



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

OPROLITE

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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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From GCG's Chairman

The sad and tragic loss of David Price has overshadowed a year otherwise full of interest and achievement for the Group. David was one of our most respected members, well-known through his few, but memorable, appearances at meetings. We shall all miss him. Ironically, for all the outrage that his death has provoked, it will be one of his many successes that begins the New Year, for by the time this issue is published, the Brighton Medal will be ready (see elsewhere in this issue).

The continued success of *Coprolite* makes this report somehow redundant. Having concluded our second year of production, it is abundantly clear to me that the membership now hardly needs the annual review of the Committee's work - it has in effect already been published. Congratulations to Tom Sharpe and Monica Price on their valuable contribution to the Group.

Hot on the heels of the NCC's *Earth Science Conservation in Great Britain - a Strategy*, the Group has entrusted the care of the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation to a Steering Group chaired by Mike Harley, now of English Nature and RIGS fame. Mick Stanley and your Chairman are both members.

The Museums and Galleries Commission approached the Group with an exciting initiative regarding geological travelling exhibitions (*Coprolite* 5, p.7) which we have considered long and hard. The truth emerges that co-operative ventures like this are going to be extremely difficult to pull off, however willing we may be. Discussions with the MGC continue.

Following John Nudd's 'good news' about UFC funding for collections care at the five university centres (*Coprolite 5*, p.2), monies were indeed released. We have reason to be cheerful as Peter Crowther has lucidly explained in his recent editorial. Our congratulations to Jim Kennedy of Oxford for all his hard work.

Peter now has a new-look *Geological Curator* in which to expound. Smarter and more professional, I hope that the *Curator* has not lost too much of its informal appeal. Committee is confident that we will now be able to turn around the problems of late production and that new issues of the *Curator* will be landing more often on your desk. My thanks to Peter for his outstanding contribution and, again, to Monica Price for her DTP work.

The Group launched a new animal on the scene this year. The Geological Collector of the Year Competition has proved to be quite a success and attracted a lot of attention (see elsewhere in this issue). Committee has yet to consider the frequency of this competition, but it will certainly be reappearing in the future. My thanks to Simon Timberlake for so successfully having seen this through.

Another new venture in which the Group is involved is RockWATCH (see *Coprolite 6*, p.8). I applaud the initiative of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) and the Geologists' Association. As a Group, we are considering the reintroduction of a nationwide geological walk programme sponsored by museums. Already we are in discussion with RSNC for a timely issue of a new edition of our *Thumbs-up* leaflet, in time for the public launch of RockWATCH in March. Diana Hawkes is doing a grand job of coordination and I am grateful for her efforts on behalf of the Group.

As readers of *Coprolite 6* (pp.17-18) will know, I attended a meeting of INHIGEO in Dresden in September where I announced my intention for a GCG meeting to be held in Brussels with the Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique acting as hosts. I aim to draw European museum geologists together in a way which, I fear, the Madrid meeting next year may fail to do. I hope I am proved wrong.

Among these successes, not everything in the garden is green. My initiative on terminology is proving rather slow mostly due to a too crowded diary both for the Group and for myself. I hope that the New Year will see this corrected, as will be the slow work on the production of a new publicity leaflet for the Group. I will need to grasp this more firmly. Outside of the Group, we have seen disturbing developments taking place at Bolton, Derbyshire, Sunderland, Brighton, and now possibly at the Hancock Museum. In contrast, I am delighted to learn of the appointment of Jane Mee to the post at Ludlow.

Having begun my report with sadness, I cannot pass on to my final paragraph without mourning the loss of Bev Halstead. Bev was a good friend of the Group and indeed was to have taken part in two of our meetings in this past year. I am sure that there was much that we could have achieved with his driving spirit.

Finally, my warm thanks to all the Committee members for their able assistance throughout the year. I have already mentioned several individuals. I must thank the outgoing Committee members, Tony Cross, Amanda Edwards, John Martin and Monica Price. I am looking forward to working with the new Committee in 1992.

