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Secretary's Report 1980/1981

It was not until the Annual General Meeting in Leicester that we learned that Stephen Flood was taking up a post in the Arts Council and that he would be giving up his position of Honorary Secretary and it was consequently with very little warning that I took over his duties. My first, and pleasant duty is to place on record our thanks to Stephen for his contribution to the work of the Group through his term of office and to wish him well in his new post.

Other officers and committee members elected at the Annual General Meeting on 12th April are given elsewhere in this Newsletter in the report of the meeting.

Three committee meetings have been held during the year, on 8th May in London; 25th July in London and 31st October in London, and one more is planned for 30th January. Two general meetings have been arranged for members during the year, the Study Weekend in Leicester which has already been reported and a meeting at the British Museum (Natural History) Annexe at Tring when some thirty members were able to see the new storage building housing the bird collections, and the refurbished displays in what was the Rothschild Museum.

The main achievement of the year has been the publication of the long awaited Collection Survey Report. This has provided the incentive to begin planning the next stage - a survey of University collections and the possible preparation of a National Plan for systematics collections on the lines of the American Association of Systematics Collections Report.

Much of the Honorary Secretary's time during the year seems to have been taken up with correspondence and discussions of the implications for museums of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill which at the time of writing has just had its first reading. A statement of the effects of the Bill, approved by the Department of the Environment and the Taxidermists Guild appeared in an earlier Newsletter and the progress of the Bill will be closely monitored. The Honorary Secretary has also during the year, prepared an updated bibliography on natural history museums and the management of natural history collections and intended primarily for the guidance of Museums Association Diploma students. The bibliography will be available shortly from the Education Officer.

Other matters discussed at committee have included representation on the Wildlife Link committee of CoEnCo, cooperation with the Geology Curators Group, and cooperation with the Museums Association Manual of Curatorship. Comments have been forwarded to the Research Council on the report 'Taxonomy in Britain', a new draft constitution is being drawn up and a publicity leaflet designed. The Group is cooperating with Paul Harding of the Biological Records Centre on a survey of Regional Biological Records Centres.

As far as future conferences are concerned it was decided that to allow sufficient time to make proper arrangements, this would have to be deferred until July 1982. It is planned however to hold a one day meeting in Birmingham in April and to make arrangements for members to meet during the Museums Association Conference in Manchester on 21st September.