



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

OPROLITE

No.15
November
1994

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

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Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Andy Newman, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU tel/fax 0191 222 7426

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the AGM of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at 16.00 on Wednesday 30 November 1994 in the Committee Rooms, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Nominations for the posts of Officers and one Committee Member must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Mandy Edwards, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL by 9 November 1994.

Musical Curators

Helen Fothergill has been appointed Assistant Keeper of Geology at Sunderland Museum. Mike Bishop, formerly Deputy Curator at Plymouth Museum has been appointed Curator at Torquay Museum and took up his post in June. Former Leicester Museum Studies students Heather Rayfield and Karen Ritson are now working in Hull and Oxford respectively. Heather is temporary Assistant Keeper of Natural History for the Hull Museum Service, while Karen is contract display technician preparing mineral displays at Oxford University Museum. Congratulations to Sue Rainton of Scunthorpe Museum who is now Mrs Sue Sladen.

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Andrew Brewster**, Lincoln; **Linda Wigley**, Bath; **Pete Joseph**, Northolt; **Nicholas Bishop**, Guisborough; **Tim Holt-Wilson**, Diss; **Peter N Ogilvie**, Preston; **Heather Rayfield**, Hull; **John F Kelly**, Birmingham; **Nick Gordon**, Saffron Walden Museum; **Geraint Owen**, Swansea; **David John Ward**, Orpington; **Ian T Alexander**, Edinburgh; **Helen Fothergill**, Sunderland; **Daniel Lockett**, Shrewsbury; **Bruce Campbell**, Newport Museum; **Glenn W Storrs**, University of Bristol; **Shin Wang**, Taipei, Taiwan; **East Midlands Museum Service**; **ICCROM Library**, Rome.

Directory of British Geological Museums

Heading the list of newish publications in this issue is the *Directory of British Geological Museums*, compiled and edited by John Nudds on behalf of GCG and published by the Geological Society as Miscellaneous Paper No18. The *Directory* lists museums by region and includes details of the history, main collections, major strengths, displays, and archives as well as essential information about museum opening times, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, all packed into 141 pages of a handy A5 size. You cannot afford to be without it! List price is £14.95, but copies are available at a special price of £9.50 to Fellows of the Geological Society and to members of GCG.

Send your orders, quoting your Geological Society membership number or stating that you are a GCG member, to Geological Society Publishing House, Unit 7, Brassmill Enterprise Centre, Brassmill Lane, Bath BA1 3JN tel 01225 445046 fax 01225 442836.

New UK telephone numbers

GCG members overseas may not be aware that UK telephone numbers are about to change. From Sunday 16 April 1995, all UK area codes starting with 0 will start 01. For example, inner London changes from 071 to 0171; Cardiff changes from 0222 to 01222. Five cities receive an entirely new code and an extra digit in front of the existing local number:

Leeds 0532 xxxxxx becomes 0113 2xx xxxx
Leicester 0533 xxxxxx becomes 0116 2xx xxxx
Nottingham 0602 xxxxxx becomes 0115 9xx xxxx
Sheffield 0742 xxxxxx becomes 0114 2xx xxxx
Bristol 0272 xxxxxx becomes 0117 9xx xxxx

The new numbers are being used in parallel with the old from 1 August 1994.

Thumbs-up leaflets

The GCG *Thumbs-up* leaflet has now been reprinted. It is aimed at the general public and gives cartoon-style information on how to collect and curate geological specimens along with sources of further information and a list of museums providing geological advisory services. If you require leaflets please contact Mandy Edwards, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

5 November 1994 University College, London

Geologists' Association Annual Reunion

Contact: Sarah Stafford, Geologists' Association, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 9AG tel 0171 434 9298 fax 0171 237 0280.

30 November - 1 December 1994 National Museum of Wales, Cardiff

GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip: The geological display - new directions in interpretation.

In recent years museums have been moving away from traditional static and factual displays to a more interactive and interpretative approach. Is this the way ahead or should we return to more specimens and less button-pushing? This seminar will review developments and look at new techniques and technology to aid geological interpretation in the museum environment.

Contact: Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NP tel 01222 397951 ext 265, fax 01222 667332.

