



OPROLITE

DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

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Chairman's Report

All of my predecessors have commented that time passes much more quickly for Chairmen of GCG and this is certainly a phenomenon I have experienced in my first year in post. However, it may well be that we have all just reached that certain age. It is, of course, a reflection of a typically busy GCG year, a year in which the Group celebrated its 25th anniversary. Such celebrations provide an opportunity to review past glories, to take stock of the present, and to indicate the way ahead. Not to mention the chance to sink a few beers. The anniversary meeting was held in Leicester Museum on 17 May, 25 years to the day after the Inaugural Meeting, and was, by all accounts, a great success. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend, having unexpectedly and rather suddenly parted company from a horse the day before.

Although GCG has achieved some notable successes in the last 25 years, we cannot be complacent. Our concern for geological collections and for the curators who look after them has not waned, and the current trend towards appointing generalist (or, at least, non-geologist) 'heritage managers' instead of specialist curators poses a serious threat to the future of geological collections. This year

GCG has been in correspondence with the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall over the sale of its library (see *Coprolite* 30, November 1999, pp.7-8) and with Ipswich Borough Council on their review of Ipswich Museum. We also expressed our concern for the future of the geology displays at Leeds City Museum, where they have been put in store with no immediate prospect of return to public view. However, there is an experienced geological curator in post who will be maintaining the collection and arranging some degree of public access. Geological collections at Liverpool and Norwich are undergoing upheaval as building refurbishment requires their removal. We look forward to hearing more about these developments in due course. Currently, we are investigating the situation at Peterborough Museum where their important Oxford Clay reptiles are no longer cared for by a geologist. Most serious, however, has been a reorganisation at the British Geological Survey which has resulted in the loss of, among others, the curator of the biostratigraphic collections and a curator of the borehole cores. I am still in correspondence with the Survey's Director over his plans for the future care of the collections, and our protests to him have been supported by the Museums Association, the Museums & Galleries Commission, the Geoconservation Commission and the Geological Society. Although the Director of the Geological Survey has assured us of his commitment to the collections, it is clear that his plans for them are seriously flawed. The BGS situation will continue to have the attention of GCG Committee.

In addition to our 25th anniversary meeting in Leicester, we have had a busy programme this year with meetings in Cardiff, Camborne, Paris and, of course, Dublin. We are grateful to all those curators who have given their time to organise or speak at our meetings this year, in particular Mark Evans and John Martin who arranged our anniversary meeting, and Lesley Atkinson for organising our seminar in Camborne. In Paris, we were welcomed and entertained by Michel Giraud, Patrick De Wever, and Jean Pierre Caulet of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle who gave generously of their time to show us their institution. As is now our custom, Michel, Patrick and Jean Pierre have been given two years free membership of GCG. GCG was also one of the sponsors of the very successful meeting held in Lyme Regis in June to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Mary Anning. The report of this meeting by Steve Howe resulted in the bumper pre-Millennium issue of *Coprolite* (November 1999).

This year also saw a revamp of the GCG website, which, through the energy, skill and enthusiasm of Mandy Edwards, is now much improved and easier to navigate. We hope that the site will expand to be an essential port of call for geological curators seeking information on museums, collections and curatorial matters generally. In addition to managing our web pages, Mandy has also taken on management of our membership database which should improve the accuracy of our records and make it easier for us to keep track of our moving members. To this end, we plan to introduce a GCG membership card which will act as a receipt for your annual subscription.

Our links with the Geological Society continue, with John Nudds representing GCG and several other specialist groups on the Society's Science Board, while I attend the Specialist Groups Committee. This has provided a useful forum for discussing the events at BGS. We are also looking at a greater exchange of information on our activities among the specialist and regional groups as each may have events or meetings of broader interest. A recurrent agenda item at the Specialist Groups Committee is Continuing Professional Development, and we hope that our seminars and workshops will fit readily within the Society's CPD scheme for Chartered Geologists as well as contributing to an individual curator's development programme.

The success of any society like ours is entirely dependent on those individuals who give freely of their time and expertise, and on the backing of their employers. As Chairman, I would like to thank all of this year's committee for their support and work and for putting up with frequent (and often long) e-mails, letters and phone calls from me. I am indebted to our Secretary, Mandy Edwards, and Treasurer, Andy Newman, for keeping the Group running and on a firm financial footing; to Steve McLean for the huge effort he puts in to putting together our meetings programme; to Patrick Wyse Jackson for continuing to produce a journal of which we can be proud; to Tiffany Foster and Mark Evans who took our minutes this year; and to our Recorder Glenys Wass who is coping well with the vaguest job description on Committee; to Committee Members Dale Johnston (who leaves Committee this year), Susan Crook, and John Nudds; and to BCG's representative on Committee, Steve Thompson, who provides a vital link between the two groups. I would also like to express my thanks to Tony Morgan who represents us on the Geoconservation Commission, to Wendy Simkiss who keeps us updated on the Natural History Conservators Group and to Sue Sladen, who looks after our archives.

GCG was represented at the Geological Society careers day held this year at BGS headquarters in Keyworth. Thanks are due to Steve Thompson and Mark Evans for manning our stand. Thanks are due, too, to you, the members, who support the work of the Group through your subscriptions, attendance and participation at meetings, and contributions to our newsletter and journal. Keep it up and the next 25 years should be as successful as the last.

Finally, we record with sadness the passing of John Thackray, Archivist at the Natural History Museum, who died on 5 May. John had been a member of GCG since 1974 and had been a great friend to the Group.

Tom Sharpe, GCG Chairman
Cardiff, 2 December 1999

Honorary Members

As announced in *Coprolite* 30, November 1999, to mark our 25th anniversary GCG Committee proposed the election of Roy Clements, Hugh Torrens, Howard

Brunton, Philip Doughty, Geoff Tresise and Mike Jones to Honorary Membership of the Group in recognition of their contribution to our foundation and to the work of the Group in those early years. At the Annual General Meeting held in Dublin in December 1999, this was approved by the membership, and they were duly elected.

Subscriptions 2000: a reminder

Subscriptions for this year were due on 1 January and a subscription renewal form was included in the last (November 1999) issue of *Coprolite*. Subscriptions remain at the same rate as last year, ie £10.00 for UK Personal Members and £12.00 for Overseas Personal Members. **Any subscriptions unpaid by 30 April will be deemed to have lapsed and will be removed from the mailing list.** Please ensure that your subscription is paid as soon as possible to Amanda Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL.

