



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

No. 33
November
2000

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Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the 27th AGM of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at 16.00 on Monday 4 December 2000 at the Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York. Nominations for the posts of Officers, and 3 Committee Members must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Amanda Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester M13 9 PL by 13 November 2000.

Subscriptions 2001

Subscriptions are due on 1 January 2001. Rates remain the same as last year, ie £10.00 for UK Personal Members and £12.00 for Overseas Personal Members. A subscription renewal form is included with this issue of *Coprolite*. Subscriptions unpaid by 30 April 2001 will be deemed to have lapsed. Please return the subscription form promptly, with your payment, to Amanda Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL.

GCG membership list 2000

Usually, this issue of *Coprolite* carries the full list of GCG personal members. However, the list is being revised to remove members whose subscriptions are not current (take this as a hint if you haven't yet paid!) and it is not yet ready for publication. It is hoped that the list will be included in the next issue.

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Seriwat Sampinyama**, Thailand; **Frances Wall**, Natural History Museum; **Clive Jones**, Natural History Museum; **Remmert Schouten**, University of Bristol; **Graham Worton**, Dudley Museum; **Dr M P Howe**, University of Leicester; **Hannah Chalk**, Museum Studies Student; **Langan Turner**, Isle of Wight; **Peter Russell**, Canada

Newish publications

- Catastrophes. Time's trail of destruction* by Susanna van Rose, 2000. Keyworth: British Geological Survey, 64pp. ISBN 0 85 272354 7, £6.50.
- Tourists' rock, fossil and mineral map of Great Britain*, British Geological Survey, 2000. ISBN 0 85272 351 2, £3.50.
- The Geologists' Directory 2000*, The Geological Society, 2000. ISBN 1 86239 068 1, £79.00.
- A revised correlation of Ordovician rocks in the British Isles* by R A Fortey, D A T Harper, J K Ingham, A W Owen, M A Parkes, A W A Rushton and N H Woodcock, 2000. The Geological Society Special Report No 24, £18.00.
- Dinosaur tracks and other fossil footprints of Europe* by Martin Lockley and Christian Meyer, 2000. New York: Columbia University Press, xviii + 323pp. ISBN 0 231 10710 2.
- Treatise in invertebrate paleontology part H Brachiopoda revised volumes 2 and 3: Linguliformea, Craniiformea and Rhynchonelliformea (part)* by Alwyn Williams, C H C Brunton and S J Carlson, 2000. Geological Society of America and University of Kansas, xxx + 919pp. ISBN 0 8137 3108 9.
- Glossary of mineral synonyms* by Jeffrey de Fourestier, 1999. *The Canadian Mineralogist Special Publication 2*, xi + 434pp. ISBN 0 921294 44 1.
- Nature's connections. An exploration of natural history* by Nicola McGirr, 2000. London: The Natural History Museum, 212pp. ISBN 0 565 09144 1, £12.95
- Into the dinosaurs' graveyard, Canadian digs and discoveries* by David Spalding, 2000. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 305pp. ISBN 0 385 25794 5.
- Tyrannosaurus SUE. The extraordinary saga of the largest, most fought over T. rex ever found* by Steve Field, 2000. New York: W H Freeman, xvi + 248pp. ISBN 0 7167 4017 6.
- Trilobite! Eyewitness to evolution* by Richard Fortey, 2000. London: HarperCollins, xiii + 269pp. ISBN 0 0025 7012 2, £15.99.
- A guide to copyright for museums and galleries* by Peter Wienand, Anna Booy and Robin Fry, 2000. Routledge, 168pp. ISBN 0 415 21721 0, £19.99.
- Paleobiology II* by Derek Briggs and Peter Crowther, 2001. Blackwell Science, 608pp. ISBN 0 632 05147 7, £110.00.

Paleobase: Macrofossils Part 1 by N Macleod, 2000. Blackwell Science, CD-ROM. ISBN 0 632 05641 X. Single user £25.00 + VAT, network site licences £130,00 + VAT.

Exhibitions 2000

Tracking dinosaurs Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery, Riversley Park, Nuneaton until 17 December 2000; Perth Museum and Art Gallery, George Street, Perth 22 December 2000-22 April 2001; Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery, Borough Road, Sunderland 1 June-31 August 2001.

