Geological Collections Group

https://www.geocollections.org/

Annual Report for 2025

For presentation at the 2025 AGM

The Geological Collections Group is a UK-based membership organisation and charity (no. 1198339), founded in 1974 to improve the state and status of geological collections and curation. The Group is run for its members, by volunteers elected from the membership. It is affiliated to the Geological Society of London as a Specialist Group and recognised as a Subject Specialist Network by Arts Council England. Our mission and vision are available here.

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Previous years' Annual Reports can be found at:
https://www.geocollections.org/committee/management-documents/60-annual-reports-and-accounts

1. View from the Chair

1.1 The sector

As you will read in the Collections report in section **6 Collections Support**, there is huge, ongoing, concern for the sector overall. Mike and his team outline specific issues in section **6**, which includes an update on Buxton Museum and the Rashleigh Collection, as well as where we are currently with DiSSCo-UK. On behalf of us all, I would like to extend thanks to Karen Bell, Sherri Donaldson, and Mike Howe, for their dedication to this integral and fundamentally important part of our role as the Geological Collections Group.

In addition, a currently evolving situation of *great* concern is the news emerging from the University of Leicester that a proposed restructure will dissolve Geology and Palaeontology into a new School of Chemical, Earth and Environmental Science. It seems that the proposal will include the closure of the Geology/Palaeontology programmes (including the Centre for Palaeobiology and Biosphere Evolution) as well as the University's Geological Collection, which will result in a devastating loss for our sector, not least in the form of redundancies including the position of geological curator, held by Vicky Ward.

A petition has been set up to lobby against this action, please see here:
https://www.change.org/p/save-geology-at-the-university-of-leicester

On behalf of those most directly affected, as well as the sector at large, we strongly encourage you to add your name to this petition and to share it as widely as you can. If you are at an institution, please ask your employer to write to those named below at the University of Leicester to express concern, as it is felt by those on the ground in Leicester that this will have more of an impact than individual letters. GCG will be sending a letter imminently, to voice our concern over the proposal which would cause a grave loss to the sector.

Those to address are:

- Professor Nishan Canagarajah, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester
- Professor Henrietta O'Connor, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester
- Professor Dirk Schaefer, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Science and Engineering, University of Leicester

The Curator of the Geological Collections at the University of Leicester, and long-time member of GCG, has written a summary of information that may be of help when writing a letter:

"The School of Geography, Geology and the Environment has held, and grown, a significant geology collection since the founding of the Department of Geology in 1951. At the request of Professor Peter Sylvester-Bradley, the first Professor of Geology at the University of Leicester, the collection was to be organised systematically so as to reflect all areas that geology encompasses. He recognised the importance, too, of having a specialist curator in post, in order to facilitate access to specimens underpinning teaching and research.

Currently, the Geology collection is an estimated 250, 000 specimens, containing examples collected worldwide. Students studying with SGGE, are fortunate to have open access to around 10% throughout the duration of their degrees. Highlights include "Jane," previously believed to be a juvenile *Tyrannosaurus rex*. However, recent research (2025) on the original specimen (held by the Burpee Museum of Natural History, Illinois), has once again sparked debate that this is an example of

another apex predator, the *Nanotyrannus*. Massive slabs of 450-million-year-old volcaniclastic sediments hang in the Foyer to the Bennett Building, documenting the geological past of what is now an area of the Lake District. We hold an extensive Ore Suite collection from key localities across the globe, and a comprehensive and complementary amount of material from Leicestershire, including scientifically important sites of Charnwood Forest and Bradgate Park, in addition to examples of local mineralisation of the county. The collection contains years of research material, that is still used and called upon by external contacts, both nationally and internationally. We are also custodians of the new species of multisegmented fossil, now officially named as *Keurbos susanae* (2025), affectionately called "Sue," that is a significant career long research project."

A final point on collections is discussion over how GCG can react more quickly to these threats. Although we *sincerely* hope that this *does not apply* to Leicester, often by the time GCG hears about situations such as this, it is too late to do anything about it. It really feels as though there may still be time to affect the outcome at Leicester and we strongly urge you to sign the above petition and ask your institutions to write to those named. However, the GCG Committee will be dedicating much of its January meeting to discussing (not for the first time I appreciate) how we can stay more informed of goings on in the sector, so that we may better support all those who work, volunteer and care for geological collections. As those we serve, if you do have any thoughts on this, please do get in touch with me chair@geocurator.org, or anyone on the Committee. Anonymously if you would prefer. Many thanks.

1.2 The Committee

Due to unexpected additional priorities, Karen Bell took the difficult but understandable decision to stand down from the Committee during the year. We are sad to lose Karen as she brought a wealth of experience, ideas, and self-motivation to GCG, but we wish her all the very best. The Committee is hopeful that Karen will be able to join us again in the future. Karen's departure means that the role of Collections Coordinator Assistant is available. This is an incredible opportunity for anyone interested in geological collections which, we presume, makes it relevant to you all in one way or another! Please see slightly further on in this section for information on how to apply.

At the upcoming AGM we have two long-standing Committee members standing down. It is with great sadness that I have to announce that our Secretary Lu Allington-Jones is departing GCG after six fantastic years on Committee, including three as Secretary. Lu has been an incredible powerhouse of organisation as Secretary, a role which is no small undertaking in the slightest. As Chair, I have been extremely grateful to Lu throughout my three years leading the Group, for her incredible support, help and guidance, not only for myself, but for the entire Committee and our membership at large. Lu will be very sorely missed and on behalf of everyone, I would like to thank Lu for absolutely everything that she has done for us.

