



# COPROLITE

No. 81  
March  
2017

DROPPINGS  
FROM THE  
GEOLOGICAL  
CURATORS  
GROUP

*Coprolite* is compiled and produced by Helen Kerbey, Production Editor, *Mineralogical Magazine*, 12 Baylis Mews, Amyand Park Road, Twickenham, TW1 3HQ. (e-mail [coprolite@geocurator.org](mailto:coprolite@geocurator.org), tel +44 (0)2920 513901). 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.

**Chairman:** Matthew Parkes, Assistant Keeper, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland, Merrion Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. Email: [chairman@geocurator.org](mailto:chairman@geocurator.org)

**Secretary:** Sarah King, York Museums Trust, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York, YO1 7FR. Email: [secretary@geocurator.org](mailto:secretary@geocurator.org)

**Treasurer:** Dr Rachel Walcott, Principal Curator, Earth Systems, Department of Natural Sciences, National Museums Scotland, Chambers St, Edinburgh EH1 1JF. Email: [treasurer@geocurator.org](mailto:treasurer@geocurator.org)

## New Committee 2017

Following the 2016 AGM in Bristol the new Committee for 2017 is:

**Chairman:** Matthew Parkes, [chair@geocurator.org](mailto:chair@geocurator.org)

**Secretary:** Sarah King, [secretary@geocurator.org](mailto:secretary@geocurator.org)

**Treasurer:** Rachel Walcott, [treasurer@geocurator.org](mailto:treasurer@geocurator.org)

**Minutes Secretary:** Tony Morgan, [minutes@geocurator.org](mailto:minutes@geocurator.org)

**Programme Secretary:** Zoë Hughes, [events@geocurator.org](mailto:events@geocurator.org)

**Collections Officer:** Mike Howe, [collections@geocurator.org](mailto:collections@geocurator.org)

**Journal Editor:** Matthew Parkes, [journal@geocurator.org](mailto:journal@geocurator.org)

**Newsletter Editor:** Helen Kerbey, [coprolite@geocurator.org](mailto:coprolite@geocurator.org)

**Web Officer:** Simon Harris, [webmaster@geocurator.org](mailto:webmaster@geocurator.org)

**Membership Officer:** Cindy Howells, [membership@geocurator.org](mailto:membership@geocurator.org)

**Ordinary Members:** Emma Bernard, Luanne Meehitiya, Alex Peaker  
**Co-opted Member; NatSCA representative; blog editor:** Isla Gladstone  
**Co-opted Member; ICON representative:** Nigel Larkin

New website under construction, new generic emails.  
Visit [geocurator.org](http://geocurator.org)

## Meeting Report

### **43rd GCG meeting and AGM: The ethics of UK fossil collecting: from the shore to the store**

On 6th December 2016 I was one of the 56 people gathered at M Shed, Bristol for a hotly anticipated meeting with a panoramic view of a drizzly Bristol port. There was a good mix of fossil collectors, dealers, academics and museum staff.

Janet Ulph from the University of Leicester kicked off the conference by outlining the letter of the law when it comes to museum acquisitions and disposals. It was surprising how quickly this got into deep philosophical territory – for example, are fossils cultural property or not? Surprisingly mind-bending questions like this that came up throughout the day. Janet went through some fascinating case studies including a *T rex* illegally exported and subsequently returned to Mongolia.

Martin Munt from Dinosaur Isle was next, describing how dinosaurs and other large vertebrates can erode slowly from the cliffs of the Isle of Wight, resulting in them being collected over many years and becoming a political hot topic. Martin described how their museum collaborated with amateur collectors and landowners to slowly reunite fragments of specimens such as *Baryonyx* for display and study in their museum.

Errol Fuller from Summers Place Auctions followed on from this with a provocative talk stressing that fossil collectors and dealers have been central to museum collections for centuries and that fossil dealing can be both economically and educationally important. He stressed that legislation can backfire and lead to more fossils being lost. Jeff Liston from Yunnan University continued to unpick the intricacies of the international fossil trade. The intended and unintended effects of international attempts to legislate collecting were again a theme.

