



COPROLITE

Coprolite is the newsletter of the Geological Curator's Group, compiled and produced by Cinzia Ragni (Newsletter Editor). Contributions are welcomed, and should be sent to coprolite@geocurator.org by the appropriate deadline.

Spring edition issued in March - Deadline 15th February. Summer edition issued in June - Deadline 15th May. Autumn edition issued in September - Deadline 15th August. Winter edition issued in December - Deadline 15th November.

No. 106

Autumn

2023

Chair: Emma Nicholls (Oxford University Museum of Natural History) chair@geocurator.org

Secretary: Lu Allington-Jones (Natural History Museum, London) secretary@geocurator.org

Membership: Cindy Howells (National Museum Cardiff) membership@geocurator.org

Please log into our website and check that your contact details and preferences are correct and check whether you need to pay your subs (due from January 1st).



Upcoming Event Deadlines

Dinosaur Trackways Field Workshop: 19th October 2023, 8.30am-5.30pm (Round trip from central Oxford): Limited to 12 places

One day field workshop: how to clean out large sauropod footprints and take measurements of both isolated prints and entire trackways. This is a practical field workshop. Cost £50 GCG members/£60 non-GCG members. Members-only registration opens 15th September. General registration opens 22nd September. Registration closes 30th September 2023.



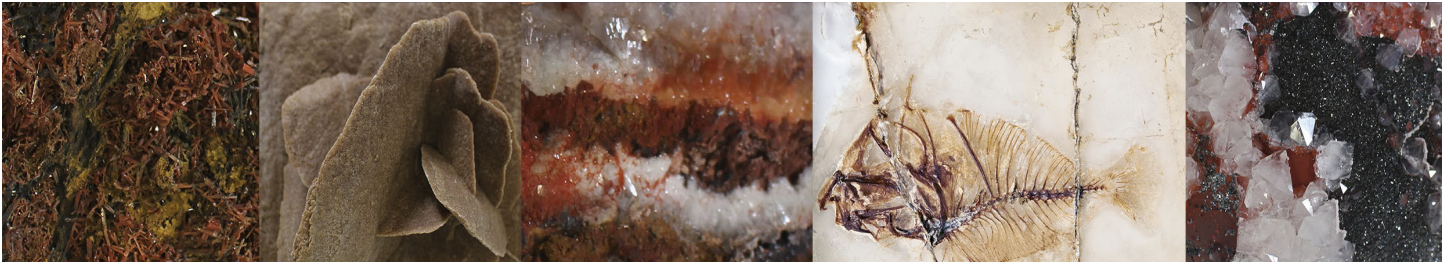
Digital Morphology Workshop: 11th December 2023, 10am-5pm (Oxford University Museum of Natural History): Limited to 15 places

Techniques for visualising and analysing extinct and extant organisms, both digitally and in three dimensions. Cost £40 GCG members / £50 non-GCG members. Tea/coffee and lunch included! & An informal evening of networking will take place in a pub nearby the Museum. Members-only registration opens 18th September 2023. General registration opens 18th October 2023. Registration closes 24th November 2023.



Museum of
Natural
History
University of Oxford



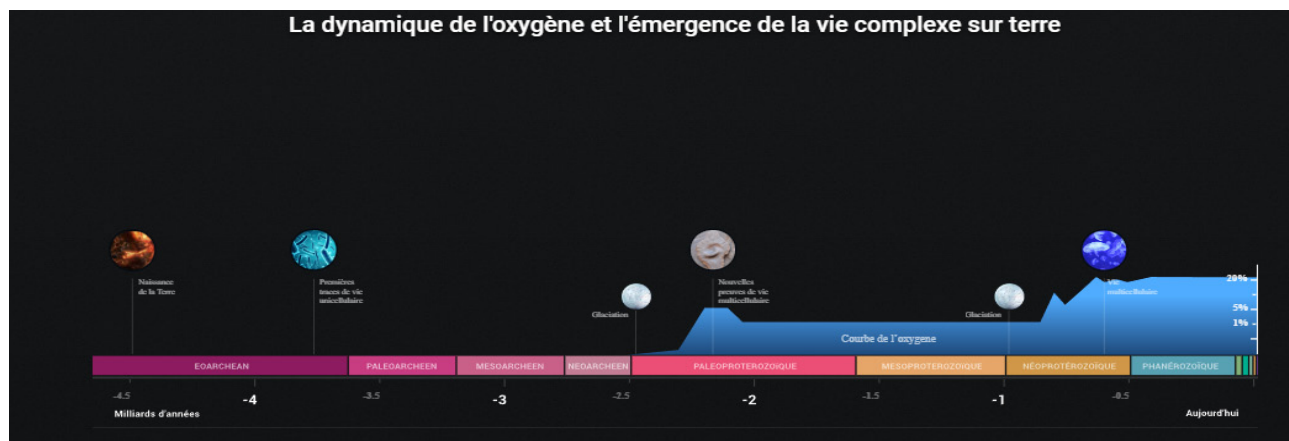


THE ORIGIN OF LIFE...