In equally sad news, our incredible Web Coordinator Simon Harris is also standing down at the end of this year. Simon has been on the Committee for nine years, eight as Web Coordinator, and has been nothing short of a miracle worker when it comes to our online presence and offer. He supports so many aspects of Committee business, not just in his role as Web Coordinator, and we will miss him greatly. Simon has always responded quickly to the various cries for help from Committee members when we attempt to do something 'behind the scenes' on our website and get confused or frightened by its inner machinations! Simon takes with him a huge amount of skill, knowledge and experience. On behalf of everyone, I would like to thank Simon for his, nothing short of Herculean, efforts for GCG. We will miss him greatly!

On behalf myself, the Committee and the entire membership and wider GCG community, I would like to thank Karen, Lu, and Simon for all of their hard work, dedication, and passion, and wish them nothing short of the absolute very best as they sail on to other shores.

As for all other committee posts, everyone else is intending to remain in their current positions and I would like to thank each and every one of these incredible people for their ongoing dedication to GCG. However, some (listed below) have all been in their roles for over three years meaning that, in accordance with our byelaws, anyone else can now also apply for these positions (with the exception of the positions of Chair and Chair Elect). If anyone would like to go for any of the roles listed below, please send a 200-word (maximum) paragraph on why you feel you would suit the specific position to secretary@geocurator.org. **The closing date for applications is 2nd December 2025**. All roles will be voted on by the membership (paid up members only) at the AGM. Please see our website for specific role descriptions.

Collections Coordinator: Mike Howe
Conservation Coordinator: Nigel Larkin
Journal Editor: Duncan Murdock
Membership: Cindy Howells
Newsletter: Cinzia Ragni
Programme Coordinator: Mark Evans
Treasurer: Rob Lowther

In addition, our Ordinary Members confirmed as staying are: Olivia Beavers, Paul Davies, and Nadine Gabriel. Olivia, Paul and Nadine, together with our superb Conservation Coordinator Nigel Larkin, help to keep GCG ticking by bringing their skills and expertise to discussions, projects, and outputs. We greatly appreciate Nigel, Olivia, Paul and Nadine's continuing presence on the Committee and are thrilled that we will continue to benefit from their input for the following year. Thank you to you all!

Finally, I have some news on the role of Chair! As you all likely know, the Chair of the Geological Collections Group has a three-year term, which for me, should end with the upcoming AGM on 10th December 2025. However, the Chair can only be elected from the current Committee, with that person taking up the role of Chair Elect during the preceding Chair's final year, in order to start the handover process. As you may remember, we were unable to find a candidate to fill the position of Chair Elect last year, and so I was asked to stay on for a fourth year. Something I was only too happy, and extremely honoured, to do. Since then, I am delighted to say that we now have a fantastic replacement for me, in the form of Dr Mark Evans! Mark will become Chair Elect at the AGM in December 2025, and take over from me as Chair at the AGM in November/December 2026. I couldn't be happier for both Mark and for us, and know that he will do a wonderful job. Thank you for all you have done as Programme Coordinator Mark, and thank you for taking up the mantle of Chair, I look forward to seeing where you will steer the GCG ship next!

For me personally, this means that I have a year left to tie everything up that I wanted to achieve in this incredible role. In the Chair's Roadmap 2023-2025 I outlined 17 bullet points of achievements, divided into the three (expected) years of my tenure. Many I have done already, with the help, support, and exceptional hard work of the Committee, and I would like to say a huge thank you to them all! Other areas will always be ongoing to some extent, such as 'diversify the Committee', 'establish a membership push', and 'expand global audience and offer'. In addition to progressing these ongoing areas, during my final year I would particularly like to tackle these five points:

- get the bursary scheme up and running

- finalise the byelaws as part of our transformation into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- work with Mark Evans, the incoming Chair, to succession plan for the next iteration of the Committee going forward, and help to ensure as far as possible that he has the right people in the right roles for a successful tenure
- publish the textbook 'Care and Use of Geological Collections', part of the Geological Society of London Geoscience in Practice, which is a series of books that covers 'the use and application of geological techniques relevant to a subdiscipline'. This has been held up by one chapter, for which there has been a series of unfortunate and unforeseen delays. However, the GSL has been incredibly understanding and supportive and we hope to have it published by the end of 2026
- forge closer working relationships with sister groups to mutually support and benefit from each other, please see below for further information on this

1.3 Membership offer

Following on from the reference above to the Roadmap 2023-2025, during my tenure as Chair the Committee has been working hard to recover our offer to subscribers, following the impacts on – primarily events – by the pandemic. Our events calendar has been filling up, including workshops, field trips, conferences, and joint meetings with other groups, with more ideas for future events in the works (for further information on events, please see section **3. Events**). Huge thanks to Mark Evans and Meghan Jenkinson, as well as Lu Allington-Jones, Frankie Dunn, Phil Hadland, Gemma Laker, Nigel Larkin, and Duncan Murdock, plus all those who have helped to organise, facilitate, host, and support these events. Our physical and online events are communicated across our social media platforms through the dedication of our Communications Coordinator Emily Swaby. Emily has also been working tirelessly to monitor and update our digital footprint at large, which comprises myriad online sites that host information about us. For all of this and more, we extend our utmost thanks to Emily.

Our journal has been streamlined from two smaller issues to one large one per year in order to keep costs down (primarily postage!) which is reflected in us keeping our membership costs down, plus *another* special issue is in the making; this time focussing on 'Moving towards equitable Geoscience Collections', following a very successful series of EDI sessions. A great many thanks go to Duncan Murdock and his team of Associate Editors and Production Editors, as well as to EDI Coordinator Gemma Laker who is the powerhouse behind the current special issue. There have been some communication problems with regard to the journal, which must be acknowledged and GCG apologises profusely for any frustration this has caused for authors. We are working towards a more streamlined submission process to avoid this happening again in the future (for further information on the journal, please see section **4.1 *Geological Curator***).

