



DROPPINGS FROM THE GEOLOGICAL CURATORS GROUP

OPROLITE

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Membership

Membership Dues 2014

Many thanks to all who have already paid for this year (£15 UK, £18 overseas). If you have not done so, please could you send me a cheque asap. If you're not sure if you've paid or not, then do get in touch.

We can accept bank transfers as well as cheques or cash, but unfortunately not credit/debit cards or PayPal. The simplest method of payment is to set up an annual Standing Order, and the forms are available on our website: www.geocurator.org.

Arrears notice - Some members have failed to update their Standing Order payments with their banks from the previous subscription rate despite regular encouragement to do so. Please can those people ensure this is done before next year, as they will not be sent journal issues for 2015.

Please send cheques to **Cindy Howells**, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF10 3NP, or E-mail cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk

New Members

Lil Steven, Curator, NHM, **Deborah Hutchinson**, Collections Officer, Bristol Museum, **David Baines**, Digitisation Officer, Kew Gardens, **Sara Dickson**, volunteer, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, **Betty Quinn**, The Governors House, County Louth, Ireland.

Muscial Curators

Christian Baars is now the Senior Preventative Conservator and **Annette Townsend** is the Senior Conservator Natural Sciences at Angueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.

Dr Colin Forbes

GCG is sad to announce the death of Dr Colin Forbes, one time curator of the Sedgwick museum, Cambridge.

Message from the Chairman

Survey results - Firstly a big thank you to the 113 people who responded to our survey. Adverts were placed on JISCmail, (GCG and NatSCA), Facebook, Twitter and a mail round to all e-mail addresses we currently hold for our members. 74% of the replies came from respondents who currently manage Geological Collections and a total of 72 of our 160ish members replied, 33 of whom have over 20 years experience of managing Geological Collections. Results were calculated taking into account the whole dataset and again for GCG members only but the rough percentages of answers were very similar. Some interesting trends were observed and are briefly listed here:

- Only 42% of the respondents attended GCG meetings (the figure was 58% for GCG members only).
- Long travel distances and lack of time were the main reasons given for non-attendance.
- 1% of members who replied would consider subscribing to electronic versions of The Geological Curator but the figure was 88% for Coprolite.
- 91% of those who replied would welcome closer links with other related societies including NatSCA, SPNHC and HOGG.
- 64% of the total replies suggested that The GCG would be the first port of call for answering geological collections management questions. The figure was 74% for GCG Members only.
- The main area for seeking advice from GCG was on Conservation issues and very few indicated that they would like help with valuations.
- 86% indicated that a database of Natural History Collections like Fenscore would be of benefit to their work.
- Keeping members informed of latest happenings in Geological Collections Management, Monitoring and providing support for collections/staff at risk and a louder voice for advocating geological collections received more votes than holding seminars, study trips and publishing ideas in the Geological Curator.

As was mentioned in the last newsletter, Tim Ewin will be analysing the replies more thoroughly to list skill sets that we can provide and match them with the skills requested from the survey (see article later in this newsletter). The whole dataset will be analysed in greater depth and the committee intend to publish the findings and some recommendations in *The Geological Curator* later this year.

Subject Specialist Networks - I have attended several meetings for the NHM run UK Collections Connections Project. Julie Reynolds, the project co-ordinator, has written a short article about this for Coprolite. I reported in the last newsletter that I had attended a consortium meeting of Natural History Museums and subsequently volunteered for a subgroup that is looking to set up support networks. Part of this relates to establishing the relationship between the Consortium of museums, NatSCA and GCG. To summarise we see the consortium members as providing the backing and funds to set up projects like internships, exchanges and releasing their staff to help other institutions. GCG and NatSCA would continue to offer the specialist programmes that they currently run but would not have the financial burden of hiring staff or co-ordinating and supporting these exchanges. Our skills sharing network would facilitate these interactions and help make suitable placements for exchange of knowledge. We intend to apply for SSN funds to support meetings and help maintain an on-line register of experts. I have communicated these intentions to various members of NatSCA committee to ensure that any application we submit complements rather than duplicates what they are doing. I look forward to interesting discussions later this month in Cardiff at the SPNHC/NatSCA/GCG meeting where I will sign an MoU between our three groups. A copy of the text of the MoU is included in this newsletter.