Wednesday 30 November 1994

Centre Block Committee Rooms (access from Main Hall via Museum Restaurant)

10.00-10.20 Coffee

10.20-10.30 Welcome: Colin Ford, Director, National Museum of Wales and Mike Bassett, Keeper of Geology

10.30-11.00 Communicating geology at the new Museum of Scotland: Ian Rolfe, Keeper of Geology, National Museums of Scotland

11.00-11.30 Does the earth move for you? Alisdair Hinshelwood, Haley Sharpe Associates, Leicester

11.30-12.00 And there was light - sound and image: David Willrich, Managing Director, D J Willrich Ltd, AV & Multimedia Specialists.

12.00-12.30 Discussion

12.30-14.15 Buffet lunch in NMW followed by an opportunity to tour Evolution of Wales exhibition

14.15-14.30 The evolution of geology displays in Cardiff: Mike Bassett, Keeper of Geology, National Museum of Wales

14.30-15.00 Victorian innovation and the Dudley Time Trail: Colin Reid, Keeper of Geology, Dudley Museum

15.00-15.30 Getting to grips with earth science. Hands on - the present and the future at the National Stone Centre: Ian Thomas, Director, National Stone Centre

15.30 Discussion and tea

16.00 Annual General Meeting

Meeting fee: £6.00. This covers coffee, tea, and a buffet lunch.

Thursday 1 December 1994

Field excursion: Dinosaurs, deserts and drowning - the Mesozoic of the South Wales coast

An informal tour led by Steve Howe and Tom Sharpe.

Meet at 10.00 at the front of the National Museum of Wales.

In the morning we will visit Ogmore by Sea to view Triassic wadi deposits on Carboniferous Limestone, and Southerndown to see the Lias, locally severely deformed. After lunch in a local pub, we will visit the Triassic dinosaur footprint locality near Barry.

Please complete the form on page 15 and send it to Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF1 3 NP tel 01222 397951 fax 01222 667332 by **23 November 1994**

5 January 1995 University of Lancaster

Joint Earth Science Education Committee of the Geological Society / Earth Science Teachers' Association / Association for Science Education: Exhibiting interactive earth science.

Contact: Chris King, JESEC, 'Haleside', 65 hale Road, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9HP tel 0161 928 0858 (day); 0161 929 0063 (evenings); fax 0161 929 5137.

18 March 1995 Keble College and University Museum, Oxford

Russell Society: Mineralogy in the field 1995

This symposium, organised by Britain's leading topographic mineralogy society, will bring together speakers on a wide range of topics closely connected with field mineralogy or specimen-based research and curation. These aspects of mineralogy, which are at the heart of the Russell Society's activities, have often been overlooked in recent years despite being essential to the science of mineralogy. Topics will include: 'Compiling a mineralogy for Wales' and 'Mineral collectors past and present in Scotland'. The symposium will be held in Keble College and non-members are very welcome to attend.

There will be a reception in the University Museum on the evening of the 18 March, and the University Museum will be having a special opening on Sunday 19 March with a variety of geological activities for members of the public and a special bus link to the Oxford Mineral Show - all part of the SET⁷ programme of events. If you are interested in minerals, make sure you are in Oxford that weekend!

Contact: Brian Young, BGS, Murchison House, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3LA tel 0131 667 1000 or Roy Starkey, 15 Warwick Avenue, Fringe Green, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B60 2AH tel 01527 874101.

25 March 1995 Civic Theatre, Ayr

Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society: John Smith: geologist, antiquarian and natural historian - a symposium

This full-day symposium marks the centenary of the publication in 1895 of John

Smith's acclaimed book *Prehistoric man in Ayrshire*. Tribute will also be paid to the work of Smith as a geologist and natural historian. Speakers on Smith's geological work will be Dr Ian Rolfe, Brian Jackson and Miss J Calder of the National Museums of Scotland; Dr R B Wilson; Dr J Pollard, University of Manchester; and Dr D Peacock, British Geological Survey.

Contact: Dr D Reid, Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 10 Woodend Road, Ayr KA7 4QR.

19-21 April 1995 Hulme Hall, University of Manchester

BCG/GCG/The Manchester Museum: International Conference on the value and valuation of natural science collections.