We are also working on enhancing our newsletter *Coprolite*, with many many thanks to Cinzia Ragni for her hard work. A good section of a recent Committee meeting was focussed on discussing what should go into it, in addition to current contents. Any ideas in particular on this front would be welcomed by the Committee (for further information on the newsletter, please see section **4.2 *Coprolite* Newsletter**).

Our website has very recently migrated to a new domain to both reflect our name change and to coincide with a required upgrade to the backend content management system. We extend a HUGE thanks to the tireless work of Simon Harris, our outgoing Web Coordinator for all of the time and effort that he has put into this (for further information on the website, please see section **8.1**

Website). The above outputs are pulled together by a large number of the Committee and I wish to thank all of them for their incredible dedication and hard work. These are of course not our only outputs, but have the greatest reach to our subscribers and are perhaps the most 'front-facing' in terms of our 'membership offer' to both new- and re-subscribers.

Our blog has also been nothing short of revitalised, through the ongoing efforts and excellent whip-cracking of Phil Hadland. I hope you have seen some of our recent articles on there, if not, please do pop over and take a look. Although I have put this in this section on our membership offer, our blog is actually not just for our subscribers, but is open to our entire community. If you would like to submit an article, please do get in touch with Phil at blog@geocurator.org. Thank you so much to Phil for all that you do to keep fresh, exciting and relevant content on our blog. It's looking great!

Finally, it is a huge amount of work to keep on top of our membership and I would like to express sincere thanks to long-standing Committee member Cindy Howells, for all that she does for us. Cindy doesn't just look after the membership efficiently, but she does so with care and a personal touch, that I know means an awful lot to our subscribers. Despite increasing pressures on all our time, Cindy included, she still manages to miraculously find the time and energy to add these personal touches, and I would like to thank her on behalf of us all. It also takes a lot of work to keep our accounts in order, and there has been an especially large amount to do recently by our wonderful Treasurer Rob Lowther, in finalising changing our bank account over. I think we are now there and many, many thanks are extended to Rob for his patience and dedication on this and every other front.

1.4 Forging networks

Up to now GCG has had (on and off) 'reps' serving on other committees such as NatSCA and SPNHC, feeding back to each organisation on the activities of the other. However, this has proven to be too much of a time commitment for individuals in more recent years and those roles have become harder to fill.

Following discussions of other ways to solidify working relationships with some of our most relevant sister groups, earlier in the year I contacted the Chairs/Presidents of the Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA), Palaeontological Association (PalAss), Society for the Protection of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) and Society of Mineral Museum Professionals (SMMP) to see if they would be interested in sharing bullet point highlights of minutes of their committee meetings as an efficient way of keeping abreast of each other's activities.

The principle of strengthening relationships was met with enthusiasm by NatSCA, PalAss, and SMMP, and discussions are ongoing as to how to take this idea forward. Conversations have been taking place with NatSCA in particular, regarding some joint endeavours particularly with regard to DiSSCo-UK. We have been discussing the potential of collaborative approaches to supporting wider regional collections, in order to engage with and benefit from the initiative. For more information on DiSSCo-UK in general, please see section **6. Collections Support**. We will report more on this to GCG subscribers, as plans develop. In addition, an idea from PalAss was to "create a forum for discussion and collaboration between cognate societies". This sounds like an interesting idea and we await further conversation on what this might look like.

1.5 Structure of Annual Report

When I wrote my first annual report as Chair, in 2023, I looked back at previous editions, written by Sarah King and, before her, Matthew Parkes. The structure for the Chair section seemed to include a

summary of what other Committee members had written in their reports. However, as these reports appear subsequently in the same document, whilst valuable as a quick reference guide for those of us with not enough time to read the report in full, it seemed a bit repetitive to me. I consequently decided that whilst including a couple of highlights made sense, I would use the Chair's section to talk about additional points not raised elsewhere in the report. I have continued that structure in the Annual Report for 2024 and 2025. I wanted to acknowledge this change of direction in writing, for those who may have pondered such things! I also thought it might be helpful to put my thought process 'on record' for future Chairs to consider, and then decide for themselves on what structure they prefer to use in the future!

1.6 Thank you

Finally, I just wanted to thank *you* for being part of this fantastic (in my opinion!) Group. GCG endeavours to serve the geological collections community in the best way that we can, providing resources, advice, and support where needed, and it is you, our members, who enable us to achieve everything that we do. Thank you!



Emma Nicholls
Chair of the Geological Collections Group

2. Accounts

The Geological Collections Group has remained financially healthy this year.

The Group's PayPal and CAF accounts are working well, with the level of support that CAF provides being exceptional, especially through their recent system upgrades. The CAF Gold account's interest has dropped in line with the market but remains an additional income stream for GCG. PayPal's wide range of features has proven very helpful this year to allow myriad options for the collection of subscription fees.

The group is still looking to open a fixed term savings account to enable us to better utilise some of our reserves so that we can better support the community. However, given the current financial market these products are changing quite frequently.

The 2024-2025 accounts will be released before the AGM once they have been compiled and audited.

Rob Lowther, Treasurer

3. Membership

In fantastic news, we have had 36 new individual members for 2025 which is well above any year since 2018. I am only aware of the sad death of one member, Graham Ward of Brentwood, Essex to whose family we send condolences. I have deleted 22 previous members for non-payment, and several others have written to cancel through moving out of the sector or retiring.

