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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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BCG Autumn Meeting

Live Animal Displays in Museums - the Lower Vertebrates

25 September 1987 at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry.

Programme

- 10.00am Museum opens
- 10.30am Coffee
- 11.00am "Legislation Relating to Live Animal Displays" What are the implications of the various Acts? Zoo Licensing; Wildlife and Countryside; CITES etc Gordon Reid (Horniman Museum, London) will tell you!
- 11.45am "Freshwater Aquaria and Developments at Bolton" Bolton aquarium will, by September, be undergoing major refurbishment. Tim Henshaw (Bolton Museum) will discuss approaches and problems.
- 12.45pm Lunch
- 1.45pm "Marine Aquaria" Denis Murphy (Liverpool Museum) will talk on "The management of temperate and exotic marine fish and invertebrates in closed systems", including discussion of some new display techniques based on field observations made on the Great Barrier Reef.
- 2.30pm "Vivarium Design for Public Display" Nigel Platt (Cotswold Wildlife Park). Confused by the Tru-lite/Black light controversy (or never heard of it)? Want to know how to provide a vivarium where your animals feel secure but can still be seen? Trade secrets from Nigel ...
- 3.15pm "Sexing and Breeding Reptiles and Amphibians" Adam Wright (Coventry Museum). Everything you wanted to know about reptile sexing but were afraid to ask! Also information on egg incubation and how to elicit a mating response (in reptiles and amphibians anyway!)
- 4.00pm Tea and biscuits
- 4.30pm Discussion
- 5.15pm Depart

Booking forms available now from Adam Wright, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry CV1 5RW. There will be a fee of £3 for the seminar to cover costs of speakers' travel and producing a set of transcripts for each delegate (these will be available on the day).

AGM 87

For those members unable to attend the 1987 AGM, the officers' reports are published below.

Chairman's report

This report is written as Acting Chairman due to the recent resignation of Tony Irwin. He was elected at our 1986 AGM and has worked hard for the Group throughout the year. However, due to the pressure of other commitments, he felt obliged to resign in February of this year. I thank him for all he has done for the Group, both as Chairman and as a Committee member.

This past year has seen some important events. The National Federation for Biological Recording was launched last April, a body spawned by the BCG; and in July the Museums Association Conference was treated to an excellent address by Peter Davis discussing the role of the BCG (you will all have read this in the last Newsletter).

In recent years the BCG has probably been a little lacking in certain areas. We suffered from poor attendances at meetings and many members seemed reluctant to become involved in activities of the Group by joining the Committee or by contributing to the Newsletter.

We now have an enthusiastic Committee, an excellent new Newsletter with a distinct professional touch, a new journal on the way and today our best attended meeting ever! Even the Museums Association, under its new Director General, seems to be taking a more positive attitude towards us!

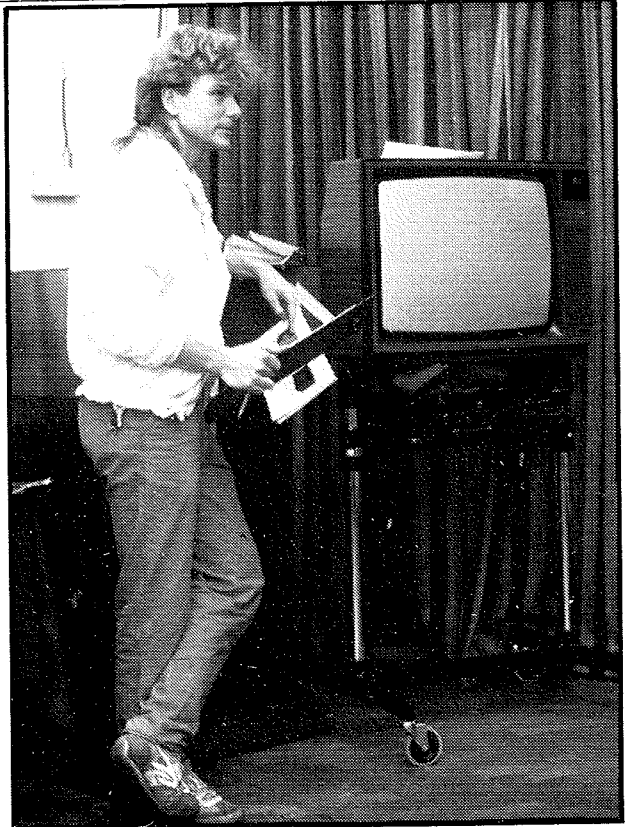


AGM 87: Steve Garland and Ray Barnett with Howard Mendel.

Our Committee meetings are always very busy and I could not possibly list everything which is under consideration, but major projects in the pipeline include a Manual of Biological Curatorship (probably the most important publication that we shall ever produce), a meeting on live animal displays in museums at Coventry in the autumn, a new membership drive and a 'Beetle Down' campaign as the first phase of a national drive to publicise our services. Couple all of this with the publication this summer of the Bernice Williams Report on Biological Collections in the United Kingdom, and you can see that the Biology Curators' Group will certainly be very busy striving to further the cause of biological services in museums.

I hope that you will all support the Group enthusiastically in the future because a strong BCG (and GCG) is surely a vital step towards achieving the higher status and funding for natural sciences in museums which we all desire.

Steve Garland
Acting Chairman



AGM 87: Derek Whiteley, organiser of a very successful meeting.

Secretary's report

It has been a busy year for the Committee with five meetings since the last AGM: in May, September, November, February and March. Two meetings were held at the British Museum (Natural History) and three at the Department of Zoology, University College London. The Committee is most grateful to these institutions for their hospitality (particularly the latter for generous volumes of tea and biscuits). Meetings now last about four hours.

Penny Wheatcroft (who did not wish to stand for re-election a year ago) continued as a caretaker Secretary until September when she formally resigned the post. Penny has worked hard as Secretary since 1983, and we are all grateful for her energy and enthusiasm. Her involvement with BCG was not always encouraged by the authorities at the BM(NH). We wish her luck and support her campaign to maintain free enquiry and research facilities at the BM(NH) and we draw attention to her trade union's campaign against entry charges.

I have been Acting Secretary since November. The Committee has been represented by Phil Collins at the Museums Association's Specialist Group Meetings, and a very useful dialogue is developing. The appointment of Graeme Farnell as Director General of the MA seems to have created an enlightened active attitude towards the Specialist Groups. Amongst other things the MA have allocated BCG ten free places at this year's conference, and are keen to support our initiative to run a five-day training course for biologists in November.

Peter Davis represented the Group at the 1986 MA Conference in Aberdeen, and gave a very

inspired paper, which has since been published. The committee has also been represented by various members at GCG Committee meetings and Diana Smith reciprocates for GCG at our meetings.

Major issues spawned this year, which will occupy much of our time and energy next year include the 'Bernice Williams Report' - we need to comment on the draft before publication and we must take action on the findings of the Report when it comes out. Also curatorial training, a "watchdog" on the disposal of collections, and collections at risk, and our own "Beetle Down ..." campaign.

Despite the fact that FENSCORE and NFBR are taking leading roles in two fields which BCG has traditionally administered (collections research and biological recording), we are still active in these areas. However we are also spending more time covering other topics such as displays and galleries, live animals and plants, education, enquiries, use of collections and others. Some of these have been neglected by BCG in recent years.

General interest in the Biology Curators Group seems to be on the increase, as today's turnout (75) has demonstrated. We have a hard-working committee, a good membership and I hope we can continue receiving your support during the coming year.

Derek Whiteley
Acting Secretary