

GEOLOGICAL CURATOR



Volume 8

Number 8



GEOLOGICAL CURATORS' GROUP

Registered Charity No. 296050

The Group is affiliated to the Geological Society of London. It was founded in 1974 to improve the status of geology in museums and similar institutions, and to improve the standard of geological curation in general by:

- holding meetings to promote the exchange of information
- providing information and advice on all matters relating to geology in museums
- the surveillance of collections of geological specimens and information with a view to ensuring their well being
- the maintenance of a code of practice for the curation and deployment of collections
- the advancement of the documentation and conservation of geological sites
- initiating and conducting surveys relating to the aims of the Group.

2008 COMMITTEE

Chairman	Helen Fothergill, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery: Drake Circus, Plymouth, PL4 8AJ, U.K. (tel: 01752 304774; fax: 01752 304775; e-mail: helen.fothergill@plymouth.gov.uk)
Secretary	Matthew Parkes, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland, Merrion Street, Dublin 2, Ireland (tel: 353-(0)87-1221967; e-mail: mparkes@museum.ie)
Treasurer	John Nudds, School of Earth, Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, U.K. (tel: +44 161 275 7861; e-mail: john.nudds@manchester.ac.uk)
Programme Secretary	Steve McLean, The Hancock Museum, The University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 4PT, U.K. (tel: 0191 2226765; fax: 0191 2226753; e-mail: s.g.mclean@ncl.ac.uk)
Editor of <i>The Geological Curator</i>	Matthew Parkes, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland, Merrion Street, Dublin 2, Ireland (tel: 353 (0)87 1221967; e-mail: mparkes@museum.ie)
Editor of <i>Coprolite</i>	Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NP, Wales, U.K. (tel: 029 20 573265; fax: 029 20 667332; e-mail: Tom.Sharpe@museumwales.ac.uk)
Recorder	Michael Howe, British Geological Survey, Kingsley Dunham Centre, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG, U.K. (tel:0115 936 3105; fax: 0115 936 3200; e-mail: mhowe@bgs.ac.uk)
Minutes Secretary	Tony Morgan, Clore Natural History Centre, World Museum Liverpool, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN, U.K. (tel: 0151 478 4286; fax: 0151 478 4390; e-mail: tony.morgan@liverpoolmuseums.co.uk)
Committee	Michael Howe, British Geological Survey, Kingsley Dunham Centre, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GG, U.K. (tel:0115 936 3105; fax: 0115 936 3200; e-mail: mhowe@bgs.ac.uk) Will Watts, Scarborough Museums & Gallery, Town Hall, St Nicholas Street, Scarborough YO11 2HG, U.K. (tel: 01723 232572; fax: 01723 376941; e-mail: Will.watts@scarborough.gov.uk) Hannah Chalk, School of Earth, Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, U.K. (tel: 0795 6208704; e-mail: Hannah-lee.Chalk@manchester.ac.uk) Cindy Howells, Department of Geology, National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NP, Wales, U.K. (tel: 029 20 573554; fax: 029 20 667332; e-mail: cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk)
Co-opted members:	Steve Thompson, (NatSCA), Museum of North Lincolnshire, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe, South Humberside DN15 7BD, U.K. (tel: 01724 843533; fax: 01724 270474; e-mail: Steve.Thompson@northlincs.gov.uk) David Gelsthorpe, Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, U.K. (tel: 0161 2752660; fax: 0161 2752676; e-mail: David.gelsthorpe@manchester.ac.uk) David Craven, Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL1 1SE, U.K. (tel: 01204 338764/557661; fax: 01204 332241; e-mail: david.craven@bolton.gov.uk)

The views expressed by authors in *The Geological Curator* are entirely their own and do not represent those of either the Geological Curators' Group or the Geological Society of London unless otherwise stated.

© The Geological Curators' Group 2007. ISSN 0144 - 5294

Cover: Marie Stopes studying coal ball sections at Manchester, using a gas light source and a spherical glass condenser. Image reproduced by courtesy of the Director and Librarian, The John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester. See paper by D. Gelsthorpe, page 375.

THE GEOLOGICAL CURATOR

VOLUME 8, NO. 8

CONTENTS

THE GEOLOGICAL CURATORS' GROUP - THE FIRST 34 YEARS....!	
by Cindy Howells	352
MARIE STOPEs THE PALAEOBOTANIST, MANCHESTER, SCOTT OF THE ANTARCTIC AND HER ADVENTURES IN JAPAN	
by David Gelsthorpe	375
LOST & FOUND	381
BOOK REVIEWS	382
GEOLOGICAL CURATORS' GROUP : 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	385



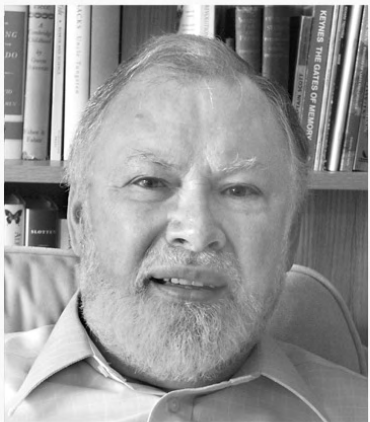
Roy Clements



Hugh Torrens



Howard Brunton



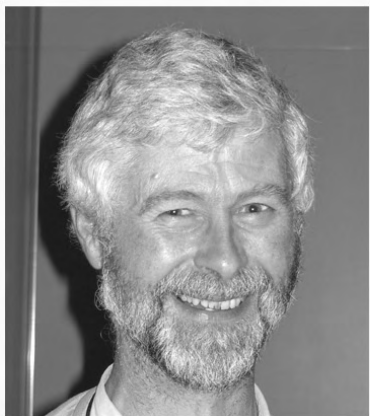
Phil Doughty



Mick Stanley



John Cooper



Paul Ensom



John Nudds



Tom Sharpe



Patrick Wyse Jackson



Mandy Edwards



Helen Fothergill

Figure 1. The 12 Chairmen.

THE GEOLOGICAL CURATORS' GROUP - THE FIRST 34 YEARS....!

by **Cindy Howells**



Howells, C. 2007. The Geological Curators' Group - the first 34 years....! *The Geological Curator* 8(8): 352-374.

What were the initial aims, hopes and aspirations of the Geological Curators' Group? Over its 34 year history it has endured many highs and lows, and has undoubtedly played a large part in the salvation of many geological collections and curatorial jobs. But its success in some areas has been balanced with failure in others. This revisit of the last 34 years may serve to remind the group of what it has achieved, and the progress that has been made by the profession as a whole. It may also serve as a historical record of the meetings and trips held, publications produced, and the many committee members who served over the years. Long may it continue!

Cindy Howells, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NP. cindy.howells@museumwales.ac.uk Received 27th June 2007.

Introduction

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the number of geology graduates entering the UK museum world was on the increase. Mostly they found themselves fairly isolated, with no professional bodies to look to for support or advice, and no forum through which to contact other curators. It was only at the meetings of the non-specialist Museum Assistants' Group that like-minded geologists were able to express concerns about the condition of collections for which they were responsible. There was obviously a pressing need for a specialist professional association to provide support, training, advice, and be a focus for meetings and discussions about geological collections in museums, universities and other institutions across the country.

In 1973, Mike Jones, then Keeper of Geology at Leicester Museum, drafted a constitution for the Association of Museum Geologists and circulated it for comment. Although the Museums Association were sceptical about the idea, perceiving it as a splinter group, the Geological Society of London, when approached for help, agreed to the new society becoming an affiliated specialist group using their apartments and newsletter. At a meeting in Leicester on 15th February 1974 the proposals were discussed with a view to establishing a means whereby geological curators could meet and discuss concerns and share ideas. A working party was established, and the name of the group was changed to the Geological Curators' Group.

Membership

GCG was the first of the specialist curatorial groups and the initial membership of 83, reported at the end of 1974, had doubled by the end of the second year. The first overseas members joined in 1976, and many institutions were also keen to subscribe; 50 in the first two years. After the initial burst of enthusiasm, there was a fairly steady increase up until the mid 1980s when saturation point seems to have been reached. Membership was never restricted to those holding a curatorial post, and it was, and still is, good to receive applications from technicians, preparators, students, lecturers, fossil dealers, etc. By 1997 the membership levels reached a peak of 517 subscriptions in total with 358 individual members, and this level has not yet been beaten. It does seem that this total included people who had not paid for a number of years, and these were subsequently weeded out during the following few years, resulting in a significant decline in numbers. None of the increases in subscription costs can be correlated with drops in membership levels, so it seems that no-one is ever put off by our meagre rises. Undoubtedly the decline in specialist geological posts has resulted in fewer subscriptions being renewed in the past few years, although early indications for 2008 seem to show a very slight upwards trend once more. Records were initially kept on index cards, and these still give a useful insight into the early years of GCG membership. After 1999, the database was kept on computer, but relatively rapid changes of committee posts meant that various people kept different sets of

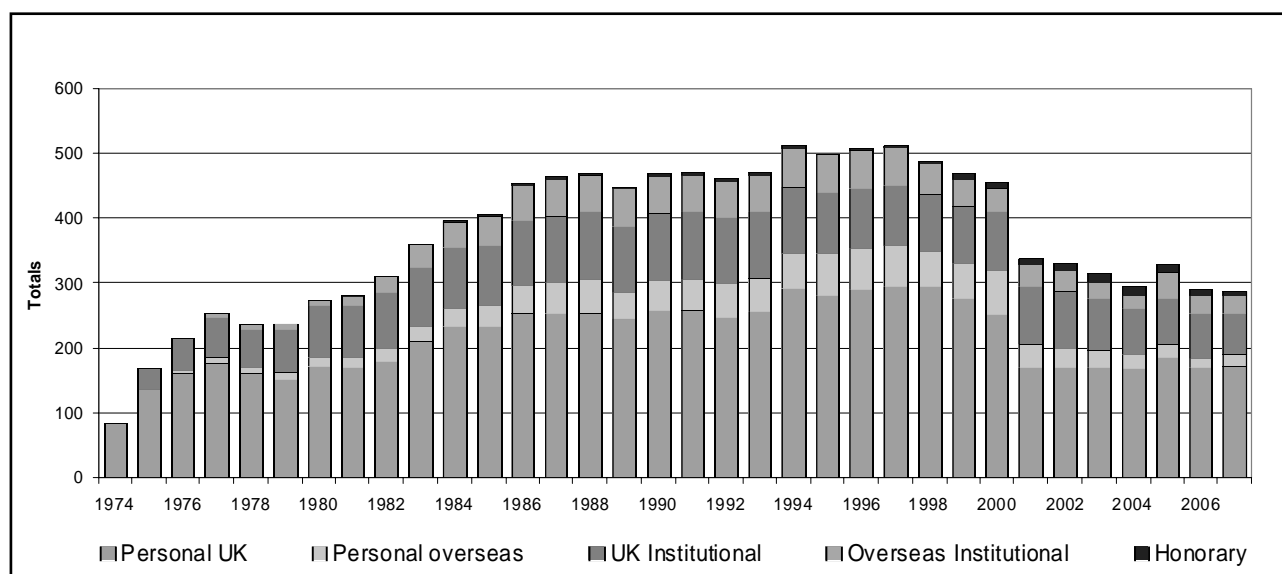


Figure 2. GCG membership levels from 1974 to 2007. Most of the values given in this chart are taken from the AGM reports published in the *Geological Curator*. A few gaps in these reports have been filled in by counting old membership cards and a certain amount of guesswork.

records in assorted ways, and inevitably some inaccuracies occurred. Historically GCG has not been quick to remove non-payers from its database, but increasing postage and publishing costs will inevitably force us to be a little more ruthless in the future.

Seminars and workshops; field trips and study tours

A format of around three meetings of themed talks per year was quickly established, attracting on average 40 - 50 delegates. They were, and still are, mostly held at museums with geological collections and a specialist curator. Occasional visits to the Geological Society in London help to maintain links with that organisation. Several large international, two and three-day conferences have been held, often jointly with other bodies such as the Palaeontological Association, the Museums Association and the Biological Curators' Group, to name a few. Many other smaller joint meetings have also helped to foster links between different organisations. Themes for meetings have covered many topics from basic curatorial techniques, through to displays, databases, conservation, ethics, and specialist subjects, also the recently popular subjects such as education, and geotourism.

Workshops on a range of topics have been held throughout the Group's history and have almost always been well attended. Their aim was to allow members to gain practical experience beyond that

available at their own institutions, to discover new techniques and to brush up on old ones. Most early workshops dealt only with strict curatorial and documentation matters, but conservation and preparation techniques soon followed. From the mid 1980s no workshops were held until they were reintroduced in 1992. These dealt more with identification and newer conservation techniques, and in 2001, the first of the popular fossil identification series was held.

The traditional meeting timetable has been hit several times by lack of enthusiasm forcing cancellations, but this never seems to be due to any one factor. Some meetings in far-flung parts of the country have been low in numbers; others have suffered from being held towards the end of the financial year, or within holiday seasons. So timing and location have each played their part. However, more and more often recently we have had to cancel meetings and workshops and yet overall membership numbers have not dropped appreciably. It seems likely that increasing pressures of work, tightened budgets and the need to justify absence at meetings have all played their part in falling attendances. It is a shame that with the modern trend towards performance indicators, collections accessibility and staff development, the need for curators to attend such meetings does not seem to be appreciated by our managers. Even when the theme of the seminar is not strictly relevant to curators, it is still a valuable meeting place where news, ideas and help may be on hand to all.

Many GCG seminars are now planned as two-day meetings with an accompanying field trip, but this was not the case in the early years of the group. Although delegates were often given the chance to view galleries and stores, the first visit to an outdoor site seems to have been in 1983 at a meeting held in

Buxton. Since then sites such as quarries, mines, caves, beaches, hills and cliffs throughout the UK, have been visited as an integral part of many meetings, and offer a rare chance to see, and get a feel for local geology under the leadership of a specialist.



Figure 3. Members investigating the Cromer Forest Bed at West Runton, Norfolk.

In 1997 the first in a series of overseas study tours was held. These were the brainchild of John Cooper, and usually involved visits to several museums and institutions within a major European city (and once New York!). After the first few such trips, they were extended into several days to include geological sites as well. By their very nature they have tended to be more expensive than UK meetings and as such usually only attract a handful of members. However, they are invaluable in allowing us to meet our European colleagues and compare facilities, collections and displays. Unfortunately it is now several years since we had enough interest to run an overseas trip, and recently even UK study tours have proved unpopular. Perhaps we may have to rethink how we go about organising meetings in the future? Should we canvass opinion about what the membership actually wants from the Group? Most workshops seem to attract enough members so maybe we need to structure all meetings in a way that gives a measurable result which can be taken back to management as a proof of its validity; for example, to fit in with CPD (Continuing Professional Development) schemes.

Research and publications

Two of the major interests of GCG right from the very start were collections research and curation, and these themes were always very evident in early meetings and journal articles; accessioning procedures, documentation and record cards were all discussed. Compilation of collections data very quickly became an integral part of the journal with many continuing themes, such as the ever popular *Lost & Found* Column, and *Collections and Collectors of Note*.

Many small 'type and figured' catalogues have been published within its pages, and also accounts of the history and content of museum collections. Unfortunately some themes were dropped much too soon, for example the *Worst Curated Object*, which revealed some startlingly bad identifications! There must be more examples out there just waiting to be revealed to the group.

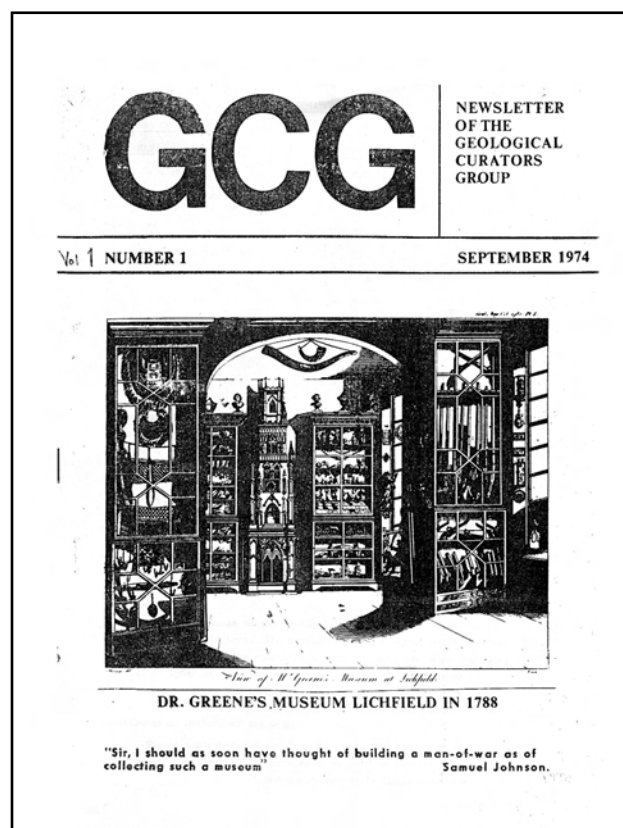


Figure 4. The first issue of the GCG newsletter.

