



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

Coprolite is compiled by Tom Sharpe, 49 Kelston Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF4 2AG and produced by Monica Price, University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW. It is published three times a year in February, May and November. Any material for inclusion should be sent to Tom Sharpe by the first of the previous month, i.e. by 1 January, 1 April or 1 October.

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From GCG Chairman

The year has been one of steady achievement for the Group, punctuated by several eye-catching and significant events. From within the Group came both the publication of our new publicity leaflet and the seminar survey. For the former we have to thank John Cooper and Nigel Cunningham for their commitment in bringing this vibrant and quite excellent flagship leaflet to fruition. The distribution to as wide an audience as possible falls to Colin Reid. As Public Relations Officer he has also been responsible for the organisation of the seminar survey. The results were published in *Coprolite* 12 and Committee will be mindful of your responses. Thanks to Colin for much hard work on this front. From outside the Group (but with significant contributions from within) came the Museum and Galleries Commission's *Standards for the museum care of geological collections*. This document must be welcomed by all who strive to curate the wealth of geological material in museums, especially at present when there is such uncertainty over funding and the consequences of local government reorganisation.

Colin Reid has also taken on the running of our seminar programme. I would like to thank him and all those who have been involved in seminar organisation, who

have spoken at them, and who have written reports for *Coprolite*. There is no doubt that they are an excellent stimulus and that initiatives can flow from them. In addition valuable contacts are made between different individuals and organisations. A good example was the building stones seminar at the Sedgwick in Cambridge which we hope will lead to the creation of a national database of building stones.

The training of geological curators remains an area of great interest to Committee, especially as the basic training in identification skills imparted to undergraduates, which has always been taken for granted, seems to be in decline. This year it is appropriate that we should thank Bob Toynton of Sheffield University for his input and support over 4 of the 5 years when the joint BCG/GCG courses have been run. Committee is very pleased that Leicester has taken on this training role starting with a course to be run in March 1994.

A nationwide series of geology events in which museums would play a significant part was being considered by committee earlier in the year. This has been overtaken by events. Geology Unlimited in August this year (see *Coprolite* 12) has laid the foundation for similar events in alternate years. In addition, the Office of Science and Technology has launched National Science week (18-25 March 1994) in which there are good opportunities for museums to show the flag.

During the year Committee has been acutely aware of the non-appearance of *Geological Curator*, not least because we have expected the issue of two parts early in the new year. I doubt any one here fully appreciates the difficulties which have beset our Editor over the last 12 months or so. As some of you know, Bristol is undergoing a major staffing review which has led to posts being cut from the establishment. Peter Crowther concluded that he should resign as Editor and with great regret Committee has accepted his resignation. We owe Pete a great deal for the tremendous effort he has put into 15 published parts of the *Geological Curator*. In his first editorial 8 years ago he said "The last thing I want to do is preside over the journal's dreary 'sanitization!'". He most certainly has not. He built on the sound foundations of his predecessors and hands on a high-quality publication of which the Group can be justifiably proud. We thank him for the very professional results which have flowed from him and his team, and in that team we include his wife Gill and his family. By the end of this meeting we should have a new editor in post and we will be looking forward to the renewal of the regular appearance of the *Geological Curator*.

I am pleased to report that the *Directory of British Geological Museums* referred to in the Chairman's report last year should be in print in the near future and we thank John Nudds and John Cooper for their continuing work on this publication.

On the committee front, since the last AGM Phil Doughty has retired from the post of Public Relations Officer, though contact is maintained. Phil has had a long

association with the Group and we are grateful for his support and hard work given over many years. At the same time Mick Stanley became corresponding member for the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation. As a result of these changes 'new blood' came onto the committee in the form of John Faithfull, Colin Reid, and Gill Weightman. Gill has taken on the organisation of the Collector of the Year Award. John Cooper also became a corresponding member for the new leaflet and the proposed Senckenberg Meeting, now scheduled for the autumn of 1995.

Tom Sharpe and Monica Price are to be congratulated for maintaining a steady flow of *Coprolites* and for their November issue which I think is the largest 'dropping' to date. Thank you to all those who have contributed; please continue to do so.

This AGM sees, in addition to Peter Crowther, four other committee members retire; Chris Collins who has kept the Committee well informed on conservation, Kate Pontin on matters educational, and finally Roy Clements who as founder Chairman has brought a valuable perspective of the Group and its activities. Thank you for your service and very enormous contributions. Simon Knell has given sterling support throughout the year despite an enormous workload of his own. Finally my thanks to all the officers and other Committee members for their support and enthusiasm.