Walking with dinosaurs Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York until 31 December 2000.

Illustrating Irish geology. An exhibition of original objects and documents from the collections of the Geological Survey of Ireland Geological Survey of Ireland, Beggars Bush, Haddington Road, Dublin 4

Canterbury Roadshow

Encouraged by the great success and popularity of previous events, Canterbury's Royal Museum is staging its third Fossil Roadshow. The museum is asking visitors to bring along fossils, rocks or minerals to challenge their team of experts to identify those unusual objects found on the beach or dug up in the garden. Dinosaur footprints will take pride of place at the Roadshow and several dinosaur-related exhibits and activities for children will be on offer.

Local groups supporting the event and exhibiting new finds will include the Oyster Coast Fossil Society, Medway Lapidary and Mineral Society, Isle of Sheppey Fossil Study Group, Kent Geologists' Group and Ravensbourne Geological Society.

Free samples of 110 million year old Kentish Ragstone, the same kind of rock in which the first named dinosaur was found, will be given away to the first 50 children attending the Roadshow.

The Roadshow is being held at Canterbury Royal Museum, High Street, Canterbury, Kent on Saturday 20 January 2001 from 10am to 4 pm. Admission is free. For further details contact Ralph Anderson or Martin Crowther on 01227 452747.

BGS continued

Following a unsuccessful first attempt to appoint a Chief Curator earlier this year, BGS readvertised the post in June. GCG assisted by circulating the advertisement to our members. However, the word is that again there was only a handful of applications. Only one candidate had collections management experience (and that person later withdrew). A Chief Curator has now been appointed and took up the post at the beginning of October.

As GCG members will be aware, since July 1999 we have expressed our concern

for the care of the **BGS** collections to BGS Director, Dr David **Falvey** as the restructuring implemented by him is resulting in the loss of the two **most** experienced collection managers at BGS. Steve Tunnicliff, who looked after the Biostratigraphic collections, lost his job in May. Stuart **Hollyer**, Collections Administrator and manager of the **Borehole** Collection, finishes in March 2001.

GCG were informed back in November 1999 that **BGS** intended to appoint a chief curator and four curators (one for fossils, one for rocks and minerals, one for **borehole** cores, and a fourth for prepared samples and miscellaneous small collections). We hoped that these posts would be advertised externally and that applicants would be required to have collections management experience and a museum studies qualification. It would now appear that following the disappointing response to the advertisement for the post of Chief Curator, **BGS** now expects to fill these four curatorial posts internally.

In the light of this, one must question how the nationally and internationally important collections held by **BGS** will benefit from this restructuring.

Mary Anning, 1799-1847: a bicentenary exhibition

Mary Anning, 1799-1847: a bicentenary exhibition, at Dorset County Museum in Dorchester from 22 May through 2 September in 1999, is now travelling to other museums. It is difficult, to say the least, to mount a show when not one biography on your subject has been published. It is harder still when both historians and collectors have served anyone as badly as they have Anning. Nonetheless, the **DCM's** deputy curator, **Kate** Hebditch, has done a remarkable job. This exhibition serves as a worthy companion to the new permanent Anning display which opened at the same time at the Lyme Regis Philpot Museum.

Hebditch is clearly indebted to Hugh Torrens of Keele University, as are all of us who write about Anning, and to Sir **Crispin Tickell**. Torrens' "Mary Anning (1799-1847) of Lyme; **the greatest fossilist the world ever knew**" (*British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 28, 1995, pp. 257-284) and **Tickell's Mary Anning of Lyme Regis** (*Lyme Regis: Lyme Regis Philpot Museum*, 1996) are just about the only reliable accounts of this pioneering fossil-hunter available to date. Hebditch puts the life of this "princess of palaeontology" nicely into perspective. It is notoriously difficult, for example, to translate prices from one century to another, so she juxtaposes what a crinoid **might** fetch with the rising price of a **small** cottage in Lyme. She demonstrates the growth of tourism in Lyme, the grinding poverty of early nineteenth century Dorset, and the newness of geology as a science. We hear how the Annings escaped the workhouse after Richard **Anning's** death, how the town was thrilled by Princess Victoria's visit in 1833, and how Anning lost her entire life's savings in **1834**.