I recently attended a meeting at the Geological Society to discuss the future structure of the Science Committee in relation to Affiliated and Specialist Groups like GCG. Full details are yet to be released by the Society but I hope that this will be an opportunity to renew and strengthen our links with The Geological Society. Some of you may have seen some correspondence on this matter on the JISCmail list and I have forwarded this to the Chair of the Geological Society Science Committee for comment.

Good collections news - I received a request from the family of John Humphries who are looking to find a suitable repository for his rock and petrology collection. We are pleased to say that the BGS look likely to take this collection on. We are also pleased to report that a letter we wrote in support of Steve Etches and his new museum at Kimmeridge has provided the outcome we were hoping for. We look forward to hearing about the progress of this exciting new museum. Another support letter written on behalf of Leeds City Museum to support an application to the John Ellermann Foundation has helped with a successful application to fund a temporary Geological Curator and support collections blitzes where specialists are brought in to assess the content of collections. Secretary Helen Kerbey attended a meeting at The Lapworth Museum to bring the community up to date with their HLF funded Redevelopment Project. All of these

projects are excellent success stories and we look forward to keeping you informed of their progress in the coming years.

Publications - We have been speaking to the Geological Society Publishing House for some advice on enhancing the profile of our journal to that some of the content published over the years can be better profiled and more easily accessed. Webmaster Hannah-Lee Chalk has recently scanned the indexes and made these more visible on the web site. I think that providing some sort of searchable index on our website in the future is a key way for us to advocate geological collections and provide support and advice to curators through our vast directory of publications since 1974. We shall also be looking into methods for allocating digital object identifiers (doi) to our past and future journal articles to increase their profile. On-line we have recently published a guest blog by Dean Lomax based on a 6 questions for a Geological Curator theme. I have asked him to suggest other people to feature in future blogs and I have already contacted some of them to provide content. If you would like to feature in a future blog then don't hesitate to get in touch.

<http://geocollnews.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/six-questions-for-a-geological-curator-dean-lomax-doncaster/>

Earth Science Week 2014, October 13-19 - <http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/earthscienceweek>. Finally we would like to encourage curators of Geological Collections to take part in Earth Science week by offering to provide behind the scenes tours of their collections. If you would be willing to offer a short tour behind the scenes during that week then please mail the GCG on geologicalcuratorsgroup@gmail.com. If you can't then why not raise the profile of geological museum collections by responding to the Geological Society's request to nominate your favourite museum for their 100 Great Geosites competition that closes on 19th July. You can do this on Facebook at www.facebook.com/100geosites, or twitter using #100geosites.

Giles Miller, Chairman.

Report on the skills requested by GCG survey responders

Timothy A, M, Ewin

Using the results from the recent GCG survey, I was asked by the committee to assess both the skills needed by museum stakeholders and those which the group could already offer. To do this, I listed all the responses given for several different questions, to capture as broad a range of responses as possible. These included:

Are there any subjects that you would like to see us cover as part of our programme?

What topics would you like to see covered in GCG Publications?

Is there anything that the GCG are not currently doing that you would like to see us supporting?

Once I had all the responses, the duplicates were removed and the remaining responses, there were 115, were then arranged into 10 categories. These

categories were arbitrarily selected on the basis that they encompassed a reasonable number of related responses. The responses covered a very broad range of curatorial issues for a wide spectrum of professionals at different stages of their career. These 10 categories were:

- Early Career training/ Non-geological specialist resources
- Mid-Career/ Advanced Geological curation training
- Legal and Ethical
- General Collections issues
- Museum partnerships
- Conservation/preparation/sourcing of curatorial supplies
- Digital collections creation/use/best practice
- Advocacy
- Outreach/exhibition/community engagement
- Fund raising

The full list of responses is too numerous to list here however these will shortly be put up on the website for all to view. I am fully aware that others may disagree with the titles of the categories and also the position of the various responses (I was rather undecided on several!) and I hope people will respond with alterations, additions and deletions to both the responses and the structuring of them into categories.

