



# OPROLITE

DROPPINGS  
FROM THE  
GEOLOGICAL  
CURATORS  
GROUP

*Coprolite* is compiled by Tom Sharpe, 49 Kelston Road, Whitechurch, 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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Chairman: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA Tel. 0273 552586  
Secretary: Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG Tel. 0533 523976.  
Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Andy Newman, Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4PT Tel. 091 222 7418

## Notice of Annual General Meeting

Please note that the AGM of the Geological Curators' Group will be held at 15.30 on Thursday 3 December 1992 at Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe, South Humberside. GCG Chairman, John Cooper, completes his three year term of office at this meeting. Nominations for the posts of Chairman, officers and one Committee Member must be made by two members of the Group and submitted in writing to Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG by 9 November 1992.

## GCG Committee 1993

At its last meeting, Committee congratulated our Secretary, Simon Knell, on his appointment to the Museum Studies Department of Leicester University. Simon drew attention to the increasing workload of the Secretary, and Committee discussed how best to ease this growing burden. The decision was taken to transfer the organisation of our seminar and meetings programme to a Meetings Secretary.

This post will be unofficial for two years and will be the responsibility of a Committee Member. After this initial period, if the role of Meetings Secretary proves to be a success, steps will be taken to amend the Group's constitution to establish this post as an officer of the Group.

### **The A.G. Brighton Medal Award 1992**

I am delighted to be able to announce that the first recipient of the Group's A.G. Brighton Medal for services to geology in museums is **Charles Waterston**, formerly Keeper of Geology at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. The medal will be presented to Charles at the Group's Annual General Meeting which this year will be at Scunthorpe Museum, on 3 December. I hope that members who are old friends and colleagues of Charles will be able to attend. The Chairman's citation will appear in the *Geological Curator* in due course.

John A. Cooper, Chairman.

### **Russell Society honours Bob King**

Dr Bob King, GCG Honorary Member and Curator of the John Moore Museum in Tewkesbury, has been awarded the first Russell Medal by the Russell Society at its 20th anniversary AGM in Loughborough on 4 April. GCG members will wish to congratulate Bob on this award which is presented for expertise in curation, service to the Society, and contribution to the science of mineralogy.

### **New members**

GCG is pleased to welcome the following new members: **Scott Engering**, Streatham; **Richard Twitchett**, Royston; **Matthew Parkes**, Trinity College Dublin; **Alan Marlow**, Southsea; **John B. Saunders**, Natural History Museum, Basle.

### **Musical Curators**

**Simon Knell**, GCG Secretary and Keeper of Natural Sciences at Scunthorpe Museum, has been appointed Lecturer in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester and took up his post on 1 October; **David Green**, formerly a Research Fellow at Leeds University, has been appointed Keeper of Mineralogy and Petrology at the Manchester Museum and took up his post on 21 September; **William Lindsay** of the Palaeontology Laboratory at the Natural History Museum has taken a year's sabbatical and is working as a freelance preparator/conservator based at the Yorkshire Museum; **David Hill**, formerly Geology Conservator at Bristol City Museum has moved to the new post of Conservation Development Officer with the Area Museum Council for the South West.

## **Forthcoming meetings and seminars**

**19-20 November 1992 Heriot-Watt University, Riccarton, Edinburgh  
Scottish Museums Council Annual Conference in conjunction with the Museums  
Association: The greening of museums.**

The aim of the conference is to consider how museums have responded to society's current, and growing, concern for environmental issues. The speakers, acknowledged experts drawn both from inside and outside museums, will cover a wide range of issues. What distinctive contribution do museums make - to scientific study or to general awareness and understanding? What more might they do to help society meet the challenges of understanding and protecting the environment?

The conference is primarily intended for museum committee members, trustees, senior officers and non-specialist staff and volunteers, seeking greater understanding of the issues and ideas for future development. It will also be relevant to biology and geology curators keen to enhance the importance of the natural sciences in tomorrow's museums.

