



## DROPPINGS FROM THE GEOLOGICAL CURATORS GROUP

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*Coprolite* is compiled and produced by Helen Kerbey, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF10 3NP (e-mail Helen.Kerbey@museumwales.ac.uk, tel +44 (0)29 20 573367). It is published three times a year in March, June and November. Any material for inclusion should be sent to Helen Kerbey by the first of the previous month, i.e. by 1 February, 1 May or 1 October.

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**GCG website:** <http://www.geocurator.org>

### Isles Strachan

GCG members will be saddened to hear of the death of long standing member Dr Isles Strachan. Dr. Strachan was a graptolite expert with "A bibliographic index of British graptolites" amongst his publications. He went to Birmingham from Edinburgh University and spent many years identifying graptolites, often for the Geological Survey, before retiring to Scotland.

### Musical Curators

Drs. Tom Challands and Mark Bell have started part time temporary contracts doing collection level work on petrological material as Geology Collections Assistants at the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Howard Bartlett is to retire from the University of Cardiff after working in the variously named School of Earth and Ocean Sciences for over 45 years !

## **Overdue subscriptions**

Subscriptions were due on 1 January 2012. Please send any subscription enquires or fees to Cindy Howells, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NP email [cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk)

## **Committee news**

After being on the committee for many years David Craven has decided to step down. This leaves the Committee without a Natsca rep. If you are a member of Natsca and GCG and wish to be on the committee please get in touch. Many thanks to David for all of his hard work.

## **Fossil, mineral and gem shows 2012**

9-10 June      Kempton Park Racecourse, London. Rock & Gem Show  
16-17 June     Bath and West Showground, Shepton Mallet. Rock & Gem Show  
7-8 July        Newcastle Racecourse, Newcastle Upon Tyne. Rock & Gem Show  
14-15 July      Farnham Maltings, Farnham. Rock & Gem Show  
4-5 August     Kempton Park Racecourse, London. Rock & Gem Show  
11-12 August   Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells. Rock & Gem show  
8-9 Sept        Newton Abbot Racecourse, Newton Abbot. Rock & Gem show  
6-10 October   York Racecourse, York. Rock & Gem show

For further information on Rock & Gem shows contact Rock and Gem Ltd, PO Box 72, Maidenhead SL6 7GB tel 01628 621697 email [info@rockngem.co.uk](mailto:info@rockngem.co.uk)  
[www.rockngem.co.uk](http://www.rockngem.co.uk)

10 November Haywards Heath Mineral Show. Sussex Mineral and Lapidary Society <http://www.sussexmineralandlapidarysociety.org.uk/smlsshow.htm>

## **Meeting reports**

### **Nature's Treasures IV. 3rd March 2012**

This event is run yearly by the Mineralogical Society, The Russell Society and the Gemmological Society and for the first time was held outside of London at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. In total about 85 people attended a day of talks and displays.

The talks were very varied: first was Derek Siveter who gave an excellent talk on re-creating 3D models of fossils. The preserved soft bodied fossils come from a site in the Welsh borders however non-destructive techniques such as the Synchrotron failed to reveal any more detail. Instead Derek's team went back to basics and took multiple photographs of sections by grinding a little bit off the rock each time. The technique was destructive but there were large numbers of specimens of each species used. He then used computer tomography programmes to stitch together the images to create fabulously detailed depictions of fossil species including many soft parts not seen before. Richard Patrick talked

about nuclear waste disposal sites, in particular highlighting the importance of finding the right minerals and rocks to contain radioactivity. David Palmer gave a visually stunning display of crystal structures and explained how knowing how the atoms can be arranged can help us create new technologies such as touch screens on i-pads etc.

After lunch Courtenay Smale gave a talk about the recovery of the Caerhays Mineral Collection—mentioned in the last Coprolite. The specimens shown were beautiful and many are now on display at Caerhays Castle in Cornwall. How many more collections are waiting in someone's attic? Jack Ogden for the Gemmological Association then tried to provoke the audience into contesting the healing properties of minerals and gems. He then provided an interesting historical talk showing where some of these myths might have come from and finished by showing that some minerals can be good for you. The final talk of the day was by David Pyle who talked about volcanoes.

