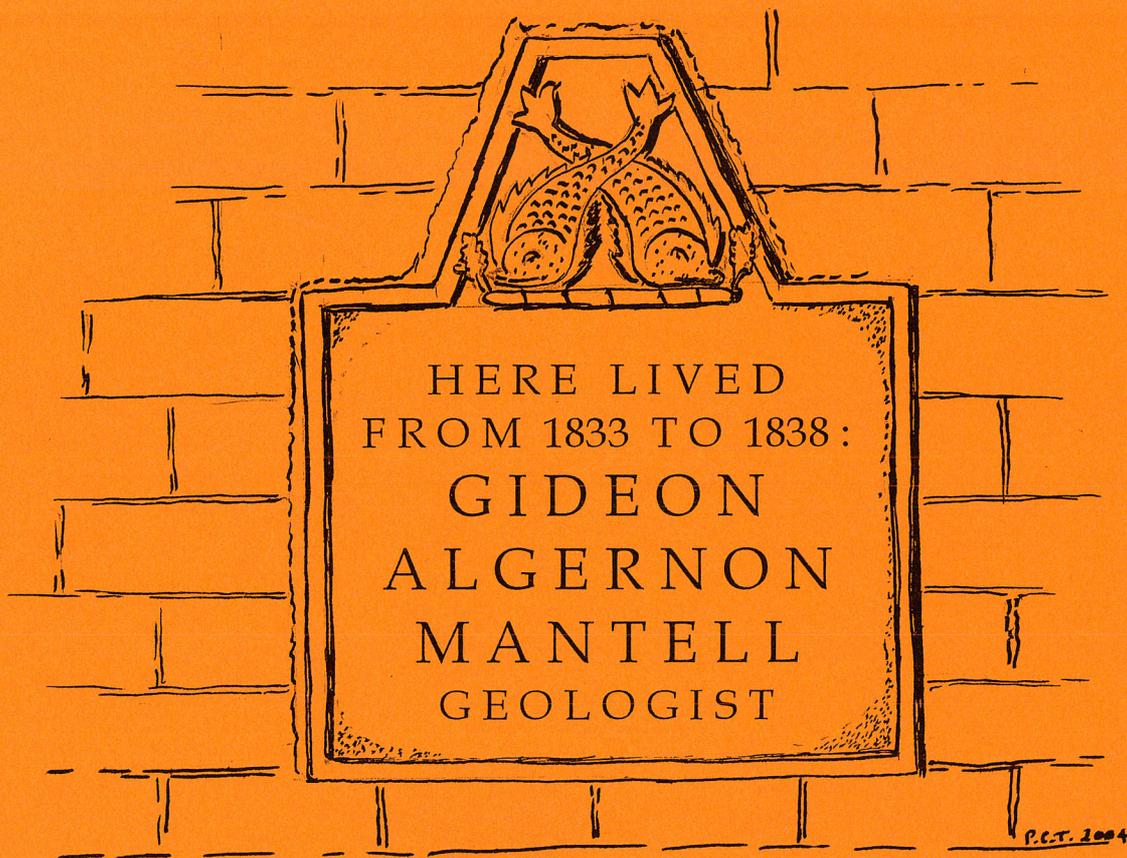


# HOGG

Newsletter of the History of Geology Group of the  
Geological Society of London



Number 21

May 2004



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## Cover Illustration:

This drawing (partly by the editor!) is taken from an image which appeared in the Sussex County Magazine, vol.14, (1938), p.615 showing the commemorative tablet erected on the house in Brighton once occupied by Gideon Mantell. A report of the unveiling of the tablet, by Sir Arthur Smith-Woodward, was given in the Evening Argus for Thursday 8 May 1930. He said that "...Dr Mantell was a genius: he was fearless in the pursuit of knowledge, he made geology a popular branch of science, and he was a pioneer in working out the structure of that part of England...". Afterwards a luncheon was held at the Royal Pavilion with Smith-Woodward and Mantell's biographer Dr Spokes as special guests of Sir Charles Thomas-Stanford, Chairman of the Memorials Sub-Committee.

The importance of this image, and the fate of the plaque can be found in the article by Tony Brook on page 9 of this newsletter, and it will feature in the field trip on "Sussex Pioneers" in early June.

**Editor:** Peter Tandy, Department of Mineralogy, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD  
(tel: 020-7942-5076; fax 020-7942-5537; e-mail [pt@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:pt@nhm.ac.uk))

# OOOPS!

Eagle eyed readers of this newsletter might have spotted an error in the previous edition; in fact just 0.869% (roughly!) of the membership did so. The cover picture was erroneously said to show the discussion following the meeting of the Geological Society in 1953 when Piltdown Man was exposed as a hoax. However, I am reliably informed that the picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1915 and shows the "geological giants of the day gloating over the skull which the tabloid press had dubbed that of 'the first Englishman'." The Editor would like to apologise to those people who were misled, and perhaps to those who missed it and accepted it as gospel fact. My thanks go to the person who exposed this particular piece of 'fraud'. It seems we cannot fool HOGG readers so easily, can we? Piltdown man will be one of the topics discussed at the forthcoming "Geofakes, Frauds and Hoaxes" meeting in October