Contact: Rachel Shah, Museums Association, 42 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1R 0PA.

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

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

**Wednesday 2 December Fieldtrip: Mesozoic sites in South Humberside**

Leader: Simon Knell. Meet at: Scunthorpe Museum at 10 am

Don't be deterred by the time of year - it's always warm and sunny in this part of Britain. A chance to see the extensive Lower Jurassic sequence exposed in the spectacular Frodingham Ironstone mines before they're lost and the Upper Jurassic - Upper Cretaceous rocks of Middlegate Quarry, South Ferriby. Hard hats, stout footwear, hammers, trowels.

Pub lunch.

Evening: Visit to Brandy Wharf in deepest Lincolnshire for a meal and sample of the local beverages.

**Thursday 3 December Seminar and AGM: Fossil digs: the practicalities of fossil  
excavation.**

Museums often find themselves involved in the systematic excavation of fossils whether as the result of a chance find, a disappearing locality or the museum's own research interests. This seminar will investigate the resources needed, the help available and the potential benefits of excavation. Is excavation the only way to build scientifically useful collections? Do museums possess sufficient resources to undertake effective excavations? Is excavation only worthwhile if it is accompanied by an associated research project?

- 10:00 Coffee  
10:30 Welcome: Councillor Oliver Duffeln, Chairman of Leisure Services  
10:35 Introduction: Museums and excavation, Simon Knell, Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester  
10:45 Fossil excavation in Scotland, Bob Reekie, National Museum of Scotland  
11:05 Plesiosaurs, mammoths and volunteers, Gordon Chancellor, Peterborough Museum & Art Gallery  
11:35 Fossil excavation and the professional collector, David Sole, independent professional fossil collector  
12:05 Excavation - the role of English Nature, Colin Prosser, English Nature  
12:35 Presentation of the Brighton Medal by John Cooper, GCG Chairman.  
Lunch.  
14:00 Tracks and tribulations, Stephen Howe, National Museum of Wales  
14:20 What price collecting? Peter Crowther, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery  
15:05 Discussion  
15:15 Tea  
15:30 18th Annual General Meeting  
16:15 View gallery Messengers from Paradise; depart.  
Fee: £1 (please pay on the day)

Please complete the booking form on back page, and return it to: Sue Rainton, Scunthorpe Museum and Art Gallery, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe, South Humber-side DN15 7BD. Tel 0724 843533 or 0724 280444 ext 864 by 30 November 1992.

### **18-23 April 1993 Earnshaw Hall, University of Sheffield**

#### **BCG/GCG Natural Sciences Curatorial Course.**

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

### **21-25 April 1993 University of Southampton**

#### **Association of Geoscientists for International Development and the Commission on Geoscience Education and Training of the International Union of Geological Sciences: International Conference on Geoscience Education and Training.**

The main aim of the meeting is to provide a forum for international exchange of ideas, methods and data, and to stimulate a continuing dialogue between participants.

There will be four main themes each supported by a range of separate workshops:

1. Geoscience education in schools; 2. Higher education; 3. Geoscience training for business, industry and public service; 4. Public understanding of geoscience.

Contact: Dr Dorrik A.V. Stow, GEOED Conference Convenor or Mrs Esther Johnson, GEOED Conference Secretariat, Department of Geology, University of Southampton, Southampton SO9 5NH. Tel. 0703 593049 Fax. 0703 593052.

**22 April 1993 City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol**

**GCG Seminar: Marketing geology in museums.**

Contact: Dr P.R. Crowther, City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol BS8 1RL. Tel. 0272 223592.

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

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

Assessing mineral collections and developing an action plan.

Contact: Monica Price, University Museum, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW  
Tel. 0865 272950.

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

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

Contact: John Cooper, Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA Tel. 0273 552586.

**17-24 July 1993 Great Malvern**

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

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

**mid-September 1993 Cambridge**

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

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

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

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

A review of building stone collections, their importance and use, including a discussion on the development of a national building stone collection.