Problems with numbers

You may have noticed something missing from the header of the last issue of *Coprolite* – there was no issue number or date. This was due to an error at the printers. That issue was number 30, November 1999. So, we now enter our eleventh year of production with this issue, number 31. We've also had a bit of a problem keeping track of how many AGMs we've had. The last, held in Dublin in December 1999, was our 26th AGM and not the 25th as advertised.

Newish publications

A story through time. The formation of the scenic landscapes of Ireland (North) by Patrick J McKeever, 1999. Landscapes from Stone, 99pp. ISBN 1 899702 23 7, £4.95.

Atlas of the prehistoric world by Douglas Palmer, 2000. London: Marshall Publishing, 224pp. ISBN 1 84028 255 X, £19.99.

Gold by Richard Herrington, Chris Stanley and Robert Symes, 1999. London: The Natural History Museum, 64pp. ISBN 0 565 09141 7, £7.95.

Fossils of the Rhaetian Penarth Group edited by Andrew Swift and David Martill, 1999. London: Palaeontological Association, 314pp. ISBN 0 901702 65 X, £16.00.

Building stones of Edinburgh by A.A. McMillan, R.J. Gillanders and J.A. Fairhurst, 1999. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Geological Society, 235pp. ISBN 0 904440 10 9, £9.50.

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Kenneth John Phipps**, Hull College, Hull; **Anne Keeling**, Hildersham, Cambridgeshire; **Sara Isted**, Petersfield, Hampshire; **Patrick De Wever**, **Michel Guiraud**, and **Jean Pierre Caulet**, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

GCG Committee 2000

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Co-opted members: Steve Thompson, Museum of North Lincolnshire, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe DN15 7BD tel 01724 843533 fax 01724 270474; John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL tel 0161 275 2660 fax 0161 275 2676 e-mail john.nudds@man.ac.uk

Musical Curators

Susan Cooke, formerly Exhibitions Project Manager for Shropshire County Museum Service has been appointed Keeper of Charnwood Museum in Leicestershire and took up her post on 31 January; **Cathy Painter** has been appointed Natural History Assistant at Norwich Castle Museum; **Graham Worton**, a geologist with the mining engineering firm Johnston, Poole and Bloomer, has been appointed Keeper of Geology at Dudley Museum and took up his post on 1 February; **Liz Hide**, Curator of Invertebrate Palaeontology at the National Museums of Scotland, has been appointed Gallery Development Project Officer at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge and took up her post on 9 February;

Dale Johnston, currently Exhibition and Outreach Officer at North Somerset Museum Service has been appointed Outreach Officer for the four university museums of human and life sciences at Cambridge and takes up his post on 15 March; at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, **Kevin Walsh** has become temporary Assistant Curator working on the petrological collections and **Seymour Butler** joins as Data Entry Clerk for the mineral collections, both posts funded from the Designation Challenge Fund grant to enable the museum to computerise its collections data.

Fossil, mineral and gem shows 2000

5 March Oxford Mineral, Fossil and Gem Show, The Oxford Centre, 333 Banbury Road, Oxford 10.00-16.30 tel 01508 531014

11-12 March Rock & Gem Show, York Racecourse 10.00-17.00 tel 01628 621697

1-2 April Rock & Gem Show, Cheltenham Racecourse, Prestbury Park, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire 10.00-17.00 tel 01628 621697

15-16 April Rock & Gem Show, Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex 10.00-17.00 tel 01628 621697

6-7 May Rock & Gem Show, Aintree Racecourse, Aintree, Liverpool 10.00-17.00 tel 01628 621697

13-14 May Rock & Gem Show, Newcastle Racecourse, High Gosforth Park, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 10.00-17.00 tel 01628 621697

Exhibitions 2000

Tracking dinosaurs Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast until 7 May; Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, St James Road, Dudley 20 May-3 September

Myths and Monsters, Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne until 11 June

Claws! Plymouth City Museum 18 April-16 September

Bad news from Ipswich

Things are not looking good at Ipswich Museum following a Best Value review by Ipswich Borough Council. The museum's funding is being cut by £150,000 and restructuring will lead to the loss of curatorial posts. GCG has expressed its concern for the care of the geological collections which number some 50,000 specimens, with particular strengths in local Pliocene and Pleistocene molluscs and mammals, and include type and figured material.

British Geological Survey strategy ignores collections

The last issue of *Coprolite* reported the loss of curatorial cover for the biostratigraphic collections at BGS, and lamented the lack of firm information from the Survey's Director, Dr David Falvey on his plans for the collections. Since then, BGS has published its strategy paper *Foundations for a sustainable future. A new strategy for the British Geological Survey*, but it merely reinforces the view that the collections have been ignored by the strategic review. There is not a single reference to the BGS collections, other than obliquely as 'data'.

Correspondence has continued between BGS and GCG, and in his letters, Dr Falvey sheds a bit of light on the matter. He plans, from 1 April 2000, to appoint a chief curator and four curators to look after the whole range of BGS collections. There will be a curator each for fossils, rocks and minerals, and borehole cores, and the fourth curator will look after prepared samples and miscellaneous small collections. These staff will be charged with completing digital indexes to all of the survey's specimens within three years.

While we welcome the allocation of additional staff and resources to collections care, it is remarkable that BGS considers it appropriate to lay off two of its existing curators who have expert knowledge of the collections and their documentation systems. Both Steve Tunnicliff who has been involved with the biostratigraphic collections for nearly 30 years, and Stuart Hollyer, curator of the borehole core collection for over 20 years, are losing their jobs. This seems a strange way for BGS management to demonstrate its commitment to the collections.

GCG has stressed that qualified curatorial staff should be appointed to the new posts, and argued that they should be graduate or postgraduate geologists with recognised museums qualifications and experience of curating museum geological collections. However, it still means, as far as the biostratigraphic collections are concerned, that BGS will be replacing one curator who is familiar with the collections and their documentation, with one curator who isn't. This cannot possibly be seen as an improvement in the care of the collection.

Further evidence of the management's lack of understanding of the collections is seen in the plan to complete digital indexes of all the BGS collections within three years. GCG doubts that this is achievable by only five curatorial staff. Based on experiences elsewhere, it has been estimated that the biostratigraphic collections alone require a minimum of nine curators and that the construction of a public access database for those collections would take 250 man-years. BGS would stand a better chance of approaching its target if Steve Tunnicliff had been maintained in his post, especially as he developed a digital index some ten years ago. The new curators will certainly have their work cut out.