All of the talks were of very good quality and made for a very interesting day. If the event is held again I recommend it to students and those wanting to know more about minerals and the numerous ways in which they can be used.

Helen Kerbey

### **Geology Today. 5th March - 14th March**

The publication Geology Today held what they termed an 'online event' for their Fossils and Minerals Explained series, organised by the Geological Society, the Geological Association and Wiley-Blackwell. The event was held over the internet for several days and various experts were available to answer questions. We signed up to see what it entailed, apparently with 1,400 other people. On four dates during this period many of the journal's publications were made available as pdfs for reading and downloading. Every date had a different theme, and one each for Fossils and Minerals. This is a great help to people who find it difficult to access journals and many of the subscribers to the event appeared to be from abroad or were involved in teaching. The 'discussions' often centred around people commenting how useful this event was in terms of making publications more widely available; it was disappointing that not many 'real' discussions took place. Maybe we should have started some? The articles available through the event only covered a limited range of fossil groups but I have no doubt that the release of articles was of interest to many people. A compilation of the articles is permanently available at <http://geologytoday.wordpress.com/2012/03/16/geology-today-minerals-and-fossils-thank-you/>

Helen Kerbey, Christian Baars

### **Forthcoming seminars and workshops**

21 May **Maths In Museums Workshop**. Aintree Racecourse, Liverpool run by GEM. An opportunity to explore how museums can develop activities that inspire and support learning in Maths. Contact: Kirsty Hall, GEM NW Convenor, Victoria

Gallery & Museum, University of Liverpool, Ashton Street, Liverpool, L69 3DR Tel: 0151 794 2348 Fax: 0151 794 4787 email: Kirsty.Hall@liv.ac.uk

11-16 June **Emerging Technology and Innovation in Natural History Collections Management** SPNHC 27th Annual Meeting Yale University New Haven Connecticut.

27th June **OpenCulture 2012 'In Defence of the Curator' by Dr. Tim Ewin**

Tim will be exploring the necessity of curators in a lively Q&A session on the 27th June at OpenCulture 2012. OpenCulture 2012 takes place on the 26th and 27th June at the Kia Oval, London. For more information please visit [www.collectionslink.org.uk/openculture2012](http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/openculture2012), call 020 7942 6080 or e-mail [events@collectionstrust.org.uk](mailto:events@collectionstrust.org.uk)

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/new-perspectives/1266-openculture-2012-provocation-in-defence-of-the-curator-by-dr-tim-ewin>

27 - 29 August **7th International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums**, Deutsches Hygiene Museum Dresden. [www.conventus.de/mm7](http://www.conventus.de/mm7)

4th & 5th September **William Smith Meeting**. The meeting will explore the relationship between the preserved strata of the rock record and the passage of time, extending from the controls on preservation of strata in the record, through the qualitative and statistical properties of stratigraphic data, to the implications for analysis, interpretation, modelling and prediction.

September 10-14, 2012, Oxford. **60th meeting of the Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy & 21st meeting of the Symposium of Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation**

22-23 October 2012 **Appreciating Physical Landscapes: Geotourism 1670 - 1970** History of Geology Group (HOGG), The Geological Society (Burlington House), London

### **News and publications**

Hellawell, J. and C.J. Nicholas 2012 Acid treatment effects on the stable isotopic signatures of fossils. *Palaeontology* 55(1):1-10

Larkin, N.r. 2011 Pyrite decay: cause and effect, prevention and cure. *NatSca News* 21: 35-43

