



OPROLITE

**No. 74
November
2014**

**DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP**

Coprolite is compiled and produced by Helen Kerbey, Department of Natural Sciences, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF10 3NP (e-mail Helen.Kerbey@museumwales.ac.uk, tel +44 (0)29 20 573250). 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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Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the **41st Annual General Meeting** of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, on **Tuesday 2nd December 2014 at 4.00pm**. Nominations for the posts of Officers and two Committee Members must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Helen Kerbey, National Museum Wales, CF10 3NP email hkerbey@museumwales.ac.uk. By 11th November 2013.

40th Anniversary Dinner

To celebrate our 40th year of existence, GCG would like to invite you to join us in a celebratory dinner to be held after the AGM in Birmingham on 2nd December 2014. The venue will be the Old Joint Stock Pub, on Temple Row West – near to the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery (www.oldjointstock.co.uk). Here we have a private room booked, and hope to have an after dinner speaker. Numbers will be limited to the room's capacity, so please order a place as soon as possible.

We would particularly love to see Brighton Medallists, early committee members and those who participated in the early days of GCG, as well as newer members. All members should already have received a booking form (for this and the AGM) by post or email. Please contact us if you haven't had one. Replies should be sent to **Jim Spencer**, 3 Merlyn Court, Austin Drive, Didsbury, Manchester. M20 6EA. Email: jimspencer11@gmail.com

Membership 2015

Subs for next year are due any time after 1st January, but I don't mind being sent cheques earlier! Rates are likely to remain the same for the coming year, but some are still paying the older rate from several years ago. If you pay annually by Standing Order, please check that you are paying the correct rate as those in arrears will not be receiving the journal next year. Remember we **can't change your SO, only you can do this.** If you are not sure whether you are up to date, or which rate you're paying, please contact me. Rates are £15 UK, £18 Non-UK, £10 unwaged. **Cindy Howells**, Membership Secretary, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF10 3NP. Telephone: 029 20573354. Email: cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk

Musical Curators

Neil Owen joins Leeds Museums and Galleries as Assistant Curator of Geology for three years as part of the John Ellerman funded Geoblitz project. **Camilla Nichol** is leaving Leeds Museums and Galleries to take up the post of Chief Executive of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust.

Erratum

71% of members who replied to our survey would consider subscribing to electronic versions of The Geological Curator not 1% as printed.

Chairman's Report

GCG Committee meeting, 23rd September 2014, University of Manchester.

SPNHC/NatSCA/GCG meeting: Since the last committee meeting the major event has been the joint meeting in June at Cardiff between SPNHC, NatSCA and GCG. Organising a meeting like this is a major undertaking so many thanks need to go to committee members Cindy Howells and Helen Kerbey for their roles on the organizing committee that included speaking the opening ceremony on behalf of the GCG, leading field trips and many of the tasks necessary to ensure the smooth running of a very successful meeting. My part in the meeting was to speak at the NatSCA session on "Collections Advocacy" on behalf of the GCG and to take part in the following panel discussion on the same subject. Before that session we signed a memorandum of understanding between the three organisations and agreed the immediate way forward for initial discussions. At a breakfast meeting at the conference the chairs of our three organisations agreed that we would choose three "emerging professionals" from our memberships to discuss and suggest three key ways in which we can

improve collaborations between our groups. In return these members will receive free membership to each of the three groups. I am delighted to say that we have chosen committee members Emma Bernard (NHM, London) and Sarah King (York Museums Trust) to take this forward on our behalf.

GCG 2014 survey results and strategy: Partly to help with initiating dialogue with SPNHC and NatSCA and also to facilitate a future application for funds to support our activities, the committee has put together a strategy document based on the results of the survey we carried out in Feb/March this year. We aim to publish it in the next edition of the Geological Curator and outline the direction in which we see the GCG taking in the next few years based on the comments from our membership. The main body of this paper will be a skills list that will form the basis for a skills sharing initiative that Tim Ewin (NHM, London) will be taking forward. We also want to base our future talks programmes on results from this document and will almost certainly be carrying out a future survey to see which these many subjects are the most requested. I have also asked Kate Riddington (Lapworth Museum, Birmingham) to make a list of past seminar and workshop subjects as repeating some of the more successful events may be easier and more efficient than to develop new ones.