Natural science collections have scientific, cultural and monetary values. The conference will explore the nature of these various values and will reflect the experience of those involved in the care and use of such collections. It is often said that natural science collections are undervalued (in all senses of the word) when compared with humanities-based collections, particularly those of fine art objects. Is this true? If so, is it a consequence of the way society views the arts and the sciences? Or is it because art collections have such high financial values? What can be done to increase society's appreciation on the many values of natural science collections? What pressures are there upon museums and other holding institutions to put financial values on their natural science collections, and should such pressures be welcomed or resisted? In responding to such pressures, is there a risk that the intrinsic scientific and cultural value of natural science collections is at best undermined, and at worst, sold out? The publication resulting from the conference will help to answer some of these questions, and inform future policy decisions about natural science collections.

Reflecting the aims of the conference, three major themes will be pursued during the various scientific sessions. These sessions will examine the scientific value and cultural value of natural science collections, and address the question of financial value of these collections. The last theme presents four aspects - what pressures are there to provide financial valuations for natural science collections, what commercial valuations are de facto in existence already, what are the arguments for and against assessing such monetary values, and, if we have to value, how should the consequent risks be minimised?

The final debate session will endeavour to draw together all these disparate threads, and attempt to define the principles that should inform future policy decisions about natural science collections.

Registration fees: Full delegate £100.00 (if paid by 16 December 1994), otherwise £125.00. Members of GCG / BCG / unemployed / full time students £90.00. Accompanying person £20.00.

Contact: Valuation Conference Secretariat, The Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

11-14 October 1995 St Petersburg University, Russia

International Symposium on the History of Mineralogy, Mineralogical Museums, Gemmology, Crystal Chemistry, and the Classification of Minerals.

This meeting commemorates the 210th anniversary of the mineralogical collection in the Department of Mineralogy at St Petersburg University.

Contact: Prof. Vladimir G. **Krivovichev**, Faculty of Geology, St Petersburg University, Universitetskaya Emb., 719, St Petersburg 199034, Russia **tel (812) 2189481**, fax (812) 2181346, E-mail Anna@dean.geol.lgu.spb.su

10-13 June 1996 Budapest, Hungary

Third International Conference on Mineralogy and Museums.

Contact: **M&M3** Secretariat, c/o **Department** of Mineralogy, Eotvos University, Budapest, **Múzeum** krt. 4/A, H-1088 Hungary. fax (361) 266 7952 E-mail emin003@ursus.bke.hu

20-24 August 1996 St John's College, Cambridge

Second International Symposium and World Congress on the Preservation and Conservation of Natural Science Collections: Natural science collections - a resource for the future.

Contact: **Chris** Collins, Natural Science Congress '96, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ tel 01223 62522 fax 01223 60779 .

Manchester meeting : **GCG** assisted places

As one of the sponsors of the International Conference on the value and valuation of natural science collections to be held in Manchester in April 1995, GCG is offering a limited number of assisted places; with a 50% contribution towards the GCG rate conference fee. If you wish to apply for one of these places, please write, explaining why you are a deserving cause, to Mandy Edwards, GCG Secretary, Department of Geology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL by 1 January 1995.

Exhibitions

Monsters of the deep: Liverpool Museum, **William** Brown Street, Liverpool until 3 January 1995.

Here be dragons: recent dinosaur discoveries in the South West. Leicestershire Museums, New Walk, Leicester 14 November 1994 to 21 January 1995.

Dinosaurs from China: Royal **Albert** Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter until 25 February 1995.

Living with minerals: **Amgueddfa'r** Gogledd, Llanberis, Gwynedd 21 May to 30 November 1994. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff 9 December 1994 to 4 June 1995

The geology of Kerry: an exhibition devised by the Geological Museum, Trinity College, Dublin. ENFO, St **Andrew** Street, Dublin until November 1994.

The dinosaurs of Jurassic Park: Bristol Industrial Museum, **Wapping** Wharf, Bristol until 22 November 1994

Time traveller: an exhibition of art in geology, concentrating on the fossil **mammal** illustrations of **Michael Long**. Bristol City Museum, Queens Road, Bristol 21 January 1995 - 19 March 1995

Mammuts aus Sibirien: Hessischen **Landesmuseum** , **Friedensplatz** 1, 64283 Darmstadt, Germany until 19 February 1995

Building stones of the Museum of Scotland: The new Museum of Scotland, currently being built in Chambers Street, Edinburgh, will take advantage of the revival in the use of building stone, employing modern techniques. An exhibition showing the main stones selected for the Museum of Scotland, how they will be used, where they have been used elsewhere, together with a little about their geological origins will be on show in the Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh until 10 December 1994.

