



DROPPINGS  
FROM THE  
GEOLOGICAL  
CURATORS  
GROUP

*Coprolite* is compiled and produced by Helen Kerbey, Production Editor, *Mineralogical Magazine*, 12 Baylis Mews, Amyand Park Road, Twickenham, TW1 3HQ. (e-mail [hkgeology@btinternet.com](mailto:hkgeology@btinternet.com), tel +44 (0)2920 513901). 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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## Subscriptions

As I hope you are all aware, subscription rates were increased for 2016 as follows:

UK + Ireland Individual £20 (Optional concession £15)

Overseas individual £23, \$36 or E30

UK institutional £25

Overseas institutional £27, \$42 or E34

We do encourage members to pay by annual Standing Order, but this means that it is up to you to change the amount in the case of the subs rising. Currently over half of the subscriptions which have already been paid this way for 2016 are still on the old rate (and owe us a further £3). Please could I ask everyone to take the time to check their account and see what they have paid - and to change their SO if needed. If you continue to pay the wrong amount then the treasurer may become upset!

There are a few, very generous, persons who still continue to pay the previous rate (£12) each year. This is now taken as a donation and they do not receive journals or newsletters from us. If you don't wish to join this select group, then please do check that you have paid the correct amount. There are also still quite a few people who have not renewed yet this year. I'll accept cheques any time - don't wait to be asked ! If you don't know if you've paid or not, then please ask me.

Finally, please do let me know if you change address, email or job. Otherwise we can't get in touch easily and you risk not getting the journal or newsletter.

Sorry to be a 'Mrs Grumpy' Membership Secretary this time,

**Cindy Howells**, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF10 3NP. (Email: cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk)

### **New members during 2015**

GCG welcomes: Lisa Coombes, Lukas Large, Catherine Goodwin De Sousa, Alex Peaker, Roy Starkey, Carmelo Corral Arroyo, Gerardo Mazzetta, Mike Rosenbaum, Robin Hansen, Tom Cotterell, and Rachel Walcott.

### **New Committee 2015**

**Chairman:** Giles Miller, The Natural History Museum, London.

**Secretary:** Sarah King, York Museums Trust.

**Treasurer:** John Nudds, University of Manchester.

**Editor-Journal:** Matthew Parkes, Natural History Museum, Dublin.

**Editor-Coprolite:** Helen Kerbey, Mineralogical Society, London..

**Web Officer:** Hannah Chalk, University of Manchester.

**Programme Secretary:** Vacant.

**Minutes Secretary:** Tony Morgan, World Museum Liverpool.

**Collection Officer:** Mike Howe, British Geological Survey.

#### **Committee Members:**

Tim Ewin: The Natural History Museum, London.

Isla Gladstone: Bristol Museum & Art Gallery.

Luanne Meehitiya: Birmingham Museums.

#### **Co-opted Members:**

Emma Bernard: GCG/NatSCA rep. The Natural History Museum, London.

Many thanks to Kathryn Riddington for stepping in as Programme Secretary last year. Following a committee meeting Simon Harris has been co-opted as Programme Secretary.

## Events

Here are some dates for you all to put in your diaries for GCG events this year:

The **GCG Annual General Meeting** will be held on **6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> December 2016**. The theme this year will be "The Ethics of UK Fossil Collecting". We will release more information as we are able to confirm it. In the meantime, any members with a suggested title for a talk are invited to e-mail me using the details below.

**11 October 2016** sees us heading to **Cardiff** for a workshop hosted by Jana Horak (Amgueddfa Cymru | National Museum Wales) on **Meteorites**. The morning will concentrate on identification and curation of specimens, whilst the afternoon will discuss ways to make your outreach activities with meteorites "out of this world"!

Finally we are planning a new type of workshop for mid-summer. In response to the ever increasing costs of travel and accommodation, and pressures on time, we hope to run an experimental "**webinar**". The only cost to attend will be a couple of hours of your time and the need to find an internet connected computer. The working title is "3d Fossils – what happened next?"

Please direct any offers for talks, or suggestions for future events to me at the e-mail address below. As always keep an eye on the JISCmail list for updates as they happen.

**Simon Harris** (simhar@bgs.ac.uk) Co-opted Programme Secretary

### **Lyme Regis Fossil Festival - can you help ?**

The 2016 Lyme Regis Fossil Festival will take place **29 April - 1 May, 2016**.

There is an opportunity for our members to join the GCG stall at the 2016 Lyme Regis Fossil Festival on Sat 30th April to Sun 1st May. You can find details of the festival at the following address: <http://www.fossilfestival.co.uk/>. We are running our "Be a Curator" activity, which demonstrates the importance of curation and encourages people to curate their own fossil finds. This was successfully trialled last year at the Lyme and Yorkshire fossil festivals. We are asking people to help on the stall for around four hours (or whatever you can manage), and we may be able to contribute towards your travel and subsistence. It's a really fun event with a great atmosphere and lots of families getting enthusiastic about fossils (I should know, I think this is will be my ninth Lyme!). If you are interested, please contact **Luanne Meehitiya** on [luanne.meehitiya@birminghammuseums.org.uk](mailto:luanne.meehitiya@birminghammuseums.org.uk) to talk about it.