The journal rapidly established itself as a professional academic publication, carrying scientific articles on a wide range of subjects, and its early success was undoubtedly due to the excellent job Brian Page did as the first editor, insisting that major articles should be refereed, seeking advertising revenue to offset ever increasing costs, and arranging the printing. As a university technician, Brian was not in the easiest position to have undertaken the arduous role of editor and eventually pressures from the department became too great to continue, forcing him to resign, both as editor, and from the university. Subsequent editors have continued to build on his early framework, ably coping with rising printing costs, and changes in format. The initial aim of three copies per year has now been reduced to two, although the overall appearance of the publication has been greatly modernised, with glossy covers, new typeface, double column layout and abstracts for papers. Hugh Torrens, Tim Pettigrew, Peter Crowther, Patrick

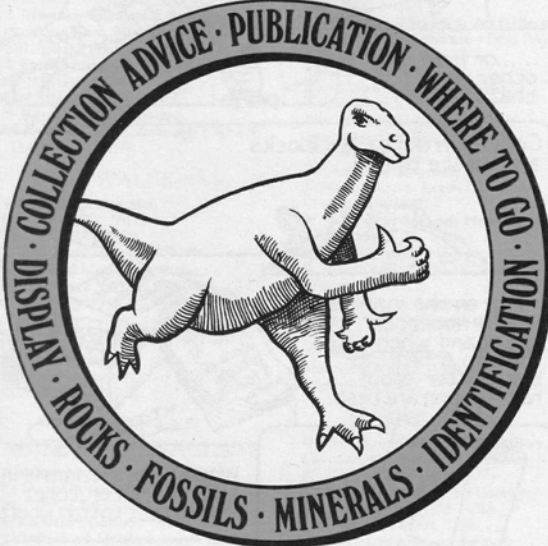
Wyse Jackson, and now Matthew Parkes have also all served as Journal Editors over the years, each bringing their own invaluable contribution. The journal is perfectly complimented by the newsletter *Coprolite*, edited by Tom Sharpe for the entire run of its existence (aided by Monica Price until 1998), which provides for a more rapid turnover of information. The perennial frustration for all editors is getting enough material to publish, and I urge all members to support both publications by submitting more articles, no matter how brief.

Numerous other publications have been produced over the years, many through the Geological Society. Phil Doughty's *State and Status of Geology in UK Museums*, published in 1981 is referred to time and time again. It revealed that most geological collections across the UK had no curatorial care at all, and that geological curators were a very rare breed. Many collections were neglected or at risk. The initial aims of the Group had been to address these very issues, and now that the scope of the problem had been documented, work was started on a set of standards to help curators with every aspect of curation. *Guidelines for the Curation of Geological Materials*, edited by Howard Brunton, Tristram Besterman and John Cooper, was published in 1985 in a loose-leaf, ring-binder format, the intention being that it could be easily and regularly updated (although as of 2007 this has not yet happened). In the same theme, in 1986, as part of an initiative to involve and educate children, a campaign entitled Thumbs-up was launched on BBC TV's *Blue Peter*. An A4, three-fold leaflet illustrated, with cartoons, the do's and don'ts of collecting, cleaning and cataloguing specimens. Museums listed on the leaflet displayed the Thumbs-up sticker in their galleries and provided advice to young enthusiasts.

The *Directory of British Geological Museums*, compiled by John Nudds and published in 1994, provided a very useful list of geological collections and museums. Each entry gave contact details, collection strengths, specimen numbers, facilities offered, and many other details along with a photo of the building or collection. Even though it is now out of date, this guide is still often the first port of call when checking the details of an institution. Around this time various institutions were coming under pressure to put financial values on their natural science collections which had always been undervalued when compared with humanities-based collections. The First International Conference on the Value and Valuation of Natural Science Collections was held at The University of Manchester from 19-21 April 1995 to

**ROCKS FOSSILS
and MINERALS**

**How to make the best
of your collection.**



**A Thumbs-up guide for
the young enthusiast.**

**Sponsored by Robertson Research Int. Ltd.
Published by the U.K. Geological Curators' Group.**

Figure 5. Thumbs-up leaflet.

address issues relating to such valuation, and the conference proceedings, published by The Geological Society in 1997, discussed their scientific and cultural value in addition to financial value. The volume was edited by John Nudds (GCG) and Bill Pettit (BGC). More recently the State and Status report was revisited with an aim to see if the situation could be seen to have improved in the two decades since it was published. Glenys Wass sent out the initial questionnaire, and the results were published by Helen Fothergill in *Geological Curator* volume 8 no.3. Unfortunately the outcome of the new report was to show that gain has been balanced by loss, and we must continue to campaign for the preservation of our geological heritage.

Committee

The first GCG committee was appointed at the inaugural meeting on 17th May 1974 and consisted of:

Chairman:	Roy Clements (Leicester University)
General Secretary:	Mike Jones (Leicester Museums)
Treasurer:	Anne Pennington-George (Doncaster Museum)
Minutes Secretary:	Geoff Tresise (Merseyside Museums)
Recorder:	Phil Doughty (Ulster Museum)
Editor:	Brian Page (Keele University)
Membership: Committee:	Tim Riley (Sheffield Museum) Hugh Torrens (Keele University) Colin Sizer (Wellcome Museum)

Since then, the format of the committee has stayed basically the same, but has been added to. In 1985 a new post of Public Relations Officer was created, and in 1993 this was widened in scope to include co-ordination of the meetings schedule; this post is now known as Programme Secretary. The post of Newsletter Editor was created in 1996 to reflect the amount of work carried out in this role by Tom Sharpe. Up to 4 ordinary members are elected onto committee for two years, but co-optees may stay for longer if the need arises. Chairmen are elected for a three year term of office (although Hugh Torrens managed to stay in post for four years), while other posts can be retained as long as the incumbent is willing, subject to approval by the membership present. Committee meetings are usually held three times a year at various venues and the day to day business of the Group is discussed at these. The AGM is usually held at a seminar in early December. To date, there have been 12 Chairmen, 10 Recorders, 9 Membership Secretaries, 8 Treasurers, 7 General Secretaries, 6 Journal Editors, 5 Minutes Secretaries, 5 Programme Secretaries/Public Relations Officers and just 1 Newsletter Editor. The full list appears in Appendix 4.

Time Line

In compiling this history of the Group, I have scoured every issue of the Geological Curator and Coprolite, and have also scanned through the archives. I can also add my personal memories of meetings since 1986, but I am sure I will have missed some items which members will feel should have been included, and it is possible that my interpreta-

tion of events may not be as others remember. I apologise for any errors, and would welcome any additional information or images which might be of use in maintaining as accurate a record as possible of the group's history.

1974

The inaugural meeting was held in the Geological Society's rooms in Burlington House, Piccadilly on 17th May 1974. Fifty-five people attended (see Appendix 3) with 22 apologies for absence. The progress of the affiliation was discussed, as was the provisional constitution. An annual subscription of £1 was agreed upon.

Publications

The first issue of the GCG Newsletter was launched in September 1974 containing a report of the inaugural meeting, along with the first in a series of articles on museums and collections of importance by Hugh Torrens. Also included were various snippets of interest to curators; an article which launched the still strong *Lost and Found* series; a technical piece on colour coding specimens; a book review; list of publications and notices of other meetings. A *Notes and News* section was edited by Tony Cross.

Meetings

The first regular meeting was held in the Geological Museum in London in October, with 77 delegates attending. Talks focused on the 'Story of the Earth' exhibition, with a tour of the gallery itself. In December, a seminar was held at the Geological Society in Burlington House with a series of talks about accessioning procedures, and the formation of a working party on this subject was discussed. The group's first AGM was also held at this meeting; the committee were confirmed in their roles for the following year, and the accounts were presented as showing a final balance for the year of £99.50.

1975

Meetings

In March 1975, a two-day workshop was organised at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge to consider a proposed format for recording geological data. Twenty-five delegates attended, and it was decided to set up three working groups - for Palaeontology, Mineralogy and Petrology - to draw up specifications for record cards. There was general discussion about the differing types of computerised systems onto which records could be transcribed. A further meeting, on Geological Site Documentation, was held in Sheffield in September, jointly with Nature Conservancy Council and the Information Retrieval Group of the Museums Association. Fifty delegates discussed the proposed record card, and the formation of regional centres for the storage of site information - thus, the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation was founded. The December meeting and AGM was held in Leicester Museum and University, with a chance for delegates to visit the new geology gallery, the Department of Museum Studies and the Geology Department.

1976

Publications

In September, the group produced a special publication, in the same format as the Newsletter, on the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation. It was reported that 95% of questionnaires circulated for the national geological collections survey had been returned.

Meetings

Thirty-eight members met at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in March for a seminar on replication of fossil vertebrates, concluding with a series of demonstrations of moulding and casting techniques by Stuart Baldwin. A meeting on 'Mineral collections in small museums' was held at the Yorkshire Museum in September, attended by 31 members. Two detailed talks were followed by a chance to inspect the stores and galleries. The December meeting, and associated AGM, on a theme of 'Pyrite decay', was held at the British Museum (Natural History). Hugh Torrens was elected as Chairman for the following three years and John Cooper took over the post of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. It was reported that the bank account stood at £82.13 at this point, and subscription rates were raised to £2 for individual members (£3 overseas) and £2.50 for institutional members (£3.50 overseas).

1977

In May the Committee for Geological Site Documentation finally came into being. The Chairman was Roy Clements, supported by an executive of John Cooper, Phil Phillips, Ken Sedman and Mick Stanley. Record cards were to be produced jointly with the Museum Documentation Association.

Publications

In September the 10th part of volume 1 of the Newsletter was published, including an index to date.

Workshops

A joint Palaeontological Association/GCG workshop was to have been held at the National Museum of Wales this year to discuss curatorial problems and techniques in palaeobiology but this was postponed until 1978.

Meetings

Merseyside County Museum hosted a meeting on 'Geological information services and sources in museums' in February. This was a joint meeting with the Geological Information Group and 31 delegates attended. In September, a meeting with a theme of 'The function of local natural history collections' was held jointly with the Biological Curators' Group and the Systematics Association, at the University of Liverpool. Bristol Museum and Bath City Museum and Art Gallery jointly hosted the December meeting and AGM, attended by 27 members and a number of visitors. The session at Bath in particular was aimed at trying to draw local support to the plight of the museum and its collections. At the AGM it was reported that a deposit account had been opened and £150 transferred into it.

1978

Meetings

An international meeting was organised jointly by GCG

and the Palaeontological Association at the National Museum of Wales at the end of March this year, with a theme of 'Curating in palaeontology'. Many useful talks were given to over 100 delegates on a variety of topics over three days, and were rounded off with a discussion session. Conclusions included the need for an improvement in the worrying state of geological collections as highlighted by the initial findings of Phil Doughty's report. A one-day specialist session on Geological Conservation was held in Edinburgh as part of the Museums Association Conference in July. In December, 23 members attended a seminar at Hull University on the 'History and future of the Hull geological collections'. A short discussion on the restitution of cultural property was also included. At the AGM it was discussed whether it may be possible to hold field trips in conjunction with some meetings. Mike Jones resigned as Secretary and was replaced by Phil Doughty, who in turn was replaced as Recorder by Ron Cleevley.

1979

Meetings

In March, John Cooper organized a well-attended two-day conference at the Geological Society, on 'The future development of geological conservation in the British Isles'. Many organizations and societies were involved in this valuable opportunity to discuss such an important topic. In April, 160 delegates from 15 countries met for 3 days at the BM(NH) at a joint GCG/BCG/Society for Bibliography of Natural History conference. With a theme of 'History of museums and collections in natural history', concern was raised about the standard of care given to some historical collections. Universities seemed particularly at risk from the whims of new department heads. A session on 'Geological collections in Hampshire' was held as part of the Museums Association conference in Southampton, in July, and organised by Professor Hodson. Sheffield University hosted a joint meeting of the Geological Societies of the British Isles in September with a session on 'Curation of university research collections', organised by Phil Doughty and Tim Riley. The November AGM and seminar, on 'Standards of curation', was held at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge, and 33 members attended. It was reported that the full Geological Site Documentation committee had been disbanded due to lack of funding, and in future it would operate as a subcommittee of GCG.

1980

Publications

The newsletter was re-titled as The Geological Curator for volume 2, no.8. This was the last issue edited by Brian Page. Due to rising costs and an unenthusiastic bank balance, it was decided to publish the last two issues of this year's Geological Curator as a double issue in October - volume 2, no's 9 & 10. Hugh Torrens stood in as a temporary editor for these, and subsequently Tim Pettigrew was invited to become Editor.

Meetings

In April, a seminar entitled 'Recent developments in the northeast' was held at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle. In June, around 40 curators attended a two-day meeting at

the Institute of Geological Sciences, Leeds on 'Documentation of geological material'. There was a general willingness to improve the quality of records and work towards greater standardisation. A joint MDA/GCG meeting in November at the BM(NH) discussed mineralogical terminology. Twenty-five members attended the AGM and accompanying seminar 'Geology for sale' held in December at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. At the AGM Howard Brunton was elected as the third Chairman, Geoff Tresise replaced Phil Doughty as Secretary, and Di Smith became Minutes Secretary. Brian Page was made an honorary life subscriber to the journal in respect of his contribution as its first editor. It was decided that the annual personal subscription would be raised from £2 to £4 and that two members should be elected to audit the accounts each year.

1981

Publications

In April, the first issue of volume 3 of the Geological Curator was published, to be followed once again by a double issue in November. Phil Doughty's State and Status of Geology in UK Museums was published as a Geological Society Miscellaneous Paper.

Workshops

A joint workshop meeting of GCG and MDA at the BM(NH) in June discussed the use of the MDA geology specimen card and other approaches to the documentation of geological specimens. A mineral workshop at the Geological Museum, London sadly had to be cancelled through lack of support, but it was hoped to be able to reschedule this for 1982.

Meetings

In September, a joint session with BCG on 'Computer storage of data' was held at the MA conference, in the Manchester Museum. The final meeting of the year was held at University of Birmingham in December. Bad weather prevented the appearance of the Chairman, Howard Brunton, at this meeting on 'Local geological displays'. A tour of the collections in the morning was followed by couple of talks and the AGM. Di Smith reported on a publicity leaflet she and John Cooper had produced, for distribution in the New Year. Individual membership totalled 185, and it was proposed that the personal subscription rate be raised to £5.

1982

Workshops

A mineral workshop with Alan Jobbins was held at the Geological Museum in June.

Meetings

Stoke Museum was host to around 40 delegates in April for a meeting, organised by Don Steward, on 'Geological displays for the 1980s'. A joint GCG /Pal. Ass. meeting in September, held partly in the BM(NH) and partly in Burlington House had to be extended from two to three days due to the amount of talks offered. The theme of 'Vertebrate palaeontology - history of collecting and curating', organised by Ron Cleevely, attracted a large number of delegates. Tours of the BM(NH) stores were offered, as

well as an opportunity to see material from the Geol. Soc. archives. The symposium dinner was enlivened by an amusing speech by Alan Charig. In December, the Oxford University Museum hosted the AGM and a seminar on 'Geological displays and associated problems', organised by Phil Powell. John Cooper and Ron Cleevely retired from their posts of Treasurer and Recorder respectively, and were replaced by Tom Sharpe as Treasurer/Membership Secretary, and Alan Howell as Recorder.

1983

Meetings

In April, a joint meeting was held with the Association of Teachers of Geology in the Merseyside County Museum, Liverpool on 'Teaching geology in and around the museum'. In June, around 50 delegates attended a two-day meeting at the BM(NH) on 'Technical and conservation techniques'. In September, Buxton Museum and Mick Stanley hosted a two-day meeting with talks on local collections, and documentation. A demonstration was given of computer inputting using a remote terminal linked to the Council mainframe. On the second day delegates visited Tunstead Quarry and Poole Cavern. As part of the September Museums Association conference, a field trip to the Gower Peninsula was held. In December, a seminar on 'History of collections' was held at Warwickshire Museum, organised by Tristram Besterman. At this AGM Howard Brunton completed his term of office as Chairman and was replaced by Phil Doughty.

1984 - the 10th Anniversary!

Meetings

In February, Leicester was the venue for the 10th Anniversary meeting. Ludlow Museum and John Norton hosted a seminar in June, entitled 'The geological heritage', with a field trip to Downton Gorge and the Ludlow anticline. At this meeting Phil Doughty gave an address outlining the successes of the past ten years, the present role of the group and looked ahead to the next decade. September saw a seminar on 'The computerised museum' at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge organised by David Price. Delegates also attended a second session at the Castle Museum, Norwich on Pleistocene vertebrates, with Di Smith. In November, a seminar at Yorkshire Museum, York, took 'A new look at the dinosaurs'. The final meeting of the year was held in December at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, where around 70 delegates visited the new roller-racked storage which was the inspiration for a theme of 'Storage of geological collections'. 45 members attended the 11th AGM where Geoff Tresise acted as Chairman in the absence of Phil Doughty. It was reported that final revisions were being made to the 'Guidelines' which would hopefully be published in 1985. Tim Pettigrew stood down after 5 years as Editor; his last issue of the Geological Curator was the first part of volume 4, published in a new format with a 2 column layout. He was replaced by Pete Crowther. Alan Howell resigned as Recorder and was succeeded by Don Steward.



