



# COPROLITE

DROPPINGS  
FROM THE  
GEOLOGICAL  
CURATORS  
GROUP

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

*Coprolite* is sponsored by C.J.C. Burhouse Ltd of Huddersfield, wholesale distributors of minerals, gemstones, gemstone products and jewellery components.

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Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT Tel. 091 222 7418  
Fax 091 222 6753

## Co-optees to GCG Committee

The following people were co-opted onto Committee at its meeting on 12 January 1993:

Rosina Down (Dept. Zoology, University College, London; BCG Rep.)

Tom Sharpe (National Museum of Wales; Editor of *Coprolite*)

Simon Timberlake (AMSSEE)

Gill Weightman (Leicestershire Museums).

## New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: R.C. Eng, Burke Museum, Washington, USA; Henry Lowe, Henry Lowe Associates, London; and M.M. Pindelski, London.

## Forthcoming meetings and seminars

**22 June 1993 University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford**

**GCG Workshop: Getting to grips with your mineral collection.**

A workshop to help participants assess the quality and condition of mineral specimens and their documentation, recognise conservation problems and potential hazards, and plan the sorting, ordering and labelling of the collection. There will be a nominal charge for refreshments.

Contact: Monica Price or Joy Irving, University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford  
OX1 3PW Tel. 0865 272950, Fax. 0865 272970.

**15 July 1993 Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London**

**GCG Seminar: Fossil and mineral fakes and forgeries.**

This meeting will explore the world of specimens which should perhaps never have entered the collections of a museum but by that very characteristic become, noteworthy. Speakers will be looking at both the practices and practitioners of fakes and forgeries, and all participants are invited to bring examples from their collections, with explanatory labels, for display during the course of the meeting.

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Welcome

11.10 Fossil fakes and forgeries: an overview. Steve Maclean, Sunderland Museum.

11.40 Mineral fakes: case studies from the national collections. Peter Tandy, The Natural History Museum, London.

12.10 Fakes in the gem world. Roger Harding, Gemmological Association and Gem Testing Laboratory, London.

12.40 Questions and discussion.

13.00 Lunch

A sandwich lunch including wine, coffee and dessert will be available from the Society caterers, and must be booked using the form on page 11.

During lunch there will be ample opportunity provided for the examination of specimens of fakes brought by those attending.

14.30 The Moulin Quignon and Piltdown forgeries: the sanctification of museum specimens. Patrick Boylan, City University, London.

15.00 Restoration versus fakery; experiences from the current fossil market. Terry Manning, Leicester.

15.30 Tea, followed by questions and discussion.

16.30 Meeting closes.

Please complete the booking form on page 11, and return it to John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA by **Friday 9 July at the latest if you require lunch**. Later bookings for the seminar can be accepted but a telephone call would be appreciated: Tel. 0273 552586 or 713299, Fax. 0273 563455.

**17-24 July 1993 Great Malvern**

**Joint Nature Conservation Committee: The Malvern International Conference on Geological and Landscape Conservation.**

Contact: MIC93, Earth Science Branch, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1JY.

**5 August 1993 Geological Conservation Unit, Cambridge.**

**GCU Workshop: Microenvironmental control and monitoring for geological collections.**

Contact: Chris Collins, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0EZ. Tel. 0223 62522, Fax. 0223 60779. (Workshop fee: £15)

**14 September 1993 Cambridge**

**2nd Symposium for palaeontological preparators and conservators.**

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

**15 - 18 September 1993 University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge**

**41st Annual Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy**

Contact: Dr Jenny Clack, University Museum of Zoology, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ Tel. 0223 336613 Fax. 0223 336676.

**21 September 1993 Sedgwick Museum, Downing Street, Cambridge**

**GCG Seminar: Building stones: are collections relevant today?**

The schedule for the day is still being finalised and a flysheet detailing the content and timetable will be circulated in mid May.