The origin of life on Earth is difficult to study, and the distance and diversity of the earliest species that lived on our planet is difficult to explain to the public. If a museum wants to show this, it can turn to Professor Abderazzak El Albani, who has collected many fossils from this period during his many years of excavation in the Gotland field. A professor at the University of Poitiers, he worked (and still works) at the Hydrasa laboratory on the Silurian Gotland reef. Now part of the collection of the excavation done in Gabon is part of a permanent exhibition in Vienna on the history of the Earth (Precambrian) and the following Palaeozoic as well as the life forms that existed at that time, in particular the first multicellular organisms of the Ediacaran biota and the bizarre Burgess animals. Most representatives of both groups have no surviving modern relatives and are therefore difficult for us to imagine, although detailed reconstructions are provided to help visitors understand what these creatures would have looked like.

The fossils...

The sedimentary sequence of the Franceville Basin was described and dated by Francis Weber and François Gauthier-Lafaye. It consists of five main formations, named A to E from bottom to top. The fossils were found in the black shales of the FB. As luck would have it, they were found in a section of a quarry that used the sandstone to make road material. Having escaped the intense weathering that turns everything into red mud, these shales yielded remarkably well-preserved footprints and pyrite remains in 2008. The first descriptions of this previously unknown biota were published in Nature in 2010. This was followed by a comprehensive paper in the journal Plos One in 2014. These multicellular organisms are distributed in different types of organisations and sometimes reach a considerable size (17 centimetres). They are associated with bacterial veils, the most delicate traces of which are still visible. The collection preserved at the University of Poitiers is far from having revealed all the secrets of this exceptional deposit. The latest discovery, published in 2019 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, attests to the ability of some of these organisms to move and dig tunnels in the sediment when it was still soft mud. The sinuous, sometimes criss-crossing trajectories appear to lead to bacterial mats that may have been a food supply.



Une innovation biologique vieille de 2.1 milliards d'années :
exposition de quelques macrofossiles (de 5 à 18 centimètres) représentatifs de cette biodiversité.



Virtual tour!

If your museum does not currently have the facilities to host an exhibition, you can still take a step back in time thanks to the website: <http://aux-origines-de-la-vie.com/fr> where you can watch explanatory videos (in French) and view the exhibits. In short, an alternative way of imagining the past before going to the museum!

Contact. Prof. A. El Albani

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Many thanks to Prof. A. El Albani for the collaboration
Cinzia Ragni, GCG Newsletter Editor





Other Events

Geological Society's Digital Geoscience: unleashing the Power of Data and Technology in Earth Sciences Conference: on 13th and 14th November.

Geologist's Association's annual Geology photographic competition: at the Festival of Geology on 4th November

XITH international PROGEO symposium: on 9th to 11th October, Loughborough, UK. Organized by ProGEO: The International Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage & Charnwood Forest Geopark

Geological Curators Group 50th annual Conference and AGM: 28th-29th November, National Museum Cardiff. We have big plans for our fiftieth anniversary in 2024 (we were founded in 1974), all starting with the 50th AGM in Cardiff!

Next summer's HOGG/GCG meeting: 16-17th July 2024 in Cambridge. The subject will be on 'Geological discoveries made during historical expeditions to Polar regions' with a chance to see specimens brought back from the first Antarctic expeditions. For more information.... stay tuned!!!!

Gentle reminder

SUBSCRIPTIONS

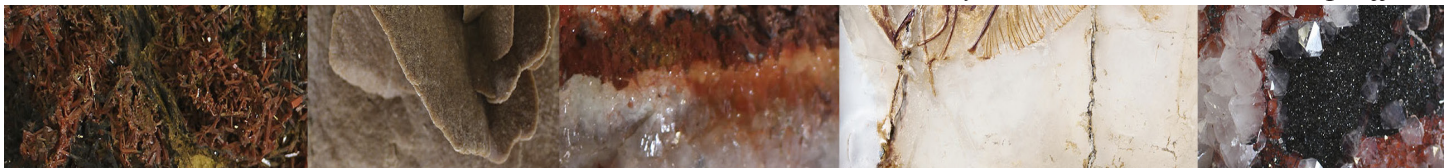
Subscriptions for 2023 were due in January, and I thank those who have already paid, but there are a small number still to pay for this year.

If you think you may be outstanding, please do log onto our website www.geocurator.org/membership and check the current status of your account (or you can email or ring me).

We have just opened our new bank account and will soon be sending round details so that members and subscribers can change over their Standing Orders.

As always I'd like to assure GCG members and supporters that I'm happy to respond at any time if you have queries about membership.

Cindy Howells, GCG Membership Officer



Coprolite of the Quarter

Answer to last quarter's mystery coprolite:

Stratigraphy: Lower
Cretaceous

Location: Isle of Wight, UK

Likely culprit: Dinosaur or
crocodilian



Image: © Nigel Larkin

Guess the Coprolite

Guess the
Formation!

© Museo cantonale di storia naturale (Lugano, Swiss)



Please send guesses to coprolite@geocurator.org

The answer and winner will be announced in the next quarterly newsletter. The winner will also receive a small prize. If there are several correct answers, one winner will be selected at random.