in worldwide Maastrichtian palaeontology and stratigraphy since the 1995 Brussels symposium on Cretaceous stage boundaries. We will have three days of sessions and/or workshops (18-20 November 1999), in the city centre, close to the museum. On 19 November there will be a parallel session (the so-called Staring Symposium) of the Royal Dutch Geological and Mining Society of the Netherlands, and an excursion on 21 November to the Maastrichtian type section and to the Geulhemmerberg K/T boundary section. For additional information, conference registration forms and all other communication on this project, please contact Anne S Schulp tel + 31 43 350 5481 or John W M Jagt tel + 31 43 350 5479 at the Natuurhistorisch Museum Maastricht, de Bosquetplein 6-7, P.O. Box 882, NL-6200 AW Maastricht, The Netherlands fax + 31 43 350 5475, e-mail mail@nhmmaastricht.nl

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

22-26 March 1999 Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester: Communicating Science Course.

This year convened by Dr Melanie Quin of Techniquest, the week will attempt to discover how we can be effective science communicators. The course will look at a range of media and approaches, and will, amongst other things, draw upon Techniquest's extensive experience in shows, educational programmes, publication and interactive exhibits. The course will enable natural scientists to compare their methods of communication with other museum science communication.

Course fee: £325, excluding accommodation.

Contact: Barbara Lloyd, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG or phone 0116 2523962, fax 0116 2523960 or email BL5@le.ac.uk.

14-16 April 1999 Natural History Museum, London Society for the History of Natural History and the Natural History Museum 12th International Conference: Drawing from nature: art and illustration in the natural sciences.

Programme includes Martin Rudwick on Cuvier, Peter Crowther on Palaeontographical Society illustrations and Andrew Scott on 16th century fossil

drawings in the Royal Collection

Contact: Paul Cooper. Zoology Library, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD tel 0171 938 9367 fax 0171 938 9290 e-mail p.cooper@nhm.ac.uk

22 April 1999 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

GCG Training Workshop: The curation and hazards of mineral collections.

Are you aware of the hazards your mineral collections present and your responsibilities for the health and safety of staff and visitors examining the collections? You might be surprised by the risks your collection can pose. This workshop will address the major health and safety issues of mineral collections in light of current legislation and suggest practical methods to reduce the risks. This training course is aimed at both specialist curators and non-geologists who have responsibility for mineral collections in their museums.

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Welcome: Mike Bassett, Keeper of Geology

11.05 The history and scope of the NMGW mineral collection: Richard Bevins

11.20 The curation of mineral collections: Monica Price

1.00 Lunch

2.00 Warning: minerals can seriously damage your health by Lambert and Buttler

Control of toxic minerals for curators

The hazards of mineral preparation and analysis

The invisible hazards of radioactive minerals: radiation, contamination and radon.

Mike Lambert and Caroline Buttler

4.00 Meeting ends

Please complete the form on the centre pages and return it to: Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF1 3NP fax 01222 667332, e-mail Tom.Sharpe@nmgw.ac.uk **by 15 April 1999.**

17-18 May 1999 New Walk Museum, Leicester

GCG Seminar and fieldtrip: 25 Years of GCG!

GCG was founded in Leicester on 17 May 1974 by curators and geologists concerned about the state of geological collections in museums. This seminar will examine the original aims and objectives of GCG, review the work of the Group over the last 25 years, and set the agenda for the future. The focus of the meeting will be on collections and will allow curators and students to view recent and current developments in geological curation in context. A buffet lunch at the Museum and an evening dinner will give participants an opportunity to discuss informally the role of GCG, to reflect on our past and to influence our future.