John A. Cooper,
Booth Museum, Brighton.

[The above is a précis of the Chairman's Report given at the Group's AGM in Dudley in December 1991. The full report, along with those of the other Officers, will be published in The Geological Curator in due course.]

GCG Committee 1992

- Chairman:** John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA Tel. 0273 552586
- Secretary:** Simon Knell, Scunthorpe Museum, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe DN14 7BD Tel. 0724 843533
- Treasurer/Membership Secretary:** Andy Newman, Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT Tel. 091 222 7418
- Editor:** Peter Crowther, Bristol City Museum, Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RL Tel. 0272 223592
- Recorder:** John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, The University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL Tel. 061 275 2634
- Public Relations Officer:** Phil Doughty, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast BT9 5AB Tel. 0232 381251
- Minutes Secretary:** Diana Hawkes, Haslemere Educational Museum, High Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2LA Tel. 0428 642112
- Committee:** Paul Ensom, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York YO1 2DR Tel. 0904 629745
Roy Clements, Department of Geology, University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH Tel. 0533 522522
Chris Collins, Sedgwick Museum, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ Tel. 0223 333456
Kate Pontin, Leicestershire Museums, 96 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TD Tel. 0533 554100

New members

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new member: Lesley Appleton, Department of Geology, Imperial College, London.

Musical Curators

Grace Griffiths, Geological Conservator at the National Museum of Ireland has been appointed Assistant Keeper (Conservation) in the Department of Earth Sciences at Leicestershire Museum; **Joy Irving** and **Juliet Hay** have been appointed technicians at the University Museum, Oxford, working on the geological and mineralogical collections; **Phil Phillips**, Keeper of Palaeontology at the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside has been seconded to the Directorate team at the museum for 2 years from 1 October 1991, where he will have responsibility for developments in information technology.

Overdue 1991 Personal Subscriptions

Those members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 1991 should now have received a letter from the Membership Secretary/Treasurer. Would those members please make their payments, along with their 1992 subscriptions, as soon as possible to the Membership Secretary/Treasurer whose address can be found on the subscription form on the centre pages.

The Brighton Medal

Under the guidance and inspiration of David Price, the Group agreed to commemorate the outstanding achievements of A.G. 'Bertie' Brighton by striking a medal in his honour. Bertie (1900 - 1988) was Curator at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge from 1931 to 1968 and his work there was well described by David Price in *Geological Curator* 5(3), 95 - 99. The medal will be awarded to individuals who have given outstanding service to geological science in museums. Committee has agreed that the medal will be awarded once every 3 or more years depending on suitable recipients being identified.

The request for funds raised almost £2200, and as a result of this highly successful appeal, 10 sterling silver medals have been struck.

I am delighted to announce that Committee has further decided to make two presentations to inaugurate the award. First, a medal will be given to Edith Brighton, Bertie's widow, in honour of her late husband. Second, a Founder's Medal will be posthumously awarded to David Price in recognition of his dedication to Bertie's cause. It will be presented to Val Price in David's honour. The two presentations will be made at the Sedgwick Museum on a date to be decided.

A full list of subscribers to the Brighton Medal will be published in the *Geological Curator*, Volume 5 Number 8 in 1992.

John A. Cooper,
GCG Chairman

Geological Collector of the Year Competiton

The Geological Collector of the Year trophy was presented to Simon Carpenter of Bristol, a member of the Bristol Naturalists' Society, by Dr Bob Symes of the Natural History Museum at the Annual Reunion of the Geologists' Association in London on 2 November. The runners-up, the Martin family of Lewes, East Sussex; J. Gordon Todd of Kilbarchan, Paisley; and Felix Whitham of Hull, as well as special prize winner, 9 year old Carl Durber were all present to receive their awards.

News of a new geological conservation service in Britain.

