



# NEWSLETTER

Vol 4 No 9

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## AGM 88

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AGM 1988  
Town Hall, Bolton  
Friday, 15 April 1988

- 10.00 Assemble and coffee
- 10.30 Welcome. Dr John Gray (Chief Museums Officer, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery)
- 10.35 Introduction. Steve Garland (BCG Chairman and Senior Keeper, Natural History, Bolton Museum)
- 10.45 Non-chemical Pest Control Techniques, Geoff Stansfield (Lecturer in Museum Studies, University of Leicester)
- 11.15 Early detection of Insect Pests. Dr David Pinniger (MAFF, Slough Laboratory). Some live insect pests will be available for viewing.
- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.15 An opportunity to view Bolton Museum's natural history collections and aquarium
- 14.00 Computer Applications in Museum Biology. Phil Philips (Liverpool Museum, National Museums on Merseyside)
- 14.45 Desk-top Publishing - talk and demonstration. Dr David Jackson (Vuman Ltd., Computer Division)
- 15.30 Tea and AGM
- 16.00 Beetle Down Campaign - an introduction. Derek Whiteley (BCG Secretary and Assistant Keeper Zoology, Sheffield City Museums)
- 16.30 Finish
- 19.00 Dinner in the Dido Suite

20.30 Biology Collections - UK  
Open discussion session

Saturday, 16 April 1988

Visits to Mere Sands Wood Nature Reserve (Lancashire Trust for Nature Conservation) and Martin Mere (Wildfowl Trust).

Both these sites have visitor centres with interpretive and educational roles.

Interest has been expressed by some members in visiting Ainsdale NNR. If you require a permit to collect invertebrates for the weekend then contact Steve Garland (Bolton (0204) 22311 ext 2211) and he will arrange access.

For booking details contact Steve Garland, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton BL1 1SE. Booking forms have already been sent out. The fee for the day is £2.00.

### Notice of Annual General Meeting - 1988

The Annual General Meeting of the Biology Curators' Group will be held at 3.30pm on Friday 15th April at Bolton Civic Hall.

### Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meetings held on 16th April 1986 at Cambridge, and 3rd April 1987 at Sheffield
3. Secretary's report
4. Editor's reports
6. Election of officers and committee
7. Date and place of next meeting
8. Any other business (any business under this heading should be notified in writing to the Honorary Secretary at least four weeks before the meeting).

Nominations are invited for officers and members of the committee.

Present position: (year of election in brackets)

Chairman: Steve Garland  
Secretary: Derek Whiteley  
Treasurer: Adam Wright  
Membership Secretary: Adam Wright  
Advertising Officer: Adam Wright  
Editor: John Mathias  
Special Publications Editor: Gordon Reid  
Committee:  
Steve Moran (1986)  
Rosina Down (1987)  
Geoff Hancock (1985) retires  
Howard Mendel (1986)  
Graham Walley (1985) retires  
Phil Collins (1986)  
Clem Fisher (1987)  
Colin Plant (1987)

All officers are willing to stand for re-election.

The committee has the power to co-opt. Present co-opted members are Di Smith (GCG representative), Dave Bolton, Kathy Way and Geoff Stansfield.

The committee consists of nine posts of which only eight are presently filled; two members retire at the AGM.

Nominations for officers and committee members must be supported by two members of the Group. Nominations, in writing, should reach the Secretary at least two weeks before the Annual General Meeting.

Derek Whiteley (BCG Secretary)  
City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield S10 2TP

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## AGM 87

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Sheffield City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield on Friday 3rd April at 4.00pm.

1. Apologies were received from Gordon Reid and Phil Collins.
2. Minutes of the 1986 AGM at Cambridge were unavailable for reading. Item deferred to next AGM. Ex-Secretary to be contacted again.
3. Chairman's Report. Steve Garland as Acting Chairman read a report of the year's activities (to be published in the Newsletter). The report was accepted. Proposed D Whiteley, seconded Rosina Down.
4. Secretary's Report. Derek Whiteley as Acting Secretary read a report on the Committee's activities (to be published in the Newsletter). The report was accepted. Prop S Garland, sec Adam Wright. Discussion followed on the charging policy of the British Museum (Natural History). Prop David Mellor, sec Sue Cross that "BCG Committee take steps to canvass the opinion of the membership and seek a mandate" concerning the BM(NH) charging policy for entrance to the museum. Carried by a majority vote.

5. Treasurer's Report. Adam Wright circulated a report on the accounts which was accepted. Prop I Evans, sec J. Mathias.

6. Editor's Report. John Mathias read the Editor's report (to be published in the Newsletter).

7. Election of Officers and Committee

Chairman. Tony Irwin had recently resigned. Steve Garland was elected. Prop J Mathias, sec Derek Lott.

Secretary. Derek Whiteley was elected. Prop John Mathias, sec Steve Garland.

Special Publications Officer. Steve Garland having moved to Chairman, Gordon Reid was elected. Prop Steve Garland, sec John Mathias.

Treasurer, Adam Wright; Editor, John Mathias; committee members Geoff Hancock, Graham Walley, Phil Collins, Howard Mendel and Steve Moran were willing to stand, and were re-elected en bloc. Geoff Stansfield has served three years and retires from committee.

The committee consists of nine posts of which four are filled. Three nominations were received:

Clem Fisher - prop Derek Whiteley, sec Steve Garland  
Colin Plant - prop Steve Garland, sec Bill Ely  
Rosina Down - prop Derek Whiteley, sec Adam Wright

8. Date and place of next AGM. Bolton, 15th April 1988

9. Any other business

Reg Harris. John Mathias reported on the recent death of Reg Harris, a founder member of the Group. The AGM wished to express its sadness at Reg's untimely death, and to minute the contribution he made to the Group, particularly in the fields of training and publication. Rosina Down had attended the funeral on behalf of BCG.