Peter Tandy (HOGG Newsletter Editor)

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## HOGG Diary of Future Meetings

The new HOGG Committee has set an ambitious provisional agenda of meetings for the future. More details will be given of each meeting nearer the date, but so far the provisional diary is:

### 2005

(Spring) History of Speleology and Cave finds, combined with a field meeting in the Torquay area related to speleology

(November) "The Role of Women in the History of Geology"

### 2006

History of Geoconservation

History of Micropalaeontology

(?June/July) a 'Buckland' meeting in Oxford

### 2007

Celebration of the bi-centenary of the Geological Society

### 2008

History of Igneous Petrology

Other topics may include:

History of the Philosophy of Geology, the History of Mineralogy, something on Collections Lost and Found, and more on Hydrogeology

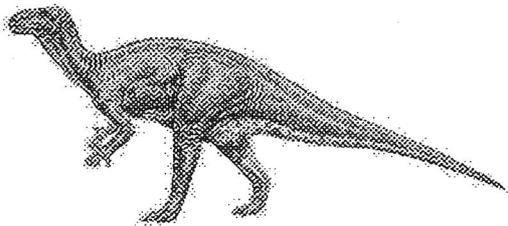
If members have any additional ideas for meetings (or field excursions) the Committee would be pleased to hear of them.

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# HOGG field trip: "Sussex Pioneers"

5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004

In 1822 **Gideon Mantell**, a doctor from Lewes, Sussex, described a fossil tooth which his wife, Mary Ann, had found by the side of the road in Cuckfield. This tooth, eventually identified as being from an **iguanodon**, was the **first dinosaur fossil** in the world ever to be identified.



HOGG is running a **weekend field trip** to Sussex to visit various sites associated with **Gideon Mantell** and other **Sussex Pioneers of geology**. **You are invited to join us.**

## Programme Saturday 5 June

**9.30 am** Meet on the forecourt of Brighton railway station. Talk and tour of the Booth Museum with curator John Cooper. This will pay particular reference to the little-known fossil collection of George Bax Holmes, **Mantell's contemporary.**

**2.30 pm** Guided tour of the "British Engineerium". In 1866 the Goldstone Pumping Station was opened. Standing over a 160 foot well, it was supplied by three boilers and their adjacent coal cellars. Today **Victorian steam engines** are also on view.

## Programme Sunday 6 June

**9.30 am** Meet outside 20 Old Steine in central Brighton. The trip will take in Lewes to see Mantell's home and memorial plaque in the church. Lunch at the **Piltdown Man**, with a possible visit to the Piltdown site. Then on to Cuckfield and Whitmans Green, the original quarry from which the **Iguanodon** came. Other sites of interest on the way will also be visited, if time permits.

## Arrangements

**Cost** A reduced price of **£20** for the weekend's trip is being offered to **HOGG members.**

**Transport** will be by car-sharing unless numbers are large, in which case a Minibus will be hired. There may be a small extra charge (~£5).

**Accommodation** will be in Worthing. If you wish accommodation to be arranged for you, please send a deposit of £25 (plus £20 for the trip) to reach the organiser **no later than Friday 21 May**. Prices are based on two people sharing. Single supplement applies.

Name .....

Address .....

..... Telephone .....

Please reserve ..... place(s) on the field trip (no accommodation). I enclose a cheque for **£20 per person**

Please reserve ..... place(s) on the field trip (with accommodation). I enclose a cheque for **£45 per person**

Please make cheques payable to HOGG and send them with this slip to:

**Tony Brook, 15 Cambourne Court, Shelly Road, Worthing, BN11 4BQ. Tel: 01903 233418**

# GeoFakes Frauds and Hoaxes

Friday 22 October 2004, Burlington House, Geological Society of London

An exciting programme of talks is now scheduled for this anniversary meeting, the date of which celebrates 6,000 years since the world was 'created', and 10 years since the founding of the History of Geology Group.

We are delighted to have **John Talent** as our Keynote speaker, who will come all the way from Australia to tell us how he uncovered the fraudulent VJ Gupta.

**Chris Stringer** will reveal yet another candidate for the Piltdown mystery, and many other speakers will disclose fascinating fakes, frauds and hoaxes, several of which have never before seen the light of day.



The talks will finish with a toast to Archbishop Ussher, given by **Hugh Torrens**, and **John Fuller** will explain just how we come to be celebrating that famous date in 4004 BC. The day will end in true style with **HOGG's Creation Dinner**.

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## MEETING PROGRAMME

Full titles and abstracts can be found at: [www.geolsoc.org.uk/template.cfm?name=geogroup17](http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/template.cfm?name=geogroup17)

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: VJ Gupta's life of academic fraud**

#### *Professor John Talent*

For twenty five years Professor Gupta was regarded as a world leader in his field, until John Talent of Macquarie University established that Gupta's research was "fictitious and based on spurious fossils". Professor Gupta took fossils he might have bought in a flea market or else where, and claimed he found them at a remote site in the Himalayas. Why?

