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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Response to Walley

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takes place, the boundaries are little altered. Thus for most of the time, even using the latest maps, the naturalist has no difficulty in thinking he knows which vice-county he is in and will record accordingly.

If local records centres are to collect efficiently all the biological data for their area and yet serve the needs of, amongst others, local authorities, it may be easier for neighbouring records centres to arrange amongst themselves to duplicate data for areas where the old boundaries are no longer politically convenient, rather than try to alter traditional boundaries of local voluntary organisations.

Ultimately the establishment of a single records centre for each vice-county or county or even a group of counties will create a national data gathering network with enormous scientific potential. "

Although most local records centres will have information on where the vice-county and local government boundaries differ, Dr. Perring informs me that the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood holds a set of transparencies of boundaries which can be borrowed and used for tracing etc.

The point which perhaps needs re-emphasising is that it will always be better to adopt an agreed and traditional base-line for survey, where necessary coming to some mutually acceptable arrangements about duplication of records.

Better a traditional system than one which changes with the vagaries of local government - at least until we are all governed within grid squares!

Dear Sir,

If Mr. Walley's intention was, by making a lunatic suggestion to provoke discussion, then I'm sure he has achieved his objective. I refer to his third proposal (B. C. G. Newsletter No. 8., page 30) "That the BCG encourages a policy of placing in public museums all type material at present in private collections, and that the status type should be officially questioned if they are not so placed".

This very arrogantly presupposes public museums look after their

collections in a way vastly superior to the private museum and individual. Further, I would say that anyone suggesting that, for example the Hope Department, hand over their vast amount of type insect material to a public Museum is in need of psychiatric help. The second part of the proposal three (status type should be officially questioned), to me shows a fundamental lack of understanding of what a type specimen is, how it was established, and the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature governing its establishment, not least a total lack of forethought on the nomenclatural chaos that would result, if overnight a percentage of established type material was to have its status questioned even when those species in question were erected under strict I. C. Z. N. rules. The chaos existing at present is surely enough?

However the sad fact remains that there are many neglected collections, including some in public ownership that contain type material that is decaying or not labelled as such.

The Walley proposal two covers the point adequately, and can be extended to help the less well looked after collection whether it be in private hands, a Government research establishment, Trustee Museum or Natural History Society collection. If proposal one were modified to include all collections, including those outside Council or National Museums, the revised proposal two could be implemented.

This seems a monumental task and one that will probably never be completed. Nonetheless it is a duty that a Group such as ours should undertake.

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Glasgow.

** A reply to the above letter by Graham Walley will appear in the next edition of the BCG newsletter. Ed.