Mineral and fossil shows

5-6 November 1994 Rock'N'Gem Show, The Grandstand Hall, Kempton Park Racecourse, **Sunbury** on Thames, Middlesex

Contact HD Promotions, Events House, Wycombe Air Park, **Booker, Marlow**, Bucks. SL7 3DP tel **01494 450504**

19 November 1994 Sussex Mineral Show, **Clair Hall**, **Haywards Heath**, **10.00-16.00**.

This year's show has special displays on 'Minerals from the Massif Central' and 'The Hampstead Farm **Quarry**, Avon' as well as presentations by Roy **Starkey of the Russell Society** 'In Heddle's footsteps' and John Cooper of the Booth Museum Brighton 'Dinosaurs in Sussex'.

Contact Sussex Mineral and Lapidary Society tel **01444 233958**

19 March 1995 Oxford Spring Mineral & Fossil Show, **333 Banbury Road**, Oxford, **10.00-16.30**.

The 1995 **show will** be linking with the Russell Society Symposium on 'Mineralogy in the field 1995' (see p. 4) and a special day of geological activities at the University Museum. As usual, a bus service will link the Museum and Show.

Contact Paul **Lowe**, Endsleigh Nature Company, Endsleigh **House**, 50 **Daniell Road**, **Truro**, Cornwall **TR1 2DA** tel or fax **01872 223227**

Set ⁷ 1995

Following the success of Set ⁷ - 'seven days plus of science, engineering and technology' - earlier this year, the British Association for the Advancement of Science is again coordinating a week of events in 1995. Beginning on Friday 17 March 1995, the week **has** the general aim **of Science** and **the public**. The BAAS is asking everyone to join in the week, to help raise public awareness of science, engineering and technology. Any sector of the population can be targeted, and organisations are encouraged to make the events readily accessible to the general public either by invitation or by making presentations in public places. Particularly

successful events this year were those presented in shopping malls, city centre locations and other places frequented by the public going about their everyday business. The final programme will close for printing early in January. If you are interested in taking part in this exciting event, please contact the BAAS as soon as possible. Limited funding has again been made available by the Office of Science and Technology to help encourage smaller organisations and individuals participate. These funds will be disbursed by way of grant aid from COPUS and details can be obtained from them c/o The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG; please contact Cheryl Davies on 0171 839 5561 ext 247. If you wish to take part in 1995, contact Set⁷, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB tel 0171 494 3326 fax 0171 734 1658.

Talking Science+

Increased liaison between local museums and research or academic institutions can offer extra resources to museums and galleries and a wider availability of well-presented science and technology themes to the general public. To facilitate this liaison, Talking Science+ has the details of many professional scientists who are keen to get involved with museum work, either by giving presentations (talks, workshops or demonstration lectures), helping to design science or technology exhibits, advising on scientific content or context, or sitting on a governing body. The heart of Talking Science+ is an ever-growing database which contains the details of over one thousand experts recommended by their peers or by audience groups. It is administered by the British Association for the Advancement of Science on behalf of COPUS with financial support from the Department of Trade and Industry.

If you think you could make use of this free service to help arrange talks, debates, hands-on science events or to get ideas for science-based presentations, please contact Jane Mole, Administrator, Talking Science+, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB, tel 0171 287 0980 fax 0171 734 1658.

GCG 20 years on

GCG 20th Anniversary Meeting, Northampton, 17 May 1994

How time flies! Twenty years to the day after Roy Clements, Bob King, Mike Jones and Geoff Stansfield - and others, perhaps - met at the Geological Society in London to float the idea of a specialist organisation for geological curators, more than fifty members of the resulting Geological Curators' Group gathered in Northampton on 17 May this year. As chairman Paul Ensom said, this was "a very special meeting". Our Group now has more than 324 British and 158 international members; these people and institutions are its powerbase. Much of what is good and new in the profession of curatorship as a whole was started by GCG, including registration, standards, documentation, professional guidelines, education and the development

of the Museum Documentation Association.