Some Anning finds have not survived and many others have yet to be positively identified in existing collections, so Hebditch shows us what she can: drawings,

photographs, and journals. She includes contemporary press accounts, for example - some mentioned by neither Torrens nor **Tickell** and new to me - which vividly convey the excitement created by her discoveries of ichthyosaurs, plesiosaurs, a flying reptile, and fossil fish.

The exhibition was in Barnstaple from 1 July to 2 September 2000, and will be in **Norfolk** from 23 June to 22 September 2001, but is available other times. To book it, or for further information, contact **Kate** Hebditch, Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, Dorset **DT1 1XA** tel 01305 262735, fax 01305 257180, **email** kate@dor-mus.demon.co.uk

Thomas W **Goodhue**, **Amityville**, New York. (Thomas W **Goodhue** is completing a biography of **Mary Anning**).

The Association of Museum Geologists

Our celebrations of 25 years of the Geological Curators' Group reminded me of its forerunner, the Association of Museum Geologists. It had a brief history which now seems to be largely forgotten, but its existence still has relevance to the present and the future of GCG.

In 1973 the future of geology in museums was a considerable concern. There were moves in local authority museums to replace specialist geology curators with natural historians, and to remove geology as a specialist subject from the Museums Association Diploma. At the same time there were few opportunities for geology curators to discuss concerns and share ideas, since apart from the Museums Association, probably the only relevant groups were the Museums Assistants Group and the local Museum Federations.

The first constitution for the Association of Museum Geologists was drafted in 1973 by Mike Jones, then Keeper of Geology at Leicester Museum. It concentrated on **tackling** concerns about geology in local authority and university museums, and set out to establish a means for geology curators to **work** together to promote and further the future of the subject in museums. Mike circulated the draft for comment and convened a meeting at Leicester Museum on 15 February 1974 to discuss the formation of the **Association**. At that stage most of the geology curators circulated and invited to attend the meeting were based in the Midlands. The Museums Association found itself unable to support the development of a specialist curator group, and in consequence the Geological Society of London was approached for help. To its great credit the Geological Society was very sympathetic and agreed that the Association could use the Society's apartments and Newsletter with the intention of becoming an affiliated specialist group.

The proposal to form the Association was quickly agreed at the Leicester meeting, followed by a **discussion** of the draft constitution and the establishment of a

working group to progress discussions with the Geological Society. It was also agreed to extend the membership to include staff in national museums and all those interested in geology curatorship. It was at this meeting that the Association of Museum Geologists formally ceased to exist and the Geology Curators Group came into being, in line with the titles of other specialist groups in the Geological Society.

GCG soon became established and provided a model for the many other museum specialist groups that exist today, the Biological Curators Group being one of the first to follow its lead. Not only has GCG led the way for many other specialist groups, but of course it also has a distinguished record of furthering curatorship and promoting the care of geological collections in museums. No doubt it seemed logical to expect museum authorities to respond by appointing more specialist geology curators and for there to continue to be specialist training courses and qualifications, but unfortunately the reverse now seems to be the case. Geology curator posts have been deleted and there appears to be no way for geologists to acquire curatorial qualifications in the UK without having to undertake some natural history. These of course were originally so much the concern of those who initiated the Association of Museum Geologists, and now we might reflect whether GCG was right to concentrate so much on the promotion of geology collections. On the other hand perhaps it is simply beyond the resources of a specialist group to successfully defend the interests of its own membership.

Andrew Mathieson, Museum Education Freelance and Consultant (1997 to date), Geologist in Bristol Museums Education Service (1974-97), Assistant Keeper of Geology at Leicester Museum (1972-74).

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Earth Sciences established

Professor **Allan Rogers MP** FGS, the only geologist in Parliament, has set up a new parliamentary forum for debate in Earth science. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Earth Sciences aims to raise awareness of the importance of Earth science among **MPs** and is chaired by Professor Rogers. The inaugural meeting was held on 5 April, and it is planned that the group will meet once a month while the House of Commons is sitting. The Geological Society is providing the necessary administrative support for the Group. As a Specialist Group of the Society, GCG has been asked to identify potential topics and speakers to recommend to **Allan Rogers**. If you have any suggestions, please let Tom Sharpe, GCG Chairman, know.