### **The contrasting treatment of the Piltdown Fraud of 1912 and that of Moulin Quignon, 1863. Dr Patrick Boylan**

There are alarmingly close parallels between the Piltdown 'discoveries' of 1912 to 1914 and the 1863 'discovery' of a human jaw associated with the Middle Pleistocene extinct mammal fossils found at Moulin Quignon near Abbeville, northern France ...

### **Piltdown and Sussex: an uneasy relationship. Dr Tony Brook**

In a recent General Index of the Sussex Archaeological Society occurs the intriguing entry 'Piltdown hoax, possible explanation of'

### **Fishy business. Dr Peter Forey**

The 'art' of faking fossil fishes is old and has adopted many guises ...

### **The unlikely story of Miocene Man.**

#### *Mr Mike Howgate*

In 1806 a fossilised human skeleton was excavated by the French on the West Indian island of Guadeloupe ...

### **The scientific work of J.B. Hannay (1855-1931). Mr Julian Jocelyn**

J.B Hannay (1855-1931), Glasgow chemist, inventor and author is best known for a discredited synthesis of diamond. When his career is examined with respect to honesty, it is hard to draw the line between fact and fiction.

### **The fraud of Château-Thierry (1627): How Martine de Bertereau really prospected for water. Dr Martina Kölbl-Ebert**

Martine de Bertereau was all too successful in hiding geological knowledge behind the occult.

continued...

**The mystique of cold groundwater**  
*Dr John Mather*

The mystical powers of cold groundwater owe more to the efforts of local entrepreneurs than to any intrinsic properties of the waters themselves, but patrons continued to be duped – as they have been for five centuries.

**The Orgueil Meteorite Fraud turns full circle.** *Dr Joe McCall*

The Orgueil Meteorite fraud remained undetected for 100 years, until Claus and Nagy found quite different 'organised elements' in other specimens of the same meteorite. These bodies are microscopic, unlike the fraudulent seed implants, and could represent bacteria ...

**Forever amber?** *Dr Andrew Ross*

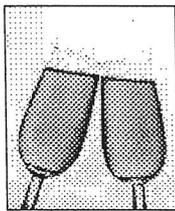
Large inclusions such as lizards, are extremely rare in amber and have a high market price ...

**Geologists and fossilists: trust and mistrust in fossil specimens in geology's heroic age.**

*Professor Martin Rudwick*

In the decades around 1800 there was a necessary symbiosis between savants interested in the sciences of the Earth and the "fossilists" who made a living by supplying them with some of their best specimens ...

**A toast to Archbishop Ussher**  
*Professor Hugh Torrens*



**Stimulating the speculators**  
*Dr Adrian Rushton*

At the end of the 19th century the need for coal in London drove speculators to invest in a drilling programme encouraged by "seeding" a borehole core, which resulted only in some good specimens of Tremadoc graptolites ...

**Pitldown – the final answers?**  
*Professor Chris Stringer*

At least 25 men have been accused of being involved in the forgery, and Dawson has always been the prime candidate, but an alternative has recently come to the fore ...

**Beringer's iconoliths or 'lying stones': fossil fraud in the early 18th century.**

*Dr Paul Taylor and Dr Ann Lum*

While Beringer has become a figure of ridicule and his iconoliths dubbed 'lying stones', the fraud must be viewed in its historical context – a time when the definition and origin of fossils had not been entirely settled.

**Originals, replicas, models and fakes.**  
*Dr Dave Williams*

"Is it real?" is the question most frequently asked about a fossil.

**James Ussher – Neither Fake Nor Fraud**  
*Dr John Fuller*

So who placed the words 'Before Christ 4004' at the opening of the Book of Genesis in the King James Bible, published in 1701, fifty years after Ussher died?

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I wish to reserve a place at the meeting on **GeoFakes, Frauds and Hoaxes**  
(HOGG members £10, students £5, non-members £15)

Name .....

Address.....

Email .....Telephone .....

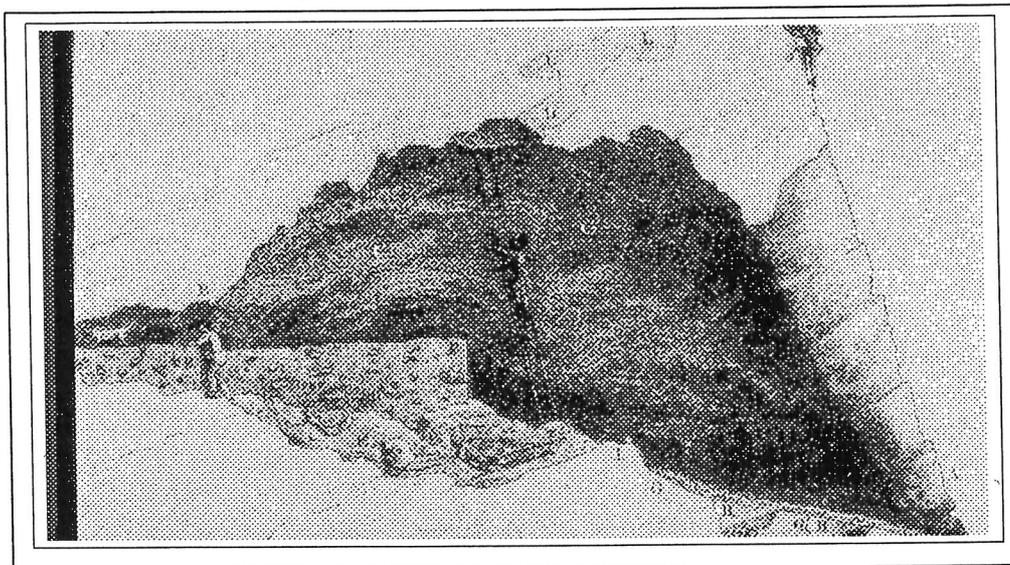
Please send this slip and a cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to HOGG to  
Dr Cherry Lewis, 35 Morgan Street, St Agnes, Bristol BS2 9LG