Although our membership numbers overall do appear lower than normal this year, please do be aware that this is just a snapshot of payments on this date. I am confident that this is a minor issue caused by the online banking system being unavailable for much of the summer so that we have been unable to check subscriptions, and paired with the closure of our old account, it means that previous Standing Orders from many regular members are still being chased. These unusual circumstances should account for around 50 more subscriptions still to come in once individuals have been contacted.

As always, I urge you all to please let me know if your email and/or postal address changes, so that we can keep in touch. Also, please check your subscription level through our website https://www.geocollections.org/ and do pay promptly whenever possible – using your name as a unique and identifiable reference with your payment!

Please do contact me about any membership questions.

Breakdown of membership figures for this year (up to 26th Nov 2025).

Full individual members paid to date	137 (105 UK, 32 OS)
Concessionary members paid to date	26 (22 UK, 4 OS)
Honorary members	7
Institutional subscribers paid to date	24
Total	**194** (with others still to pay)

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Personal UK	127	153	164	170	159	169	173	175
Personal Overseas	36	33	33	37	45	39	34	28
UK Institutions	10	15	19	24	19	26	37	38
Overseas Institutions	14	12	16	19	16	19	20	21
Honorary	7	7	7	8	8	8	7	7
Total	**194**	**220**	**239**	**258**	**247**	**261**	**271**	**269**

Finally, we can count members from 19 countries, including: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Columbia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, USA and the UK.

As always, I love to hear from members, especially when you write offering an idea, a talk, an article, or (especially!) to host a meeting. Do continue to promote GCG to your work colleagues. GCG is relevant to anyone who deals in any way with geological collections, whether you are a student, volunteer, curator, conservator, collector, illustrator, preparator, dealer, photographer, collections manager, or any of the other types of geological roles that professionals and amateurs work within.

Cindy Howells, Membership Coordinator

4. Events

4.1. Winter 2024

We concluded 2024, our Golden (or 50th) Anniversary year with the Winter Seminar and 51st Annual General Meeting on November 11th – 13th at Oxford University Museum of Natural History. The theme was *Reciprocal Relationships: how can partnerships help us and our collections develop?* and the meeting was ably organised by Emma Nicholls and Duncan Murdock. An evening ice breaker in the museum's Main Court preceded the seminar, and included the opportunity to explore the collections through behind-the-scenes tours. The seminar featured 10 talks on a range of topics from Oxford's iconic dinosaur *Megalosaurus* to the ethical return of specimens to Aotearoa, New Zealand, with two workshops on developing effective partnerships. The AGM was followed by an informal evening dinner at a nearby pub and the meeting concluded with a fieldtrip to local Oxfordshire Jurassic sites, featuring '*Bathonian Beasts and Building Stones'*, on November 13th. Our attendance for the meeting was 34 in-person seminar delegates with an additional 15 attending the AGM virtually.

4.2. Spring 2025

Early in 2025 we held a second opportunity to attend our successful Digital Morphology Workshop, this time at the University of Leeds on April 1st. Thirteen attended the workshop, learning how to create 3D models from scan data. I would like to thank Duncan Murdock and Frankie Dunn for delivering the training and Meghan Jenkinson for the local organisation.

This was closely followed by the online EDI Symposium, April 9th – 11th (equity, diversity and inclusion) at which we looked at ways of moving towards inclusive spaces in geoscience collections and workplaces. This virtual Zoom meeting was organised by Gemma Laker, and each day had its own theme, with talks followed by discussion:

April 9th: Decolonising geoscience and natural history museum spaces

April 10th: Queerness in the geosciences

April 11th: Creating open workplaces and museum spaces

The meeting featured 11 talks followed by discussion sessions, with over 100 attendances over the course of the three days. Thanks to Gemma and all contributors for making the meeting such a success.

4.3. Summer 2025

The SPPC (Symposium on Palaeontological Preparation and Conservation) has usually been held in September in conjunction with the SVPCA meeting. However, as the latter was not taking place this year, there was an opportunity for a change of date and venue. The meeting was held at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, Netherlands, between June 26th – 27th. The theme *From Excavation to Exhibition* explored how geological collections end up in museum displays, as well as their conservation and preparation. The meeting included two days of presentations, tours and workshops, including a chance to hear about developing the *Triceratops: the herd exhibition* from the Naturalis preparation team. In all, 39 people from seven different countries attended the meeting, most of whom were not members of GCG (yet!). Thanks to Lu Allington-Jones, Kieran Miles, Nigel Larkin and Naturalis colleagues for organising the meeting.

In July, there was another opportunity to contribute to the work on the now world-famous 'Dinosaur Highway' at Dewars Farm Quarry in Oxfordshire as we repeated our Dinosaur Trackways Workshop on the 24th of the month. All 12 places were filled for this, and attendees cleaned out footprints from a newly discovered part of the longest trackway, with lunch at a local pub. Thanks to Emma Nicholls and Duncan Murdock for organising the day. Huge thanks also go to Mark Stanway and his team at Smiths Bletchington for ongoing support in allowing GCG to access the site and host these field workshops.

Our next event is the Winter Seminar and 52nd AGM, *Putting Geology Collections to Work* and will be held at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery on December 10th – 11th.

Overall, our events programme engaged with over 238 people over the past year, with 98 attending in-person and at least 140 virtually. We continue to run a mix of in-person and virtual meetings, as the latter are more inclusive and enable us to engage with a wider range of members, non-members and global colleagues. I would like to extend my thanks to Programme Coordinator Assistant Meghan Jenkinson, other committee colleagues and all others who have helped with the events programme this year, and my apologies to those I have inadvertently omitted.

