



A SPACE FOR DISCOVERY: THE ROOM AT THE HEART OF GEOSCIENCE

For more than two centuries, across multiple homes and through the upheavals of scientific revolution, one room has sat at the heart of the Geological Society. Now, having secured its future at Burlington House for the next thousand years, the Society is ready to make that room worthy of the centuries ahead.

WITH THE SOCIETY'S FUTURE at Burlington House ensured through a 999-year lease, we have a rare opportunity to invest in one of the most significant spaces in the history of geology—and to help shape its future.

Today, as the Society looks ahead to its third century, an ambitious project is underway to refurbish and restore the Lecture Theatre at Burlington House, the centre of many of the discoveries, debates and discussions that have shaped modern geoscience.

Our aim is not simply to modernise a well-used space, but to reveal its historic character, improve accessibility and sustainability, and ensure it remains a place of learning, debate and inspiration for generations to come.

A home for geology

Wherever you are in the world, if you work in, study or care about the geosciences, you are connected in some way to the Geological Society's home at Burlington House.

← At a meeting of the Geological Society of London on 18 December 1912, Charles Dawson claimed that four years earlier, a workman at the Piltdown gravel pit in East Sussex had given him a fragment of the skull that became known as the 'Piltdown Man'. The earliest photograph we have of the 'Meeting Room' (Lecture Theatre), is the one of the Ordinary General Meeting on 30 June 1954 where the Piltdown skull was confirmed to be a fraud.
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Founded in 1807 by thirteen pioneering geologists, the Geological Society is the oldest national geological society in the world. Since 1874, Burlington House has served as its home: a place where scientific knowledge is shared, professional standards are developed, collections are cared for, and the global geoscience community comes together to tackle some of society's greatest challenges.

At the centre of that activity sits the Lecture Theatre.

Known originally as the Meeting Room, this space has accompanied the Society throughout its history. Long before the move to Burlington House, the Meeting Room travelled with the Society through successive premises across London, always remaining central to its purpose. Since arriving in Piccadilly, it has continued to provide a place where geologists gather to exchange ideas, challenge assumptions and advance understanding of Earth.

In the early 1970s, the Meeting Room was transformed into the Lecture Theatre we know today. More than fifty years later, the time has come to reimagine the space once again.