If you would be interested in attending HOGG's Creation Dinner (price ~ £20), please tick here:

You will be invoiced separately for the dinner.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### "From Earthly Bowels into Light" The History of Geological Speleology and Cave Finds



William Buckland's excavation of Paviland Cave, Gower, from Buckland's *Reliquiae Diluvianae*

The study of caves, their formation and their contents, has attracted the interest of a variety of researchers over the past few centuries. In earlier years, some speculated that the great bones and teeth lying in caves belonged to dragons. Various theories of cave formation have been expounded: were these created by earthquake, flood, erosion, solution of rock, or other means? Kent's Cavern, in Torquay provided a focus for nineteenth century enquiry into Quaternary fauna, and excavations at the nearby Brixham Cave (1858-1859) were central to the human antiquity debate.

A three-day meeting on the history of cave research will be held in Torquay towards the end of **April 2005**. It will be a joint meeting with the Devonshire Association (Geology Section) and will include field excursions.

If anyone would like to give a talk on the history of cave research, please would they contact either Anne O'Connor, preferably by email to [hoggsec@hotmail.com](mailto:hoggsec@hotmail.com), or by post to the Department of Archaeology, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE; or Peter Tandy (address on inside cover), with a brief title or outline. Talks should be aimed at being about 30 minutes long and concentrate on the HISTORY of caving or cave finds in a geological context.

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#### "The Role of Women in the History of Geology"

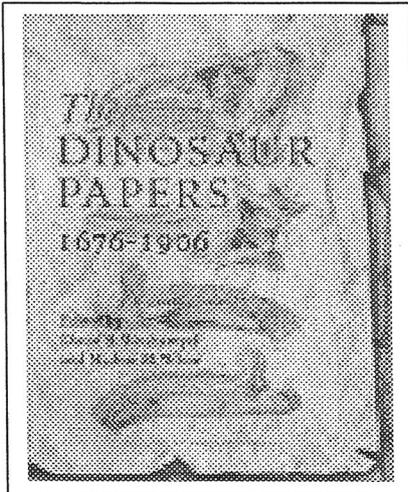
Women have fulfilled many different roles over time in the history of geology. They have taken roles as illustrators, academics, travellers, collectors or simply 'wives'. This meeting aims to examine these roles and their effect on the development of geology.

The meeting is likely to be held at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, in November 2005, on a date yet to be decided.

If anyone would like to give a talk at this meeting, would they please contact Contact **Cynthia Burek** at Environment Research Group, Centre for Science Communication, Dept of Biological Sciences, University College Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ or email at [c.burek@chester.ac.uk](mailto:c.burek@chester.ac.uk) or phone on 01244 375444 Ex 3051 (but email is best in the first instance.)

## For your bookshelf...

"The Dinosaur papers, 1676-1906". Edited by David B. Weishampel and Nadine M. White. Pub. 2003, The Smithsonian Institution. ISBN- 1-58834-122-4, pp.524. (\$75.00)



This unique collection of journal articles and book excerpts takes the reader on a journey of discovery through one of the most exciting periods of science. Here are the beginnings of the history of palaeontology, from Robert Plot's discovery of the first dinosaur bone (which he mistook for a leg bone from an extinct race of giant humans) to Barnum Brown's discovery and Henry Fairfield Osborn's classification of *Tyrannosaurus rex*. New translations of classic dinosaur papers from France and Germany give the story global focus.

