



# OPROLITE

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No.3 November 1990

DROPPINGS  
FROM THE  
CURATORS  
GROUP

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*Coprolite* is compiled by Tom Sharpe, 49 Kelston Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF4 2AG and produced by Monica Price, University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW. It will be published three times a year in February, May and November. Any material for inclusion should be sent to Tom Sharpe by the first of the previous month, i.e. by 1 January, 1 April or 1 October.

## New Members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: Ramon Lopez, Barcelona; Florence Lowry, London; M P Smith, Denmark; Neil Hubbard, Leicester, Caroline Butler, Cardiff; and Patrick Wyse Jackson, Dublin.

## Musical Curators

Andrew Jaram, formerly on the staff of Manchester University, was appointed Curator of Palaeontology at the Ulster Museum and took up his post on 1 August 1990. Di Smith of Haslemere Educational Museum is now Di Hawkes of Haslemere Educational Museum following her recent marriage.

## Annual General Meeting 1990

Please note that the AGM of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at 15.45 on Thursday 6 December 1990 at the Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York.

Chris Collins completes his term of office at the end of this year. All nominations for his and any other posts on the Committee must be made by two members of the Group and must be submitted in writing to Simon Knell (Hon. Secretary), Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe DN15 7BD, at least 21 days before the AGM. The deadline for nominations is 14 November 1990.

## Forthcoming meetings and seminars

### 6 December 1990 Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York GCG Seminar and AGM : Recapturing the initiative.

Geology in the public arena has been eclipsed by archaeology and the arts since the pioneer days of investigation and discovery in the 19th century. What was the basis of this golden age that inspired the patronage of individuals and authorities and led to the building of some of the finest geological collections? Was it all sweet success? Can we learn from it? What has happened to cause the eclipse and what is being done to redress the balance? Exhibitions appear prominent in our strategy but do they alone engender the lasting support which we so need? How can we recapture the initiative?

- 10.30 Assemble for coffee
- 11.00 Welcome by B J Hayton, County Museums Officer
- 11.15 Introductory words from J A Cooper, Chairman of GCG
- 11.20 Dr J Morrell, University of Bradford 'Perpetual excitement: the heroic age of British geology'
- 11.45 Dr P Addyman, Director, York Archaeological Trust 'Archaeology rules OK? The popularisation of the past'
- 12.10 Dr I Rolfe, Royal Museum of Scotland 'Snatching victories....'
- 12.35 Lunch - There are abundant pubs and restaurants within easy reach of the Yorkshire Museum. During the lunch break there will be an opportunity for those interested to visit the geology stores.
- 13.50 Dr G Durant, Director, Science Projects Scotland 'Outreach opportunism'
- 14.15 P Phillips, Curator of Palaeontology, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside 'Awareness, access, and accountability - buzzwords or strategy?'
- 14.40 Discussion
- 15.15 Tea
- 15.45 GCG Annual General Meeting
- 17.00 Museum closes

Meeting fee: £2.00

Please complete the booking form on centre pages, and send it with payment (cheques made payable to GCG) to Paul Ensom, Keeper of Geology, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York, YO1 2DR (Tel. 0904 629745) by 30 November 1990.

### 19-20 December 1990 Dijon, France. First International Show of Museographic Techniques: Nature and the Environment

Contact: Isabelle Theodon, Office de Cooperation et d'Information Museographiques, 64 Rue Vannerie, 21000 Dijon, France

### 14 March 1991 Haslemere Educational Museum. GCG Seminar

Contact: Di Hawkes, Haslemere Educational Museum, High Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2LA. Tel. 0428 2112

**14-18 April 1991 University of Sheffield**

**BCG / GCG Curatorial Course.**

For anyone wanting to brush up on current thinking about the **curation** of biological and geological materials, and especially useful for those studying for the Diploma.

Contact: Bob Toynton, Division of Continuing Education, University of Sheffield, 85 Wilkinson Street, Sheffield S10 2GJ Tel. 0742 768555 ext.4932

**6-11 May 1991 Ottawa, Canada**

**Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, 6th Annual Meeting and Training Workshop.**

Contact: G R Fitzgerald, Canadian Museum of Nature, Earth Sciences (Palaeobiology), PO Box 3443, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6P4, Canada.