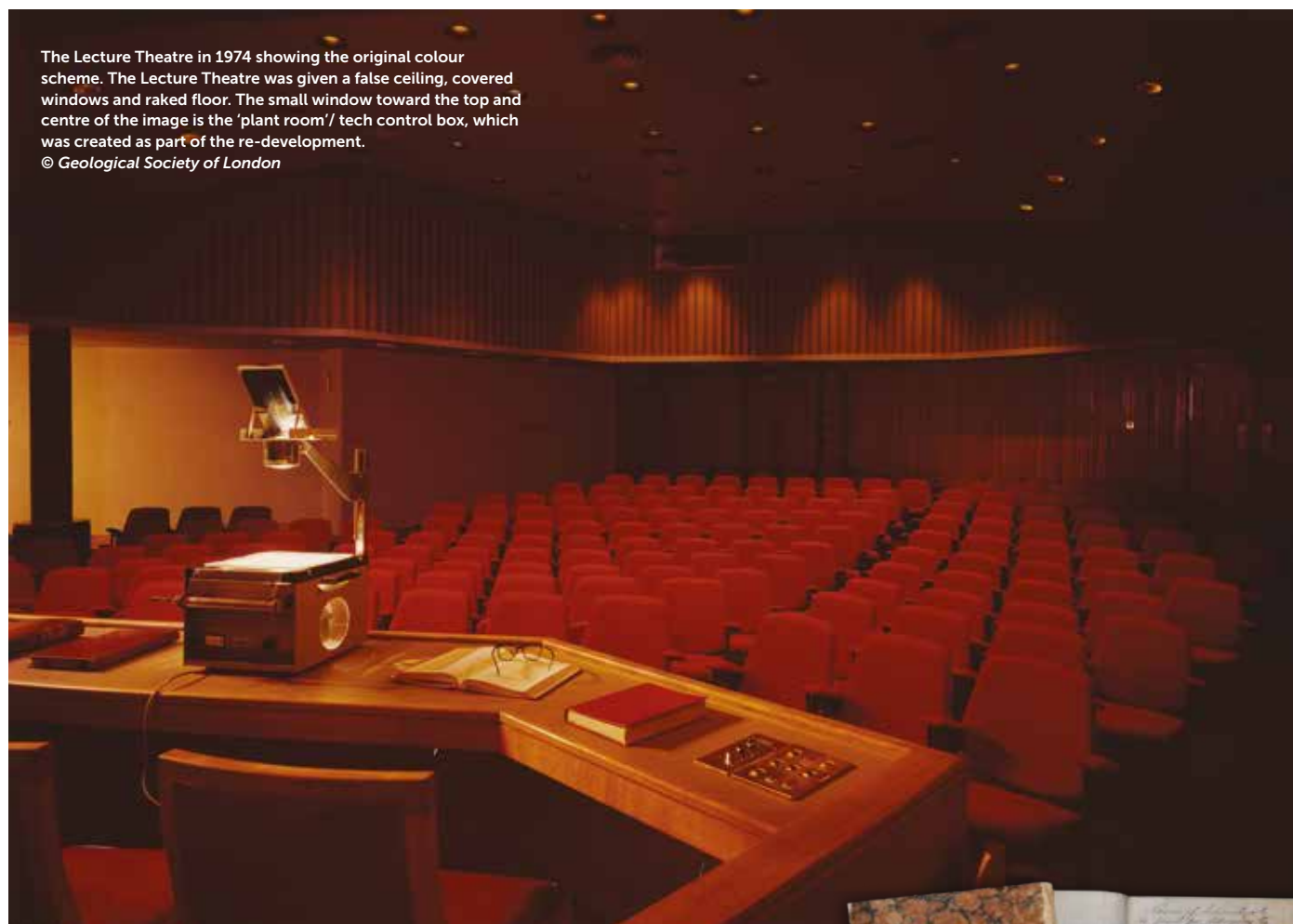
Where ideas changed the world

Few scientific spaces can claim such a direct connection to the development of an entire discipline.

The Society's early meetings were →

“A place where geologists gather to exchange ideas, challenge assumptions and advance understanding of Earth”





The Lecture Theatre in 1974 showing the original colour scheme. The Lecture Theatre was given a false ceiling, covered windows and raked floor. The small window toward the top and centre of the image is the 'plant room' / tech control box, which was created as part of the re-development.
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renowned for lively debate. Unlike many learned societies of the nineteenth century, discussions were actively encouraged, with the room arranged in a parliamentary style to foster challenge and exchange. One meeting attendee, J. S. Lockhart, famously remarked, "Though I don't care for geology, I do like to see the fellows fight." Charles Babbage, a regular attendee at Society meetings, also praised the discussions for bringing together ideas and observations that ultimately led to important scientific conclusions.

Within this space, discoveries that transformed scientific understanding were presented and debated and refined.

Mary Anning's remarkable fossil discoveries, and some of the earliest known plesiosaurs and pterosaurs, were brought

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before the Society, helping to revolutionise ideas about prehistoric life. In 1824, William Buckland presented the first scientific paper on *Megalosaurus*, the first terrestrial dinosaur. The first papers describing the Cambrian, Silurian, Devonian and Permian systems were also presented here, laying important foundations for the geological timescale used today.

On 4 January 1837, a young Charles Darwin presented his first scientific paper



For almost 200 years, the Society has recorded and celebrated the generosity of its supporters. This book documents donations towards the Society's move to Somerset House in 1828, with William Buckland, Roderick Murchison, Charles Lyell, William Wollaston and Adam Sedgwick among the signatories.
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to the Society, sharing observations made during the voyage of HMS *Beagle*. Seventy-five years later, the Meeting Room hosted the first presentation of the discovery of the Piltdown Man, when bone fragments were presented as the fossilised remains of a previously unknown early human. In 1954, it was also the venue where the official announcement was made exposing the Piltdown Man as one of the most famous frauds in science.

The room has also witnessed important moments in the Society's own history. In 1901, women attended an Ordinary General Meeting for the first time, helping pave the way for the election of the Society's first women Fellows in 1919. And when the newly refurbished Lecture Theatre opened in 1973, its inaugural lecture was delivered by Harrison Schmitt—geologist, Apollo 17 astronaut and the only geologist ever to have walked on the Moon.

Revealing the past, preparing for the future

The proposed refurbishment offers an exciting opportunity to reconnect the Lecture Theatre with its historic character while ensuring it meets the needs of a modern scientific society.

Historic photographs suggest that significant architectural features from the original Victorian Meeting Room may still survive beneath the 1970s redevelopment. Original windows, decorative detailing and elements of the room's earlier appearance may yet be revealed. The project will seek to uncover and celebrate these historic features wherever possible, restoring →

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AN INVITATION TO BE PART OF THE STORY

THE LECTURE THEATRE IS NOT SIMPLY A ROOM WITH AN INTERESTING HISTORY. IT IS A ROOM WHERE THE HISTORY OF GEOLOGY HAPPENED

The Society's history has been shaped by generations of Fellows, supporters and benefactors who invested in its future.