Other meetings: On the subject of repeating successful meetings, our joint meeting with NatSCA on hazardous collections to be held at Oxford University Museum in October has been over subscribed and many GCG members have found themselves on the waiting list. We will also certainly be re-running this workshop, probably in Oxford again so watch this space. I attended a joint Royal Microscopical Society/GCG Meeting in Oxford this September, organised partly by former GCG committee member Owen Green on the subject of "Geomaterials and preparation for microscopy". Committee member Helen Kerbey also spoke at that meeting that we held in the new Geological Sciences building at the University of Oxford. September was a busy month for GCG meetings as the SVPCA met at York Museums Trust at a meeting partly organized and hosted by committee member Sarah King. Yorkshire was also the venue for the Yorkshire Fossil Festival held around the Rotunda Museum in Scarborough on 12-14th September. I was able to represent the GCG on a stall highlighting the GB 3-D Fossils project in which we were one of the organisations involved. Our thanks go to Simon Harris and his colleagues at the BGS for transporting the 3-D printer and demonstrating it so enthusiastically to members of the public.

English Geodiversity Charter: In September I hosted a committee meeting of the English Geodiversity Forum at the NHM, London. The main aim of this meeting was to prepare for the launch of the English Geodiversity Charter at a meeting for MPs at Westminster on 21st October. Members on our listserver GEOCURATORS may well have seen requests for you to invite your MPs to this meeting and if you still wish to do so then please contact me as soon as possible. At this Westminster meeting it looks like there will be the possibility to make a short presentation using eye catching hand specimens that will be designed to

highlight local issues, important facts about Geodiversity and the role of museums in delivering that message.

Collections at risk: We have been following the situation of the Conesby Rock Store in Lincolnshire and have suggested to local contact Malcolm Fry that the local MP be invited to the Geodiversity Charter launch. A local deposit of Frodingham Ironstone was placed in a small area of open land in Lincolnshire to enable geologists to study the formation and collect examples of the local fossils. Former BGC/NatSCA rep Steve Thompson was personally involved in arranging for this site to be created. The local council has suggested that the site could be cleared to make way for the construction of buildings. We are waiting for the latest news on this site to see if a letter of support is needed as there are possibilities for the material to be moved elsewhere.

Rockwatch Prize and public engagement: I have negotiated a £50 prize with Chris Darmon of GeoSupplies that we agreed at the last committee meeting to match from GCG funds so that the total will be a 100 pound token for GeoSupplies. I have made contact with Susan Brown about the supply of RockWatch leaflets that we have but still need to discuss terms of any award, age-groups and method of assessment. Spending time on the stall at the Scarborough Fossil Festival set me thinking about future engagement with younger geological curators and how we may effectively deliver activities at future festivals such as Lyme Regis or the GA. I think we should discuss the possibility of having a dedicated member of the committee whose remit will be public engagement. At the NatSCA meeting I asked Isla Gladstone (Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives) if she would consider managing the GCG blog and she has suggested that we widen the remit to include examples of public engagement. This suggestion has previously been raised and supported by the committee. I would like to thank Isla for offering help in this area and welcome her to the committee as a co-opted member.

Earth Science Week - Geological Collection Open Days and 100 Geosites: A key method for public engagement and our suggestion for participation in The Geological Society's Earth Science Week, has been the facilitation of behind the scenes collections tours. Our suggestion has been to encourage geological curators to open up their stores during Earth Science Week for behind the scenes tours. We have offered to host a list of collections on our website available to view by the public during that week. The idea is that we publicise contact details and it is up to interested parties to book directly. Up until the meeting, we had only one museum sign up so I would like to encourage other museum curators to contact us and offer support to our participation in Earth Science Week. The Geological Society is also carrying out a survey to compile a list of the 100 Great Geosites. We have been campaigning for people to nominate and vote for museums as geosites. It will be interesting to see how many museums make it to the final 100.