Lunch gave us all a chance to mingle before a talk by Alastair Brown from the Museums Association (MA) shifted the focus to the recently updated MA Code of Ethics. This outlines the responsibilities of museums under the three pillars of Individual and Institutional Integrity, Stewardship of Collections and Public Engagement and Public Benefit.



The rest of the afternoon returned to the topic of how to work together pragmatically to make the most of amazing fossil discoveries. Well known fossil collector David Sole talked about how the Dorset Jurassic Coast developed a voluntary collecting code in 1998. This allows responsible collecting and stipulates that important specimens are reported to the Charmouth Coast Heritage Centre for documentation before being returned to the collector. Finally, Sam Scriven and Will Watts from the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site spoke about building on this code to create a Jurassic Coast Collection from the finds that collectors have unearthed. This could mean many things – a digital record, a catalogue, perhaps eventually a new accredited museum on the Jurassic Coast.

Throughout the day there was some good debate, unpicking the intricacies of how fossil collecting relates to legislation, ethics and pragmatic cooperation. Tea and scones fortified us for the 43rd AGM and then on to the pub!

The next day some of us headed to Bristol's Redcliffe caves where caver Alan Gray enthusiastically guided us around this huge man-made cave system carved over centuries from the Red Sandstone underneath this part of Bristol. We saw pencil thin speleothems, the underside of tree roots that had worked their way through solid concrete and – my favourite – the "cave painting" created by an old film crew. I have to admit, I was flagging a bit in the afternoon, but Isla Gladstone's tour of Bristol Museum's geology stores soon revived me! The highlight for me was getting

a sneak peek at the Westbury Pliosaur, an arthritic 8m long Jurassic beast that will be going on display in an exhibition next year.

**Luanne Meehitiya**

## **Looking for Amber, Copal, and Plant Exudates**

Jorge Santiago-Blay, Department of Paleobiology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, District of Columbia 2050 USA

Amber is fossilized plant resin. Copal is partially fossilized plant resin. Resins, along with gums and phenolics, are the three basic types of plant exudates that one can often easily collect by hand, without extraction. For years, Dr. Joseph B Lambert (Emeritus, Department of Chemistry, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA; currently at the Department of Chemistry, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, USA) and I have been studying amber, copal, and plant exudates using nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy (NMR). Examples of papers or ours published recently can be found in the following links and references therein listed.

<https://blaypublishers.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/lambert-et-al-2016-leb-43215-2321.pdf>

<https://blaypublishers.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/lambert-et-al-leb-34-japanese-amber.pdf>

<https://blaypublishers.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/lambert-et-al-nmr-monocot-exudates1.pdf>

<https://blaypublishers.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/leb-24-1-30-lambert-et-al.pdf>

Although samples need to be pulverized, they are not burnt or chemically altered. Do you have amber, copal, and plant exudates you would like analyzed via NMR or have something constructive you would like to comment on? If "yes", please contact me at [blayjorge@gmail.com](mailto:blayjorge@gmail.com). Thank you.

## **Exhibitions**

### **Wills Memorial Building (Earth Sciences), Bristol**

'Is it Magma' is an exhibition that showcases sculptures and video footage by Bristol-based artist Jo Lathwood who has been researching the possibilities of shaping and casting molten rock through alchemical experiments. The majority of works on display have been created by heating up the volcanic rock Andesite to a molten state and then pouring it into bespoke moulds. Jo has been inspired and supported by a multidisciplinary team of geologists, founders, sculptors and material scientists.



The exhibition is part of an ongoing collaboration between staff and students from the School of Earth Sciences and visual artists based at Spike Island studios in Bristol. Visitors are welcome to view the exhibition as part of the Wills Memorial Building Tower Tour.

**Claudia Hildebrandt**, Collections & Practicals Manager, School of Earth Sciences University of Bristol

### **NHM, London**

The iconic 'dippy' diplodocus cast from the Hintze Hall at the Natural History Museum has been taken down after and is to go on tour.