Even at Northampton, as our host Sheila Stone explained, the geological collections, long the subject of the Group's concern, are being rehabilitated with Rosemary Roden's help and John Cooper's advice - just as it should be, especially as it was John, and Hugh Torrens, who first rescued the Northampton collection back in 1973.

Other speakers, many founder or near-founder members, looked backwards with satisfaction and forward with anticipation. But the main theme was that the Group's past influence and successes must not be lost in the changed political and cultural environment of the present; Simon Knell reminded us, for example, that the development of the "collection manager" instead of specialist curator could permit geology to become a "Cinderella subject", with collections again neglected for want of use and proper care.

Ron Cleevely, describing the initial struggles but later success (too many articles on collections for the *Curator*) of the Lost and Found database, despaired of ever being able to persuade politicians of the primacy and uniqueness of objects - real things - in our business. Andy Mathieson talked about our role in providing what teachers, trying to implement that National Curriculum with no specialist knowledge, need: "education is (of course) a curatorial function". Phil Doughty discussed our credibility with all our public - how we must strive for the highest quality of service based on our specialist expertise if geology in museums is to have continuing political influence.

Fred Dunning's video took us on a tour of recent geology exhibitions and galleries, with examples, mainly good, of how we dress our profession's shop window. Chris Collins described the promotion of geological conservation by the Group, and how materials science led to the idea of preventive conservation rather than repair; despite what sounds like success (now 20 geological conservator posts worldwide) there are (oh dear!) 100 million geological specimens for them to conserve, and it may be that we have to accept that "collections managers" are a reality and get on with educating them.

Despite being manager of the first Geological Site Record Centre, your correspondent could not identify any of the famous places Mick Stanley quizzed us with to introduce his account of the Group's ground-breaking work in the national scheme of coordinated geological site recording. The meeting over, members transferred to the Lime Trees Hotel for the 20th anniversary dinner (prawns, chicken, hazelnut croquante) and were entertained (by that I mean laughed themselves silly) by Hugh Torrens' guest speech.

What was the overall message for geology curation over the next 20 years? Perhaps that we still have as big a fight now as we ever had, and that to win it we have to know exactly why we have collections, to understand their value to society, and to provide all the services our "customers" want to the highest possible standards.

John Martin, Leicestershire Museums

Hard hats wanted

Several hard hats were borrowed from Di Sutherland during the 20th Anniversary fieldtrip in Northamptonshire and not returned. If you find yourself with a hat that seems to have appeared from nowhere, please give **Simon Knell** a ring on 0116 252 3963 (fax 0116 252 3960) or ring Roy Clements on 0116 252 3800.

Geological Survey of **Ireland** Collections

Funding has recently been approved by the National Heritage Council (of Ireland), for a major project on the 19th century fossil collection of the Geological Survey of Ireland. The significance and status of this collection was recently reviewed by Sleeman (1992, Geological Curator, Vol. 5, No. 7, 283-291). The scale of funding is an encouraging recognition of the importance of the collection by the National Heritage Council, which is funded through the National Lottery. The project, scheduled to be completed by the end of 1995, is to complete the **curation** and documentation of the outstanding material (more than two thirds of the total). A catalogue of type, figured and cited material is planned and also an exhibition to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the Geological Survey of Ireland in 1995. An important bonus for the project, since funding was offered, has been the agreement of the British Geological Survey to return several hundred specimens originally received from the Geological Survey of Ireland in the late **1800's**, but which have remained unregistered in the Geological Survey Museum.

The funding includes assistance with the computer database input of records. The main **curation** and identification work is to be done by Matthew Parkes, as the Contract Palaeontologist, who has moved **from** the Geology Department at the National Museum of Wales on completion of his 'Evolution of Wales' contract. Anybody who has an interest in the material in the collections or **is aware** of obscure references relating to the collection (possibly **as** held in the Dublin Museum of Science and Art) is encouraged to write to Dr Matthew Parkes or to Dr. A.G. Sleeman at the Geological Survey of Ireland, Beggar's Bush, Dublin 4, Ireland.

The UK Systematics Forum: **Directory** of UK systematic expertise and current research

The UK Systematics Forum - an important new initiative funded by the Office of Science and Technology - is currently setting up a Directory of UK systematic expertise and current research and invites any person in the UK active in systematic biology research to be included in this important database.