For me however, this subdivision not only provided a useful summary of the skills requested but also seemed to me to be a good way to inform future delivery of support for the geological community, either as a series of themed conferences or the development of other skills sharing resources. I would be very interested to hear what members think. Indeed some areas are already covered, in particular the AGM conference meeting being centred around attaining external grants.

Further analysis has centred on the skills offered by GCG members to share with others in the heritage sector. This has resulted in a list of skills, 79 in total, offered by the group. This skill offered list has been compared with the skills requested to give an idea of coverage. This has suggested variable results with many areas comfortably covered, such as collections management but significant areas without direct coverage. However, further work is required as many of the skills requested may already be covered but were simply not offered when asked previously. Several people have also asked for a list of skills required to sign up to rather than just supplying information. The skills request document will act as this list. So, to give members the chance to rectify this, all those people who previously offer their skills (or intimated that they would) in the survey will be contacted again and asked to fill existing gaps. If you did not respond but feel that you can offer some help, please contact me.

Timothy A. M. Ewin t.ewin@nhm.ac.uk

Exhibitions

Lego® on display Alderholt Military Museum and Eastleigh Museum.

Marine fossils and animals made from Lego® sitting side by side in a 'prehistoric aquarium'. The aquarium is one of two on display; this one at Alderholt Military Museum, the other at Eastleigh Museum. The aquaria are part of a touring exhibition, 'The Lost World Zoo', which had its origins in a larger temporary exhibition, at Milestones, Basingstoke.

Both aquaria feature coral (*Halcytes* sp), trilobites, lace crabs (*Marella* sp), fish, Crinoids (*Woodcrinus* sp) and ammonites. Other fossils and animals include bivalves and sharks. Above each aquarium are wall mounted domes with Cretaceous fossils from Hampshire. In addition to the aquaria, fossil plants, a full size Sabre-toothed Cat have been created in Lego bricks and an Archelon turtle in Duplo bricks. A Woolly Mammoth was also built for the exhibition at Milestones, but was unfortunately too large to tour around Hampshire's smaller museums. These have been displayed along side specimens from the geology collections, providing a fantastic opportunity to display over 60 fossils normally held in store.

For more information contact **Christine Taylor**, Keeper of Natural Sciences Hampshire County Council, <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/natural-science>
Or see: www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/chilcomb-house/whatson-chilcomb.htm

Collections News

Rescue of the R.M.C. Eagar archive. Members of GCG and the Manchester Geological Association (MGA) have rescued a valuable research archive which was under threat of disposal. Dr R.M.C. ('Michael') Eagar was Keeper of Geology at Manchester Museum for 42 years from 1945 until his retirement in 1987, and was the world expert on the biostratigraphy of non-marine bivalves from the Upper Carboniferous of Europe and North America. His vast research collection of over 20,000 specimens, which relate to over 100 published papers, is housed in Manchester Museum, but when Michael died in 2003, an important paper archive, relating to this research, remained in the family home in Knaresborough. On the sale of this house at short notice last December, Michael's study, which had been untouched since his death, was about to be cleared and the contents skipped, when GCG and the MGA stepped in. Two car loads of archive were saved and brought back to Manchester. Approximately half of this material relates to Michael's published work and, thanks to Mike Howe and his colleagues, has now been housed by the British Geological Survey (BGS) at Keyworth.

The remaining half relates to the Eagar family history including his father, George Fraser Fitzgerald Eagar, M.C., who was a mining engineer of some repute, designing a breathing apparatus used extensively during the Great War; his uncle Waldo McGillicuddy Eagar, who was a key figure in the establishment and development of the National Association of Boys' Clubs, and also in the Royal National Institute for the Blind, where he was a good friend of Helen Keller; and

his grandfather Alexander Eagar, who was a published poet. This valuable family archive, including many photographs, letters, wills, and a family history drawn on parchment and going back to Alfred the Great, would certainly have been skipped had it not been for the last-minute action by GCG and MGA. It will be forwarded to Michael's daughter in the near future. For further details please contact me in the first instance.

