



OPROLITE

No. 83
November
2017

DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

Coprolite is compiled and produced by Helen Kerbey, Production Editor, *Mineralogical Magazine*, 12 Bayliss Mews, Amyand Park Road, Twickenham, TW1 3HQ. (e-mail coprolite@geocurator.org, 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.

Chairman: Matthew Parkes, Assistant Keeper, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland, Merrion Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. Email: chairman@geocurator.org

Secretary: Sarah King, York Museums Trust, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York, YO1 7FR. Email: secretary@geocurator.org

Treasurer: Dr Rachel Walcott, Principal Curator, Earth Systems, Department of Natural Sciences, National Museums Scotland, Chambers St, Edinburgh EH1 1JF. Email: treasurer@geocurator.org

Notice of Annual General Meeting of the Geological Curators' Group

Notice is hereby given that the 44th Annual General Meeting of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Collins Barracks and Swords Collections Resource Centre on 14th November 2017

All Committee posts (except Chair) are renewed annually. Nominations for the posts of Committee Members must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing or by email to the Secretary, Sarah King (sarah.king@ymt.org.uk), by 24th October 2017. Items proposed for inclusion on the Agenda should be submitted to the Secretary as above.

Chairman's notes

It may have seemed like a fairly quiet year for GCG in 2017, with not so many meetings or training courses as in most years, but behind the scenes in the committee it has been a different story. Starting as a new Chairman, but a long serving committee member, it seemed a good time to take stock of where we are and how we do things. So people's time has been invested on committee in many different ways in analysis and discussion and then documentation of protocols, so we can make future committee decisions based on agreed policies. Many of these things involve change, and adapting to change in the way we communicate and promote GCG. With a range of people involved we are lucky to have many different talents, including those able to explain social media to me (!) and to help bring us forward. The most visible change is in the website, which has been rebuilt by Simon Harris and which now has many functions that we did not have previously, including a members area. I would encourage you to login to that and see the resources that we are building for geological curators. It is a constant work in progress, across the website, so please check in regularly.

By the time you read this we hope that the postponed date for the second run of the Hazardous Minerals course (previously run jointly with NatSCA, by Monica Price and Jana Horak) will have been announced. It was heavily oversubscribed previously and is likely to be so again. We have an exciting range of meetings planned for 2018 and 2019 and you will find details separately. The AGM Seminar in Dublin has now come together and promises to be a valuable sharing of hard earned knowledge and I hope that you will be able to join in. I will be reporting in more detail on things past and still happening, but it is also your chance to have a say in how GCG is shaped for the future. One big item for the committee, based on production and distribution costs, and for reasons of practicality, is whether Coprolite in its current form still provides the best means of communicating. If you have views on this please let us know, as we are considering a radical change to it at present.

Manage your membership online

One of the features of the new GCG website is the ability for members to manage their own subscriptions online if they wish. As well as being able to access our members-only content, such as the electronic versions of the latest issue of the journal, you can also renew your subscription online for next year. You can find everything you need in the membership section accessible from the top menu bar of the website at www.geocurator.org

We will shortly be doing a bulk upload of all members who are either fully paid-up or only need to pay their subscription for the 2017 calendar year. When this process is complete we will send you an e-mail with full instructions and you will be able to complete your subscription online and also renew it into 2018.

You can also continue to pay by Standing Order each year as before, or even send cheque/cash directly to the membership secretary. Once we receive your payment, we will update your online registration for you.

If you still need to pay your subscription for 2016 or earlier, then we would still like to create an account for you, but please contact Cindy first so that we can calculate the correct amount for you to pay.

Data security: As always, GCG will attempt to keep your personal data as secure as possible, but please note that in order to provide access to the website, you should be aware of the following information:

- Details of your membership will be stored on a database server at our web hosting providers. This could include name, address, e-mail, telephone and username details. Passwords are "hashed and salted" and are not visible to anyone except yourself.
- The website runs on a secure HTTPS server and data passing back and forth is encrypted. GCG committee members (especially the membership secretary, treasurer, web officer and chairperson) may be able to access the data table through their password protected account.
- You should use a unique, strong password for your account, and not share it with others
- If you object to your data being stored in the ways described above, then please notify the membership secretary who will be able to store your details in a different manner, or to remove them from the website. Doing this may compromise your ability to access the members only content. Please note that information may persist in website backup files until such point as we delete these.
- GCG will never store any of your payment details on our website. Cheque, standing order or bank credit payments are still handled as before, with details stored off-line. If you wish to pay using a credit or debit card, this will be handled by PayPal (<https://www.paypal.com/>) and GCG is notified once a transaction is completed successfully.