Kate Andrew has now completed her two year training in the conservation of geological specimens. Her training combined time in Britain (based at the Horniman) and Canada (based at the Canadian Museum of Nature), but a number of training staff were involved and training tasks included work on a wide variety of mineralogical and palaeontological specimens as well as a major research project on pollutants in mineral collections. Throughout the training, emphasis was placed on preventative conservation in order to minimise the risk to specimens from damage and decay. This culminated in the chance to assist in a full conservation survey and staff training at a museum in the USA.

Kate returned to Britain in December 1991 and is completing a three month contract with AMSSEE as their Geological Conservator. Her work can be grant aided for AMSSEE members but she is also available to carry out geological conservation projects for museums outside the AMSSEE area. She has worked mainly with specimens suffering from pyrite decay, bones, teeth and tusks, and on the cleaning and repair of mineral specimens.

From 1 March 1992, she hopes to set up as a self-employed geological conservator based in the West Midlands area, for the areas of Britain currently not covered by other geological conservators.

Now that an additional geological conservation service is being made available, Kate would welcome any offers of work and can be contacted via the Horniman Museum, 100 London Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 3PQ Tel. 081 699 1872.

Forthcoming meetings and seminars

27 February 1992 Ipswich School, Small Lecture Theatre, Henley Road, Ipswich. UKIC in conjunction with Ipswich Borough Council: Life after death. The practical conservation of natural history collections.

Environmental control of natural history collections: Joe Sage, Dundee Museum
Biological materials as sources of air pollution in museums: Peter Brimblecombe, University of East Anglia

Consolidation and cleaning of natural history specimens, some methods and materials: Helena and Richard Jaeschke, private conservators

The inefficient use of insecticides in museums: Bob Child, National Museum of Wales and David Pinnager, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Work done by the AMSSEE natural history conservation and taxidermy unit: Simon Trodd, AMSSEE

The conservation of natural history specimens of the Victorian Natural History Gallery: Bob Entwistle, Ipswich Museum

Practical solutions to conservation problems of large fossil specimens for display: William Lindsay, Natural History Museum, London.

Contact: Bob Entwistle, Ipswich Museum, High Street, Ipswich, Suffolk. Tel. 0473 213761.

31 March - 2 April 1992 University of Manchester

Mineralogical Society, Geological Society Conservation Committee, GCG, and Joint Nature Conservation Committee: Conserving Britain's mineralogical heritage

Sites of mining activity are an important part of the natural and man-made heritage of Britain. They attract the interest of mineralogists, archaeologists, historians, botanists, mineral collectors, mining companies, planners, tourist entrepreneurs, and of course, the general public.

This meeting will consider how mineralogical sites can best be preserved, in the face of increasing threat, as a resource for research, study and recreation. It will bring together all those who use, own or manage the sites to share their concerns and to examine ways of working together.

31 March (am): field excursion, Alderley Edge

(pm): 1st discussion session, University of Manchester

1 April (am): 2nd discussion session, University of Manchester

(pm): 3rd discussion session, University of Manchester

2 April All day field excursion to the Coniston area.

Please complete the booking form on the centre pages, and send it with payment to Dr Des O'Halloran, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1JY as soon as possible.

5 - 10 April 1992 Earnshaw Hall, University of Sheffield

BCG/GCG Natural Sciences Curatorial Course

This course is aimed at anyone with an interest in the preservation, storage, documentation, and uses of natural history and geology specimens and records. It will be of particular value to those studying for the Museums Diploma (Natural Sciences), new curators, mid-term curators, non-specialist curators with responsibility for natural science collections, and those from other institutions with collections.

The cost of £215 includes tuition, all transport within the course, and full board accommodation in Earnshaw Hall from dinner on Sunday 5 April to lunch on Friday 10 April inclusive (except lunch on 7 and 8 April - pub lunch recommended).

Contact: Bob Toynton, Division of Continuing Education, University of Sheffield, 85 Wilkinson Street, Sheffield S10 2GJ. Tel. 0742 768555 ext. 4932.

10 - 15 May 1992 Madrid

International Symposium and world congress on the preservation and conservation of natural history collections.