Figure 6. Group photo taken during the 1985 meeting in Winchester. Some of the delegates have been identified as: Back row: Steve Howe, Keith Duff, Simon Knell, Adrian Doyle, Martin Warren, Tom Sharpe, Mike McGinnes, Rosemary Roden, Bryan Meloy, Margaret Green, Andy Newman, Paul Clasby, Chris Collins, Tony Cross, Mike Taylor. Front row: Di Smith, Paul Ensom, Gill Weightman, Howard Brunton, Sue Swansborough

1985

Publications

Geological Curator was published with a new-look glossy cover, for volume 4, no.2. The Guidelines for the curation of geological materials (Brunton, Besterman and Cooper) was also published this year

Meetings

In April, Hampshire County Museum Service in Winchester hosted a meeting on 'A conservation strategy for geological material' organised by Tony Cross. In June, the Booth Museum, Brighton hosted a meeting on 'Specimen documentation and data standards', organised by John Cooper. The outcome of a general discussion was the recommendation that GCG should establish a two-year research project to erect a standard terminology for specimen recording, although funding for this would have to be found. A field trip, led by Dr Rory Mortimore, was held on the second day, to visit Chalk sections, and also Amberley Chalk Pits Museum. In September, Bolton Museum was the venue for a seminar entitled 'Aspects of palaeobotany in museums', organised by Alan Howell. The December meeting was held in Dudley, where Alan Cutler organised talks with a theme of 'The Dudley experience' attended by 50 delegates. The AGM was held in the banqueting suite of Dudley Town Hall, and it was reported that a new committee post of Public Relations Officer was to be created next year. It was decided that in order to reduce costs (corporation tax), the group would

apply for charitable status. It was also proposed that the cost of subscriptions should rise by £1 across the board.

1986

Publications

The 'Thumbs Up' campaign was launched in February this year.

Meetings

In January, a major two-day conference was organised by Chris Collins and Peter Whybrow in the BM(NH) on 'The conservation of geological materials'. At least 98 delegates attended this meeting which was intended to cover all aspects of geological conservation and to promote discussion of current techniques and future developments. At the end of May, a three-day meeting was held in Camborne, organised by Lesley Atkinson. A series of visits were made to several mineral and mining sites, and a series of related talks were given in the evenings and on the last day. An extremely well-attended meeting was held in the Geology Museum in Bath, with 70 delegates gathering to learn about 'Promoting museums'. The December Seminar was held in the Manchester Museum, jointly with the Association of Teachers of Geology, the theme being 'Geology and the media'. At the AGM Phil Doughty came to the end of his three-year run as Chairman and was succeeded by Mick Stanley. Hugh Torrens was formally elected as Public Relations Officer.



Figure 7. GCG sitting on the Carboniferous rocks of Whitely Bay, near Newcastle, September 1989

1987

Meetings

Fifty-one delegates attended a meeting in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, in March, with an opportunity to tour the new 'Dinosaurs from China' exhibition. This was followed in the afternoon by a series of talks related to putting on this exhibition. In April, Dorchester was the venue for a well-attended seminar, organised by Paul Ensom, on a theme of 'Geology in Dorset'. On the following day, delegates met at Lyme Regis for a tour of 'Dinosaur Land', the Philpott Museum and various historical landmarks, before relocating to Charmouth to look for fossils. In August, at the Ulster Museum, Belfast, a session on 'The geological heritage' was held as part of the British Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting. In October, GCG, the Geol. Soc., and Pal. Ass. held a joint meeting at the Geological Society in London to discuss the problems of palaeontological site conservation, and the solutions applied to them. This was organised by Pete Crowther. Liverpool Museum's new Natural History Centre was the venue for the December seminar and AGM entitled 'Public access to collections', organised by Geoff Tresise. It was reported that the group had achieved charitable status, and thus became exempt from tax. Don Steward retired as Recorder and was replaced by Mike Taylor (Leicester). Hugh Torrens resigned as PR officer, and although it was too late to ask for nominations for the post, Phil Doughty was co-opted to cover it until next year. Hugh also departed, after thirteen years, from his role as compiler of the 'Lost and Found' columns in the Geological Curator.

1988

Meetings

In April, a seminar on 'What price a national service?' was held at the BGS in Keyworth, and included a tour of the facilities. A small but enthusiastic set of members met at Whitby Museum in July, for a seminar organised by Shaun Lofthouse entitled 'Lifelines for a small museum'. Talks about Whitby Museum, local geology, other small local

museums and the problems encountered by them, were followed by the chance to explore the galleries. The following day an even smaller group (dominated by National Museum of Wales staff) were led by Peter Thornton along the coast from the West Pier to Black Nab. Unfortunately the Edinburgh meeting planned for September had to be cancelled due to lack of support. This was the first time this had happened. In October a well-supported curatorial training course was held, jointly with BCG, at Losehill Hall, Castleton. Around thirty-five members attended the December seminar and AGM held at Shrewsbury with a theme of 'The future of the Shropshire Collections'. At the AGM Geoff Tresise resigned as Secretary after eight years in the post; he was succeeded by Simon Knell. Phil Doughty was confirmed in the role of Public Relations Officer to which he had been co-opted the previous year. Individual membership levels were reported as being 307, and the subscription rate was increased to £7 for personal UK members, with equivalent rises for other categories.

1989

Meetings

The first seminar of the year was held in March, with 40 delegates gathering in Bristol for 'Here be dragons!', and a chance to see the new exhibition. At this meeting Bob King was made an honorary member in recognition of his long years of service, training curators on the Leicester course, and his many papers on minerals and their care. On a gloriously hot day in June, the Group met for a day exploring the Malvern Hills, followed by a second day at Worcester City Museum and Art Gallery where Rosemary Roden was organiser for a seminar entitled 'Geology and the local museum'. In September, the Hancock Museum, Newcastle hosted a meeting on the fate of University collections. Organised by Andy Newman, this meeting addressed various issues and concerns about the ongoing reorganisation of University Earth Science departments. A field trip the preceding day gave participants the chance to explore a good section of the coast between Tynemouth and Seaton Sluice, led by Dr J.M. Jones. In the afternoon

the rapidly rising tide almost caused delegates to become stranded on the wrong side of a headland, and only a quick scramble over the rocks prevented this crisis.

The December meeting and AGM in Oxford University Museum was organised by Monica Price, on a theme of collecting, curating and conserving minerals - 'Facets of our glittering heritage'. Mick Stanley came to the end of his term of office as Chairman to be replaced by John Cooper. Other changes to committee posts included Andy Newman becoming Treasurer/Membership Secretary, replacing Tom Sharpe, who in turn became editor of the new newsletter Coprolite, and John Nudds replacing Mike Taylor as Recorder. Membership totals were slightly down this year as some had been weeded out due to their non-payment of subs. NCC awarded a contract to BGS to form a Geological Records Centre to provide a central computerised database of all records held within the National Scheme for Site Documentation. In this year John Norton was awarded life membership of the Group.

1990

Publications

With Geological Curator now firmly established as a journal, there was a gap in the market for a regular newsletter. The first issue of Coprolite, produced by Tom Sharpe and Monica Price, appeared in February of this year and has since gone from strength to strength, with three issues every year, keeping the membership up to date with meetings, reports, job changes, exhibitions and new publications. Pete Crowther and Justin Delair published the long awaited index to volume 2 of the Geological Curator.

Meetings

The BCG/GCG/University of Sheffield Natural Sciences Curatorial Course took place in Sheffield in March and was very well received. Also held in March, and also jointly with BCG was a seminar entitled 'Stenosaurs, sunflowers and schools'. Held in Peterborough City Museum and Art Gallery it provided a chance to see the new Geology and Wildlife Gallery. Other meetings in 1990 included the first 'foreign' trip; 3 days in Trinity College, Dublin, where Patrick Wyse Jackson assembled an interesting seminar on Irish geological collections, tours of the museums and Geological Survey, followed by a field excursion to the Wicklow Mountains, to examine nineteenth century mines. In October, a well-attended trip to Cromer with a theme of 'Collecting and identifying Pleistocene material' was hosted by Martin Warren, and ended with a gloriously sunny fieldtrip to the Pleistocene coastal sections, taking in some spectacular coastal erosion. The year finished in December with an AGM and seminar, entitled 'Recapturing the initiative' in the Yorkshire Museum, with Paul Ensom as organiser. It was reported that a terminology working party was to meet and discuss standards for specimen curation: John Cooper, John Martin, Nigel Monaghan, and Phil Phillips were to lead this. A new publicity leaflet was being designed, and headed notepaper was also to be produced. Work was to start on a project to publish details of all museums in the British Isles with geological collections.

1991

The Geological Collector of the Year competition was launched and attracted a fair amount of attention, with an awards ceremony at the GA reunion in November. It was during this year that John Cooper first proposed that GCG should hold a European visit and Brussels was suggested.

Publications

From this year forward, until 2006, the production of Coprolite was sponsored by Clinton Burhouse of Burhouse Ltd. for which the group are very grateful. The Geological Curator, volume 5, no.6 was the first to be published under a more direct system, straight from 'Pagemaker' into a camera-ready A4 format. Unfortunately this still meant much work by Monica Price who was responsible for designing the final layout. The new logo also appeared on this issue for the first time.

Meetings

The first meeting of 1991, in March, attracting 30 attendees, was hosted by Di Hawkes in Haslemere Museum, on an educational theme, examining the way museums can meet the challenges posed by the National Curriculum. In April, the Natural Sciences Training Course was held with BCG and the University of Sheffield. In June, Perth Museum and Art Gallery held a two-day meeting organised by Mike Taylor. After an initial day in the field, ending with an evening in a distillery, talks on the second day examined interpretation of geology through displays in various museums across Britain. Plymouth Polytechnic was the venue in August for a meeting entitled 'Geological collections in the southwest' as part of the British Association for the Advancement of Science conference, and was organised by Mike Bishop. This was a chance to view the museum's new exhibition and also their stores and documentation system. The year finished with a very well-attended meeting, when over 80 delegates gathered for 'Mining the heritage seam', held at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery and organised by Colin Reid. A field trip to the Black Country Museum and Wren's Nest was held despite somewhat chilly weather.

1992

This year saw the inauguration of the Brighton Medals, and in March, at the Sedgwick Museum, the first medals were presented, by John Cooper, to Mrs Edith Brighton, widow of Bertie Brighton, the inspiration behind the idea, and to Mrs Valerie Price, widow of the late David Price, founder of the medal. A full list of the Brighton medallists appears in Appendix 1.

Workshops

GCG workshops were re-introduced this year, one on mineral identification (in Manchester in June), and another on microenvironments (at the Sedgwick Museum in August).

Meetings

GCG were co-sponsors of 'Conserving Britain's mineralogical heritage', a major three-day international conference held at the University of Manchester at the end of March. Steve McLean organised a meeting on 'Reaching for a common standard', at Sunderland Museum in July which demonstrated the problems of terminology and the different approaches being taken. A second day was spent in the field looking at superb Permian exposures. The



Figure 8. GCG members not looking at the Middle Jurassic in a Northamptonshire quarry, May 1994

planned meeting in September at St Albans, on 'Geology and museum education' was unfortunately cancelled due to a lack of interest. The December meeting was held in Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery and focussed on the practicalities of fossil excavation, with a field trip to local Lias and Chalk exposures on the second day. Thirty members attended the AGM, at which it was announced that the new publicity leaflet was almost completed. This meeting saw John Cooper complete his term of office as Chairman and the appointment, in his place, of Paul Ensom.

1993

Workshops

A series of five workshops were arranged by Chris Collins and held in the Geological Conservation Unit, University of Cambridge and dealt with a range of techniques. In June, Monica Price held a workshop in the University Museum, Oxford entitled 'Getting to grips with your mineral collection'.

Working Party

In September the Terminology working party met, chaired by John Cooper, with the addition of Roy Clements, John Faithfull, John Nudds and Monica Price. Subsequently this work was absorbed into Spectrum (the industry standard for documentation practice) by the MDA.

Meetings

A survey of members' feelings about meetings was circulated in this year and collated by Kate Andrew. Among the interesting results was the fact that 70% usually attend no more than one meeting most years and 35% don't attend any.

The first seminar of the year was hosted by Peter Crowther at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery in April. With a title of 'Marketing geology in museums', it reviewed the experience of curators in presenting geology to the public, and attracted talks from marketing officers and media presenters. In July, a seminar at the Geol. Soc, on fakes and forgeries attracted around 20 members. Various examples were discussed and the advice was given that we should be keeping abreast of the current market. In September a somewhat larger group attended a Building Stones semi-

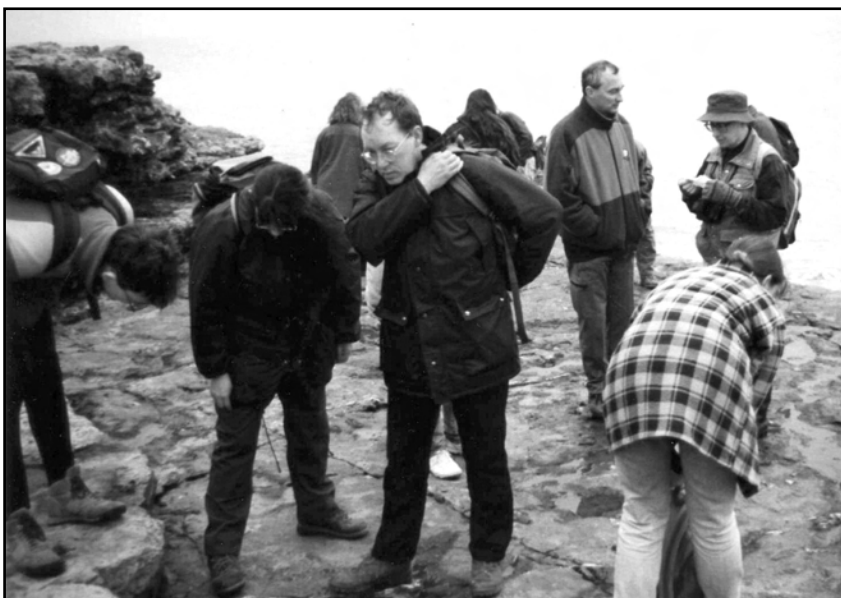


Figure 9. GCG members looking at the Carboniferous Limestone at Ogmore, South Wales, in December 1994

nar in the Sedgwick Museum, hosted by Mike Dorling and chaired by Eric Robinson, and discussed their continuing relevance today. Last year's cancelled meeting in St Albans was successfully held in October, and focussed on organising educational activities and developing educational policies. The December seminar and AGM this year were held in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, organised by John Faithfull and attended by around 30 people who were entertained by a series of talks about various curatorial disasters, from complex numbering systems through to full-scale flooding. A field trip to see Carboniferous vesicular lavas on the second day was also led by John. At the AGM it was announced that Colin Reid had taken over the role of Public Relations Officer during the year, and widened the scope of this job to include organising and co-ordinating the meetings schedule. Pete Crowther resigned as Journal Editor this year after eight years of hard work, and was succeeded by Patrick Wyse Jackson, while Mandy Edwards took over the post of Secretary from Simon Knell.

1994 - the 20th Anniversary

Publications

The long-awaited Directory of British Geological Museums, compiled and edited by John Nudds, was published as a Miscellaneous Paper by the Geol. Soc.

Meetings

A very special meeting was held in Northampton in May this year exactly twenty years to the day since a small but select group of curators met at the Geol. Soc. to discuss the founding of GCG. Over 50 members were present on this anniversary to review the trials and successes of the past 20 years. The meeting was followed by an anniversary dinner, with Hugh Torrens as an excellent guest speaker. Simon Knell did a marvellous job in organising this meeting, and Diana Sutherland led a well-attended field trip the day after - visiting various stone-producing quarries in the area.

Unfortunately, after the success of the anniversary cele-

bration, the July meeting in the Lapworth Museum, Birmingham, had to be cancelled due to lack of support. A joint GCG/BCG meeting was held in September, as part of the Museums Association Conference in Brighton. Simon Timberlake and John Cooper hosted the meeting, with a theme of 'Orphan collections'. The 21st AGM was hosted by the National Museum of Wales in November when 61 delegates gathered for a seminar organised by Tom Sharpe. Their new Evolution of Wales gallery was the focus for talks on 'New directions in geological displays', followed by a field trip to various coastal sites to examine dinosaur footprints and the local Carboniferous, Triassic and Jurassic rocks.

