



NEWSLETTER



August 1992

Vol 5 No. 10

Sorry for delay

As you will all have noticed, this edition of BCG Newsletter is a been a long time coming. This is not something that will be allowed to become a habit and apologies are due to all who have become concerned over its non-appearance. This issue has therefore been produced in all haste with material that was readily to hand and with a new editor and a new printer to be broken in any rough edges will have to be forgiven. The remedy lies in your hands, please forward any news, views, letters, queries or information to Michael Taylor, Perth Museum and Art Gallery, George Street, Perth PH1 5LB, Scotland (- the last bit is very important or as sure as eggs is eggs your valued contribution will wing its way to Western Australia). Contributions on 3.5 inch disk would be especially welcome as they will save the hard-pressed editor from developing splayed ends to the two fingers which bear the brunt of his meagre typing skills. Wordperfect is the preferred format but disks can be converted from several PC compatible programmes. Please telephone if in doubt.

The thanks of the membership go to John Mathias who acted as editor for BCG since volume 4 (part 5). Indeed, thanks to all

members of committee who have put in a great deal of time and effort over the last year.

It will be the norm in future to subject BCG members to a short diatribe on some aspect or other of the world of museums and biological curation in general but you can breathe a sigh of relief for this edition at least because there simply wasn't enough time. However as the opportunity of writing an editorial is probably the only perk of being an editor it will be taken up in future.

So what about our editorial policy ? I doubt if anyone will spot any radical changes and so much will depend on what you send in. Yet there may be a spot of punctuated equilibrium in the evolution of this organ at least. In other words when a good idea turns up it will be taken on board. So, suggestions are welcome. For the moment the newsletter will be 'newsy', it will be regular, it will contain news of events, exhibitions, publications, people and posts, issues and gossip. Short pieces of criticism on any relevant subject will find a place but please note that while (preferably constructive) criticism of a professional nature is perfectly acceptable, mud slinging against colleagues is not.

News

New Exhibitions

At the National Museum of Wales a major new permanent exhibition 'Man and the Environment' opened to the public on 18 July. The exhibition looks at the impact that humans have had on aspects of the natural world and at the ways in which the animal kingdom has been utilised and exploited. The Aberthaw humpback whale and the world's largest leatherback turtle are displayed along with specimens from the mollusca and entomology collections. [Would anyone wishing to do a short critique of this exhibition please get in touch - Ed.]

Meanwhile Oldham museum is planning a touring exhibition on all aspects of 'Parrots' including the current threatened status of some species. More details in the next BCG Newsletter. Meanwhile anyone wishing to find out more can do so by contacting Oldham direct.

Reorganisations

The natural sciences departments at both the Ulster Museum and Kelvingrove, Glasgow are being subject to reorganisation. At Ulster we understand that the Botany, Zoology and Geology departments are being merged to form a single natural science department under a single Keeper.

At Glasgow the situation also involves a merger to form a single department. In this case the Natural History Department will merge with the Transport Museum to form a new Science Department. (Try and work that one out !). The rationale we understand is that this will make it easier to produce 'ecological' displays. Certainly some displays will be needed as the bird gallery has just been commandeered to make another ace cafe. Further news on this and other changes will follow in the next newsletter.

Please note that the 'people' section otherwise known as 'musical curators' will return in the next issue. Please send any information to the Editor.

Publications

The National Museum of Wales has added 'Snowdon's Plants since the Ice Age' to the list available from their Botany Department. This 32 page booklet is also available in Welsh. Price £3.75 incl. postage. A Flora of Glamorgan is also in press.

The BSBI can now offer a new 'List of Vascular Plants of the British Isles' by DH Kent. Available from BSBI Publications price £11.50.

More local publications are available from Stoke Museum with the addition of spiders and flies to the series of Staffordshire atlases and checklists.

In press is the South-east Collections Research Unit's catalogue of natural history collections, more details later.

Meetings

The two items below relate to the two highly successful meetings held by BCG over the last year. Firstly, the Secretary's report followed by a list of your committee members. Followed by an account of the meeting in Burnley last year on live displays in museums. Please note your nearest committee member and feel free to pester them for information or indeed pieces and suggestions for the newsletter. Thanks should go to Steve Hewitt and his colleagues at Carlisle for organising an enjoyable and informative AGM and to the Cumbria constabulary for directing the diehards to a late night source of the amber nectar.