Contact: Symposium '92 Local Organising Committee, Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Jose Gutierrez Abascal, 2, 28006 Madrid, Spain.

14 - 17 May 1992 Crewe, Cheshire.

Conserving our landscape: evolving landforms and Ice Age heritage.

English Nature, Geological Society, Quaternary Research Association, British Geomorphological Research Group, Royal Geographical Society, Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, Countryside Council for Wales.

This wide-ranging conference will consider all aspects of the conservation of landforms and Quaternary features. It will consist of a single day of presentations followed by two days of field-based studies and discussions. Subjects will include the conservation of river systems and coastal features; man-made exposures and mineral extraction sites; and upland landscapes and deposits. The legislative framework, voluntary conservation initiatives and links with wildlife and archaeological conservation will form important cross themes to the subjects listed above.

Contact: Jo Collinge on 0733 340345 extension 2322 (direct line 0733 318322).

**7-8 July 1992 Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery, Borough Road, Sunderland
GCG Seminar and Fieldtrip: Reaching for a common standard: control of terminology in geological documentation.**

Fieldtrip: English Lower Permian and Zechstein cycles of the Upper Permian.

Contact: Steve Maclean, Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery, Borough Road, Sunderland, Wearside SR1 1PP Tel. 091 514 1235.

14 - 18 September 1992 Plymouth

Museums Association Annual Conference

Contact: The Museums Association, 34 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SF
Tel. 071 404 4767.

15 September 1992 Geology Lecture Theatre, University of Bristol

1st Symposium for palaeontological preparators and conservators.

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

16 - 18 September 1992 University of Wales College of Cardiff.

New geology - new roles. 8th meeting of the Geological Societies of the British Isles

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

23 - 25 September 1992 Edinburgh

Joint meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the National Museums of Scotland: Volcanism and early terrestrial biotas.

Contact: Sandra McDougall, Meetings Secretary, The Royal Society of Edinburgh, 22,24 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PQ.

29 September 1992 Museum of St Albans, Hatfield Road, St Albans

GCG Seminar: Geology and Museum Education

Contact: Kate Pontin, Leicestershire Museums, 96 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TD. Tel. 0533 554100.

2 - 3 December 1992 Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe

GCG Seminar and AGM: Fossil digs: the practicalities of fossil excavation.

Including visit to ironstone mines and other local sites.

Contact: Simon Knell, Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe, South Humberside DN15 7BD. Tel. 0724 843533 / 280444.

GCG Workshops

It is often impossible for members to obtain practical experience beyond that available at their own institutions (without changing jobs!). The aim of these new workshops is to give working curators an opportunity to discover new techniques or to brush up on old ones. They are designed to be attended by only a handful of people so that there is every opportunity to get fully involved. There will be two workshops in 1992:

15 June 1992. Department of Geology, University of Manchester

Advanced techniques in mineral identification.

Tutor: Amanda Edwards

If you find mineral identification challenging and often impossible then this workshop could let you in on the secrets of real mineralogists. You will be able to explore the use of X-ray diffraction, scanning electron microscope and electron microprobe techniques.

Contact: Amanda Edwards, Department of Geology, The University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL. Tel. 061 275 2000.

6 August 1992 Sedgwick Museum, University of Cambridge

Microenvironmental control for geological specimens.

Tutor: Chris Collins

This workshop will examine the various techniques that can be used to create microenvironments around specimens in order to maintain appropriate humidity levels etc.

Contact: Chris Collins, Sedgwick Museum, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ. Tel. 0223 333456

Exhibitions

Dawn of the Dinosaurs

Leicestershire Museum

29 Feb - 26 Apr 1992

The Dinosaur Roadshow

Perth Museum

until end Apr 1992

Inverness Museum

May - July 1992

Dinosaurs from China

Yorkshire Museum

27 Mar - 31 Oct 1992

The story of the earth

Geological Museum, Trinity College, Dublin

until Oct 1992

Mammoths and the Ice Age

National Museum of Wales

until 27 Sep 1992

Minerals and gemstones

National Museum of Wales

until 1 Mar 1992

Mineral Shows

Essex Rock & Mineral Show, Saturday 15 February 1992

North Romford Community Centre, Clockhouse Lane, Collier Row, Romford, Essex. 10.00 to 16.00, admission 50p.