Peter Davies flew the flag for GCG at *Terre, modeles, musées at Dijon* and reported on the content of the meeting in *Coprolite*, 12, for which we are most grateful.

During 1993 the production of *Coprolite* has once again benefited from the sponsorship of Mr Clinton Burhouse and I am delighted to report that he has just said that he will do so again in 1994. His generosity is hugely appreciated by the Group and we thank him for his continuing support.

In my incoming Chairman's letter (*Coprolite* 10) I referred to the importance of the collections we care for. As the year draws to an end I can report that we are talking to MGC and BCG with a view to initiating a report on the use of collections. We hope that the report will underpin a renaissance in the way in which museums and their governing bodies view them.

Paul Ensom, Yorkshire Museum, York

Cooptees to GCG Committee

The following were coopted on to Committee at its meeting on 13 January 1994:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Rosina Down | Department of Zoology, University College, London,
BCG Representative; |
| Tom Sharpe | Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, editor of
<i>Coprolite</i> . |

GCG Committee 1994

Chairman: Paul Ensom, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York YO1 2DR
tel. 0904 629745 fax 0904 651221.

Secretary: Mandy Edwards, Department of Geology, University of Manchester,
Manchester M13 9PL tel 061 275 3825 fax 061 275 3947.

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Andy Newman, Department of Archaeology,
University of Newcastle upon Tyne tel/fax. 091 222 7426

Editor: Patrick Wyse Jackson, Department of Geology, Trinity College, Dublin 2,
Ireland tel 010 3531 702 1477 fax 010 3531 671 1199.

Recorder: John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester M13
9PL tel 061 275 2634 fax 061 275 2676.

Publicity Officer: Colin Reid, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, St James' Road,
Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HU tel 0384 453574 fax 0384 453576.

Minutes Secretary: Diana Hawkes, Haslemere Educational Museum, High Street,
Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2LA tel 0428 642112.

Committee: John Faithfull, Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, Glasgow
G12 8QQ tel 041 339 8855 fax 041 307 8059

Gill Weightman, Leicestershire Museums Service, 96 New Walk,
Leicester LE1 6TD tel 0533 473081 fax 0533 473011

Simon Timberlake, Area Museum Service for South East England, 12
York Street, Cambridge CB1 2BY tel 0223 300616.

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **John Gould**, Truro;
Phillip L. Manning, Clitheroe Castle Museum; **Jill Kerr**, Down County Museum;
M.D. Henderson, Burpee Museum of Natural History, Rockford, USA; **A.J. Limb**,
Nottingham; **D.R. Johnston**, Durham; **S.R. Harper**, Newquay; and
Bournemouth University Library.

Musical curators

Bath City Council and the Area Museum Council for the South West have appointed
Linda Wigley, formerly Curator at Trowbridge Museum, to the post of Museum
Development Manager for the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution's
collections.

Words, words, words

At its meeting on 22nd September 1993, GCG Committee established a small
Terminology Working Party, consisting of Roy Clements (acting informally as
coordinator), John Cooper, John Faithfull, John Nudds, and Monica Price. Whilst
John Cooper was Chairman, he had wanted to see the Group become involved with

the problems of achieving some standardisation of the terminology used in geological curatorial documentation. It is this interest that has led to the current initiative.

Right at the outset we have recognised two things: Firstly, total terminology control and uniformity is unattainable, and undesirable. Most geology goes on outside museums (curators are not in control!), and as a rapidly advancing science, it is burgeoning with new ideas, new terms and new classifications. Furthermore, we can look to developments in IT to solve some of the problems this vitality causes. So, apart from a few relatively limited documentation fields, we shall not be producing standard vocabularies or classifications, but rather in acting as an information service, we shall hope to provide access to sources, compendia, dictionaries, vocabularies, thesauri, alternative classifications, etc. Whatever our recommendations, we plan they should meet the requirements of any individual documentation system whether manual or automated. Thus we are aiming for flexible terminological calming and facilitating, not rigid prescriptions.

Secondly, we recognise that it is important to produce at least some results! So, rather than attempt to produce everything all at once, we shall chip away at individual documentation fields (such as name/description; specimen form/derived materials; status; geological localisation; geographical localisation; history; processes; etc.) or parts of them. Thus, for example, for the geological localisation field we might seek to produce: (a) a standard list of system names (and boundaries); (b) a list of standard and non-standard stage names; (c) bibliographies of sources and of listings for biostratigraphical, lithostratigraphical and other 'stratigraphical' frameworks, and for terms relating to geological 'complexes'. We hope that in the not too distant future you will see the start of an irregular series of articles on these matters in the *Geological Curator*. Our first objectives are mineral nomenclature, specimen form and derivative materials terminology, and specimen status terminology.