The day will consist of a series of talks culminating in a discussion on the relevance and future of building stone collections and the development of a national collection. There will be an opportunity to look at the Sedgwick Museum's Watson Collection, and time permitting, a visit to a local specialist masons yard.

There has already been interest from outside the museum community, and discussion promises to be lively and interesting.

Please complete the booking form on page 11 and return it to: Mike Dorling, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ, Tel. 0223 333456 by 18 September 1993.

**7 October 1993 Geological Conservation Unit, Cambridge.**

**GCU Workshop: Storage and environmental monitoring for geological materials.**

Contact: Chris Collins, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0EZ. Tel. 0223 62522, Fax. 0223 60779. (Workshop fee: £15)

**18 November 1993 Geological Conservation Unit, Cambridge.**

**GCU Workshop: Conservation and care of sub-fossil bone.**

Contact: Chris Collins, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0EZ. Tel. 0223 62522, Fax. 0223 60779. (Workshop fee: £15)

**8 December 1993 Hunterian Museum, The University, Glasgow**

**GCG Seminar and AGM: True confessions - learning by our mistakes.**

Talks or poster displays are sought on great curatorial disasters, obscure and dreadful storage or numbering systems, lost data, fire, flood, pestilence and the like. If you would like to make a confession please contact Dr John Faithfull by 1 August 1993.

Contact: Dr J.W. Faithfull, Hunterian Museum, The University, Glasgow G12 8QQ.

## **Exhibitions**

**Prehistoric Sea Monsters:** Dinamation's robotic sea monsters, ancient and modern.

National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff until 27 February 1994.

**Dinosaurs and their relatives:** an exhibition of dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs, plesiosaurs and pterosaurs.

National Museum of Ireland (Earth Science), Merrion Row, Dublin until 26 September 1993.

**Dino-Live:** an exhibition of 20 Dinamation robotic dinosaurs, including a full-scale Tyrannosaurus rex.

Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8 until 5 September 1993.

**Dinosaur Mania :** over 40 000 people have flocked to this exhibition since it opened in November 1992, so by popular demand the exhibition has been extended until 31 December 1993.

Dudley Museum, St James's Road, Dudley.

**On Wenlock Edge :** a new exhibition focusing on the geology and natural history of the Wenlock Limestone.

Much Wenlock Museum, High Street, Much Wenlock, Shropshire.

**The Netherlands from one million years until present:** an exhibition celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Werkgroep Pleistocene Zoogdieren.

The Museon, The Hague, Netherlands until 1 September 1993.

**The 200 million year Franconian flora:** an exhibition of Rhaeto-liassic plants from the private collection of Sepp Hauptmann.

Jura-Museum, Willibaldsburg, Eichstätt until 31 May 1993.

### Mineral shows

**11 - 12 June 1993 Iver Heath London Show** Iver Heath Village Hall, Iver Heath, Bucks. (Open Fri. pm and all day Sat.).

**18 July 1993 South Western Mineral and Fossil Show** St. George's Hall, Market Street, Exeter, Devon. Open 10am to 4pm.

Contact: Paul Lowe Minerals, Endsleigh, 50 Daniell Road, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2DA, Tel. or Fax. 0872 223227.

**28 - 30 August 1993 Harrogate International Show** Crown Hotel, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Contact: John F. Turner, 'Glenjoy', 19-21 Sun Lane, Wakefield, W. Yorkshire WF1 1JD, Tel. 0924 373786.

**11 September 1993 Southampton Mineral and Fossil Show** The Avenue Hall, The Avenue, Southampton, Hants. Open 10am to 4.30pm, admission 50p.

Contact: Southampton Mineral and Fossil Society, Tel. 0703 865567, 865361 or 872519.

**16 - 17 October 1993 London International Show** Regents Park Marriott Hotel, Swiss Cottage, London.

Contact: John F. Turner, 'Glenjoy', 19-21 Sun Lane, Wakefield, W. Yorkshire WF1 1JD, Tel. 0924 373786.

