



COPROLITE

No.14
May
1994

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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New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Dr M J Jenyon**, Richmond, North, Yorkshire; **Alf Cawthorn**, Birmingham; **Andrew Brewster**, Lincoln; **Karen Ritson**, Brampton, Cumbria; **Naomi A Mott**, Institute of Archaeology, London; **Richard Wilding**, Twickenham; **Dr Karen Watson**, Canterbury Museum, New Zealand; **Professor G M Friedman**, New York; **Dr C Giles Miller**, Natural History Museum, London; **Paul W Sowen**, Croydon, Surrey; **Carol S Davies**, Kendal Museum; and **Hayashibara Museum of Natural History**, Okayama, Japan.

Musical Curators

Hugh Ivimey-Cook retired as Curator of the British Geological Survey Palaeontological Collections at the end of March. He is succeeded by **Steve Tunnicliff** who took up his post on 1 April.

Musical Collections

Most of the BGS Type and Figured collection of fossils (the BGS GSE collection) which was housed at Murchison House in Edinburgh, has now been transferred to BGS Keyworth. Some vertebrate material remains in Scotland on loan to the Royal Museum of Scotland, and the John Smith Collection remains at Murchison House. Any enquiries can be directed to either Steve Tunncliff, British Geological Survey, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG or to Mark Dean, British Geological Survey, Murchison House, West Main Road, Edinburgh EH9 3LA.

Russian bugs at the Booth Museum, Brighton

The Booth Museum recently purchased a collection of Baltic amber from Russia. It consists of 307 small blocks each containing fossil insects and was collected during September 1992 from the commercial open-cast amber plant at Kaliningrad on the Baltic coast. This initiative was taken by the Palaeontological Unit of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, headed by Prof. A.P. Rasnitsyn, and the collection offered for sale to appropriate institutions. The Booth Museum, through the work of Ed Jarzembowski, has developed a strong interest in, and good collections of, Wealden insects which the Russians among others are actively studying and publishing. This 'first representative collection' of amber has been thoroughly identified by a wide range of Russian specialists and will provide very useful comparative material to help with our work on the Wealden fauna.

The collection was purchased for £2,000, half of which has been provided as grant-in-aid by the MGC's PRISM Fund administered by the Science Museum, and half by the Friends of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton Purchase Fund. The collection is currently being catalogued prior to photography and display.

John Cooper, Booth Museum, Brighton.

The tortoise...

Good news, the next two issues of *Geological Curator* will be going to press in late May. Peter Crowther is putting the finishing touches to volume 5 numbers 8 and 9. Meanwhile, new Editor, Patrick Wyse Jackson, has number 10 ready to go to press. All GCG members are assured of some good summer reading this year.

and the hare...

Congratulations to our nippy GCG Recorder, John Nudds, who ran the 1994 London Marathon in 2 hours 49 minutes, just one minute outside his best time despite the cold windy weather. Not to be caught napping after this fine achievement, he is now sprinting through the last stages of the GCG *Directory of British Geological Museums* and hopes that it will be published in time for the Northampton meeting in May.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

17-18 May 1994 Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

GCG 20th Anniversary Meeting: Geology in Museums: A Review

Over the last 20 years the 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 give your thoughts and ideas on past performance and future direction.

17 May 1994 (Note changes to agenda since *Coprolite* no.13)

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Welcome

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

11.35 Found and lost? What happened to collections research? Ron Cleevely, RonCAIR

12.00 Geology, education and museums: Andrew Mathieson, Bristol City Museums

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

12.50 Questions

13.00 Lunch

14.15 Geology display in museums today : Fred Dunning, formerly Geological Museum, London (on video)

14.35 Giving birth to geological conservation: Chris Collins, Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge

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

15.25 Forum: GCG into the next decade chaired by Paul Ensom, GCG Chairman, Yorkshire Museum

16.15 Tea and an opportunity to view the collection: Brian Webster/Rosemary Roden

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

19.00 GCG 20th Anniversary Dinner. Lime Trees Hotel, 8 Langham Place, Northampton. Advance booking essential

18 May 1994 GCG 20th Anniversary Field Meeting: Building stones of Northamptonshire. Leader: Diana Sutherland, Department of Geology, University of Leicester. A tour of the county's building stones and stone producing quarries including a visit to the remarkable Brixworth Church. 09.00 start: contact Simon Knell to arrange transport.

If you wish to attend, please contact **immediately** 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.