We shall be consulting widely, both within the curatorial and geological communities, and outside them. We shall obviously liaise with MDA's work in this field. However, if you have any views or information about our immediate objectives, or about the general work of the Working Party - please let us know. Although we want to keep the Working Party itself small, we shall obviously need all the help we can get. Contact me: Roy G. Clements, Department of Geology, University of Leicester, Leicester, LE1 7RH tel 0533 523800.

Geological Curator

At GCG Committee's first meeting of 1994, held at the Museum and Galleries Commission on 13 January, the new editor of *Geological Curator*, Patrick Wyse Jackson, outlined his plans for the journal. Two parts prepared by Peter Crowther are almost ready and will be published as soon as possible. These will be followed

in the autumn by an issue which will include papers presented at the Scunthorpe meeting, completing volume 5.

1995 will see changes to the appearance of the journal starting with volume 6 part 1. Major articles will have abstracts and it is hoped that each issue will carry many more pages. Two parts will be published each year, in March and September, and ten parts will complete a volume. An index will be included in the last part of each volume. Committee approved Patrick's plans and looks forward to seeing the *Geological Curator* published on a regular basis.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

24 February 1994 Lecture Theatre, Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool

UKIC Natural Sciences section: Life after death

The first conference and AGM of the Natural Sciences Section of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation.

10.00 Registration and coffee

10.40 Introduction: William Lindsay, Chairman UKIC Natural Sciences Section

10.50 Five went to Chicago...A Pilgrim Trust sponsored study geological tour of the USA: Simon Moore, Hampshire County Museum Service

11.15 From bones to bornite. A curator's guide to the geological conservation course: Wendy Simkiss, Liverpool Museum

11.40 Conservation of the Maidenhall Mammoth: Jeanette Pearson,, Ipswich Museum

12.05 The conservation of more sea dragons: Adrian Doyle, Natural History Museum

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Introduction: Louise Bacon, Horniman Museum and Gardens

14.05 The storage of natural history collections at the Horniman Museum: Kirsten Walker, Horniman Museum and Gardens

14.30 A textile conservator's perspective on natural sciences materials: Marion Kite, Victoria and Albert Museum

14.50 A salvage operation and a sticky problem solved. Two success stories from the Natural History Museum Botany Department: Jenny Moore, Natural History Museum

15.10 Mounting an enquiry...A survey of conservation materials and methods in British herbaria: Angus and Donna M. Hughes, Liverpool Museum

15.30 Questions

15.40 Tea

16.00 AGM UKIC Natural Sciences Section

Conference fee: £15.00 UKIC members and UKIC Natural Sciences Section members; £25.00 non members. Fee includes lunch, tea and coffee on 24 February. There is no charge for those wishing to attend only the AGM.

A second, optional day will give participants a chance to look at natural sciences conservation projects underway at the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, visit the studios of the Conservation Division and see plans for the exciting new Conservation Centre currently under construction in the heart of Liverpool.

If you wish to attend, please complete the form on the centre page and return it to Angus Gunn, Botany Department, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Liverpool Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN.

28 February - 4 March 1994 Department of Museum Studies, Leicester Sciences 1: Science collections

This course will take a wide look at science collections in museums, and is aimed particularly at students interested in the history and philosophy of science. The course will examine the nature of these collections, practice in collecting and conservation, directions for research and the basics of collection management.

Course fee £220.00

Contact: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel. 0533 523963 fax 0533 523960.

7-11 March 1994 Department of Museum Studies, Leicester Sciences 1: Natural Sciences Curatorial Course

In collaboration with the Biology Curators' Group, the Geological Curators' Group and Leicestershire Museums. This course focuses on those aspects of curation which are specific to the natural sciences.

Monday 7 March Introduction to the natural sciences in museums and the role of the natural science curator (am). Planning to collect objects and data (pm)

Tuesday 8 March Field day looking at sampling, collecting and recording techniques

Wednesday 9 March Naming natural science objects (am). Preparation techniques in biology (pm)

Thursday 10 March Preparation techniques in geology (am). Detecting conservation problems (pm)

Friday 11 March Data capture (am). Collection care and course review (pm)

This one-week course replaces BCG/GCG/University of Sheffield Natural Sciences Curatorial Course. It aims to build upon the success of the Sheffield course particularly in its continued commitment to practical work but with the added incentive of potentially contributing to a recognised qualification in museum studies.

