

nearest land at the time of this catastrophe, with maybe a little of the Mendips close by, the ½ mile-across Woodstones horizon seems to represent an ‘only happened once tsunami event’ in the Lias.

Only fragments from North America and a poorly preserved specimen from China show anything at all similar to the Black Ven dinosaur fossils, so the clearly ‘group herding’ or extended family structured Scelidosaurus are still an extraordinary find and still unique to this bit of the Lias.



*Fore -section of skeleton showing ribs and scutes.  
(Photograph by Bernard Newton)*



*Detail of spine showing ossified tendons  
(Photograph by L Drummond-Harris)*



*Ammonites have colonised the skeleton (L D-H)*



*Detail of the jaw showing the remarkable  
preservation of the teeth  
(Photograph by L Drummond-Harris)*

## **DID YOU KNOW? GEOLOGICAL SCIENCE AT BRISTOL MUSEUM**

*Alan Bentley*

- Bristol's geological collection is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest Museum collection in Britain.
- Until now, the Museum has had a specialist Geology Curator for nearly 180 years. From 1831 to 1850 the Museum (then known as The Bristol Institution) employed the famous naturalist and geologist Samuel Stutchbury in that capacity. Stutchbury was no amateur. In 1834, at the age of 35, he collaborated with Dr H Riley in excavating the first recorded remains of the reptile *Thecodontosaurus*. These were found in Triassic fissure fills in the Clifton Down Limestone of old quarries on Durdham Down. Stutchbury's consultancies included working with Sir Charles Lyell on Home Office inquiries.
- Bristol's excellence in the preparation and display of fossil vertebrates has continued down to the present day. This is acknowledged internationally. Accessions include one of the most complete Pliosaurus ever discovered, the oldest Stegosaur ever discovered, and recently

the best preserved dinosaur (*Scelidosaurus*) ever found in Britain.

- The Geology galleries are amongst the top 3 visitor attractions in the Museum. For the first time in almost two centuries, Bristol is currently without a specialist Geology Curator. The management situation is being debated. No reappointment will be made until well into next year, and considerable doubt hangs over whether the new curatorship will be specialist, or combined with Biology. If the latter happens, one person will be in charge of well over a million specimens, patently not a practicable proposition. The demands of the Geology and Biology disciplines are not readily compatible and in fact conflict in such areas as conservation, access and display requirements.
- The display and storage space devoted to Geology are under pressure, despite the fact that the material includes several National Heritage collections replete with type and figured specimens.

## GEOLOGY AT BRISTOL MUSEUM: A PLEA TO SAFEGUARD CURATORSHIP

*Alan Bentley*

The Wills Building is the current home of Bristol University's Dept of Earth Sciences, and home to the most comprehensive geological library outside London, Oxford and Cambridge. This cathedral-like structure took eleven years to construct (1914 – 1925). It dominates the landscape at the top of Park Street, and perched on its upland Plateau of Brandon Hill Grit (a local variant of the Millstone Grit, the colour of strawberry purée, but quartz-hard and glittering like diamonds in the sunlight), is a stunning feature of the skyline for miles around. Niklaus Pevsner the architectural historian describes it as 'a tour de force in Gothic Revival, so convinced, so vast and so competent that one cannot help feeling respect for it'. To me

it encapsulates the standing which the study of geology in Bristol has had for the past century, and should continue to have.

Very close by, and literally attached both in construction and in spirit, is the City Museum and Art Gallery. A glance at the front page of the [bbc.co.uk/Bristol/museum](http://bbc.co.uk/Bristol/museum) website immediately reveals its predominant reputation. Dinosaurs feature prominently at the top, while lower down it states 'It's a geologist's favourite place: see the Museum's collection of rare rocks and stones'.

The Museum may have had to move its image forward to match the times, but its place of affection in my mind harks back to when, as a young teenager, I made pilgrimage there almost every Saturday afternoon. The front sweep of stairs, worthy of a Russian palace, was crowned by glazed oak doors whose brass handles were kept polished to such radiance that you felt you had to apply for permission to touch them.



*The biplane replica in the Museum foyer*

Within the atrium, the overhead blaze from the skylight was diffused, incongruously, by an early biplane which appeared to have been built largely from paper and timber recycled from old bedroom furniture. Out of the glare, the building retreated into cool, gloomy, inviting caverns within which one glimpsed the glint of gold artifacts and the beady stare of exotic animals. Here and there, of particular interest to the teenager, was a pedestal bearing a slightly risqué statue, parts of which seemed to carry a surprising polish. All these delights came wrapped in a slight but persistent aroma of coffee, cabbage and old pine, recognisable in Museums country-wide and probably available in aerosol from a museum commodity supplier. There was an echo and grandeur about the place which evoked city fathers and intrepid explorers in smoking jackets and top hats.