**16-18 September 1994 School of Earth Sciences, Birmingham University
Earth Science Teachers' Association Annual Course and Conference**

Any exhibitors wishing to take part should contact Dr Alan Thomas at the address below by 22 July.

Contact: Dr A T Thomas, School of Earth Sciences, Birmingham University, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT tel 021 414 3344 fax 021 414 3971.

20 September 1994 Museum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre

3rd Symposium for Palaeontological Preparators and Conservators

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

21-24 September 1994 Museum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre

42nd Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy

Contact: Eric Buffetaut, SVPCA, Palaeontologie at Stratigraphie, Case 106, Universite Paris 6, 4 place Jussieu, 75252 Paris Cedex 05, France tel (33) 1 44 27 35 14 fax (33) 1 44 27 49 92.

4 October 1994 Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London

Inaugural meeting of the History of Geology Group

Contact: John Thackray, History of Geology Group, Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0JU.

5 November 1994 University College, London

Geologists' Association Annual Reunion

Contact: Sarah Stafford, Geologists' Association, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 9AG tel 071 434 9298 fax 071 287 0280.

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.

Contact: Valuation Conference Secretariat, c/o The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester M13 9PL.

Exhibitions

Prehistoric Sea Monsters: Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York until end May 1994.

Here be dragons: recent dinosaur discoveries in the South West. 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 from China: Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter from 26 July 1994.

Living with minerals: Amgueddfa'r Gogledd, Llanberis, Gwynedd 21 May to 30 November 1994.

The geology of Kerry: an exhibition devised by the Geological Museum, Trinity College, Dublin. Kerry County Museum, Ashe Memorial Hall, Tralee, Co Kerry until 31 May 1994. ENFO, St Andrew Street, Dublin September through November 1994.

Darwin and Darwinism: an exhibition of natural and cultural history. Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Lingnerplatz 1, D-01069 Dresden, Germany until 26 June 1994.

Mineral shows

7 May 1994 7th Annual Rock and Mineral Fair. Keele University Student Union, 10.00 to 16.30.

Contact: J G O'Dell, 27 Chapel Lane, Rode Heath, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 3SD tel 0270 875133 (evenings)

17 July 1994 Summer Oxford Mineral Show. '333' Oxford Conference Centre at 333 Banbury Road, Oxford from 10.00 to 16.00.

Contact Paul Lowe, 'Endsleigh', 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2DA tel or fax 0872 223227.

28-29 May 1994 BLMDA* Show. The Winter Gardens, Ilkley, North Yorkshire

27-29 August 1994 BLMDA* Show. The Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

15-16 October 1994 BLMDA* Show. The Regents Park Marriott Hotel, Swiss Cottage, London

(*BLMDA - British Lapidary and Mineral Dealers Association)

Discovery Sunday at Oxford University Museum

On 20 February 1994, the University and Pitt Rivers Museums joined forces to run their first ever family afternoon *Discovery Sunday*. The main aim was to raise funds for the museums' joint appeal to provide facilities and access for people with

disabilities, and staff, students, Friends, friends, (a subtle difference) and families all volunteered their time to help on the day.

An extremely varied programme of events was organised with fossil casting, gem cutting and fluorescent mineral demonstrations, tours of the stores and laboratories, zoology handling tables, fossil and insect identifications, and a variety of art activities including drawing and fossil rubbing, all in the University Museum; conservation demonstrations, gamelan playing, face painting and basket making among the many activities in the Pitt Rivers. A variety of short 'gallery talks' were given in both museums and needless to say Phil Powell's 'Dinosaurs' talk drew the largest audience! Local geology and natural history groups set up stalls and added quizzes and displays to the entertainments on offer.

Organising the event was approached with much trepidation - just how many people would come? Would it be worthwhile if the numbers were low? What would happen if we were swamped with visitors? (The ideal intermediate was rarely envisaged!) Organising refreshments for the masses, just how many would we have to cater for? We were delighted with the help we received from local businesses; paper and stationery materials for art events, prizes for the raffle, biscuits, drinks and the loan of catering equipment, and much welcome publicity from the media including an afternoon's live radio broadcasting from the Museum on the Friday beforehand.