### **HOGG - History of Geology Group Meetings - open to GCG**

Details on events may be found at [www.historyofgeologygroup.co.uk](http://www.historyofgeologygroup.co.uk).

### **NatSCA annual conference and AGM**

21 - 22 April 2016, The Silk Mill and Derby Museum & Art Gallery

The Nature of Collections - How museums inspire our connection to the natural world

### **SPNHC 2016 - Germany**

The Museum für Naturkunde and the Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin are honored to be hosting the 31st Annual Meeting for the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) in Berlin from June, 19 to June, 26, 2016.

### **Rock and gem shows, 2016**

5-6 March. Rock 'n' Gem March Show, Kempton Park Racecourse

19-20 March. Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show , Brighton Racecourse

2-3 April. Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show, Newton Abbot Racecourse

23-24 April. Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show, Newark Showground

14-15 May. Rock Gem n Bead Show, Shepton Mallet

4-5 June. Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show, Kempton Park Racecourse

Find further information on Rock & Gem shows at [www.rockngem.co.uk](http://www.rockngem.co.uk) email [info@rockngem.co.uk](mailto:info@rockngem.co.uk).

Don't see your event here? Email the newsletter editor: Helen Kerbey [hkgeology@btinternet.com](mailto:hkgeology@btinternet.com)

### **Museums and Exhibitions**

Amguedfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

The new dinosaur discovered in Wales in 2014 now has a name: *Dracoraptor hanigani*. This name was chosen to honour the dragon of Wales and also the Hanigan family who donated the specimen to the National Museum of Wales, where it is now back on display in the main hall.

Fossil Hunters

The National Museum of Scotland has just opened a new exhibition entitled 'Fossil Hunters', detailing the fascinating story of how life moved from water onto land between 360-345 million years ago, including the fossil hunting discoveries and discoverers behind this research.

Horniman Museum - Dinosaurs: Monster Families

13 February 2016 until 30 October 2016. Discover the fascinating world of dinosaurs and their young in this family-focused interactive exhibition.

## Meeting reports

### **GCG AGM, Natural History Museum, London, 1-2 December 2016.**

#### **Not Just Rocks in the Cupboard: Communicating Geoscience Using Collections.**

The Darwin Centre was the host for the annual December GCG meeting. The topic was communicating geoscience and the speakers covered a variety of subjects from communicating research to writing a book. The first speaker was Paul Smith the director of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. He focussed on the Research Excellence Framework for assessing higher education and the requirement, along with an increasing number of grant giving bodies to look for examples of public engagement as a requirement for funding. Museums seem to have been slow to catch on to this possible collaboration. Prof Smith noted that many academics do not have the skills and facilities to communicate with the general public but that Museums are already set up for this purpose. They should work together more.

Hilary Blagborough talked about taking specimens from the Antarctic Survey to various fossil festivals. In 2006 the collections had around 30 visitors. In 2015 over 10,000 people saw specimens at various shows. Hilary focussed on getting key facts across about Antarctica to the general public. It is not all covered in ice. It used to be warm there. There are fossils! Tim Ewin also talked about communicating 'difficult' topics i.e. things that aren't dinosaurs. He found little published information on communicating fossil plants to the public so found that sticking to key messages worked best.

Phil Powell and Nina Morgan spoke about their self-published book on the Geology of Oxford Gravestones. They have managed to create a very well laid out book that appeals to a broad range of people. The gravestones allow a good mix of social history to be included especially as Oxford hosts a number of famous and interesting bodies, and like building stones, graveyards tend to be very accessible and easy to visit. Roger Osborne has published many books and edited even more so gave many tips on what writing should include. Stick to concrete things i.e. use the real words for things like "keep the school open" not "keep sustainable communities" and always think "what is it I want them remember?"

The day ended with a quick video from the Friends of the Crystal Palace Dinosaurs. The concrete dinos have been very badly treated by vandals and poor conservation over the years and need some good restoration. <http://cpdinosaurs.org/library/1582> is an interesting video and another example of geological outreach.

### **Publications and resources of interest**

Please let me know of any publications of interest, particularly those in journals we may not normally keep up to date with.

Federico Carò, Elena Basso and Marco Leona (2016) The Earth Sciences from the Perspective of an Art Museum. *Elements*, **12**(1), 33-38.

John Stevenson, Paul Denton, and Kirstin Lemon (2015) BGS — Education through open doors and OpenGeoscience. *The Leading Edge*, **34**, 1376-1380.

Barry A. Thomas and Leyla J. Seyfullah (2015) Stigmaria Brongniart: a new specimen from Duckmantian (Lower Pennsylvanian) Brymbo (Wrexham, North Wales) together with a review of known casts and how they were preserved. *Geological Magazine*, **152**, 858-870.