To the rescue

Throughout its existence, and especially in its early years, GCG has been involved in rescue curation, and no member more so than Hugh Torrens. The *collections* lost and *found section* of the Group's early Newsletter and later, *The Geological Curator*, were essential reading. There is surely no better example of this type of work than **Hugh's** rediscovery of some specimens from the collection of Etheldred

Benett (1775-1845) of Wiltshire. Although much in the shadow of her contemporary, Mary Anning (something Hugh has been trying to rectify for a number of years), **Benett** was a significant figure. In a new paper in the *Proceedings* of the Academy of Natural Sciences of *Philadelphia* (volume 150, pp.59-123), Hugh, along with Elana Benamy, Edward B Daeschler and Earle E Spamer of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and Arthur E Brogan of North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences, describes the rediscovery of Jurassic **bivalves** with soft part preservation in **Benett's** collection.

After her death, most of **Benett's** collection went to **Thomas Bellerby** Wilson of Delaware, and he donated it to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia between 1848 and 1852. The collection was thought for many years to be lost, until its rediscovery in 1989. In 1992, three specimens of *Laevitrigonia gibbosa* (J **Sowerby**) with soft parts preserved, first described in 1848, were rediscovered. This paper redescribes these specimens and compares their features with the soft tissues of modern *Neotrigonia*. In their introduction, the authors state that they 'hope most of all to stress the importance of 'rescue curation'. The competent reevaluation of neglected collections can restore not only valuable information for the scientific community, but can also add vigor to the stated mission of the institution to safeguard knowledge of the natural world and to disseminate it to the world. Once data are irretrievably lost, science and history both suffer for it. The restoration of the **Benett** collection and its data has had immediate benefits in this regard, with the added advantage of having salvaged the proof of the work and abilities of the first lady geologist."

GCG members will be also be delighted to see that in the paper's acknowledgements, Hugh dedicates his part in this work to "all-his friends in the Geological Curators' Group on their 25th anniversary, in memory of shared concerns and in gratitude for common enthusiasms".

Manchester geology galleries open

The Geology Galleries at Manchester University Museum were reopened in July by botanist and environmentalist, David Bellamy. At a grand ceremony, marking the completion of Phase One of a £19.3 million refurbishment, Dr Bellamy praised the Heritage Lottery Fund which had given a grant of £11.6 million towards this project.

Centrepiece of the palaeontology gallery is a complete specimen of the herbivorous dinosaur, *Tenontosaurus tilletti*, from the **Cloverly** Formation (Upper Cretaceous) of Montana - probably the most complete skeleton of this species in the world. Also on display for the first time in the museum is the wonderful plesiosaur (*Macropata longirostris*) collected by Fred Broadhurst and Manchester students in the 1960s and now beautifully conserved by Roger Vaughan.

The gallery tells the story of life from the first prokaryote bacteria of the Apex

Chert, 3.5 billion years ago, to the people of the Creswell Caves 30,000 years ago, and is illustrated by over 1,000 specimens from the Museum's collections.

Fewer than 1% of the specimens were purchased specially for this gallery, but new acquisitions include dinosaur eggs, a superb Lower Cretaceous bird from China, and an impressive specimen of the K/T boundary from Maastricht (sponsored by KLM Exel), collected by John Nudds, Tom Sharpe and Ros Gourgey and conserved expertly by Remmert Schouten of Bristol University.

An adjacent gallery displays some superb mineral and rock specimens, many collected or acquired by David Green, but this gallery is not due to be completed until mid 2002 with the culmination of Phase Two of the refurbishment. A temporary museum shop is currently occupying the majority of this gallery, but visitors will be able to get a taste of what is to come from the impressive displays of meteorites and British Isles minerals.

Dr John Nudds, Keeper of Geology, Manchester University Museum.

Giant geodes

The August 2000 issue of *Geoscientist*, the magazine of the Geological Society, carries a report and photographs of a spectacular giant geode found in southern Spain. What may be the world's largest geode can hold 10 people and is lined with huge transparent crystals of gypsum. The origin of the geodes is currently under investigation, but it may be related to the Messinian Salinity Crisis when the whole of the Mediterranean basin dried up.