Pilot Projects for UK Collections Connections Project: Finally I have previously mentioned my involvement in the UK Collections Project, a consortium

of UK Natural History Museums with the remit to assess and move forward mechanisms for networking between UK museums and for better advocating for natural history collections. We have been asked to submit a potential case study for a skills sharing placement. The idea is that a staff member of a museum who requires on the job training, is placed for a week or two maximum, in another museum to receive training. A central fund, initially provided by the NHM, London, will allow for travel, accommodation and subsistence for the traveling curator to be paid. The Consortium aims to trial these placements and to submit a larger grant application to ensure that this initiative can be more sustainable. I see the GCG vital in facilitating the future matching of skills so that any resource can be effectively managed in the future.

Increase in subs from 2016: We are to put a proposal to the AGM to increase our subs from 2016 to help fund various projects that we would like to take forward. Firstly committee meetings are becoming increasingly more expensive because institutions that previously supported committee members to attend are now requesting that the GCG fund travel expenses for their staff. We would also like to offer expenses to invited speakers to our talks programmes. Previously we have not done this but feel that by pre-booking guest speakers so that the sessions can be advertised in advance, we can encourage better attendance. It would also appear that going electronic and cutting down the print run for the journal does not save us as much as we had hoped.

Future of Coprolite: Our survey included questions to gauge the feelings of our membership about electronic delivery of our newsletter and journal and we are committed to proceeding with this. We will be experimenting with a more regular but shorter version of Coprolite that will be delivered as a pdf via the web site. Members will be alerted to new versions becoming available by e-mail. Those that wish to continue to receive hard copy will be mailed printed versions of the relevant news sections three times a year at the times that Coprolite would normally have been mailed. Members will have to opt in for paper copy but it is hoped that the benefits of receiving more regular, shorter, more up to date communications and the potential cost saving to the GCG will encourage members to rely on the electronic versions only.

Member list of e-mails: As a result we would like members to contact membership secretary Cindy Howells with their updated e-mail addresses so that we can keep you informed more easily. It was interesting to see that the best response to our survey came when we directly e-mailed members. The JISCMail list was effective too but not all members subscribe and it is not exclusive to our membership. We would encourage all members to join the list for the most up to date news on geological collections management.

Electronic Geological Curator: The situation with electronic delivery of the journal is less clear-cut. We feel that we need to further investigate methods of hosting and making available the electronic versions to subscribers. At present, hard copy is only available to subscribers for the first two years after publication

and we wish to retain this situation when we deliver electronic copy so that subscribers continue to get value for membership. There are also issues with providing long term archiving for both personal members and institutional members. As a result we wish to start offering electronic delivery of the journal in 2016.

Finally, I would encourage you to come to the AGM in Birmingham this year to celebrate our 40th Anniversary. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at this event.

Giles Miller, Chairman.

Publications and resources of interest

John Scouler (c1804-1871), Scottish Naturalist: A life with two voyages, by E. Charles Nelson. Glasgow Natural History Society, ISBN-10: 0956529518.

A newly published book with sections on the Andersonian Museum, Glasgow, (1831-1880) as part of the biography of its first curator, John Scouler. For more information on Scouler see: <http://www.universitystorry.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH16202&type=P>.

Dinosaurs of the British Isles by Dean R. Lomax and , Nobumichi Tamura. Illustrations by, Scott Hartman, Jaime, A. Headden and Gregory S. Paul. Publisher: Siri Scientific Press, ISBN-10: 0957453051.

The first publication devoted to British Dinosaurs. Information gathered from over 50+ institutions and organisations including many museums.

Publications about Frederic Harmer:

Kington, J.A. 2013. Frederic William Harmer: Geologist and Pioneer Palaeometeorologist. *Bulletin of the Geological Society of Norfolk*, **63**, 13-42.