At the AGM it was reported that the new edition of Thumbs Up had been published and was being widely distributed. As the group ended the year with a financial deficit, it was decided to raise the rate of individual subscriptions to £10 (£12 overseas) and institutional subscriptions to £13 (£15 overseas). Membership had benefited from the publicity leaflet and ended the year on a total of 507, with 346 individual subscriptions. John Crossling was elected as Minutes Secretary, replacing Di Hawkes. Mandy Edwards took over the role of Meetings Secretary from Colin Reid.

1995

Workshops

In July a workshop on advanced techniques in mineral identification was held at Manchester, but two other planned workshops were unfortunately cancelled.

Meetings

In April an International Conference on the 'Value and Valuation of Natural Science Collections' was organised jointly by GCG, BCG and Manchester Museum. This was attended by 135 delegates, 36 papers were presented, and geological sciences were well represented. The report of the meeting was eventually published by the Geological Society in 1997, edited by John Nudds and Bill Pettitt. In June, the group met at Burlington House, for a seminar on



*Figure 10.
GCG travelling
by Eurostar,
October 1997*

a theme of site recording, NSGSD, RIGGS and conservation issues. The meeting ended with a general agreement that there was a need for a central database to safeguard records. October saw a small but enthusiastic group of members assemble at Sandown, Isle of Wight for a seminar and field trip organised by Jon Radley and Steve Hutt. Talks focused on collecting, by professionals and amateurs, and the use of fossil material. A damp field trip on the second day gave a good overview of the local fossil sites. The AGM was held in the Assembly Rooms, Ludlow in November this year. The aim of the seminar was to look at various ways of communicating 'Geology for all', possibly by changing the traditional role of the museum. A field trip the following day, led by Andrew Jenkinson, to various local sites including Wenlock Edge, was well-attended despite bitterly cold and damp weather. It was reported that a website had been set up, by the services of John Faithfull and Mandy Edwards. The number of attendees to seminars was down this year and it was hoped that this would increase in the future. Tom Sharpe was liaising with Haley Sharpe on the production of display panels. Paul Ensom finished his term of office as Chairman and was succeeded by John Nudds. John Faithfull was elected as the new Recorder.

1996

Meetings

In April, a seminar was held jointly with BCG, at the headquarters of the North of England Museum Service in Newcastle, and looked at the need for professionalism in the training of museum personnel. This attracted around 40 members and was organised by Andy Newman. In June, Liverpool was host to around 25 members for a seminar designed to show the way forward with new technologies such as the World Wide Web. Wendy Simkiss organised this meeting, at which John Faithfull officially launched the GCG website. At the same meeting an EGM was called to change a few points of the constitution relating to the dates of the AGMs, the creation of the post of Newsletter Editor, and the replacement of the Publicity Officer by a Programmes Secretary. The Harrogate MA conference in September held a half-day GCG session, organised by Paul Ensom and attended by 21 members, which looked at collections and collecting in Yorkshire. Manchester Museum hosted the AGM in November, with 38 participants attending a seminar on 'Geological models' organised by John Nudds. A field trip down the old copper mine at Alderley Edge on a bitterly cold second day was well-organised by David Green, and around 25 members thoroughly enjoyed a very muddy descent into the darkness. At the AGM Steve McLean took over the role of Programme Secretary, and Tom Sharpe was elected to the new post of Newsletter Editor: a role he had already successfully, if unofficially, filled for the past 6 years.

1997

Study Tour

In October the group finally realised John Cooper's long term plan to visit mainland Europe. Nineteen members met in Kent, stayed in a Carmelite Priory overnight (another first!), and got up at the crack of dawn to take the

train from Ashford to the Royal Institute in Brussels for a day which is fondly remembered by all who attended - for many varied reasons.

A second day saw a seminar organised by Ed Jarzembowski at Maidstone Museum, on 'Lost worlds and the European perspective'.

Meetings

The first meeting of 1997 was held in Torquay Museum in April, where Mike Bishop organised a seminar for 20 members on 'Quaternary collections', with a trip to Kent's Cavern and Berry Head the following day led by Professor Alan Straw and Chris Proctor. For once this field trip was held in sunshine. Unfortunately in June, a meeting planned in Hull on 'Disability and geological displays' had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. New GCG display boards, sponsored by Haley Sharpe, were unveiled at the Dudley Rock and Fossil Fair in September. As part of the MA conference in Cardiff this September a GCG/BCG session was organised on the 'Demise of the specialist curator'. Steve Thompson organised the session but unfortunately this was poorly attended. The Natural History Museum, Mineralogy Department was the venue in November for a very well-attended meeting and AGM. The theme of new gallery developments focused particularly on the new Earth Galleries at the NHM, and many were impressed with their plans for the future. Cally Hall and Andrew Clark organised the program for this meeting. At the AGM Glenys Wass was elected as the new Recorder.

1998

Workshops

Chris Collins held a very successful training course on pyrite decay, attended by 8 people, at the Sedgwick Museum.

Study Tour

The second European trip to Leiden at the end of October was experienced by a small but select group of 9 members. Several museums, field trips and bars later, the entire visit was declared a great success, although the uncensored story of the final night out in Amsterdam has yet to be revealed! Steve McLean masterminded the trip with much help from Ros Gourgey.

Meetings

April saw the year start with another well-attended conference (72 delegates), in Belfast, on a theme of Geotourism. With two full days of talks, and another two of field trips, it was an exceptional meeting and proved that many museums and curators are aware of the importance of geotourism as a tool for getting geology into public awareness, and there seem to be many projects afoot to facilitate this. Unfortunately, once again the June meeting, to Camborne was cancelled due to lack of numbers, and it was decided that this was not a good time of year to hold meetings. A joint meeting of GCG, the History of Geology Group and the Geoconservation Committee was held at Burlington House in September entitled 'Has the past got a future?'. This seminar, organised by John Thackray, focused on the conservation of geological sites, collections and records and was attended by around 40 delegates. The final meeting of the year was held at Wollaton

Hall, Nottingham in December. Forty-two delegates attended, with a theme of 'Little and large'. A second day saw a visit to BGS and their impressive stores. The AGM saw John Nudds come to the end of his reign as Chairman, and hand over the position to Tom Sharpe. John Crossling resigned as Minutes Secretary and was replaced by Tiffany Foster. Glenys Wass reported on the first stages of producing an updated version of the State and Status Report.

1999 - The Silver Anniversary

Workshops

A training workshop was held in the National Museum of Wales, in April, on the subject of the curation and hazards of mineral collections. This workshop was organised by Tom Sharpe.

Study Tour

The third European trip took place in October when a small but dedicated group of eight members met in Paris for a single day's whistle-stop tour of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle. The stunning new Evolution Gallery and the original mosasaur skull, plundered by Napoleon, were admired by all.

Meetings

The first seminar of 1999 was held in May at Leicester, organised by Mark Evans and John Martin, and celebrated the Silver Anniversary of the group. After a day of talks looking back at the past 25 years, the members enjoyed a celebratory dinner with Hugh Torrens as an entertaining speaker. A field trip, led by John Martin, was held in the drizzle of the following day, visiting Charnwood Forest, Hunt's Hill and Tilton Railway cutting. GCG were co-sponsors in June of the very successful Mary Anning bicentennial meeting in Lyme Regis. Also in June, the

University of Leicester hosted a week-long course on the collection and curation of natural science materials. GCG supported this course, which is so important to the training of curators, especially non-specialists. The previously postponed trip to Camborne finally took place in September this year, albeit with only five members present. A numbers of mines and museums were visited, and despite the frequent rain it was an excellent trip organised by Lesley Atkinson. A seminar and AGM at Trinity College, Dublin finished the year, with a review of the past decade. A bitterly cold field trip the following day was led by Matthew Parkes. At the AGM honorary membership was conferred on six of the early major contributors to the society: Roy Clements, Hugh Torrens, Howard Brunton, Phil Doughty, Geoff Tresise, and Mike Jones. Tiffany Foster had resigned as Minutes Secretary during the year, and her role had been filled temporarily by Mark Evans and Alastair Bowden, but Tony Morgan was appointed to the post at this meeting.

2000

Workshops

Dale Johnston held a very successful workshop in November on basic gemstone identification with nine members travelling to the Sedgwick Museum.

Study Tour

European study tour number four took place in October this year, with a trip to Bavaria, and the Munich Mineral Show. The 13 members were entranced by the range of specimens for sale at the fair, and also by the various museums and sites they visited. The sight of two *Archaeopteryx* specimens was another attraction for those members of the group who are trying to see the full set.



Figure 11. GCG members gather in Oxford for a day in the field, December 2001

Meetings

The first meeting of 2000 was held in decidedly stormy weather in Scarborough in April, with a theme of 'Access to collections'. This meeting was held jointly with BCG and Natural Sciences Conservation Group, with a large turnout of delegates from all groups, and was organised by Nick Gordon of the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. The following month Mike Taylor organised a seminar held in Edinburgh to look at the new exhibition 'Dynamic Earth' and the Museum of Scotland. Several other large new developments were also described in a fascinating series of talks, culminating in a tour of the new Edinburgh exhibitions. The December seminar and AGM were held in the Yorkshire Museum, and were organised by Phil Manning. There were several fascinating talks on the tribulations of recovering dinosaur tracks, and their usage. Phil also led the field trip to Port Mulgrave with a small intrepid group braving the wind and rain to climb extremely muddy cliffs in search of footprints. At the AGM it was announced that a questionnaire about the current status of collections had been produced by Glenys Wass for issue with the journal.

2001

Workshops

Unfortunately the March workshop on Petrology Collections at University College, London had to be cancelled. The first in a series of fossil identification workshops was held at the NHM in November when Jonathan Todd gave around 10 members a very informative overview of fossil bivalves.

Study Tour

The fifth overseas study tour went west for four days in November this year. Ten members flew out to New York to be welcomed by Chris Collins of the American Museum of Natural History. Many of the AMNH stores were visited, along with numerous galleries and shops. This visit was two months to the day after '9/11' and members also paid their respects at 'ground zero'

Meetings

In May, the Manchester Museum and John Nudds hosted a seminar entitled 'The commercial trade: ethics versus science'. This theme attracted delegates from a wide range of professions, with an even wider range of viewpoints. A somewhat lively meeting, which didn't quite come to blows, it provoked much discussion later. A joint meeting with HOGG was held in the NHM in June to celebrate 150 years of the Geological Museum. It explored the role of the Geological Museum, its architecture, current role and links with the BGS. The Oxford University Museum was the venue for the December seminar and AGM, with around 40 members present. The talks generally had a building stone and architectural theme, showing the links between geology art and architecture. A field trip was led by Phil Powell to Ardley Quarry to see the amazing dinosaur trackways, and to Cassington gravel pit to hunt for vertebrate remains. At the AGM it was mentioned that BCG and NSCG were to merge and had looked at the possibilities of GCG joining them. The overall feeling was that this would not be a good move. Camilla Nichol had

taken over management of the website, and the e-mail discussion group JISCMail had been set up which all members were recommended to join. Personal subscriptions were raised to £12 to take effect from 2003 and membership was lower than before due to major weeding out of non-payers. Tom Sharpe came to the end of his term of office, to be succeeded by Patrick Wyse Jackson. Mandy Edwards retired from her post as Secretary, and Andy Newman retired as Treasurer. They were succeeded by Giles Miller and Susan Cooke.

2002

Workshops

The National Museum of Wales hosted the second of the fossil identification workshops in June, when John Cope showed a small group of members just how difficult it is to identify ammonites from shape and morphology alone. The third of the fossil workshops was to have been John Nudds 'doing' corals at Manchester in November, but unfortunately this was cancelled due to the inaccessibility of the collections during the delayed lottery-funded refurbishment.

Study Tour

Overseas trip number six was to have been to Prague this year, but this was changed at a fairly late date to a two-day trip to Berlin. Eight members were treated to a tour of the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. Interesting storage conditions and impressive specimens were finally topped by the sight of yet another *Archaeopteryx* for the twitchers in the group.

Meetings

March saw a rather small group of members assembling on the Isle of Wight to view the new Dinosaur Isle Museum. Talks on a dinosaurian theme were followed by a tour of the new galleries and also a field trip to the Cretaceous sequence at Yaverland led by Martin Munt, Dan Pemberton and Lorna Steel. In May, a seminar was held jointly with the Geoscience Information Group at the BGS, Keyworth. The theme of databases attracted more than 60 people, with many of the larger institutions giving detailed overviews of their systems as well as a number of demonstrations available to view. Mike Howe and Giles Miller organised this, very relevant, seminar. The December meeting was held in the Sedgwick Museum, with series of talks about new geological displays and a chance to see the redeveloped galleries here. There was opportunity the following day to visit the new out-of-town store and conservation lab. Leslie Noè and Liz Hide were the organisers for this well-attended meeting. At the AGM Glenys Wass reported on the continuing progress of the 2001 State and Status report but resigned as Recorder, passing the task on to Helen Fothergill.

2003

Workshops

Mark Evans held a very useful workshop in Leicester, in June, on identification of marine reptiles. Another on 'Curation and conservation of micropalaeontological materials' was held in the NHM in September when Giles Miller organised a very informative day.

Study Tour

The planned overseas study tour to Copenhagen was unfortunately cancelled due to lack of interest.

Meetings

The first meeting of the year was held in and around Inverness in May. Around 10 members spent a morning in Cromarty, followed by an afternoon of talks in Inverness Museum. On the second day, Elgin Museum hosted a morning of talks, followed by a trip to see the local Permian rocks. Unfortunately September's proposed meeting in Scunthorpe had to be postponed due to lack of interest. The December seminar and AGM was held in Ludlow Museum, where the focus of the meeting was 'Is collections research dead?'. An impromptu midnight field excursion to the Ludford Lane to 'see' the Ludlow Bone Bed, was followed the following morning by a tour of the new Ludlow Resource Centre by Daniel Lockett, and a trip to the Secret Hills Visitor Centre. At the AGM Ros Gourgey was co-opted as Membership Secretary, with Camilla Nichol responsible for the membership database. Susan Cooke resigned as Treasurer during the year and Sara Chambers agreed to take over the role.

2004 - The 30th Anniversary.

Workshops

A workshop on trilobites planned for June at the National Museum of Wales was postponed until next year. The year was rounded off with a workshop on 'Meteorites, impactites and tektites' held in Liverpool in December.



Figure 12. GCG members in a Prague pub with the 2002 flood level marked on the wall, October 2004

Study Tour

A select group of six members and one husband, met in Prague, in October for the seventh study tour. After tours of the Czech Geological Survey and the National Museum, the group headed out into the field to see the Devonian stratotype at Klouk, and then to the Museum of the Czech Karst, before heading back.

Meetings

The long-awaited meeting in Scunthorpe, organised by Steve Thompson, finally took place in May, on the 30th anniversary of the group. A fairly small set of delegates gathered to discuss 'Is collecting dead?'. An anniversary dinner was held in a local Indian restaurant, and was followed the next morning by a trip to Connisbury Quarry



Figure 13. GCG members in the fog on top of the Malverns, December 2005

and Welton le Wold. A seminar on 'Geology in partnership' was held in the National Museum of Wales in October, and was attended by a small but select group of delegates. The growing trend for partnership schemes, loaning specimens and touring exhibitions, between national and regional museums was discussed along with regional hub funding, and maximizing the use of geological collections.

AGM

The AGM for 2004 actually took place in January 2005 rather than the previous December, due to Patrick Wyse Jackson's six-month USA sabbatical. At this meeting Mandy Edwards was elected as the group's first lady Chairman.

2005

Publications

In May this year the 2001 State and Status report, as finally compiled by Helen Fothergill, was published as issue 3 of volume 8 of the Geological Curator; a bumper issue.

Workshops

Unfortunately the postponed workshop on trilobites once again failed to attract many takers and so was cancelled. Dale Johnston held a workshop in the Hancock Museum in October on gemstone identification.

Study tour

Once again the overseas trip, to Copenhagen in November, fell foul to indifference, and had to be cancelled due to a low number of interested members.

Meetings

The theme of the January meeting in Newcastle was

'Disaster planning', and a fascinating series of talks were organised by the host, Steve McLean. A field trip on the second day took in the local Permian deposits amid some typically northern weather. As part of the SPNHC meeting in the NHM in June, GCG organised a morning session of talks which provided a very useful opportunity for a number of members to meet with their American counterparts. A select group of members gathered at the University of Worcester in December for the AGM and a seminar on Geoparks and Geoconservation. This was a very relevant topic, and talks were given on all aspects of the planning, setting up, and conserving of one's regional sites, whether they be Geopark, World Heritage Site, or small SSSI. The following day Peter Oliver led a small group up into the Malvern Hills for a somewhat misty and cold overview of the local Precambrian and Palaeozoic rocks. At the AGM Giles Miller and Sarah Chambers stood down as Secretary and Treasurer and were replaced by Matthew Parkes and Helen Kerbey.

2006

Workshops

The National Museum of Wales held a workshop on the 'Care and conservation of rock collections' organised by Helen Kerbey, although the planned session in Liverpool on geological archives had to be cancelled.

Study Tour

This year's study tour was to be Liverpool and Manchester, in the hope of attracting a more sedentary audience. However this didn't work either, and the trip had to be cancelled yet again.