### Return of the Sea dragons

Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery has opened a new display of Jurassic marine reptiles. Space for the new display has been created by extending a balcony over the aisles which link the front and rear halls of the museum. The construction blends well with the original Edwardian interior, and the work was grant-aided by the Museums and Galleries Commission's Capital Grants Scheme. The displays were designed by Design Gap and built by museum staff, with the help of a major grant from the Area Museum Council for the South West. Stars of the new displays include the Westbury pliosaur; the 10m long Charmouth ichthyosaur; a Lias ichthyosaur with uncrushed skull and paddles; and an ichthyosaur from Kimmeridge Bay.

From its foundation in the 1800's the Bristol Institution (the forerunner of today's City Museum and Art Gallery) was closely involved with bringing fossil 'Sea Dragons' to public attention and built up one of the best collections of such fossils in the country. Tragically, this unique collection was destroyed during the Bristol Blitz of November 1940, when the Museum's geology gallery was engulfed by fire.

The new 'Sea Dragons' gallery brings together some recent discoveries and helps to restore Bristol's former glory as a centre for both the display and the scientific study of Jurassic marine reptiles.

Peter Crowther, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

## Confessions of a secret mineral dealer...

All members of GCG will be delighted to hear that C.J.C. Burhouse Ltd. are sponsoring *Coprolite* for another year. I first encountered C.J.C. Burhouse Ltd. some four years ago when Don Alderson, GCG member, mineral dealer, longstanding friend, and a new member of the Burhouse team, persuaded us that we should be selling mineral specimens on our museum salesdesk. It is unusual for museums to sell real rather than replica specimens, and I shared the concern that our visitors might think we were selling off parts of the collections. The visiting public seem not to be under such misapprehensions (although we do take the precaution of having labels with many of our specimens saying 'especially purchased for resale by the University Museum'), and the sale of minerals and fossils has been a great success, accounting for some 25% of our shop turnover and an even higher percentage of our profit margin. Forget postcards and guidebooks, our biggest sellers are 'tumblestones' - tumble polished semi-precious stones - selling at 30p apiece.

I keep an overview of which stocklines are ordered. There are some that I try to avoid, for example heat-treated amethyst labelled 'citrine', blue and green dyed agate (at least the red and brown dyes mimic colours that occur naturally), and re-cut crystals. 'Enhancement' of minerals is widespread, and what is sanctioned in the gemmological world, is often less acceptable to geologists, so choice of stock can be a subject of some controversy.

I want visitors to know what they are buying so we label baskets containing tumblestones and other 'cheap' lines with the identity of the material and where possible the locality too. Many other lines, including the small plastic boxed minerals and fossils, come ready labelled and most can easily be reordered by the shop manager. Other specimens may require labels and I believe we should be selling collector's specimens with as much data as we can provide. After all, we can hardly complain about poor labelling by collectors if specimens sold in museum shops have poor levels of documentation. Our labels are produced cheaply and easily in-house using DTP software, laser printer and photocopier.

Once or twice a year I visit C.J.C. Burhouse Ltd for specimens that are better hand-picked. The showroom contains all the pre-packed minerals and fossils, carvings and jewellery, and downstairs, the rock shop is racked out with shelves, trays, boxes and drums of minerals, nearly all sold by weight, and varying from large showpiece specimens to pyrite chips and gem gravel - with everything between. I get a warm welcome from Clinton Burhouse and his staff on each visit, spend an interesting day selecting stock and new lines for our shop and finding out what's new in the bulk mineral market. My last visit had an extra bonus; a special summer offer of 10% extra goods free of charge resulted in the acquisition of two extra display specimens for the collections - and there my mineral dealings cease and I am curator again.

Monica T. Price, Oxford University Museum

## Newish publications

*Hey's Mineral Index. Mineral species, varieties and synonyms* by A.M. Clark. Chapman and Hall, 1993, x + 852pp, 3rd edition. ISBN 0 412 39950 4.