Course fee: £220.00.

Contact: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester,
105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel. 0533 523963 fax 0533 523960.

**14-18 March 1994 Department of Museum Studies, Leicester
Sciences 2: Communicating Science.**

A look at how museums communicate science. This wide ranging course for scientists of all disciplines will examine techniques used in science and discovery centres, in exhibition, site interpretation, publication and education. The focus will be on developing techniques and knowledge which can be applied directly in the museum.

Monday 14 March Public understanding of science; interpretation objectives; communicating through publication; marketing science.

Tuesday 15 March Exhibition, science centres, discovery centres, developing interactive exhibits.

Wednesday 16 March Museum visit to examine science interpretation in practice.

Thursday 17 March Outdoor interpretation.

Friday 18 March Science education and activities.

Course fee: £220.00.

Contact: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester,
105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel. 0533 523963 fax 0533 523960.

17 March 1994 Cambridge

Museum Documentation Association: MODES for natural science and geology.

This course is designed for those who wish to use MODES for documenting natural science and geology objects. A basic knowledge of MODES is required.

Course fee: £65.00.

Contact: Tania Flack or Alison Wheeler, Museum Documentation Association,
Lincoln House, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH tel 0223
242848 fax 0223 213575.

11-12 April 1994 Keble College, Oxford

BCG/GEM: Using natural history collections - focus on education

This meeting, for all who use natural history collections for education in its broadest sense, aims to bring together curators and educators to share expertise. Topics covered through presentations, workshops and visits will include discovery centres, holiday activities, nature trails, and other uses of museum gardens, the National Curriculum, writing worksheets, etc. There will also be plenty of opportunity for discussion. There will be visits to the Oxford Botanic Garden, the new Music Garden at the Balfour Building, Pitt-Rivers Museum, and Cogges Manor Farm Museum. On Monday evening there will be an opportunity to see the zoological and Hope entomological collections in the Oxford University Museum. BCG Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday and the Annual Dinner on Monday evening.

Accommodation and meals will be provided at Keble College. The price for the total meeting including all meals, the Annual Dinner, bed and breakfast and trips will be £75 (£85 to non-members). Day registration, including the Annual Dinner, is possible.

Contact: Ms Jane Pickering, University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW.

17-18 May 1994 Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

GCG 20th Anniversary Meeting: Geology in museums: a review

Over the last 20 years GCG has played an important role in protecting and developing geology collections in museums, and in raising the profile of geology more generally. Through the Group, geology curators have been able to influence national policies affecting geology collections and comment or advise on local decisions. On the occasion of the Group's twentieth anniversary, it seems appropriate that we should review past activity and discuss what our priorities should be for the future. Speakers at this meeting will give their own view of developments in geology in museums and make their own suggestions for the future. Are collections any better protected now than they were 20 years ago? Do geology displays now attract greater resources? Does the science of geology make better use of collections? Are there any more geology curators? Please come along and give your thoughts and ideas on past performance and future direction.

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Welcome

11.10 The Marquis of Northampton - a collection and the cause: Simon Knell, University of Leicester

11.35 Lost and found - GCG and the history of collections: speaker to be announced

12.00 GCG and education in museums: speaker to be announced

12.25 Museums and the science of geology: Phil Doughty, Ulster Museum, Belfast

12.50 Questions

13.00 Lunch

14.15 Geology display in museums: Speaker to be announced.

14.40 Geology in the field - progress with site documentation: Mick Stanley, Hull City Museums and Art Gallery

15.05 Tea

15.30 GCG into the next decade: Paul Ensom, The Yorkshire Museum, GCG Chairman

16.00 Discussion

16.30 Opportunities to view the collection

Meeting fee £3.00 (please pay on the day).

20.00 GCG 20th Anniversary Dinner. Venue depends on numbers attending but likely to be at a local restaurant.

18 May 1994 GCG 20th Anniversary Mystery Fieldtrip.

If you wish to attend, please complete the form on centre page and return it by 1 May 1994 to: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG tel 0533 523969 fax 0533 523960.

**13 July 1994 Lapworth Museum, Birmingham University
GCG Seminar: The university collections**

Has the reorganisation of university geology collections been a success? How are university curators coping with their additional responsibilities? What new facilities exist for the maintenance of the collections? This seminar will review the situation with case studies by the protagonists.