Mark Evans, Programme Coordinator

5. Publications

5.1 *Geological Curator*

11(9) Summer 2024

Print edition was circulated early 2025 and all articles are available to members online.

- **Illuminating an uncatalogued micropalaeontological collection at the Lapworth Museum of Geology, University of Birmingham** *J. D. Dixon, Alexandra Z. Meek, Jon Clatworthy and Kirsty M. Edgar*
- **In search of lost time: Recovering missing stratigraphical data from fossil marine reptile specimens using micropalaeontological analyses** *Nigel R. Larkin, Dean R. Lomax, Ian Boomer and Phil Copestake*
- **Using the methyl cellulose poultice method to remove plaster and burlap - A case study on Triceratops bone** *Kieran Miles*
- **Trilobite thin section analysis clarifies matrix separation properties** *Maximo Alfonso Rojo, Atle Jorstad Qviller, Nélia Castro and Øyvind Hammer Hammer*
- **The Dinosaur on your Doorstep: raising awareness of Hastings' dinosaur heritage** *Phil Hadland*
- **Book Review: *Ichthyosaurs from the Early Jurassic of Britain***

11(10) 50th Anniversary Special

The final issue in volume 11 was a celebration of our 50th year with contributions from the meeting in May 2024. Print edition was circulated early 2025 and all articles are available to members online.

- **GCG after 50 years – History, Views and Recollections** *Cindy Howells*
- **GCG Overseas Study Tours 1997-2004** *John Nudds*
- **Putting museum mineral collections to work: 45 years of practical experience** *Roy E. Starkey*
- **Unearthing treasures: The past, present, and future of a local authority museum geological collection** *Philip Hadland*
- **Donation and acquisition of fossils: how to valorise them** *Cinzia Ragni*
- **Good things come in small packages: how to curate a micromount collection** *Nadine W. Gabriel*
- **Asbestos in the Cambridge geological collections: past, present, and future** *R.G.W. Seidel, D.S. Pemberton and M.B. Holness*
- **Byne's decay on the d'Orbigny's foraminifera collection at the MNHN, Paris: from the collection assessment to the reproduction of damage by artificial ageing** *Véronique Rouchon, Clara Hairie, Annachiara Bartolini and Marie-Béatrice Forel*

12(1) December 2025

The first edition of volume 12 is in production, due for circulation online in December 2025 and physical editions early 2026.

12(2) Special Issue

After the success of the GCG EDI symposium in April, the GCG are proud to announce a special issue of *Geological Curator* for publication in Summer 2026, titled 'Moving towards equitable Geoscience Collections'. The purpose of this issue is to consolidate current research and initiatives that aim to improve the environment, accessibility, and future of geological collections. Broad themes welcomed in this issue include anti-colonial practice, physical accessibility, neuroinclusive practice, and representation of minority groups. Submissions can include topics relating to museums and collections broadly, but submissions with a Geoscience collections focus would be preferred. **Call for papers is still open.**

Editorial Team

Thanks go to the current editorial team: Duncan Murdock (Editor); Lu Allington-Jones, Neil Adams, Jess McCoy (Associate Editors); Jordan Bestwick, Emily Swaby (Production Editors). Huge thanks to Alexandria Gour (First Stage Production Editors) and Emily Carlisle (Second Stage Production Editor) who have moved onto bigger and better things.

Submitting a manuscript

All enquiries should be sent to journal@geocurator.org. Submissions should now be made via the new webform and should follow the Instructions for Authors. They should be in English, appropriately structured, clear, concise and fully referenced. Please carefully read through our Journal Policies and Guidance before submitting a manuscript for consideration.

Issues of *Geological Curator*

The most recent three issues can only be accessed by current members through logging in to the website. Issues older than 2 years are made freely available via the website. Back issues of most printed editions are also still available here.

Duncan Murdock, Journal Editor

5.2 *Coprolite* Newsletter

The internal collaboration to produce articles (alphabetic order):

- Lu Allington-Jones (GCG Secretary)
- Phil Hadland (GCG Blog Editor)
- Cindy Howells (GCG Membership Coordinator)
- Gemma Laker (GCG Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator)
- Rob Lowther (GCG Treasurer)
- Emma Nicholls (GCG Chair)
- Cinzia Ragni (GCG Newsletter Editor)

The external collaboration (collaboration or writing of article, collaboration with photo) (alphabetic order):

- Michela Bornancin, University of Turin (n. 112)
- John R Nudds, University of Manchester (n. 112)
- Fabio Magnani, Museo Cantonale storia naturale, Lugano (Switzerland) (n.113)
- Natalie Watson, Malvern college (n.113)
- Joan Corbacho, Geological Museum of the Barcelona Seminary.Barcelona (Spain) & Associació de Perits i Taxadors de Catalunya (APTC) (n.114)
- Daniel Falk (University College Cork, Cork (Ireland) / Natural History Museum Bamberg, Bamberg (Germany)) & Michael Stache (Natural Sciences Collections, Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), (Germany)) (n.114)
- Alessio Ciaffi (Palaeoartist) (n.114)

Issue n. 112 (Spring 2025)

- The History of Geological Discovery in Polar Regions, by *John R Nudds, University of Manchester*
- Kinnekulle And Martorp's Waterfall (Sc Sweden) by *Michela Bornancin*

Finally, we had only two participants for "Guess the Coprolite" recently so feel this may have run its course. We are considering new ideas for content, such as "our favourite fossil or mineral" by GCG subscribers, but this is still an evolving idea.