Contact: Stuart Adams, 69 Westbury Lane, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 5PH Tel. 081 504 9422.

Dawn of the Dinosaurs at Leicestershire Museums

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the naming of the Dinosauria by Richard Owen in 1842, Leicestershire Museums Service is mounting the highly successful Plymouth Museum exhibition, the *Dawn of the Dinosaurs*, from 29 February until 26 April. In addition, the Museum Service has organised a wide range of activities including:

Saturday 29 February 10.00 - 15.30 Dinosaur Birthday Party and Grand Opening.

Saturday 7 March 11.00 Talk: *The Dawn of the Dinosaurs* by Dr Michael Benton (University of Bristol).

Saturday 14 March 10.00 - 16.30 Day school. Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester.

Thursday 19 March 19.00 Lecture: *The history of dinosaurs - 150 years of manic metaphor* by Dr Hugh Torrens (University of Keele). Bennett Lecture Room 1, University of Leicester.

Saturday 21 March 11.00 Talk: *Working with dinosaurs* by Dr David Norman (Sedgwick Museum).

Saturday 28 March 11.00 Talk: *Bringing dinosaurs to life* by John Martin (Leicestershire Museums).

Saturday 11 April 10.00 - 16.30 Day school. University of Birmingham.

Saturday 11 April 10.30 onwards Children's event

Saturday 25 April: 11.00 Talk: *The detective and the dead dinosaur* by Dr David Martill (University of Leicester).

Unless otherwise stated, all events take place at Leicestershire Museum, New Walk, Leicester.

Contact: Mike Taylor, Leicestershire Museums Service, 96 New Walk, Leicester, LE1 6TD Tel. 0533 554100.

New displays at the Geological Museum

In the November/December 1991 issue of *Geology today* (Vol 7 No 6), Giles Clarke, Head of Exhibition Planning and Education at the Natural History Museum, London, reports on a recent survey conducted to find out why attendances at the Geological Museum are so low. He also outlines plans for the redisplay of the museum including an expanded *Story of the earth*, refurbished *British fossils*, and several new exhibitions: *Minerals and gems* and *The useful earth*. The top floor galleries will be replaced by exhibitions on *Building and construction*, *Landscape and scenery*, and *Palaeoenvironment*.

GCG Seminar Report: Mining the heritage seam

4 and 5 December 1991 at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery

This must have been one of the best attended meetings I have been to since joining GCG, with over 80 people attending the seminar on the first day, held in Dudley Town Hall.

After a welcome by John Simpson, the Chairman of Dudley Leisure Services Committee, the meeting started with an interesting talk by Dr John Powell of the British Geological Survey (BGS), who gave us a geological background to the planning and development of the Black Country. He began by outlining the local geology, emphasising the economically valuable coal, limestone, iron ore and clay deposits of the area. He then went on to the role of BGS in the Black Country, in particular the mapping projects they are undertaking at the moment, which will be of great benefit to both geologists and planners. Lastly, he described the difficulties encountered when geologists and developers come into conflict, as they so frequently do.

The second speaker was our host, Colin Reid, who spoke about recent developments and future plans for Dudley. He began by mentioning Murchison's interest in the area in the 1840s, and the origins of the museum in those days. He then described the

successive history of the collections, and the gradual decline of interest in the museum, culminating in the shocking state of the collections when Colin was employed around six years ago. Since then he has had to reawaken the interest of the public by mounting exhibitions, activities for children and new gallery displays. However, he admits that they still have a long way to go before achieving the kinds of plans Murchison envisaged for the local heritage.

