



OPROLITE

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1999

DROPPINGS FROM THE GEOLOGICAL CURATORS GROUP

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New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Bente T Loudon**, Sale; **Jeff Liston**, Glasgow; **Jenny Bradbury**, Canterbury; **Steve Stubbs**, Loughborough; **T J Batchelor**, Redhill; and **David Roberts**, Liverpool.

John Thackray

Members will be saddened to hear of the death of John Thackray, Archivist at the Natural History Museum. John had been a member of GCG for many years and was the current President of the Society for the History of Natural History. He was due to speak at our AGM last November, but had to cancel due to illness. His fight against cancer initially went well, but he took a turn for the worse at the end of April and died peacefully on the night of 5 May.

Geological Curator Volume 6 Index

Copies of the index to Volume 6 of *The Geological Curator* are available as separates at no charge from the Editor, 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

Are you on the move?

As members will be aware, *Coprolite* likes to keep track of geological curators as they migrate from museum to museum. If you are about to move, have just moved, or have heard a rumour that someone else is about to, please do let GCG know. Not only can we change the address on our mailing list to ensure that you don't miss out on a single issue of *Coprolite* or *The Geological Curator*, but you can save time and money by telling your colleagues through the pages of *Coprolite* of your latest promotion.

Do you have something to contribute?

Are you breaking new curatorial ground? Have you discovered something interesting about your collections (or somebody else's)? Have you got something to say about the state of collections or displays? If so, Patrick Wyse Jackson, Editor of *The Geological Curator*, would like to hear from you. Patrick is keen to have as wide and varied a range of contributions as possible in each issue of the journal. *The Geological Curator* can accommodate short reports, technical notes and gallery reviews as well as full papers. If you have something you think your colleagues in GCG should know about, don't keep it to yourself. Contact 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

Musical Curators

Gordon Chancellor, formerly Curator at Peterborough Museum has been appointed Chief Executive of Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History and Society and took up his post at the beginning of February; **Jon Radley**, Researcher at the Postgraduate Research Institute for Sedimentology, University of Reading, took up the post of Keeper (Geology) at Warwickshire Museum in April; **Helen Fothergill**, formerly Assistant Keeper of Geology for Tyne and Wear Museums has taken up her new post of Keeper of Natural History at Plymouth City Museum; **Susan Crook** has left Ludlow Museum where she was Curator of Natural Sciences during Kate Andrew's maternity leave and has now taken up the post of Project Manager for Shropshire Heritage Services. **Helen Tombs**, from Camborne School of Mines has been appointed Assistant Curator (Geology) at Clitheroe Castle Museum.

Are you chartered?

The Professional Board of the Geological Society has asked GCG, as a Geological Society Specialist Group, to forward the names of Chartered Geologists who could be called upon to attend the Fellowship and Validation Panel which examines applications for Fellowship and Chartered status. Nominees must have a minimum of ten years of geological experience. If you are a Chartered Geologist with museum geology expertise, and are willing to participate in the Fellowship and Validation Panel, please contact Tom Sharpe, GCG Chairman, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF10 3NP e-mail Tom.Sharpe@nmgw.ac.uk

Impressions of Tucson

In February of this year David Green and I flew off to Tucson armed with pockets full of travellers' cheques. Our destination was the Arizona Mineral and Fossil Show and our mission was to buy some showy specimens for the refurbished geology galleries due to open next year at the Manchester Museum. I've never been completely comfortable with the fossil trade and this was my first big show, although David is a seasoned dealer. The show was an eye-opener for me and I'm now a convert !

The "Main Show", as it calls itself, is held in the Tucson Convention Centre over a period of four days as advertised. This is the top end of the market where the top dealers parade their top specimens at top prices. They are selling mainly to private individuals and this is also where most of the gems are sold. The clientele tend to be wealthy Americans rather than down-and-out academics. There are *few bargains to be had here*.

A few years back, apparently, the dealers decided to get together prior to the Main Show, to sell wholesale to the trade. An English dealer would take to Tucson a few dozen boxes, each with, say 20 specimens of Weardale fluorite, and sell on to dealers worldwide. Selling to the trade in bulk means lower prices and haggling is expected.

This part of the show now takes precedence for many over the "Main Show", and arrival in Tucson in advance of the advertised dates is essential if the best bargains are to be had. We arrived about a week prior to the advertised dates and things were already in motion - we had missed a few good specimens. The Germans, we were informed, had been there before Christmas!

