



DROPPINGS
FROM THE
GEOLOGICAL
CURATORS
GROUP

Coprolite is compiled and produced by Helen Kerbey, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff CF10 3NP (e-mail Helen.Kerbey@museumwales.ac.uk, tel +44 (0)29 20 573367). It is published three times a year in March, June and November. Any material for inclusion should be sent to Helen Kerbey by the first of the previous month, i.e. by 1 February, 1 May or 1 October.

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Exhibitions

New exhibition at the Sedgwick Museum

'From mountains to microscope' has been developed with Cambridge University palaeontologists Drs Nick Butterfield and Tom Harvey. The display highlights research they are currently undertaking on the microscopic remains of early animals found in the Cambrian rocks of Canada. Unlike the famous but rare Burgess-shale type assemblages, these 'Small Carbonaceous Fossils' represent isolated parts of whole animals and are found across western Canada, with many samples coming from drill cores. They help reveal ancestral and extinct anatomies and, being much more widespread their whole-body counterparts, allow the larger scale patterns of the Cambrian explosion to be mapped in space and time. The exhibition opens on May 1st.

Keep in contact

Web site: Geocurator.org

NEW!!! Facebook: Geological Curators' Group.
NEW!!! Twitter: OriginalGCG and hashtag #GCG.

Musical Curators

Will Watts is now Head of Public Programmes at Scarborough Museums Trust.

Fossil, mineral and gem shows 2013

8-9 Jun	Kempton Park Racecourse. Rock & Gem Show
7 Jul	Oxford Mineral Fossil Show www.oxfordshow.co.uk/home
13-14 Jul	Farnham Maltings Gem 'n' Bead Show
3-4 Aug	Kempton Park Racecourse. Rock & Gem Show
10-11 Aug	Welsh Rock 'n' Gem Show
17-18 Aug	Harrogate Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show
31 Aug – 1 Sep	Crawley Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show
7 Sep	Hampshire Show www.sotonminfoss.org.uk/smfsshow.htm
7 – 8 Sep	Newton Abbot Rock 'n' Gem Show
15 Sep	Oxford Mineral Fossil Show www.oxfordshow.co.uk/home
21-22 Sept	Newark Rock Gem 'n' Bead Show

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www.rockngem.co.uk

Meeting reports

Guernsey Museum interrupted

The theme of the meeting was 'doing more with less', and by quirk of fate, it turned into something of a practical session. All but two suffered travel disruption with Guernsey Airport blanketed in fog on Wednesday afternoon and evening, and the blind landing system at the airport out of action due to runway resurfacing. Hasty arrangements were made in Manchester, Bristol, Southampton and Gatwick as people stalled en route. Worth recording here was the great service provided by Aurigny, the Guernsey State airline, in putting people in hotels and rebooking them. Myself and Helen Kerbey joined John Nudds and Cindy Howells the next morning once the fog lifted, and Jim Spencer followed soon after. Luanne Fauknall was not so lucky and had to abandon trip as the fog descended for a second evening. Tom Sharpe got to fly from Bristol, but was diverted to Jersey and spent an enforced night there, before finally joining us for the field trip on Friday.

Fortunately, Alan Howell, our Guernsey Museum and Art Gallery host had been able to rearrange the local contributors and we held the talks and collections visit in the afternoon, leaving out only the formal discussion session. Interruptions again marked proceedings as first Dr Jason Monaghan, the Museum Director was stopped by one of his staff to inform him the Minister and the Chinese Ambassador had arrived! He had in fact just about arrived at the conclusion of his presentation on the full spectrum of what the effective National Museum service does, including looking after various heritage properties.

The notable interruption in Alan Howell's talk on the history of the geology collection came when a member of staff informed him that 'a very dead frozen

buzzard had arrived'. This pythonesque moment was a reminder of how unpredictable the role of a geological or natural science curator can be from day to day. The museum was founded on the collection of Frederick Corbin Lukis (1788-1871) and his son Francis du Bois Lukis who bequeathed the family home and the collection to form the museum in 1907. Frederick Corbin Lukis is a celebrated figure on the island, being a polymath, antiquarian, pioneer archaeologist and collector as well as geologist.

In 1938 the collection was moved to a Lukis and Island Museum, installed in a former church along with another collection of fine and decorative art. The former Guille-Allès library and museum which had opened in 1888 transferred its museum collections to the care of the States in 1978, when both collections were brought together in their present accommodation. Arthur Mourant, a later famous Jersey scientist—for his work on blood groups—had previously looked at the Lukis minerals, and Rob Ixer visited during 1983 and reported on their state after the moves in 1978. Things were to look up for geology in the museum in 1986 when Alan Howell was appointed as Natural Science Curator.