Kington, J.A. 2014. *Frederic W. Harmer: A Scientific Biography*, SpringerBriefs in Environment, Security, Development and Peace, Volume **19**, Springer-Verlag, Cham, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht and London.

Pioneer in the field of East Anglian geology, Frederic W. Harmer was also one of the last members of a distinguished group of amateur geologists who had been responsible for making major advances in the science during the Victorian era and early years of the 20th century. In particular, he played a key role in elucidating the Pliocene and Pleistocene stratigraphy in the east of England by developing the use of mollusca for biostratigraphic correlation with the Craggs of East Anglia. For more information contact Jon Kington. www.cru.uea.ac.uk/cru/people/kington/

Fossil, mineral and gem shows 2014

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.

Forthcoming seminars and workshops

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, thoughts or ideas for workshops and meetings.

GCG Seminar and 41st AGM 2nd and 3rd December 2014

Writing Effective Grant Proposals for Collections Projects

Tuesday 2nd December

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham

- 10.15 Tea/Coffee
- 10.45 Welcome to Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery.
- 10:50 **Birmingham Museum's Geology Collections**, Luanne Meehitiya, Birmingham Museums Trust.
- 11.00 **The Answer's in the Question – common pitfalls in writing grant proposals**, Nick Poole, CEO, Collections Trust.
- 11.30 **Grants for Museums and Geological Projects in Ireland - success factors**, Matthew Parkes, National Museum of Ireland.
- 12.00 **From Molluscs to Meadows: recent grant-funded natural science projects at Leeds Museums and Galleries**, Clare Brown, Curator of Natural Science, Leeds Museums & Galleries.
- 12.30 Lunch*
- 14.00 **Jisc and the GB3D Fossil Types On-Line Project – A remarkably supportive funder**, Mike Howe, British Geological Survey.
- 14.30 **Title tbc**, Jon Clatworthy, Lapworth Museum of Geology, University of Birmingham.
- 15.00 **Title tbc**, Jonathan Larwood, Natural England.
- 15.30 Tea/Coffee
- 16.00 AGM

The 40th Anniversary Dinner will be held at the
Old Joint Stock Pub and Theatre Venue.

*Lunch is not provided, participants may bring their own, or purchase something nearby.

Wednesday 3rd December

Dudley Museum and Limestone Caverns Canal Trip

- 10.00 Tea/Coffee
- 10.30 Welcome to Dudley Museums & Art Gallery
History of Collections at Dudley Museum, Graham Worton, Dudley Museums & Art Gallery

11.30 View of Museum Collections
12.30 Lunch in local pub
13.30 Travel to Canal Trust
14.00 Canal Boat Trip through Limestone Caverns
15.00 Travel to Wrens Nest
15.30 Visit to Wrens Nest
16.30 Finish

Registration fee for Tuesday: £25 (GCG Members) or £35 (Non-members) to include refreshments but excluding meals

Cost for the visit and canal trip on Wednesday: £10 (GCG Members) or £15 (Non-members) to include refreshments but excluding meals and transport between venues

A list of hotels in the Birmingham area will be provided for anyone wishing to stay overnight after the evening meal or for the visit to Dudley Museum and Limestone Caverns on Wednesday.

For more information contact **Jim Spencer**, email: jimspencer11@gmail.com or check our web-site at www.geocurator.org

See the booking form at the end of this newsletter.

Moray Geology: Past, Present, Future 21st-22nd March 2015

A conference exploring the history of Elgin Museum, its unique fossil collection and the geology of the Moray area.

List of speakers includes:

Robert Davidson (University of Aberdeen)
Prof Nigel Trewin (National Museum of Scotland)
Dr Nick Fraser (National Museum of Scotland)
Prof Michael Benton (University of Bristol)
Dr Sue Beardmore (Elgin Museum)
Dr Alison Wright (Highland Geological Society)
Dr Laura Säilä (University of Helsinki)
Dr Neil Clark (Hunterian Museum, Glasgow)

Registration £5; Fieldtrip £5

For further details or to register, contact Dr Sue Beardmore at moraygeology2015@hotmail.com

HOGG - History of Geology Group Meetings - open to GCG

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

Meeting Reports

SPNHC meeting June 2014, and the GCG fieldtrip.