If you have any queries about your membership, please contact Cindy Howells (membership@geocurator.org) or about the website, please contact Simon Harris (webmaster@geocurator.org)

**'Making the most of a move' 44th GCG AGM and seminar
14-15 November 2017
National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Collins Barracks and Swords
Collection Resource Centre**

At some stage most curators will be faced with a big move or reorganising of a collections in some way. Often this is the result of strategic museum needs, and is not undertaken in the way we, as curators, would choose to do the job. Whether you are a single curator moving one room or a large team in a National museum, the aim must be to ensure that the collections are better off at the end of the job. Here, we share practical knowledge from experienced movers, to help others avoid pitfalls and hard lessons

Tuesday 14th November 2017

- 09.00 Registration open
- 10.20 Welcomes and housekeeping
- 10.30 Matthew Parkes – revealing long-hidden gems - Ireland's geology collections
- 10.55 Nigel Monaghan – Moving Dublin's Natural History Museum collections
- 11.20 COFFEE BREAK and POSTERS
- 11.45 Rachel Walcott – National Museum of Scotland rocks redisplayed and reorganised
- 12.10 Hannah Allum – Oxford University Museum of Natural History moves
- 12.35 Emma-Louise Nicholls – Horniman Museum moves – coping with short notice
- 13.00 – 14.00 LUNCH
- 14.00 Mike Howe – British Geological Survey moving a Core Store to Keyworth
- 14.25 Simon Harris –tackling asbestos in the collections of the British Geological Survey
- 14.50 Lil Stevens – compactor storage for vertebrate collections at the NHMUK
- 15.15 Paolo Viscardi – pest management for moving collections
- 15.40 TEA BREAK and POSTERS
- 16.00 The AGM of the Geological Curators' Group**
- 17.30 Approximately DRINKS RECEPTION and POSTERS

For those who wish to, we will meet afterwards for a meal and drinks at a nearby restaurant pub.

Wednesday 15th November

- 09.00 Meet at Dublin's Natural History Museum, newly illuminated in the ground floor Irish Room. As the museum will be closed to the public we can access parts that other visitors cannot reach.
- 0.950 – 10.00 Coach journey to the recently rehomed Geology Museum of Trinity College Dublin, hosted by Patrick Wyse Jackson who will discuss the practicalities of his move
- 10.45 approx. Coach journey to the National Museum of Ireland's Collections Resource Centre at Swords

11.15 Coffee and welcome in Swords CRC

11.45 Full 'behind the scenes' tour, practical demonstrations, a range of short discussion workshops covering themes such as pest management, freezing, manual handling, documentation procedures, removal firms, packing materials, machinery and tools.

Lunch and refreshments are included on Wednesday, as is the coach travel between sites.

Participants will be able to bring luggage and get dropped at Dublin airport in the afternoon if they wish, or travel back to the city centre. If there are some people with earlier flights a single trip to the airport may be provided, before the main departure at approximately 15.00 to the City Centre, via the Dublin Airport terminals 1 and 2.

Please enquire as we should be able to accommodate most requests and variations.

Geologists Association festival of geology

Date: 4-5th November, 2017

Location: University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT

Time: 10.30-4.30

Free entry

Exhibits, talks, discovery room, trips, photographic competition and more

See: <http://geologistsassociation.org.uk/festival.html>

Hazards in museum geological collections - the practicalities

Date: 28th November, 2017

Location: Oxford University Museum of Natural History

Time: 10.00-17.00

Leaders: Monica Price (OUMNH) & Jana Horak (AC-NMW)

Price: £40 (GCG and NatSCA members) £60 others

To book places go to:

<https://tickets.ox.ac.uk/WebStore/shop/ViewItems.aspx?CG=ash&C=MNH>

(Please note, prices are inclusive of VAT. Each transaction is subject to a £1 booking fee).

Rocks, minerals and fossils can be hazardous to humans, and in some cases, storage and usage must comply with UK and EU law. This workshop is aimed at museum professionals, and will clarify the nature of the hazards, and outline responsibilities and practical steps that will support those working with geological material in institutional collections. We are planning a mixture of short talks, visits behind the scenes, and discussion. The focus 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. This workshop is run jointly by the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Amgueddfa Cymru -National Museum Wales. The ticket price includes a sandwich lunch. A discounted rate is available for

members of the Geological Curator' Group (GCG) or the Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA). Please note, prices are inclusive of VAT. Each transaction is subject to a £1 booking fee.

Pyrite Oxidation: where are we now? Project Airless, Natural History Museum London

Date: 10th May 2018

Location: Natural History Museum London

Pyrite oxidation is a significant problem for mineral and fossil collections in both small and large museums. But what are the most recent research developments and what are we all doing about it? Do you have, or suspect you have pyritic specimens within your collections? If so, save the date for this day of talks and workshops to be held at the Natural History Museum in London, in association with Geological Curators Group. Costs for the event are expected to be £15-30.