Contact: Mike Dorling, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EQ. Tel. 0223 333456.

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

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

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

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

## **New Geological Conservation Unit at the Sedgwick Museum**

The new Geological Conservation Unit in the Earth Sciences Department at the University of Cambridge has now opened. Funded by UFC grant-aid to the department, one of the five University Geological Collection Centres, the Unit has been developed to provide a national facility to help promote the care and conservation of geological materials and collections, and will be providing training and research facilities as well as a conservation service.

Training courses ranging from one-day seminars to an eight-week intensive course will be run, and, with this in mind, the laboratory has been designed to enable up to eight people to be supervised in practical sessions.

The Unit will also be publishing a 'magazine-style' manual on geological conservation and preparation. This manual, called *Update*, will be in a loose-leaf format, with sections produced on a regular basis, and will build into a complete working manual. Each section, written by a leading expert, will be on a specific area, from acid preparation techniques to microenvironments for storage of minerals. Also included will be case histories of treatments and comments from readers. The manual will be updated as new techniques, materials or information are developed.

For more information, contact Chris Collins, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0EZ. Tel. 0223 62522, Fax. 0223 60779.

### **Diploma in the Conservation of Geological Materials**

A new eight-week, six-module training course on the conservation of geological materials has been established at the Geological Conservation Unit in the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Cambridge. It is aimed at conservators, technicians, collections managers, preparators, and curators responsible for the care and conservation of geological material, who wish to expand their practical and theoretical knowledge of this field. The course, leading to the Departmental Diploma in the conservation of geological materials, will provide expert training in all areas of geological material conservation giving students an understanding of methods and mechanisms of conservation work on fossils, minerals, rocks and related materials.

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The first course will be held from 7 June until 30 July 1993. The course will be limited to a maximum of eight people and will cost £800 per person, excluding accommodation and meals.

There will also be a one-week residential course on preventative conservation for geological collections from 7 June until 11 June 1993. This course will be limited to 15 people and will cost £75 per person, excluding accommodation and meals.

## **Workshops at the Geological Conservation Unit, Cambridge.**

- 11 Feb 1993    Treatment of sulphide oxidation of fossils and minerals.
- 15 Apr 1993    Cleaning of fossils and minerals.
- 5 Aug 1993    Microenvironmental control and monitoring for geological collections.
- 7 Oct 1993    Storage and environmental monitoring for geological materials.
- 18 Nov 1993    Conservation and care of sub-fossil bone.

Cost: £15 per person per workshop.

**For further information on the Diploma and Workshops, contact Chris Collins, Geological Conservation Unit, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0EZ. Tel. 0223 62522, Fax, 0223 60779.**

## **Geological conservation visit to Ireland**

Dr Caroline Buttler (Geological Conservator at the National Museum of Wales) recently spent a week in Ireland advising on matters of conservation at the geological museums in University College Cork, University College Galway, and Trinity College Dublin. At present, the museums at Cork and Galway are taking part in a Fas (Government training agency) sponsored programme where over a dozen trainees are engaged in museum work. The aim of this scheme is to produce comprehensive specimen documentation as well as upgrading displays.

Caroline spent two days in each museum and pinpointed areas where problems were evident or might arise in the future and suggested remedies. While each museum contains specimens (large ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs) which would require the attention of trained conservators, Caroline demonstrated a number of techniques (basic cleaning, storage, and use of microenvironments) which could be undertaken by existing staff so as to reduce future degradation of specimens.

It seems highly unlikely that any one of the museums visited by Caroline will ever be in a position to employ a full-time conservator (indeed, a full-time curator in two of the museums is an urgent requirement). The dispersal of conservation techniques such as those demonstrated by Caroline can only lead to the improvement of geological collections, particularly where fully-trained conservators are not available. On behalf of the Irish museums, I thank Caroline and the National Museum of Wales for taking time out to advise us on our collections.

Patrick Wyse Jackson, Geological Museum, Trinity College Dublin.