Figure 14. GCG's toast to the future!

Meetings

In May, Mandy Edwards organised a very successful meeting on the identification and storage of dangerous minerals. Hosted by Manchester University, there was a morning of talks identifying various hazardous minerals. The afternoon was dedicated to a workshop, followed by tours of the collections. A well-attended December meeting was held at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery with a theme of 'Learning with geology collections'. Curators mingled with education officers to listen to a wide range of educational and outreach ideas, and to try some out in the practical sessions which followed. On the following day a small group explored Morwellham Quay in the morning, ending the day exploring the highly toxic arsenopyrite mines at Gunnislake Clitters. Helen Fothergill organised this excellent meeting. Helen Kerbey's move to the USA prompted her resignation as Treasurer, to be replaced by John Nudds. Matthew Parkes took over the job of Journal Editor from Patrick Wyse Jackson, and Cindy Howells became Membership Secretary. The subscription rates were increased across the board to take into account the rising cost of printing the journal and newsletter.

2007

Workshops

Chris Cleal held a very informative workshop for 15 members, and non-members who have since joined, on Carboniferous plant fossils, at the National Museum of Wales, in June. A second workshop in November, given by Andy Currant and Chris Collins in the Natural History Museum, with a theme of identification and care of sub-fossil bone, was heavily oversubscribed and may be repeated at a later date. As these workshops are proving to be very popular, members were asked about the subjects they would like covered in future sessions.

Study Tour

Once again the planned study trip, to Dorset in October, failed to attract more than a few takers and sadly had to be cancelled.

Meetings

The first meeting of the year was a visit to the recently redesigned Kelvingrove Museum, in May. Alastair Gunning welcomed a small group of members for a day which began with a series of talks about the new developments, and also gave the chance to have a good look at the innovative new galleries. The December seminar and AGM was held in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin with a theme of 'Local Heroes'. Matthew Parkes put together a packed program of talks ending with a fascinating guest lecture by Gordon Herries Davies. The following day, about 16 members enjoyed a tour of the Mount Jerome Cemetery where many notable Irish scientists are buried. At the AGM, Mandy Edwards was succeeded as Chairman by Helen Fothergill, who in turn was succeeded by Mike Howe as Recorder. Honorary Life Membership was awarded to Phil Powell as a previous Brighton Medalist.

The future

So after 34 years, what can we say about GCG? Undoubtedly the formation of the group has had a great and positive influence on geological curators, and their specimens. Many collections have been rescued, preserved, conserved, and simply curated better, as a direct effect of the group. It has also had a significant influence in encouraging research into the history of museums, their collections and collectors.

GCG members have always shown immense enthusiasm for participation in collections research, site documentation, common terminology standards, and other related projects. The NSGSD (National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation), which later became integrated into the British Geological Survey's Geological Records Centre was an early initiative of the Group. Other members helped in co-ordinating geological collections data through regional natural science Collection Research Units under the umbrella of FENSCORE (the Federation for Natural Science Collections Research). GCG has always tried to foster close links with other associated bodies (particularly BCG, NatSca, MDA, MA, the Geol. Soc etc), and many members have always participated in numerous local, regional and national groups, often serving on several committees, and spending much of their own time and resources in order to benefit both the profession and geological science as a whole. The dedication shown by curators is never fully appreciated by those who manage them, and as such work only rarely results in individual publications, it often goes unnoticed.

It was, at least initially, hoped that GCG would be able to provide a 'symbiosis' between the keepers of objects (i.e. curators) and users of them (academics/taxonomists etc); however looking back over the years, there has been an increasing trend towards it becoming a 'trade union' for curators. It is a pity that there are not more academic and technical members to provide that necessary unity and support within the profession as a whole. Perhaps a concerted effort should be made to promote the group within the wider profession; to encourage more preparators, collectors, academics and technicians to join and benefit from the group, whilst we can learn from them and present a more balanced front.

Geological curators are under just as many threats now as ever before, especially as museums have widened their role to become pseudo-educational establishments. With the resulting increased emphasis on 'outreach activities' there has been increased



Figure 15. Two GCG chairmen doing Iguanodon impressions in Brussels 2001

pressure to cut curatorial budgets, merge departments and share responsibilities, which has resulted in the loss of many specialist posts. The emergence of non-specialist collection managers and documentation posts supplanting curators was foreseen as a threat to many collections, and undoubtedly this has been to the detriment of some. Increasingly complex procedures and regulations, along with new databases and computer software, have changed curation forever. Some specialist curators are able to adapt and work within such systems; perhaps we should offer a service to the non-specialists who have some geological remit, and encourage them to join the fold.

Imposed financial constraints have meant that many dedicated geological curators have been forced to diversify and take on new roles. This already seems to have had a detrimental effect on meeting attendances, with fewer institutions willing to justify funding for trips to specialist seminars. Several GCG meetings have been cancelled recently as a result of this, and the number of meetings per year has now been significantly reduced.

The question of the group merging with BCG or NatSCA has surfaced a few times but it has always been resisted, in the thought that it could lead to the geological sector being swamped by the rest of the Natural Sciences. But how long before geological curators become a rare breed to be found solely in the National Museums and the few remaining University Museums? Even in such institutions there is a growing trend to employ researchers who may do a little curation on the side, rather than skilled curators who

can be encouraged to partake in research in order to enhance their collections. The value of the knowledge of one's collections gained through years of curatorial experience cannot be overemphasised, but the long-serving curator is often overlooked by administrators who prefer the idea of a shiny new PhD graduate.

The tragic suicide of David Price in 1991, a brilliant curator at the Sedgwick Museum, but under severe pressure to publish research, serves to highlight the still growing concerns of many curators that the profession as a whole is undervalued, under-funded and increasingly subject to ill-informed decisions by higher authorities. Funding the purchase of a single painting may obliterate a museum's acquisition budget for an entire year, but how often do we hear that a similar figure is spent on a geological specimen? Many geological curators, both young and old, are dedicated to their profession in a way that only other curators can understand. We struggle to maintain standards of care and curation for our collections and their uncertain future is a constant worry.

Perhaps museums need to rediscover their original role as repositories of collections and guardians of our heritage. The more eye-catching outreach activities may have some merit, but this must not be at the expense of the museum's prime function of collection care.

Not all is doom and gloom however. Schemes such as Designation and Accreditation (formerly Registration), administered by the MLA, seek to improve the condition, accessibility and understanding of collections. Geoconservation and geotourism seem to be holding their own, with the UNESCO World Heritage Status of the Jurassic Coast (Dorset and East Devon), and the HLF-supported Yorkshire Dinosaur Coast Project, amongst many other projects, geoparks and geology trails. All museums must actively support such projects and any other local exhibitions, or displays, which might increase public awareness of geology, and geology collections, and how they relate.

One of the findings from the 2001 State and Status report was that although more government funding is available to museums and their activities, most is directed towards 'learning and inclusion' rather than towards the collections themselves. It is important that such funding is also directed towards the long-term care of collections, by curators, so that they might remain accessible for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

GCG has achieved a great deal over the past 34 years, but there are still many battles to be fought, and many collections to be curated. We must all give what support we can to the group and to other curators, and continue to promote the best possible care of our collections. In this computer controlled age, with museums driven by targets and performance indicators we must not lose sight of our primary role as guardians of the collections which form such a vital part of our heritage.

References and further reading

- Brunton, C.H.C. et al. 1985. *Guidelines for the curation of geological materials*. Geological Society Miscellaneous Paper 17.
- Doughty, P.S. 1981. *The State and Status of Geology in UK Museums*. Geological Society Miscellaneous Paper 13.
- Doughty, P.S. 1984. The next ten years. *The Geological Curator* **4** (1), 5-9.
- Doughty, P.S. 1999. Museums then and now: collection developments in museum geology since 1981. *The Geological Curator* **7** (1), 3-10.
- Fothergill, H. 2005. The State and Status of Geological Collections in United Kingdom Museums: 2001. *The Geological Curator* **8** (3), 53-136.
- Nudds, J.R. 1994. *Directory of British Geological Museums*. Geological Society Miscellaneous Paper 18.
- Nudds, J.R. and Pettit, C.W. 1997. *The value and valuation of natural science collections*. The Geological Society of London.
- Torrens, H.S. 2003. Natural History in 18th Century Museums in Britain, pp. 81-91 in Anderson, R.G.A. et al. (editors). *Enlightening the British: Knowledge, discovery and the museum in the 18th century*. London: British Museum Press.
- Wyse Jackson, P.N. 2000. Silver Pages: 25 years of the Newsletter of the Geological Curators' Group and The Geological Curator. *The Geological Curator* **7** (3), 95-99.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Hugh Torrens who contributed a vast amount of useful suggestions for this article, and also John Nudds who proof-read and gave advice whenever needed. I am immensely grateful to Tony Cross for supplying the 1985 group image, and Howard Brunton, Phil Doughty, Mick Stanley and John Cooper for allowing me to pester them for personal photos. Also everyone else who has offered advice and given me snippets of information.

Appendix 1

Brighton Medal and Medallists

This medal was the brainchild of David Price, who thought that the Group should have some way of recognising the outstanding contributions made to museum geology by certain long serving curators. The medal is awarded every three years to a person selected by the outgoing Chairman, with advice given from a small number of senior professionals from within the group. The background for the medal can be found in *Geological Curator* 5(8), and individual presentation reports in appropriate issues.

Presented by: J A Cooper:

- 1992 Mrs Edith Brighton, widow of Bertie Brighton
 1992 Mrs Valerie Price, widow of Dr David Price
 1992 Dr Charles Waterston

Presented by: P C Ensom:

- 1995 Dr Bob King

Presented by: Dr J R Nudds:

- 1998 Dr Roy Clements

Presented by: T Sharpe:

- 2001 Phil Powell

Presented by: Dr P N Wyse Jackson:

- 2004 Professor Hugh Torrens

Presented by: A Edwards:

- 2007 Dr Geoffrey Tresise

Appendix 2

Honorary Members

Over the years, certain members have been rewarded for their contributions to GCG and its work by offering them life membership to the group.

Brian Page	from 1980
Ron Pickford	from 1986
John Norton	from 1989 (died 2002)
Bob King	from 1989
Howard Brunton	from 1999
Roy Clements	from 1999
Phil Doughty	from 1999
Mike Jones	from 1999
Hugh Torrens	from 1999
Geoff Tresise	from 1999
Phillip Powell	from 2007

Appendix 3

Founder members

The following 55 people were in attendance at the inaugural meeting in the Geological Society's rooms in Burlington House, Piccadilly on 17th May 1974. They are considered to be the founder members.

Dr C G Adams	P Doughty	E G Philp
W W Aitken	F W Dunning	B Playle
Dr F B Atkins	Dr P Embrey	H P Powell
G Batey	J G Essame	Miss B Pyrah
Dr A C Bishop	Dr C L Forbes	F Reasley
M J Bishop	Miss M M Hartley	Miss J Roberts
Dr W W Bishop	I Henrichsen	J Royston
W Campbell-Smith	T F Johnson	Dr R Rushton
J N Carreck	M D Jones	B R Sawford
H Carter	Dr R King	C A Sizer
P J Challis	S Locke	M Stanley
Miss J Church	R MacCallew	W N Terry
Miss C J Clement	R A Markham	A J Thomas
Dr R Clements	A Mathieson	Dr H S Torrens
A Cook	A Middleton	Dr G R Tresise
R Croucher	Dr M Muir	Miss S Turner
T Cross	J H Negay	G R Ward
Dr M Curtis	B Page	A R Wyatt
J H Davies	Mrs P A Pennington George	

Appendix 4

GCG committee posts

Chairman:

Roy Clements 1974 - 1976
 Hugh Torrens 1976 - 1980
 Howard Brunton 1980 - 1983
 Phil Doughty 1983 - 1986
 Mick Stanley 1986 - 1989
 John Cooper 1989 - 1992
 Paul Ensom 1992 - 1995
 John Nudds 1995 - 1998
 Tom Sharpe 1998 - 2001
 Patrick Wyse Jackson 2001 - 2004
 Mandy Edwards 2004 - 2007
 Helen Fothergill 2007 - present day

Secretary:

Mike Jones 1974 - 1978
 Phil Doughty 1978 - 1980
 Geoff Tresise 1980 - 1988
 Simon Knell 1988 - 1993
 Mandy Edwards 1993 - 2001
 Giles Miller 2001 - 2005
 Matthew Parkes 2005 - present day

Assistant Secretary (handling newsletter distribution):

Tim Riley 1975 - 1977

Treasurer (this post was combined with that of membership secretary for many years):

Anne Pennington-George 1974 - 1976
 John Cooper (& Membership) 1976 - 1982
 Tom Sharpe (& Membership) 1982 - 1989
 Andy Newman (& Membership) 1989 - 2001
 Susan Cooke 2001 - 2003
 Sarah Chambers 2003 - 2005
 Helen Kerbey 2005 - 2006
 John Nudds 2006 - present day

Membership Secretary (see Treasurer):

Tim Riley 1974 - 1975
 Anne Pennington-George (& Treasurer) 1975 - 1976
 John Cooper (& Treasurer) 1976 - 1982
 Tom Sharpe (& Treasurer) 1982 - 1989
 Andy Newman (& Treasurer) 1989 - 2001
 Susan Cooke (& Treasurer) 2001 - 2003
 Ros Gourgey & Camilla Nichol 2003 - 2006
 Cindy Howells 2006 - present day

Minutes Secretary:

Geoff Tresise 1974 - 1980
 Di Smith 1980 - 1994
 John Crossling 1994 - 1998
 Tiffany Foster 1998 - 1999
 Tony Morgan 1999 - present day

Recorder:

Phil Doughty 1974 - 1978
 Ron Cleveley 1978 - 1982
 Alan Howell 1982 - 1984
 Don Steward 1984 - 1987
 Mike Taylor 1987 - 1989
 John Nudds 1989 - 1995
 John Faithfull 1995 - 1997
 Glenys Wass 1997 - 2002
 Helen Fothergill 2002 - 2007
 Mike Howe 2007 - present day

Journal Editor:

Brian Page 1974 - 1980
 Hugh Torrens 1980
 Tim Pettigrew 1980 - 1984
 Peter Crowther 1984 - 1993
 Patrick Wyse Jackson 1993 - 2006
 Matthew Parkes 2006 - present day

Newsletter Editor (this only became an official post in 1996):

Tom Sharpe 1989 - present day

Public Relations Officer/Programme Secretary:

Hugh Torrens 1986 - 1987
Phil Doughty 1987 - 1993
Colin Reid 1993 - 1994
Mandy Edwards 1994 - 1996
Steve McLean 1996 - present day

Appendix 5**AGM venues**

1974 Geological Society, London
1975 Leicester Museum and University.
1976 British Museum (Natural History), London
1977 Bath City Museum and Art Gallery
1978 Hull University
1979 Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge
1980 Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.
1981 Birmingham University Museum
1982 Oxford University Museum
1983 Warwickshire Museum
1984 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
1985 Town Hall, Dudley

1986 Manchester Museum
1987 Liverpool Museum
1988 Rowley's House Museum, Shrewsbury
1989 Oxford University Museum
1990 Yorkshire Museum
1991 Town Hall, Dudley
1992 Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery
1993 Hunterian Museum, Glasgow,
1994 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
1995 Assembly Rooms, Ludlow
1996 Manchester Museum
1997 Natural History Museum, London
1998 Wollaton Hall, Nottingham
1999 Trinity College, Dublin
2000 Yorkshire Museum
2001 Oxford University Museum
2002 Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge
2003 Ludlow Museum
2004 Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne
2005 University of Worcester
2006 Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery
2007 National Museum of Ireland, Dublin

MARIE STOPES THE PALAEOBOTANIST, MANCHESTER, SCOTT OF THE ANTARCTIC AND HER ADVENTURES IN JAPAN

by David Gelsthorpe



Gelsthorpe, D. 2007. Marie Stopes the palaeobotanist, Manchester and her adventures in Japan. *The Geological Curator* 8(8): 375-380.

Marie Stopes is best known as a social reformer but before this she was a pioneering palaeobotanist. She was the first woman to be appointed to the scientific staff at Manchester University where she undertook research into coal fossils. Whilst at Manchester, she met Robert Falcon Scott where she showed him examples of *Glossopteris* fossils. Scott went on to collect fossils of this type on his fateful polar expedition in 1912. Scott's fossils later became a key piece of evidence for a 200 million year old super-continent. Marie undertook a research trip to Japan where she discovered the earliest recorded evidence of angiosperms. The significance of the events of her early life were fundamental in shaping her career and should not be underestimated.

The Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL (e-mail: david.gelsthorpe@manchester.ac.uk) Received 29th October 2007.

Introduction

Marie Stopes (1880-1958) is best known for her work as a pioneer in contraception and women's rights (see Hall 1977; Briant 1962; Rose 1992 for comprehensive biographies). Her reputation as one of the foremost social reformers of the twentieth century is rightly deserved. Before this, she had a little known career as a palaeobotanist (Chaloner 2005). Much of her collection now resides in Manchester Museum and illustrates the passion of this remarkable woman.