Secretary's Report (given at the Carlisle AGM)

In my first year as secretary and looking back at previous reports it is patently or painfully obvious just how conscientious and hard working Derek Whiteley was. He is an incredibly hard act to follow and I hope we can maintain some of the momentum he created.

Again, it has been a very busy year for your committee. We met six times at various locations throughout the country including London, Glasgow, Newcastle and yesterday here at Carlisle. Once again our sincere thanks go to these institutions for their hospitality.

The AGM at Liverpool was a resounding success and well attended with several excellent papers on a variety of 'green issues' and their reference to museums and out thanks must go to Kathie Way and Clem Fisher for organising the event and for their patience, tolerance and understanding.

Most of my work on committee last year was spent organising a seminar entitled 'The Educational Role of Live Exhibits' held at Towneley Hall in October 1991. About 40 people attended from a variety of organisations including museums, zoos, public aquaria, the RSPB and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust. We hope to publish the proceedings at some future date.

Two leaflets were launched by the BCG:

The Sunflower Campaign

The Sunflower Campaign leaflet was put together by Derek Whiteley of Sheffield Museum and Alec Coles of Tyne and Wear Museum Service. It was primarily formulated to be sent to influential people including governing bodies, councillors, trustees, etc to lobby support for the care and maintenance of natural science collections. Additional copies can be obtained from Alec. Once again our sincere thanks must go to him for the effort he has put in on this project.

Animal Welfare Leaflet

The second leaflet concerns Animal Welfare in Museums from methods of collecting to keeping live exhibits. It is aimed at the general public to dispel some of the myths surrounding the acquisition of natural science material in museums.

Gordon Reid put this leaflet together with Bill Pettitt adding some final touches. Further copies can be obtained from me at Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museums.

I am also putting together a register of natural science conservation material suppliers, this is in response to requests from several BCG members who are experiencing problems obtaining smaller quantities of chemicals, eg. phenoxotol. I have approached several suppliers and after explaining the problem have received very favourable responses. I hope to make this register available in the near future. I would like to keep it updated so any further information would be extremely useful.

This year the BCG is putting on a display at the Museum Conference in Plymouth. We would like to publicise our activities and generally raise the profile of the group. However, we do need graphic material in the form of a photograph, press cuttings, etc., eg Beetle Down material. Volunteers are also needed from the Plymouth area or delegates attending the conference to man the stand for a few hours. I will be taking the stand down but I would appreciate it if someone could bring it back to a museum in the north west. Any offers? If you are interested in getting involved in this project, could you please let me know?

Again the regular work of the committee continues and we still operate the watchdog scheme on posts lost and created and collections at risk. Steve Judd is collating this scheme on behalf of the committee so any information should be passed on to him at the Natural Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. We will continue to lobby institutions and governing bodies when these threats materialise. We had some success in this area and I believe we were instrumental albeit on a small scale in

supporting Lancashire County Museum's efforts to appoint a Natural Science Curator. A letter from John Blundell at Preston seemed to verify this.

Future work for the committee includes organising seminars on a variety of topics including the value of natural science collections which we hope will take place at Manchester Museum in the near future. Travelling exhibitions in conjunction with MGC to take place possibly at Ludlow in February 1993 and next year's AGM in Inverness.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks on behalf of the membership to the BCG committee for all their hard work and to Richard Sutcliffe who retires after three years. Two new members of committee will hopefully take up their new role after this AGM and I would like to welcome Jane Mee from Ludlow Museum and Jane Pickering from Oxford University Museum.

Mike Graham
BCG Secretary

Committee List 1992

Chairman

Steve Garland
Senior Keeper of Natural History
Bolton Metropolitan Museum
Le Mans Crescent
Bolton
Tel: 0204 22311 Ext. 2211
Fax: 363224

Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Kathie Way
Zoology Department
British Museum (Natural History)
Cromwell Road
London
SW7 5BD
Tel: 071 938 8892
Fax: 938 9290/8750

Newsletter Editor

Mike Taylor
Depute Curator & Keeper of Natural Sciences
Perth Museum & Art Gallery
George Street
Perth
PH1 5LB
Tel: 0738 32488
Fax: 35225

Special Publications & Journal Editor

Charles Pettitt
Keeper of Invertebrate Zoology
The Manchester Museum
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL
Tel: 061 275 2634
Fax: 061 275 2676