Issue n. 113 (Summer 2025)

- EDI Symposium 2025 *by Gemma Laker*
- Palaeo-insect *by Fabio Magnani*
- Space: Could Life Exist beyond Earth? *By Lu Allington-Jones*
- Palaeontology and Instagram: Is Social Media the Right Place to Dig? *By Cinzia Ragni*
- Blog Digest *by Phil Hadland*
- Committee Business by *Lu Allington-Jones*
- Wanted *by Natalie Watson*
- Subscriptions *by Cindy Howells*
- My Favorite Object *by Rob Lowther*

Issue n. 114 (Autumn 2025)

- Manual of paleontological falsifications and techniques for their recognitions by *Joan Corbacho*
- An Eocene Treasure Box: The German Geiseltal Collection by *Daniel Falk & Michael Stache*
- Fossil (Super)Market by *Alessio Ciaffi*

Issue n. 115 (Winter 2025 – In editing)

- Didactic fossil preparation laboratory by Cinzia Ragni

Lu Allington-Jones (GCG Secretary), Cindy Howells (GCG Membership Coordinator), Emily Swaby (GCG Communications Coordinator) and Dr Emma Nicholls (GCG Chair) reviewed and provided countless tips for improving the newsletters.

New targets

Significant changes are being made to the newsletter. These are some of the sections that I would like to expand.

- Inclusion of summaries of blog articles (edited by Phil Hadland)
- A section dedicated to the titles of *Geological Curator* articles
- Replacement or addition of a representative fossil for 'guess the coprolite'.

Other sections that may be created include:

- Descriptions of conferences
- Recommendations of exhibitions to visit
- Book recommendations (a discussion will take place at the next GCG Committee meeting on the appropriateness of this re 'advertising').

This year I have started using Canva to produce the newsletter, which is much more streamlined and faster than InDesign, which I used last year (partly due to my lack of experience). At the end of the year, I plan to send out a questionnaire with the newsletter to find out if our work is heading in the right direction and if readers like it.

Cinzia Ragni, Newsletter Editor

6. Collections Support

A crisis has been brewing within geoscience collections for the last twenty years, and as yet there has been little success in tackling it. Geoscience collections have been hit by a “Quadruple Whammy”:

1. A general lack of appreciation by senior managers, funders, policy makers and the general public in the importance of geoscience collections in addressing the key societal issues
2. A reduction in resources for collections, resulting in lack of space and staff. Many of the specialist curators who could argue the importance of geoscience collections have been “lost”
3. A growing body of knowledgeable amateurs with important collections looking to find good and appropriate homes for their material whilst they are still able
4. Museum Trustees, fearful of losing accreditation, adopting procedures more suitable for expensive works of art than for geological samples.

No.1 is a key priority, and work is ongoing to develop a compelling advocacy package, lest the disaster experienced in Cardiff is repeated elsewhere. Central to this are case studies demonstrating how geoscience collections have helped tackle societal issues and we repeat the call for any examples.

Karen Bell and Sherri Donaldson have been working on valuable resources to support "collections in peril" (a collection assessment form and a video/audio collection walkthrough guide), alongside some basic guidance to help non-specialist curators and specialist non-museum collectors improve curation of their geological collections (collection cataloguing, specimen labelling and specimen photography). Sadly Karen has been forced to step down as Collections Assistant due to the pressure of other duties. I hope that she may be able to continue with her collections work in the not too distant future

The collections at Buxton have now been packed up and moved to safe storage, and the building sold. The local Council have committed to a new museum, but, as yet there is no news, and the museum team are providing an "interim service" from the library. Acceptance of the redisplay of the Rashleigh Collection at the Royal Cornwall Museum seems to be growing, and we understand the labelling has been improved.

DiSSCo-UK is becoming a major concern amongst the UK geoscience collections community. The project involves a £155 million investment by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of UKRI over 10 years in digitising 50% of the UK natural science collections. Regrettably the project is prioritising digitisation streams that produce quantity to satisfy the funder (e.g. flat herbarium sheets, pinned insects), rather than addressing the greatest societal challenges (e.g. climate change, critical metals, energy storage, CO_2 sequestration). Digitising geoscience collections has been stalled until at least the second and possibly the third call (2 – 5 years). Project developers, argue that this is largely because of the lack of tried and tested geoscience digitisation workflows and a suitable aggregating database. The DiSSCo-UK aggregating database is a subset of GBIF and is designed for the life sciences, but can accommodate palaeontological specimens. It does not take rocks, minerals, borehole samples and meteorites.

BGS, with AHRC approval, is leading a volunteer working group of over twenty members to research workflows, standards and vocabs and report on the preferred options, including highlighting any outstanding development needs. This should strengthen the case for the earlier funding of geoscience digitisation.

Part of the argument for DiSSCo-UK not developing a geoscience collections aggregating dataset is that only 8% of the UK Natural History specimens are rocks, minerals, borehole cores and meteorites, and that the 25% or so that are fossils can be accommodated in GBIF. However, there is a growing belief, including in the US, that GBIF does not do justice to the richness of palaeontological data and that an alternative is needed. Clearly there is much to do before the UK geoscience collections form an easily accessible, fully interoperable, infrastructure.

Mike Howe, Collections Coordinator

7. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

GCG hosted an EDI Symposium on 9th – 11th April 2025. The purpose was to ascertain if our members and others would want events like these, and how we can prioritise/format other EDI events. We had 236 registrants for all three events cumulatively, from 125 individual attendees. The event was felt to be extremely successful with very positive feedback. Although we had permission to record the talks, we chose not to record the discussion sections. However, these were found to be really productive and interesting, so next time we may try and record these as well, if possible/applicable/useful.