Despite assurances from the Director, it is clear that the BGS strategic review forgot about the collections and the responsibilities which BGS has for this important part of our national scientific heritage. It is also clear that there exists at BGS a serious lack of understanding of the value of the collections and how they should best be cared for.

GCG will be maintaining an interest in the progress of collections care at BGS for some considerable time to come, even though our comments may have been regarded as "coming from a bunch of whinging academics who don't bring any money into BGS anyway".

Gulbenkian prize for the Philpot

The recently refurbished and redisplayed Lyme Regis (Philpot) Museum has won the 1999 Gulbenkian Prize. The award crowns a successful year for the museum – it also won the South West Museum of the Year and received a special design award from National Heritage. It was, of course, also host to the Mary Anning bicentenary conference held last June.

creating SPARKS

creating SPARKS is an innovative and ambitious festival taking place in South Kensington in September 2000. Opening on Wednesday 6 September 2000 and continuing through that month, it will be the biggest science and arts festival there since the Great Exhibition of 1851. The British Association for the Advancement of Science is leading the great institutions of South Kensington – Imperial College, the Natural History Museum, the Royal College of Art, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Geographical Society in staging creating SPARKS.

The estimated audience in South Kensington for creating SPARKS is more than half a million, and many more will be reached through the internet and through broadcast events. The prime audience is the 'attentive' general public (those who visit festivals, exhibitions, arts events and science centres), those with a professional interest in the sciences and the arts and their surrounding industries, and young people.

creating SPARKS has a number of Key Features that comprise its core. These are the BA Annual Science Festival; the creating SPARKS Big Bazaar on Exhibition Road, in the Royal Albert Hall and Hyde Park; the creating SPARKS Experiments engaging young people in real scientific investigations; Visitors' Voices where visitors will have their say about the future; the Star Gazers programme of people that matter in the sciences and arts; and the Festival's Grand Finale in the Royal Albert Hall.

For further information, contact Jill Nelson, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 2NB tel 0171 973 3055, fax 0171 973 3051, e-mail jill.nelson@britassoc.org.uk

RNLI Round Britain Walk

GCG member Martyn King and his partner Alison Shaw have set off on a two-year walk around the coast of Britain. They left New Brighton Lifeboat Station at Wallasey on 1 January and during the walk they plan to raise funds towards the purchase of essential life-saving equipment for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. They aim to visit all 185 lifeboat stations around Britain's coast, including those on the Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Anglesey, the Isle of Man, and the Scottish islands. If you would like to make a donation, it can be paid at any post office into Girobank account 46 067 3289, RNLI – Round Britain Walk.

Dorset Jurassic Coast Strategy published

The Dorset Jurassic Coast Project has published its Jurassic Coast strategy which illustrates the potential for using the internationally important geology of the Dorset coast as a basis for geo-tourism. The strategy identifies a number of current projects or initiatives that can help to develop niche tourism and conserve the geological resource. The strategy also makes a number of recommendations for the future. Detailed proposals, including those for a 'Quarry Park' on Portland, have been developed in a number of topic papers that have formed the basis for consultation documents over the last 18 months. These will be made available on the Dorset Coast Forum website in the near future (www.dorset-cc.gov.uk/dcf) and will be modified and adapted as the project develops.

Richard Edmonds, Jurassic Coast project Officer, Environmental Services Directorate, Dorset County Hall, Dorchester DT1 1XJ.

Dino Days

The Yorkshire Dinosaur Coast Project is organising two major events at Easter. These Dino Days will be held at Scarborough on 24 April and Whitby on 25 April. This will be the start of the public events programme and ought to attract thousands of people. The main visual activity will be giant dinosaur sand sculptures in the beach, and this will be accompanied by entertaining guided walks, slide shows and over 50 hands-on activities organised by various organisations. I would like to cordially invite any museum, or other institution that may feel that there is mutual benefit, to come to the Dino Days and bring along an exciting activity. If you are interested, please get in touch as soon as possible – time is running out.

Alistair Bowden, Yorkshire Dinosaur Coast Project Officer, Londesborough Lodge, The Crescent, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO11 2PW, tel 01723 367326, e-mail dinocoast@hotmail.com

Yorkshire Dinosaur Coast update

Much behind the scenes work has been carried out over the winter. Preparation is well underway for the launch events (see 'Dino Days' article elsewhere in *Coprolite*), the production of the new popular guidebook to the geology of the North Yorkshire coast and the formation of the Dinosaur Coast Watch Group, a hybrid of Rockwatch and Wildlife Watch. Perhaps of most interest to *Coprolite* readers is the ongoing work looking at the issues relating to fossil collecting on the North Yorkshire coast. It was decided to get all stakeholders together to look at the future management of the fossil resource, before any of the problems seen elsewhere in the country became critical. The first meeting of over twenty interested parties will look at the user groups and consider their impact and also the locations that are at most risk. If it is thought that future meetings can achieve useful positive outcomes, then a working group will then be set up.

Alistair Bowden, Yorkshire Dinosaur Coast Project Officer.

The building stones database project revived

Way back in 1993, GCG held a meeting at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge on the theme of building and decorative stones. From that arose a plan to create a joint building stones database, complete with images, starting with two of the largest collections, the old British Geological Survey collection in the Natural History Museum, and the Watson Collection in Cambridge. At that time the technology was available but too expensive, resources were limited, and the project was put on the back burner, so to speak.

Things have moved on. Interest in the use of stone in new buildings has revived, and technologies for databasing and imaging are now readily available; indeed considerable progress had been made at most of the institutions represented at a meeting held at the Natural History Museum on 28 January 2000 to review the project. Phil Doughty (Royal Ulster Museum) gave a brief resumé of the project history, and then he and the other attendees, Geoff Ashall (standing in for Tim Yates - Buildings Research Establishment), Brian Jackson (National Museums of Scotland), Steve Laurie (Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge), Graham Lott (British Geological Survey), David Mason (English Heritage), Monica Price (Oxford University Museum of Natural History), and David Smith (Natural History Museum), gave a brief update on the content and status of their building/decorative stone collections.

It was felt a joint database that would work as effectively for ancient marbles from foreign localities as for modern British building stones with extensive technical data – two extremes of a wide spectrum of materials - would be a cumbersome way to improve access to the collections. World Wide Web links have the potential to provide a more practical and cost effective way of bringing collections and associated services to the attention of enquirers, possibly supplemented by a small publication of some kind. A working party comprising Graham Lott, Monica Price, David Smith and Tim Yates will now investigate the best way to develop, fund and generally progress the project.

