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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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## 6. Return of Cultural Property

This will be discussed by ICOM/Museum Association and representatives of the National Museums at a Conference at the Museum of London on May 24th. It was felt that BCG should keep in touch with developments, but not make a definite statement. It was felt however, that a statement of policy from the National Museums was required. Restrictions on research in other countries was discussed.

## 7. Museums Association Conference

Arrangements for Portsmouth meeting were outlined. The 1980 M. A. Conference (London, 8-9-10 October) makes no provision for a 'specialist session', although the results of the M. A. questionnaire may yet influence the form of Conference.

## 8. Any Other Business

- i) Drew Report - this holds implications for all museums, and the views of the membership are required. The Editor agreed to place an appeal slip in the March Newsletter.
- ii) Small Mammal Exchange - Kelvin Boot raised the question of this publication, and would welcome comments from members.
- iii) Collections Research in N.W. England - Geoff Hancock reported on the availability of the Computer produced catalogue of collections in the N.W.

P. S. Davis  
1. 5. 1979

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MINUTES OF B. C. G. COMMITTEE MEETING: THURSDAY 26th APRIL, 1979

### Members PRESENT:

Eric Greenwood (Chairman), Stephen Flood, Peter Davis, Mike Hounsome, Mike Taylor, Geoff Hancock, Martin Brendell.

1. APOLOGIES were received from Peter Morgan, Kelvin Boot, Geoff Stansfield, Peter Lambley, Jim Bateman, Dave Erwin and John Mathias, Bari Logan.
2. THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING of 2nd March 1979 which appeared in B. C. G. Newsletter Volume 2 Number 2 page 62 was accepted as a true record of the proceedings.
3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Meeting with Guild of Taxidermists.

Discussion took place on the form and content of the proposed joint meeting. The problems appear to revolve around the training of taxidermists and of general natural history technicians to museum requirements. The Museums Association has established examination standards, although these are open to criticism, and appears to be withdrawing from any form of training. There was therefore value in B. C. G. and Taxidermists trying to establish common ground on these topics. Members wished to emphasise that the demand for general technical work in natural history was of greater importance than preparation of display specimens which could, if necessary, be brought in from Area Services or others who work to museum standards. Agreed that S. Flood liaise with Bari Logan over time and place and B. C. G. to be represented by P. Morgan, D. Erwin, J. Bateman, E. Greenwood and S. Flood. (Meeting at Museums Association offices at 2 p.m. on 13th June).

3.2 Collections Survey.

Delay in details of costing may jeopardise the M. A. G. block grant of £100 so agreed that S. F. contact P. M. to obtain costings and emphasise importance of making the report available for M. A. Conference.

'Drew' Report

It was clear that a response was necessary.

Discussion took place on the recommended structure for application of grant aid to museums and special note taken of the support recommended for Area Councils and County Consultative Committees. It was regretted, however, that it suggested aid applied to institutions rather than collections, that there was no encouragement of academic work on collections, and that the problem of uncurated collections was not covered. The BM (NH) appears to wish to establish much closer relationships with provincial museums and perhaps it is up to B. C. G.

to foster this in view of the lack of guidance in the Report. It was obvious that the scale of the problem of unrecorded collections and the curator/specimen ratio needs to be established.

Agreed that E. G. prepare a paper covering these points, emphasising B. C. G. 's survey achievements and plans, and circulate it for comment.

Members attention was drawn to the report of the Research Council Review Group on Taxonomy now published by HMSO, which may also require a response from B. C. G.

### 3.3 Museums Association Conference

Details of the meeting had been passed to the Museums Association, and S. F. would be circulating speakers with a suggested general common outline on the subject of collections and displays.

### 4. A. G. M. April 3rd 1979

Minutes of the A. G. M. had been prepared by P. Davis and, subject to addition of some names, were accepted.

### Matters arising

#### 4.1 Manual of Curatorship

Little was known on this subject as no correspondence had been received from the M. A. It was generally felt that there would be many difficulties in describing all the curatorial techniques for natural sciences and that comprehensive bibliographies linked with information sheets on general museum topics (such as legal and administrative problems) would solve most curatorial problems. Agreed that S. F. write to the M. A. asking for further information, offering help but pointing out the view of the Committee.

#### 4.2 Small Mammal Exchange

It was reported that the Mammal Society were not taking any action on this matter, but that a number of other interested parties had been contacted.

#### 4.3 Exchange of Cultural Property

Details of the joint M. A. / I. C. O. M. meeting in London were read out. The B. M. (NH) would be attending but at this stage had not formulated official policy, beyond pointing out that, with the possible exception of extinct species and unique anthropological material, natural history specimens could not really be classed as being of

cultural significance. Committee agreed to make no formal comment at this stage but to continue to study the situation.

5. LONDON CONFERENCE 1979

Short reports had been prepared for some publications and M. T. agreed to write an account of the proceedings for the B. C. G. Newsletter.

The Systematics Association and S. B. N. H. were organising a conference for Easter 1981 on History in the Service of Systematics.

Members discussed ideas for the B. C. G. Conference in Autumn 1981, possibly joining with N. C. C. to discuss a range of topics connected with collecting and collections by government agencies, universities and museums. S. F. and P. M. would draft suggested programme etc., for next committee meeting.

6. FURTHER MEETINGS

Committee members will be urged to organise regional meetings to encourage better communication with members, but wherever possible to give them wide publicity (B. C. G. Newsletter, M. A. Bulletin) so that members from other regions can attend.

(S. F. will coordinate topics to avoid duplication!). S. F. to receive suggestion for A. G. M., Easter 1980.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Committee Meetings. S. F. to prepare a cycle of meetings (provisionally May, September, February) and suggest dates for a meeting in Leicester in September. (Leicester Museum, 13th September).

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THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE HISTORY OF  
MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS IN NATURAL HISTORY. 3 - 6  
April 1979 - A PERSONAL VIEW.

Although Scotland is a veritable paradise for the naturalist/geologist, living here does have certain disadvantages. One is the comparative scarcity of one's museum colleagues when compared for instance with the cheek by jowl museums of the English Midlands or North-West and another is the distance involved in travelling to any meeting or conference organised south of Edinburgh.