John Nudds, The University of Manchester, Formerly Keeper of Geology
Manchester Museum 1988-2003

Publications and resources of interest

Roycroft, P. 2014. Julius Hanna: A Genealogical Sketch of an Important Belfast Amateur Mineralogist. *Journal of the Genealogical Society of Ireland*, **15**, 97-110.

Julius Hanna, a Belfast industrialist and amateur mineralogist whose collection of some 1,400 specimens was sold to the Belfast Museum in 1926; this collection, called the 'Hanna Collection' is now with the Ulster Museum - under the care of Kenneth James - where some 33 of Hanna's specimens are currently on public display [see <http://www.nmni.com/um/What-s-on/Permanent-Displays/Earths-Treasures>]. For a copy of the paper email Patrick Roycroft <proyc6@aim.com>

Fossil, mineral and gem shows 2014

- 5-6 July Newcastle Upon Tyne Race Course, Rock & Gem Show
- 13 July Kidlington, Oxford Mineral Fossil Show
- 2-3 August Kempton Park Racecourse. Rock & Gem Show
- 9-10 August Royal Welsh Showground. Rock & Gem Show
- 16-17 August Harrogate Pavilion, Rock & Gem Show

Find further information on Rock & Gem shows at www.rockngem.co.uk email info@rockngem.co.uk. Find further information on Oxford Mineral Fossil Shows at www.oxfordshow.co.uk, email oxfordshow@gmail.com.

Important news! **40th Anniversary of the GCG**

- ★ Are you a founder member? Have you been with us for 40 years?
- ★ Come and celebrate with us at a meal after the AGM at Birmingham on the 2nd December 2014. See the Events section for more details.
- ★ Names to the Programme Secretary: Jim Spencer, email: Jimspencer11@gmail.com or phone Helen Kerbey on 029 2057 3367.

Events at a glance

Date / Title / Venue See text for more information

22-28 June 2014 / 29th Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections Annual Meeting, Historic Collections- Future Resource. / Cardiff

23 June 2014 / SPNHC & GCG field trip / Ogmore, South Wales

18-20 July / HOGG Brecon trip / Brecon

2 September 2014 / GCG & SPPC joint meeting / York

1-6 September 2014 / SVPCA meeting / York

1-5 September 2014 / 21st Meeting IMA / Johannesburg, South Africa

11 September 2014 / GCG & RMS Geo-Materials Sample Preparation for Microscopy Workshop / Oxford

17 October 2014 / NatSca & GCG Hazardous Minerals / Oxford Natural History Museum

13-19 October 2014 / Earth Science Week, 'Our Geo-Heritage' / Various

19-20 October 2014 / GSA Advancing the Digitization of Paleontology and Geoscience Collections / Vancouver, Canada

3-4 November / HOGG Geology and Medicine conference /

2nd December / GCG 40th Anniversary Meal / Birmingham

2-3rd December 2014 / Geological Curators Group 41st AGM, Grant writing and obtaining funds / Birmingham

2015

March 2015 / Moray Geology: Past, Present, Future / Elgin Museum

23-24 April 2015 / HOGG William Smith Conference /

May / GCG workshop on mineral identification / Buxton t.b.c.

18 June 2015 / HOGG History of geology / tbc

26-28 August 2015 / Flugsaurier / Portsmouth.

31 August 2015 / SPPC / National Oceanographic Centre, Southampton

1-3 September 2015 / SVPCA / National Oceanographic Centre, Southampton

November 2015 / HOGG 21st anniversary / tbc

Check our website www.geocurator.org for updates to our seminar programme or contact the Programme Secretary Jim Spencer (Jimspencer11@gmail.com) with any questions.

Facebook - GeologicalCuratorsGroup

Twitter - @OriginalGCG

Forthcoming seminars and workshops

Check our website www.geocurator.org for updates to our seminar programme or Contact the Programme Secretary Jim Spencer (Jims Spencer 11@gmail.com) with any questions.

June 22nd-28th 2014

29th Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections Annual Meeting, Historic Collections- Future Resource.

During June 2014 Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (AC-NMW), in partnership with the Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA), and the GCG, are honoured to be hosting the 29th SPNHC Annual General Meeting in the capital city of Wales, Cardiff.