*Minerals of the Cairngorms - the story of Scotland's National Gem*, by Roy Starkey . Available from [www.britishmineralogy.com](http://www.britishmineralogy.com) priced at £25

The following text is from the author, describes the reason for writing the book and some of the interesting history of the minerals to be found in the Cairngorms. For reviews see the *Geoscientist* (<https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/Geoscientist/Books-Arts/Geoscientist-book-reviews-online/2015-Book-Reviews-Online/Crystal-Mountains-Minerals-of-the-Cairngorms>) or the *Mineralogical Magazine* (<http://minmag.geoscienceworld.org/content/78/7/1795.extract>) for more information.

The Cairngorms is an area of dramatic and rugged scenery, recognised formally by its designation in September 2003 as the UK's largest, and most northerly National Park. It is home to five out of six of Britain's highest mountains and the Queen's summer residence at Balmoral. The area has given its name to Scotland's most famous gemstone, the distinctive, smoky amber-coloured cairngorm quartz, a term recognised globally by the jewellery trade, and which has for centuries adorned traditional Highland dress.



Cairngorm quartz, has been found in very large crystals and crystal groups (up to 20 kg in weight) but much of the material is too dark (termed morion) to be used as gem cutting material, and the lapidary trade resorted to heat treatment of dark specimens, in an effort to improve their colour and commercial value. If this was successful, such specimens were commonly sold as citrine.

A new book *Crystal Mountains – Minerals of the Cairngorms* unravels the story of the cairngorm, exploring the long tradition of hunting for 'Cairngorm stones', which saw individuals, and whole families, driven to search the mountains with a zeal akin to the lust for gold.

The book's author, GCG Member Roy Starkey, a volunteer at the Lapworth Museum of Geology, has been fascinated by minerals since he was at school

and has travelled all over the UK in his search for worthwhile specimens. He has a particular interest in the minerals of Scotland, and has been exploring the Cairngorms for more than 25 years. Roy said that his love of the Cairngorms grew from exploring the wilderness areas, and researching the fascinating history of the minerals and the people who sought them in days gone by. He realised that he had gathered together a unique collection of information and decided to compile what he hopes will be the definitive work on the subject.

Demand from the lapidary and jewellery trade in the 1800s was such that the supply of authentic local material could not keep up, and inevitably, imported material began to be passed-off as Scottish. It is now very difficult, if not impossible, to be certain of the provenance of cut stones and those mounted in jewellery.

Roy's quest has seen him examine specimens in all the major public and private collections, and the book features numerous previously unpublished images of specimens from the Cairngorms. The book traces the history of the cairngorm (and the associated topaz and beryl crystals which are found in the region, although of much less common occurrence than quartz), and also presents a very readable account of the geology and occurrence of the gem minerals, including an easily understood explanation of the cause of colour in smoky quartz.

The fascination of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert with Scotland's national gem, and the surviving legacy of their specimens, are explored using the Queen's personal journals and contemporary newspaper accounts, together with images of specimens from the collection at Balmoral Castle and Osborne House. A supply chain is traced from 'The Diggers' who sought raw material, through mineral dealers, lapidaries, seal engravers and jewellers who all earned a living trading 'Cairngorm stones'. The principal centres for the Scottish lapidary trade appear to have been Edinburgh and Aberdeen, but with several notable businesses also prospering in Inverness, and others in Dundee, Perth and Stirling. The story culminates in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which provided a shop window to the World for Scottish goods, including natural cairngorm crystals, and the jewellery and other artefacts fashioned from them.

The days of the 'diggers' and 'cairngorm miners' are long gone, but there may still be forgotten treasures scattered in attics and trinket boxes across the area, just awaiting discovery by the next generation. Queen Victoria's mountains attract thousands of visitors each year, and the links with Balmoral remain as strong as ever. Scottish pebble jewellery is now a highly collectible commodity, and an authentic Scottish cairngorm brooch would undoubtedly still make a most acceptable gift.

The book, 184 large format pages (276×218 mm) softback, is available direct from the publisher [www.britishmineralogy.com](http://www.britishmineralogy.com) priced at £25 plus p&p.

## News

Etches Collection - The museum building which will house the world famous Etches Collection in Kimmeridge, Dorset is set to be finished later this summer, and progress can be checked through their website - [www.theetchescollection.org/news](http://www.theetchescollection.org/news).

Lapworth nearly ready- The Lapworth Museum, Birmingham should be re-opening soon, after redevelopment thanks to the award of a £1.56m Heritage Lottery Grant.

The guardian has a new palaeontology blog: [https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/feb/18/lost-worlds-revisited-an-introduction-to-our-new-palaeontology-blog?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/feb/18/lost-worlds-revisited-an-introduction-to-our-new-palaeontology-blog?CMP=share_btn_fb)

The Smithsonian has an interactive geological time scale earth: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/travel-through-deep-time-interactive-earth-180952886/?no-ist>

A virtual Natural History Museum is being designed at Bristol University. The museum will be in the form of an online computer game designed to help teach pupils about the evolution of life on earth. <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2016/february/virtual-museum.html>

The Geological Museum in the University of Copenhagen under threat - news on the Mindat and other message boards suggest that a large number of redundancies are planned at this geological museum.

A new museum has opened - California's largest meteorite museum opens on campus at UCLA. <http://www.meteorites.ucla.edu/>



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