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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Author(s): Garland, S. P.

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## THE NATIONAL BUTTERFLY MUSEUM SALE

This took place on 26th and 27th October 1983 at Sotheby's in London . Surprisingly most lots achieved sale prices far in excess of those estimated. Some archival material sold for ten times its estimated value!

A walnut-faced cabinet containing fifteen drawers of rare British butterflies was sold for over £10 000 to an unknown private buyer.

There were two interesting aspects to the sale from the museum viewpoint. Firstly the star billing of type specimens. Ian Wallace of Merseyside noted 17 species represented by co-types, 22 by paratypes and 15 by holotypes or allotypes.

Secondly the Special Note reproduced below concerning trade in protected species. Do they really add nothing to the value of a lot?

The sale put an end to the controversy concerning the use of the words 'National' and 'Museum' as far as this institution (or whatever) is concerned, but I wonder what damage the wide publicity will have done to the image of museums in the eyes of the public. Certainly all national media coverage which I heard, saw or read never seemed to question the fact that there was a museum selling off its collections to the highest bidder.

SPG

### **BRITISH BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS**

*Special Note:* The recent Wildlife Protection Act contains certain provisions relative to butterflies and moths. Apparently these have not all been implemented but for the present purpose the National Butterfly Museum assumes that these are in full force and therefore makes the following statements:-

1. Any specimens of protected insects in the museum collection were taken or obtained in all cases in the years before the provision of such protection - in most cases the insects are anything from 20-120 years old!
2. Notwithstanding this, any such specimens of butterflies, moths, etc., contained within the lots offered for sale are deemed not to form part of that lot for sale purposes or valuation, such specimens being regarded in the nature of a gift by the museum to any other museum, or responsible individual, who shall purchase any such lot. In all cases where such insects might be present they would form a relatively minor addition and cannot therefore be regarded as an inducement to purchase any given lot.
3. The acceptance of the above by the purchaser(s) of such lots is deemed a special condition of sale.