Following on from the EDI Symposium, the next *Geological Curator* issue will focus on similar themes, namely how we can move towards geoscience collections being more equitable i.e. how we can implement initiatives or examine past histories to make the future of collections (specifically geological) better for all. The EDI Coordinator has also been contributing to revisions of all GCG policies.

Gemma Laker, EDI Coordinator

8. Online

8.1 Website

Our website continues to function as one of our main methods of communicating with existing members, as well as acting as an advertisement to new ones. We continue to receive increasing numbers of visitors to the site, last year at the AGM I reported 67,959 views of the homepage up to 12th October, as I write this the figure is 74,734 views (approximately 2.5% higher if we adjust for the time periods in question).

Our biggest challenge this year was to move the site to a new domain. The new domain is www.geocollections.org to reflect the change of name of the group that we announced in 2024. This was timed to also coincide with a required upgrade to the backend content management system, just to ensure maximum adrenalin levels! Our existing host provided did not support the new software, so a new host was chosen, and the content was transferred over during a weekend in early October when there was little activity on the website (i.e. there were no events open for booking). After sorting out a few minor problems, things seem to be functioning just fine in our new home.
For the time being our e-mail services are still hosted at @geocurator.org – this is a totally different system as we are in discussions about how to make this function most effectively for the committee and our members. We will of course let members know if this changes, but for now you can contact us all using the addresses listed on the committee page of the website (https://www.geocollections.org/committee).

Finally, after ten thoroughly enjoyable years on GCG committee, I will be stepping down from the role at the end of 2025. If you are at all interested in helping to run the GCG website, please get in touch. You don't need to be technically minded – most of the work is carried out in a very friendly web-based interface, there is no coding required, and if all else fails, there is always the backup!

Simon Harris, Web Coordinator

8.2 Communications

This year, we launched the GCG's LinkedIn and BlueSky accounts, in addition to maintaining regular posts on X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. The BlueSky account was introduced in response to declining engagement on X and may eventually serve as a replacement. LinkedIn, widely regarded as a professional and credible platform, is already enhancing GCG's reputation within Geoscience and among prospective members. It could also support recruitment efforts by reaching a broader pool of potential committee members ahead of the next AGM.

Here is an overview of GCG's current social media:

Social media	Link / handle	Followers	Date joined
LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com/company/geological-collections-group-gcg	151	September 2025
Bluesky	@originalgcg.bsky.social	197	December 2024
X	@OriginalGCG	1412	January 2013
Facebook	www.facebook.com/GeologicalCuratorsGroup	1518	January 2013

Overall, GCG's social media presence across platforms remains healthy and continues to grow. We thank everyone who has engaged with us over the years and continues to do so. If you have content you would like us to share via our social media channels, please get in touch at comms@geocurator.org or send us a direct message (DM) on any of our platforms.

In addition to maintaining GCG's social media, I have also been continuously updating GCG's Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geological_Collections_Group. These updates began with changing the name from Geological Curators Group to Geological Collections Group, while noting the previous name and the date of the change. I've also added our old and new logos, as well as links to the blog, website, and committee pages. Additionally, I've added sections on History of GCG, Geological Curator, Blog, Coprolite, and Events and Projects, including our most recent events and workshops, such as:

- Dinosaur Trackways Field Workshop 2025 (in partnership with Oxford University Museum of Natural History)
- EDI Symposium 2025
- Digital Morphology Workshop 2025 (in partnership with University of Leeds)
- Symposium on Toarcian Palaeobiology

The GCG's Wikipedia page can be edited by anyone without registration, and we are encouraging committee members and GCG members to contribute where possible, while the Communications Coordinator will monitor all changes made to the page.

Dr Emily Swaby, Communications Coordinator

8.3 Blog

2025 has seen the first full year of blogging for the new editor. After a relatively slow start, with seven articles in the first seven months of 2025, there have been six in just the last three.

Two regular slots continue to feature on the blog: A monthly contribution from a committee member (on a rotating schedule), and the monthly *News from the Sector* (a round-up of forthcoming exhibitions, events, conferences, lectures and other news) compiled by Blog Editor Phil Hadland. One of the aims this last year has been to increase the numbers of blogs contributed by authors outside of the Committee. To this end, Committee members have been encouraged to ask relevant colleagues to consider writing for the blog on some aspect of their work with geological collections. The fruits of these efforts, which are mainly attributed to Committee members having those conversations, have been an uptick in externally authored blogs with three published in just the last couple of months.

In total, five articles were written by authors external to the committee in the last year to 31st October 2025. The Blog Editor has also recruited a volunteer to source blogs from university workers and students on topics such as making use of geological collections. It is important to note that to write for the blog you don't have to be a GCG member.

A total of 14 blog articles have been published in the last year. The blog received 8,022 views in the last year to 31st October 2025 compared to 7,026 in the previous year to 31st October 2024. Views per visitor in for the same period are 1.67 which is up slightly on the previous year. This indicates there isn't a drop in engagement, which is positive, and that an increase in posting frequency in 2026 will only be beneficial. The blog has been visited by people in 100 countries with the top five countries being the UK (3,839), USA (2,399), Australia (171), Canada (132) and Germany (125). Of

note is the growth in visitors from the USA with 2,405 in the last year to 31st October 2025 compared to 1,627 in the previous year to 31st October 2024.
The top five most read articles between 1st November 2024 and 31st October 2025 are:

1. The Case of the Asbestos Dinosaur
2. Excavating the 'Rutland Sea Dragon', the largest ichthyosaur skeleton ever to be found in the UK!
3. Tendaguru, a decolonisation perspective
4. Toadstones and Re-Animated Toads
5. Bad Bling

If you have anything you would like to advertise in the monthly *News from the Sector* blog, or you would like to contribute an article of your own, please get in touch with us at blog@geocurator.org.