There was no other business and the meeting finished at 5.20pm.

Derek Whiteley  
Secretary

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## NFBR

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National Federation for Biological Recording

The 1988 Annual Meeting will take place at the University of Nottingham on Saturday 23rd April following the two day MDA meeting on Computers in Museums.

The NFBR meeting will take the form of a series of demonstrations of the use of micro-computers in the recording of species and site records, followed by the Annual General Meeting.

The report of the Biological Recording Working Party of the Linnean Society was approved for publication by the Linnean Society Council in January. It is hoped that it will be possible to distribute the report to County Trusts, Local Authority Departments and other interested bodies.

## Curatorial Course

Natural Sciences Curatorial Course  
Losehill Hall, Derbyshire  
17th to 21st October 1988  
Organised jointly by BCG and GCG

### Provisional programme

Monday 17th:

pm Registration  
Introduction  
Brief history, functions,  
organisation and current trends in  
Natural Sciences in museums  
evening Collections Research: sources/  
importance

Tuesday 18th:

am Study visit to Rotherham Museum  
Running a Museum based records centre  
Collection, preservation and storage  
of invertebrates  
pm Study visit to Sheffield Museum  
New displays  
Treatment and preservation of  
material for exhibition purposes  
Enquiry services  
The "Ecology Unit"  
evening Museums and conservation

Wednesday 19th:

am Study visit to Buxton Museum  
Storage of geological collections  
Geological site recording  
lunch Matlock Bath - also an opportunity  
to visit the Peak District Mining  
Museum  
pm Study visit to Derby Museum  
The practical and theoretical  
considerations involved in planning  
the new Derby Natural History Museum  
- plus a site visit to look at  
progress  
evening Do we undervalue Natural Sciences  
Collections?

Thursday 20th:

am Study visit to Manchester Museum  
Preservation, storage and  
documentation of vertebrate material  
Preservation, storage and  
documentation of botanical material  
Legal and practical aspects of live  
displays in museums  
pm Recent trends in Natural Sciences  
conservation  
Short study visit to Edale visitor  
centre (Peak District National Park)  
evening Museum Natural Sciences and Education

Friday 21st:

am Documentation of collections: the  
special requirements of natural

history, types etc.

Collecting policies: legal aspects,  
relationship to display programmes  
etc.

lunchtime Course finishes

A further note on the Curatorial Course from the Secretary, Derek Whiteley. Losehill Hall has now been booked for the period of the course. The programme, outlined above, is now being finalised and will be given in full in the next Newsletter.

The cost will be £150 and this will cover food, accommodation, tuition and transport by minibus to neighbouring museums. We have tried to keep the costs to a minimum. Although the course failed to attract grant-aid it is still cheaper than the first curatorial course organised by BCG two years or so ago in Leicester. It should be good value for money!

Queries on the course content should be sent to Steve Moran, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness, IV2 3ED. Tel: 0463 - 237114.

Bookings can now be accepted with a deposit of £30.00, cheques made payable to 'Biology Curators Group'. Send your name, address, telephone number and any special requirements you may have regarding the accommodation (diet etc.), and deposit to Derek Whiteley (BCG Secretary), City Museum, Sheffield S10 2TP.

## Beetle-down....

"Beetle-down .... to your local museum"

### 1. The Idea

"I never realised that you do so much!" exclaimed a staggered member of the audience, following a lecture on the activities of our Natural Sciences department. "The museum was the last place I'd think of" said another, who couldn't believe that we are actually involved in local nature conservation.

"I thought you just put things in glass cases and typed the label". How many times have we heard this remark? "But you should tell people what else is available!" added a particularly vociferous council activist, of course, hitting the nail right on the head. And broadly speaking she was right .... we very rarely advertise our bread-and-butter public services.

"Beetle down .... to your local museum", is an attempt by BCG to tackle the problem nationally, starting with a co-ordinated campaign week, and then taking it from there. We are printing 30,000 "Beetle down ...." leaflets A4 size, folded twice to fit in the pocket or notebook. Initially aimed at children, the leaflet describes, with the aid of cartoons, most of the services and activities at most museums. Displays, temporary exhibitions, information, identification services, enquiries, live

displays, records, reference and study collections, loans, museums on holiday; these are some of the topics covered. The reverse side of the leaflet carries a list of museums which provide some level of biological (natural history) service.

Those carrying a star (\*) provide most or all of the services listed in the leaflet and employ a curator specialising in biology (natural history). Other listed museums provide some of these services but, crucially, do not employ a biologist in a curatorial post.

The leaflet is deliberately similar in design to the Geological Curators' Group 'Thumbs Up' leaflet, and the two should complement each other.

## 2. The Events

"Beetle down ...." Week 22 to 31 July 1988

National and local press releases will be available but most museums will prefer to write their own. We are hoping that each museum will organise special activities some time during this week, to carry the "Beetle-down ...." flag. Most children will be on holiday from school during this week, and the idea is to get them down to their local museum, either in their home town or on holiday in the UK (this aspect is covered in the leaflet).

Activities may involve simply drawing media attention to some aspect of your work; or actually involving your Education staff in a special activity; or may be publicising a particular object or collection. At the very least, please try to publicise the spirit of "Beetle-down ....".

The main thing is .... please try to get involved! And don't forget to let us know how things go, and send a copy of press cuttings.

## 3. The Products

"Beetle-down ...." Package

A window sticker - for those museums qualified to display one.  
A general press release.  
A batch of "Beetle-down ...." leaflets.  
Car stickers may be available.