The international Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections came to Cardiff in June this year for their major annual conference. Around 280 delegates from the USA, Europe and further afield, gathered for a week of talks, workshops, demonstrations, fieldtrips, meetings and other activities. Luckily the weather behaved for once, and those who came expecting Welsh rain were given an entirely different view of the capital bathed in glorious sunshine. The opening day of talks was based in the National Museum of Wales, after which it moved to the very impressive Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay. Here, there were three parallel sets of talks for two full days, so delegates had more than enough to do and see. A final day of meetings and tours was held back in the National Museum, before the extremely well attended annual dinner in the Park Hotel.

However before all this, the week started with a day of fieldtrips to 6 very **different sites**. **GCG's offering to the meeting was a sponsored fieldtrip to the Glamorgan Heritage Coast**. The day dawned extremely hot and sunny, so we loaded up with extra water bottles and a coach took 37 delegates along to Southerndown and Ogmores Bays. This gave everyone a chance to appreciate some of the fine geology and impressive landscapes we have in South Wales. We looked at exposures of fossiliferous Carboniferous Limestone, unconformably topped with Triassic and Jurassic sequences. The Triassic locally includes great thicknesses of conglomeratic desert flash flood deposits, and also some cave fissure fills. The Jurassic (Hettangian) sequences are interesting as they preserve a marginal coastline facies illustrating the slow drowning of a set of islands before a transition to fully marine conditions. All also had the opportunity to collect fossils of the classic Gryphaea bivalve, common locally. The fieldtrip was very favourably received by all and we felt to be a great opportunity to promote GCG to our colleagues from other countries.

Co-leaders: **Cindy Howells** (NMW) and **John Nudds** (Manchester University)

Report on 23rd SPPC at York

The 23rd SPPC meeting took place at the York Medical Society Rooms during the afternoon of Tuesday 2nd September, with thirty-three people in attendance. Following the presentations there was a visit to the Yorkshire Museum and its storerooms. Later there was a reception at the Museum, hosted jointly by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the Museum, followed by a lecture given by Stuart Gilvly of the Museum.

On the previous day, Monday 1st September, thirty people took part in a field trip in reasonable weather to Saltwick Bay, led by Dean Lomax of Doncaster Museum. After arriving at Whitby the group walked a short distance to the steps leading

down to the rocky shore, an area Dean has often visited searching for fossils. During the day plenty of fossils were found, including two dinosaur footprints.

The first of the five SPPC presentations, “Challenges encountered during the preparation by acid-resin transfer of fossil fish from Monte Bolca, Italy”, was given jointly by Mark Graham and Lu Allington-Jones of the Natural History Museum. Five fish from Monte Bolca, which were two-dimensionally preserved and glued to slabs, seemed suitable for acid-resin transfer. Although acid-resin transfer techniques had been used before at NHM, this had last been done in the 1980s and the methods and materials were not fully documented. It was decided to make a study of techniques and document the results. The authors described the preparation of the five fish and the problems encountered. As the preferred resin was no longer available, various currently-available resins were compared – phenolic, polyester, vinyl ester, acrylic and epoxy. The authors concluded that Water White Clear Casting Resin (Synolite 0328-A-1) was the best.

In “GB/3D Fossil Types On-line,” Mike Howe, of the British Geological Survey, reviewed progress of the JISC-funded project to digitise the fossil type-specimens held in British Museums, in particular the 17,500 types in the BGS collection. Each type specimen was digitised in three forms: as a normal photograph, as a stereo anaglyph and as a 3D image. A high-resolution Canon EOS 5D camera was used. The stereo anaglyphs were made using a see-saw to obtain different views; the 3D images were obtained by rotating the object in front of a laser scanner, from which the image of the stand had to be digitally removed and the top and base of the specimen added. Problems were encountered with the various styles of data-recording at the different institutions. The project was presented a year ago at a press-launch at NHM.