Next, Alan Cutler of the Black Country Geological Society (BCGS) spoke about the role that the BCGS plays in conservation of both sites and collections. He mentioned specifically the development of the Wren's Nest Nature Reserve, and the difficulty of getting geologically important sites recognised. He described the assessment factors used in setting up Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) which are recognised and listed but not protected like Sites of Special Scientific Interest. He stressed that although most people tend to think only of the biological importance of listed sites, many are in fact recognised for their geological importance.

Charles Copp then spoke on the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation geological sites database which he is setting up as the equivalent of the biological 'Recorder' database. He discussed the problems encountered with non-uniformity of terminology used by geologists. Stratigraphic terms and fossil names, for example, are not standardised enough, and synonyms are often used. However, most of the work has now been done and he is hoping that the database will soon be available for use.

After a very enjoyable lunch, provided by the museum, and a chance to look round the galleries, it was time for the final talk of the day. Rosemary Roden enlarged on the problems of being a self-financing peripatetic curator. She spoke about two major collections she has had to deal with recently, both found by her to be in a shocking condition. These have now been cleaned up, re-curated and stored in much more acceptable conditions. Along the way this has resulted in Rosemary having to learn many new skills, including designing and building displays and learning to use a computer in a very short space of time.

The seminar was rounded off with a short discussion session and was then called to a close. It was generally agreed that, despite musical accompaniment from the tea-dance downstairs, the talks were a great success. The speakers were all thanked before we adjourned for tea and then the AGM.

After a fairly short and uneventful AGM, we were reminded that our presence would be appreciated at the official 'opening' of the new Geological Gallery windows. The Mayor spoke briefly - because of the cold - and then the windows were officially lit for the first time. *The windows are intended to be illuminated at night to draw attention to the collections inside.* They were designed by Steve Field, Dudley Borough Artist-in-Residence, and sand-blasted by six students at the International

Glass Centre, and do tend to brighten up the outside of an otherwise unobtrusive building.

Promptly at 6.45pm most of us arrived back at the Museum for a guided tour of the Black Country by night. Unfortunately, our bus did not arrive quite so promptly, and it was around half an hour later when we finally embarked. Valuable drinking time lost, some said! Once we thawed out, a very good time was had by all, helped by many varied pints of the local brew. A trip to a small local brewery was followed by a second hostelry which provided each of us with a large slab of 'Pit Pony Pie', mushy peas, spuds and lashings of gravy. A very welcome and warming meal. Finally we moved on to the 'Dry Dock' where the bar itself has been made out of an old canal-boat. All too soon this establishment closed, and we were taken back to Dudley to be dropped off near our various hotels. Congratulations to Colin for organising such an interesting evening. The beer was, by all accounts, well worth it!

The second day dawned cold but dry, so we gathered, around 50 strong, bleary-eyed and shivering, in the Zoo car park for a visit to the *Geochrom*. This turned out to be a walk through time guided by large day-glo trilobites with flashing eyes. After the Silurian, Devonian and Carboniferous environments of the Dudley area, we were given a choice of pathways into the future, one into a dead, polluted world, or another through a doorway into a lush, tropical greenhouse. This forms the final part of the exhibition.

The next stop on the trail was the Black Country Museum, where we were taken into a very impressive mock-up of a drift mine. Lit only by a few dim torches, the atmosphere of a mine in the 1850s was extremely well recreated, and it was all too easy to imagine the dangerous conditions under which the seams had been mined. The impressive chamber where the 30 foot 'Thick Coal' seam was mined was especially good, and there were several exclamations at the thought of men undercutting a face of that height, sometimes 18 feet into the seam, in order to then drop the rest of the coal down. The frequency of accidents must have been staggering.

After a chance to recover over a cup of coffee, we all piled onto a canal boat and were taken into the old limestone workings deep under Castle Hill. These were also awe-inspiring and I would recommend a visit. Visitors on these trips are often given the chance to try the art of 'legging' the boat along - well done Colin for volunteering.