The meeting will be the usual busy mix of field-trips, technical sessions, workshops and social events run over the course of the week. At its heart will be the two days of talks, trade-show and demonstrations which will be held at the iconic Wales Millennium Centre in the historic Cardiff Bay area of the city.

The overall theme of the 2014 conference will be 'Historic Collections: Future Resource' which will be an opportunity to link the collections at the heart of Natural History Institutions to the demands and uses these collections are meeting in the modern world. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/spnhc2014/>

23rd June Ogmore trip

As part of the international SPNHC meeting in Cardiff, GCG are sponsoring and organising a field-trip on Monday 23rd June to Ogmore-by-Sea and Southerndown in the Vale of Glamorgan. This will explore the local Carboniferous Limestone and its relationship with the overlying Triassic and Jurassic deposits. The trip is fairly full at the time of writing although there may be a few spaces left. Please check the SPNHC website, or contact Cindy Howells for details - cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk

1st-5th September 2014

21st General Meeting of the International Mineralogical Association to be held from at the Sandton Convention centre in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Theme: Minerals, museums, culture and history.

Monday 1st September – Saturday 6th September 2014

62nd SVPCA and 23rd Symposium of Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation (SPPC) with GCG, York

Monday 1st September – Field Trip, Saltwick Bay led by Dean Lomax.

Tuesday 2nd September – SPPC/GCG, York Medical Rooms, Stonegate, with visit to store rooms of Yorkshire Museum, plus Icebreaker.

Tuesday is a joint meeting of GCG with the Symposium of Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation (SPPC). This is part of the week-long SVPCA meeting in York on all aspects of vertebrate palaeontology, although the GCG day can include almost any palaeontological topics. Deadlines for abstracts and

registration are Friday 20th June. Registration is £20 for this day only, or £80 for the full week. Please check out the website http://svpca.org/years/2014_york/second.circular.php for further details. Talks and posters from GCG members would be especially welcome.

Wednesday 3rd – Friday 5th September – SVPICA, University of York.

Saturday 6th September – Field Trip, Alum Quarry, Whitby Museum and Rotunda Museum, Scarborough.

11th September 2014

Geo-Materials Sample Preparation for Microscopy Workshop

Joint meeting by the Royal Microscopy Society and GCG

http://www.rms.org.uk/events/Forthcoming_Events/Geo-Materials

A one day workshop discussing existing and new techniques used in the preparation and storage of geo-materials initially examined by light and scanning electron microscopy.

13th-19th October 2014

Earth Science Week, 'Our Geo-Heritage'

Nominate the 100 best geosites - please nominate your favourite museum.

<http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/100geosites>

17th October 2014 GCG-NatSCA Workshop

Hazards in museum geological collections – the practicalities

Oxford University Museum of Natural History

Geological materials can present a variety of hazards to humans, sometimes with additional legal requirements to the way they should be stored and used. This workshop will clarify the nature of the hazards, and outline responsibilities and practical steps that will support museum professionals working with geological material. The focus of the training will be on seeing real specimens and work areas, discussing how safe conditions can be developed at reasonable cost, and learning where to get expert support and advice.

Topics will include: Responsibilities and risk assessments, Safe handling, Radioactive, asbestos and toxic specimens, Protecting specimens from hazards, Good laboratory practice, Looking after visitors.

The workshop is run jointly by the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of Wales.

2nd-3rd December 2014

Writing Effective Grant Proposals for Collections Projects

Geological Curators Group 41st AGM, Birmingham City Museum.

This two day seminar will focus on practical and informative methods of obtaining funds and writing grants for working with geological collections in various different ways. Our key note speaker will be **Nick Poole** from the Collections Trust.

Provisional programme and call for speakers:

2nd December

10a.m. - 4p.m. Talks and workshops

4:15p.m. - 40th GCG AGM

Evening - 40th anniversary meal.

3rd December

Visit to Dudley Museum, possibly including a trip on the canal.