We should not have worried about numbers with about 1,400 visitors during the 3 hours opening, raising nearly £2,500 for the appeal. Rather the contrary, we now realise how fortunate we were that the whole afternoon ran so smoothly with a capacity crowd in the buildings. The ubiquitous questionnaires gave a wonderfully enthusiastic response, typically 'why don't you do this every year' and 'our first visit - we'll be coming again'; the oft quoted but only negative comments being along the lines of 'too many people' and 'too good publicity'. By the end of the afternoon the entire team of staff and helpers were experiencing a rather novel cocktail of exhaustion and elation. Not only had the afternoon been a financial success, but it had brought excellent publicity to the two museums and done wonders for staff moral.

We learnt many lessons from the occasion, not the least about crowd control. There were some disappointments that all the tickets for the fossil casting sessions were distributed within the first half hour while many were still queuing outside, and thank goodness it wasn't raining - just think what 1,400 dripping coats would have done to RH levels! We were pleased to be able to repeat the fluorescent mineral demonstrations for the Oxford Mineral Show in March, and the gem-cutters of the Oxford Mineral and Lapidary Club have been invited back to demonstrate their skills for an OXMUS (childrens museums club) event next year. As for that suggestion 'you should do this every year', it will take us a long time to recover from this year's event - and we wouldn't want to give our visitors the same old thing every year...

Monica T. Price, Oxford University Museum

Life after death II

UKIC Natural Sciences Conference, 24 February 1994, Liverpool Museum.

Having been many moons in gestation, the first UKIC natural sciences section meeting finally blossomed at Liverpool Museum. Possibly to ensure that this meeting would be at least slightly different, no sooner had we arrived than the fire alarms went off and we all had to troop out into the cold and damp Liverpool morning. This was only a temporary diversion however, and not enough to prevent the meeting starting on time.

Having renewed our (by now, cold) drinks, we got down to business. We began with Simon Moore (Hampshire County Museum Service) and his colleagues, who had plenty to show us from their study trip to North America. It turns out that even the Canadians have their problems, despite the glowing reports we often get from there; which is not to say they haven't achieved an enormous amount, which they clearly have. Wendy Simkiss (Liverpool Museum) continued the morning with more studying, this time closer to home, in Cambridge, where she had spent eight weeks on the geological conservation course. This looks like an entertaining as well as an educational experience, but it was pointed out that few curators were going to be able to get an eight week slot to do the course. Anything shorter possible?

Jeanette Pearson (Ipswich Museum) told us how they had gone about restoring the Maidenhall Mammoth to at least something like its former glory. A very interesting talk, showing us how less than ideal circumstances were coped with, something which most of us regard as the normal state of affairs. Adrian Doyle (Natural History Museum) completed the morning with a wry account of the refurbishment of the marine reptiles at the Natural History Museum. I thought it a pity that more hadn't been done on the interpretation of the material. After all, it doesn't come much better than this.

Following a superb lunch, Kirsten Walker (Horniman Museum) opened the afternoon session by showing us how they were going about improving the lot of the collections at her museum. Again, another story of coping with dubious circumstances, and a major undertaking which would be interesting written up as a case study. Marion Kite's (Victoria and Albert Museum) contribution was in some ways the most interesting of the day, dealing as it did with the conservation of natural history material after it has been turned into social history material in the form of clothes and ornaments. This is an angle that I suspect most of us rarely consider.

Jenny Moore (Natural History Museum) gave us a light hearted account of two problems that they are currently dealing with, namely how to deal with a herbarium when someone's dropped a bomb on it, and what to do when your glue has been turned into condoms. Whatever next! Angus Gunn (Liverpool Museum) finished off by giving us a summary of a recent survey of methods and materials used in

British herbaria. It was a pity more people didn't respond to the requests for information, but the replies that did come back revealed a surprisingly wide range. The afternoon session was followed by the section's AGM, which included a short time for discussion. I suspect there would have been considerably more if people had not been starting to look at their watches by this time. The one issue that was discussed was the provision of training in conservation. No conclusions were drawn on this occasion but it is an ever recurring topic, and an area to which the section could very usefully contribute.

As you can see, a wide ranging, and very appropriate, first meeting, giving us a taste of what we might expect to see covered in future events. It was reassuring to see such a good turnout, as the attendance of over fifty delegates exceeded the current membership, though hopefully this will increase as a result of the meeting. I was a little disappointed to see so few curators (only a dozen or so), as we had hoped that this section would draw together the curatorial and conservation communities, but perhaps we will do better in future. All in all, an enjoyable and promising meeting. Our thanks go to Angus Gunn and his colleagues for their excellent organisation.