As well as visiting the Guernsey Museum displays (locally still referred to as the Candie Museum, from its location in a purpose built museum in the Candie Gardens), we visited the new Museum storage, which we had heard much about in a talk, by Operations Manager Clive Martin, aptly titled 'the long road to upgraded storage', also covering a number of previous moves. As for many of us, tribulations imposed from outside mean that the curator's aspirations are not always achieved, and Alan showed us the much improved mobile storage system, but also some not-so-good elements still awaiting the upgrade process. After much investigative browsing in the collection (Lukis collected island minerals, but there are also many fossils from elsewhere, a silicified wood collection and others) we were treated to a wine reception in the museum.

Friday 26th April was fortunately fog-free, allowing Tom Sharpe to finally join us, and indeed turned out to be a beautiful day for an excellent field trip to key sites on the island. Our leader, Dr John Renouf from Jersey, who was with us on Thursday, first set the scene with a talk on the geology of Guernsey in the museum. The main thrust of the geology is unfamiliar to those reared on UK Palaeozoic and Mesozoic geology, with affinities to the Armorican Massif rocks of Brittany. Ancient gneisses from about 2-2.5 billion years ago, considered as basement elsewhere, are well exposed in the larger, southern part of Guernsey. The northern part is dominated by diorite and granites from the Cadomian Orogeny, dated to various ages between 650 and 490 million years ago. We were joined by local geological colleagues of Alan, and took an effective anti-clockwise circuit of the coast.

Stop 1 was at Spur Point on the northern side of Belle Greve Bay, north of the town, St Peter Port. Here some unusual gabbro has hornblende rich bands and clots that are quite visible to the naked eye where the sea has battered the surfaces smooth. This is locally termed a "Bird's Eye Gabbro". There were also rare

orbicular structures. Small areas are so hornblende rich, with hornblende substituting for augite, that they are termed bojite, and some loose material was found in the beach.

Stop 2 was after a longer but more scenic tour of the northern coast, passing by many disused quarries within the Bordeaux Diorite Complex. The salmon pink Cobo Granite was bathed in sunlight against azure blue sea water.

Stop 3+4, further west was at L'Eree, where we really began to explore John Renouf's primary research interest in the landscape evolution of the Channel Islands, particularly in the glacial and post-glacial periods, and its relationship to early human occupation and archaeology going back to Palaeolithic times. Raised beach platforms are cut in the bedrock around much of the island, and the present sea level is only about 2 metres lower than the main terrace so the interpretation of subtle features is not without difficulty. John was able to help us envisage verdant prehistoric landscapes across Rocquaine Bay where now the sea has since cut back the former slopes and shoreline. At the start of the causeway to Lihou Island was a significant raised beach deposit, part of the evidence for this. The first section on the north of the little headland showed the very clear head or rock solifluction deposits overlying the raised beach of rounded pebbles at the back of the platform. Next stop was the Imperial Hotel at Torteval for a fine lunch.

Stop 5 was at Petit Bôt Bay, where as well as a good chance to examine the very attractive Icart Gneiss, we also had ice cream and a look at a restored and accessible Guernsey Tower (although these are a little older and different from the typical UK and Irish examples of Martello Towers that I have seen). Also in this beautiful flower decked wooded valley was the remains of both an overshot and an undershot water powered mill.

The final stop was at the Doyle Column on the Jerbourg Peninsula at the south east corner of the island. Steep descent on good paths took us down to Marble Bay where an excellent wave cut platform sits clearly above present levels. Continuing along the coast path we were shown some metasediments, which are the oldest rocks in Guernsey, at around 2.5 billion years. Further south a promontory is marked by excavated gullies and revetments. Here we looked at further evidence of post glacial events. A thick deposit of loess overlies a head deposit in the bay to the south. In part, the head has been calcreted by lime leached from the loess, and in one place a distinct lime pan had formed at the base of the loess.

At this point John and Alan left in order to catch John's return flight to Jersey, so it was here that we said our grateful thanks to John Renouf, and to the geological and archaeological colleagues, John Lihou, Andy Dorey and David Dorey who had also generously imparted their knowledge and transported us around. Most of us managed to meet later for dinner and enthuse further over a most enjoyable and interesting visit. For the geology of Guernsey, and indeed the Channel Islands I am left with a clear mental picture of what are now islands or large tracts of rock planed down to be fully exposed only at low tide (such as Les Minquiers), having

once been merely the high ground forming the coastline to much of Brittany and France in a Quaternary landscape with much lower sea level. For the museum and for Alan Howell who retires next year, I can only offer GCG's thanks for organising an excellent meeting and wish him good luck with the geology collections projects he hopes to complete in that time.