After lunch, Dave Smith gave a guided tour of the decorative and building stone collections at the Natural History Museum and the accompanying computer catalogue to which he is currently adding images.

If any other museums and similar institutions have collections of building and/or ornamental stones and would be interested in becoming involved, please contact Monica Price at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, e-mail monica.price@oum.ox.ac.uk.

Dynamic Earth pulls them in

Dynamic Earth, the interactive earth science centre which opened in Edinburgh in July 1999, is well on the way to achieving its target of 430,000 visitors in its first year. Within 4 months, it had attracted 250,000 visitors. This success contrasts

with the failure of other Millennium landmark projects, such as the National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield and the Earth Centre near Doncaster, to meet their visitor figure targets.

Mantell memorial planned

Prehistoric Promotions, a non-profit organisation set up by Mike Howgate and Andy Ottaway, is proposing to erect a monument to Gideon Mantell at Whiteman's Green, near Cuckfield, West Sussex. The site, one mile north of Cuckfield village, now consists of public playing fields with a large car park. However, the view towards Cuckfield is that depicted in Mantell's *Geology of the South Downs*. This is the location of the quarry where Mantell obtained the *Iguanodon* fossils he described in 1824.

The Mantell Monument will comprise a block of tough local Tilgate sandstone with a plaque depicting the quarry scene, a portrait of Gideon and his wife Mary Ann, and an inscription about the discovery. A display board will expand upon this story and the importance of Mantell's discoveries to geological science.

Prehistoric Promotions have received a grant of £500 from the Geologists' Association, and £750 from Mid Sussex Council who have also officially approved the plans. Cuckfield Parish Council and Cuckfield Museum have raised a further £600 toward the monument. However, they are still well short of their target of £4,000 and are seeking donations of between £20 and £50 from individuals and £100-£250 from companies or groups. All donations will be acknowledged with a special Mantell Memorial certificate. Major donors will also be invited to a special unveiling ceremony next year.

If you would like to contribute, please make your cheque payable to Prehistoric Promotions and send it to Prehistoric Promotions, PO Box 2673, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5BZ

Symesite

GCG member Dr Bob Symes, formerly Keeper of Mineralogy at the Natural History Museum, has had a new mineral named after him. The mineral, symesite, is a pink complex oxide of lead from Merehead Quarry near Wells in Somerset.

Trembling *Triceratops*

A mounted *Triceratops* skeleton which has been on display since 1905 at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC has been damaged by vibration from visitors' feet and by high humidity caused by moisture in visitors' breath, according to a report in *New Scientist* (23 October 1999). At the meeting of the Society for Vertebrate Paleontology held in Denver, Colorado in October, Michael Brett-Surman of the museum attributed the cracked bones of the skeleton to vibrations from museum visitors, as well as from passing traffic outside, being transmitted through the metal rods of the mount. Similar damage has also been found in a mounted *Stegosaurus* and a mammoth. Bones with a high pyrite

content also show signs of pyrite decay produced by the high humidity in the museum from visitors exhaling.

Laser preparation

Also at the Society for Vertebrate Paleontology meeting in Denver in October (according to a report in *New Scientist* 6 November 1999), a new vertebrate fossil preparation technique was described by physicists from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. This uses a cutting laser which emits infrared pulses lasting 100 femtoseconds (for the non-physicists among us, that's 10^{-15} seconds, or one thousand million millionth of a second). These very short pulses vaporise the rock surface one micrometre at a time, and analysis of the vapour for phosphorus stops the laser cutting into bone.

Tales of Beatrix Potter's fossils

The Linnean (Newsletter and Proceedings of the Linnean Society of London, Volume 16 Number 1, January 2000, pp.31-47) carries a paper by B.G. Gardiner on Beatrix Potter's interest in geology and fossil collecting. Gardiner describes how the famous author and illustrator developed her interest in geology, and how she collected over a ten-year period at the end of the 19th and start of the 20th centuries. She often visited the British Museum (Natural History) to examine, draw and photograph fossils and there she met H.B Woodward and A.S. Woodward as well as the Museum's Director Sir William Flower. Gardiner suggests that she may also have drawn fossils for H.B Woodward or at least assisted his daughter to illustrate some of his Palaeontographical Society monographs. Although two of her specimens found their way into museum collections (an *Asteracanthus* tooth is in the Natural History Museum and a Jurassic echinoid *Magnosia* is in Oxford), it is not clear what happened to the rest of her collection. Gardiner believes it may have been disposed of by her parents, following her marriage in 1913. Unless it's in a museum near you (look out for fossil rabbits).....

Palaeontology going spare

Steve Tunnicliff has spare copies of *Palaeontology* volumes 21 to 27 inclusive which need a good home. If any GCG member would like them, and can think of a way to get them from Steve, then they are welcome to them. Contact Steve Tunnicliff, The Homestead, East End, Long Clawson, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE14 4NG, e-mail SPTunni@aol.com

Display cases seek new homes

Subject to its obtaining funding for a second phase of new displays, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History will have available for disposal during the summer months approximately 22 good quality wooden vertical display cases. If you would like more details of design, size, numbers etc, please contact Chris Burras tel 01865 272950, fax 01865 272970, e-mail chris.burras@oum.ox.ac.uk

Irish Extinct Animals Stamps

On Monday, 11 October 1999, An Post (the Irish postal service) issued its annual Fauna and Flora series of commemorative stamps. This year, the theme is Extinct Irish Animals and the issue consists of four stamps featuring a Giant Deer (30p and 45p), Mammoth (30p and 45p), Wolf (30p only) and Brown Bear (30p only). The stamps are available in various formats including all four animals in a sheet depicting an interglacial scene of 30,000 years ago. A pictorial First Day Cover can be purchased featuring an Arctic fox. Postcards of each stamp are available as well as a special Presentation Pack. Full details are available by post from Philatelic Department, An Post, GPO, O'Connell Street, Dublin 2 or on their website at <http://www.anpost.ie/Philatelic/extinctanimals/animals.html>

Isle of Wight museum acquires Palaeogene vertebrates

Following a successful bid for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museum of Isle of Wight Geology has purchased a substantial collection of Palaeogene (Late Eocene – Early Oligocene) vertebrates. The collection, which comprises about 2,000 individual pieces, was collected over the past three decades from the beach and foreshore at Hamstead, on the Island's north-west coast. It is the most important collection of such fossils to ever be offered to the Museum, and only the second such collection to become available for many years. The collection includes bones and teeth of both large and small mammals, turtle, crocodile, fish and bird remains. The most important objects so far identified within the collection, include a partial skeleton of an Anoplothere, and the jaws of a *Palaeotherium*.