We are looking for practical and inspiring talks of around 15-20 minutes on fund raising and grant writing. Contact the programme secretary for more details:

Jin Spencer, E-mail: Jimsencer11@gmail.com

HOGG - History of Geology Group Meetings - open to GCG

Details on events may be found at www.historyofgeologygroup.co.uk.

18-20 July - GCG members are very welcome to join our weekend field trip centred in Brecon and following Murchison, led by Duncan Hawley. 3-4 November Geology and Medicine conference

23-24 April 2015 -William Smith Conference on William Smith's Map

18th June 2015 -an 'open meeting' on no particular theme other than the history of geology.

November 2015 - a celebration of HOGG's 21st anniversary .

Geological Society of America 2014 Annual Meeting Session Announcement

We are pleased to announce the technical session "Advancing the Digitization of Paleontology and Geoscience Collections: Projects, Programs, and Practices" to be held at the 2014 GSA Annual Meeting in Vancouver, Canada this October. The session is sponsored by iDigBio, in collaboration with the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, the Paleontological Society, GSA Geoinformatics, University of Colorado Museum of Natural History, and Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Abstracts submission opens April 1st: <http://www.geosociety.org/meetings/2014/>

Registration of interest for the Elgin Museum 'Moray Geology: Past, Present, Future' conference

Opened in 1843, Elgin Museum is Scotland's oldest independent museum, exhibiting local historical, archaeological and geological objects. It also houses a Scottish Government Recognised Collection of Devonian fish and Permo-Triassic terrestrial reptile fossils, some of which are unique to the Moray area. This collection is currently undergoing extensive re-organisation and cataloguing by Dr Sue Beardmore, the temporary curatorial assistant (geology and palaeontology) at the museum. To mark the scheduled completion of the task, and to highlight the importance of the collection, a conference is proposed for March 2015 (dates to be confirmed) comprising a day of talks, on the Recognised Collection and its contribution to the museum's history, the usage of the collections at present and

potential ideas for the future. There will also be the opportunity to visit a number of the field localities and find sites.

At this time, we are seeking a registration of interest from anyone who would like, firstly, to attend the event and, secondly, to display posters in the museum of related research throughout the conference; the facility will also be provided for posters to be presented in absentium. To register interest, please email **Dr Sue Beardmore** (curator@elginmuseum.org.uk), providing, if relevant, a short description of work that is available for presentation. In the interim, the Elgin Museum is open Monday-Saturday until the end of October, or at other times by appointment. Entry is free, donations are welcome.

Meeting Reports

Lyme Regis Fossil Festival - 2nd – 4th May 2014

If you've never attended the Lyme Regis Fossil Festival in May, then why? There is an increasing trend for geological festivals in the UK, but this one was one of the first, and for loads of reasons it has to be the best.

Imagine the best fossil-collecting locality in the UK. Then add sea, sand, rock-pools and fantastic fossils. Stir in a little sunshine, ice-cream, and lots of good cheer, and top off with a whole tent-full of activities for the family. This festival has been running for the past 10 years or so, and has now settled into a three/four day format with schools booked into the Friday, and public activities all weekend. It usually runs on the May Bank Holiday weekend, with the Monday itself turned over to a food or art festival.

Lyme Regis is always a fascinating place to visit, and is often very busy as well, especially during the fossil festival weekend. Accommodation needs to be booked well in advance, and many of the B&B's will only take bookings for 2 or 3 nights. Parking is relatively easy and cheap, with plenty of spaces available within the Long Stay Car Parks in the morning, and also frequent shuttles to and from the 'Park and Rides' further afield for later in the day.

Walking down Silver Street towards the sea front, one starts to notice fossils appearing in almost all shop windows, together with posters about fossil collecting trips, Mary Anning walks and various fossil-themed activities. The town gets busier the further you go, with children clutching hammers and rolled up dinosaur paintings rather than buckets and spades. Past the Old Forge Fossil Shop, and at least three bakeries doing a roaring trade, and then one comes out at the little car-park on the front. This is closed for the weekend, and mostly taken up by a very large goggle-eyed pliosaur! There's a small caravan with information and booklets, and plenty of volunteers wearing orange t-shirts showing people where to go.