*Scottish Borders Geology. An excursion guide* edited by A.D. McAdam, E.N.K. Clarkson and P. Stone. Scottish Academic Press, 1993, x + 220pp. ISBN 0 7073 0709 0, £9.50.

*The encyclopedia of the solid earth sciences* edited by Philip Kearney. Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1993, 736pp. ISBN 0 632 02577 8, £99.50.

*Mineralization in the British Isles* edited by R.A.D. Patrick and D. Polya. Chapman & Hall, 1993, c.528pp. ISBN 0 412 31200 X, £49.95.

*Natural Science Collections in South East Britain* edited by J. Bateman, G. McKenna and S. Timberlake. Museums Documentation Association, 1993. ISBN 0 095963 85 7. This important new publication is the result of over 2 years work by the South East Collections Research Unit. It records over 1,000 natural science collections held in museums, universities, colleges, hospitals and in private hands throughout the South East of England and the Channel Islands. The Register also includes summary records of the holdings of the Natural History Museum, London.

The Register is published in three forms - as a book, as a ready to use computer database on 3.5in or 5.25in disks, or as a microfiche. The microfiche and computer database come complete with a guide to the project and instructions on how to search the data. Contributors are entitled to a special price for the publication: book £23.50, database £18.38, microfiche £12.50. Rates for recognised UK institutions (ie registered museums or related organisations): book £28.50, database £24.25, and microfiche £18.38; and for others: book £53.50, database £47.75 and microfiche £37.75. All the above prices include postage and packing and VAT. Order from SECRU Orders, Museums Documentation Association, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH.

## Education news

**Survey 1990** A report has been prepared on the results of the survey carried out in 1990 on museum responses to the earth science content of the National Curriculum. Although there have been changes to the Curriculum since the report was written, copies are available for anyone interested from me at the address below.

**Practical publications** Currently I am reviewing various museum and other publications on the earth sciences, concentrating on books and packs with practical ideas. Upon completion, a selection of these will be reviewed in *Coprolite*.

**Education workshop** Would you be interested in attending a workshop on earth science museum education? This would be a practical session for those new to this field and would include sessions on hands-on activities, gallery resources and education policy. I am now planning the workshop, hopefully for the autumn term but would appreciate knowing numbers of interested people.

Kate Pontin  
Local Heritage Education Officer,  
Central Library, High Street, Uxbridge, Middlesex  
Tel. 0895 250702.

### **Cannel coal, oil shales and lignites sought**

Siobhan Watts of the Department of Archaeological Sciences at the University of Bradford has recently commenced a research project to investigate characterisation methods for archaeological jet and jet-like artefacts. She wishes to collect samples of jet, oil shale, cannel coal and lignite for comparison with archaeological samples using physical and chemical analyses and is looking for information on museum collections of cannel coals, oil shales and lignites or details of localities where this material can be collected (apart from Whitby jet and Kimmeridge oil shales). If you think you can help, please contact Siobhan Watts, Department of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD7 1DP.

### **MODES Plus and the Bournemouth Natural History Society**

The Bournemouth Natural Science Society (39 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 3NS) has large geological collections which are particularly strong in Tertiary fossils. Although this is a private society collection, enquiries from *bona fide* researchers are always welcome.

The Society has just acquired MODES Plus, and are just beginning the task of transferring collection data. They would welcome contact, help and advice from anyone currently using MODES+ for geological collections. Please contact Mrs Vera Copp Tel. 0202 394534.

### **Venezuelan geological specimens and archives**

Professor Franco Urbani of the Universidad Central de Venezuela is leading a working party on the history of the geological sciences in Venezuela. He would like to hear about any Venezuelan geological specimens in British collections, including information about localities, collection dates and collectors. He offers to inform you if he suspects your locality data is incorrect.

Professor Urbani would also like to know about any archives containing material on the geology, mining and petroleum industries of Venezuela. If you can help, please write to him at UCV, Dept. Geología, Apartado 47028, Caracas 1041A, Venezuela.



