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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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While being unwilling to make an estimate of the actual number of specimens in the collection, some indication of the holdings is that there are 312 cabinet drawers and 119 storeboxes. A considerable amount of material is also kept in spirit and this includes tropical species, larvae and immature stages of many groups, research material, duplicate material not required in the main collections and other Arthropoda. These last include some Arachnida, Myriapoda and Isopoda.

One 16-drawer cabinet of foreign insects, contains material from many parts of the world. Though many are unidentified, data labels indicate the country of origin etc. and specimens of Orthoptera, Coleoptera, Diptera etc. display the striking modifications, brilliant colours and size range to be seen in warmer regions.

A small collection of pressed leaves showing insect mines and other damage has been built up in recent years.

Apart from the actual material mentioned above, the other important feature of the Museum is the large file of record cards which become increasingly valuable as a research tool. Contained in 24 drawers, cards are filed under insect Orders sub-divided into vice-counties (i.e. using the Watsonian vice-county system). Virtually all known records from the six North Wales counties have been written on individual cards and this is continually added to and kept up to date. All past entomological literature (i.e. from the mid 19th century onwards) has been searched for published records and the relevant journals are perused regularly and any records extracted onto cards. This card index is being increasingly consulted by other workers from Universities, Museums, NCC and other bodies as well as individual collectors. There are estimated to be about 30,000 individual cards at the present time.

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#### MORE RIDICULOUS FOLKLORE

One of the more amusing incidents of a natural history nature (the others do not bear repeating) during a french holiday concerned spiders. On a tour around several chateaux of the Touraine, we were solemnly told in one that the roof timbers constructed of "Chestnut" had the useful property of repelling spiders. The vaulted ceiling was too high to check but we were equally adamantly assured by a different but equally charming guide that the oak beams of the next building were similarly endowed with the mystery repellent. However, there were multitudinous webs to be seen with the unaided eye in this example.

I thought perhaps Jean Henri Fabre's Life of the Spider might provide the source of this "well known fact" but cannot find any mention and I don't know of any other french naturalists who may have perpetuated such a story.

E.G.H.