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Register of Natural Science Collections in Northwest England

Hancock, E. G. & Pettitt, C. W. (Editors) Manchester Museum, 1981.

The details of museum collections from over seventy museums totally about 1600 main entries are catalogued and cross indexed by subject and geographical origin. A consortium of natural history curators forming the Northwest Collection Research Unit have gathered the data over a period of two years. Originally the data were available through computerised retrieval but this has been found too unwieldy to satisfy the constant demands so the Register is now available as a publication. The full price of £6.00 includes postage and packing. The Register will be sent out from Easter 1981. Orders to be sent to E. G. Hancock, c/o Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, BL1 1SA, England, cheques and postal orders made payable to the Northwest Collection Research Unit (overseas subscribers, International Money Orders in Pounds Sterling, please).

p.s. This is not free to BCG members and is not the same as the BCG Report No. 1 (A Survey of Zoological and Botanical material in Museums and related institutions of Great Britain, 1980) although some people appear to have this misconception. The latter is available for £3.00.

ICOM Meeting in Mexico

Those privileged few who could travel so far produced the following reports and contributed to the resolutions passed on for further consideration.

We were the three Brits in the Natural History Committee, (which totalled about 60, give or take a few locals), Anne Clarke from South Kensington, Peter Morgan from the Principality (where else?), also representing Europe, and me from Tyneside (also representing the rest of England). We read two papers each which is six out of 18, so, considering the strong side fielded by the rest of the world, we did all right. In fact we were quite proud of ourselves. There was a little trouble with the projector, Mexican carousels do strange things to some slides (I think) and Mexican carousel operators do even stranger things to Mexican carousels (I know) and that's not a lot, especially when you really want them to do something and that was quite often. Apart from that the hosts were super, remarkable people, the climate was comfortable, the smells, like the water, quite disgusting and the whole incident something I would not have missed for worlds.

The Natural History Committee which met in the City's newish Natural History Museum, a series of huge concrete mole-hills linked by very hacienda-style open corridors twixt palms and fountains, decided that through general education of the masses, we could persuade everyone not to louse up this, our only planet, save the world from international democracy or communism, or whatever, and ask for more money to do it. I think I can just recognise one of our resolutions amongst those debated by the final plenary session. That however, is another story. My final comment must be on Senor Montezuma. I do not know who did what to this chap, but it must have been pretty nasty, judging from the vicious revenge he took on yours truly at 2.00 a.m. on 1st November.

Tony Tynan

from ICOM U.K. Newsletter, No.12 (Nov. 1980)



After the constant noise and pollution of Mexico City, the clean air and tranquillity of the north Mexican desert was an ideal setting in which to relax and talk over the events of the week.

'The Lucky Ten' of us flew with two staff from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology to Torreon on the first leg of our journey to the Institute's Desert Field Station. At Torreon the party divided, five going on by small plane, the rest of us setting off by minibus on the four-hour journey first following the line of the railroad and then branching on to a dirt track across a desert landscape reminiscent of scenes from the 'Magnificent Seven'.

As a complete newcomer to deserts, my eyes darted from the strange and varied forms of desert plants to lizards that scuttled across the track in front of us, and hawks wheeling overhead. Occasionally we glimpsed the ear-tips of a jack-rabbit and the flashing colours of a beautiful butterfly.

At the Field Station Mrs Halfitter and the staff welcomed us with a marvellous meal and while devouring a huge basket of crystallised fruit we discussed the work of the Field Station and its role in the 'Man and the Biosphere' project of which it is a part. Lunch finally ended about 5 pm just in time for us to walk up a nearby hill to watch the sun set - a magical sight, looking over the vast desert plain below to the red glow that gradually disappeared behind distant mountains.

Sunday gave us the opportunity to become more familiar with some of the desert wildlife: a variety of birds ranging from a golden eagle to tiny humming birds, a horned lizard and young, as well as the inevitable tarantulas and scorpions.

Anne Clarke