## **Baldwin's Eggs**

GCG member Stuart Baldwin's Fossil Hall Museum has recently acquired two dinosaur eggs from the south of France. At the end of June 1992, France's first Dinosaur Museum opened at Esperaza near Rennes-le-Chateau and Stuart provided the museum with a number of dinosaur replicas from his range of 2000 products at no charge. In return, Stuart was invited to excavate some 70 million year old eggs for his museum in Essex. The 25 cm long eggs, from the Maastrichtian of the Aude Valley at Rennes-le-Chateau, are slightly crushed and have some 300 pieces of shell up to 3mm thick in juxtaposition. All of the eggs from this site have hatched, but large quantities of dinosaur bones from nearby localities suggest that the eggs could have been laid by a titanosaurid sauropod some 13m long. The nests discovered so far have been up to 2m in diameter and contain up to 10 eggs sometimes found to be laid in a spiral.

The nest excavated by Stuart and a team from the Université Paris VI led by Professor Eric Buffetaut, has yielded five eggs so far of which the two best are now on display in Stuart's museum. The eggs from the south of France are the largest so far discovered to be attributed to dinosaurs. The thinness and porosity of the shell indicates a high humidity, low oxygen and high carbon dioxide nest environment in which rotting vegetation may have provided the heat for incubation.

The eggs may be seen at Fossil Hall Museum, Boars Tye Road, Silver End, Witham, Essex CM8 3QA, Tel. 0376 83502 on most Saturdays when the museum is open from 10am to 4pm, or on weekdays by appointment.

## **Late course news:**

### **19 August Cambridge**

#### **MODES course on natural sciences**

This course looks in detail at the best way to use the MODES Object format to record information about any natural science collection, whether of rocks, fossils, minerals, insects, birds or plants. Working from example records to establish common principles, participants will then have the chance to develop templates to record their own information. The course will also cover participants' indexing and cataloguing needs, working with some specially designed layout specifications.

A MODES Subject Guide for Natural Sciences will be available from May 1993, price £20 + VAT (including a diskette).

Contact: Sue Thornley, Museums Documentation Association, 347 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH. Tel. 0223 242848, Fax. 213575.

## Display cases for sale

For sale: four matching 'anti-reflection' wooden display cases made by Edmonds of Birmingham specifically for use in a glass-roofed building. They each have a lockable hinged glazed horizontal section to a depth of 17in, glazed back-panel, wooden overhang to cut out roof reflections and come complete with fluorescent light fittings. Overall dimensions (each) are 66in wide by 26.5in deep by 54in high. Purchasers must collect the cases and will need to provide base units. Price: £100 each (or offers). Contact George McGavin, The University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW Tel. 0865 272950, Fax. 0865 272970.

## This space could be yours...

If you have any news, views, ideas or suggestions you'd like to pass on to other members of GCG, please contact Tom Sharpe (49 Kelston Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF4 2AG) or Monica Price (The University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW, Tel. 0865 272950, Fax. 0865 272970). Deadlines for copy are given at the top of the front page.

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**GCG Seminar: Fakes and forgeries**  
**LONDON 15 July 1993**  
**BOOKING FORM**

I will be attending the seminar on 15 July .....

I will / will not require LUNCH Price £5.50 .....

There will be a meeting fee of £2.50 which includes tea and coffee during the morning and afternoon.

From: Name.....Title.....

Address.....

.....

Tel.....

Please return this section and cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to the 'Geological Curators' Group' to: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA **by 9 July at the latest if you require lunch.** (see p.2).

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**GCG Seminar: Building stones**  
**CAMBRIDGE 21 September 1993**  
**BOOKING FORM**

I will be attending the seminar on 21 September .....

From: Name.....Title.....

Address.....

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Tel.....

Please return this section to Mike Dorling, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB3 0EZ **by 18th September.**