The collection is currently being processed by museum volunteer John Quayle, to determine its conservation needs and get a fuller picture of its contents, this has already led to the recognition of rare bird bones. When processing is completed and conservation needs actioned, the collection will be made available to interested researchers. It is anticipated that some items will be included in the new Dinosaur Isle Museum, which is due to open in early 2001 to replace the current museum. Progress is already being made on the new museum, and the designers Haley Sharpe of Leicester have been appointed to design its interior. The new museum is being part-funded by the Millennium Commission and the Isle of Wight Council.

The Isle of Wight Council gratefully acknowledges the 90% funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, for the purchase of the Palaeogene vertebrate collection.
Martin Munt, Museum of Isle of Wight Geology

Museumland - a new online initiative

Museumland.com is the new world-wide portal to online museums and online cultural heritage. It is dedicated to offer (free of charge) improved visibility to all kinds of museums with a web site. It also includes every type of cultural heritage organisation from churches to monuments and from gardens to libraries.

Currently there are 3000 links from 65 nations. Museumland.com is co-promoted (no funding support) within the context of the EC Medici Framework. To find out more about Museumland, visit the web site at www.museumland.com.

If your website is not linked in the Museumland database, e-mail your URL and three or four text lines describing your site contents to link@museumland.com. If you know of any other museums and cultural heritage organisations not listed, Museumland.com would welcome the information

Mario Bucolo, ABIS MultiCom, Multimedia & Communication, Via Milano n.61 - 95127 Catania - Italy tel +39 095 38 7092 or 38 75 20, fax +39 095 38 70 67 e-mail abis@multimedialand.com, <http://www.multimedialand.com>

***T. rex* in Oxford for the Millennium**

A 13 metre long replica of the giant carnivore *Tyrannosaurus rex* of *Jurassic Park* and *Walking with Dinosaurs* notoriety will be among new arrivals joining the dinosaur displays in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History by summer 2000. A £300,000 project to enhance and expand the unique dinosaur displays has been agreed by Viridor Waste Management, the Greenbank Trust and the Museum. The new free-standing dinosaur replicas will be housed in the court of the Museum as part of a larger display of dinosaurs and extinct giant reptiles of the Mesozoic. As well as the *T. rex* skeleton, the new replicas, supplied by the Black Hills Institute of Geological Research in South Dakota, include a separate cast of its 1.5 m long skull, with clear evidence of combat in the form of a circular puncture over 3 cm in diameter through the back of the skull; an 8.75m long cast of the hadrosaur *Edmontosaurus annectens*, a second skull cast for display at ground level, and a cast of a skin impression; a 2 m long cast of the skull of *Triceratops horridus*, plus a cast of a skin impression; a cast of a *Pachycephalosaurus* skull; a cast of the 5 m long skeleton of *Struthiomimus sedens*; and a cast of a skeleton of *Velociraptor*.

The Museum expects to take delivery of the new casts in April 2000, to complete the new displays by early summer, and mark the opening with a dinosaur weekend of talks, films, and family activities.

GCG study visit to Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris 29 October 1999

The Group's third European adventure took us to Paris and in particular to the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle (MNHN). This was planned as a day visit so those attending were free to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements, although Steve McLean and Ros Gourgey provided us with a good selection of hotels from which to choose. Some of us met up on the Thursday evening with the aim of sampling some of Paris' culinary delights, and, after a wonderful meal, a small group of intrepid travellers (see *Coprolite*, 28, March 1999, pp 12-18) hit the Left Bank to sample some more of the delights of this beautiful city. One or two of us had trouble adapting to the range of glassware

offered in one of the bars, but that's another story!

At 10.00am on Friday morning we all met at the Laboratoire de Geologie on the Rue Buffon, opposite the Jardin des Plantes, where the Director of the laboratory, Professor Patrick De Wever, greeted us and over tea, coffee and biscuits we met some of the other staff members from the laboratory. The Secretary General of the MNHN gave the first presentation on the work of the MNHN. The museum has its origins in the Royal Medicinal Plant Garden created in 1635 during the reign of Louis XIII, the National Museum itself being founded in 1793. It currently consists of the sites around the Jardin des Plantes, the zoological gardens and the Museum of Mankind, all in Paris, as well as two zoological parks, a Palaeolithic museum, four botanical gardens and two marine laboratories in other regions of France. The MNHN employs 1800 staff, including 300 researchers, has 26 research laboratories and a post-graduate university centre providing training and research in many aspects of the museum's work.

Professor Patrick De Wever gave an overview of the Earth Science departments of the MNHN. These consist of Geology, Mineralogy, Oceanography and Palaeontology laboratories. The collections themselves comprise over 1 million rocks and thin sections with 1 million stored in the Geology department and 120,000 in the Mineralogy department, 232,000 minerals including 1000 type species, 2 million fossils in the Palaeontology department, 200,000 in the Geology department and a few more in mineralogy. This distinction between Geology and the other Earth Science disciplines puzzled a number of us at first until we deduced that this department is concerned with petrologic and stratigraphic material. Other collections managed by the MNHN include drill core samples, ocean floor material, 2500 meteorite samples from 1000 falls, gemstones and other precious objects from the French Crown jewels, and a micropalaeontology collection that includes 18,000 species described by Alcide d'Orbigny.

At 11.00am the tour of the department and galleries started. First stop was the ocean drill core storage area under the guidance of the Curator, Jean Pierre Caulet. This is the newest of the museum's collections, being started in 1972. The collection holds over 8000 m of core material, with between 20 and 50 new cores added each year. The current storage area, built in 1978, is kept at a temperature of between 4° and 6°C. Each core is split into two longitudinal sections so that one section can be used for research, with the other being placed in an archive collection in a separate room. In addition to the cores there is 36,000 kg of ocean floor material, including a large collection of manganese nodules from which we were each invited to take an example for our own use. The museum participates in ocean drilling cruises across the world and collects so much material that a new store is being built in Bordeaux just to house Atlantic Ocean material. This collection may not be as visually impressive or as large as others we may be familiar with in the UK, but it's not the size, it's what you do with it that counts. Access to much of the information from the ocean surveys can be viewed on the

museum web-site (<http://www.mnhn.fr>), where tracks of the ocean cruises can be seen and summary information from individual drillings can also be obtained and printed out. We were each given an example of a drilling log from the Somalian Basin printed from the web site. The department also hosts weeklong visits by schools who perform measurements and calculations on photographic reproductions of some of the core samples. This whole department was very keen on spreading the scientific knowledge it had gained to as wide an audience as possible.