Lunch was partaken of in the Black Country Museum restaurant, or liquid refreshment was available in the 'Village Inn'. Then it was back to the cars for the final outing of the day. After some of us had been aimlessly driving round a local housing estate for a while, we all met up again at the Wren's Nest Nature Reserve. Guided by the Senior Warden, we followed part of the trail round the hillside. We were given several opportunities to search for 'Dudley Bugs' in the scree, as collecting from the rock faces is forbidden. This met with little success though. We continued with the

very enjoyable and informative walk around the rest of the trail, and then as the temperature was plummeting, the meeting was called to a close. Simon Knell thanked the Warden for escorting us around the reserve, then we all joined in thanking Colin for organising such a thoroughly action-packed meeting. I personally would like to thank again everyone who helped to make this such an enjoyable meeting.

Cindy Howells
National Museum of Wales.

GEOEVENTS at the Yorkshire Museum 25 - 28 October 1991

Following the successful Fossils Roadshows of 1989 and 1990, we considered that a broadening of this geological event was appropriate. In addition, we were keen to offer a free venue to local, regional and national organisations involved with geology, providing them with a chance to show the varied ways in which they are involved in the subject. On the strength of their response to our initial enquiries we felt confident enough to launch GEOEVENTS.

The four day programme consisted of:

Guided stone walks. On the Friday, two walks were led by Eric Robinson (President of the Geologists' Association) around York Cemetery; Tony Benfield (Yorkshire Geological Society) and a member of the museum staff led two walks around the City of York on the Sunday; and museum staff led two around the Museum Gardens on the Monday. Two spontaneous walks took place on the Saturday principally arranged for members of the Nationwide Geology Club who held their AGM in the afternoon.

Minerals, Rocks and Fossils Roadshow. A panel of experts fielded over 100 specimens in the course of the Saturday. Our usual team of Fred Dunning, Simon Knell and Paul Wignall was joined by Professor A. Dunham and Nick Riley who represented the Yorkshire Geological Society. Richard Moore demonstrated his computer program designed to identify Liassic belemnites.

Displays. These were housed in the Hospitium, a restored medieval building in the Museum Gardens. The lower floor was given over to displays prepared by the following bodies: British Geological Survey, Geologists' Association (GA), Geological Society (Yorkshire Regional Group), Earth Science Teachers Association (ESTA), Hull Geological Society, Leeds Geological Association, Palaeontographical Society, Palaeontological Association (Pal Ass), English Nature - RIGS, Russell Society, Departments of Earth Sciences and Adult Continuing Education of the University of Leeds, RockWATCH, York Geology Club, and the Yorkshire Geological Society (YGS). The quality of the stands was high and they deservedly aroused much interest from the visiting public. In addition, GEOSUPPLIES of Sheffield could supply both field and armchair geologist alike from their ample stocks of equipment and books.

Demonstrations. On the Sunday, ESTA took over from the Roadshow and entertained the public with 'Know your minerals, rocks and fossils - a hands-on experience'. They continued to field the odd roadshow enquiry as well.

Competition. Visiting members of the public were invited to attempt to guess how many crocodile teeth were in a small glass tube. Of the 147 people who had a go, 312 and 310 were the closest guesses to the 313 present. First day covers of the Royal Mail issue of dinosaur stamps were given to the nearest nine, courtesy of Royal Mail (York).

Publicity for the above events was achieved through circulars of organisations involved (Pal Ass, GA and YGS), the production of 4000 A5 flyers for the summer and then 1000 full colour posters for distribution in late September. The latter were produced by Design 4 of Manchester with generous grant aid from the Curry Fund of the GA. The A4 poster was a particular challenge to the designer who had to ensure sufficient information about what was happening when and where at the same time as having room for an eye-catching cartoon.

The response to GEOEVENTS was certainly favourable from those participating and we were encouraged by the number who expressed a desire to be involved in a repeat performance. Numbers of the public attending were in excess of 1000 over the four days, with the bulk of these being on the Saturday and Sunday.