The next speaker was Jeff Liston, of Yunnan University. In “Resourcing Palaeontological Collection Care in a Time of Crisis” he reflected on the parallels between the cost-cutting of today and the Earth Science Review of the 1980s. The ESR had resulted in the closure of Earth Science departments, and it had been realised that geological collections needed protection and the cost of that needed to be allowed for. The review identified five institutions: Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford, Cambridge and the Hunterian in Glasgow as centres of importance. Although the Funding Councils had maintained funding over the years, the number of posts has declined. The specimens in Geological collections often outnumber those in others, so that more effort is need to maintain them, though this is rarely acknowledged – money is often spent on non-natural sciences.

Frank Osbaeck, of Museernes Bevaringscenter i Skive, described the preparation of **a large fish in “Preparation of Ardiodus sp. from the Eocene Moclay in Denmark.”** Two years ago a cementstone concretion had been received from a private collector. The concretion, which had been found in north Jutland, was extremely hard and had been broken into five large pieces and many smaller fragments. He used a diamond saw to cut it, because it was so hard. As much matrix was removed as possible to lessen the amount of acid preparation. Plasticene was used

to retain the acid in little pools during the work. He chose to use Paraloyd B72 adhesive, rather than the usual Araldite 20-20, as it had better acid resistance properties. The preparation, which involved over eighteen hundred hours of work, took place over one and a half years and resulted in a fine specimen.

The final presentation, "Upper Jurassic Marine Reptiles from Spitsbergen: from field conservation to laboratory preparation," was given by Aubrey Jane Roberts, of Southampton University. Spitsbergen, a part of Svalbard, is permafrosted, only melting for two weeks in August. The permafrost offers some advantages – saws and drills can be used to cut the fossil out, which can then be coated in plaster, with iron supports beneath, before lifting out with a helicopter. Siderite results in differences in hardness of the matrix and gypsum is present around the bones, presenting problems during preparation; the stabiliser had to be used in varying dilution to address this. The specimens are often fragmented due to the permafrost and have to be glued together with Superglue.

Nigel Larkin, of Natural History Conservation, displayed two posters – **"A Tale of Two Mysticeti"** and **"Using Infrared Thermal Imaging as a Collections Management Tool."**

Visit to the Yorkshire Museum: Later in the afternoon Sarah King, of Yorkshire Museum, showed participants around the museum store-rooms, with its fine collection of ichthyosaurs. In the evening the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and the Museum jointly hosted a wine reception at the Museum, which was followed by a lecture given by Stuart Ogilvy of the Museum in which he outlined the history of the museum and its collections.

Twenty participants went on the final field trip, led by Will Watts, which visited Scarborough and Whitby Museums and Alum Bay Quarry at Ravenscar.

GCG would like to thank Phil Cox and the other members of the SPPC Host Committee, Sarah King and staff at Yorkshire Museum, and the field-trip leaders for making the events so successful.

Jim Spencer, GCG Programme Secretary.

Geo-Materials Sample Preparation for Microscopy Workshop – 11th September 2014

Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford

The Royal Microscopical Society (RMS) along with The Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford and GCG organised a fantastic workshop on geo materials sample preparation – the first of its kind to be held in 16 years! The event brought together geology technicians, geology curators and researchers, alongside exhibitors of preparation equipment.

The workshop attracted 50 people in total. Events on the day included a varied programme of talks ranging from preparation techniques and advances in **equipment, through to rediscovering Darwin's lost thin sections. Many posters** were on display to browse whilst we were presented with demonstrations of the

latest geological preparation systems from various companies. During the day attendees were also treated to a tour of Oxford University Department of Earth Sciences' preparation laboratories and facilities.