John Ray conference volume

The proceedings of the conference *John Ray and his successors: the clergyman as biologist* held in March 1999 have now been published. The volume comprises 20 papers and five abstracts covering the period from John Ray to the end of the 20th century. It includes papers about clerics of each century and their influence within biology. Copies cost £15.00, including post and packing, and are available from The John Ray Trust, Town Hall Centre, Market Square, Braintree, Essex CM7 3YG. Cheques should be made payable to the John Ray Trust.

Consultants in, curators out

Phil Doughty of the Ulster Museum draws our attention to *The Daily Telegraph* of 29 July. The newspaper's arts and books section carried several articles, the first in a series, on the theme of museums in crisis. Richard Dormont, in an article titled *The danger posed by our new curators*, highlights the decline in scholarship in art galleries and blames this on the erosion of the traditional role of the curator. Although his remarks are specifically about art history and art curators, much of what he writes applies to almost any museum discipline.

Dormont visited an art gallery in the northeast and was not impressed by what he

saw, and having discovered that the person in charge "was not a museum curator or director but the head of leisure services" he wonders "what talented person seriously interested in the conservation and display of art would wish to enter a profession where the person to whom he or she was answerable was more interested in the sports centre than in its art gallery?". He goes on to write "The curatorial profession in Great Britain is in crisis. It is being eroded by ... the systematic denigration of the curator's traditional role as a mediator between the work of art and the public. Great scholars continue to work in our museums but they are becoming rarer and rarer, as second rate ones are hired and promoted by careerist directors primarily interested in ever-larger attendance figures. This new breed of directors is driving good curators from our museums."

"... the scholarship that characterised the curatorial departments of old is being denigrated in favour of marketing, publicity and development. ... But museums depend for their vitality on the energy of the people who know about the art that's in them. When the marketing consultants arrive, that's when the **dumbing-down** begins and the curators of calibre start to leave."

Paleobase

What is likely to be a valuable reference for geological curators everywhere is being published by Blackwell Science. The *Paleobase: Macrofossils* database, available on CD-ROM will consist of about **1000** generic records drawn from the major invertebrate groups. It represents the marriage of systematic information on a vast collection of fossil genera, state-of-the-art colour digital photographs from the Natural History Museum's palaeontological collections, and modern relational database technology.

Paleobase includes:

High quality colour digital images of representative specimens. These can be magnified to reveal additional morphological detail.

Complete systematic descriptions incorporating the latest information and written by staff of the **NHM's** Department of Palaeontology.

A morphological key for each-group that can be used to study morphological character distributions or aid in the identification of unknown specimens.

A complete classification for each genus, with geographical, palaeogeographical, and **chronostratigraphical** distribution

A complete bibliography that connects the information provided by Macrofossils to the larger technical literature.

Paleobase will be released in three parts:

Part 1 (summer 2000) arthropods, brachiopods, bryozoans, trace fossils, trilobites, graptolites

Part 2 (winter 2000) gastropods, bivalves, ammonites, nautiloids, belemnites

Part 3 (summer 2001) cnidaria, echinoderms, sponges and other groups.

Minimum hardware requirements: Mac: Power PC, System 8.0 or higher, 12Mb RAM; PC: Pentium, Windows 95 or higher, 16 Mb RAM.

For a demonstration see: www.paleobase.com

Gallery videos

Jon Radley, Assistant Keeper (Geology) at Warwickshire Museum is looking for information and research results concerning optimum lengths of museum gallery videos, with special reference to geology, geological conservation and landscape interpretation. If you can help, please contact Jon at Warwickshire Museum, Market Place, Warwick CV34 4SA tel 01926 412481, email jonradley@warwickshire.gov.uk

New address for geology at the National Museum of Ireland

Ivor Harkin and Nigel Monaghan may now be contacted at the Earth Science Section, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Benburb Street, Dublin 7, Ireland tel + 353 677 7444, fax + 353 1 677 7828, email earthscience@AEA-museum.ie

Rock, mineral and fossil shows 2000

11-12 November Newmarket Racecourse, Newmarket, Suffolk, 10.00-16.00. Tel 01628 621697

Forthcoming GCG seminars and workshops

14 November 2000 Sedgwick Museum, Downing Street, Cambridge GCG training course: Gemstone identification for natural science curators

A one-day workshop on the basics of gem identification, from the perspective of natural science curators. Participants will have the opportunity to use most of the simpler and more affordable instruments employed by **gemmologists** and will be able to examine some of the more commonly encountered gemstones and synthetic gemstones. Participants will also receive a pack of gem specimens which may be retained.