This "Pre-Show" has gradually expanded and now takes over much of Tucson for a couple of weeks. About a dozen hotels are involved over the whole city and a free shuttle bus transports visitors from one to another at regular intervals. Most of the hotels are designed around a large, central grassy courtyard onto which the dealers' bedrooms, now converted to mini-shops, open out. Furniture is pushed to one side, beds and sideboards are adorned with makeshift display stands, while the en-suite bathroom becomes a temporary store. Some of the bigger dealers pay for bigger premises, and the Black Hills Institute had the use of the ballroom for their dinosaurs. (Well, it's difficult to get one in a twin room!)

There are three main hotels - the Ramada Inn, where Dave and I were staying, is the main one for fossils, and Black Hills, Triebold Fossils, PaleoSearch and Canada Fossils were all here, along with several Chinese dealers and most of the English boys - Trevor George, Chris Moore and Simon Cohen (thanks, guys, for all the useful advice at the start of the week!). There were 101 dealers in total, just in our hotel, but this was topped by the Executive Inn, down the road, which had nearly 150 dealers. Many of the top mineral dealers were here, and Dave spent

a lot of time seeking out some beautiful pieces. The Inn Suites Hotel was another one not to miss and I got some nice French *Hypselosaurus* eggs here, and a rare *Stegosaurus* tail spike.

Prices were high - \$1000 for the tail spike - but I've since been advised that this was a good price. You just have to get used to a different set of values, and after a few days you get accustomed to it and can spot a good deal from a bad one. Buying a few specimens from one dealer will ensure some sort of discount - sometimes up to 20% - and towards the end of the week you can often knock prices down as dealers don't want to transport more than they have to back home. But it can be a bit of a risk, leaving things too late. Next to our hotel was the Fossil Co-op, where we both bought some large pieces as centre-pieces for our galleries. Dave got a massive quartz crystal, while I bought a large, polished slice of petrified Arizona wood. Both these dealers had facilities for shipping to anywhere in the world and for a small fee, shipping to Manchester was arranged, the specimens arriving safely just a few days after our return.

Some of the other hotel venues were hardly worth a visit, quality of specimens and of provenance information deteriorating the further away from the main centre. The peripheral marquees only verged on the geological and tended to be occupied by ethnic traders in Mexican rugs etc.

It was a hectic week, hard work, but great fun. Arizona is a fascinating state: we took a couple of days off and climbed Mount Wrightson at 9453 feet, went for a run in the Saguaro Desert and swam in an icy splash pool in Bear Canyon. We saw coyotes and humming birds, and Dave raced a mountain lion in his metallic-green convertible (*mountain lions drive green convertibles?* - Ed.)

Flights were quite reasonable - around £300 including taxes, but room prices are high - inflated for the show to \$100 per night. However, each room has two double beds, so you can half that if you take a friend, and can half it again if you take some special friends!

Our thanks to all the English dealers who helped us out there, especially to Trevor George for shipping the bulk of our purchases back home and to Terry Manning for arranging our accommodation and for introducing us to some great guys. Like *the Terminator*, we'll be back !

John Nudds, The Manchester Museum

Newish publications

Museum display labels. The philosophy and practice of preparing written labels and illustrations for use in museum displays by David C Devenish, 1999.

Indian National Committee of ICOM, 34pp, \$10.00

James Hutton: Present and Future by G Y Craig and J H Hull, 1999. London: The Geological Society, 192pp. ISBN 1 86239 026 6, £59.00.

Functional morphology of the invertebrate skeleton by Enrico Savazzi, 1999.
Chichester: John Wiley, xi + 706pp. ISBN 0 471 97776 4.