The most obvious place to start is the large marquee adjacent to the promenade, and this is jam-packed full of people and activities. Most activities are free, and

aimed at children as well, so there's plenty to occupy families if the weather turns cold or wet. The Natural History Museum, London, have the first section and they bring down masses of staff, both specialist curators and education staff. You can bring your finds to be identified, have a go at picking out shark's teeth, and numerous other activities. If you can fight your way through this section then you pass onto a multitude of other stalls, some selling guide books, others painting fossil replicas, polishing sectioned ammonites, or making dinosaur footprints. The activities vary from year to year, but are hosted by groups such as the Geologists Association, Lyme Regis Museum, Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, Plymouth University, National Oceanography Centre in Southampton, Isle of Wight Museum, British Antarctic Survey, Dorset Geologists, the Paleontological Association, the Buckland Club and the Jurassic Coast Team.

In the middle you'll find a coffee stall for that well-earned break, then onwards, through even more activities, to the final section with a number of local dealers and collectors selling fossils, minerals, and jewellery ranging from pocket money pieces up to unique special items. Check out our very own GCG member, Chris (and Alex) Moore's stall here. If you have no luck finding your own fossils on the beach, you can always pop in here and select a ready prepared ammonite, bivalve, or Green River fish (!) to pass off as your own find. Just don't forget to take the price label off first!

Ok, you've done the marquee, so now where? The Lyme Regis Museum is always free entry on these weekends, so it's well worth calling in here to look at the displays of fossils and local history, and while you're here, check out the times of the fossil collecting trips run by curator Paddy Howe and his colleagues. There is a charge for these, but you're guaranteed to find several fossils and gain a bit of knowledge about the local geology too, so they are well worth it, and tend to book up very quickly. Paddy leads one trip each day, at low tide, out to the best collecting areas to the east of the town. You don't need any special kit – although it's muddy in places and slippery too, so wellies are ideal. You'll come back with several finds, so do take a few strong plastic bags with you, but watch the tides carefully as you can get cut off very easily here, and don't go near the cliffs as they are very prone to falls.

Horace the Travelling Pliosaur was parked next to the marquee all weekend this year, with his walk-in cinematic belly! Adrian Gray had his usual awesome stone balancing tent, and there were numerous other events and activities throughout the town. Also, don't forget to check out the fossil shops, and particularly Richard Bizley's shop (opposite the Dinosaur Museum), for his fantastic range of plastic model dinosaurs, and palaeo-art. I apologise if I haven't mentioned everything or everybody, but really there's just too much to get through in just one day – you need to come for the weekend.

Later in the day, if you start to flag a little, there are usually a few talks organised. Some years there are gallery talks in the museum, but this year

there were only evening presentations, although these are always on varied topics. They tend to be suited more for an adult audience and there's a small charge for these as well.

To round off a perfect day, I suggest an evening spent in one or other of the local hosteries. The Pilot Boat is usually a good meeting point for many geologists, although the pubs over by the Cobb are also popular and offer excellent food.

I hope that this will encourage more of you to visit the festival next year – with the theme of 'Mapping the Earth' this promises to be an equally successful event, with even more going on. The dates will be 1-3 May, 2015, and you can find out more information at <http://www.fossilfestival.co.uk/>.

Cindy Howells, National Museum of Wales

News - Geology and Government

South Carolina became the 40th US state to designate an official state fossil when Bill H.4482 was signed into law by State Governor Nikki Haley on May 16th, 2014. In a state where legislators regularly clash over science education, and there is still intense debate over the teaching of evolution as fact, the passage of the bill was not always smooth.

The story began when Olivia McConnell - an 8-year old from Lake City - visited a restaurant that listed the state symbols on the menu. When she found that South Carolina did not have a state fossil she wrote to legislators and asked them to name one. She proposed the mammoth, in part, because its teeth were one of the first vertebrate fossils found in North America when they were dug from a S.C plantation in 1725. The discovery was recorded in Mark Catesby's *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* (1743); this is first known mention of mammoth remains in the Americas. He wrote: "At a place in *Carolina* called *Stono*, was dug out of the Earth three or four Teeth of a large Animal, which, by the concurring Opinion of all the *Negroes*, native *Africans*, that saw them, were the Grinders of an Elephant....".