The package will be available in late Spring at a nominal cost, from BCG. The price will depend on how much we can raise from sponsors. Further details at the Bolton meeting and in the next Newsletter.

"Beetle-down ...." does not end on 31 July 1988. The campaign will continue throughout the summer holidays, and into 1989. If things go well a range of products and leaflets may become available, in the future.

Derek Whiteley  
BCG Secretary  
City Museum  
Sheffield S10 2TP

## STOP PRESS!!

We have just heard that WATCH, the youth wing of RSNC, have offered to co-produce the leaflet. We should be able to provide the package at a very nominal charge with their help.

# Techniques

<sup>note</sup>How to treat your type specimens.

The following is quoted from MONOCULUS (Copepod Newsletter) no.14 (April 1987); it is transcribed from 'Type Specimens of Ergasilus funduli Kroyer, 1863 (Crustacea: Copepoda) re-examined', Steenstrupia 12 (9): 154-156, by Z. Kabata.

"This paper would not be complete without an account of the fate of the examined specimens. The best-preserved of them (Fig.1) was selected as the lectotype, there being no type designated in Kroyer's material. Afraid that further manipulation might be damaging to the fragile specimens, I labelled the slide on which it had been mounted in Berlese's fluid and returned it to Dr Wolff in Copenhagen. To my surprise, Dr Wolff, having looked at the slide, was unable to find anything under the coverslip. The specimen had inexplicably vanished. I asked Dr Wolff to send the slide to me again, so that I could verify this strange fact. I need not have troubled. The much-travelled slide was indeed innocent of any specimens."

It continues, explaining the disappearing copepods.

"Both Dr Wolff and I wanted to have a lectotype selected. Having picked out of the remaining material the only specimen that, in my opinion, sufficiently displayed the diagnostic features of the species, I put it on a slide in Berlese's fluid and labelled it immediately. Several days later I inspected the slide thoroughly. To my utter disbelief, the specimen was not there. A small clump of debris that might have represented copepod remains was all that could be found.

It seems fairly obvious that Berlese's fluid must have acted as a solvent and caused a complete, or almost complete, disintegration of the copepods. This could have happened only because of the old age of the specimens, combined with whatever treatment they had received in the past ...

This strange incident is reported upon as a warning to copepodologists who have to examine century-old specimens. I am also glad to report that Dr Wolff's helpful friendship for me appears to have survived this debacle."

Further comment arising from the above appeared in MONOCULUS 15 (November 1987) from Vernon E. Thatcher in Brazil. It is quoted fully here.

The sad but amusing story by Dr Kabata about the disappearing copepods in MONOCULUS, 14, suggests to me that it is time someone offered a few words about methods. Making permanent whole-mounts is more a craft or an art than a scientific procedure, and permanence is relative. For example, a ringed glycerine jelly mount stored in an unheated room in Hamburg might last for years, whereas the same slide kept in my sometimes airconditioned lab in Manaus might deteriorate in a few months. Mythology and alchemy are still to be found in micro-technique and some people assume that the same "classic methods" are being used by all and date from van Leewenhoek (1674). Both of these assumptions are false. In truth, procedures vary from lab to lab and most have evolved during the last 30 to 50 years.

Although the "classic methods" have evolved over the years and new reagents have been introduced from time to time, the basic problems remain the same. We must kill and fix an animal in a solution that will preserve its cells and produce minimal distortion. After that we need to remove all water from the animal (dehydration) and replace it with liquid that will harden without undue alteration in form. At some point, stains should be introduced to enhance visibility and the animal should be cleared enough to permit the passage of light, but not so much as to render it totally transparent.

If we define "permanent slide" as one that will last for one hundred years, we have expressed our goal. That is, we seek hundred year permanence (or HYP). The mounting medium that has HYP is Canada balsam. Most others are too recent for us to know if they have HYP or not. Similarly, many stains do not have HYP but Eosin may, since it has been in use for a long time.

In a long and arduous search for HYP, I have tried and abandoned many reagents and procedure either because they were inadequate or unnecessary. Among these are: Bouin's, Schaudinn's and Zenker's fixatives; carmine, cochineal and fuchsin stains; graded alcohols, dioxane and absolute alcohol; lactic acid, lacto-phenol, xylene, cedarwood oil and creosote; Berlese's, Gray & Wess' and any mounting medium containing either PVA or glycerine.

I have recently evolved, and will now explain, a method that is rapid, simple, has HYP, has CLASS, gives excellent short-term results and is almost foolproof. First, fix everything in AFA (85 pts 85% alcohol: 10 pts formalin: 5 pts glacial acetic acid) for at least 10 minutes. Next, pass the specimens directly from AFA to the stain solution (95% alcohol coloured to the intensity of weak tea with equal parts of Eosin and Orange-G stains). Stain in this solution for 3-10 minutes and then move the specimens to pure phenol (liquify phenol crystals with a bit of 95% alcohol to make this solution). The phenol simultaneously dehydrates, clears and destains the material. When the specimen is clear in

phenol a few seconds later it is already dehydrated, but if more destaining is desired it may be left in this solution for a few minutes. After the proper degree of destaining is achieved, pass the copepod to methyl salicylate which stops the destaining process. After 3 minutes in the latter, the specimen can be mounted in balsam. The entire process requires 8-10 minutes. Material fixed by other means and stored in 70% alcohol can be processed in the same way, but specimens in aqueous solutions (10% formalin) must be placed in 70% alcohol for a few minutes before staining.