Matthew Parkes.

Publications

A collection of papers from the **Hazardous Substances in Collections Conference** at the Museum of London, 22 November 2012 is now available to download here <http://ctt-news.org/6S6-17TZX-NALEV-HF3H9-1/c.aspx>

Anonymous. **Duelling over a Mongolian dinosaur.** *Science* 336, p965. Auction house is waiting to find out who owns a nearly complete Tarbosaurus skeleton before completing its sale.

Araujo, R., Natario, C., Pound, M. 2011. **How to mount an inexpensive sieving lab.** *Journal of Paleontological Techniques*. No. 9 pp1-8
www.jpaleontologicaltechniques.org/pasta3/JPT%20N9/Pdf/JPT_n009_Dec.pdf

BGS. **Geology of the Dudley District** – brief sheet explanation for E167 by the British Geological Survey.

Brinkman, Paul. **The Second Jurassic Dinosaur Rush: Museums and Paleontology in America at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.**

Falkingham P.L. 2012. **Acquisition of high resolution three-dimensional models using free, open-source, photogrammetric software.** *Palaeontologia Electronica* 15: 1T:15p.

Trewin, Nigel. **Scottish Fossils.** Dunedin Academic Press, 144 pages.

MEMBERS OFFER!

Manson Publishing is delighted to offer members of the Geological Curators Group a 20% discount (plus free UK p&p) on their Earth Science books during 2013. To claim your discount please enter promotional code 'GCGROUP' when purchasing books online at www.mansonpublishing.com/earth or sending orders to: NBN International, Airport Business Centre, 10 Thornbury Road, Plymouth PL6 7PP, T: 01752 202 301, F: 01752 202333, E: orders@nbninternational.com For more information or to request an inspection copy please contact Natalie Wills, T: 07957 198967, E: natalie@mansonpublishing.com

News and Comment

Geology Museum at Wigan & Leigh College

A big thank you to all GCG members (and others) for assisting me in the disposal of the Geology Museum of Wigan & Leigh College, formerly the Wigan & District

Mining & Technical College. The task seemed impossible and a large 'skip' loomed, as the College were selling the building within which I had reconstructed the collection from storage. The 'old kitchen' where the museum had been rehoused consisted of 48 displays, holding over 18000 specimens, 3000 maps and a library collection, all dating from the opening of the Museum in 1883.

A discussion with David Craven was the starting point and a number of interested organisations quickly contacted and acted with the urgency needed. Eventually the core of the collection went to Liverpool and Manchester Museums, with thanks to David Gelsthorpe and Wendy Simkiss. Wigan Heritage Service removed various mining materials (thanks to Yvonne Webb). Dennis Gamble relocated a large part of the Invertebrate Collection, plus many books. Harry Critchley of the Russell Society (and members) sorted through the Minerals. Kevin Stephen of Altrincham Boys Grammar School rehoused the teaching collections, maps and equipment. Amanda Edwards of Manchester University relocated the old Geological Maps and Sections. The Stratigraphy displays, numerous specimens and display cases went to the Education Room at Haigh Hall Country Park (Wigan Leisure Services). Finally College students 'grazed' the left overs!

A sad end to a wonderful resource, but with an outcome which will bring many of the materials to a wider audience. In retirement, I am a volunteer assistant, working on the cataloguing and displaying of the collection at Haigh Hall. Still working with some of the Museum!!

Steve Hewitt

Darkened, but definitely not dormant!

The Oxford University Museum of Natural History may be closed for a year of roof repairs, but lots of things are going on inside and outside the Museum. From the 14th May to 29th September, our specimens will feature in an exhibition called 'Natural Histories' at Oxford's Museum of the History of Science. Themes will include 'Collecting, preserving, studying', a celebration of the tradition of collecting natural history specimens, and 'Order' which introduces ideas of classification. 'Time and change' focuses on evolution, adaption, and our understanding of geological time, while 'Lost and found' tells about extinction and the discovery of new ecosystems.