The UK Systematics Forum serves as an important opportunity to raise the profile of systematics. Its role is to promote coordination and communication amongst institutions with major biological and palaeontological collections as well as the wider systematic community, and to develop priorities for systematic work. The creation of this Directory, just one **of the** activities being undertaken to achieve this aim, is considered to be an important **first** step in strengthening the discipline of systematics. The information collated in this directory will be made available to

interested parties and used as a tool to inform governmental policy makers of the current situation in systematic research - a role made possible by the Forum's links with the Office of Science and Technology.

Anybody in the UK currently involved in systematic research - the science of describing, naming and classifying all organisms - whether at an amateur or professional level, biological or palaeontological - is strongly urged to contact the Forum for inclusion in this important information source.

For **more** information, please contact E Watson, The UK Systematics Forum, FREEPOST (LON 91), c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5YZ tel 0171 938 9522 fax 0171 938 9531 E-mail ew@nhm.ac.uk

History of Geology Group formed

The inaugural meeting of the History of Geology Group of the Geological Society was held at Burlington House on 4 October. GCG was well represented: there were at least 15 GCG members amongst the 60 or so people present. John Thackray and Hugh Torrens reviewed the recent history of the history of geology, before the aims and function of the new group were discussed by the meeting. The Group aims to raise the profile of the history of geology within the geological community and to promote geology through its history. (The aims were outlined in the last issue of Coprolite.) It was felt that there was no need for a group publication, other than perhaps a newsletter to keep members informed. It was proposed that a meetings programme should include workshops, visits, and joint meetings with other organisations. Some projects suggested by members included a sourcebook of materials, the celebration of particular centennials and the 'blue plaque' commemoration of individuals. The main concerns voiced were the lack of recognition, particularly by university authorities, of the work being done by researchers in the history of geology and attitudes towards the study of the history of science in general and geology in particular. It is hoped that the new group will go some way towards improving this situation. The meeting elected a committee of six (most of whom seem to be called John). Congratulations to John Thackray, Hugh Torrens, and the others involved in convincing the Geological Society to set up this new group. For further information, contact John Thackray, **History of Geology Group**, Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London **W1V 0JU**.

Tom Sharpe, National Museum of Wales.

Environmental **monitoring** at the Oxford University Museum

The Oxford University Museum has recently **received grant-aid** from the South East Museum Service to purchase a telemetric environmental monitoring system. A survey of current environmental monitoring, control, and remedial conservation was carried out as a preliminary to forward planning for conservation. It revealed that while widespread monitoring and controls were already in place for light, insect, pollutant and mechanical damage, only limited monitoring and controls were set up for **temperature** and humidity.

The telemetric system comprises twelve detectors which send readings by radio to a central logger. The data is then downloaded to a computer where it can be plotted and analysed. With thirty six separate stores and a large display area, the Museum has given priority to monitoring those areas containing the most vulnerable specimens, for example, pyritic and sub-fossil bone material. Off-site stores are monitored using traditional recording thermohygrographs, and a number of small max/min electronic thermohygrographs supplement the overall system.

After the first year of monitoring, the Museum should have the hard data necessary to establish control measures which will protect the most vulnerable collections... always assuming the system confirms the environmental 'hunches' of staff members!

Meanwhile, the Museum would welcome visits from any curators, conservators etc. interested in seeing the telemetric monitoring system in action. Please contact Rennison Hall or Monica Price to arrange an appointment, at the University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW tel 01865 272950, fax 01865 272970.

Cornwall appeals

On 5 August 1994, South Crofty plc announced a successful share issue raising more than £1m and thereby ensuring that the Government and former mine owner RTZ would jointly write off loans of over £31m. Cornwall's one remaining tin mine now has a fighting chance of remaining open. Its future now depends on a lowering of world tin prices, favourable exchange rates, and continued success in its sales of shares so that it can modernise and improve productivity.

Meanwhile, the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall has launched the next stage of its Museum Restoration Appeal. It is seeking to raise £65,000 to complete renovations and prepare new displays in its Penzance museum. The Society was founded in 1814, and with many eminent scientists among its membership and strong links with the Cornish mining industry, it built up fine collections.