If a specimen collapses in methyl salicylate (copepods seldom do), it may mean that it was not properly fixed or was dead too long before fixation. Not all is lost, however, for when such a specimen is returned to phenol, it returns to normal shape in a few minutes. To resolve the problem of collapse, it may be necessary to perforate the animal with a fine needle to permit a more rapid exchange of liquids. It is sometimes helpful to pass such specimens through a solution of half and half (phenol and methyl salicylate) before exposure to pure methyl salicylate.

It often happens that a copepod is fixed in an undesirable position with the antennae wrapped around the body or the abdomen curled under. Regardless of the fixative used, these conditions can be corrected because a specimen in phenol becomes soft and pliable. It can be taken from that liquid, placed on a dry slide and manipulated into a good position with dissecting needles. Arranging the legs at this time may obviate the necessity for dissection. When the animal is in the desired position, place a coverglass on top to hold it and add some methyl salicylate. The latter hardens the specimen in a few seconds and it will retain the same form when mounted in balsam.

The described method will produce good whole-mounts of any zoological material that it is possible to place between a coverglass and a slide, as long as it clears in phenol. It is especially useful for Copepoda, but we have also had good results with Ciliophora, Rotifera, Temnocephala, Monogenea, Digenea, Cestoda, Nematoda, Acanthocephala, Oligochaeta, Hirudinea, Cladocera, Branchiura, small isopods, decapod larvae, mites, insects and larval fish. Small pieces of vertebrate intestine and snail hepato-pancreas have been flattened and mounted in this way as well. With nematodes, it is relatively easy to make permanent "en face" mounts by removing a worm from methyl salicylate, placing it on a dry slide near a drop of balsam, cutting off the head and pushing it into the balsam.

In case some skeptic should ask how I know this method achieves HYP, I would have to ask him to come back in one hundred years and we will then take a look at these slides. If they are not as good as we would like them to be, we will simply remount them using the same technique. Any slide made with balsam can be demounted by soaking in methyl salicylate or xylene for a few hours. Slides

made with PVA or glycerine jelly, on the other hand, cannot be successfully demounted. Personally, I plan to check my collections every 50 years or so to see if any specimens require remounting.

Vernon E. Thatcher  
INPA, Manaus, AM, Brazil

Many thanks to Prof. Dr. H. Kurt Schminke of Oldenburg University in West Germany, editor of MONOCULUS, for permission to reproduce these articles, and to Peter Davis for suggesting we reprint them.

#### Pest control

[Martin Linnie (Dept of Zoology, Trinity College, Dublin) has sent us a copy of his paper Pest Control, A Survey of Natural History Museums in Great Britain and Ireland (INT J OF MUSEUM MANAGEMENT AND CURATORSHIP (1987), 6, 277-290)

One hundred and eight natural history museums took part in the survey, and this paper looks carefully at the results. Types of pests, damage, source of infestation, pest control strategies, effects of pesticides on specimens and health and safety aspects are discussed. A summary of Martyn's major findings are listed below:

- 1 The majority of museums surveyed have uncontrolled temperature and relative humidity levels, particularly in storage and display areas.
- 2 Virtually all museums (96 per cent) have experienced some form of pest infestation.
- 3 Members of the Coleoptera and Lepidoptera were the most frequently recorded pests, while the Dermestidae (hide, bacon and carpet beetles) caused the most damage and posed the greatest threat to collections.
- 4 Integration of material into established collections was the most frequent source of pest entry recorded, and accounted for 38 per cent of reported infestations; yet only 17 per cent of respondents routinely fumigate or treat incoming material before integration.
- 5 Pesticides are used to control or deter pests in 96 per cent of the museums surveyed, and naphthalene, PDB and 'vaponal' are the most widely used substances.
- 6 Some form of adverse effect on specimens or museum materials related to pesticide usage was noted by 29 per cent of respondents.
- 7 A range of medical ailments occurring at work were linked with the use of chemical substances used for pest control by 32 per cent of those surveyed, and were most frequently associated with exposure to naphthalene, p-dichlorobenzene and 'vaponal'-type products.
- 8 Comparisons with the survey of American museums and related institutions (Bell and Stanley, 1980) show similar trends despite obvious differences in geographical and climatic conditions.

Both surveys show the Dermestidae to be the most serious pest in natural history museums, and the integration of material as the main cause of infestations. However, while the top three substances used to protect collections are the same in each survey, naphthalene, the most widely used substance in the British Isles (62 per cent), is used by only 27 per cent of respondents to the United States survey. Just over half of the American institutions routinely fumigate or treat incoming material, compared to only 17 per cent in the British Isles, while adverse effects noticed on materials and specimens were similar in both surveys.

If anyone has difficulty obtaining a copy, please send 50p in stamps to:

BCG Secretary  
Derek Whiteley  
City Museum  
Sheffield S10 2TP

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## Exhibitions

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### First Impressions - whose impressions?

First Impressions: The British Discovery of Australia is hailed as a centrepiece of the bicentennial celebrations. The exhibition contains many fine drawings and paintings from the explorers and naturalists who visited Australia 200 years ago. It also recounts the history of the times using a variety of maps, portraits and videos.

Although excellently and interestingly produced this exhibition is disappointing in one major respect: it is too pretty. The chosen title means there is no need to discuss the Aborigine question. As the defaced posters on the Underground remind us, this year is no celebration for them. Perhaps more sadly, given the exhibition title, is the lack of information on the convicts. Museums have often been criticised for presenting a non-controversial and rose-coloured view of the past, a situation which is thankfully changing. However this exhibition includes only the work of the 'great men' and artists and ignores the experiences of the ordinary people. If naturalists want to encourage interdisciplinary work, like First Impressions, we must strive to present an honest picture. If not, historians are surely justified in assuming such exhibitions are best left to them.