Speakers are invited for the morning session. If you are undertaking a re-storage program or have recently undertaken/embarked on research then we would love to hear about it. Please send a 300 word abstract with one image to Lu at l.allington-jones@nhm.ac.uk

Shows & Events

Events from UKAFH (UK Association of Fossil Hunters) <https://ukfossils.co.uk/events/>
Nov 12 - FOSSIL HUNT - Isle of Sheppey, Kent
Jan 14 (2018) - FOSSIL HUNT - Aust, Bristol

Rock & Gem shows

Nov 4-5 Cheltenham Racecourse

Nov 11-12 Kempton Park Racecourse

Nov 18-19 Brighton Racecourse

Sussex Mineral and Fossil Show

Nov 18 Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, East Sussex

News

Dorset County Museum gets Lottery funding

Dorset County Museum has been awarded £11 million to redevelop the buildings. The project entitled 'The Tomorrow's Museum - Making Dorset Proud' will involve creating four new galleries. Of interest to GCG members are the over 20,000 specimens from the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The new developments will allow new research and conservation spaces, as well as a public gallery where visitors can oversee the inner workings of the museum and its staff!

Dorset County Museum will launch a fundraising campaign next month to raise the final £1.6million needed to put the plans into action.

Marsh Award nominations

Nominations are now open for the Marsh Award for Palaeontology, Mineralogy and the Best Earth Science Book of 2017.

The Marsh Awards recognise unsung heroes who have made a major contribution to the promotion of palaeontology or mineralogy in the UK and abroad.

These contributions could include:

- popular publications
- websites
- collecting and donation of natural history collections to museums
- superb preparation or conservation of specimens in public collections
- artistic or technical innovations

For full details of how to make nominations or to attend the award ceremony on 8th December, please see the Natural History Museums website:

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/>

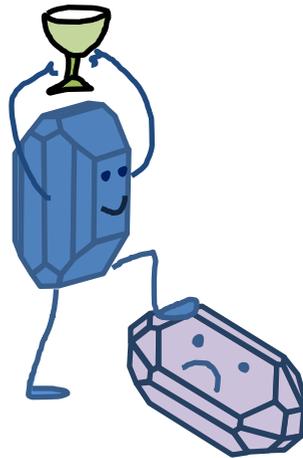
Online news

The mineral world cup 2017.

From 30 minerals and 16,593 votes to one world cup winner the 2017 #minicup (@tectonictweets) had the community on tenterhooks

The final: olivine vs. zircon was won by olivine - beating pyrite, quartz, garnet and magnetite on the way.

<https://twitter.com/tectonictweets/status/914952579171352577>



Photographic competition

Some stunning photos here as part of the Guardians competition 'Our Restless Earth':

https://www.theguardian.com/science/gallery/2017/oct/09/our-restless-earth-geological-society-photography-competition-winners-2017-in-pictures-earth-science-week?CMP=share_btn_fb

Unusually shaped rocks

Robert Plot is thought to have made the earliest description and illustration of a dinosaur fossil in his 1676 book "The Natural History of Oxfordshire being an Essay towards the Natural History of England". One of the chapters is about 'formed stones' which he describes as being similar to parts of humans or perhaps some 'other animal' possibly giants with an illustration. He also describes rocks that look like horses' heads, owls, and many body parts which he does not like to illustrate in print.

For more information see this article on the Guardian web pages at:

https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/sep/07/mysticism-and-rudely-shaped-rocks-why-17th-century-palaeontology-is-worth-revisiting?CMP=share_btn_fb

Plot's book is available on the Biodiversity Heritage Library website:

Plot, R. (1676) *The Natural History of Oxfordshire being an Essay towards the Natural History of England*.

<https://archive.org/details/naturalhistoryof00plot>

Antarctic specimens collected by Edward Bransfield in 1820

On behalf of a colleague in Ireland, I am keen to trace specimens collected in 1820 in the South Shetland Islands during the Antarctic voyage of Edward Bransfield RN (c.1785-1852) on the brig *Williams*. The material collected was mainly biological: specimens of albatrosses, albatross eggs, cape petrel, snow petrel, shag, and gulls along with several mosses. There were also some geological specimens collected: 'various stones'; a sample of soil; 'white and brown granite and limestone' and a rock from the Seal Islands north of Elephant Island.

I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can suggest where this material may be found, if it still survives.

Tom Sharpe

email tom@tomsharpe.co.uk

GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP



Affiliated to the Geological Society of London
registered charity no. 296050