Serious deterioration in the Society building resulted in evacuation of the collections and the launching of a restoration appeal in 1986. Now, structural work has been completed and environmental monitoring and control equipment has been installed. The library and collections are being unpacked and curated and the Society has ambitious designs for its new museum which will provide valuable resources for local schools and educational groups as well being an attraction for residents and tourists alike.

For more information about the appeal, contact Colin Sparrow, Cornwall Geological Museum, Alverton, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2QR.

A new Oxfordshire pliosaur

The fossilized bones of *Peloneustes philarchus*, a 150 million year old, 15 foot long pliosaur have been unearthed at ARC Southern's Cassington gravel pit near Yarnton, Oxfordshire. The skeleton was discovered by Phil Powell of Oxford University Museum, who noticed the end of a bone sticking out of a clay bank in

the site of a new silt settling pond being dug by ARC. He enlisted a team of museum staff, colleagues and friends, and, with the assistance and support of ARC, carried out a full excavation.

The dig revealed a complete skull about three feet long and a perfectly preserved lower jaw, still set with some of the two inch long pointed and enamelled teeth. The team also recovered over 50 of the 60-80 vertebrae, one complete paddle and the remains of two others.

The whole operation took about 10 days. ARC's pit manager Bob Turner arranged for a large excavator to dig away several tonnes of clay lying on top of the skeleton and kept a pump working continuously to prevent the site flooding. Bones were transported in plaster of Paris jackets to the museum laboratory where Juliet Hay, museum technician and preparator, has begun the task of extracting, cleaning and repairing them.

Together with other fossils from the site it will form the centrepiece of a new exhibit illustrating life in the warm shallow sea which covered Oxfordshire 150 million years ago.

Newish publications

Directory of British geological museums compiled and edited by John R Nudds on behalf of the Geological Curators' Group. 1994, viii+141pp The Geological Society Miscellaneous Paper No 18. ISBN 1 897799 08 X, £14.95

Yorkshire rocks and landscape. A field guide edited by Colin Scrutton. 1994, 224pp. Yorkshire Geological Society. ISBN 1 873551 088, £8.99.

Solnhofen. A study in Mesozoic palaeontology by K W Barthel, N H M Swinburne and S Conway Morris. 1994, 236pp. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0 521 45830 7, £16.95 (paperback).

Fossil reptiles of Great Britain by M J Benton and P S Spencer. 1994, Geological Conservation Review Series 10, Chapman and Hall. ISBN 0412 62040 5 £70.00.

Palaeozoic palaeobotany of Great Britain by C J Cleal and B A Thomas. 1994, 304pp. Geological Conservation Review Series 9, Chapman and Hall. ISBN 0 412 61090 6, £75.00

Marine Permian of England by D B Smith. 1994, 208pp Geological Conservation Review Series 8, Chapman and Hall. ISBN 0 412 61080 9, £69.00.

Eyewitness Science: Earth by Susanna van Rose. 1994, 64pp. Dorling Kindersley ISBN 0 7513 1044 1, £9.99.

The periglaciation of Great Britain by Colin K Ballantyne and Charles Harris. 1994, 340pp. Cambridge University Press, ISBN 0 521 32459 9, £37.50.

Atlas of Mesozoic and Cenozoic coastlines by A G Smith, D G Smith and B M Funnell. 1994, 112pp. Cambridge University Press, ISBN 0 521 45155 8, £24.95.

The American Museum of Natural History's book of dinosaurs and other ancient creatures by Joseph Wallace. 1994, 144pp. Simon & Schuster/Prion. ISBN 1 853751 42 1, £14.99

West Cornwall by A Hall. 1994, Geologists' Association Guide no.19, Second Edition, 50pp. ISBN 0 900717 57 2, £6.00

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Geology and mineralogy at Oxford 1860-1986; history and reminiscence by E.A. Vincent. 1994, 245pp. Privately printed and obtainable from the Librarian, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PR, £10.50 including p&p.

**GCG Seminar, AGM and field trip
National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
30 November - 1 December 1994**

I will be attending the seminar/AGM on 30 November

I will be attending the field trip on
morning/*afternoon/*whole day of 1 December

I will require/*can offer transport on the field trip

I would like details of local accommodation

*delete where applicable.

Name.....

Title.....

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Please return this form to Tom Sharpe, Department of Geology, National
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