Next it was into the Jardin des Plantes proper, and a visit to the collections of the Palaeontology department where Professor Philippe Taquet and other members of the department greeted us. This is what we were waiting for, lots of stairs and crowded cellars! Real museum storage conditions! The first area we visited housed just the fossil fish collection, which has around 300,000 specimens, all in familiar compactor units. The collections are organised according to stratigraphy, then sub-divided according to location, then genus and species. The collection includes material collected by Murchison and which was sent to Agassiz in Paris for identification. Next, up to the top of the building and the Invertebrate Palaeontology collection. Far too many to spend a useful amount of time here, so we visited the type specimen store which has a mere 16,000 types kept in a locked room with a very serious looking gate on the door. Organisation of material here is by phylum and class, then by stratigraphic age, then by locality. Of course, it's all fully documented on computer including references to papers and other publications where the specimens have been used. This is the invertebrate collection so it must include micropalaeontology surely? No. So it's down stairs again to the separate Micropalaeontology collection. This consists of a small office, laboratory and collections area. The collection is so big that the foraminifera material, with only 1000 type specimens this time, has a room all of its own. The Micropalaeontology collection has around 5000 type specimens in total. After this we paid a quick visit to the Palaeontology gallery with its collection of vertebrate and invertebrate fossils, which includes dinosaurs, mastodons, extinct birds and a *Palaeotherium*. Memories of last year's visit to the Netherlands had some of us wondering how far we would get if we tried to "liberate" the Maastricht mosasaur specimen. A temporary exhibition titled "Comics Park", all about the depiction of prehistoric creatures and humans in popular publications, was having its official opening on the evening of our visit, so we all got invited to it.

Just before lunch we had time to visit part of the Mineralogy Gallery. We were taken into a dark, narrow storage area off the main gallery which was lined with shelves stacked floor to ceiling with crates, each of which held lots of rocks and minerals. These had not been looked at for 50 years prior to 1997 and now a big project was underway to produce a basic catalogue of what was stored here. It looked like it was going to be a long job.

Time for a quick break as it was now lunchtime, so it was into the building that houses the Grand Gallery of Evolution. The building was completed in 1889 to house the zoology gallery but since the Second World War had suffered a great deal of neglect. After a major refurbishment and redisplay of material the Grand Gallery of Evolution reopened in 1994. The café is on the first floor and gives a superb view of this huge space. If there were a good museum café guide this one would rate very highly for the quality of the food and its setting.

In the afternoon we returned to the Mineralogy Gallery to have a look at the specimens on display. The first area we visited had a display of giant crystals, mostly huge quartz crystals, geodes and microclines from Brazil. Some were grouped together on the floor, others arranged as they had been found at the mineral mine and many could be touched, although a large amethyst pipe had recently been covered to stop overenthusiastic visitors removing crystals from it. The whole effect was stunning, but much more was to follow as a staircase from this gallery leads to the Treasure Room in the basement. The entrance to the room is by a very secure looking bank vault door which protects displays of cut and polished gemstones and minerals of all types, as well as amber, pearls and a number of tables inlaid with various stones. Also in here are the gemstones and other precious objects from the French Crown Jewels. The specimens themselves are very well lit and generally very well presented, although a few labels id seem a bit removed from the specimens. The department has close links with the Elf oil company who provides 1,000,000 Francs per year solely for the purchase of mineral specimens. In return, the department mounts exhibitions of some of the material at the company headquarters. After such a visual feast it was a relief to get back into the main gallery again. At the time of our visit, two exhibitions were in progress, one on the age of the Earth, the other on the geology and landscape of Morocco, both with superb rock, mineral and fossil specimens. After this, we had a quick look at some of the mineral storage and in particular at some of the departments historical collections, which include minerals described by Haüy. Before we left we were each given a book describing the collection and display of the giant minerals we had seen earlier.

We then returned to the Geology lab for a talk on databases, how they were developed for the MNHN, and how they relate to databases in other geology museums in France. The MNHN aims to produce a networked database of all natural science collections from the main French natural history museums, but are still deciding if a common standard needs to be imposed. We silently wished them luck.

After the timetabled business, some of us took the opportunity to have a look at the Grand Gallery of Evolution before the museum closed at 6pm. We then went on to the exhibition opening where we devoured some wine and nibbles and managed a look at the comparative anatomy gallery, and more fossils, before the formal addresses began. The speeches, all in French, were a little difficult to

follow at times, but Philippe Taquet did give GCG a mention during his opening address.

In addition to the superb specimens and displays we had seen, and the incredible hospitality shown to us by our hosts, we got the feeling that contact with museum workers in other countries through GCG was seen as a good thing by the people at the MNHN. This is, after all, one of the reasons for the study visits, so long may they continue. The next visit is to the Munich Mineral fair and museums in southern Bavaria in 2000, so register your interest now; it's well worth it.
Tony Morgan, Liverpool Museum

GCG Seminar Geology and the Local Museum: a decade of progress ?

Trinity College, Dublin 3-5 December 1999

The last GCG meeting of the millennium was a retrospective event looking back over the past decade of progress since Simon Knell and Mike Taylor's now famous book on 'Geology and the Local Museum'. The weather was unfortunately against us; choppy seas meant most of the Friday and Saturday ferries were cancelled, denying us the company of some of our members and making for a rather rough crossing for others. However, those that made it to Dublin by Friday night kicked the meeting off in customary style with a meal and sampling of the local black stuff in the Earl of Kildare Hotel across the road from Trinity College.

The following morning, the survivors met in the Department of Geology, Trinity College, where Simon Knell, in a slight change to his publicised talk title, opened the proceedings by explaining the origin and purpose behind the publication of 'Geology and the Local Museum'. Simon and Mike's aim of publishing a book that would convince museums of the worth of geological collections and providing curators with all the information they needed to start to make the most of their collections was certainly met by this publication. A debt of thanks is owed to this pair for waiving their royalties in order to ensure that each museum with a geological collection received a free copy. Simon concluded with several good suggestions for the future, and in particular called for museum professionals to communicate across specialism boundaries more frequently. He also indicated his support for the production of a new set of best practice guidelines and the need for the GCG to be perceived as leading the way in this field. Simon also painted a pleasant picture of the life of a geological curator by pointing out how many famous geology curators of the aptly named heroic age killed themselves through overwork (and jumping off cliffs and ferries!).