Steve Thompson, Scunthorpe Museum

Suggestions for the marketing of building stone collections

The summary of the building stones seminar in *Coprolite 12*, by Susannah Van Rose, recorded the mood of the day's events with clarity. However, one detail of the agenda was overlooked, that being the marketing of building stone collections.

In my opinion, and I am sure this is shared with others, the boxes of 6-inch cubes which normally comprise a building stone collection are in themselves very dull and unattractive and have limited use as a direct teaching tool. Although each sample pinpoints a building stone quarry (and effectively maps the local surface geology), the connection with architecture and stonemasonry is generally not made very clear.

The link between geologists and stonemasons has not been an easy one to forge. Although sharing a common interest in stone, each uses a different language which prevents a free flow of information and an exchange of ideas. Because the museum curator is generally not familiar with the practicalities and terminology of the traditional construction industry, he is often limited in his ability to market stonemasonry and architecture as important examples of applied geology.

Geologists have a fundamental training in the weathering and structural processes within the earth's crust, and with a little application and common sense these same principles can be applied to the behaviour of stone in a man made structure. With a better understanding of buildings, the geological curator should acquire an appreciation of the value of building stones in his care and discover ways of incorporating these into simple public displays.

A block of raw building stone is transformed into a visually stimulating subject by skilful application of the stonemason's tools and this will be especially apparent on the upper levels of a building. Here, one can observe the differential use of stone within a structure to prevent penetration of wind and water into the walls and in the form of intricate mythological creatures, crests, inscriptions and other curiosities. The terminology and the customs of the stonemason and architect can easily be learned by the keen enthusiast, by talking to local craftsmen, looking at buildings with the naked eye and by obtaining trade literature from the Stone Federation in London.

Applied to the museum environment, the marketing objective of the geological curator should be to encourage visitors to explore these points of interest within the region and this could be achieved by the use of a simple annotated photographic display, highlighting the most visually interesting stone detailing to be found locally, accompanied by examples of local hand tooled stonemasonry, a sample of plain raw material and where possible a brief walking guide.

The argument against this is probably related to cost and levels of staffing, but shared with archaeology or local history sections, this can be considerably reduced and judging from my own experiences, a temporary exhibition based on good quality photographic images can be produced relatively cheaply.

Traditional stonemasonry, carving and sculptural skills are rapidly disappearing in Great Britain. This is a valuable part of the British heritage, but has been sadly neglected by central government policy. Stalwarts such as Eric Robinson have already laid down the foundations for the general scientific study of stone in buildings, cemeteries and churchyards but this needs to be taken one step further by encouraging students of all ages to study building stones in a structural context.

Museums are often the first point of contact with a lifetime passion and geologists can therefore play an important role in reviving an interest in a subject which combines elements of both applied science and the visual arts.

Scott Engering, Bakewell, Derbyshire

Newish publications

Here be dragons! Scelidosaurus and other dinosaurs from the West of England by Roger Clark. Bristol Museums and Art Gallery, 1993, 12pp. ISBN 0 900199 41 5, £0.90.

The Coal Measures forests by B A Thomas and C J Cleal. National Museum of Wales, 1993, 32pp. ISBN 0 7200 0394 6, £3.50.

The palaeobiology of trace fossils by S K Donovan. Wiley, 1994, 256pp. ISBN 0471 94843 8, £40.00.

Fossil fishes of Fenton and Longton. The John Ward Collection by Don Steward. City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent, 1994, 19pp. ISBN 0 905080 69 6, £1.95.

Quaternary of the Thames by D R Bridgland. Geological Conservation Review Series, Volume 7, Chapman & Hall, 1994, 441pp. ISBN 0 412 48830 2, £79.00:

Eyewitness Handbooks. Gemstones by Cally Hall. Dorling Kindersley, 1994, 160pp. ISBN 0 7513 1026 3, £10.99.

Dinosaurs of the East Midlands by David Martill and Maria Clarke. Peterborough City Museum and Art Gallery, 1994, 15pp. ISBN 0 905952 05 7, £2.00.

An illustrated guide to the British Middle Eocene vertebrates by David Kemp, Liz Kemp and David Ward. Published by the authors, 1990, iv+59pp. Available from David J Ward, 209 Crofton Lane, Orpington, Kent BR6 0BL, £4.95 including postage (cheques payable to David J Ward).

Dinosaur hunters by David A E Spalding. Key Porter Books, 1993, ix+ 310pp. ISBN 1 55013 300 4, £13.95.