Contact: Paul Smith, School of Earth Sciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT tel 021 414 6147

12 September 1994 Brighton

**GCG/BCG Seminar in conjunction with Museums Association
Conference: Orphan collections - a strategy for the future?**

The Doughty Report (1981) found that of the 283 British museums known to house geological specimens, only 16% had appropriate curators and almost 70% had no curatorial staff at all. Biological collections share a similar fate. Currently, the well-being of these 'orphan' collections lies in the hands of a few specialist peripatetic curators. Their work is crucial, but is it the long-term solution to the problem? Drawing on the experience of conservators and curators, this seminar will examine the dilemma, consider a working party report on the issue and provide a forum for participants to propose a strategy for the future.

Contact: Simon Timberlake, 12 York Street, Cambridge CB1 2BY tel 0223 300616.

September 1994 Le Havre

3rd Symposium for Palaeontological Preparators and Conservators

Contact: Eric Milsom, Lamont Cottage, Norton Green, Freshwater, Isle of Wight PO40 9RY tel 0983 753192.

30 November-1 December 1994 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip: The geological display - new directions in interpretation.

In recent years museums have been moving away from traditional static and factual displays to a more interactive and interpretative approach. Is this the way ahead or should we return to more specimens and less button-pushing? This seminar will review developments and look at new techniques and technology to aid geological interpretation in the museum environment.

Contact: Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales,
Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NP tel 0222 397951 ext 265, fax 0222 667332.

19-21 April 1995 Hulme Hall, University of Manchester

BCG/GCG/The Manchester Museum: International Conference on the value and valuation of natural science collections.

The aim of this conference is to promote discussion of the value to society of natural science collections and the way in which these social and scientific values may be expressed in financial terms. The subject is timely because curators are now being asked to put commercial and insurance valuations on museum collections for audit purposes. It is also becoming increasingly important to be able to justify the use of resources to maintain and curate natural science material. The international line-up of speakers will be drawn from government agencies, users of collections, museums, insurers, dealers and auction houses. The conference will be of interest to curators, directors and trustees of museums, government and local authority agencies and auditors. The conference is being organised by the Biology Curators' Group, the Geological Curators' Group and the Manchester Museum. The aims of the conference are supported by the Museums and Galleries Commission, the Linnean Society of London, and the UK Federation for Natural Sciences Collection Research..

If you would like to present a paper, poster or display at the conference, or would like to receive further information, please return the form on the centre pages to Valuation Conference Secretariat, c/o The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester M13 9PL by 1 March 1994.

Mineral shows

19 February 1994 Essex Gem and Mineral Show. North Romford Community Centre, Clockhouse Lane, Collier Row, Romford, Essex 10am -4pm, admission 50p. Contact: Stuart Adams, 69 Westbury Lane, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 5PH tel 081 504 9422.

13 March 1994 The second Oxford Mineral Show. '333' Oxford Conference Centre at 333 Banbury Road, Oxford from 10.00 to 16.00 with a special opening of the **University Museum** for show-goers from 12.00 to 16.00. A free bus service will run between the two venues. Admission (show and museum) £1.50. Further details can be obtained from Paul Lowe, 'Endsleigh', 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2DA Tel. or Fax. 0872 223227.

Exhibitions

Prehistoric Sea Monsters: Dinamation's robotic sea monsters, ancient and modern. National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff until 27 February 1994. Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York 27 March to end May 1994.

The Evolution of Wales: a new, permanent geology gallery opened 15 October 1993. National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Sea Dragons: the spectacular marine reptiles from south west England acquired by the museum in recent years. Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol.

Here be dragons: recent dinosaur discoveries in the South West. Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol 28 December 1993 to 10 April 1994. Gloucester City Museum, Brunswick Road, Gloucester 18 April to 16 July 1994. Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York 23 July to 30 October 1994. Leicestershire Museums, New Walk, Leicester 14 November 1994 to 21 January 1995.

Dinosaurs Alive: robotic dinosaurs from Dinamation. Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne until 13 March 1994.

Dinosaurs from China: Dick Institute, Elmbank Avenue, Kilmarnock until 30 April 1994; Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter from 26 July 1994.

Earth...Life: from the origins of the earth to the explorations of Captain Cook and the voyage of HMS Challenger. Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow.

Plants conquer land: Devonian land plants from famous localities in northwestern Germany and Bear Island, Norway. Until April 1994, Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Stuttgart, Museum am Lowentor, Rosenstein 1, D-70 191 Stuttgart.