Mineral, fossil and gem shows 1999

- 5 June Norfolk Mineral, Gem & Fossil Fair**, Dussindale Centre Pound Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich 10.00-16.00. Tel 01376 520606
- 12-13 June Kew Mineral & Fossil Fair**, Kew Bridge Steam Museum 11.00-17.00. Tel 01872 223227
- 3 July Medway Mineral & Fossil Fair**, Upstairs Community Hall, Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre, Gillingham, Kent 10.00-17.00. Tel 01634 230976
- 18 July Oxford Summer Mineral & Fossil Show**, Oxford Conference Centre, Banbury Road, Oxford 10.00-17.00. Tel 01828 633833
- 7-8 August Lake District Gemstone, Mineral & Fossil Fair**, Northlakes Hotel, Penrith 10.00-17.00. Tel 01828 633833
- 28-30 August BLMDA Gem & Mineral Fair**, Harrogate International Hotel, Harrogate 10.00-17.00. Tel 01724 710361
- 18-19 September Rock & Gem Show**, York Racecourse, York 10.00-17.00. Tel 01628 621697
- 25 September Southampton Mineral & Fossil Fair**, East Point Centre, Burgoyne Road, Southampton 10.00-16.30. Tel 01703 865567
- 2-3 October Rock & Gem Show**, Cheltenham Racecourse, off Evesham Road, Prestbury, Gloucester 10.00-17.00. Tel 01628 621697
- 9-10 October Bakewell Rock Exchange**, Lady Manners School, Shutts Lane, Bakewell, 10.30-17.00. Tel 01629 813542
- 23-24 October Rock & Gem Show**, Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sudbury 10.00-17.00. Tel 01628 621697

***Earth's Treasury* commended**

The Earth's Treasury, the minerals exhibition in the new *Earth Galleries* at the Natural History Museum, designed by Bentheim Design, was Highly Commended in the 10th Design Week Awards. The winner in the same section was the Althorp Visitor Centre in Northamptonshire.

Leeds Museum to close

As reported in *Coprolite 28*, the Galleries of Leeds City Museum in the Municipal Buildings are to close for essential safety maintenance work. Jim Nunney of Leeds Museum informs us that all of the collections will be taken into store until it is decided how and where the Museum displays are to be rehoused. The geology displays will be incorporated into the main study collections where they will still be available for access by anyone who wishes to consult them. Except for public displays there should be no deterioration of the service offered, and he hopes that some form of public activity will be undertaken in the near future.

Exhibitions 1999

Voyages of discovery Natural History Museum 4 July 1999-spring 2000.

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

Claws! Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne October 1999 - January 2000.

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

World of the sea dragons Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, St James's Road, Dudley until 4 September 1999.

Monster Art Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, St James's Road, Dudley 17 July - 2 October 1999.

Mary Anning and the monsters of Lyme Dorset County Museum, Dorchester until 22 September 1999.

Cornucopia

Fenscore (The Federation for Natural Sciences Collection Research) was set up in 1980 to co-ordinate the activities of regional groups of curators in the UK who were beginning to survey natural science collections in their areas. After nearly 2 decades a great deal of information has been collected and is now available on the Fenscore Website (www.man.ac.uk/fenscore). This site is still growing and improving, but already it contains the following information: the full text of *Skeletons in the Cupboard*, a NWCRU publication. The forms used for data recording in collections research and most importantly the ability to search the National Database which currently has just over 15,302 entries from Scotland, Wales and 6 regions in England. Fenscore have just received a grant from the Museums and Galleries Commission to upgrade the database to make it compatible with the Cornucopia Project (www.cornucopia.org.uk)

Cornucopia : Discovering UK Collections is a new project from the Museums and Galleries Commission. It will give a complete picture of the wealth of UK museum collections through a comprehensive database available on this website. This pilot website provides information on the 50 museums in England with Designated collections. Designation celebrates pre-eminent museum collections outside the national museums and now covers a wide-ranging group of outstanding collections in museums throughout England. The importance of Designated collections has been recognised by Government with a £15m Challenge Fund over the next three years. The full Cornucopia is going on-line in 2000 and will cover the collections of all 1,700 MGC Registered museums in the UK. Users will be able to explore many types and sizes of museums relevant to their research and interests. You can also discover which museums have collections which can help you with your research, studies or project. Cornucopia will give you all the information you need to contact a museum or make a visit, as well as providing a link to the museum's own website. You can also find out whether the collections you want to see are likely to be on display or in store and Cornucopia will tell you how to arrange to see objects in store if you need to.

What's in a name?

Tony Morgan at Merseyside sent us the following snippet by 'AF' from the *Journal of the Accrington Naturalists' and Antiquarians' Journal* (No. 18 1994-95):

I was at a friend's house watching her three-year old son playing with his toy dinosaurs.

'Tom can name every single one of his dinosaurs,' his mother announced, proudly.

Picking up the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, I asked, 'What's this one's name?'

'Sarah', he replied, confidently.

When did GCG last visit you?

It's time to ask yourself a question: could your museum survive a visit by GCG? If the answer is yes (and we're really quite nice - honest!) then give me a call. I'm looking for venues and themes for GCG seminars and workshops in 2000 and 2001 and I would be very happy to hear your suggestions.

