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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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In the Press

GUILD OF TAXIDERMISTS NEWSLETTER
19 MARCH 1989

In addition to the usual fascinating (and amusing) articles on modern techniques and historic background information the latest guild NEWSLETTER will also be of interest to the curator in general. It contains a useful and concise article by Margaret Reilly on THE CARE OF ZOOLOGICAL SPIRIT COLLECTIONS. In clear, practical terms the paper outlines basic spirit techniques from fixation and preservation to the choice of jars, sealants and labels. A useful list of references and suppliers is also appended.

In addition, the NEWSLETTER also contains a note on where taxidermists stand with regard to the Wildlife and Countryside Act at present. Of late there seems to have been some confusion over the wording of the Act and this article (based on a meeting with the DoE) clarifies the situation nicely. It never hurts for the museum curator occasionally to remind him/herself of these legalities and this article is certainly the simplest summary that I have ever read.

Paul Richards
Sheffield Museum

STUDIES IN CONSERVATION 34(3), August 1981, has an interesting paper by S Omar, M McCord and V Daniels on freeze-drying techniques: The Conservation of Bog Bodies by Freeze-drying. The work done on two bog bodies, Meenybradan Woman and Lindow Man is discussed in detail. Of particular interest is the technique of freeze-drying after impregnation with polythene glycol 400, and data are presented on shrinkage and temperature fluctuation during the freeze-drying process. The use of clingfilm during the initial freezing period, presumably to maintain the shape of the subject, is interesting; this was removed before freeze-drying began. Completed a year before the paper was written, the technique appears to have been very successful with minimal shrinkage (less than 5%) and good colour retention although some marking from the cling film plasticiser was visible on the surface of the Lindow Man specimen.

BSBI News (No 52, September 1989) reports in glowing terms on the permanent opening of the Liverpool Museum Natural History Centre. Also in that issue is an article by David J McCosh (Secretary of the BSBI Records Committee) on vouchers: what they are; when to take them; what to take; where records should be sent for the national recording scheme; advice on where vouchers should be deposited and on long-term provisions for private herbaria. Local museum herbaria are not mentioned by name but they are by implication.

BRITISH BIRDS (Vol 82 no 9, September 1989) continues to hound the Natural History Museum in its treatment of the Sub-department of Ornithology at Tring, on this occasion in the form of a letter from W R P Bourne of Aberdeen University. He comments on how the staff cuts adversely affected him in a recent attempt to make use of the collections at Tring (a round trip of 500 miles from Aberdeen). His more general comments are also of interest and it is to be hoped the debate on that issue continues - in the ornithological as well as the museological world.

The GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER (Vol IV no 3, Fall 1989) has a short piece on a Survey of Formaldehyde in Museum Environments. It is not clear from the article whether biological storage environments were sampled at all, but the results from general museums are of interest anyway. Anyone who would like to see the full report, or at least see a detailed breakdown of the results, should contact Dr Dusan Stulik, Analytical Section Head, Getty Conservation Institute, 4503 Glencoe Avenue, Marina de Rey, California 90292-6537, USA. Presumably, Dr Stulik can be contacted through the Conservation Information Network.

SUNFLOWER CAMPAIGN - A MODEST SUCCESS

I haven't been scouring the press for reactions to the Sunflower Campaign - Derek will report on that in a later issue - but one report was sent to me recently from the CHRISTIAN HERALD. It was an accurate and well-written piece and it's good to see that our publicity campaign reached beyond the national dailies to all sections of the press.

JHM