Simon was followed by Paul Davies from the Surrey Museums Consultative Committee, who, in another slight change to the proposed talk title, gave a presentation on the 'Effective use of collections in a small museum'. He explained how 16 of Surrey's approximately 38 museums (depending how you count them!) have been working together on a joint HLF bid. This was the first such joint bid

the HLF had had. Paul talked about the importance of providing specialist advice on the care of geological collections, particularly now that the county's one and only geology curator, Diana Hawkes, has left for pastures new on this side of the Irish Sea. He quoted a few interesting examples of past mistakes including the cellar-stored floating Pleistocene mammals and a dustbin-stored pliosaur paratype.

In a late addition to the programme, Kate Andrew explained the work being done by the Shropshire County Museum Service to build a new museum resource centre in Ludlow. In a talk entitled 'Thinking big in a local museum: the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre project' she described the trials and tribulations of the HLF-funded project. She paid tribute to John Norton, curator at Ludlow Museum from 1959-1989, who despite chronic lack of investment, built up a superb and internationally important geological collection. She went on to describe how, over the past 5 years, his collection of shirt boxes in which the geology was stored, has been methodically replaced by plastizote and acid-free cardboard boxes in preparation for the new resource centre. The Ludlow Museum Resource Centre is due to open in late 2002.

After a break for coffee and frantic book buying, the seminar resumed with a talk from Matthew Parkes of the Geological Survey of Ireland on 'Geology in local museums in Ireland'. He presented us with the results of a postal survey undertaken to find out about other geological collections in Ireland. One of the results of the survey was confirmation of the lack of public understanding of the difference between geological and archaeological material, something which no doubt most of us have come across. Where geological material was identified it was too often marginalised and placed in the basement, squeezed out by historical and archaeological material. On a more positive note Matthew talked about the beginnings of a Registration scheme for museums in Ireland and developments in geotourism such as Mayo's Gold and Dublin's statue of Oscar Wilde. He made several well thought-out recommendations for the way forward for Irish geological collections.

Nigel Monaghan then gave us a presentation on 'Recent developments at the National Museum of Ireland and planning a new Earth Science gallery at Collins Barracks.' He described all the careful planning that goes into building a new museum and their future plans for putting the geological collections back on display. He also told us about the bat found hibernating in a bubble-wrapped *Megaceras* skeleton and the National Museum of Ireland's strange fondness for putting museums into buildings where people had been executed. His talk was an excellent introduction to the new museum, which we then visited in the afternoon.

The afternoon was spent visiting various Dublin Museums, including Collins Barracks and the collections of the Geological Survey of Ireland. But for me the

highlight had to be Dublin's Dead Zoo - the affectionate local term for the Natural History Museum. It has to be seen to be believed.

Saturday night was spent in a Thai restaurant and the watering-holes of Dublin, as one might expect.

Sunday saw us in the field looking at the local geology. We had great fun investigating old lead works, chimneys and flues at Carrickgollogan and Ballycorus and fossil-hunting and caving on the beach at Portrane. It was a bitterly cold day and there was some dissension in the ranks about lack of a pub lunch stop: geologists not visiting a pub during a fieldtrip? Something strange here; what else is fieldwork for if not an excuse to escape to the local pub at lunchtime! But thanks must go to Patrick Wyse Jackson and his wife for providing an excellent packed lunch, and also to Matthew Parkes for stepping in at the last minute to lead the fieldtrip, after Patrick's unfortunate mishap on the stairs.

The Dublin seminar proved to be a time of change (mainly to the talk titles, programme, and our AGM counting system). But it was a chance to reflect on our past and to hear of new developments for the future. If you missed it - you missed out. Thanks must go to our hosts at the Geological Museum, Trinity College, the National Museum of Ireland and the Geological Survey of Ireland, in particular Patrick Wyse Jackson, Nigel Monaghan and Matthew Parkes for an enjoyable and stimulating meeting and for the bumper goody pack they put together.

Susan Cooke, January 2000

Forthcoming GCG seminars and workshops

7 March 2000 The Time Machine Museum, (formerly Woodspring Museum), Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset
GCG training course: Gemstone identification for natural science curators

A one-day workshop on the basics of gem identification, from the perspective of natural science curators. Participants will have the opportunity to use most of the simpler and more affordable instruments employed by gemmologists and will be able to examine some of the more commonly encountered gemstones and synthetic gemstones. LAST CHANCE TO BOOK.

See *Coprolite 30*, November 1999 for full programme

Course fee: £20 (includes buffet lunch and a pack of gems which can be retained).

Contact: Dale Johnston, North Somerset Museum Service, Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset BS23 1PR tel 01934 621028

3-4 April 2000 Scarborough

Joint BCG/GCG Seminar: Access to biological and geological collections

How do we balance care against access?

For further details, complete the form on the centre pages and return it to Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 6765, fax 0191 222 6753, e-mail s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk

10-11 May 2000 Edinburgh

GCG Seminar: Major developments in museum interpretation – the Museum of Scotland and Dynamic Earth

Among the recently opened, or soon to be opened, large-scale exhibition centres and museum developments in Britain are the long-awaited Museum of Scotland and Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh. The *Beginnings* gallery of the Museum of Scotland provides an opportunity to study geological and biological interpretation in a new museum, while Dynamic Earth, funded by the Millennium Commission and Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd, among others, offers a high-tech, but specimen free, visitor attraction. This visit will provide GCG members with a valuable insight into the interpretive methods employed by these two state of the art attractions and their sisters elsewhere, and some of the implications for the future of our profession. The meeting allows plenty of time to examine both Edinburgh attractions, including the Museum of Scotland as a whole. Newcastle's International Centre for Life explores life and how it works. It brings together science and biotechnology, research and education, entertainment and ethics on a single city centre site. At its heart is the Life Visitor Attraction which presents the public, for the first time ever, with a totally new way of looking at life: where it comes from, how it works, what it means.