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

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

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.

See *Coprolite* 28 for details.

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

2-4 September 1999 University College Worcester

Second UK RIGS Conference

Contact: Geological Records Centre, University College Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ tel 01905 855184 fax 01905 855132 e-mail rigs@worc.ac.uk

6-10 September 1999 Imperial College, London

mda/CIDOC 1999 Conference: Delivering diversity, promoting participation

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

6-11 September 1999 National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

8th Symposium of Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation and 47th Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy

Contact: Dr R L Paton, (SVPCA/SPPC), Department of Geology and Zoology, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF fax 0131 247 4010 email SVPCA@nms.ac.uk

**13-17 September 1999 University of Sheffield
British Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Festival of Science**

Contact: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 Saville Row, London W1X 2NB tel 0171 973 3500 fax 0171 973 3051

**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.

**26-28 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 the Lizard, and Lands End granite or an underground mine visit, will provide an opportunity for curators to familiarise themselves with the diversity of minerals in museum collections in Cornwall and some classic localities.

Sunday 26 September (afternoon only). For those who wish to travel to Cornwall at the weekend, there will be the opportunity to visit the Lizard with Alan Bromley (geological consultant, Petrolab). Meet at 13.00 in rear car park at Camborne School of Mines.

Monday 27 September

09.30 Arrive Truro Museum: Rashleigh collection of minerals

11.30 Coffee.

12.30 Arrive Wheal Martyn China Clay Museum

13.00 Lunch (at China Clay Museum).

16.00 Depart.

18.00 Reception and buffet at Camborne School of Mines Museum.

19.30 Short talks and poster displays. Please contact Lesley Atkinson if you wish to present a paper or poster.

Tuesday 28 September

09.30 Visit Royal Geological Society of Cornwall Museum, Penzance.

10.30 Field trip to Land's End granite or underground visit

Pub lunch

Meeting fee: £3.00 (includes lunch on Monday), plus £6.00 evening buffet. Please complete the booking form on page 11 and send it, with payment, to 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 Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris
GCG Study visit**

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 participants 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. The visit is being hosted by Professor Patrick De Wever who, along with various members of his staff, will be showing us around the Museum itself as well as the geology, palaeontology and mineralogy sections. If you have access to the Internet, visit the Museum website at: <http://www.mnhn.fr/>

For further information please complete the form on the centre pages of *Coprolite* 28 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

28-30 January 2000 Dresden

International Hanns Bruno Geinitz Symposium: History of geosciences, regional geology, biostratigraphy and palaeontology in central Europe

Contact: Geinitz Symposium, Staatliches Museum für Mineralogie und Geologie zu Dresden, A B Meyer Bau, Königsbrucker Landstrasse 159, D-01109 Dresden, Germany tel + 49 351 89 26 403, fax + 49 351 89 26 404 e-mail mmg@sik.de

1-2 March 2000 Edinburgh

Scottish Natural Heritage: Selling geology to the public

Contact: Sharing Good Practice Administrator, Scottish Natural Heritage, Battleby,

Redgorton, Perth PH1 3EW.

7 March 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

Half-day session to be organised by GCG and the Palaeontological Association

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

26-30 May 2000 Brighton

Geologists' Association: Earth Alert

Contact: Sarah Stafford, Executive Secretary, Geologists' Association, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 9AG tel 0171 434 9298 fax 0171 287 0280 e-mail Geol.Assoc.@btinternet.com

28-29 June 2000 Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London

HOGG: Celebration of the age of the Earth

Contact: Dr Cherry Lewis, History of Geology Group, Wells Cottage, 21 Fowler Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 2AN tel/fax 01625 260049 e-mail clewis@aol.com

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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**GCG Seminar and field trip
Camborne School of Mines, Pool, Redruth, Cornwall
26-28 September 1999
BOOKING FORM**

Title.....Name.....
Address.....
.....Postcode.....
Telephone..... e-mail.....

- I will be attending the field trip on Sunday 26 September
- I will be attending on Monday 27 September
- I will be attending on Tuesday 28 September
- I can provide transport for.....people
- I would like details of local accommodation
- I enclose a cheque made payable to the Geological Curators' Group
for £3.00 (lunch on Monday 29th)
for £6.00 (evening buffet at CSM Museum)
Total enclosed : £.....

Please return this booking form with your payment to Lesley Atkinson, Camborne School of Mines Geological Museum and Art Gallery, Pool, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 3SE **by 10 September 1999.**

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