The day itself was a rare opportunity to bring together geo-materials technicians since the days of the meetings of the sadly obsolete Geo-Technology Group (GTG). It was clear from the day that these kind of meetings would be of great benefit to geo technicians and a general opinion was certainly one of it would be beneficial to resurrect this kind of group. The workshop was a fantastic networking opportunity to make contacts with fellow colleagues within the field of geological preparation but also to see what new and fascinating equipment is available.

A big thank you goes out the organisers of the workshop for a valuable opportunity and hopefully this will be something that we will see more of in the future.

Amanda Valentine-Baars, Laboratory Technical Officer, Department of Natural Sciences, National Museum Wales amanda.valentine@museumwales.ac.uk

Comment

The fate and legacy of private geology collections

A local collector

I'm an amateur field geologist with a large palaeontological collection – collected principally from the Bristol region over a period of about 40 years. The collection contains important Upper Jurassic marine reptile fossils from Wiltshire – two of which are new species and donated to Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. It is well curated with substantial documentation and contains considerable material from temporary sites where fossils have been recorded in association with measured rock sections. I share my field notes with Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC) and the British Geological Survey. I see myself as a custodian of the collection and want to ensure that it can be used in the future beyond my lifetime. With this in mind I have recently written a Will and left the collection to my daughter. Accompanying guidance I have provided identifies the strengths of the collection – what material should be donated and to where. I am fortunate to have a family member who shares my interest, who will continue to manage and promote the collection and who may also want to add to it.

The problem

I have become increasingly interested in the fate of geology collections particularly those in private hands. Not everybody has family willing to take on a collection. When the collector dies, the dispersal or disposal of their collections becomes the responsibility of family or friends. They may not have any interest in it or space to store it. These are critical times for most private collections. Key decisions are often made without sufficient specialist guidance or knowledge of the importance or otherwise of the collection. Private collections may contain material rivalling our public collections – **for the most part we simply don't know. In many cases the**

deceased collector has made no plans for their future care so it's not surprising to hear of collections being broken up, cherry-picked by commercial dealers or simply discarded.

Examples

I have become aware of several such cases recently. The late Colin **Horstmann's extensive collection and the Philip Curnow collection were broken up** – both had been established members of Bath Geological Society. More recently, the geological collection of the late George Cross, another Bath Society member, was offered to the geology community and in this case, Gloucester Geology Trust agreed to take it on and become the collections new custodian.

A potential solution

It seems to me that we need some kind of safety net to ensure that private collections, often the effort of a lifetime, are offered, as a first port of call, to a legitimate and appropriate repository and this is more often than not – the local Museum. Here, professionals can apply their collection policy to assess the collections quality and decide if it is worth keeping or not. This will guarantee at least, that scientifically important material, be it minerals, rocks and fossils are not lost to the geology community and can be integrated into a professionally managed and accessible research collection.

I am keen to develop voluntary guidance to help active collectors to work more closely with their local museum service (and their geology specialist – if they have one), to share information about their collections when they are alive and to share plans for its care beyond their death. Museums can, in return, offer support; assisting in identification of finds, guidance on preparation, curation and conservation of geological material as well as being a portal for bringing people together to share their interests and concerns. That said, I am also aware that many museums lack specialist curators and space to store ongoing donations and acquisitions. It is important that museums and collectors work collaboratively to address these issues.

I would be interested to hear from others who have already developed a voluntary scheme or who are thinking of starting one up to support collectors with geological collections. Please get in contact, if you can help and I look forward to hearing from you.

Simon Carpenter, simonccarpenter@yahoo.com. 25 Innox Hill, Frome, Somerset BA11 2LW. Tel: 01373 474086.

This MoU was signed at the SPNHC conference in June.

General Memorandum of Understanding

BETWEEN THE NATURAL SCIENCES COLLECTIONS ASSOCIATION, THE GEOLOGICAL CURATORS' GROUP AND THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

The Natural Science Collections Association (hereafter referred to as NatSCA), The **Geological Curators' Group (hereafter referred to as GCG) and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections** (hereafter referred to as SPNHC) have reached an agreement on the following points in order to increase and improve collaboration in areas of common interest.