Marie was exposed to scientific recording and visiting academics from an early age. Her father Henry Stopes an architect, was a passionate archaeologist and rented an Elizabethan manor house in Swanscombe, Kent. Marie was trained to follow him and to wash and catalogue the flints he collected.

In 1902 she took both botany and geology Honours degrees at University College London within two years of starting university. She also won the University's Gilchrist Scholarship which enabled her to do postgraduate work abroad.

Having taken her degree so quickly, Marie had an extra few months to spare at University College. This of course, she did not waste and became a research assistant to Professors F. W. Oliver and D. H. Scott. Both men were pioneers in reproductive palaeobotany and no doubt encouraged her in her first scien-

tific publications: On the Leaf-Structure of *Cordaites* (Stopes, 1903a) and The 'Epidermoidal' layer of Calamite roots (Stopes, 1903b).

In 1903, Marie took up the opportunity of postgraduate work in Munich and became the only woman amongst 500 men. The Botanical Institute gave her the opportunity to work with Professor K. Goebel one of Europe's leading plant morphologists. In 1904 she achieved her doctorate on cycads seed structure and function.

Whilst at the Botanical Institute, Marie met Kuyiro Fujii from Tokyo's Imperial University, who had published widely on the structure of *Ginkgo biloba*. She quickly developed feelings for him, but he was married with a child and was an atheist. Understandably, she was reluctant to get involved and in the summer of 1904 she returned to England.

Manchester and Scott of the Antarctic

Shortly before leaving Munich, Marie had applied for the post of junior lecturer and demonstrator in botany, at Owens College Manchester (later to become the University of Manchester). She held little hope of getting the job, as no women had ever been appointed to University scientific staff in the north of England before. After prolonged debate amongst the University Council and a recommendation by Weiss (Chair of Botany), they agreed to her appointment (Watson 2005).

By the end of her first term in Manchester, Marie's enthusiasm for palaeobotany had taken her in some surprising ways. Not only was she giving lectures to medical and engineering students, but she also gave public lectures to the people of the Manchester slums. Unfortunately, their response to Cycads and the Inferior Oolite has been lost in the midst of time.

As well as teaching she continued to pursue her research. As part of her doctorate at London University, she was collaborating with Fujii on plant structure of gymnosperms (Stopes and Fujii 1906). In 1905, she became the youngest doctor of science in Britain.

Her real passion though, became the study of coal and coal balls. Coal balls are a mass of plant debris which can be sectioned revealing the plant structures inside. The concentrated fossils show details of the stems, leaves and roots that are difficult to gain from a single fossil on a bedding surface. Manchester was well placed between the Lancashire and Yorkshire coalfields and at the time provided the richest source of coal balls in the world.

She published several papers on coal balls (for example Stopes 1907b) and her work with Watson became the standard reference for some time (Stopes and Watson 1908) (Figure 1). Many of her thins sections are housed at Manchester Museum (Figure 2).

Marie was not content to sit and wait for specimens to be handed to her and insisted on going down the mines herself. As a result, she built up a good relationship with several mine owners. One local mine owner, Mr. W. H. Sutcliff collected specimens for Marie which led to the discovery of a new species from the Coal Measures *Tubicaulis sutcliffii*, which she named in his honor (Stopes 1906) (Figure 3).

A long running line of research was Mesozoic flora. This first began with her research on the Middle Jurassic flora of the Brora coast in Scotland (Stopes, 1907a). For the first time, the flora was comprehensively described allowing close comparisons to be made to the flora collected by Murchison on the Yorkshire coast.

Aside from Marie's academic talent and hard work she led a hectic social life, organizing and attending



Figure 1. Marie Stopes studying coal ball sections at Manchester, using a gas light source and a spherical glass condenser. Image reproduced by courtesy of the Director and Librarian, The John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester.

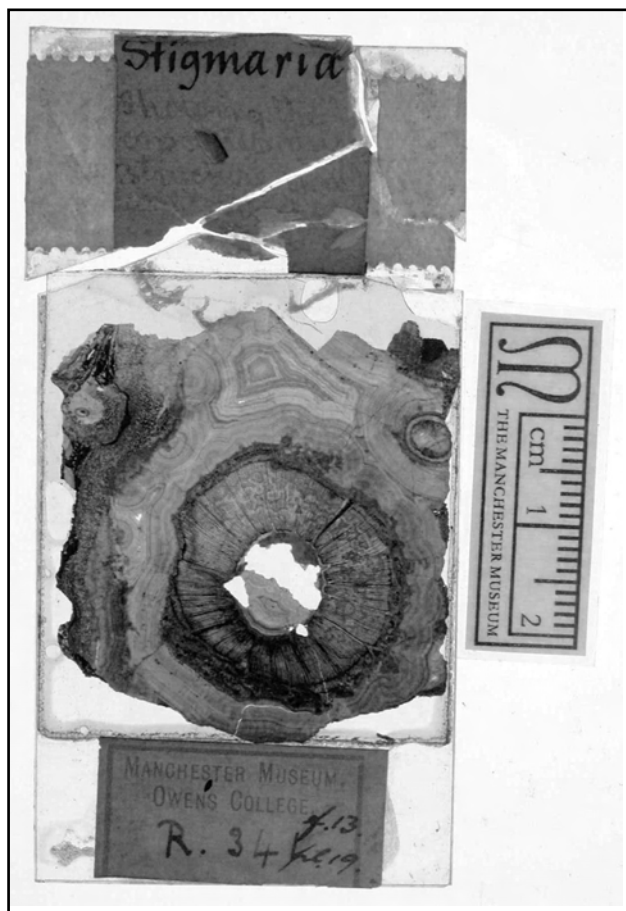


Figure 2. Section of coal ball showing a *Stigmaria* sp. root (R.34).

social events. The departmental fancy dress party seems to have been one of the highlights. It was enjoyed with such gusto that Mrs. Weiss (wife of the Chair of Botany), felt the need to write to her warning that her unconventional behavior was inadvisable (Hall 1977: 52).

In 1904, Robert Falcon Scott visited Manchester on a lecture tour to raise money to pay off the debts of his previous voyage on the ship *Discovery*. Marie had been invited to a dinner to meet him. Over dinner and dancing, she began to persuade him to take her on the expedition he was preparing to reach the Antarctic pole.

In the cold light of day, Scott realised the impracticalities of her suggestion. His response to Marie was that he would take her if it could possibly be arranged, but if he could not 'he would do his utmost to find to find fossils she wanted'. It is likely that Marie showed him Manchester Museum's examples of fossil *Glossopteris* she had intended to collect in Antarctica. Scott's visit is recorded in the museum register.

Scott's journals show that Amundsen's Norwegian flag was at the pole when the party arrived. The sci-

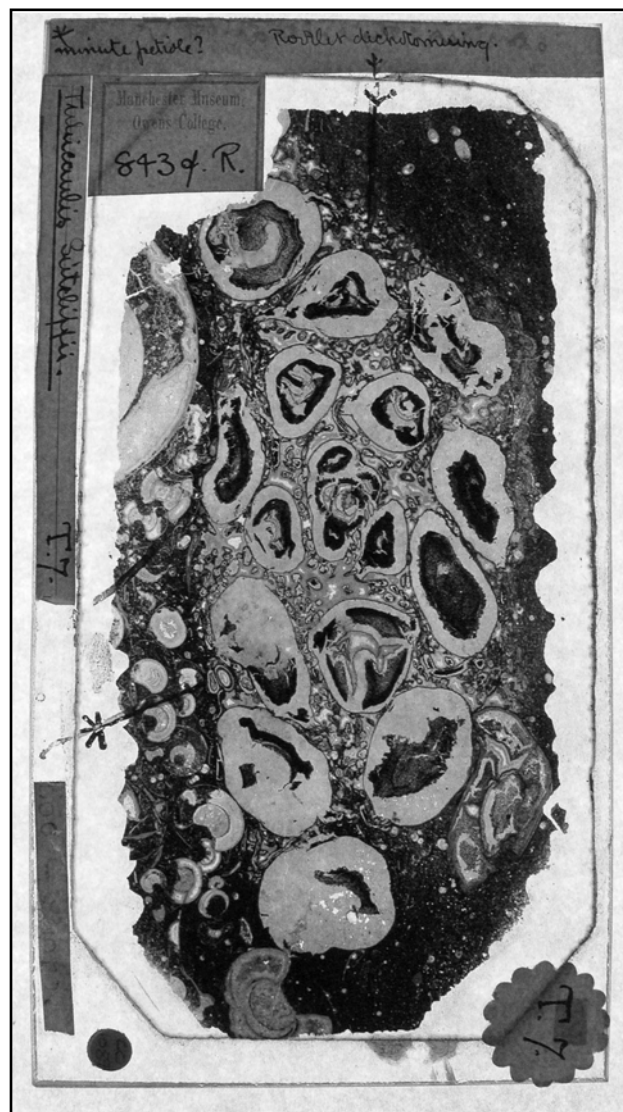


Figure 3. Section of coal ball showing *Tubicaulis sutcliffei* type specimen (T.7).

entific investigations then became the main focus of the expedition and justification for the cost.

When Scott's body was eventually found, plant fossils collected by the party on the return from the pole (subsequently described as *Glossopteris*), were found near him. This was the first recorded occurrence of this plant in Antarctica and formed a vital piece of evidence for a super-continent of Gondwana, 200 million years ago.

Adventures in Japan

In 1906, Marie and Fujii acknowledged they were in love with each other and agreed to marry eighteen months later when his divorce had come through. Fujii's academic career lay in Japan and Marie did not earn enough money to support him in Manchester, so Marie had to find a way to get to Japan. The answer lay in the origin of angiosperms.

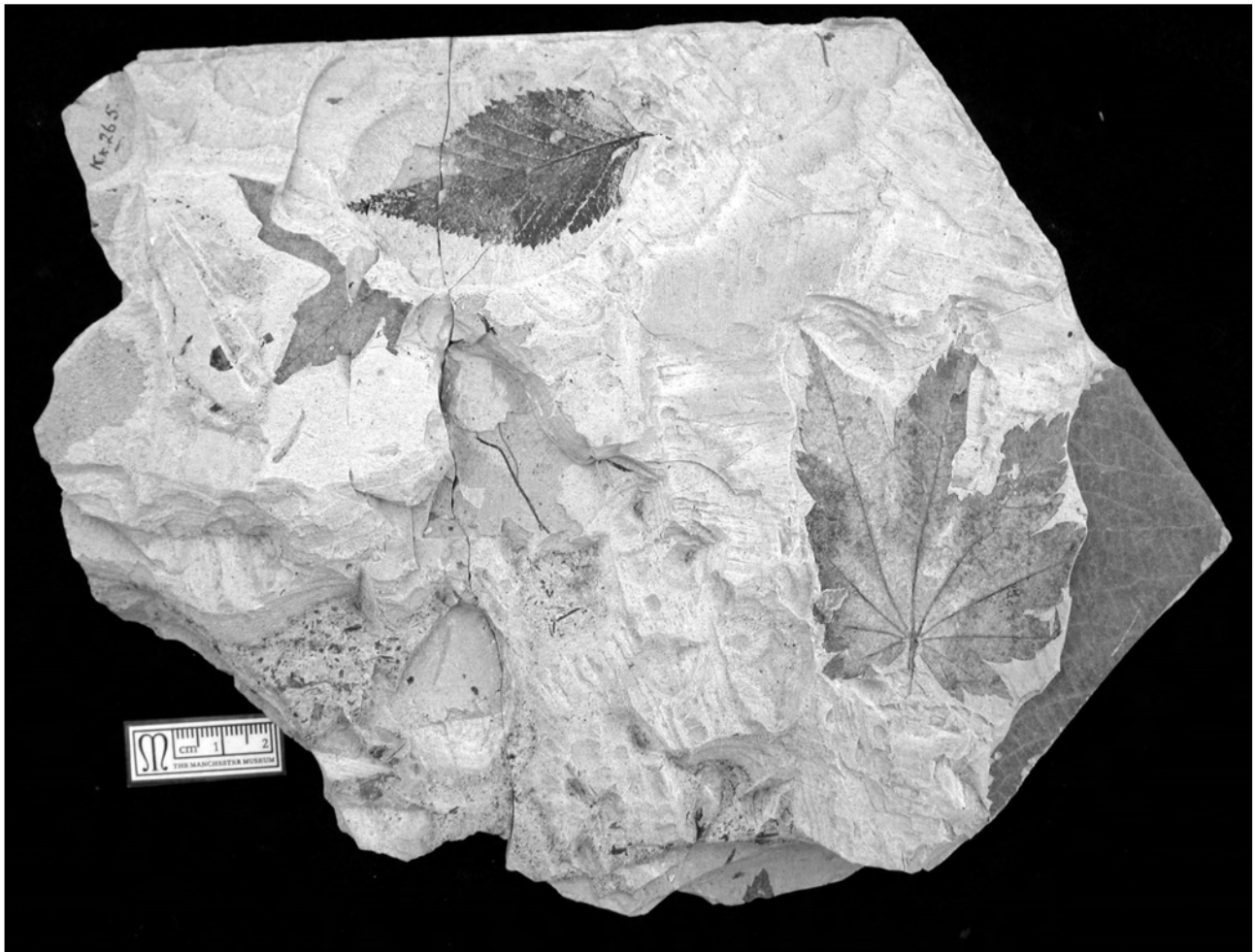


Figure 4. *Acer palmatum* fossil collected by Marie Stopes from Shiobara, Japan (KK.265.13).

Marie had long been interested in the origin of angiosperms and she was aware that the oldest fossils were found in Japan. Fujii sent her some nodules from the island of Hokkaido, where she thought the angiosperm fossils were most likely to be preserved. The first specimen she examined revealed an angiosperm. Marie was awarded a grant from the Royal Society to continue her work in Japan on the strength of these finds.

In the following months, letters from Fujii show that his love for Marie had waned, but by this time she had committed to her trip and hoped things might be different when her ship arrived.

On 7 August 1907, Marie arrived in Japan. After ten days, she set off on her first collecting trip to Hokkaido. The authorities insisted on sending Marie with an interpreter, two guides, thirty coolies and a policeman, all much to her protestations. The going was quite arduous. The only way through the forest was to take the river beds, negotiating six-foot bamboo and strong rapids. In her journal (Stopes 1910) she writes "August 24th: Really it is hard work to

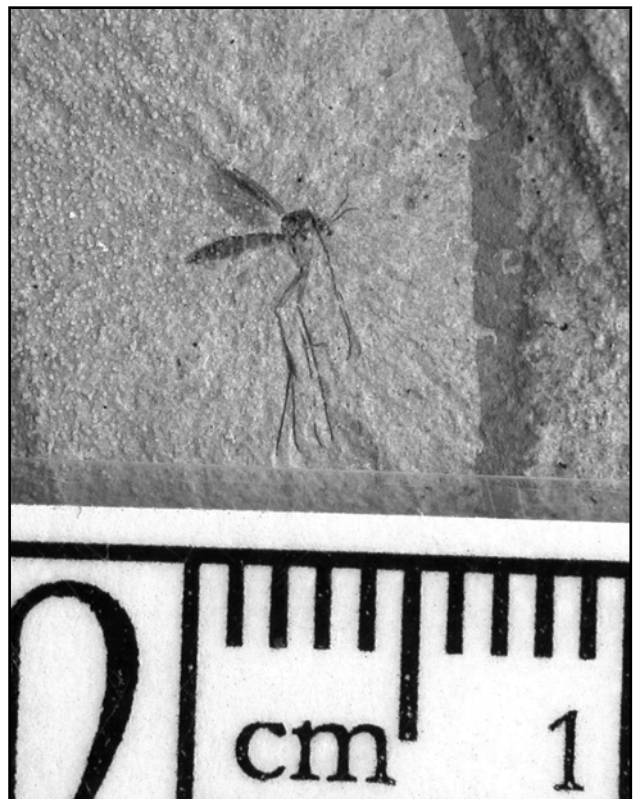


Figure 5. *Fungus gnat* fossil collected by Marie Stopes from Shiobara, Japan (L.8042.a).

carry tents and everything along these rivers. Often I alone find it difficult to go, and I have nothing to carry - except my fan and hammer, both of which are in constant use."

After Marie's trip to Hokkaido she spent many hours in the laboratory preparing sections from the material she had collected. She also undertook as many trips as she could to investigate Japan's palaeontology, this time without her entourage.

One such trip was to Shiobara, a hot spring resort in central Japan. The site is famous in Japan for exceptional preservation of Palaeogene leaves such as maple (Figure 4). Marie also collected several exceptionally preserved fossil insects (Figure 5).

As Marie suspected, her relationship with Fujii was dead. She only met with him a few times whilst she was in Japan. Fujii increasingly refused to see her saying he was gravely ill with leprosy. He subsequently lived a long and healthy life and was eighty-six when he died (Hall 1977: 73).