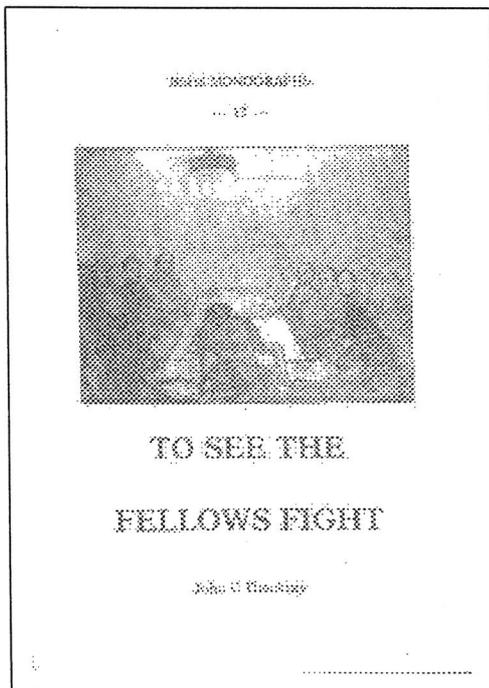
As these first palaeontologists raise their voices in debate once again, the reader can watch the science and structure of dinosaur research crystallise out of their discussions. Species and genera are named and fall by the wayside as deep time is recognised; extinction is defined and accepted; and science and religion are separated. The groundwork is also laid for controversies and issues that persist to this day: from dinosaurs to birds, from independent creation to the theory of evolution.

The papers, largely compiled by Nadine White, are placed into historical and scientific context by David Weishampel's accompanying commentary. The outstanding artwork reproduces all the dinosaur drawings from the original papers.

(from the flyleaf)

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**To See the Fellows Fight: Eye Witness Accounts of Meetings of the Geological Society of London and its Club, 1822-1868**, edited by John C. Thackray. ISBN: 0-906450-14-4. Publisher: British Society for the History of Science, 2003.



When a few close friends began to meet together to form a 'little talking Geological Dinner Club' in London during the early years of the nineteenth century, they had little idea that the group would soon metamorphose into the first discipline-based specialist scientific society in Britain. What really set the Geological Society apart, however, was the practice (instituted in the 1820s) of having the papers delivered before it subjected to comments and discussion from the floor. This was a brave move, for during this period scientific debates could all too easily lead to religious or political squabbles. The early presidents stressed that the aim was conversation rather than controversy, though the line between the two was a fine one and hard to maintain. Partly because of this, the Society strictly forbade any reporting of the discussions in the press.

The debates in the Geological Society became celebrated as the most lively feature of London's scientific scene; as the literary editor John Lockhart said, "I don't much care for geology, but I do like to see the fellows fight". They covered a huge array of topics, from Agassiz's glacial theory to the

classification of the Greensand. This was where the key issue of the relation of geology to the

Biblical deluge was hammered out; it was the site of the great Devonian controversy and the dispute between Murchison and Sedgwick about the classification of the Lower Palaeozoic. But to find records of these and many other discussions, geologists and historians have had to sift through hundreds of diaries and letters in the hope of finding potentially relevant comments.

*To See the Fellows Fight: Eye Witness Accounts of Meetings of the Geological Society of London and its Club, 1822-1868*, brings together all the available accounts of the famous Geological Society discussions into one place. The editor, the late John Thackray, knew as much about the archives of the history of geology in this country as anyone ever has: and in putting together this fascinating anthology he drew on an amazing variety of sources, from letters in the papers of all the leading geologists, to rare works such as the nine-volume life of the palaeobotanist Sir Charles Bunbury. The result is (to my mind) a wonderful read and one of the best ways to understand just why geology was seen to have been such an exciting science. Papers that look dry as dust in the *Transactions* or *Quarterly Journal* suddenly come to life.

This fine collection, with an excellent introduction by John, has recently been published by the British Society for the History of Science as a substantial paperback of 244 pages. It can be purchased for only £15.00 (postage included) by sending a cheque made out the 'BSHS Ltd.' to The British Society for the History of Science, 5 Woodcote Green, Fleet, Hants, GU51 4EY, United Kingdom. Visa and Mastercard are also accepted. While you're at it, make sure your local university or department library orders a copy. You may also want to order other monographs published by the BSHS, as listed on the reverse of the enclosed flier: among these is the enlarged and reset second edition of Ludmilla Jordanova and Roy Porter's classic *Images of the Earth*.

Any efforts HOGG members can make to publicize John's book will be much appreciated. Further copies of the flier can be obtained from the BSHS Executive Secretary (address above).

Jim Secord

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**"On the trail of Necker"**, Ian R. Mitchell, 2004 [Scottish visits and final days of Louis Necker, grandson of H. B. de Saussure]. *History Scotland* 4, 50-54.

**"Minerals of Scotland; Past and Present"** by Alec Livingstone, published by NMS Publishing which has much of historical interest as well as many lovely photos of the specimens themselves;

**"William. S. Bruce: Polar Explorer and Scottish Nationalist"**, by Peter Speak

This is part of the Scotia Centenary Celebrations, organised by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, which marked the centenary of the Scottish National Antarctic (Scotia) Expedition, 1902-1904, organised and led by Bruce - a forgotten polar hero indeed, although remembered by a 2003 exhibition at National Museums of Scotland.

(see <http://www.nms.ac.uk/bookshop/index.htm> ).