The refurbishment of the Lecture Theatre offers today's community a chance to do the same.

We are seeking to raise over £1 million to refurbish and secure the future of the Society's historic Lecture Theatre. The project will be supported through a range of philanthropic opportunities, enabling individuals and organisations to contribute in ways that are meaningful to them.

FOUNDING MEMBER PATRONS

Founding Member Patrons will play a particularly important role in bringing the project to life. Inspired by the spirit of the Society's original founders, this group of supporters will help shape the future of Burlington House, forming the bedrock from which we build a legacy, and will be recognised for their leadership gift and commitment to geoscience. We are seeking **13 Founding Member Patrons**—individuals or organisations to collectively unlock a vital programme of investment in the Society's future—each committing **£20,000** or more. A limited number of places remain.

THE FOUNDER'S CIRCLE

While inspired by our original founders, we welcome further interest. From a gift of **£3,000+**, the Founder's Circle brings together Fellows, members and friends of

the Society who wish to support the refurbishment at a significant level. Collectively, these early supporters will help ensure that the project can achieve its full ambition and impact.

SEAT DEDICATIONS

For those seeking a personal connection, seat dedications provide a lasting way to become part of the Lecture Theatre's story. Seats may be dedicated in honour of a mentor, colleague, loved one or personal passion for geoscience. Future generations of students, researchers and Fellows will gather in these seats to learn, debate and discover. Dedications range from **£500** to **£2,500**.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

The Society has a range of partnership opportunities for organisations that share its commitment to education, sustainability, innovation and the future of the geoscience profession. Bespoke opportunities are available for companies wishing to support the project and engage with the Society's international community.

£ Bespoke.

BOOK OF BENEFACTORS

All donors will be recorded in a commemorative Book of Benefactors, preserved within the Society's collections and listed online

SUPPORTING AT ANY LEVEL

Every contribution, whatever its size, will help bring the project closer to reality.

Anonymous donations of any size are also

welcome and will be respected in accordance with donors' wishes.



The Lecture Theatre as in use today, with the seats recovered in blue.
© Geological Society of London

“The refurbishment will create a more welcoming, accessible and sustainable environment for everyone”

a stronger connection between the space and its remarkable past.

At the same time, the refurbishment will create a more welcoming, accessible and sustainable environment for everyone who uses it.

Improved accessibility will help ensure that Fellows, visitors and speakers can participate more fully in Society activities. Enhanced environmental performance will support the Society's wider sustainability ambitions. Modern infrastructure and audiovisual technology will enable the Lecture Theatre to continue serving audiences both in person and online.

The Geological Society has always been

international in outlook. Today, members join lectures and scientific meetings from across the world. The refurbished Lecture Theatre will strengthen those connections, creating a space that reflects the global nature of contemporary geoscience whilst retaining the unique atmosphere that has characterised the room for more than two centuries.

The next chapter

A 999-year lease is a remarkable responsibility.

It represents confidence in the future of the Geological Society and a commitment to safeguarding Burlington House for generations yet to come. The refurbishment

of the Lecture Theatre is one of the first opportunities to honour that commitment.

For more than 200 years, this room has witnessed discoveries, debates and conversations that have shaped our understanding of Earth. The decisions made today will determine how it continues to serve the geoscientists of tomorrow.

The Society warmly invites Fellows, members, researchers, students, partners and friends around the world to be part of this next chapter.

Together, we can ensure that this extraordinary room remains a place where ideas are shared, discoveries are made and the future of geoscience continues to be shaped. **G**

SIMONE LENNOX-GORDON

Head of Development, The Geological Society of London, UK

MAKING A GIFT FOR THE FUTURE

To discuss the project or opportunities to support the campaign, please contact Simone Lennox-Gordon, Head of Development, or Jenny Boland, Director of Membership & Development, by emailing development@geolsoc.org.uk or calling +44 (0)20 7432 0947.

To find out more about supporting the future of geoscience, including our donor recognition opportunities, visit: geolsoc.org.uk/about-us/support-the-geological-society

WITH YOUR SUPPORT WE CAN
CONTINUE TO DISCOVER, DEBATE
AND INSPIRE FOR GENERATIONS
TO COME FROM THE HOME OF
THE OLDEST NATIONAL
GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY IN
THE WORLD.