First Impressions: The British Discovery of Australia is a temporary exhibition at the British Museum (Natural History) until 20th March. It then travels to Australia to tour for 16 months.

Jane Pickering (student)  
Department of Museum Studies  
University of Leicester



# Letters

Dear John

Perhaps you could include the following request for information in the next available BCG Newsletter.

Mr R G Ledlieu is trying to find the whereabouts of his wife's great great grandfather's insect collection: Charles Stuart Gregson. Gregson collected Lepidoptera and Coleoptera, the collection apparently consisting of some 28,000 specimens. He sold the collection to a Sydney Webb of Brighton in 1888. I have no details of this material in our area. Gregson was born in Lancaster on 29th May 1818 and died in Liverpool on 31st January 1899. Any information concerning this collection should be sent to Dr Gerald Legg, The Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA.

Best wishes,

Gerald Legg

Here's a tasty little offer from Derby

Dear John,

Would you please insert this note in the next BCG Newsletter; it is an attempt to reduce our stocks of live Phasmids to a more manageable level.

We have the following species available, all of which could do with a good home:

Indian or Laboratory Stick Insect  
Carausius morosus Food plant: Privet

Annam Stick Insect  
Baculum extradentatum Food plant: Bramble

Pink-winged Stick Insect  
Sipyloidea sipylus Food plant: Bramble

Macleay's Spectre  
Extatosoma tiaratum Food plant: Bramble  
or Eucalyptus

All species are easy to raise (as we have found to our cost) and, dipped in chocolate, could make interesting party snacks!!

We are offering specimens free, but would appreciate carriage costs if we have to send them by Red Star.

Nick Moyes  
Assistant Keeper of Natural History  
Derby Museum  
The Strand  
Derby DE1 1BS

More on the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, which was introduced briefly in Newsletter 4(5). This note is from Ingrid Birker of the Redpath Museum, McGill, Montreal who is attending the Certificate course in Museum Studies at Leicester University.

NEW Natural History Journal and Society!

COLLECTION FORUM, a new journal from the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) seeks short articles of scientific research pertinent to conservation, preparation, preservation, management, documentation and storage of natural history collections. Inter-disciplinary in scope, the journal stresses development and application of technologies concerning collection management and is published biannually.

COLLECTION FORUM, available in approximately thirty museum and university libraries worldwide, represents a 200 member strong Society formed in 1985. Although newly hatched and mainly North American, this volunteer, member-driven organization holds annual Meetings and Workshops and maintains ten Standing Committees and six Sessional Committees. A newsletter is published twice a year, intermittent with the issues of COLLECTION FORUM, to keep all members informed of the activities of each Committee. Annual Meetings are organized by host museums, alternately American and Canadian, and have featured two days of presentations and poster sessions followed by a third day of hands-on workshops. Though no Proceedings are published, the Abstracts of all poster and oral contributions are published in the Winter issue of COLLECTIONS FORUM so interested readers may correspond directly with the authors. This year's Annual Meeting at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, May 31 - June 3, will focus on Conservation of Natural History materials and tentative contributors include Carolyn Rose (Smithsonian), John Dawson (CCI-Canada), Chris Collins (Leicester) and Steve Williams (Carnegie Institute).

Currently, SPNHC is the only single organization addressing the needs of natural science collections on a worldwide and interdisciplinary level. Perhaps this mandate is too broad? However, natural science curators, collection managers and technicians need a united front in order to compete against the well-organized arts and social science museums community for public attention and funding. By developing a vehicle for internal dialogue among the natural sciences, common problems and information can be shared and beneficial solutions formulated.

The great majority of feature and research articles published to date have been submitted by American or Canadian authors. The time is ripe to exchange ideas and information with British and European colleagues in the field of natural history collection management.

For information regarding COLLECTION FORUM please contact the Editor: Dan Faber, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2A 3Y6. For details regarding this year's Annual Meeting contact Steve Williams at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15206 or phone (412) 665-2611. For local contact write: Ingrid Birker, Dept of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG, England.

## Legal Niceties

Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981:  
The Quinquennial Review  
(Information from DOE News Release no 493)

The outcome of the quinquennial review (which is required by the provision of the 1981 Act) was made public in September 1987. The number of native species protected from being taken from the wild, injured, killed or destroyed is increased by 48 animal species and 31 plant species, bringing the total number of species now protected to 177. The additions are to schedules 5 and 8 of the Act and include:

- \* full protection for wild cat, dormouse and pine marten
- \* full protection for all cetacea using British waters
- \* extension of protection afforded to viviparous lizard, slow-worm and grass-snakes to make it an offence to kill or injure them
- \* full protection for a number of plants which are known from one site only, such as sand crocus and pygmy weed.

The two species removed from the protected list are the chequered skipper butterfly and the carthusian snail.

The full list of additions is given below (the odd notation of common names comes straight from the press release). More information on the plants can be found in BSBI News no 47 (December 1987) p19.