Here be dragons! New discoveries of dinosaurs in the south-west.

A new exhibition at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

This new exhibition from Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery was formally opened by David Norman of the Sedgwick Museum on 6 January 1994. The exhibition opened to the public on 28 December 1993 and during its first six days attracted 4000 visitors (compared with 1500 in the same period the previous year).

Bristol has followed up its successful Sea Dragons exhibition which highlights new discoveries of marine reptiles in the south west, with this new exhibition to show that the south west is also producing terrestrial reptiles. Five dinosaurs are represented in this exhibition: *Thecodontosaurus*, *Plateosaurus*, *Cetiosaurus*, *Scelidosaurus* and a megalosaur. Each dinosaur is illustrated by a triptych of panels which describe the discovery of the specimen from the south west, explain how the material is studied, and give information ('dinofacts') about the genus.

There are two full size, mounted skeleton casts in the exhibition, a megalosaur and *Plateosaurus*. Along with the megalosaur cast are the real legs, pelvic girdle and some vertebrae of a megalosaur found by Peter Langham in the Kimmerigian of Kimmeridge in Dorset in 1984. The *Plateosaurus* cast has with it plateosaur bones from the Rhaetian of Aust and footprints from Barry in South Wales. The highlight

of the exhibition is, however, not a mounted specimen, but the bones of a juvenile *Scelidosaurus harrisoni* from the Lower Lias of Charmouth found by Simon Barnsley in 1985, and accompanied in this exhibition by a superb-life-size model of the animal by Arril Johnson. In addition to vertebrae, femur, ribs, foot, pelvis and scutes, the skull and skin impressions have also been found. The story of the discovery and subsequent preparation and study of the Dorset *Scelidosaurus* is told on a video made for this exhibition.

The exhibition also includes a display of dinosaurs in popular culture, from Waterhouse Hawkins to Godzilla and beyond, with comics, bubble gum cards, plastic models, spaghettisaurus, and a range of dino-junk.

The exhibition has clean, tidy lines, with large, clear text on grey, free-standing panels. The cases are simple and effective, with the specimens mounted in or on dark grey Plastazote. It was designed by Haley Sharpe Associates of Leicester and cost £26 000. It is designed to travel, and after three months in Bristol the exhibition will be visiting Gloucester, Yorkshire, and Leicestershire Museums. A booklet is being published to accompany the exhibition. Peter Crowther and his staff at Bristol are to be congratulated on producing a fine exhibition, an achievement enhanced when one knows of the difficult conditions under which the staff at Bristol have been working in recent years.

Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales.

Dinosaurs do a ton in Dudley!

On 8 January 1994, the final day of its record-breaking 14-month run, Dudley Museum's *Dinosaur mania* exhibition received its 100,000th visitor. Extended twice to meet public demand, the exhibition more than quadrupled the museum's normal attendance figures and increased the takings in the museum shop by a staggering 1500%!

Put together largely in-house, *Dinosaur mania* featured life-size models and skeletons and the finest private collection of dinosaur material in the country, including skulls, bones and egg nests from the USA, Canada, France, China and the Isle of Wight. The exhibition was complemented by *Jurassic Park* displays and a range of children's activities, including computer games and exhibits in which they could design and construct their own dinosaur.

Dinosaur mania was provided as a free service and attracted over 250 school visits from as far away as Cheshire, Buckinghamshire and Avon. The exhibition's success has come at a crucial time for the museum. In 1993 local government cuts reduced its working budget by 29% and threatened the museum's long-term survival. In 1994, however, it is hoped that budgets will be increased and major capital investment is anticipated.

Colin Reid, Dudley Museum and Art Gallery.

GCG Workshop: Museum education without dinosaurs St Albans, 28 October 1993

This proved to be a very successful day; all those attending felt it was enjoyable and constructive. The workshop aimed to provide ideas and resources for those who have to develop educational programmes within their museums.

Susanna Van Rose gave a short talk on publications, looking in particular at Dorling Kindersley's series of books written for children and students. She gave an insight into how these books are produced and reviewed some of their very useful earth science publications. How the earth works by John Farndon (Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness Science Guides, 1992) is a particular favourite, describing simple earth science experiments. It is well worth stocking in the museum shop (and reading, whatever your age).