Marie's work on the early angiosperms she discovered was highly significant. The most important was the triocular ovary which was described as *Cretovarium japonicum* (Stopes and Fujii 1909; Stopes 1910c). This was dated to Santonian which is roughly equivalent to Upper Cretaceous Chalk in northern Europe. Since then other specimens have predated Marie's (for example Friis and Crepet 1987).

Life after Japan

After returning to Manchester Marie was promoted to lecturer in botany and was commissioned by the Natural History Museum, London to undertake a full scale catalogue of their Cretaceous flora (Stopes 1913; Stopes 1915). On her return, as well as lecturing she published seven major papers including 'Studies on the structure and affinities of Cretaceous plants' (Stopes and Fujii 1910) and 'Ancient plants' (Stopes 1910b) the first popular account of palaeobotany. In 1910, she resigned her post at the University saying that her ill-health was caused by the climate in Manchester and moved to London.

Marie, went on to do work on Carboniferous flora of New Brunswick for the Canadian government. During World War I, her coal research proved vital to power the war machine.

Discussion and conclusion

Marie Stopes was clearly a pioneer from a very early age, both in terms of her brilliant academic ability and her determination to achieve the seemingly impossible. After all, when Marie needed a reason to go to Japan she quickly found a way, through her passion for palaeobotany.

It is easy to underestimate how difficult it must have been for Marie in the early 1900s. British society was tentatively emerging from the austerity of the long years of Victoria's rule and it was some time until 1918, when women finally got the vote.

The often remarkable men she came into contact with were clearly charmed by Marie's character, but at the same time had a genuine respect for her scientific ability. After all, The Natural History Museum, London asked Marie to compile their Cretaceous flora catalogue. Her work on coal balls and early angiosperms were benchmark publications.

Much of the time, Marie was seen as an honorary man by her contemporaries. This was particularly true on her trip to Japan, where the thought of a woman conducting fieldwork in harsh conditions would have been impossible at that time. However, this status did not always open doors. Had she been a man, she might have been accepted on to Scott's polar expedition.

It is tempting for historians to concentrate on Marie's later achievements in social reform and women's rights. The significance of her early life should not be underestimated, as her events prior to 1910 were key to defining her character. The skills she gained through becoming a pioneering woman in palaeobotany and dealing with officials such as the Japanese authorities, prepared her well in tackling the problems she came across later.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people: Suzanne Grieve and Leander Wolsenholme for pointing me in the direction of several specimens collected by Stopes, Sam Alberti for helping me find the Scott signature, Steve Devine for help with photography, the librarians at John Rylands Library for providing a photograph of Marie Stopes and Henry McGhie for reviewing the manuscript.

References

- BRIANT, K., 1962 *Marie Stopes, A Biography*, London: The Hogarth Press.
- CHALONER, W. G., 2005 The palaeobotanical work of Marie Stopes, pp 127-135 in BOWDEN, A. J., BUREK, C. V. and WILDING, R. (editors) *History of Palaeobotany: Selected Essays*, Geological Society, London, Special Publications, 241.
- FRISS, E. M. and CREPET, W. L., 1987 Time of appearance of floral features, pp 145-179 in FRISS, E. M., CHALONER, W. G. and CRANE, P. R. (editors), *The Origins of Angiosperms and Their Botanical Consequences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HALL, R., 1977, *Marie Stopes, a biography*, London: Andre Deutsch Ltd.
- ROSE, J., 1992, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution*, London: Faber & Faber.
- SEWARD, A. C., 1914 Catalogue of the fossil plants in the Department of Geology, British Museum. The Wealden Flora - Pt. I. Thallophyta-Pteridophyta, British Museum (Natural History), London.
- STOPES, M. C., 1903a On the Leaf-Structure of Cordaites. *The New Phycologist* **2** (4 and 5), 92-98.
- STOPES, M. C., 1903b 'The 'Epidermoidal' layer of Calamite roots', *Annals of Botany*, (September) 792-794.
- STOPES, M. C., 1906 A new fern from the coal measures: *Tubicaulis stucliffii*, *Memoirs' and proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society* **50** (3) 10.
- STOPES, M. C., 1907a The flora of the Inferior Oolite of Brora. *Quarterly Journal Geological Society* **63** (August) 375-382.
- STOPES, M. C., 1907b The relation of the concretionary nodules of the yarra to the calcareous nodules known as 'coal-balls'. *Geological Magazine* **4** (513) 106-108.
- STOPES, M. C., 1909 Plant containing nodules from Japan. *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* **65** (May) 195-205.
- STOPES, M.C., 1910a *A journal from Japan. A Daily Record of Life As Seen By a Scientist*, London, Glasgow. Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Ltd.
- STOPES, M. C., 1910b *Ancient plants. Being a simple account of the past vegetation of the Earth and of the recent important discoveries made in this realm of nature study*. Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Ltd.
- STOPES, M. C., 1910c Further observations on the Fossil Flower, *Cretovarium*. *Annals of Botany* **24** 679-681.
- STOPES, M. C., 1913 The Cretaceous flora. Part I - Bibliography, Algae & Fungi. From: Catalogue of the Mesozoic Plants in the British Museum (Natural History), London, British Museum (Natural History), London.
- STOPES, M. C., 1915 The Cretaceous flora. Part II - Lower Greensand (Aptian) plants of Britain. From: Catalogue of the Mesozoic Plants in the British Museum (Natural History), London, British Museum (Natural History), London.
- STOPES, M. C. and FUJII, K., 1906 'The nutritive relations of the surrounding tissues to the archegonia in gymnosperms', Beiheft zum Botanischen Centralblatt, 20.
- STOPES, M. C. and FUJII, K., 1910 'Studies on the structure and affinities of Cretaceous plants'. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* **B 201**, 1-90.
- STOPES M. C. and WATSON, D. M. S., 1908 'On the present distribution and origin of the calcareous concretions in coal seams, known as 'coal balls''. *Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society* **B 200**, 167-218.
- WATSON, J., 2005 One hundred and fifty years of palaeobotany at Manchester University, pp 127-135 in BOWDEN, A. J., BUREK, C. V. and WILDING, R. (editors) *History of Palaeobotany: Selected Essays*. Geological Society, London, Special Publications 241.

LOST & FOUND

Enquiries and information, please to Matthew Parkes, (National Museum of Ireland - Natural History, Merrion Street, Dublin 2, Ireland; e-mail: mparkes@museum.ie). Include full personal and institutional names and addresses, full biographical details of publications mentioned, and credits for any illustrations submitted.

The index to 'Lost & Found' Volumes 1-4 was published in *The Geological Curator* 5(2), 79-85. The index for Volume 5 was published in *The Geological Curator* 6(4), 175-177.

Abbreviations:

CLEEVELY - Cleavelly, R.J. 1983. *World Palaeontological Collections*. British Museum (Natural History) and Mansell Publishing Company, London.

GCG - *Newsletter of the Geological Curators' Group*, continued as *The Geological Curator*.

LF - 'Lost & Found' reference number in GCG.

261. British Antarctic Survey Antarctic plant fossils.

Hilary Blagbrough, British Antarctic Survey, High Cross, Madingley Road, Cambridge, CB3 0ET. UK; Tel: 01223 221378; e-mail: hibl@bas.ac.uk) writes:

The British Antarctic Survey is anxious to locate over 400 Antarctic plant fossils which were on loan to Professor W. S. Lacey in 1978 when he died. The

fossils in his collection were left to the University of Bangor and then passed to the Museum of Wales. However, somewhere along the way our specimens, which were a documented loan, got lost. If anyone has any information as to the whereabouts or possible fate of these specimens we would be extremely grateful. All the specimens are numbered (**.###.## style, although the lead letters may be missing) and if anyone thinks they may have them, I can send a list of the relevant specimen numbers to check.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Sedimentary rocks in the field. A colour guide* by Dorrik A.V. Stow, 2005. London: Manson Publishing, 320pp. Hardback ISBN 1 874545 68 1, £39.95, paperback ISBN 1 874545 69 3, £19.95.**

This is a book that is exactly what it says on the cover. This 150 mm by 210 mm volume weighs in at just over 600g and is packed with information and useful features. Every space in this book is put to use, including flaps inside the front and back covers which carry a grain size comparison chart and a sediment description checklist, while the back cover itself has a centimetre scale bar along the edge, a way-up arrow and a space for writing in a photograph number.

Following two introductory chapters giving an overview of sedimentary rocks and field techniques, the third chapter, on the main characteristics of sedimentary rocks, introduces the style which is used through most of the book - pages of colour field photographs with brief captions - over 425 photographs from 30 countries, and over 50 line drawings as well as useful diagrams and tables. Then come chapters on conglomerates, sandstones, mudrocks, carbonates, cherts, phosphorites, coal and oil, evaporites, ironstones, soils, paleosols and duricrusts and volcanoclastic sediments. The final chapter deals with interpretations and depositional environments. Some of the photographs are annotated, and there's a good set of photos of sedimentary features as they show up in mudrock cores.

Each chapter is colour coded and each photograph displays the relevant colour as a narrow colour band along its upper and lower edge. This is a well-designed and well thought out book. Attention to such detail is a hallmark of this publisher, and as the standards of illustration in geology books continue to rise, those from Manson are amongst the best.

Generally, the photographs themselves are of good quality and clear, although some are the typical fieldtrip shots with students scattered randomly around or on the outcrop which detracts a little from the pictures. And there are somewhat off-beat and quirky scales in some of the photographs: figure 13.3, for example, uses a pair of size 8 shoes!

One can nitpick at a few minor typos such as the "thrust plain" in the caption on page 208, and I'm not sure I agree with the caption of a photograph on page 238 that Santorini volcano is extinct, since it last erupted in 1950.

As the author points out in his preface, ideas and concepts in sedimentology change rapidly, but the collection of data in the field is fundamental. This book helps us see how these rocks occur in the field and how they can be interpreted.

Printed on a good quality glossy paper, this is a coffee table book for use in the field, equally at home with the

cafetière or the thermos. And at £19.95 for the paperback, it represents great value for money. There's no reason why you shouldn't have a field copy and an office copy.

Tom Sharpe, Curator (Palaeontology and Archives), Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF10 3 NP. 10th July 2007.

Okada, H. with Kenyon-Smith, A.J., 2005. *The evolution of clastic sedimentology*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, ISBN 1 903765 49 8, xix + 251pp, £45.00, euro 65.00, US\$85.00.

This is an English language, expanded and revised edition of a book first published by Hakuyu Okada in Japanese in 2002. It makes available for the first time, in English, a comprehensive review of the development of clastic sedimentology.

A preface by Bob Dott of the University of Wisconsin explains the background to this English edition and provides an outline of Okada's career and experience. A prologue then explains the structure of the book and its nine chapters. A short introductory chapter explains sedimentology and its place amongst the disciplines of geology, before a chapter called 'Pre-sedimentology: development of geology and stratigraphy'. This covers much standard ground, from Steno through Werner, Jameson and Hutton to Cuvier, William Smith and Lyell. But it goes further, bringing in the introduction of the geosyncline by Dana through to Marshall Kay, Aubouin, Dietz and Matsumoto.

The third chapter deals with the 'Development of the observation of strata', looking at how sedimentary structures were interpreted by Lyell and Sorby and how Bailey was put straight on the younging direction of his Ballachulish sequence. This chapter leads quickly on to basin analysis, the role of turbidity currents and gravity flow, and the Bouma sequence. It concludes with an account of how sequence stratigraphy developed out of seismic stratigraphy.

The fourth chapter describes the development of sedimentary petrology while the fifth deals with the development of lithology and the facies concept. The sixth chapter looks at the establishment of sedimentology and explains the background to three discrete schools: the European, the Russian, and the American.

The seventh chapter considers research on the ocean floor from the Challenger Expedition in 1872 to the Deep Sea Drilling Project of the 1960s and 1970s and looks specifically at the Messinian Salinity Crisis in the Mediterranean, the role of deep ocean circulation and bottom currents, and oceanic anoxic events.

Unsurprisingly, there is an unabashed emphasis on the role of Japanese sedimentologists, with chapter eight devoted to sedimentology in Japan, from the establishment of geol-

ogy as a discipline in Japan in 1867 following the Meiji Restoration to developments since 2000. While it could be argued that this makes the book unbalanced, in fact it brings into focus the contributions of Japanese sedimentologists which may have been overlooked had this volume been written from a Western perspective.

The final chapter takes sedimentology into the 21st century with lunar sedimentology (whose existence is at least debateable and arguably more 1970s than 21st century) and Martian sedimentology, as well as 'environmental' and 'social' sedimentology.

The book concludes with a comprehensive reference list followed by name and subject indices.

The book is well-illustrated with black and white photographs and line diagrams, and Okada and Kenyon-Smith have clearly gone to some lengths to procure portraits of the main figures in sedimentology; from Steno through to scientists active today. There is particularly good representation of 20th century sedimentologists, and it is pleasing at last to be able to put some faces to the authors of the textbooks and papers I encountered as an undergraduate - people like Kay, Pettijohn, Bouma and Twenhofel. Most, though, don't look like geologists, apart from Robert Folk who has a hand-lens round his neck and a wine glass in his hand!

What I particularly liked about this book was how it made me think about things I had previously taken for granted, for example, how ideas like using cross-bedding and graded bedding as indicators of younging direction developed. Somebody, somewhere, sometime had to work this out and, as this book shows, often these are not straightforward discoveries or readily accepted.

Tom Sharpe, Curator (Palaeontology and Archives), Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF10 3 NP. 15th October 2007.

Taylor, Michael A. and Kitchener, Andrew C., *Scotland's Beginnings: Scotland Through Time*, NMSE Publishing 2007, ISBN: 978-1-901663-26-6, 90 pages, £8.99

Drs Taylor (Principal Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology) and Kitchener (Principal Curator of Mammals and Birds) were lead curators on the National Museums of Scotland exhibition *Beginnings*, which opened as part of the Museum of Scotland on St Andrews Day 1998. This is not a belated book of the exhibition, rather it's an expansion of the themes explored.

It follows the chronological journey of what is now Scotland from the late Pre-Cambrian 650 million years ago through to the present day (it briefly touches on the considerably older Lewisian Gneiss early on). It is a journey not only through time, but across the globe, as the landmass is moved by tectonic forces from the South Pole to its current, some would say just as chilly, location. This

makes the book's title a little misleading; far from just Scotland's *Beginnings*, this book looks at its past, present and future.

The book is divided into two parts.

Part 1, *Scotland's Journey Across the Earth's Surface*, looks at Scotland's geological history and the ever-changing landscape, from Silurian seas to Devonian lakes and from Carboniferous swamps to the Permian desert, eventually through to the Ice Ages. Diagrams show the global position of what will be Scotland at various points in time. As you would expect there's plenty in there for the palaeontologist too, with numerous exceptional Scottish specimens illustrated and discussed.

Part 2, *Scotland's Wildlife*, takes the story on from the last Ice Age and looks at the development of modern ecosystems. It shows how various strands of evidence, such as fossils, radiocarbon dating and relict species, can tell us more about the past flora and fauna.

Having reconstructed the last 12,000 years of Scottish natural history, this section closes by looking at Scotland today and considers the impact of human activity on the landscape.

The nature of Scotland's geology makes this a good, broad introduction to the subject as a whole, with many key ideas and terms simply defined and well-illustrated.

While it is not a thorough technical guide to the natural history of Scotland, it does serve as a useful whistle-stop tour, covering broad points that will be of interest to the general reader. It has a reference section that recommends museums, websites and books for those that wish to know more. It also talks briefly about collecting (Kitchener taking the opportunity to make a plea for dead animals!).

Detailed without being overwhelming, it is a very well-written guide. It is also beautifully illustrated with 120 images comprising photos of spectacular scenery, specimens and thin sections, alongside artistic reconstructions and handy diagrams. It serves as a good example of the type of supplementary materials that can accompany a more permanent display.

David Craven, Bolton Museum and Archive Service, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL1 1SE. 29th October 2007.

Cooper, Michael P., 2007 *Robbing the Sparry Garniture: A 200-Year History of British Mineral Dealers. The Mineralogical Record* 358 pages US\$49.00

Subtitled *British Mineral Dealers 1750-1950*, the ambitious scope of this text is clear from the outset. Well over a decade in preparation, Cooper's purpose is to address the oft-neglected role of the mineral dealer in the history of mineralogy and to provide as thorough as possible a set of biographies for these dealers. The result is an unqualified success.

The book opens with a brief introduction, setting out the

motivations for the text and a couple of pages on sources used. Cooper has also included three essays on mineral dealers.

Friend of Foe? The Dealer's Role is a history of the relationship between dealers and collectors, academics and curators. *The Market* looks at the development of Natural History collecting and examines the growth of the trade to meet these interests. Finally, *Distribution* discusses the geographic centres for dealers, focusing on the main mining districts as well as shop locations. The essays are interesting and well-written, with *The Market* a particularly rewarding read.

This leads on to the biographical section that occupies the bulk of the text. It's this section you will be buying the book for, and you won't be disappointed. Brief notes set out the definition Cooper is working to for "British Mineral Dealer" and the format for the data.