## Exhibitions

<b>The Dinosaur Roadshow</b>	
Stoke on Trent Museum	7 Nov - 31 Jan 1993
<b>Mammoths and the Ice Age</b>	
National Museum of Wales	until 10 Jan 1993
<b>Dinosaurs alive!</b>	
Leeds Tropical Gardens	22 Oct - 10 Jan 1993
<b>Dinosaurs from China</b>	
Yorkshire Museum	proposed extension until 3 Jan 1993
<b>Dinosaur Mania</b>	
Dudley Museum	21 Nov - 6 Feb 1993

### Dudley Rock and Fossil Fair

Dudley Rock and Fossil Fair will be held at Dudley Town Hall, St. James's Road, Dudley on 28 and 29 November 1992 from 10am to 5pm. The fair will include 50 exhibitors from government, industry, education and leisure; dealers in minerals, fossils, equipment and books; demonstrations of gem-cutting, jewellery making, dinosaur modelling and fossil preparing; and a rock, fossil and mineral roadshow. Admission: £1.00. For further details, contact Colin Reid at Dudley Museum, tel. 0384 453575.

### Sussex Mineral Show, Saturday 14 November 1992

The Sussex Mineral Show will be held at Clair Hall, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath from 10am to 4.30pm, admission 60p. Besides a fine array of dealers' stands, this year's show will feature an exhibition *The minerals of Hungary* by Eötvös University, Budapest, displays by the Sidcup Lapidary and Mineral Society and the British Micromount Society, and presentations by Bob Symes (Natural History Museum) and Michael Edwards (Hampshire Micro). It is an excellent opportunity to get to know collectors, dealers and curators and find out what's happening on the mineral market. You don't have to buy any specimens but temptation is guaranteed! As usual, there will be a bar with home-made refreshments, and the convivial atmosphere which makes this one of the country's most enjoyable mineral shows. Car parking is easy and the railway station is just across the road. For further information, contact: Sussex Mineral and Lapidary Society Tel. 0444 233958.

### Mary Anning Lecture

Hugh Torrens will be giving a lecture on Mary Anning at the Geological Museum on 9 December. Tickets are available from the Hon. Curator, Lyme Regis (Philpot) Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3QA. All proceeds will go to the Philpot Museum Appeal.



## *Dinosaur Mania strikes Dudley Museum*

This November Dudley Museum hosts an 'alternative' dinosaur exhibition - *Dinosaur Mania*, which takes a sideways look at dinosaurs in popular culture.

Exhibits include dinosaur memorabilia - a unique collection of models, toys, books, comics and souvenirs from around the world. These are all the prized possessions of 'dino-maniac' Mike Howgate, founder of Dino Promotions and the Dinosaur Collectors' Club, who frequently exhibits and lectures on the subject at the Natural History Museum.

Also on display is dinosaur material from the collection of Bill Blows, Britain's foremost dinosaur collector. Exhibits include skulls and vertebrae of carnosaurus from the USA and Canada, and *Iguanodon* remains and footprints from the Isle of Wight.

The exhibition is complemented by a series of interactive displays direct from the record-breaking *Dinosaurs* exhibition recently on view at the Ulster Museum, Belfast. These comprise a shadow theatre, computer games and exhibits in which children can design and construct their own dinosaur.

In conjunction with *Dinosaur Mania* the popular short film *Dinosaurs: the terrible lizards* will be shown regularly each day through until Christmas. The exhibition continues from 21 November until 6 February.

### *The Time Trail*

After two years of planning and construction, Dudley Museum's ageing geology gallery has been transformed into *The Time Trail*, a highly innovative and visually exciting new exhibition.

Devised and built largely in-house, the displays consist of detailed dioramas depicting the living environments of Dudley's geological past. In addition, finely modelled rock faces have been used to display original fossil material in its 'natural' environment and to replicate features such as life and death assemblages, sedimentological structures and faults. By the adjacent rock faces, the link between the past and present is illustrated in a simple, yet strikingly visual way.