### Schedule 5 (animals)

Anemone, Ivell's Sea  
Anemone, Startlet Sea  
Apus  
Beetle, Violet Click  
Cat, Wild  
Cicada, New Forest  
Dolphin (all species)  
Dormouse  
Leech, Medicinal  
Marten, Pine  
Mat, Trembling Sea  
Moth, Viper's Bugloss  
Porpoise, (all species)  
Sandworm, Lagoon  
Shrimp, Fairy  
Shrimp, Lagoon Sand  
Turtles, Marine (all species)  
Vendace

Walrus  
Whale (all species)  
Whitefish

### Schedule 8 (Plants)

Adder's-tongue, Least  
Cabbage, Lundy  
Colt's-foot, Purple  
Cottongrass, Slender  
Crocus, Sand  
Cudweed, Red-tipped  
Fleabane, Alpine  
Fleabane, Small  
Gentian, Fringed  
Germander, Cut-leaved  
Goosefoot, Stinking  
Grass-poly  
Hawk's-beard, Stinking  
Helleborine, Youngs  
Horsetail, Branched  
Hound's-tongue, Green  
Marshwort, Creeping  
Milk-parsley, Cambridge  
Naiad, Holly-leaved  
Pennyroyal  
Pigmyweed  
Ragwort, Fen  
Rampling-fumitory, Martin's  
Restharrow, Small  
Rock-cress, Alpine  
Rock-cress, Bristol  
Speedwell, Fingered  
Star-of-Bethlehem, Early  
Stonewort  
Strapwort  
Viper's-grass

### Skeletons in the cupboard

There must be many botanical collections in museums up and down the country whose curators are unwittingly breaking the law. How can this be so?

Try out the following check list. If the answer to any of the questions is "yes", then you should read to the end of the article!

- 1 Have you Coca specimens in your herbarium? If so, is it possible that any of them are *Erythroxylon coca*?
- 2 Now examine your collection of medicines. Do you have any morphine tablets?
- 3 Many museums have collections of economic botany samples. Do yours contain any poppy heads, perhaps with grooves scored in them?
- 4 There may well be a bottle of Dr Bowe's Liniment in a medicine chest. Did you know that it contains morphine?

The point of all these questions is simply that many museums have collections which contain Class A and Class B drugs (otherwise known as Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 drugs). Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, possession of any of these drugs is an offence (even if there is no criminal intent).



However, do not panic! A simple remedy is available, in that the Home Office operates a licensing system which allows bona fide custody of such substances to be registered. So instead of telling your Director that he could be facing a spell in chokie, you could simply point out that it only needs a letter to the Drugs Branch of the Home Office to start to put matters straight.

So far as the curator is concerned, the main impact of the licence requirements is on storage arrangements. Naturally, the authorities insist on a high standard of security. For this reason, the author of this note prefers to remain anonymous, but in order to assist the indexing of the Newsletter I will adopt the initials "MDA" (for Misuse of Drugs Act, you understand?).

The other important requirement is that a register is kept of all drugs in the inventory, and all movements in and out of storage. In my museum I found that several of the more antiquated containers refused to be opened, so for purposes of stock control a gross weight (including the container) was recorded. An accurate weight such as one obtains using modern electronic scales is almost impossible to falsify. A Museum accessions record is not considered adequate for the purposes of registration; a book must be kept with the collection.

Another problem I encountered while establishing our register was that some of the names on the samples were pretty archaic. For instance, one of the samples was labelled "Narceine" which I think is a synonym of Morphine. I have already mentioned Dr Bowe's Liniment; one must read the small print on the labels. To solve this problem, I used the BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL CODEX (1973 edition) in conjunction with a Victorian book of *Materia Medica*: Pereira's "THE ELEMENTS OF MATERIA MEDICA AND THERAPEUTICS" (1849). A surprising aspect of the exercise to compile the register was that controlled drugs were found in so many different collections, including a set of samples from a local pharmaceutical organisation, a ship's doctor's portable medicine chest, a collection of "economic botany" samples, and even in the herbarium. Dried parts of plants are embraced by the Act; it does not apply only to extracted substances.

Some biology curators will doubtless say "not my problems"; but if not, it is worth asking one's colleagues whether they have any skeletons in their cupboard. If so, the address to write to for further information is: Drugs Branch, The Home Office, 90 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.

MDA

# Diary

15th to 16th April 1988

BCG AGM meeting at Bolton Town Hall  
Further details in this Newsletter

22nd April 1988

GCG and British Geological Survey  
joint meeting at Keyworth, Notts.  
BGS - a service to the nation  
Contact: Brian Taylor, BGS, Keyworth,  
Notts NG12 5GG.

11th to 13th May 1988

Association of Systematics Collections  
(ASC)  
1988 Annual Meeting at the Field Museum  
of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois  
Programme includes symposia and workshops  
Contact: Annual Meeting Coordinator,  
ASC, 730 11th St NW, Second Floor,  
Washington DC 2001, USA

30th May to 3rd June 1988

Society for the Preservation of Natural  
History Collections  
1988 Annual Meeting at the Carnegie  
Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh,  
Pennsylvania

24th and 25th June 1988

GCG meeting at Whitby Museum, North  
Yorkshire  
Lifeline for a small museum  
Contact: Shawn Lofthouse, c/o Whitby  
Museum, Pannett Park, Whitby, N.  
Yorkshire, YO21 1RE

12th to 15th July 1988

Systematics Association  
European Floristic Studies, joint meeting  
with Linnean Society and the Flora  
Europaea Organisation, at Reading  
University.  
Contact: Dr J R Akeroyd, Botany  
Department, University of Reading, PO  
Box 221, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 2AS

September 1988 (date to be decided)

BCG Autumn meeting at Exeter Museum  
Details to be published in the next  
Newsletter.

21st to 24th September 1988

Museums Documentation Association (MDA)  
in association with the Getty Art History  
Information Program  
International Conference on Terminology  
for Museums at Cambridge.  
'As a growing number of museums build-up  
computer databases and improved records,  
effective terminology controls is a  
crucial issue .... This conference will  
provide a substantial review of recent  
developments of systems within individual  
institutions.' Special sessions on  
natural history and geology.  
Contact: MDA, Building 0, 347 Cherry  
Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH.