**4-5 June 1991 Perth Museum and Art Gallery**

**GCG Seminar.**

Contact: Mike Taylor, Perth Museum and **Art** Gallery, George Street, Perth PH1 5LB. Tel. 0738 32488

**26-30 August 1991 Plymouth**

**Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.**

Contact: Michael Robbins, c/o South West Polytechnic, Drake Circus, Plymouth PIA 8AA

**September 1991 Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery**

**GCG Seminar.**

Dates and details to be **confirmed**.

**9-15 September 1991 Dresden, Germany**

**INHIGEO International Symposium: Museums and collections in the history of mineralogy, geology and palaeontology.**

Contact: Sekretariat der GGW, INHIGEO 1991, Invalidenstrasse 43, Berlin.

**4-5 December 1991 Dudley Museum and Art Gallery**

**Recent Developments at Dudley, and GCG AGM.**

Contact: Colin Reid, Dudley Museum and **Art** Gallery, St. James's Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HV Tel. 0384 55433

**Exhibitions**

**Giants, Gems and Jewels**

Hunterian Museum, Glasgow

13 Apr - 19 Dec 1990

**Dinosaurs Past and Present**

Natural History Museum, London

1 Nov - 3 Feb 1991

**The Dinosaur Roadshow**

Scunthorpe Museum

22 Sep - 17 Nov 1990

Doncaster Museum

22 Nov - 15 Jan 1991

**The Great Gloucestershire Dinosaur Discovery**

City Museum and Art Gallery, Gloucester

20 Oct - 26 Jan 1991

Monsters of the Deep Yorkshire Museum, York	13 Apr - Jan 1991
The Legacy of Ice Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry Malvern Museum	8 Oct - 17 Nov 1990 24 Nov - 5 Jan 1991
Mammoth! Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne	12 Sep - 11 Sep 1991
Chalk and flint • fossils, wells and quarries Chichester District Museum	8 Sep - 1 Dec 1990

## Mineral Shows

Saturday 17 November 1990 Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, Sussex

## Dinosaurs pull the crowds

The Ulster Museum's travelling exhibition, The *Dinosaur Roadshow*, currently at Scunthorpe Museum, continues to pull the crowds. During its 26 weeks at the Hancock Museum it was seen by 66,000 visitors; at Derbyshire Museum Service it received 20,000 visitors in 12 weeks.

## Museums and Geology in the National Curriculum

GCG hopes to prepare materials to help museum staff cope with the demands of the earth science component of the National Curriculum. Kate Pontin of Leicestershire Museums Service would be grateful if members would complete the questionnaire on the centre pages and return it to her as soon as possible.

A summary for those of you who are not familiar with the National Curriculum:  
Attainment Target 1 - Scientific skills such as observation, recording and assessing information, developing experiments to test hypotheses.

Attainment Target 2 - Fossils, preservation of plants and animals.

Attainment Target 5 - Human influences on the earth including waste disposal, recycling, pollution, arguments for and against exploiting the planet's resources.

Attainment Target 6 - Similarities and differences in groups of objects, man-made and natural.

Attainment Target 7 - Conversion of raw materials by chemical reactions into useful products, fossil fuels and raw materials, the rock cycle.

Attainment Target 9 - Looks at the Earth and the Atmosphere and covers: weathering, studying soils and rocks, the formation and types of rocks, volcanoes, earthquakes and other landforms, time scale, structure of the earth and plate tectonics.

Attainment Target 13 - Energy, fuels, limited resources, fuel economy and efficiency.

Attainment Target 16 - The earth in space, the moon, planets and the sun.

## A new geological society in Kent...

A Kent Geologists' Group has been formed which meets on the first Tuesday of every month at the **Cobtree** Museum of Kent Life. The annual subscription is £4. Anyone interested in joining should contact **Simon Hawkins**, Kent Geologists' Group, c/o **Cobtree** Museum of Kent Life, Lock Lane, **Cobtree** Manor Park, Maidstone, ME14 3AU. Tel. 0622 763936

## ...and a new Southern Branch of the Russell Society

A new branch of the Russell Society for members in the South of England is to have its Inaugural Meeting on Friday 30 November at Queen Elizabeths School, **Wimborne**, Dorset at 7.30pm for 8.00pm. Dr. Bob Symes of the Natural History Museum, and President of the Russell Society, will give a lecture entitled 'Minerals of Cornwall and Devon'. A full programme of events is planned. If you are a mineral enthusiast and would like to know more about the Society, contact Mike **Brooke** 138 Lower Blandford Road, Broadstone, Dorset, **BH18 8NZ**. Tel. 0202 696523

## A new geology museum for the Isle of Wight

A major new geological museum costing between two and three million pounds has been proposed for the Isle of Wight. The County Council will contribute £600,000 towards the cost and is appointing consultants to examine the viability of the proposed scheme or to propose a viable alternative, and, at a later date, to put together a funding package. The construction phase will begin in 1993 at the earliest.