Phil Hadland, Blog Editor

9. GCG information

The Geological Collections Group can be found at:

https://www.geocollections.org/
www.linkedin.com/company/geological-collections-group-gcg
https://www.facebook.com/GeologicalCuratorsGroup/
https://twitter.com/OriginalGCG
https://bsky.app/profile/originalgcg.bsky.social
Register of Charities for GCG
Email: info@geocurator.org

Address:
Geological Collections Group
(c/o Becky Goddard)
The Geological Society
Burlington House
London
W1J 0BG

Committee of 2025 (following the 2024 AGM)

(T = trustee)

Chair (T): Dr Emma Nicholls *(Oxford University Museum of Natural History)*

Secretary (T): Lu Allington-Jones *(Natural History Museum, London)*

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator (T): Gemma Laker *(University of Edinburgh)*

Collections Coordinator (T): Dr Mike Howe *(British Geological Survey)*

Communications Coordinator (T): Emily Swaby *(Oxford University Museum of Natural History)*

Treasurer (T): Robert Lowther *(Imperial College, London)*

Membership Coordinator: Cindy Howells *(National Museum Wales)*

Programme Coordinator (T): Dr Mark Evans *(British Antarctic Survey)*

Journal Editor (T): Dr Duncan Murdock (*Oxford University Museum of Natural History*)

Web Coordinator (T): Simon Harris *(British Geological Survey)*

Newsletter Editor: Cinzia Ragni *(Università degli Studi di Torino)*

Blog Editor: Phil Hadland *(Hastings Museum & Art Gallery)*

Ordinary Members (T): Olivia Beavers *(National Museums Liverpool)*, Nadine Gabriel *(Natural History Museum London)*, Paul Davis *(Lyme Regis Museum)*

Officer: (Conservation Officer): Nigel Larkin *(Natural History Conservation)*

Officer: (Collections Coordinator Assistant) Karen Bell *(Natural History Museum London)*

Officer: (Programme Coordinator Assistant) Meghan Jenkinson *(University of Leeds)*

Officer: (Web Coordinator Assistant) Sherri Donaldson *(University of New England)*

Geological Curator **journal support team:**
Associate Editors: Neil Adams *(Natural History Museum, London)*, Jess McCoy *(Northumbria University)* and Lu Allington-Jones *(Natural History Museum, London)*

First Stage Production Editors: Jordan Bestwick *(University of Zurich)* and Emily Swaby (*Oxford University Museum of Natural History*)

Second Stage Production Editor: Emily Carlisle *(University of Bristol)*

Geological Collections Group (1198339)

52nd Annual General Meeting

2025 Accounts

27/10/2024 - 31/10/2025

2025 Income	2024-2025	2023-2024
GCG AGM: 2023		£540.00
GCG AGM: 2024	£1,020.00	£505.00
GCG AGM: 2025	£220.00	
GCG Event: Digital Morphology Workshop 2024		£330.00
GCG Event: 50th Meeting		£2,320.00
GCG Event: Symposium on Toarcian Palaeobiology		£2,232.50
GCG Event - Digital Morphology Workshop Leeds 2025	£310.00	
GCG Event - Dinosaur Trackways 2025	£390.00	
GCG Event - SPPC 2025	£2,554.89	
Events & Workshops Total	£4,494.89	£5,927.50
Subscriptions	£4,366.00	£4,674.94
Donation	£0.01	£100.00
Bank Interest	£434.29	£431.99
2024 Income	**£9,295.19**	£11,134.43

2025 Expenditure	2024-2025	2023-2024
GCG AGM: 2024	-£50.00	-£495.00
GCG AGM: 2025		
GCG Event: Digital Morphology Workshop 2024		-£418.18
GCG Event: Dinosaur Trackways Field Workshop 2024		-£594.43
GCG Event: 50th Meeting		-£3,879.77
GCG Event: Symposium on Toarcian Palaeobiology		-£2,573.41
GCG Event: Museums and Mineralogy		-£427.70
GCG Event - Digital Morphology Workshop Leeds 2025	-£127.50	
GCG Event - Dinosaur Trackways 2025	-£493.37	
GCG Event - SPPC 2025	-£2,594.74	
Events & Workshops Total	-£3,265.61	-£8,388.49
Geological Curator Production		
Journal - CrossRef	-£221.60	-£289.05
Journal - DOI Referencing		-£700.00
Journal - Printing	-£2,708.88	-£3,730.25
Bank Fees	-£215.03	-£246.91
Committee Meeting Expenses	-£206.70	-£734.31
Subscriptions - Reimbursement		-£40.00
Web Hosting Fees	-£337.92	-£394.06
Online Meeting Platform - Zoom	-£155.88	-£143.88
GCG Logo Rebrand		-£150.00
IDE Training		-£145.80
Insurance		-£136.75
Equiptment Purchase	-£213.98	
Brighton Medals [£1,214.86 in fund]		£0.00
2024 Expenditure	**-£7,325.60**	-£15,099.50

Treasurer:

Robert Lowther 25/11/2025

Auditors:

Sherri Donaldson 02/12/2025

Anjanette Harry 27/11/2025

Closing Balance as at 27/10/2024	£24,493.28
Closing Balance as at **31/10/2025**	£26,462.87
2025 Profit	**£1,969.59**