The story of fossils. In search of vanished worlds by Yvette Gayraud-Valy. Thames and Hudson New Horizons, 1994, 191pp. ISBN 0 500 300399, £6.95

A mineralogy of Wales by Richard Bevins. National Museum of Wales Geological Series No.16, 1994, 146pp. ISBN 0 7200 0403 9 £25.00

Rock solid - Mass extinction

Firstly I'd like to thank everyone in the museums service who helped us and supported this project; it was enormous fun to make, attracted good reviews, and still ranks as the longest running national series on geology in the British media. Working with museums was particularly fulfilling as we are all doing the same job, but in different media - getting the message across that geology is a science of (literally) global importance, it's great fun, and is a science which affects everyone's daily life and in which everyone can take part.

But, on 7 September 1993 BBC Education issued a statement announcing that the much publicised November-December repeats of *Rock Solid* were having to be postponed because of what were described as 'scheduling and logistical difficulties'. The Head of Continuing Education and Training, Alan Rogers, stated very clearly that: 'The BBC and Continuing Education in particular are very much committed to broadcasting popular basic science. It is part of achieving greater scientific literacy. We are proud of *Rock Solid* and feel that it is doing a good job. We hope to reschedule it next year and I also want to persuade Schools Radio colleagues to transmit it to schools as well. I hope we can do further series'.

However, since that statement was made the asteroid of Radio Five Live has hit the airwaves, and whether, where and when seem to be pertinent questions to be asked about rescheduling and the hope of further series. Radio Four tell me they have no room in their schedules for *Rock Solid*, and as producer Gordon Hutchings is leaving the BBC shortly, it really is beginning to look a bit like the end of the Cretaceous.

Three things can happen after an extinction event: Firstly curtains, like the ammo-

nites. Secondly, surviving and carrying on the same like the good old *Nautilus* and hardy *Lingula*. Thirdly, if one is very lucky and in the right niche at the right time, and one happens to be a small furry mammal, one can evolve to something which takes over the whole planet. It is a bit early to tell which of these three fates awaits *Rock Solid*, but I think we can rule out the second one. I am, however, cautiously optimistic that *Rock Solid* is inspiring more ventures into media-geology: many of you may have heard the *Blue Skies* programme on Radio Three, devoted to landscapes, during which Steve Jones interviewed Richard Fortey about his excellent book *The Hidden Landscape*.

In my furry mammal role, I am currently working on a documentary about geological conservation for Radio Four, and many of you will have heard about the TV project I'm doing with Roger Jones of the BBC's Natural History Unit, *Postcards from the Past*. Again the joys of symbiosis between broadcasters and the museums are already bearing fruit as we have received piles and piles of amazingly interesting and useful information, currently being sifted through to see how much we can cram into one 50 minute programme! A big thank you to everyone, and here's to more working together in the future!

Anna Grayson, Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire

History of Geology Group set up by Geological Society

The Council of the Geological Society, London, has agreed to the formation of a new Specialist Group on the History of Geology. John Thackray, Hugh Torrens and John Fuller are, respectively, acting Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Membership will be open to all.

The main objects of the Group are to encourage an interest, knowledge and enthusiasm for the history of geology, particularly among Fellows of the Society; to encourage existing researchers; to recruit new ones; and to provide a forum in which they can meet and discuss their work; to raise the profile of history of geology in other related societies by means of joint meetings; and, through the Committee, to give the Geological Society a voice in the history of geology. The Group also aims to raise awareness of British contributions in the history of earth sciences by holding joint meetings with European, American and other international organisations. It is not intended to publish a journal or to compete in any way with the established societies in the fields of the history of science or natural history.

There will be an inaugural meeting of the Group at the Geological Society on Tuesday 4 October 1994, at which the objects and future activities of the Group will be discussed, officers and a Committee elected, and a pair of inaugural lectures delivered. If you would like further details of this meeting, together with information about the Group, please write to J C Thackray, History of Geology Group, Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0JU.

Launch of CWEST: Cornwall Women in Engineering, Science and Technology

CWEST is a new project launched on 24 March 1994 at the Camborne School of Mines Museum to advise and encourage girls and women interested in following a career in engineering, science or technology. There is much enthusiasm for this from industry, schools, higher education, careers officers, extra mural departments, professional institutions, local authorities, and present and past students.