See *Coprolite* 32 for the full programme and booking form.

Contact: Dale Johnston, Museums Outreach Officer, c/o The Department of History & Philosophy of Science, Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3RH 01223 331104
by Monday 7 November

4-5 December 2000 Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York GCG Seminar and 27th AGM : Dinosaur tracks, too big for their boots!

This meeting will give an opportunity to discuss the importance of trace-fossil collections and some of the problems associated with their collection,

conservation and storage. Debate on the conservation of geological sites, whether they are RIGS, SSSI or **unprotected** will also be raised in the programme, given it is some time since this was discussed in detail in Cardiff, at the 'Future for Fossils' meeting. The new exhibition, *Walking with Dinosaurs*, showing the science behind the recent BBC series will also be on in the temporary exhibition galleries of the Museum. This will be an opportunity for many to see the work and research that went into the series. The exhibition will include debate on some of the more controversial elements of the series, such as the **peeing Postosuchus**, and the reasoning behind some of the relationships and behaviour of various groups of mammals, dinosaurs, flying and marine reptiles. The exhibition will also explore the importance of programmes such as *Walking with Dinosaurs* in supporting the public understanding of science.

Monday 4 December

10:00 Welcome

10:05 Tracking dinosaurs on the Yorkshire coast: Mike **Romano**, University of **Sheffield**.

10:40 Dinosaur **tracks** from Dorset: Paul **Ensom**, The Natural History Museum

11:15 Coffee (included in registration fee)

11:35 Dinosaur tracks, broken bones and helicopters: **Neil Clark**, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.

12:10 Dinosaur-hunting on the **Isle** of Wight: speaker to be confirmed.

12:45 Hot buffet lunch (**included** in registration fee): served in the Hospitium in the Museum Gardens.

14:00 **Track** removal and casting in the **Triassic** rocks of South Wales: **Steve Howe**, National Museum of Wales.

14:35 Dinosaur **coast** heritage project: **Alistair Bowden**, Dinosaur Coast Project Officer.

15:10 Walking in the footsteps of the dinosaurs: **Phil Manning**, **Yorkshire** Museum.

15:40 Tea (included in registration fee)

16:00 GCG 27th **Annual** General Meeting

16:30 Tour of the *Walking with Dinosaurs* exhibition.

17:20 **Close** of **session**.

19:00 Dinner and sampling of York Brewery's finest ales (**NOT** included in **registration** fee). Location of **meal** to be **confirmed**, please indicate when booking whether dentition is not adapted to flesh).

Tuesday 5 December

Port **Mulgrave** field excursion: **Pack-lunch** can be provided **at cost**, please ask **Phil Manning** for details of the **culinary** delights possible. This locality displays superb sections of the Lower and Middle **Jurassic**.

There is limited space on transport, so early booking is essential. The day will end in time for people to be returned to York Railway Station by approximately **6:30pm** (dependent on **requests** for **Whitby** fish suppers!).

09:00 Depart from **Yorkshire** Museum.

10:30 Arrive at Port **Mulgrave**

15:30 Depart from Port **Mulgrave**

16:00 **Whitby** fish and chips (optional, but **strongly** recommended)

17:00 Depart **Whitby**

18:30 Return to York Railway Station

The registration fee for the meeting is £10 for the Monday session and £10 for the field trip (not including sandwiches). Places for the field trip are limited, so early booking is recommended. An accommodation list will be sent with any additional information on payment of the registration fee. Please complete the form on the centre pages, and send it, with payment, to: Phil Manning, Keeper of Geology, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York, YO23 2RU, tel 01904 629745, fax 01904 651221, e-mail Dinosauria@tesco.net **by Monday 27 November**

12 March 2001 Department of Geological Sciences Collections, University College, Gower Street, London

GCG workshop: Brush up your rocks!