**Wilsford-cum-Lake doorstep meteorite possibly the biggest to fall in UK.** News story taken from the BBC. A 200lb (90kg) meteorite that has

rested outside a house in Wiltshire for more than 80 years has now been examined by Professor Colin Pillinger of the Open University and he has decided that it is probably British, in fact he is "99.9% certain". The rock was confirmed as a meteorite some years ago by the Natural History Museum but the current owners do not know where it came from. Professor Pillinger has discovered that a

previous owner was an archaeologist and so he now believes it was possibly used by Druids and buried into a chalk mound. Iron meteorites are very unstable so the chalk mound would have provided some protection. Adrian Green, the Director of the Salisbury and Wiltshire Museum says that "it's not uncommon for exotic rocks to be built into burial mounds, and it's still covered in chalk which is the bedrock of the landscape" and as further evidence for why no-one would lug it from a great distance "it's not aesthetically pleasing"

Readers wishing to see the meteorite (and make their own mind up) will soon be able to as it is to go on display at the Salisbury and Wiltshire Museum in the autumn.

### **More meteorite news**

On April 22 a meteor exploded over the Sierra Nevada Hills sending potential meteorite debris into California. The meteor was thought to have weighed 70,000 tonnes (or the size of a minivan according to the Daily Telegraph). Hundreds of people went out in search of the meteorites and some have already been lucky—however only small fragments have yet been found. One lucky owner of two small fragments, each about 10g, is expecting to make \$1000 for them! A research team from NASA is due to start searching soon with the aid of a Zeppelin in the hope of finding a much larger fragment.

### **Peterborough Museum opens again**

After at least a year of closure the Peterborough Museum has finally re-opened. The renovation was a £3.2 million redevelopment funded by Vivacity, Peterborough City Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The web site at <http://www.vivacity-peterborough.com/museums-and-heritage/peterborough-museum/museum-redevelopment/> explains the new features.

The good news is that the text states that they have "Refurbished the Geology gallery, highlighting the internationally important collection of Jurassic marine reptiles." And also the Conservation labs: "Refurbished and relocated the conservation laboratory to continue our fossil conservation work" The Ice age displays have also been improved. General Admission to the museum is free.

If anyone is visiting this museum to see the new galleries please let us know at the Geological Curators' Group. We would like to see in practise how well the new displays promote the geological collections.

### **Bedford Museum still closed**

Since it is just down the road and has similar geological collection to Peterborough I have re-checked the status of Bedford Museum. Before closure for re-development the Museum was next door to the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery. The redevelopments involve merging the site. The Bedford Museum is now part of the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum. Currently the new museum is due to open in Spring 2013. The museum used to house a large Geology gallery with some unusual specimens from the private Bedford School whose collections formed the

start of the museum. There are also a large number of fossils from the Oxford Clay—particularly ammonites collected by Kevin Page in the late 1980's. Another museum to visit in hope when it re-opens.

### **On-line resources of interest**

#### **The Future of museums in the USA**

A video of a talk by Dr. Brent Glass, former director for the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, given at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University in April 2012. This is an American talk but they face the same cuts to public funding that we do in the UK.

<http://www.anasp.org/about/academy-news/archive/2012/April/future-of-museums/>

#### **USGS historic maps.**

A suite of historical topographic maps were released by the USGS in June 2011. See <http://nationalmap.gov/historical/> for how to access some of them for free.

<http://blog.geolsoc.org.uk/> Keep up to date with our affiliate Society with this interesting blog from the Geological Society

### **Editor's Note**

Thanks to all those who sent me articles and reports for this edition of Coprolite. Please keep sending information you think may be of interest to our members. Books and exhibitions are particularly hard to find. Reports from any meetings are welcome (not just GCG ones). Alternatively, if there's something you wish to read about that we don't cover let us know.

Helen Kerbey, National Museum Wales.

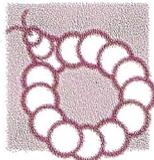
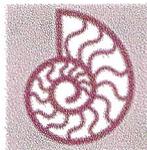
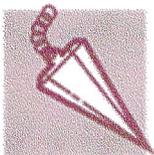
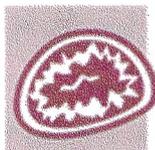
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