29th and 30th September 1988

Society for the History of Natural  
History meeting at the Department of  
Geology, University of Bristol  
The History of Geology  
Contact: Peter Crowther, City of Bristol  
Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road,  
Bristol BS8 1RL

12th to 16th December 1988

Systematics Association  
Databases in Systematics (training  
course) at Southampton University  
Contact: Dr S Hollis, Department of  
Biology, Building 44, The University,  
Southampton SO9 5NH

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## THE MANCHESTER MUSEUM

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### PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

- 9.30 Coffee and Registration
- 10.00 - 10.15 Welcome by the Director  
of Manchester Museum\*
- 10.15 - 11.15 Structure and properties  
of skin and bone. Dr J.H. Kennaugh<sup>+</sup>,  
Senior lecturer in Parasitology and  
Histology
- 11.15 - 12.00 Preparation of bird study  
skins (demonstration). Ms L.A. Lace<sup>+</sup>,  
MSc, Researcher
- 12.00 - 12.30 Methods of bone preparation.  
Dr M.V. Hounsome\*, Keeper of Zoology
- 12.30 - 1.30 Buffet Lunch
- 1.30 - 2.15 Damage to skin and bones.  
Mr C.V. Horie\*, Keeper of Conservation  
and Assistant Co-ordinator of the Natural  
History working group of ICOM  
Conservation Committee
- 2.15 - 2.45 Pests, pesticides and specimens.  
Dr R.R. Askew<sup>+</sup>, Reader in Entomology
- 2.45 - 3.15 Treatments for deteriorated  
specimens. Mr C.V. Horie\*
- 3.15 - 4.15 Cleaning fur (Demonstration)  
Mr R. Garner\*, Conservation technician
- 4.15 - 4.45 Display and curation of  
specimens. Ms S. Cross, Natural Sciences  
curator/interpreter
- 4.45 - 5.00 Treatment of specimens for  
present and future use. Dr M.V. Hounsome\*
- 5.30 Close

- + From the Department of Environmental  
Biology, University of Manchester  
\* From the Manchester Museum, University  
of Manchester.

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### CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY SPECIMENS

A one day course on Thursday 12th May 1988  
in the Williamson Building, Oxford Road,  
Manchester.

Natural history collections have suffered  
considerable damage over the past few  
decades. Much has been destroyed, by neglect  
and by deliberate action. Only recently have  
concerted measures of care for these  
collections been attempted - but what should  
one do? There is little basic knowledge  
available about the deterioration and  
conservation of these specimens.

The course aims to fill some of the gaps  
about the treatment of vertebrate material,  
skin and bone, by drawing together present  
knowledge and practice. The lectures are  
aimed at those who must undertake the  
physical care of historic vertebrate  
material, particularly zoologists and  
conservators, but also others who have  
responsibility for this care in the absence  
of anyone better. In this field, where much  
of the experience has not been committed to  
paper, course members will both learn and  
contribute to the knowledge.

Participants will receive texts of the  
lectures (and so avoid taking notes), and  
bibliographies. A video recording of the  
demonstrations will be available for  
purchase. A sandwich lunch, coffee and tea  
will be provided.

The course is run jointly by the Department  
of Environmental Biology and The Manchester  
Museum, The University of Manchester.

Fee is £25; reduced fee (£12) for voluntary,  
low paid staff and students. If you wish to  
reserve a place, send details of your name,  
address, position and daytime telephone  
number to Dr G. Murphy, Department of  
Environmental Biology, The University,  
Manchester M13 9PL.

Cheques should be made payable to the  
'University of Manchester' and sent by 15th  
April to Dr G. Murphy (address above). If an  
invoice is required, please state to whom it  
should be sent.

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## In the Press

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A short paper in *WATSONIA* by D.E. Allen  
(Vol 16 part 4) gives a review of British  
plant material represented in the United  
States National Herbarium (at the  
Smithsonian). Particularly noted are 10,000  
specimens in the S.T. Jermyn collection  
mainly from vice counties 18 and 19; also  
Rubus specimens via J.G. Baker from vc's 9,  
11, 40, 55, 18, 38, 57, not all of which are  
identified; smaller accumulations are listed  
from vc's 65, 66, 6 and 34. Collectors names  
are given in more detail, for these refer to  
the article.

CURATOR volume 29 part 4 has a paper by Sara Kerr on an exhibition called 'Animal Senses' which relies very heavily on visitor participation in getting across its three objectives: increasing understanding of sensory physics; learning how specific animals might perceive the world; learning that there are more than five senses. The planning behind the exhibit, the experience of the exhibit itself, and the evaluation of its effectiveness in achieving its objectives are all discussed in detail. It contains some innovative display techniques - such as a wall of liquid crystals where visitors make heat pictures of their hands to give an impression of how a rattlesnake 'sees' infra-red radiation. The whole emphasis is on participation so the visitor can 'become' an animal to experience a particular form of sensory perception. The article is called 'Effective Interactions in a Natural Science Exhibit!'; the exhibition is at the Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas.

Another useful paper in CURATOR, volume 30 part 3, is concerned with distinguishing formalin from alcohol solutions. It describes the development of an inexpensive paper test strip based on the sodium sulphite quantitative analysis method for formaldehyde solutions. The test strip will distinguish between formalin-based fixative solutions and alcohol solutions containing traces of residual formalin; it is fast-acting and there is the possibility of developing it into a semiquantitative test. The paper is 'A Spot Test to Distinguish Formalin from Alcohol Solutions' by D.E. McAllister and R. Waller.

The GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER for Winter 1988 (Volume 3 no 1) has an interesting article on the potential of Vikane (Sulphuryl fluoride) as a fumigant for general museum use. The effect of the fumigant on a range of materials is being examined. Initial results show that there is a reaction between fumigant and substrate but it may prove to fall within acceptable limits; relative humidity seems to be an influencing factor. Further tests will examine the highest concentrations of Vikane tolerable for museum objects, and the lowest concentrations of fumigant needed to eliminate adults, larvae and eggs of beetle (unspecified) pests. Vikane is marketed by Dow Chemical; the testing on beetles is being done at the University of Florida.

Issue no 56 of NATUROPA deals with the vexed issue of farming and wildlife and will be of interest to members concerned with the nature conservation movement. Several pieces contain facts and figures relating to habitat destruction by farming since the war; a useful reference for exhibition texts.

PALAEONTOLOGY for February 1988 (Vol 31 part 1) contains a brief article by Peter Bengtson on 'Open Nomenclature'. I suspect this concept is much more widely used in geological than biological taxonomic research, but the paper suggests the standardisation of the syntax used to denote the affinity of one undescribed taxon to another named one, provisional identification and the lack of any identification at all. Thus the abbreviations aff., cf., sp. (or spp.), n.sp. (or n.ssp.) are given standard definitions. This is meant to be a discussion paper and members may wish to comment to the author (see the journal for details).

Floaters have troubled me for some years. These are the grey, almost translucent blobs which float across my field of vision when I look down a microscope. I must confess they give me odd moments of anxiety when I notice them and imagine I have got detached retinas or something similar, so I was relieved to see a note by R Winsby in the BRITISH ARACHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER no 50 (November 1987) explaining their origins. Called 'muscae volitantes' they are the last remains of the blood vessels which feed blood to the front part of the eye in the developing embryo. The vessels atrophy naturally and at birth the few remaining remnants fall to the bottom of the eye where they remain in the vitreous humour. Tilting the head to peer down a microscope stirs the bits up and, especially against a white field of view, they become momentarily visible as slowly moving blurs. But its all normal so there's no need to worry!

AES BULLETIN for February 1988 (no 358) has a short note from Ian Mascall 'Sad State of Local Museum' which is highly critical of the entomological displays in a local museum (Cleveland area). This follows an earlier critical piece 'Concerning Museums and Collections' from the February 1986 issue. Adam Wright and myself replied to the first article on behalf of BCG and opened up the discussion somewhat to include many aspects of curatorial work other than display, and to describe the work of BCG and the local Collections Research Units. However, it becomes increasingly difficult to respond to specific criticisms which, judging from the description in the note, appear quite justified. It is a pity that committed naturalists feel the need to complain about museum displays and services - after all these are the people we should be working with and for whom we provide our services. Perhaps the curator involved could reply personally this time!

The MEMOIRS OF THE QUEENSLAND MUSEUM (Vol 25 part 1) for October 1987 contains a list of the bird type specimens held in the Queensland Museum. 122 taxa are included, most resulting from the work of Charles Walter de Vis who described 107 new forms between 1880 and 1905. Most were collected in Queensland by Kendall Broadbent or in British New Guinea on behalf of Sir William MacGregor. The paper is 'Asian Type Specimens in the Queensland Museum' by Glen J Ingram.

CHEMICALS IN CONSERVATION: A GUIDE TO POSSIBLE HAZARDS AND SAFE USE

by Amanda Clydesdale (published by the Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration) is now available in a Second Edition.

This has an additional 95 entries; 126 of the original entries have additional information; the introduction and glossary have been expanded and the bibliography enlarged and updated. Nearly 300 chemicals and commercial products are now listed with details of their properties, fire hazards, toxicity, safe methods of use and first aid instructions. The cost is £19.00 complete with ring binder (or £15 if you already have the binder) from Fiona Butterfield, 100 Holeburn Road, Newlands, Glasgow G43 2XN.

A note from Geoff Stansfield:

COMMUNICATING SCIENCE TO THE PUBLIC, Ciba Foundation Conference, 1987 (John Wiley and Sons) has chapters by R S Miles on 'Museums and the communication of science'; by S Duensing on 'Science centres and exploratories: a look at active participation'; and by B Serrell on 'Science education through graphics at zoos'. BCG members may find these of interest.

The following new books are now in the Leicester University Library:

Zucher, B F CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS, ZOOS, AND DISCOVERY ROOMS. Greenwood Press, Westport Connecticut, USA 1987. Contains 235 institutional profiles of children's museums, children's zoos and discovery rooms from Australia to Zimbabwe. Extensive bibliography.

Howie, F., SAFETY IN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES. Butterworths, 1987.

REPORT OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY) 1984-1986. British Museum (Natural History), London, 1987.

Local Authorities and Nature Conservation

In early 1986 the British Association of Nature Conservationists issued a report about the ways in which Local Authorities can further conservation. Now, in conjunction with the Working Panel of Local Authority Ecologists, it has set up a project entitled 'Local Authorities and Nature Conservation'. Important new initiatives include a Newsletter; developing an interest in nature conservation amongst elected councillors; preparation for the launch of the new Department of Environment circular on Nature Conservation; and an award scheme for Local Authorities.

Many museum-based naturalists are involved with the provision of ecological information to councillors and other Local Authority Departments through the activities of the local Biological Records Centres, so this new initiative seems worth further investigation. Contact: Richard Knightbridge, telephone (daytime) 0543 258868.

Thanks to 'Habitat' (vol 23 no 8) for this report.

Subscription rates are £6.00 for individual membership and £10.00 for institutional membership. Contact Adam Wright, Herbert Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry, for application forms.

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Edited by John Mathias, Leicestershire Museums Service, 96 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TD (Tel: 0533 554100 ext.3030) to whom all contributions should be sent. Back numbers are available from the Editor.

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