As well as elementary graphic panels within the gallery a geological 'field guide' to the displays will be published shortly. With this in hand the visitor will be able to 'read the rocks' in the gallery in much the same way as a field geologist does. Visitors to Dudley Rock and Fossil Fair at the end of November will have an opportunity to take a sneak preview of the gallery which opens officially early in the New Year.

Colin Reid, Dudley Museum

### *Time-climb*

Preparatory work is being carried out at the Yorkshire Museum for the first of a new suite of geology galleries to be installed during November and early December 1992. *Time-climb* will incorporate a redundant drilling rig, large images of past and present landscapes and other features to show the visitor how we are part of a dynamic and ever-changing earth.

### **A study of touring exhibitions and loans from the national collections**

With support from the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Museums and Galleries Commission has commissioned Sir David Wilson to prepare a short report on the options for encouraging wider access to the national collections by means of loans of both exhibitions and individual items. The study is concerned both with exhibitions constructed and lent by the national museums and galleries and with their loans to exhibitions organised by other museums and galleries. Its aims are to expose general issues and to correct any misconceptions, but most of all to argue for the new funds which will be necessary if the national museums are to lend more.

For each national museum, Sir David will review its overall policy on touring and lending, what loan exhibitions it has arranged itself and what exhibitions it has supported through loans. He will consider what types of exhibitions each institution might create and the extra funding which would be needed to enhance lending or touring of material in national museums. The study involves interviews with directors of the national museums and Sir David welcomes borrowers' comments on past experience and/or future possibilities. Please address any comments to Sir David Wilson, c/o Museums and Galleries Commission, 16 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA.

The report will be published this autumn and will be aimed at ministers in the Department of National Heritage, the Northern Ireland Office, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office. It will be available to trustees and staff of the national museums and to museums throughout the UK.

### **Newish publications**

*Care and conservation of geological material: minerals, rocks, meteorites and lunar finds* by F.M.P. Howie. Butterworth-Heinemann, 1992, 128pp. ISBN 0 7506 0371 2, £35.00.

*Manual of curatorship* edited by J.A.M. Thompson. Butterworth-Heinemann, 1992, 720pp, 2nd edition. ISBN 0 7506 0351 8, £65.00.

*Conservation concerns: a guide for collectors and curators* edited by K. Bachmann. Smithsonian Institution, 1992, 149pp. ISBN 1 5609 8174 1, £7.95.

*The museum and records office emergency manual* by East Midlands Museum Service. East Midlands Museum Service, 1992. ISBN 0 9518 4680 9, £24.95.

*Museum graphics* by M.R. Snowman. Thames and Hudson, 1992, 192pp. ISBN 0 5002 3635 6, £24.

*Collins photoguide. Fossils* by H. Mayr. Collins, 1992, 256pp. ISBN 0 002 19909 2, £14.99.

*Collins photoguide. Rocks and minerals* by W. Schumann. Collins, 1992. ISBN 0 002 19910 6, £14.99.

*Meteorites. The key to our existence* by Robert Hutchison & Andrew Graham. Natural History Museum, 1992, 60pp. ISBN 0 565 01124, £5.95.

*Rock Solid. Britain's most ancient heritage* by Anna Grayson. Natural History Museum, 1992, 72pp. ISBN 0 565 011081, £6.95.

*How the earth works* by John Farndon. Dorling Kindersley, 1992, 192pp. ISBN 0 86318 831 1, £12.99.

*The Yorkshire coast* by Peter Rawson & John Wright. Geologists' Association Guide No. 34, 2nd edition, 1992, 120pp. ISBN 0 7073 0615 9, £8.00.

*The coastal landforms of west Dorset* by Robert J. Allison. Geologists' Association Guide No. 47, 1992, 134pp. ISBN 0 7073 0623 X, £8.00.

*Bibliography of catalogues of type specimens in world's zoological and palaeozoological collections* by J. Wiktor & R. Wladyslaw. Wroclaw University Press, 1991, 308pp. ISBN 83 229 0541 8.