**"A biography of Percy Sladen (1849-1900)"**, D.Nichols., 2003. *The Linnean*, Special Issue No. 4, 1-29 This deals inter alia with his fossil and Recent echinoderm collection at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (with types at the NHM, London)

**...and for on-line viewing:**

[www.edinburghgeolsoc.org](http://www.edinburghgeolsoc.org) is the website of the Edinburgh Geological Society, and often has material of historical interest, for instance in the back numbers of the Society's informal magazine *Edinburgh Geologist*, such as Diarmid Finnegan's interesting reassessment of the role which Hugh Miller and others played in the early popularisation of glacial theory

The new [www.scottishgeology.com](http://www.scottishgeology.com) is a gateway to Scottish geology by a consortium of several public organizations (Scottish Natural Heritage, the main Scottish Government agency tasked with conservation of nature; Dynamic Earth, the visitor centre in Edinburgh; the National Museums of Scotland; the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow; British Geological Survey). It is aimed more at the general public than specialists, and although current geology is its main aim, it pays due regard to the history of the science.

Dr Michael A. Taylor  
National Museums of Scotland

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### **The Mantell Plaque - a further observation.**

*(N.B. The following was written as a reply to the article by Tony Brook in the previous newsletter)*

Dear Mr Brook,

In your article "The Mysteries of the Mantell Memorial", you suggest that Sir Charles Lyell may have played a role in the placing of the memorial tablet to Mantell in St Michael's Church, Lewes. I think you are right. Both the wording "the fluviatile origin of the Wealden formation" and the emphasis given to Mantell's discovery of a fresh-water formation beneath the Chalk bear Lyell's fingerprints. The discovery was particularly important because in 1822 the Wernerian belief in a former universal ocean, from which all sedimentary strata had been deposited, was still current, although not universally accepted. A fresh-water formation, representing a former river delta, existing beneath a deep sea formation (the Chalk), proved incontrovertibly that a former land surface had subsided beneath the sea and later been re-elevated. Lyell considered Mantell's discovery especially significant.

Furthermore, Lyell had personal experience of Mantell as a physician. In December 1834, Lyell asked Mantell to make a professional visit to his mother and sisters at Hastings. They were all ill with some kind of gastrointestinal affliction. In appreciation of Mantell's kindness to his wife and daughters, Lyell's father sent him a copy of his edition of the lyrical poems of Dante.

In reflecting on the mystery, it seemed to me possible that after Reginald Mantell returned to England in January 1853, he might have sought Lyell's help in writing an epitaph for his father. Unfortunately, I can find no mention of Reginald Mantell in Lyell's notebooks (which include many day to day memoranda) or correspondence. The most probable time for such interaction would be the winter or Spring of 1853. On 28<sup>th</sup> May, Lyell sailed for America. After his return from America on 6<sup>th</sup> August, he was preoccupied with preparations for a visit to Madeira and the Canary Islands. On 9<sup>th</sup> December 1853, Lyell sailed from Southampton for Madeira, five days after Reginald Mantell sailed from the same port for India. Thereafter there was no possibility of direct contact between the two men.

Lyell was a generous and kindly man and would have been glad to help perpetuate Mantell's memory. Whether he did or not remains a mystery. Nevertheless, I wanted you to know how interesting your article is.

(Prof) Leonard G. Wilson, St Paul, Minnesota, USA

Publications by Prof. Wilson include:

"Charles Lyell, The years to 1841: The Revolution in Geology" (Yale Univ. Press, 1972)

"Lyell in America: Transatlantic Geology 1841-1853 (John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998)

"Lyell: The Man and his Times" in "Lyell: The Past is the Key to the Present" (Ed. D.J. Blundell & A.C. Scott, Geol. Soc. 1998)

# THE OBLITERATION OF GIDEON MANTELL

Anthony Brook

Anyone interested in the History of Geology who comes to Brighton expecting to see the house where the famous 19<sup>th</sup> C. geologist, Gideon Mantell, lived and had his marvellous Museum, during his brief residence in the town, from December 1833 until September 1838, is in for nasty surprise. The 3-storey Regency townhouse is still there, at 20 Old Steine, in reasonably good condition considering its years, but the memorial plaque to Mantell beneath the front bow-window is completely blank. The shape and dimensions of the plaque are clearly evident but all the lettering has gone, weathered completely away, so that Gideon Mantell has effectively been obliterated. Eradicated from Brighton's building heritage, he has become a non-person.

In order to encourage its restoration by various interested parties, it first becomes necessary to determine its archetype. This memorial plaque to Gideon Mantell was ceremoniously unveiled, before a crowd of local dignitaries, on the afternoon of Thursday 8 May, 1930, and reported in the local newspapers, briefly in *The Evening Argus* the same evening, and then far more effusively in the *Brighton and Hove Herald* the following Saturday, under the grandiose headline of *The Man Who Found The Iguanodon*. The unveiling was performed by Sir Arthur Smith Woodward, the recently-retired, long-serving Keeper of Geology at The British Museum and a long-time resident of Sussex, in the presence of the Mayor of Brighton and 'a large gathering of prominent townspeople'. Sir Arthur, 'the most urbane of great scientists', asserted that Dr Mantell was a Sussex-born scientific genius, fearless and indefatigable in the pursuit of knowledge: an outstanding pioneer in the Heroic Age of Geology. He also built up a magnificent Collection of fossils which was housed here for all to marvel at; tried his best to make Geology exciting and popular; and established the geological parameters of Sussex and Southeast England.