Arranged alphabetically by surname, the level of detail varies enormously depending on the sources available. Some are just a name and date (e.g. Edward Bird of Derbyshire, known only from an 1852 directory), others receive pages of detail. Where possible, Cooper includes dates of birth and death, the dates the person was an active dealer, lists of addresses (with dates) and sample labels (a most useful resource for the curator of aging collections). Cross references are made clear throughout and the text is

well-annotated with bibliographical references and footnotes. The book is illustrated, but there are few specimen photos, with the focus for the images being primarily biographical (people, places etc.).

Familiar names like Robert Damon, Francis Butler, James Gregory, Henry Heuland and Richard Talling, to name but a few, are well treated and I'm sure most will learn something new about even the most celebrated of figures.

The delights often lie in dealers you may not have heard of, but who have interesting histories. William Harry's cross-dressing felon of a nephew provided great amusement for my colleagues, especially with Cooper reproducing the "Wanted" poster of 1818.

It's obviously an impossible task to create a thorough list of everyone selling minerals in the period discussed, and I'm sure every curator can find an omission from within their own accession registers. However to focus on possible omissions would be unduly picky. Cooper has created a thorough and well-researched text that rewards both casual reading and in-depth reference. It should be a must-purchase for all with historic collections.

David Craven, Bolton Museum and Archive Service, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL1 1SE. 29th October 2007.

GEOLOGICAL CURATORS' GROUP

33rd Annual General Meeting

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

Monday 4th December 2006.

1. Apologies for absence.

Kate Andrew, Mandy Edwards, Mike Howe, Steve Howe, Dale Johnson, Steve Tunnicliff, Patrick Wyse Jackson.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the 32nd Annual General Meeting, 5th December 2005.

Agreed.

3. Matters arising.

None raised.

4. Chairman's Report.

2006 has been a year of consolidation for the ongoing projects undertaken by GCG and a time of building and maintaining links with other professional bodies.

There has been some progress on the related themes of the back issues of the Geological Curator and the long term storage of our archive. Back issues of the journal are housed at Manchester Museum and Trinity College, Dublin. In 2007 we will reduce the physical stock we hold with lots of never to be repeated offers to the membership. We will then digitize a complete run of Geological Curator and make it available on the website. We are in preliminary discussions with the University of Leicester about the transfer of GCG's archives to their collections. I think this would be a most appropriate place for our archives to reside as Leicester was the place where the inaugural meeting of GCG was held.

The group is represented on various professional committees.

Roy Clements represents GCG on the Collections Advisory Committee of the British Geological Survey, having taken over this role from Phil Doughty.

Steve Thompson is our link NatSCA and is invited to attend all GCG Committee meetings.

Mike Howe attended meetings of the Scientific Committee of the Geological Society. This link is important, especially with the Bicentenary celebrations of the Geol Soc in 2007.

Dale Johnson reports back to the group on the Earth Science Education Forum. I wish to extend the

groups thanks to all of these people for the work they do on our behalf.

It is important that any items of interest are quickly distributed to the members and that we have a mechanism for discussion of any relevant items. Information exchange is encouraged by our publications and the use of the Geo-Curators email discussion list, which seems to be working well with people having questions answered quickly and positively. The redesigned website is kept up to date by David Gelsthorpe. It contains details of the meetings programmes and publications. Please take a look at it.

There have been a number of resignations from Committee this year. Patrick Wyse Jackson has resigned as Editor of the Geological Curator. He took over the editorship in 1993 and started with Volume 6, Number 1 (1994). With Vol. 8, number 6, Patrick will have overseen the production of 26 issues. On behalf of the group I would like to extend our appreciation for the hard work and careful expertise that Patrick has brought to the role. However, Patrick will not be finishing his work for GCG as he is Editor of the 2nd edition of the Guidelines for the Curation of Geological Materials, which will be published by the Geological Society.

Helen Kerbey has resigned her post as Treasurer and we wish her well in her new home in America.

Camilla Nichol has stepped down from her role as Web Editor. She is to be thanked for her hard work in setting up the new site.

Report accepted.

5. Secretary's report (including Membership and Website Reports).

Having found myself agreeing to be Secretary after the Worcester AGM, I would like to thank Giles Miller for a very smooth hand-over of well organised files and his guidance. Due to previous GCG structural changes, and the adoption by other officers of many of the tasks, my job has been made easier than I anticipated. Many correspondence items relate to existing membership records or services, and these have been ably dealt with by Camilla Nichol, David Gelsthorpe, Helen Kerbey and Patrick Wyse Jackson. A number of recent requests for membership packs have been supplied.

Three Committee meetings have been held during the year: 18th January at the Natural History Museum, London; 9th May in the Natural History Museum, Dublin and 12th September in the Geological Society, London.

In order to enhance our profile within the Geological Society, and to promote geological curation more widely, Mike Howe has attended several Science Committee meetings and has reported back to the Committee to keep us up to date with developments within the Geological Society as a whole. Having identified an apparent deficit, it is intended to try to improve our publicity and communications through the Society channels in 2007. It is intended that as many as possible of our activities should link in to the Society's Bicentenary celebrations, including the AGM in Dublin in December 2007 which will promote the Local Heroes theme.

GCG Membership Summary 2006

Membership Category	2006	2005
UK personal	170	174
UK institutional	69	92
Overseas personal	13	19
Overseas institutional	27	40
Honorary	8	9
Cancelled	10	5
Total	297	339

Membership is down on 2005 in all categories, so we need to look at a membership drive - especially at Institutional members. Standing Orders are up slightly (102) and we would encourage members to renew by Standing Order. Invoicing members without a SAE is less effective than when we did send them one so we need to decide whether it is worth bearing the cost.

Camilla Nichol

Website Editor's Report

The GCG website is up to date with the current edition of *Coprolite* on-line. Details of current events have been posted including up to date versions of timetables etc. for members to print.

The numbers of visits over the last few months are as follows: September, 58; October, 86; November, 87. Since we began recording, the number of website hits is 334. Please let me have any suggestions for content or changes in layout, and any photos would be useful in making the site look a bit friendlier.

Dave Gelsthorpe

Report accepted.

6. Treasurer's Report.

After examining the accounts over the last few years it has become apparent that subscriptions alone do not cover expenditure, and the amount of money we hold has slowly decreased. This year we have been helped by a useful addition of £1000 from the SPNHC conference held in 2005 at the NHM, and next year should see two years back payment of Gift Aid at £945.71. However, to keep our funds level we need to continue to raise income by at least £1000 a year. Our current outgoings cover such items as the journal and newsletter, and running workshops and meetings. However there are some items such as postage that are currently covered by the institutions some of us work for, and are not guaranteed if Committee members change.

It is for these reasons that, after discussion at the last committee meeting, it was proposed that we put forward a motion to raise subscriptions at this AGM.

Previous year's funds:

31.12.2001	£11369.07
17.12.2002	£7332.50
10.11.2003	£6999.57
21.12.2004	£8362.27
28.11.2005	£6894.60
03.11.2006	£6726.75

It is unfortunate that I have had to resign after only a year as Treasurer as I am moving to the USA. I am very grateful to the work put in by other committee member, especially Camilla Nichol who has dealt with all of the membership enquiries.

Helen Kerbey 10/11/2006.

It is proposed that subscriptions are raised as follows:

Personal:	£12 to £15.
Institutional:	£16 to £20.
Overseas personal:	£15 to £18.
Overseas institutional:	£18 to £20. (Overseas payments can be in Euros or US Dollars).

Report accepted.

Discussion followed, during which a number of ideas for increasing revenue and attendance were raised. Conference and workshop fees could be raised, but with the introduction of some form of bursary to encourage people to attend.

Meetings could be opened to staff in museums with geological collection, but without a specialist curator. Target groups such as GEM, ESEF, AIM and some

Geological Curators' Group
33rd Annual General Meeting, Plymouth 04/12/2006
2006 Accounts 29/11/05 - 27/11/2006

Income			Expenditure	
Subscriptions	£ 3,568.96	(3504.59)	Geol Curator	£ 2,803.56
Seminar and workshop fees	£ 370.00	(140.00)	Coprolite	£ 1,542.20
Gift Aid ¹	-	-	Seminars and workshops	£ 656.31
Donations	£ 12.00	-	Committee expenses	£ 328.22
Geol Curator Back Issues	-	-	Refund of overpaid subs	£ 114.00
SPNHC income ²	£ 1,000.00	-	Bank charges (Euro conv)	£ 80.50
			Web site fees	£ 62.02
Balance as at 28/11/2005	£ 4,950.96			£ 5,586.81
	<u>£ 6,894.60</u>		Balance as at 27/11/2006	<u>£ 6,258.75</u>
				<u><u>£ 11,845.56</u></u>

NOTES

¹Gift Aid for 2004/5 and 2005/6 paperwork currently in with £419.97 and £525.74 claimed respectively

²SPNHC income of £1000.00 for conference in 2005

American Account currently at \$1174.00 on 26 Sept 2006

H C Kerbey Treasurer 30/10/2006

C Howells (acting treasurer - Nov 2006)

C Howells

Auditors: John Nudds

Caroline Buttler

John Nudds

C Buttler

smaller museums which could be identified through the Survey data.

Make more use of *Geoscientist* and other similar periodicals to attract members and people to attend meetings. Helen Fothergill suggested that we try to aim at least one session at non specialists.

Those present agreed that subscription rates be raised.

7. Programme Secretary's Report.

Circulated at the meeting.

Summary of Programme 2005 - 2006.

GCG Seminar, field trip and 32nd AGM: 5th and 6th December 2005.

University of Worcester.

Geoparks and Geodiversity Action Plans - a new look at GeoConservation. A very well attended seminar which explored the strategic aims and objectives of major GeoConservation initiatives and how museums can play an active role, especially in terms of Geotourism and education programmes. Thanks to all the speakers: Cheryl Jones, Chris Woodley Stewart, Jon Radley, Brian Young, Andrew Haycock, Richard Edmunds. Thanks also to Cheryl Jones and Elizabeth Elston (Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark) for help with local organisation, and to Peter Oliver for leading the fieldtrip to Gullet Quarry.

GCG Workshop: 14th June 2006.

National Museum of Wales.

The Curation and conservation of rock specimens.

This one day workshop covered basic identification, terminology, storage and conservation, and useful resources on the web and in literature.

Very many thanks to Helen Kerbey (NMW) who led and organised the day.

GCG Workshop and Seminar: 18th May 2006.

University of Manchester.

Dangerous Minerals.

This meeting reviewed procedures for identifying and dealing with some of the classes of dangerous minerals commonly found in museums collections. Contributions from leading academics, curators and health and safety officers allowed participants to build an up to date picture of how to manage these collections.

Thanks to Mandy Edwards for organising the workshops and to the speakers; Giles Droop, Helen Fothergill, Sara Chambers, David Plant and David Green.

GCG Workshop. 11th October 2006.

World Museum Liverpool. Geological Archives.

This event was cancelled due to local circumstances.

GCG UK Study Visit: 9-10th November 2006.

Manchester Museum and World Museum Liverpool. Cancelled due to lack of interest. Thanks anyway to Tony Morgan and Mandy Edwards for putting the programme together.

Summary for 2007.

Some dates to be confirmed.

GCG Study Visit and Seminar: May/June 2007.

Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow.

GCG training workshop: June 2007.

Fossil plants. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

GCG Study Visit. September/October 2007.

Dorset museums and the Jurassic Coast (Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site).

GCG Training: October/November 2007.

Identification, care and conservation of sub-fossil bone. Natural History Museum, London.

GCG Seminar and 34th AGM: 3rd - 4th December 2007.

Local Heroes. Natural History Museum, Dublin.

This year we have had some reasonable attendance at events which actually ran, although the UK study visit attracted not one person, so this is obviously not the type of event you are interested in. I would be very grateful for suggestions about study visits as we are continuing to have problems attracting audiences. As always, I really do need some suggestions from you about events (seminars, visits, training etc.) as it is increasingly difficult to encourage members to find the time to participate around their busy schedule. We have now started to advertise the programme much more widely so I hope in 2007 we will see some increases in attendances.

Report accepted.

8. Journal Editor's Report.

Apologies from Patrick Wyse Jackson. No report circulated. Next edition of the *Geological Curator* is currently in production.

Report accepted.

9. Newsletter Editor's Report.

Circulated.

2006 saw the completion of the 17th year of production of *Coprolite*. As usual, three issues (Numbers

49, 50 and 51) were published, in March, June and November, totalling 34 pages (compared with 52 last year and 40 in 2004). The reduction in pages reflects fewer meetings reports as several were cancelled during the year. Issue 50 did include an 8-page name index for issues 1 to 50. A subject index will follow in a future issue.

For Coprolite to fulfil its role as a newsletter, it needs to have some news. Any news of events, meetings, exhibitions, new acquisitions, publications, staff changes and job moves, or anything at all relating to geology in museums would be very welcome. Do tell us what you and your museum are doing.

Thanks are due to Barnes Print Group of Nottingham who print and distribute Coprolite and always send it out on time.

Report accepted.

10. Recorder's Report.

Circulated.

State and Status.

With the work Camilla Nichol and Dave Gelsthorpe have undertaken on the website, there is a list of museums holding geological collections in the UK, with appropriate links to their websites. During the next year I hope to add some of the museums missed, for various reasons, from the 2001 survey to the list. I have as yet been unable to progress the exploration of options for the development of an online "specialism" database, to enable curators to make contact with researchers working in a specific field, and for researchers to contact museums that may hold material of interest to them. Debate about this is welcome.

Subject Specialist networks.

A letter was sent to Nick Gordon enquiring as to progress on the 19th January 2006. Some progress seems to be based on smaller regional groups that take many different forms. These groups have been feeding back to the SSN via NatSCA how they view the most appropriate way forward for the SSN and proposing projects that might be effective in their region.

Devon and Dorset Jurassic Coast.

A list of museums and brief description of collections based on the State and Status survey was sent to Richard Edmonds (Earth Science Manager for the Jurassic Coast) on 24th January 2006. The details included overall size of holdings, rough proportion of holdings (Palaeontology, mineralogy, petrology etc.). This was in response to a request for information about museums with Jurassic material.

Information will not be shared outside the Jurassic Coast project.

Recruitment.

I started to look at recruitment in natural sciences, and specifically geology. Posing a question on the Geo-curators email list and talking to a number of museum staff, I wrote a personal view article published in the June edition of Museums Journal. I hoped this would spark interest. Myself and my colleague, Jan Freedman, plan to follow up some of the issues in the near future. One of the interesting things that came out of that exercise was a discussion with a number of people on the definition of natural history/natural science and where, or indeed if, geology fits in.

There appears to be a problem with the perception of what natural history is. Is it biology/zoology/botany or does it include geology?

Jan is currently undertaking a survey of education provision in UK museums to discover how many museum learning staff have a natural/earth science background.

Report accepted.

11. Election of Officers and Committee for 2007.

The following have been proposed by Committee:

Chairman - Mandy Edwards.

Secretary - Matthew Parkes.

Treasurer - John Nudds.

Programme Secretary - Steve McLean.

Journal Editor - Matthew Parkes.

Newsletter Editor - Tom Sharpe.

Recorder - Helen Fothergill.

Minutes Secretary - Tony Morgan.

Committee: Mike Howe, Will Watts, Hannah Chalk, Cindy Howells.

Co-opted members: NatSCA representative - Steve Thompson. Two others to be formally nominated at the next Committee meeting in January are David Craven and David Gelsthorpe.

Auditors: Will be decided at the next Committee meeting in January 2007.

Agreed.

12. Any other business.

None raised.

13. Date and venue for next AGM.

The 34th AGM will be held at the Natural History Museum, Dublin. 3rd December 2007.

On behalf of those present, and the Committee, Tom

Sharpe thanked Helen Fothergill and all the staff at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery for their organisation and hospitality today. Thanks also to all the speakers and those who gave demonstrations of their ideas during the day, for giving up their time and contributing to a very enjoyable seminar.



The Geological Curators' Group

Membership Application Form

Please complete this form (or a photocopy of it) and return it with payment to:
John Nudds, GCG Treasurer, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Manchester, Oxford Road,
Manchester, M13 9PL, U.K. (e-mail: john.nudds@Manchester.ac.uk)
Alternatively see the GCG website : www.geocurator.org

Subscriptions from 2007:

- UK Personal Subscription 15 pounds sterling per annum
- Overseas Personal Subscription 18 pounds sterling / US\$32 / 25 per annum
- UK Institutional Subscription 20 pounds sterling per annum
- Overseas Institutional Subscription 22 pounds sterling / US\$40 / 32 per annum

Please make all cheques and postal orders payable to the "Geological Curators' Group".

Overseas subscribers are asked to make their payment in sterling, dollars or euros.

UK subscribers are reminded that subscriptions to the Geological Curator are tax deductible.

Name		
Address		
	Postcode:	
Tel:	Fax:	
email:		
Position		
Organisation and address if different from above.		
Where did you hear about us?		
If you do not wish your details to be included in this year's membership list, please tick here		

Please fill in this form and return it with payment to the above address.
Thank you.