*James Hutton and the history of geology* by D.R. Dean. Cornell University Press, 1992.

*No stone unturned: the first 150 years of the Geological Survey of Canada* by C. Vodden. Minister of Supply and Services, Canada, 1992, 55pp.

*The Giants Causeway. A remnant of chaos* by Philip S. Watson. HMSO, 1992, 49pp. ISBN 0 337 08300 2, £4.95.

*Geology and the environment in Western Europe. A coordinated statement by the Western European Geological Surveys* edited by G. Innes Lumsden and the editorial board of the directors of the Western European Geological Surveys. Clarendon Press, 1992, 325pp. ISBN 0 19 854296 8, £85.

*Zeolites of the world* by Rudy W. Tschernich. Geoscience Press, Inc., 1992, 563pp. ISBN 0 945005 07 5, £50.

*Geological excursions around Glasgow and Girvan* edited by J.D. Lawson and D.S. Weedon. Geological Society of Glasgow, 1992, 495pp. £9.00.

*Geological Conservation Review: Caledonian structures in Britain south of the Midland Valley* edited by J.E. Treagus. Chapman and Hall, 1992, 177pp. ISBN 0 412 47560 X, £65.

### ***Geological Curator special offer***

Special offer!! - Back issues of the *Geological Curator* (formerly the *Newsletter of the Geological Curators' Group*) for a limited period only, while stocks last, at these special prices, including postage and packing:

Volume 1 complete £12.00 (usual price £25.00)

Volume 2 complete £12.00 (usual price £25.25)

Volume 4 complete £15.00 (usual price £27.50)

Individual parts (including double issues) are £1.50 except Volume 4 Number 7 which is £4.00. All parts are available except for volume 3 numbers 7, 8 and 9.

Please send your orders, with payment (cheques payable to the Geological Curators' Group) to John Nudds, The Manchester Museum, The University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

### ***MPG Transactions published***

The latest *Museum Professionals Group Transactions* have recently been published, and are available by post from the address below.

*Beyond Britain's shores* considers some of the implications of the 1992 Single European Market. Included are two papers that outline the benefits and problems associated with loan exhibitions from abroad.

*Art and life* contains a series of papers that look at how professionals in museums and the arts can work more closely together. Case studies provide examples of collaboration between different disciplines and organisations. The need to break down barriers between art curators and other professionals is continually stressed. Papers include: We're all in the arts (Sue Runyard, MGC), It's nothing personal: museum and gallery services (David Fleming, Tyne and Wear Museum Service), and Artists: involving people (Jennifer Rennie, Stoke on Trent City Museum and Art Gallery).

Also still available is the recent MPG publication *Where's the party?*, which examines the issues involved when functions are held in museums. This report is both a survey of current practice and a set of practical guidelines. It covers the hiring of premises, charging, the use of income, security, damage to objects and buildings, and the setting up of contracts, conditions and guidelines.

Holding functions in our premises is a relatively new area of activity, but is increasingly seen as a potential income generator. The report will help you to decide

whether your own museum or gallery can benefit from being used as a party venue.

*Where's the party?* is available from Ann Bukantas, Ferens Art Gallery, Queen Victoria Square, Hull, HU1 3RA, price £6.00 including p & p.

*Beyond Britain's shores* (£3.50 including p & p) and *Art and life* (£6.55 including p & p) are available from Guy Kilminster, Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, Clarence Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3JT.

Please make all cheques and orders payable to the Museum Professionals Group (invoices can be issued).

### **Eastern European mineral database**

Recent collaboration between Dr T. Weisburg of the Eötvös University, Budapest, and the Mineralogy and Petrology Section of the Department of Geology in the National Museum of Wales has resulted in the inauguration of a database of eastern European mineral localities. The aim of this project is to supply curators with accurate information in this geographically complex area where misspellings and wrong translations of names often produces a bizarre array of locality names. The database will also serve to link research workers with otherwise inaccessible material. Recent investigation of the NMW collections has revealed two specimens of veszelyite from the type locality, material which has not been present in the Hungarian National Museum collections since a fire destroyed part of their collections.