The gallery is closed until the summer while new exhibits are put in place - a spectacular redevelopment, exploring humanity's relationship with the natural world. The new displays will represent the full extent of the Museum's collections - how much geology remains to be seen.

### **Publications of interest**

**On the mineralogy of the "Anthropocene Epoch"** by Robert M. Hazen, Edward S. Grew, Marcus J. Origlieri, Robert T. Downs (2017)

*American Mineralogist*, **102**, 595-611.

This paper created a host of news stories about new minerals that are due to anthropogenic interference. E.g. growing on mine walls, or spoil tips. See the Scientific American article for one example:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/found-thousands-of-man-made-minerals-mdash-another-argument-for-the-anthropocene/>

**Penarth Alabaster** by Michael Statham

<https://museum.wales/curadurol/daeareg/fforwm-cerrig-cymru/projects/>

A comprehensive report on the extensive use of elaborate pink alabaster sourced from South Wales.

Dr Michael A. Taylor (mat22@le.ac.uk) has supplied details of various publications about **historical collectors and collections**, including some in GCG publication The Geological Curator. Older issues of which are available on our website for free [geocurator.org].

M. Gostwick 2016. The Birthplace Cottage. A dark place with some probably insoluble mysteries [the Hugh Miller Birthplace Cottage in Cromarty]. Hugh's News. Newsletter of the Friends of Hugh Miller 27, 5-8.

<http://s3.spanglefish.com/s/27844/documents/newsletters/newsletterwinter16.pdf>

M. A. Taylor 2016. Keith Leask and his biography of Hugh Miller. Hugh's News. Newsletter of the Friends of Hugh Miller 27, 13-15.

<http://s3.spanglefish.com/s/27844/documents/newsletters/newsletterwinter16.pdf>

M. A. Taylor 2016. The Reverend David Williams F.G.S. (1792-1850) of Bleadon, and his collection of ichthyosaurs and a plesiosaur from the Lower Lias of Somerset. The Geological Curator 10, 263-267.

M. A. Taylor 2016. A lost ichthyosaur from the Lower Lias of Somerset in the collection of the Rev. David Williams F.G.S. (1792-1850), and figured in William Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise of 1836. *The Geological Curator* 10, 267-269.

M. A. Taylor 2016. 19th Century plaster casts of Lower Jurassic ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs in the Bristol Institution for the Advancement of Science, Literature and the Arts, and the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. *The Geological Curator* 10, 277-281.

M. A. Taylor and L. I. Anderson 2016. The two birthdays (and baptisms) of Charles W. Peach (1800-1886). *The Geological Curator* 10, 235-236.

M. A. Taylor and L. I. Anderson 2016. Tennyson and the geologists part 2: saurians and the Isle of Wight. *Tennyson Research Bulletin* 10.5, 415-430.

M. A. Taylor and M. Evans 2016. A plesiosaur from the Lower Lias of Watchet, Somerset, in the collection of the Reverend David Williams F.G.S. (1792-1850), and its casts. *The Geological Curator* 10, 269-272.

M. A. Taylor and H. S. Torrens 2016. Henry Ball (c. 1783-?1856), fossil collector of Watchet, Somerset, and the forced sale of his collection in 1841 to Robert H.W. Bartlett (c. 1814-1887). *The Geological Curator* 10, 272-277.

M. A. Taylor and H. S. Torrens 2016. A lost ichthyosaur from the Lower Lias figured in William Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise of 1836, and possibly owned by the Geological Society of London or Viscount Cole F.G.S., later Earl of Enniskillen (1807-1886). *The Geological Curator* 10, 281-282.