While there have been previous initiatives aimed at girls, now I think is the time to tackle the shortfall in women science students on four different levels: in Primary and Junior Schools; at pre-GCSE level; first year sixth forms; and women returners

At an early stage during the first years at school when science projects are introduced seems a useful time to arrange visits by women with scientific backgrounds as role models. Again when girls of about thirteen are making GCSE choices it is very important to encourage them not to abandon science and mathematics especially when boys appear more enthusiastic and confident using computers and scientific and technical equipment. Poor figures for university science entrants indicates the need of improving the image of career prospects in engineering, particularly for women, and information must be made available to sixth form pupils. Many women with grown families have time and energy for returning to, or embarking on, worthwhile careers. Courses such as environmental management can be tailored to interest groups of all ages and experience.

Camborne School of Mines has highlighted the need for women in the minerals industry for many years and is proud to boast of the success of past female students. I want to share the knowledge and experience gained in recruiting initiatives by offering advice - backed up by extensive library facilities; encouragement - from past and present female students in science and engineering fields; and education - by organising visiting lectures, suggesting access and short courses or more extensive programmes of study as required.

For further information, contact Dr Lesley Atkinson, Cornwall Women in Engineering Science & Technology, c/o Camborne School of Mines, University of Exeter, Pool, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 3SE tel 0209 714866 fax 0209 716977.

Cowper and Newton Museum: showcases required

The Gordon Osborn Room of the Cowper and Newton Museum, a small private trust museum in Olney, Buckinghamshire, has an excellent collection of local geological and palaeontological specimens and archaeological artifacts which are in desperate need of protection. If any museum has surplus display cases approximately 2ft 6in wide by 4ft high by 12in deep, they would be most welcome.

If you can help, please contact the custodian, Mrs E Knight, by letter giving details of payment required and suggestions for transport arrangements, at the Cowper and Newton Museum, Orchard Side, Market Place, Olney, Bucks MK46 4AJ.

Do you have spare GCG leaflets?

GCG's new publicity leaflet was distributed at the beginning of the year, and the response so far has been very encouraging. With help from Steve Maclean at the Hancock Museum in Newcastle, we have sent out over 50 replies to people interested in joining GCG. We have also had a lot of people asking for copies of other leaflets GCG has produced: *Record of the Rocks*; *Rocks, fossils and minerals: a thumbs-up guide*; and *Rescue - a heritage on the rocks*. If anyone has spare copies of these leaflets, I would be very grateful if you could send them to Steve at the Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT.

Mandy Edwards, GCG Secretary

Back issues, please

Wanted to complete a set of *Geological Curator*: Vol.3 nos.6-9. Please contact Mick Cooper, Brewhouse Yard Museum, Castle Boulevard, Nottingham NG7 1FB.

Under the hammer

After the considerable success of last September's natural history auction at Bonhams of Knightsbridge, another sale was held in April. As widely reported in the press, it was rather less successful this time with many lots (including sauropod eggs) failing to reach reserve prices.

However, one must congratulate Bonhams on the introduction of so many 'new' species to the mineral kingdom. Their glossy colour illustrated sales catalogue (£10.00, 55pp.) introduces flourite, rhodocrosite, cerrusite, smithsonite, scordite, apatite, energite, albite, opiment, cinnebar, goetite (I'm still only on page 3...) accompanied by many rather novel localities!

The minerals for sale included 78 lots comprising the Arthur Lockett Collection. Lot 79, 'The Complete Lockett handwritten Mineral Catalogue, with the following entries: Numbers of specimens, composition formula, Colour, Streak/Location, Clan/cleavage, usual Form, Cost and Remarks. Together with three arch lever files for cross referencing in alphabetical order... for each of the two thousand and forty-seven minerals in his collection', was sold for over £250. It is good news that many of the specimens will end up in the hands of collectors who will care well for the specimens they have spent good money to acquire, but one wonders how many will ever see and appreciate the care taken by Arthur Lockett to document his collection.

Monica T. Price, Oxford University Museum

The ultimate enquiry?

We've all had them, those letters saying 'I'm doing a school project about dinosaurs/fossils/geology. Please could you send me information'. This week the following letter reached me (duly edited to protect the anonymity of the young correspondent):

Dear Sir/Madam
I'm doing a private project at my school
but I am finding it hard to get information. So please could
you send me some.

Yours Sincerely

I'd like to nominate it for a new award - 'The Ultimate Enquiry'. Any other nominations?

Monica T. Price, Oxford University Museum



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