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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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If any members have suggestions for different subjects for the 1988 AGM meeting, or indeed for any other meetings, please let the Chairman know. Otherwise, suggestions (or offers) for speakers on either of the proposed subjects or suggestions for specific topics to be included in the programme should be sent to the Chairman as soon as possible.

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In the Press

The February 1987 ASC NEWSLETTER (vol 15 no 1) features a readable description, department by department, of the American Museum of Natural History which includes the names of curators, the scope of the collections, the main collecting areas and the major named collections; a potted history of the Museum is included. There is also an advertisement for large-chamber freeze-dryers from North Star of Minnesota, suitable for the preparation of museum specimens. The Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (California) is given a similar treatment in the April issue (vol 15 no 2). This is a private non profit-making institution dedicated to the study, preservation and display of Californian plants, founded in 1927. There is a general historical account and a detailed description of the herbarium.

The March 1987 CURATOR (vol 30 no 1) contains a description by Tony Tynan of the Abel's Ark exhibit at the Hancock Museum - a novel and inspirational way of displaying big game heads out of their usual hunting context. In the same issue is a paper describing 'Watrous Trays', a storage system for disarticulated and dissected insects. Essentially, the system allows for the disarticulated bits of an insect to be stored with what remains of the original specimen in its correct taxonomic position in a tray in a standard entomological drawer. The measurements of the tray system quoted are those of the Cornell drawer system, but they can be easily modified for Hills-type or non-standard drawers.

The spring 1987 issue of the JOURNAL OF BIOLOGICAL EDUCATION (vol 21 no 1) carries an interesting description/review of the Charles Darwin memorial at Down House, Downe in Kent - a small museum maintained by the Royal College of Surgeons and not widely known. In the same issue there is a directory of biology-based audio-visual aids suppliers which gives names and addresses of organisations marketing tape-slide presentations, videos, films, posters, models, computer software and other items which may have display potential.

A brief note in HABITAT (vol 23 no 4) gives the news that a complete mapping package for use with the BBC-B microcomputer is now available for species mapping. Up to 2520 species can be handled and the package will produce standard format dot maps; other functions include the production of species lists from individual grid units. Details from Dr A.J.C. Malloch, Dept of Biological Sciences, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YQ.

WATSONIA vol 16 (January 1987) includes a brief description of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society, updating the somewhat misleading entry in BRITISH AND IRISH HERBARIA by Kent and Allen (1984). The main collections are named and described in outline and their significance is given. The 'cleaning-up' efforts of an honorary curator in the 1930s or 1940s, who apparently thought no taxon should be represented by more than a single sheet, resulted in the loss of a large number of voucher specimens collected by J.F. Rayner for his SUPPLEMENT TO FREDERICK TOWNSEND'S FLORA OF HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT (1929). I wonder how often that story can be told!

The British Arachnological Society is starting a new spider recording scheme in conjunction with the Biological Records Centre. The organisation is described in BRITISH ARACHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER no 48 (March 1987). New record cards should be available by now. Anyone interested in contributing should contact BRC at Monks Wood for introductory literature and a supply of the new cards.

For anyone redesigning conservation laboratory workspace there is an article in STUDIES IN CONSERVATION (vol 32 no 1) by R.M. Organ on 'An Adaptable Compact Modular Bench' which describes and gives plans for a well thought out, safe (for objects and personnel) but very flexible workbench. As well as work surfaces it allows for small tool storage, temporary object storage, water, air, vacuum and electricity, facilities for removal of solvent vapours and a space for writing reports.

Volume 21 pt 2 of the GLASGOW NATURALIST carries an obituary for Charles Palmar, Keeper of Natural History at Glasgow Museum from 1949 to 1984, who died in 1986.

The BULLETIN OF THE AMATEUR ENTOMOLOGISTS' SOCIETY for February 1987 has as its 'Featured Museum' the Booth Museum of Natural History in Brighton. This is an excellent review of the history of the museum and includes a list of the major entomological collections it holds.