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SECRETARY'S REPORT 1987/88

Your committee met five times during the past year, yesterday here in Bolton, once at the Museums Association offices, and three times at University College London which has become our adopted home. I would like to thank all our hosts for their kind hospitality, and particularly Rosina Down (UCL) for her special efforts which make committee meetings a pleasure.

Two general meetings were held; Sheffield in April with a record-breaking attendance, and Coventry (Live Animals in Museums) in September was also well-attended for a second meeting of a more specific nature. Again our thanks go to the organisers and host museums. We hope to continue with the same formula; a major meeting combined with an AGM and an attractive package of lectures, discussions and visits; and a second meeting will give us the chance to discuss a specialist subject or visit a new venue, or a far-flung outpost. The emphasis is on making the meetings interesting, informative, enjoyable and cheap. In 1990 BCG will stretch its wings to visit the Isle of Man, by invitation of the Manx Museum. We will be able to take advantage of cheap accommodation, free brand-new conference facilities, an opportunity to meet our colleagues from Ulster and the Republic, and a chance to explore the island (and duty free). We feel that after the success of Sheffield and this weekend's meeting here in Bolton, that we can boldly go where no AGM has gone before. A second meeting for 1988 has been arranged at Exeter Museum in September. Your committee has worked hard throughout the year, and many of our efforts should bear fruit during the coming year. If all goes well, 1988/89 could be an exciting year for the Group. The launch of a new Journal, the Beetle-down ... campaign, a publication on 'Disposal of Collections', a residential curatorial course at Losehill Hall in October, the publication of a Manual of Biological Curation, and the publication and response to Biological Collections (UK) are all exciting events in the coming year; events for which we need your solid support and assistance.

Our relationship with the Museums Association is not all it should be. The Director General attended one of our committee meetings, and prospects thereafter looked quite good. However the MA have since failed to provide some financial support for our curatorial course, and BCG committee decided by a very small majority not to affiliate to the MA until the benefits of membership become clearer. On the other hand the MA provided ten free places to their 1987 conference and it is likely that additional places will be available for the 1988 Belfast conference. Phil Collins has represented BCG at the MA Specialists Groups Meeting and useful dialogue has developed. Gordon Reid is establishing useful links with the MGC Conservation Unit. Close links with GCG continue. Rosina Down and several other members have attended GCG committee meetings, and Diana Smith reciprocates as GCG rep on our committee.

Kathie Way keeps us informed of developments at the BM(NH).

Amongst our bread and butter work we have commented on current issues such as the Hale Report, MDA Terminology Group, CP schemes (liaising with Institute of Field Archaeology), National Heritage Museum of the Year; awards, MGC Conservation Unit and a regular feature on our agenda is 'Collections at Risk'. Here the committee operates a 'Watchdog' on the disposal and well-being of collections. In the coming year we are extending this to biology staff. We are also pushing hard for 'Curatorial Biology' to be established as one of the optional 'modules' in the new style MA Diploma, based on the Manual of Biological Curation as a syllabus. An exciting new development is the approach made to GCG and BCG by Sheffield University's Division of Continuing Education with a view to running regular curatorial courses in the natural sciences. The future looks very promising.

I am pleased to report that for the first time in several years there is some stability on committee. All the current officers are willing to stand for re-election.

The year ahead looks very exciting. I would like to thank fellow officers and members of committee for their hard work during the past year, and ask for your continuing support during the coming year.

Derek Whiteley
BCG Secretary
15 April 1988

Uses of biological specimens (2)



A little girl called Alice playing croquet with a study skin of Phoenicopterus ruber and a stuffed Erinaceus europaeus, both doubtless borrowed from the zoological collections of the Oxford University Museum. (After John Tenniel).