A Bill to name the mammoth as state fossil was sponsored by State Representative Robert Ridgeway and State Senator Kevin Johnson, having its first reading in the House of Representatives on January 14th. It read:

Whereas, giant mammoths used to roam South Carolina; and
Whereas, scientists have identified the fossils of about six hundred and fifty species of vertebrates in South Carolina to date; and
Whereas, it has been recognized that fossilized mammoth teeth were discovered in a swamp in South Carolina in 1725; and
Whereas, this discovery has been credited as the first scientific identification of a North American vertebrate fossil. Now, therefore,
Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:
SECTION 1. Article 9, Chapter 1, Title 1 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

"Section 1-1-712A. The Columbian Mammoth is designated as the official State Fossil of South Carolina."

The Bill passed its requisite readings in the House and was progressing well until it passed to the State Senate. On March 25th Senator Kevin Bryant proposed an amendment to the bill that would also create an "official state passage from an historical text". The lines he chose were Genesis 1:24-25 and Genesis 1:31 from the King James Bible:

'And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.'

This amendment was ruled out of order on the grounds that it was not germane to the bill.

On April 1st Sen. Bryant proposed a further amendment which was accepted by the Senate such that the bill now read:

"The Columbian Mammoth, which was created on the Sixth Day with the other beasts of the field, is designated as the official State Fossil of South Carolina and must be officially referred to as 'the Columbian Mammoth', which was created on the Sixth Day with the other beasts of the field".

Bryant denied any intention to stall the bill, telling reporters: "I think it's a good idea to designate the mammoth as the state fossil, I don't have a problem with that. I just felt like it'd be a good thing to acknowledge the *creator* of the fossils."

A further hurdle came on April 2nd when the Bill was opposed by Senate majority leader Harvey Peeler, who wanted it further amended to include a moratorium on designating further state symbols. "It's past time for the state of South Carolina to recognize we have enough state official whatevers." he said. The state already has fifty symbols ranging from state beverage (milk) to state craft (sweetgrass basket weaving). Following appeals from constituents, Sen. Peeler removed his objections.

The Bill was returned to the House on April 9th but, after its members refused to accept the Senate's amendments, it was sent for debate by a joint conference committee of the two chambers. The committee agreed to remove the amendments and the Bill, with its original wording, passed the House vote 98-0 and the Senate 32-3.

It is worth noting that the original wording of the Bill named the woolly mammoth (*Mammuthus primigenius*) as state fossil but it was altered at an early stage to the Columbian mammoth (*Mammuthus columbi*). This is the third time that the

Columbian mammoth has been named as a state fossil: Washington adopted it in 1998 and Nebraska adopted it, along with the woolly mammoth and the imperial mammoth, in 1967.

Putnisite - a new mineral

Amongst the surprisingly high number of minerals discovered already this year Putnisite made the news - possibly helped by its photogenic purple colour, and definitely helped by Facebook and twitter.

This new mineral is named putnisite after Drs Christine and Andrew Putnis from the University of Münster, Germany, for their outstanding contributions to mineralogy. It occurs as isolated pseudocubic crystals, up to 0.5 mm in diameter, and is associated with quartz and a near amorphous Cr silicate. It is translucent, with a pink streak and vitreous lustre. It is brittle and shows one excellent and two good cleavages parallel to {100}, {010} and {001}. The mineral has a Mohs hardness of 1.5–2, a measured density of 2.20 g/cm³ and a calculated density of 2.23 g/cm³. It was discovered during prospecting by a mining company in Western Australia.

Its formula is: SrCa₄Cr₈³⁺(CO₃)₈SO₄(OH)₁₆•25H₂O

P. Elliott *et al.* 2014. Putnisite, SrCa₄Cr₈³⁺(CO₃)₈SO₄(OH)₁₆•25H₂O, a new mineral from Western Australia: description and crystal structure. *Mineralogical Magazine*, vol. 78, no. 1, pp. 131–144; doi: 10.1180/minmag.2014.078.1.10

For other new minerals see the IMA list at <http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ima-cnmnc/>

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