Monday 17 May

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Welcome: John Martin, Curator, New Walk Museum

11.10 Status achieved! Phil Doughty, Ulster Museum

11.40 Reflections on geological curation over 25 years: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton

12.10 A quarter of a century of progress: Mick Stanley, Hull City Museums

12.40 Lunch and tour of collections

- 2.00 Collections research - what have we achieved in 25 years? Hugh Torrens, University of Keele
- 2.30 25 years of *The Geological Curator*: a review. Patrick Wyse Jackson, Trinity College, Dublin.
- 3.00 Tea
- 3.30 A place in history, but what place in the future? Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester.
- 4.00 Blots on the landscape: Tom Sharpe, GCG Chairman
- 4.15 Meeting ends

Tuesday 18 May

Fieldtrip to Bradgate Park (SK 5210) in Charnwood Forest with its Precambrian igneous and pyroclastic rocks and internationally famous fossils. Following lunch at a suitable hostelry, we will visit Tilton Railway Cutting (SK 7605), one of the best local exposures of the Middle and Upper Lias

Meeting fee: £5.00 (includes tea, coffee and buffet lunch). Dinner will cost £18.50.

Please complete the booking form on the centre pages and return it with a cheque for £5.00 (payable to Leicester City Council) to Mark Evans, Curator, New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7FA tel 0116 255 4100

by 23 April 1999.

2-4 June 1999 Philpot Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset

Mary Anning and her times: the discovery of British palaeontology, 1820-1850. A bicentennial celebration in honour of the first woman palaeontologist

Mary Anning was born at the end of the 18th Century and lived until the middle of the 19th. She worked with the leading scientists of her day to assure England's place in the developing field of palaeontology. Nearly 150 years after her death, her life is still largely shrouded in mystery and misrepresentation. Her discoveries helped to form the foundations of palaeontology, and she was quite possibly the first professional fossil collector, as well as being widely considered the first woman palaeontologist. The true importance of her work and contributions is not yet adequately recognised. This symposium aims to bring together specialists in palaeontology, history and sociology of science to create a picture of Mary Anning's life, work, and times. Drawing on new discoveries about her, situated in the historical and social context of early Victorian England, we will explore who Mary Anning was; what her contributions meant to the science of her times; and her role in society in an age of simultaneous liberation and constriction.

Tuesday 1 June 17.30 - 19 00 Registration and Reception at the Museum.

Wednesday 2 June

- 09.30 Registration (for those who cannot attend on Tuesday)
- 10.00 Liz-Anne Bawden: Welcome
- 10.10 Sir Crispin Tickell: The life and times of Mary Anning
- 10.55 Tom Goodhue: Mary Anning's religious life
- 11.10 Questions
- 11.20 Break

- 11.40 Discussion: What do we know of Mary Anning (led by Jo Draper)
- 12.30 Lunch break
- 14.00 Michael Taylor: Inventing the gatherer: Mary Anning, Thomas Hawkins, and Hugh Miller
- 14.45 Simon Knell: Mary Anning's Yorkshire contemporaries and their struggle for possession and control
- 15.15 Chris McGowan: Mary Anning, Thomas Hawkins, and the giant ichthyosaur
- 15.45 Break
- 16.10 Anne Secord: Class and gender, province and metropolis in the early history of fossil gathering
- 16.30 Discussion: reconstructing the history of fossil gathering
- 20.00 Lecture at the Marine Theatre by Hugh Torrens: Mary Anning's Life and Times: New Perspectives

Thursday 3 June

- 09.30 Martin Rudwick: Pictures of Pre-Human Life - Mary Anning and *Duria antiquior*
- 10.15 Kevin Padian: Ancient landscapes and physiologies: the strange history of Mary Anning's flying reptile
- 10.35 David Norman: *Scelidosaurus* from the Lias: Richard Owen's dinosaurian vision confirmed
- 11.00 Questions
- 11.10 Break
- 11.30 Angela Milner and Sandra D. Chapman: Mary Anning's specimens in the Natural History Museum, London
- 11.50 Chris Collins: Preservation and conservation of Mary Anning's specimens
- 12.10 Discussion: The scientific importance of Mary Anning's specimens
- 12.30 Lunch break
- 14.00 A conversation with John Fowles (Kevin Padian, interlocutor)
- 14.50 Martine Koebel-Ebert: British geology in Mary Anning's times: a conglomerate with a female meeting
- 15.10 Claudine Cohen: Women in geological sciences: the historical view from France
- 15.50 Break
- 16.10 Dennis Dean: Mary Anning and Gideon Mantell
- 16.30 Beryl Hamilton: Pigment, perception and photographs: 19th century Dorset landscapes
- 16.45 Discussion: Mary Anning and her times
- 19.00 for 19.30 Symposium dinner at the Pilot Boat Inn