Wednesday 10 May Royal Museum Lecture Theatre

- 10.00 Welcome
- 10.05 The aims and content of *Beginnings*: Mike Taylor, NMS
- 10.30 The making of *Beginnings*: Suzanne Miller, NMS
- 10.55 Bringing the fossils alive: fossil reconstructions in the Museum of Scotland: Liz Hide, Sedgwick Museum
- 11.20 Coffee
- 11.40 7 years of the *Evolution of Wales*: Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales
- 12.05 Dynamic Earth: Stuart Monro, Dynamic Earth
- 12.30 International Centre for Life
- 12.55 Lunch in NMS cafes or local hostellers
- 14.15 Meet at Information desk, Hawthornden Court, Museum of Scotland for orientation tour of Museum of Scotland, then visit to *Beginnings* (leader: Mike Taylor)
- 15.55 Return to Lecture Theatre and tea
- 16.15 Interpreting geology: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester
- 17.00 Depart, doubtless for local hostellers

Thursday 11 May

- 10.00 Meet at Dynamic Earth, Holyrood Road, for a tour of the building and facilities and the actual visitor experience (leader: Stuart Monro)
- 12.30 Lunch at Dynamic Earth or local hostellers, then free afternoon to visit the rest of the Museum of Scotland or depart as wished.

Meeting fee: £5.80 to cover coffee on the first day and discounted admission to Dynamic Earth, payable on arrival.

Please complete the booking form on the centre pages and return it to Dr Michael A. Taylor, Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology, Department of Geology and Zoology, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF, fax 0131 220 4819, e-mail mat@nms.ac.uk **by 3 May 2000**

5-10 October 2000 Munich, Bavaria, Germany

The Munich Show is Europe's premier fossil and mineral show and provides an excellent opportunity for curators to familiarise themselves with the current state of the market, or even to acquire material if purchase funds allow. In addition, this region of southern Germany has some spectacular geology, most notably the famous late Jurassic Lagerstätte of Solnhofen and the Miocene impact site of the Ries Crater at Nördlingen. Both sites have wonderful museums, with the Jura Museum in Eichstätt housing one of the few known specimens of *Archaeopteryx*. There will also be an opportunity to visit other museums and working quarries in the Solnhofen Limestone.

Provisional itinerary

Thursday 5 October. Meet at Stansted Airport for afternoon flight to Munich

Friday 6 October Visit to Munich Mineral Show Trade Day.

Saturday 7 October. Visit to Mineral Show or local museums. Travel to Eichstätt

Sunday 8 October. Visit Jura Museum, Eichstätt, then travel to Solnhofen to visit Museum Berger, Museum beim Solenhofer Aktien-Verein and Maxburg Quarry.

Monday 9 October. Travel to Nördlingen to visit Rieskrater-Museum and field trip to examine the geology of the Miocene Ries Impact crater.

Tuesday 10 October. Return to Munich for flight to Stansted.

To register an interest in this study visit and to receive further details, please complete the form on the centre pages and send it to Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT tel 0191 222 6765, fax 0191 222 6753, e-mail s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk **by 7 April 2000.**

4-5 December 2000 Yorkshire Museum, York GCG Seminar and 27th AGM : Storing giant tracks

Contact: Phil Manning, Keeper of Geology, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York YO1 2DR, tel 01904 629745, fax 01904 651221, e-mail Phil.Manning@york.gov.uk

Other meetings

26-29 March 2000 University of Leicester

**Department of Museum Studies Fifth International Conference:
Inclusion: exploring the role of museums and galleries in promoting social inclusion.**

Contact: Barbara Lloyd, Conference Administrator tel 0116 252 3962 fax 0116 252 3960 e-mail bl5@le.ac.uk

**3 April 2000 Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London
Society for the History of Natural History: Movers and shakers:
disseminating nature**

This meeting will look at the different ways in which information on natural history was disseminated, through meetings of societies or similar groups, and through publications in journals and books, and how these and private correspondence were conveyed by postal services.

Contact: Gina Douglas, 23 Jeffreys Road, London SW4 6QU

**17-20 April 2000 University of Manchester
Geoscience 2000**

Contact: Conference Office, The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0JU

**26-30 May 2000 Brighton
Geologists' Association: Earth Alert**

Contact: Sarah Stafford, Executive Secretary, Geologists' Association, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 9AG tel 0171 434 9298, fax 0171 287 0280, e-mail Geol.Assoc@btinternet.com

**27 June – 1 July 2000 Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde, Karlsruhe,
Germany**

5th European Workshop on Vertebrate Palaeontology

Conference fee: ?25.00

Contact: Dino Frey, Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde, Erbprinzenstrasse 13, D-76133 Karlsruhe, Germany tel + 49 721 175 2117, fax + 49 721 175 2110, e-mail dino_frey_smnk@compuserve.com

**28-29 June 2000 Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly,
London**

HOGG: Celebrating the age of the Earth

Contact: Dr Cherry Lewis, History of Geology Group, Wells Cottage, 21 Fowler Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 2AN tel/fax 01625 260049, e-mail clewis@aol.com

**10-14 July 2000 The Natural History Museum, South Kensington, London
4th International Brachiopod Congress**

Pre- and Post-Congress tours, registration forms and details from Sarah Long sll@nhm.ac.uk or Robin Cocks lrmc@nhm.ac.uk

**10-15 July 2000 Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections 15th Annual
Meeting**

Contact: Iris Hardy, Geological Survey of Canada, e-mail hardy@agc.bio.ns.ca or Alex Wilson, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, e-mail wilsonaa@gov.ns.ca

28 August – 1 September University of Portsmouth

48th Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy with 8th Symposium of Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation

Contact: Dave Martill, School of Earth, Environmental and Physical Sciences, University of Portsmouth, High Street, Portsmouth PO1 3QL e-mail david.martill@port.ac.uk

6-12 September 2000 South Kensington, London

British Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Science Festival

Contact: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 2NB tel 0171 973 3055, fax 0171 973 3051

6-30 September 2000 South Kensington, London

British Association: creating SPARKS

Contact: Jill Nelson, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 2NB tel 0171 973 3055, fax 0171 973 3051, e-mail jill.nelson@britassoc.org.uk

16-19 October 2000 Jersey

Museums Association 106th Annual Conference

Contact: Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0PA tel 0171 608 2933, fax 0171 250 1929

4-8 December 2000 Melbourne, Australia

4th International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums

Contact: Bill Birch, Museum of Victoria, PO Box 666E, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia fax + 61 3 9270 5043, e-mail bbirch@mov.vic.gov.au

2-6 April 2001 University of Oxford

Third International Conference on Trilobites and their relatives

Contact: Dr Derek Siveter, Geological Collections, University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW tel 01865 272953, e-mail Derek.Siveter@earth.ox.ac.uk

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