The new museum will replace the existing Museum of Isle of Wight Geology at **Sandown** which currently receives 75,000 visitors annually to a display area of only 900 square feet.

## Export of Natural Heritage Specimens

The recent near-loss from the UK of an outstandingly important fossil, the earliest known reptile, has clarified the position regarding the export of such material. Natural science material, and particular geological specimens, are not covered by the **Export of Goods** (Control) Order 1989, and **therefore** all such material, no matter how significant, is free for sale abroad. This is markedly at variance with the position regarding the man-made heritage, where export controls have long been in force for outstanding artefacts.

Prompted by this current issue, the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art has been asked by the Minister for the Arts to consider this problem and to make recommendations. It is anticipated that such **outstanding** natural **heritage** items would only rarely come before any such body for consideration, say perhaps once every ten years. It would help us considerably in presenting our case to the Committee to **have** case histories of previous losses of such specimens, or brief accounts of material saved from such loss, to inform the Committee's deliberations. Would anyone knowing of any such cases therefore please send brief details to any of the following:

Dr W D I Rolfe, Keeper of **Geology**, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF; Dr L R M Cocks, Keeper of Palaeontology, **Natural History** Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD; Dr P Henderson, Keeper of Mineralogy, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

## **Earth Science Review: Museums and Collections**

Since writing my optimistic piece on this subject in Coprolite No 2, I must now report with some regret that little real progress has been made in the subsequent six months. No monies were released by the UFC to the Collection Centres in April as we had hoped, and despite noises that something might happen in August, it eventually became clear that UFC funding for the current year, 1990-1991, had been already allocated to other sources.

Deep pessimism set in, especially after the University Museums Group Meeting on 18 July when the impression was given that all special factor funding by the UFC was to cease anyway in 1992. Immediate action by members of Kennedy's Steering Committee, to revitalise the Museums and Collections campaign, has now resulted in a more reasoned view. Two documents from the UFC, both dated July 1990, state categorically that special factor funding for the five Collection Centres will continue, but that funds are not currently available.

At best it seems that we will have to wait until April 1991 when the UFC's next financial year begins, but even then it seems that there are likely to be many other calls on whatever money is available. All we can do in the meantime is to be patient and to keep the exercise at the front of people's minds when such funds are being decided.

John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, 21 August 1990

### **Palaeontological and palaeoecological restorations in the Ulster Museum by Neave Parker - A recent Ulster Museum purchase.**

William Neave Parker (1910-1961) was a well-known **natural** history illustrator, familiar to many curators for his **illustrations** in British Museum (Natural History) palaeontology publications in the 1950s, and a remarkable series of drawings in the Illustrated London News between 1951 and 1960. He also illustrated children's **books**. His principal scientific collaborators were W.E. Swinton and M. **Burton**, both on the staff of the **BM(NH)** at the time.

The **Parker/Swinton** collaboration is perhaps the earliest of the sustained **artist/scientist** partnerships in the field of **palaeoenvironment** restoration and is also significant because it predates the recent revival of similar associations in North America. **Sylvia Czerkas** particularly regretted the omission of the work of two European artists of stature, Neave Parker and Zdenek **Burian**, from the exhibition she compiled of dinosaur art, *Dinosaurs Past and Present*, currently circulating in the U.K. The **BM(NH)** was unable to release its own illustrations and **Burian's** in Prague were beyond the Iron Curtain when the exhibition was assembled in 1985/6.

The **Geology Department of the Ulster Museum** has recently acquired 17 of the 23 Neave Parker illustrations on palaeontological subjects published in the Illustrated London News, including all but one of the dinosaur groups. They formed part of the third of a series of sales of the ILN archive held by **Bonhams** of Montpelier Street, London during 1989.