Jean Cooper from the Natural History Museum gave a very stimulating talk highlighting the approaches taken in the education department at the museum. As the education staff cannot meet all of the 1200 pupils who visit the museum every day, they try to reach them indirectly through resources, teacher training and volunteer guides. We discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches and also considered what makes a good worksheet. The complex and rigorous process of worksheet preparation, including evaluation, which is used at the museum was of particular interest.

As the workshop participants were a mixture of curators and teachers, there was a variety of outlooks and experiences relating to earth sciences and on using museums. This provoked much discussion and some interesting ideas for the future. We discussed a number of galleries and resources currently available that were felt to be good examples. Other speakers looked at the relevance of fieldwork to schools and museums, considering how museum staff could support teachers, and the rock workshop, noting format, possible pupil activities, approach and evaluation.

It is hoped to develop a centre for museum earth science resources so that they can be accessed for reference and help in developing new resources. Participants felt that much very good material was not seen by museum workers.

Kate Pontin, Local Heritage Education Officer, Uxbridge, Middlesex

GCG Seminar: True Confessions - learning by our mistakes Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, 7-8 December 1993

Around 30 people were welcomed by Graham Durant of the Hunterian who gave us a quick background to the museum and its prospects for the future. Apparently they have lots of money for projects but little to pay people to carry them out. A variation on a common theme?

The first talk was given by the home side in the form of John Faithfull, who set the mood for the meeting with a witty presentation, diplomatically entitled Curatorial

Cock-ups. The main theme of this was that our own bright ideas can turn out to be pretty dim in the harsh scrutiny of hindsight. These included such things as over-complex numbering systems, ('it'll be so easy to find things'), excellent curation, but of someone else's collection ('thanks, I'll have it back now'), data 'improvement', ('it's got to be from there') and so on. Sound familiar? Other things suggested... well, perhaps not in print.

Kate Andrew entered at this point to reveal her ten conservation nightmares. Now with things such as light, humidity, floods, fire, (followed of course by flood), none of this should be news to us, but Kate demonstrated that we often leave until 'another day' to deal with the problems.

Graham Durant returned, to take us up to coffee with an account of what he clearly wished he had never found out about in the first place, namely the moving of two university collections. So far, these have had four homes between them, though one hopes they are going to find themselves a little more settled in future. Orphan collections are one thing but now we appear to have gypsy collections as well.

After coffee Simon Timberlake took us on a tour of (unnamed) collections in South East England. It seems that many curators don't know what they have, that they are often too embarrassed to show you what they know about, and even when they are not, you can't see them anyway because the social history collections are piled up in front of them. Simon, undeterred, burrows his way in and comes out with an ever-increasing range of phenomena. These include exploding gastropods, acidity-aided gravity, tidal terrors leading to salt-enhanced soaking, MSC mayhem and aberrant object-use syndrome, to name but a few. These may be protected by booby traps (if you must store your collections in ammunition boxes at least remove the ammunition first).

The final talk brought us down to earth. This was an account of the Perth flood by Anne Abernethy (Perth Museum). I was struck by how she and Mike Taylor, who spoke to BCG on this during the summer, found it difficult to find suitable words to describe the event. It should be remembered that the museum had expected and prepared for such an eventuality, but the reality turned out to be much worse than their fears. In the end the staff were faced with seeing their collections, and years of work, being ruined before their eyes, despite working flat out during that night. Having said that, if they had not been prepared the damage would have been much worse, as indeed it would have been at so many other places. I feel it is important that this should be written up for the whole museum community to learn from, although I appreciate that the people at Perth are unlikely to have time to do so in the near future.

Thursday saw a few of us off to two sites to the south west of Glasgow. These exposed Carboniferous vesicular lavas, and their associated mineralisation, which was what really interested us. John Faithfull hoped for at least one six-inch

greenockite crystal, although he had to admit that this would have exceeded the current record by, to a very close approximation, six inches. In the event nothing larger than six microns turned up, and indeed if anything rare was found, the finder was not letting on. However, the weather notwithstanding, (let's face it, it was better than anywhere else in Britain at the time), we kept ourselves happy, being dragged away finally only to catch last trains.

Glasgow clearly has an enormous amount to offer. I didn't get to Fossil Grove, (next time), but was impressed with material in the geology gallery, (you must see the trilobites). The forty eight hours were thoroughly enjoyable from beginning to end. Our thanks go to the Hunterian for their hospitality, and particularly to John for his excellent organisation.

Steve Thompson, Scunthorpe Museum

Newish publications

Register of natural science collections in the Midlands of England edited by Graham Walley. All Midlands Collections Research Unit, 1993, 320pp. ISBN 0 905634 24 1, £27.00 including p+p, overseas orders £40.00 including p+p. Orders to West Midlands Museum Service, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD.