## Events

The Old Red: Hugh Miller's Geological Legacy  
Victorial Hall, Cromarty, 9 - 10 September 2017

This two-day meeting is being convened by 'The Friends of Hugh Miller' in Cromarty on the Black Isle. The content is aimed at everyone in the general public who is inspired by the natural world. It will appeal to all those interested in fossils, geology, landscape, Miller's writing, and Scottish history and culture. The theme "The Old Red: Hugh Miller's Geological Legacy," and the wide range of talks will show how Miller's 19th C geological contributions, and observations of the natural world still have relevance in the 21st C.

See: <http://www.thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk/index.asp?pageid=661915>



## News

### Marsh Award - inaugural year for Mineralogy

Marsh awards are given out every year in various disciplines; Palaeontology has been going for a few years and happily is now joined by an award for Mineralogy. [http://www.marshchristiantrust.org/default.asp?V\\_ITEM\\_ID=1322](http://www.marshchristiantrust.org/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=1322)



"The Marsh Award for Mineralogy aims to recognise living individuals (or groups of individuals) - based in the UK - who have made a significant contribution to the field of mineralogy. The purpose of the Marsh Award for Mineralogy is to recognise those who have contributed significant work to the field, yet whose efforts have not necessarily been widely recognised to date. Those nominated for the award can be of either amateur or professional status."

The inaugural Marsh Award for Mineralogy for work during 2016 has been presented to GCG member **Roy Starkey**. Roy is an amateur mineralogist and has dedicated his life to his passion for British topographic mineralogy and in support of others who seek the same aims.

As well as being an active member and President of the British Micromount Society (BMS) and the Russell Society, Roy has recently been involved in the recent redevelopments at the Lapworth Museum in Birmingham.

### Dudley museum shuts

Dudley Museum has recently closed its doors. The council claimed the closure of the museum would save the authority £150,000 a year, while four staff will be made redundant. Artefacts from the museum will be transferred to Dudley Archives in Tipton Road next to the Black Country Living Museum and will be put on show for the public next year.

### Damaged fossils: Skye dinosaur footprints

165m yr old dinosaur footprints at Staffin beach on Skye were damaged just before Christmas. Local Police are searching for a vandal who damaged two of the fossilised dinosaur footprints by pouring plaster into them.

"Police would like to speak to a man believed to be aged in his late 40s to early 50s, of stocky build and approximately 6ft 1in to 6ft 2ins. It is believed he travelled in a white Hymer camper van." Anyone with information is asked to contact Police Scotland on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

**Enormous feet**

One of the largest dinosaur footprints ever found has been unearthed in Gobi desert. It is thought to have been made by a titanosaur and is apparently 106cm long and 77cm wide. The giant long-necked herbivore is estimated to have been more than 30m long and 20m tall

**An interesting idea**

A geology museum is all set to open in Skazka (Fairytale) Park Krylatskoye, Russia - underground and for children.

The 'Magic Cave' museum is being constructive to resemble a cave and will feature rocks and minerals from the Kola Peninsula, Kamchatka and the North Caucasus. Visitors will be equipped with hard hats and given flashlights - the 'cave' will be unlit.

"This museum for children has been created through the assistance of the Vernadsky Geology Museum. The idea is to familiarise the younger generations with geology in general and the geologist's profession in particular," Sergei Cherkasov, Director of the Vernadsky State Geology Museum of the Russian Academy of Sciences, said. "The limestone and sandstone samples have been brought from the North Caucasus, the apatite ore used in the production of phosphate fertilisers came from the Kola Peninsula and the iron ore came from the Kursk Magnetic Anomaly. Volcanic bombs from Kamchatka and polymetallic ores from the Urals will arrive soon."

**Ron J. Cleavely 20/6/1934–26/2/2017**

It is with sadness that we report that Ron Cleavely has died. Ron worked for 30 years on the fossil mollusca at the NHM before running his own consultancy Ron Cleavely Archive & Information Research Services. He published extensively on Cretaceous molluscan faunas but is best known to GCG as the author of *World Palaeontological Collections* (1983), which has become the standard reference for palaeontology collections and collectors.

GEOLOGICAL  
CURATORS  
GROUP



Affiliated to the Geological Society of London  
registered charity no. 296050