The party then adjourned across The Steine to the Royal Pavilion for luncheon, which the *Herald* reporter described thus: "With characteristic hospitality in the cause of science, Sir Charles Thomas-Stanford, in his capacity as Chairman of the Memorial Sub-Committee, entertained at lunch, in the Saloon of the Royal Pavilion, a company of people well known in the local world of science and art". The post-prandial speeches began with the Mayor of Brighton, who noted that this was the 8th memorial tablet to record the residence of eminent people in the town. Sir Charles, as a bibliophile, remarked upon the beautifully-produced Volumes produced by Mantell during his time in Lewes and Brighton; was dismayed by Mantell's middle name of Algernon; and proposed the toast: To the Memory of Gideon Mantell.

Replies were forthcoming from the 2 learned gentlemen who knew most about the life and works

currently resident in Castle Place, Lewes, and the author of the recent (1927) authoritative biography of Mantell, rapidly surveyed Mantell's early life in Lewes and hinterland, and the establishment of the innovative Mantellian Museum in his house at the Old Steine after he moved to fashionable Brighton at the end of 1833. After 5 unprofitable years, he was forced to sell house and Collection, and sorrowfully depart. "Sir Arthur Smith Woodward gave a lucid account of the great contribution that Mantell made to geological science". In his estimation, Mantell was a great pioneer, in so many ways. His brilliant conception of a pre-Adamite Age of Reptiles, and his reconstructions of huge ancient reptiles from the Weald of Sussex brought about irreparable damage to the contemporary theology.

The formal proceedings were brought to a close by Alderman Sir Herbert Carden expressing everyone's appreciation of Sir Charles's hospitality; and protesting, in his own inimitable way, "Don't put tablets on too many old houses. I'm busily engaged in pulling half of the old houses down!"

The report in the Brighton and Hove Herald has a most important adjunct about this memorial tablet: 'It was designed by Eric Gill and executed under his supervision'. This simple statement suddenly gives it much greater value and significance, as one of the later creations of Eric Gill (1882-1940), the famous sculptor and typographer, who was born and brought up in Brighton, and presided over the Ditchling community of craftsmen from 1907 to 1924. In 1964 Evan Gill published an inventory of *The Inscriptional Work of Eric Gill*, and it is listed as No. 525 in this catalogue

525 Wall tablet of Hopton-Wood stone, inscription surmounted by dolphins,  
on house in Brighton in which GIDEON ALGERNON MANTELL,  
Geologist, lived 1833-38.  
Rubbing; 221/4 x 181/4; signed E.G. del., L.C. sc. Aug. 1929

There is thus no doubt that it was designed by Eric Gill and the calligraphy carved by his long-time associate, Laurie Cribb, in August 1929: the typeface used most closely resembles BOOK ANTIQUA. Unfortunately, the significance of a memorial tablet to the great local geologist, Gideon Mantell, designed by the great local craftsman, Eric Gill, did not fully register on the public consciousness of Brighton.

The unveiling of this Mantell memorial was generously noted in the County Notes section of the June 1930 issue of *The Sussex County Magazine* (p. 439). This general-interest, county magazine also unwittingly did the History of Geology a great service. Every month during 1938 it published extracts from the *Journal of Gideon Mantell* as edited by Cecil Curwen; in the September issue, on page 615, accompanying the text, there is a photograph of the Mantell memorial tablet already

from the sea (see front cover). Nevertheless, this photograph is of great historical importance because it is the ONLY record we have of what the memorial tablet looked like originally, when all the lettering of the inscription was clearly legible. 70 years of coastal weathering have completely obliterated this remembrance of Gideon Mantell and this artefact of Eric Gill – which is really a great shame, on both counts.

Houses of eminent people need plaques to record their eminence; otherwise, nobody knows. Plaques without letters obscure the posterity of men of letters.

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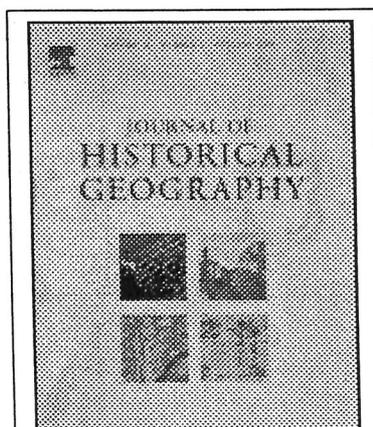
## EPILOGUE

In early January, John Cooper, Keeper of Geology at The Booth Museum of Natural History in Brighton, and Chairman of the Brighton and Hove Geological Society, appraised me of the following:

- 1) The inscription on the Mantell plaque was still clearly legible in the early 1980's.
- 2) The primary agent for ruining the plaque was not salt erosion per se (as I had assumed).
- 3) Sometime in the 1980's the whole property (including the plaque,) was completely repainted, with gloss paint, without regard to woodwork, brickwork or stonework.
- 4) The plaque is made of Hopton Wood Stone, an excellent and well-used English stone, which, because of the special qualities of its pores, is particularly resistant to the depredations of freeze-thaw / wet-dry cycles and the consequent build-up of ruinous salt crystals within the stone.
- 5) The culprit was the overpainting which smothered this special stone with an impermeable layer (gloss paint), thereby significantly altering its physical characteristics, which generated the concentration of damaging salt crystals.
- 6) Unsuccessful attempts have been over the years to communicate with the owner of the building, without whose consent nothing can be done: extremely frustrating.
- 7) Eric Gill's niece, Helen-Mary Skelton, herself a sculptress, has offered her services in whatever capacity to restore one of her uncle's public artefacts in his hometown.

