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## The Biology Curator

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Fig. 4

Additional marine invertebrate specimens, collected at Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire by Miss N Eales from Reading, were deposited in August 1937.

Teaching models have been purchased at various times and include Hydra (in section), Anodonta (internal anatomy), chick embryo, rabbit embryo, the brains of several vertebrates including the human, and embryological models demonstrating the development of the frog and chick.

During 1998, a Gap Year student (Victoria Edmonds) began preparing comprehensive annotated museum labels, based on data from both the internet and up-to-date texts, many incorporating coloured illustrations. To date, those for the reptiles and birds and some for the invertebrates and mammals have been completed. The often extensive information included on these labels is particularly aimed at students of biology.

Currently we are investigating the best ways to make fuller use of the collections. We are consulting experts on how to set up a database, selecting specimens and producing labels for display material, sorting and cataloguing the collections and searching for financial support. When many university Natural History collections are facing a financial crisis and are currently at risk, sold, stored, given away or

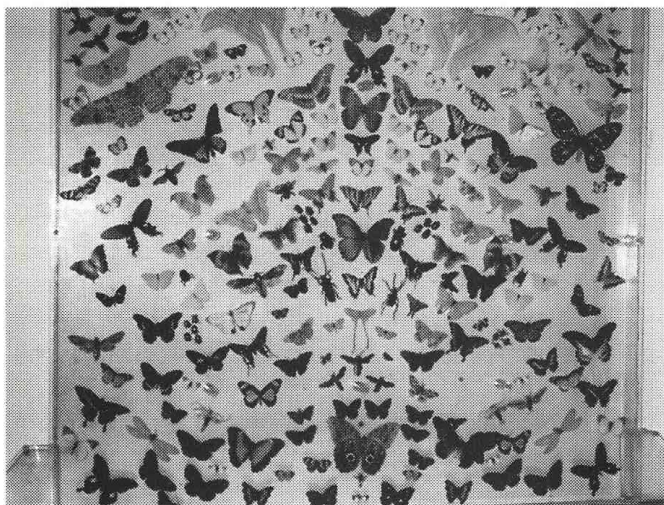


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

lost, we remain optimistic about the future, provided appropriate funding can be secured.

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### Fenscore News

The FENSCORE Committee has met twice this year, in February and in June. There is now a Website on which you can search the national database of natural science collections go to :-

[www.man.ac.uk/fenscore](http://www.man.ac.uk/fenscore)

The individual Collections Research Unit databases may also be searched independently (not all on line yet but soon will be), and there is much other information being added all the time. Of particular note at present is the full text of the North West Collections Research Unit report on the condition of collections in the North West: *Skeletons in the Cupboard*. The expenses of the Website are currently being funded by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

There is also a discussion list, FENSCORE -L. You may join this from the Website, or by emailing either the



Fenscore Webmaster (c.pettitt@man.ac.uk) or the List Moderator (ian@nms.ac.uk). The discussion list will carry up to the minute reports on Fenscore activities, and is intended also as a forum for the discussion of all matters to do with collection research.

At their recent meeting, the Committee decided to apply to the Heritage Lottery Access Fund for a grant to bring all the CRU databases up to a minimum standard of completeness and currency. It is intended the work will again be done on an area by area basis, with local knowledge input from the existing CRU members, although with the help of paid peripatetic surveyors. Visit the Website and/or join FENSORE-L to keep up-to-date on this exciting new development.

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## Skin and Bones

### Summary of the meeting held on March 25-27, 1999

After some hectic rushing around (at least of a telephonic nature) the skin and bones meeting finally made it to the light of day. It lasted two and a half days, split between London and Margate, and involved talks and tours at both sites, not to mention centrally organised transport and accommodation, an ambitious undertaking that nevertheless went off well, though to say without a hitch would be stretching a point.

### DAY 1: Bones

There were four talks on the morning, held at the NHM in London. In the first, Julian Carter gave an overview of the raw material, bones of every shape and size. He covered composition, structure and development of skeletal material, and followed this up with a quick run through the preparation, cleaning and consolidation of bone. However, if one wanted to sum up the latter part of this talk, it would probably be "don't". While we all subscribe to the necessity of using reversible methods wherever possible, the truth is that, like so many things in life, this is really an unobtainable dream.

The second talk, from Adrian Doyle, was, notwithstanding the above, about how to deal with conservation problems, and how to carry out conservation procedures. In accordance with the moral of the first talk, though, he did advocate the use of environmental control as the preferred solution for at least 65% of all conservation problems. However, if you must, there are certain things that you should be aware of. Old attempts may well affect current ones, so specimens must be carefully inspected to see what has been done in the past, and if necessary, remove it. You must always make good records of everything that you do, so that when future conservators come along, they will know straight away what processes have been carried out, instead of having to work it out for themselves. Remember that what you do will change the specimen. For example, filling cracks may well reduce

## Local Records Centres (LRCs)

- **Collect/Collate Software development ('Recorder 2000')**

The aim of this project to re-develop/replace Recorder, the standard software used in most LRCs. The design for the new software has been agreed by the project board and is on the National Biodiversity Network web site (<http://www.nbn.org.uk>). For details see: Ball, S. G., 1999. Progress with Recorder 2000, NFBR Newsletter, no. 24, pp. 7-10. Delivery of the finished product is scheduled for September 1999.

- **The Heritage Lottery Fund bid to fund the National Biodiversity Network**

A complex bid of a little under £4,600,000 was formally submitted in autumn 1998. It was withdrawn early this year because it was perceived not to be aimed at the right beneficiaries; voluntary sector naturalists and public users. A new, slimmer bid focussing on these groups will be prepared. Details of the National Biodiversity Network are available on their web site (<http://www.nbn.org.uk>).

- **New Publication**

Developing a Local Record Centre, a new loose-leaf handbook on how to establish or further develop a Local Records Centre as part of the National Biodiversity Network has now been published. Copies are available from: Rachel Hackett, Biodiversity Information Officer, The Wildlife Trusts UKNO, The Green, Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln LN5 71R (tel. 01522 544400; e-mail [lrc@wildlife-trusts.cixco.uk](mailto:lrc@wildlife-trusts.cixco.uk)).

- **Long-term funding**

English Nature has further elucidated its Position Statement on Local Record Centres (originally dated May 1998; for information see English Nature's web site <http://www.english-nature.org.uk>). It seems that long-term financial support for LRCs may be made available through Service Level Agreements. This is potentially very good news for many of the existing museum-based records centres.

- **What should the smart LRC do now?**

Submit your own lottery bid ASAP before the various committees get bored with plans to develop LRCs. Please keep me informed of local bids so that I can keep interested parties advised.

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