The illustrations are finely detailed gouache monochromes of large size, averaging around 24 by 18 inches, and generally in good condition. They are on commercial artists board from which the drawing surface is being **stripped** for remounting on conservation board. The work is currently in **hand**. The drawings will be framed **and** a small exhibition is in contemplation to travel within the next one to two years. If interested, contact **Phil Doughty** in the Ulster Museum who will also be delighted to hear from anyone with biographical knowledge of Parker, or any further details relating to his work.

**Phil Doughty**, Department of Geology, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast

### **Directory of UK Geology Museums**

I am beginning to gather information for a GCG Directory of all those museums in the UK which hold a significant geological collection. As an initial basis for this guide I am circulating all those museums listed in the GCG Thumbs-Up leaflet on Rocks, Fossils and Minerals requesting information. If your museum is not included on that list, but you feel that its geological collection deserves mention in the proposed GCG Directory, please write to me so that I can include your museum in my initial survey. **John Nudds**, GCG Recorder, The Manchester **Museum**, The University, Manchester M13 9PL

### **North of England specimens of native gold**

**Brian Young** is trying to establish a list of localities for native gold from the Caldbeck Fells **area**, and would like to hear from any museum or collection which has specimens of native gold from North of England localities. If you can help, please contact him at British Geological **Survey**, Windsor Court, Windsor Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne

### **Founders of the Geologists' Association - Appeal for Information**

**Eric Freeman** is writing an article on the founders of the Geologists' Association, and would be very grateful to learn of **portraits**, photographic or otherwise, of **Edward Cressy (1824-1870)**, **John Ebenezer Wakefield (1819-1903)**, **Charles Woodward (c.1789-1877)** and, in particular, **Samuel Joseph Mackie (c.1820-1902)**.

If you can help, please write to **Eric Freeman**, 146 **Haydons Road**, Wimbledon, London SW19 1AE. Assistance will, of course, be acknowledged **formally**.

### **Newish Publications**

**Crystals** by **Ian F. Mercer**. Natural History Museum Publications, London, 1990, 60pp. ISBN 0 565 01083 2. £4.95

*Rocks, minerals and fossils of the world* by Chris Pellant. Pan Books, London, 1990, 175pp. ISBN 0 330 29953 0. £12.99

*Dinosaur island* has been published by Isle of Wight County Council for the Museum of Geology in Sandown, 1990, 32pp. ISBN 0 906 32845 4. £1.95

*Natural landscapes of Britain from the air* edited by N. Stephens. Cambridge University Press, 1990, 288pp. ISBN 0 521 32390 8. £19.50

*Highland geology trail* by John L. Roberts. Strathtongue Press, 1990, 116pp. ISBN 0 951 58660 2. £4.95

*Geology in Shropshire* by Peter Toghill. Swan Hill Press, Shrewsbury. 188pp, ISBN 1 853 10090 0. £9.95

*The Lake District* ed. by F. Moseley. Geologists' Association, London, 1990, £9.50

*Costa Brava* by F. Moseley. Geologists' Association, London, 1990, £5.00

*Mallorca* by H.C. Jenkyns, B.W. Sellwood, & L. Pomar. Geologists' Association, London, 1990, £5.50

*Geology in and around Buckinghamshire*, a leaflet detailing geological localities in that county, has been published by Buckinghamshire County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, HP20 2QP.

*Quarrying and building in England, AD43-1525* edited by David Parsons. Royal Archaeological Institute and Phillimore & Co Ltd, Chichester, 1990, c.400pp. £40.00

The Geological Society has published its first publications catalogue. Copies available from Geological Society Publishing House, Unit 7, Brassmill Enterprise-Centre, Brassmill Lane, Bath BA1 3JN Tel. 0225 445046.

### Cheap at the Price

Riding high on the crest of the 'Green wave' in the US is a company in California selling everything from books on beetles to inflatable gorillas, all under a gloss of concern for the environment, from a chain of shops across that great continent.

My attention was caught by two items of geological interest. A rather splendid inflatable Tyrannosaurus grinned flatulently in the window of an outlet in Maryland. On entering, I found a large display of 'original' fossils and minerals for sale. Amongst these was - and I quote - 'Asteroceras from Lyme Regis, England'

Quite a nice, complete specimen, 4 inches in diameter, partially developed in a piece of Lias limestone. The asking price? \$490.

Tristram Besterman  
Plymouth Museums

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