Geological specimens going on display include fossils collected by Miss Philpott and Mary Anning, the *Megalosaurus* jaw and other bones made famous by Dr William Buckland, fine minerals and mineral fakes sold by British mineral dealers, and samples of rock from the short-lived Graham's island in the Mediterranean. We'll be showing some of our White Watson tablets and a William Smith map in a case on 'Representation', another of our themes. The modern face of natural history will feature the amazing fossils with soft-body preservation discovered by Professor Derek Siveter and his colleagues.

We will have touchable specimens and a lively programme of activities and events, from the family friendly trail running through the exhibition, to activity days,

handling sessions, late night events, gallery tours and lectures. Needless to say, the exhibition will have its own special website with lots of images and information. Watch our website, www.oum.ox.ac.uk for more details.

While we are closed, you can also read our blog 'Darkened not dormant' <http://darkenednotdormant.wordpress.com>, and follow us – @morethanadodo – on Twitter. Later in the summer, you'll be able to follow a trail around the town, finding Museum specimens in shops and businesses. Any guesses where our 'fool's gold' is going to go?! It may be a bit dark around the Museum, but it's business as usual, behind the scenes.

Monica Price

Thousands of Charnias are in the rocks

The British Geological Survey recently took casts of potentially interesting rock faces in Charnwood Forrest and discovered far more fossil Charnias than they could see by eye. They used silicone rubber to take copies of the rock face and then made casts back in the lab. The project team leader Dr Phil Wilby said "By using the silicon moulds we have discovered there are literally thousands of fossils and they are gobsmackingly beautiful. "They are absolutely world class. Some of them are substantial in size but it's almost impossible to see them in the forest because they only become visible when the sun is at the right angle." It is thought that this newly found big community of Charnias was killed en masse. The casts are on display at New Walk Museum in Leicester. From bbc.co.uk on 4 May 2013.

Museum Association Survey report

The MA has just released a report about the British public's perception of Museums. Following a survey the report has concluded that the public - visiting and non-visiting - clearly value core roles including collections, education and knowledge creation ahead of other roles including social engineering: www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/01042013-news-analysis

Web sites of interest

www.bgs.ac.uk/data/historicalmaps/home.html contains historical maps of the Geological Survey of Great Britain and Ireland. On this site will be found all the maps and sections that were produced in hand-coloured form for the period 1835–1905. They are provided under an Open Government Licence.

Blogs – here are a few for you to check out. I'm sure there are more. Let me know if there are any others that you wish to share with members.

<http://gb3dtypefossils.blogspot.co.uk/>

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/blog/?cat=1764>

<http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/museums/category/geology/>

<http://geologymatters.org.uk/blog/>

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/natureplus/blogs/micropalaeo/>

<http://palaeomanchester.wordpress.com/>

If you are really bored look at this web site for a wonderful song about sand:
http://blog.wfmu.org/freeform/2007/02/365_days_50_gen.html

Forthcoming seminars and workshops

Check our website www.geocurator.org for updates to our seminar programme.

27th August 2013 SPPC Symposium

The 22nd Symposium of **Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation** (SPPC) will be held in conjunction with the **Geological Curators' Group** (GCG) meeting at National Museums Scotland (Edinburgh) on August 27th, 2013. This combined meeting will be followed by the 61st Symposium of Vertebrate Palaeontology and Comparative Anatomy (SVPCA; 28th to 30th August), which will include a field trip to important Palaeozoic fossiliferous sites in the Scottish Borders on August 31st.

Platform and poster presentations on all aspects of geological and palaeontological preparation, conservation and curation are invited for the combined SPPC/GCG meeting, and on all aspects of vertebrate palaeontology and comparative anatomy for the SVPCA meeting. Further details for both meetings are available in the first circular, which can be downloaded from http://svpca.org/years/2013_edinburgh/first.circular.php, and booking for the meeting can be made via the SVPCA website at <http://svpca.org/index.php>. If you are interested in attending either of these meetings and would like to be included on the mailing list, please contact Stig Walsh (s.walsh@nms.ac.uk).

Organisers: Vicen Carrió, Stig Walsh, Stephen Brusatte, Jeff Liston and Nick Fraser.

18-20 September 2013 1st International Conservation Symposium Workshop – Natural History Collections

The Centre de Restauació i Interpretació Paleontològica, Barcelona, Spain. The main purpose of this symposium-workshop is to emphasize all those concepts related to protection and conservation of Natural History Collections. For a full list of speakers and workshops see the flyer at <http://www.igme.es/internet/novedades/congresos/1st%20Program-%20NEW.pdf> or contact Sandra Val sval@crip.cat



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