Museum exhibition. Theory and practice by David Dean. Routledge, 1994, 224pp. ISBN 0 415 080160 9, £22.50.

Towards the museum of the future. New European perspectives edited by Roger Miles and Lauro Zavala. Routledge, 1993. ISBN 0 415 09498 4, £27.50.

Handbook for museums by Gary Edson and David Dean. Routledge, 1994, 296pp. ISBN 0 415 09952 8, £25.00.

Museums and their visitors by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. Routledge, 1994, 224pp. ISBN 0 415 06857 6, £22.50.

Discovering museums. A guide to museums in the United Kingdom for blind and partially sighted people. Royal National Institute for the Blind/HMSO, 1993. ISBN 0 11 701557 1, £9.95.

Conserving Britain's mineralogical heritage.

The latest issue of the *Journal of the Russell Society* (volume 5 number 1) contains a thematic set of 8 papers which were presented at the conference on conserving Britain's mineralogical heritage held in Manchester 31 March - 1 April 1992. These include papers on the role of the collector; abandoned metal mines as a mineralogical and microbiological resource; the botanical interest of spoil heaps; conservation of Bronze Age mines at Cwmystwyth; the reclamation of mine sites; and the approach of governmental conservation agencies.

Copies of the Journal are available from Mr. H.W. Day, 83 Hollywood Lane, Frindsbury, Rochester, Kent ME3 8AT.

Shropshire treasure attracts national funding

A large scale watercolour drawing illustrating the work of the pioneering Victorian geologist, Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, which established a new chapter in earth's history is to be temporarily removed from its Ludlow, Shropshire home for restoration. Believed to have been drawn by Murchison to accompany a talk he gave to the town's Natural History Society in about 1850 the drawing, measuring some 8m in length, is a cross-section depicting the rocks of the Silurian System which underlie the landscape of the Shropshire- Herefordshire border.

In recognition of the national, if not international, significance of this manuscript (no other work on this scale is known for Murchison) funding amounting to £4,250 has been awarded towards the cost of its restoration by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust and the Geologists' Association's Curry Fund. Local natural history societies have provided the remainder of the funding.

The drawing beautifully demonstrates the contribution of Shropshire - not only the place but also its naturalists - to the development of Murchison's theories on the Silurian System, and it will feature in Ludlow Museum's new geology gallery.

Discovering Britain's gems

The Gemmological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory of Great Britain has launched a survey of public collections and displays of gem mineral specimens, cut gems (set or unset), hardstone carvings, and inlay work (pietra dura) in small objects and furniture. The purpose of the survey is to establish what good reference collections exist, especially outside London, which would be available for study and teaching by students and qualified gemmologists..

For many years the Gemmological Association has set and examined the Diploma in Gemmology, an internationally recognised qualification in the study of gem materials and their simulants. As the Diploma places great emphasis on the practical identification of gemstones, the Association considers that museum visits should form a valuable part of a student's experience, especially as many collections contain examples of a quality or rarity that are beyond the means of the average college collection or correspondence course student. It is hoped to provide regional lists of collections to new students, instructors and qualified Fellows of the Association, with a firm recommendation that they use this apparently much under-used resource.

The information will also be used by the education staff of the Gemmological Association who are planning a major restructuring of the existing courses. They are also exploring the possibility of holding more seminars and courses nationwide,

especially in areas where significant public collections of gem minerals and jewellery exist.

If you can help with details of your collections and displays, please contact Christine Woodward, Gemmological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory, 27 Greville Street, London EC1N 8SU.

A new UK Systematics Forum

Following the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Systematic Biology Research, the Office of Science and Technology had the Natural History Museum prepare a draft constitution and objectives of a UK Systematics Forum. The aim of the Forum is to improve coordination and cooperation of institutions housing the country's major systematics collections and to formulate a national strategy for the care, use and development of systematic biology and palaeontology collections. The Forum will meet twice a year and will organise workshops involving the entire UK taxonomic community.

The Forum will be based at the Natural History Museum and will be supported by a part-time Secretary. Funding has been secured to April 1996. The first meeting of the Forum, chaired by Dr Stephen Blackmore, Assistant Director (Life Sciences) and Keeper of Botany at the Natural History Museum, will take place on 9 February 1994. Representatives of ten institutions identified in the Select Committee's report as having biological collections in excess of half a million specimens have been invited to the meeting.

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