So where do we go from what has been a Yorkshire Museum centred event to date? The aim is that the programme for this year can become more devolved and at the same time grow in size. We hope that there will be a series of regionally organized events throughout October put on by museums and societies etc in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, encouraging the public to become more aware of geology and how it impinges on their way of life. These might be exhibitions or displays, lectures, stone walks, or field trips. The publicity for these varied events could be advertised on one poster (as in Welsh Geology Week) and locally by participating organisations. Already outline events have been formulated by Hull City Museums and the Hull Geological Society. In addition, the Yorkshire Geological Society hope to have a celebrity lecture. Other organisations seem keen to contribute.

Of course, this is all old-hat to the GCG who have been here before with the very successful series of events organised during the centenary year of the Museums Association in 1989. A further series of nationwide activities organised regionally, in the devolved way mentioned above and used by GCG in 1989, could be successfully used to make the public increasingly aware of one of the most exciting 'books to be read' - the record of the rocks.

Paul C. Ensom,
Keeper of Geology, Yorkshire Museum.

Newish publications

Mountains of fire. The nature of volcanoes by R.W. Decker and B.B. Decker. Cambridge University Press, 1991, 226pp. Hardback: ISBN 0 521 32176X, £30.00; paperback: ISBN 0 521 31290 6, £10.95.

Tracking dinosaurs. A new look at an ancient world by M. Lockley. Cambridge University Press, 1991, 249pp. Hardback: ISBN 0 521 39463 5, £27.50; paperback: ISBN 0 521 42598 0, £9.95.

The great dinosaur atlas. A pictorial guide to the prehistoric world by William Lindsay. Dorling Kindersley, 1991, 64pp. ISBN 0 86318 628 9. £9.99.

Gems and crystals by Anna S.Sofianides and George E. Harlow. American Museum of Natural History, 1991, 208pp.

Darwin by Adrian Desmond and James Moore. Michael Joseph, 1991, 808pp. ISBN 0 7181 3430 3. £20.00.

Annual Bibliography of the history of natural history. Volume 5. Publications of 1986. Natural History Museum, 1991, ISBN 0 565 01123 5. £10.00.

Heroic books

Roger Collicott of Honiton Old Bookshop will shortly be publishing a catalogue entitled *The heroic age of geology*. This will contain antiquarian geology books for sale, many of which date between 1804 and 1830. There are a number of interesting association copies and original letters. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the catalogue, please contact Roger Collicott, Honiton Old Bookshop, Felix House, 51 High Street, Honiton, Devon EX14 8PW Tel. 0404 47180.

Fossil facelift at Yorkshire Museum

Two major fossils from the Yorkshire Museum are destined to receive a major facelift. A 30 foot long ichthyosaur and a smaller plesiosaur have been removed from their wall mounts to be taken to Bristol City Museum where they will be prepared and conserved by David Hill, Geological Conservator for the Area Museum Council for the South West, in a three year project.

After recently featuring in the Museum's record-breaking *Monsters of the Deep* exhibition, work must now be carried out on the specimens to eliminate damp penetration and salt growth which cause deterioration. A mixture of tissue paper and water-based resin helped to hold the fossils together while they were moved. The plesiosaur has arrived at the laboratory in Bristol, and the ichthyosaur will be sent in March 1993. The specimens, which were built into the gallery wall, took two and a half weeks to remove. The ichthyosaur head alone took 2 days.

Paul Ensom, Keeper of Geology at the Yorkshire Museum, said: "These specimens have tremendous visual importance. Once conserved, prepared, and remounted, they will be centrepieces for the new geology galleries which are currently being planned."

More news from York

Yorkshire Museum has acquired a stuffed spotted hyaena which will form part of a reconstruction of a hyaena den in the museum's new geology gallery. Such a den was described by William Buckland in the 1820s at Kirkdale Cave near Kirkbymoorside in North Yorkshire.

The three year old male hyaena originally came from a game park in this country and was bought with 50 per cent grant aid from the Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material Grant Fund administered by the Science Museum.

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