A one-day training workshop exploring the identification, **curation** and conservation of petrological collections. This course will be of use to anyone with rocks in their collection, and suitable for both geologists and biologists.

9.30 - 5pm.

Incorporating a number of practical sessions, this workshop will introduce :
Methods of classifying and identifying igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks

Aspects of documentation: what do you need to record?

Conservation and storage of specimens: potential problems and practical solutions.

The day will be an informal event with opportunities for open discussion and exchange of ideas.

Places are limited so please book in advance using the form on the centre pages to ensure a place. There is no fee, but a small charge will be made on the day for tea and coffee.

Contact: **Glenys** Wass or Wendy Kirk, Department of Geological Sciences Collections, University College London, Gower Street, London **WC1E 6BT** tel 020 7679 7900 email g.wass@ucl.ac.uk or w.kirk@ucl.ac.uk by **1 February 2001**

Wednesday 16 May 2001 The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester

GCG Seminar: The commercial trade : ethics versus science

Many of you may have noticed the now regular "Ethics" column in the **Museums Journal** where readers pose ethical questions to a panel of experts from the Museums Association Ethics Committee. The first two columns included interesting geological questions concerned with the acquisition of palaeontological specimens from either commercial dealers, mineral and fossil fairs or private individuals. In these particular cases the issues focussed on the ability of museum curators to establish that the specimens were acquired legally. However, what happens to material that is offered for sale and not purchased by museums. Is the "rescue" argument a valid one? Do we risk perpetuating a "black market" with the ultimate price being the destruction of important **collecting sites**

and the loss of contextual scientific data. Or is the loss of scientifically important specimens to private **collectors** the price we are paying now? What part do museums play in the illicit trade of fossil and mineralogical materials? The Museums Association Code of Ethics is clear.....but are the issues clear cut? This seminar will focus on the important debate surrounding the ethics of collecting geological materials and will undoubtedly involve some lively discussion.

After all that...there will also be the chance to view the new Fossils Gallery which forms Phase 1 of the Manchester **Museum's** £19 million capital redevelopment.

For further details, or to offer papers, **contact:** John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL tel **0161** 275 2660, fax 0161 275 2676, **email** john.nudds@man.ac.uk

June 2001 London

Joint GCG and HOGG Seminar : 150 years of the Geological Museum

Contact: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princes Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel **0116** 252 3963, fax 0116 252 3960, **email** SJK8@le.ac.uk

October/November 2001 American Museum of Natural History GCG Study Visit : New York, possibly New York!

Following successful forays into Europe, GCG is now looking at the possibility of visiting the American Museum of Natural History in the Big Apple! The AMNH is one of the world's pre-eminent institutions for scientific research and education, with collections of more than 32 million specimens and artifacts. The museum houses over **100,000** rocks, minerals and meteorites, and four million invertebrate fossils. In addition, the vertebrate fossil holdings include the most comprehensive collection of fossil mammals in the world, with nearly one million specimens. There are also particularly important collections of North American dinosaurs as well as Mongolian fossil vertebrates acquired during expeditions to Mongolia led by Roy **Chapman** Andrews in the 1920's.

For further details contact: Steve **McLean**, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT tel **0191** 222 6765, fax 0191 222 6753, **email** s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk

November 2001 Natural History Museum, London GCG Workshop: Identifying fossils: ■ Bivalves

Fed up of trawling through the *Treatise* playing "match the picture"? Can you never find that fossil in your favourite pocket reference? Forgotten the difference between articulate and inarticulate brachiopods? Getting confused about all those different corals? Do bivalves bring you out in a sweat? Well never fear....GCG is here to help!

This is the first in a series of one-day refresher training courses designed specifically to help geological curators brush up on their identification skills. It is our intention initially to cover all the major groups of invertebrate fossils, beginning with bivalves. The course will be led by palaeontologists at the Natural History Museum in London.

For further details contact : Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 6765, fax 0191 222 6753, email s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk

5-6 December 2001 Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford

GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip

Contact: Phil Powell, Geological Collections, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW tel 01865 272955, fax 01865 272970 email philip.powell@oum.ox.ac.uk

Other meetings

4-8 December 2000 Melbourne, Australia

4th International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums

Contact: Bill Birch, Museum of 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

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

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