Friday 4 June

- 09.30 Roy Porter: Mary Anning's times
- 10.15 David Sole and Company: Recent finds along the coast of Lyme: Mary Anning's heritage
- 10.45 Break (display of some recent discoveries)
- 11.15 Mike House and Ramues Gallois: Introduction to the local geology and Mary Anning's localities
- 12.00 Sir Crispin Tickell: concluding remarks
- 12.30 Lunch break
- 14.00 Geological excursions. Meet at the Museum.
- 17.00 - 18.30 Strawberry Tea at Belmont.
- 20.00 Lecture at the Marine Theatre: Stephen Jay Gould - title to be announced.

Symposium fee: £80.00 which includes the full programme of sessions and evening lectures, the Museum reception, the symposium dinner, the geological walk, and the Strawberry Tea.

Please complete the form on the centre pages and return it with the fee (cheques payable to Lyme Regis Museum - Symposium) to Roger Clarke, Lyme Regis Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3QA

**14-18 June 1999 Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester
BCG/GCG Natural Science Curatorial Course in association with Leicester
City Museums and Leicestershire Museums.**

An introduction to the collection and curation of natural science materials. Consisting of a discussion of the modern context of natural science work in museums, sessions looking at recording and managing data, days in the field gathering biological and geological specimens, sessions on identification in the field and in the museum, discussion of systematics, organisation preservation and collection management, and finally an examination of the role of connoisseurship skills. There will also be some extra-curricular sessions bat-spotting, curry-eating and, hopefully, a trip to one of the strangest pubs in England.

Course fee: £325, excluding accommodation.

Contact: Barbara Lloyd, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG or phone 0116 2523962, fax 0116 2523960 or email BL5@le.ac.uk.

1-7 July 1999 Barbican, London

**International Council of Museums: International Committee for the
Training of Personnel 1999 Annual Meeting: New developments in
museum and heritage education and training.**

Contributions on recent and proposed developments relevant to the conference theme are sought. These might include initiatives and training developments for museums in relation to peace and reconciliation, risk management and insurance, emergency and disaster preparedness, response and recovery. In addition to papers on the main theme, the programme will also include: sessions for a 'Market of Ideas' and regional/institutional progress reports on museum professional, technical or management education and training; poster displays on recent developments; and study visits, including a day in Portsmouth. There will also be discussion of the future development of ICOM overall and of ICTOP within ICOM and the wider museum world for submission to a major review of the future organisation of ICOM. If there is demand, there may be an additional training day on web authoring and management.

Conference fee: about £60.00 (plus £40.00 for the web training day)

Contact: Professor Patrick Boylan, ICTOP 1999, City University, Frobisher Crescent, Barbican, London EC2Y 8HB fax 0171 447 8887, e-mail P.Boylan@city.ac.uk (by 15 March if you wish to offer a paper or poster).

**2-4 September 1999 University College Worcester (provisional)
Second UK RIGS Conference**

Contact: Peter G Oliver, RIGS Group for the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Geological Records Centre, University College Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ tel 01905 855184 fax 01905 855132 e-mail

6-10 September 1999 Imperial College, London
mda/CIDOC 1999 Conference: Delivering diversity, promoting participation

Building on the 1998 mda Cultural Grid Conference and the seminal international work of CIDOC, this conference will focus upon audience. Answers will be sought to pressing questions faced by those across the cultural sector, including museums, libraries and archives: what is the cultural content required by our diverse audiences? In what ways can we reach new and traditionally excluded audiences? How is the process of communication, as well as dissemination of information, ensured? What are the information and quality standards needed to drive forward the audience-focused agenda?