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## Journal of Historical Geography



An international quarterly, the *Journal of Historical Geography* publishes articles on all aspects of historical geography. It aims to interest an international and interdisciplinary readership. In addition to publishing original research papers, the journal encourages discussion of methodology, discourse on items of general interest, and debates on subjects covered in earlier issues. It includes a substantial book review section.

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## **Historic Jussieu (ex- Sorbonne) Mineral Collection under threat ?**

The position of Chair for the Sorbonne Mineral collection, which included Sciences of the Earth, was created by Imperial decree on 14 April 1809; the first occupant was Rene-Just Haüy, the "father of crystallography", who taught until 1822. He was succeeded by Francois Sulpice Beudant until 1840, and then by Gabriel Delafosse until 1872. Beudant began the systematic collection of minerals, and cataloguing started in 1823.. Delafosse presided over the acquisition of the 4000 piece collection of Professor Jurine of Geneva, which cost 20,000 francs and required Government intervention to succeed. The fast development of mineralogy as a science caused the mineralogists to meet and form the Geological Company of France in 1830, and further evolution led to the formation of the French Company of Mineralogy, on 21 March 1878. They occupied the Laboratory of Mineralogy at the Sorbonne. With the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a need to rebuild part of the Sorbonne, and the laboratory was temporarily transferred to a hanger. The first stone of the new building was laid on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1885, and the new Sorbonne was inaugurated on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1889, by President Carnot. Installed finally in new buildings, in the center of the library of the laboratory, the collection developed slowly. Its principal enrichment came in 1954, one half-century later, by the acquisition of the collection of L Vésignié (1870-1954). This collector was an impassioned mineralogist and an amateur within the meaning of the 18th century, and created with the passing of years a true cabinet of mineralogy. Its collection of almost 50 000 samples is one of the more beautiful private collections of, world.

*(amended translation by "babelfish" from the history page at: <http://www-ext.lmcp.jussieu.fr/mineraux/> )*

Incredible!

The mineralogical collection of the University Paris 6 Pierre et Marie Curie (Jussieu) is threatened to be stored in boxes for an undefined period.

This superb collection (previously at the Sorbonne), one of the most beautiful in the world, was set up and kept by Jean-Claude BOULLIARD. All could appreciate the thorough display and the value of the minerals.

We were informed that, according to the university campus renovation plan, it is planned to substitute the mineral gallery by a library.

Storage of the minerals in boxes is planned for the autumn. After 3 years of storing in a inaccessible place (storehouse), the best specimens would be displayed in a temporary location for 3 or 4 years before being moved for good in a museographic pole of which only the location is known so far

Have the risks inherent to such an operation been measured?

The three moving operations will generate important risks: breakage, theft, deterioration, complexity of packaging and storing. Numerous examples have demonstrated the existence of these risks.

Also, it is the disappearance of a competent team that has produced a lot of efforts for years in managing the collection and welcoming the public. Where will the people be in 6 years time?

We would agree to a museum project worthy the name, in order to place the mineral collection into the best conditions for the objects themselves, as well as for the public.

We would also agree to a temporary closure (during low museum season) to allow the removal of asbestos in the hall and the entrance (these are the only parts concerned).

But we do not agree to the irresponsible decision of putting into boxes one of the highlights of the French geological patrimony for an undetermined period of time, and without any guarantee of existence for the structure to come.

Academics, professionals, keepers, collectors, merchants, general public, you who are fascinated by minerals, must react.

In order to modify this project towards the integrity of the collection, let us make sure that the collection does not move until it is possible to move it for good to a museum place worthy of the name. A support committee under the direction of GEOPOLIS has been gathered (27 March 2004).

If you are willing to support our action, please fill up the our questionnaire, so that we can keep you informed of the evolution of the situation.

Exceptionally, the collection will be open and entrance will be free the first and thirid Saturday of each month from 1 pm to 6 pm, from April 3<sup>rd</sup> to its closure July 19<sup>th</sup>. It is up to you to benefit from that opportunity to discover or rediscover this beautiful treasure.

Together, thanks to your support, we will fight for the collection to be opened to the public until a new museum project is defined.

The national committee for the support of the Jussieu mineral collection

Soutien MinÃ©raux Jussieu  
6 imp. Parson  
94200 IVRY sur SEINE  
gÃ©opolis@wanadoo.fr

More information at [www.geopolis.com](http://www.geopolis.com)