At present, the database covers the Carpathian area (i.e. Romania, Hungary and Slovakia) but it is planned that this will be extended to cover the rest of Czechoslovakia (Bohemia and Moravia) by the end of the year. If you would like to add or verify information relating to your collections or have any queries regarding such mineral localities, please contact Ms J.M. Horák, Department of Geology, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, CF1 3NP.

### **Mineral collection sold at Malvern**

Bob King (John Moore Museum, Tewkesbury) writes: Having had the impending sale of a cabinet of minerals at an auction room in Malvern brought to my attention recently, I went to the showroom on 17 September and examined the collection during the viewing period. My immediate reaction was one of disappointment. Described under Lot no. 70, the cabinet was a fine one and certainly 19th century, consisting of 22 graduated drawers with internal glass dust covers. The back was not visible, but appeared to be alright viewing from inside the cabinet. Some attention was necessary to the drawers and cupboard front which stuck badly on opening.

The contents were the biggest disappointment; a large majority of the material had been purchased from Gregory Bottley, I suspect sometime in the 1930s, by someone, almost certainly from Malvern, keen to teach him or herself some mineralogy. One drawer was occupied by single crystals to illustrate the elements of symmetry. There appeared to be no classification of the collection which consisted of small specimens about 2 inches square. The majority was localised, but some specimens were missing and there was some decay. The bottom six deeper drawers contained rock specimens which bore numbers possibly related to sheets loose elsewhere in the cabinet.

The cabinet basically contained a teaching collection of some considerable variety, but was not what I had hoped to see - a good quality 19th century collection.

Loose on top of the cabinet were some highlights, including a large block of high quality unlocalised malachite; 2 localised cut septarian nodules; an unlocalised vanadinite; and a fine slice of silicified wood from Arizona. There were two labels from Harrods, but no specimens.

It would not be difficult to replace the material from Gregory Bottley and I valued the whole collection at a maximum figure of £350. The cabinet I suspect was worth about £500.

Lot no. 71 was the Chivor Mine emerald, which also proved disappointing. The matrix was atypical for Columbian emerald, and it appeared not to be the emerald variety of beryl. There was some evidence of enhancement. I would have given an absolute limit of £70 for the specimen.

On 18 September I went to the sale and came away amazed and not a little worried. I had no intention of bidding, but acquired a bidding card in case the prices were realistic. Bidding commenced for lot 70 at £350, but reached the completely unrealistic figure of £4,100 plus 10% commission. The bidding was against the 'phone, there being no other bidders in the hall. It was bought by the bidder in the hall who, when I spoke to him afterwards, confessed he had no knowledge of mineralogy but had purchased for a friend. In fact, he arrived late and had but a cursory look at the cabinet and contents. At the price realised, I wondered if I had missed something, or was the friend in for an awful shock? Certainly viewing was difficult, the place being packed, but I think I got it right.

Again, the price realised by lot 71, the emerald, was, I felt, unrealistic - £500 - and that was by 'phone.

As I see it, the collection is no loss to the district or to science. It would have made a useful exchange collection, but there was little in it I would have wanted to keep. I feel that such inflated prices can only do harm, if sales of this nature become common knowledge.

**GCG Seminar and field excursion**  
**SCUNTHORPE MUSEUM 2-3 December 1992**  
**BOOKING FORM**

- I will be attending the seminar on 3 December .....
- I will be attending the field meeting on 2 December .....
- I will be attending the evening visit to Brandy Wharf .....
- I have/will need transport for the field meeting .....
- I would like details of local accommodation .....

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

Address.....

.....

Tel.....

Please return this section to Sue Rainton, Scunthorpe Museum  
and Art Gallery, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe, South Humberside  
DN15 7BD by 30 November 1992.

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