Contact: Frances Bycroft, Conference Coordinator, mda, Jupiter House, Station Road, Cambridge CB1 2JD tel 01223 315760, fax 01223 362521 e-mail mda@mda.org.uk

7-11 September 1999 University of Sheffield
British Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Science Festival

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

27-30 September 1999 Edinburgh International Conference Centre
Museums Association 105th Annual Conference

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

27-28 September 1999 Camborne School of Mines, Camborne, Cornwall
GCG Seminar and field trip: Mineral collections in Cornwall

Cornish minerals are represented in many museum collections around the country. This meeting, which includes museum visits, field excursions to a china clay pit, the Lands End granite, and an underground tour of King Edward Mine, will provide an opportunity for curators to familiarise themselves with the diversity of minerals in museum collections in Cornwall.

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

29 October 1999 (date to be confirmed)
GCG Study visit to Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

A chance to see the national collections in Paris and view the current galleries and exhibitions. This year our European visit will be a one-day trip which will take place on a Friday so that participant will have the option of staying on in Paris for the weekend or travelling back to the UK on the same day. As many regional airports have flights direct to Paris, participants will make their own way

to and from Paris.

For further information please complete the form on the centre pages and return it to: Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 6765, e-mail s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk

**3-5 December 1999 Department of Geology, Trinity College, Dublin.
GCG Seminar and 25th AGM: Geology and the local museum: a decade of progress?**

In 1989 Mike Taylor and Simon Knell published their seminal book *Geology and the Local Museum*. This meeting will examine the advances made, if any, in collection care, display techniques, information technology, and education in the smaller museums during the last ten years, and will discuss the possible future for these bodies. Prospective speakers are asked to contact Patrick Wyse Jackson with offers of papers. The weekend will begin on Friday evening with dinner at a Dublin restaurant. The Seminar and AGM will take place on Saturday and on Sunday a field trip will examine a 19th century mining locality where some minerals can be collected, and the Ordovician volcanics and sediments exposed along the north Dublin coastline.

Contact: Patrick Wyse Jackson, Department of Geology, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland tel +353 1 608 1477, fax 353 1 671 1199, e-mail wysjcknp@tcd.ie

**Spring 2000 Weston-super-Mare
GCG Workshop: Basic gemstone identification**

Contact: Dale Johnston, North Somerset Museum Service, Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1PR tel 01934 621028 fax 01934 612526

**4-8 April 2000 Natural History Museum, London
Natural History Museum's Millennium event: Nature's Treasurehouses?
An international conference on the role of natural history museums.**

**10-14 April 2000 University of Manchester
Geoscience 2000**

Contact: Conference Office, Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0JU

**16-19 October 2000 Jersey
Museums Association 106th Annual Conference**

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

**4-8 December 2000 Melbourne, Australia
4th International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums**

International Mineralogy and Museums conferences are an important forum where museum-based mineralogists can discuss developments in their research and collection-based activities and how best to communicate them. The conferences are held every four years, with the previous meetings being in

London (1988), Toronto (1992) and Budapest (1996). M&M4 will be in Melbourne, Australia's second largest city. The program will embrace the three main aspects of museum work - research, collection development and public programs. Field trips to important mineral deposits in southeastern Australia, including Broken Hill, western Tasmania and the central Victorian gold province will form part of the program. A preliminary brochure is available, with the second circular due August/September 1999.

Contact: Bill Birch, Museum Victoria, PO Box 666E, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001, Australia, fax 61 3 9270 5043, e-mail bbirch@mov.vic.gov.au

2-6 April 2001 University of Oxford

Third international conference on trilobites and their relatives

Four days of indoor sessions will be based in Oxford, with field trips preceding (to Scotland and northern England) and following (to South Wales and the Welsh Borderlands). The formal programme will include both thematic and open sessions, the topics for the former to be 'functional morphology, mode of life and ecology' and 'biodiversity and evolutionary patterns'. The conference proceedings are to be published as a Special Paper of the Palaeontological Association.

Contact: Dr Derek Siveter, Geological Collections, University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW tel 01865 272953 email Derek.Siveter@earth.ox.ac.uk

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