WHEREAS

- The aims and missions of NatSCA, GCG and of SPNHC (hereafter referred to as The Parties) are both complementary and overlapping.
- The Parties wish to recognize and benefit from the professional contribution made to their shared goals by the members and representatives of each Party.

NOW IT IS HEREBY AGREED THAT THE PARTIES SHALL

1. Establish on their respective Committees (NatSCA and GCG) and Council (SPNHC) an ex-officio member position for the President (or appointed representative) of the other Party. This non-voting member will make all reasonable efforts to attend meetings and conference calls as would any voting member of the Board or Council, receive correspondence and serve as liaison between their organization and the other Parties.
2. Collaborate to establish a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide guidance and directions for productive collaborative/joint NatSCA-GCG-SPNHC Conferences.
3. Actively seek opportunities to cooperate and, when considered appropriate by all Parties, initiate and implement joint action, including - but not limited to - issuing joint statements regarding issues of concern in areas of common interest and value.
4. Draw on mutual synergies and complementarities, through the exchange of information and the implementation of strategies, projects and activities jointly elaborated and undertaken pursuant to this MoU, with progress being reviewed through regular contacts between the Presidents (or appointed representatives) of the Parties.

Limitations

The Parties will seek the approval of their respective governing bodies, as appropriate and as mandated by their respective Bylaws, in implementing the cooperation foreseen under the present MoU.

Fulfilment of the Parties' obligations under the present MoU shall at all times be subject to the terms of their respective Bylaws and the extent of the financial resources available to each Party.

Collaborative projects arising from the current MoU will be governed by separate detailed agreements between the Parties. Such agreements will include - but will not be limited to - financial arrangements associated with the collaborative projects.

Nothing in this agreement shall be construed as creating an exclusive relationship between the Parties. Each Party shall be free to enter into other agreements with other organizations.

Each Party's obligations under the present MoU shall be subject to: a) the application of its respective rules and policies and b) the availability of the appropriate financial resources.

Neither party shall use the name and /or logo of the other Party without prior written permission. Under no circumstances should any Party use the name and/or logo of any other Party in a way that implies that they are part of the other Party or under its patronage or affiliation.

The present MoU may be amended, at any time, upon formal written request by one Party and written agreement of the other Parties.

Duration and Termination

The present MoU shall take effect upon its signature by the Parties and shall extend through alternating representatives. It can be extended or amended.

Any Party may terminate the present MoU by giving 60 days written notice to the other Parties or by mutual consent of all Parties.

Any dispute arising out of the interpretation or implementation of the MoU will be settled through discussion between the Parties.

This Memorandum of Understanding signifies a statement of intent to collaborate, but it is not a legally binding document.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the duly authorized representatives of the Parties affix their signatures below on the two original copies in English.

Signed on the day of 26th June 2014

Booking Form

GCG Seminar and 41st AGM 2nd and 3rd December 2014 Writing Effective Grant Proposals for Collections Projects

I will be attending the Seminar and AGM on December 2nd

I will be attending the Evening Meal on December 2nd

I will be attending the Dudley Museum visit on December 3rd

I would like details of local accommodation

I enclose payment for £25 (Seminar, GCG Members) or £35 (Seminar, Non-members) plus £10 (Dudley Visit, GCG Members) or £15 (Dudley Visit, Non-members) - please delete as appropriate

Title Name

Address

.....Postcode

Telephone E-mail

Any Special Dietary Requirements

Any Mobility Difficulties

Please return this booking form with a cheque for the appropriate amount, made payable to "Geological Curators' Group" by 25th November to: Jim Spencer, 3 Merlyn Court, Austin Drive, Didsbury, M20 6EA. Tel: 0161 434 7977. E-mail: jimspencer11@gmail.com



Affiliated to the
Geological Society of London
registered charity no 296050