Education Officer

Alec Coles
Principal Keeper
Tyne & Wear Museums Service
Blandford House
Blandford Square
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tyne & Wear
NE1 4JA
Tel: 091 232 6789
Fax: 230 2614

Secretary

Mike Graham
Assistant Curator
Towneley Hall Art Gallery & Museums
Todmorden Road
Burnley
BB11 3RQ
Tel: 0282 24213
Fax: 0282 38772

Committee Members

Ray Barnett

Assistant Curator of Natural History
Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery
Queens Road
Bristol
BS8 1RL

Tel: 0272 27351

Fax: 222047

Rosina Down

Curator
Museum of Zoology & Comparative Anatomy
University College
Gower Street
London
WC1E 6BT

Tel: 071 387 7050

Steve Hewitt

Keeper of Natural Sciences
Tullie House Museum
Castle Street
Carlisle
CA3 8TP

Tel: 0228 34781

Fax: 810249

Steve Judd

Curator of Entomology
Liverpool Museum
National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside
William Brown Street
Liverpool
L3 8EN

Tel: 051 207 0001

Fax: 207 3759

Jane Mee

Curator of Natural Sciences
Ludlow Museum
The Buttercross
Church Street
Ludlow

Tel: 0584 873 857

Steve Moran

Assistant Curator Natural Sciences
Inverness Museum & Art Gallery
Castle Wynd
Inverness
IV2 3ED

Tel: 0463 237114

Jane Pickering

Assistant Curator of Zoology
The University Museum
Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3PW

Tel: 0865 272950

Fax: 0865 272970

Mark Simmons

Peripatetic Biology Curator
North of England Museums Service
House of Recovery
Bath Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 5SQ

Tel: 091 222 1661

Fax: 2614725

'The Educational Role of Live Exhibits'

25 October 1991 at Towneley Hall Art Gallery & Museums, Burnley

There were seven papers on the educational role of live exhibits.

The opening paper was given by Peter Garner, Education Adviser of Biology for Lancashire County Council Education Department. His talk emphasised the need for children to have the opportunity to visit live collections, which should include plants and animals.

The rest of the morning session included the following papers:

'Fishy Tails'

Live Exhibits and the New Curriculum. Mike Graham and David Anderson, Towneley Hall Natural History Centre.

The talk concerned the development and design of an aquarium to meet the needs of two objectives of the National Curriculum:

- (1) To show the diversity of life
- (2) To demonstrate their inter-relationships

'Of Shoals and Schools'

Living Displays and the National Curriculum. Dr Ian Wallace (standing in for Denis Murphy who unfortunately was suddenly taken ill) National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

Ian's presentation highlighted the philosophy behind the Mersey Watch Aquarium which is an annual interactive temporary display telling the story of the regeneration of the South Docks. The aquarium is based at the Maritime Museum in Albert Dock.

'Living Waters'

A New Style Aquarium Educating for the Future. Dr Gordon McGregor Reid, Keeper of Natural History, Horniman Museum.

Gordon's talk concerned the development and important educational role of the first public aquarium to be devoted solely to conservation issues and captive breeding. He also discussed the design and execution of the displays from an educational perspective.

The morning session finished with a tour 'behind the scenes' of the Natural History Centre Aquarium with Dave Anderson and Mike Graham.

After recovering from a surfeit of food and drink, the delegates reassembled in the Regency Room of Towneley Hall for the papers from the rest of the speakers, including:

'The Educational Use of a Zoo'

Brenda M Norgain, Head of Education Division, Chester Zoo.

Brenda gave a brief look at the ways in which school parties of any age range can make a zoo visit an effective, integral part of study in a wide range of subject areas in the school curriculum.

'Learning Through Birds'

Dr Mike Cotton, Education Adviser, Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve.

Mike's talk highlighted aspects of the school education programme developed by the RSPB using the birds and habitats of Leighton Moss to work towards relevant attainment targets of the National Curriculum. He used a multi-media approach utilising every piece of equipment we provided to present a very lively enthusiastic lecture.

'Education and Conservation'

Rod C Haynes, Displays Manager, The Sea Life Centre Limited, Blackpool.

Rod gave a very enlightened insight into the philosophy of the Sea Life Centre Limited's approach to education, in his own words, this is where big business meets conservation. It was a very contentious issue and he put his case across with great aplomb and conviction. The education programme at Sea Life Centre is three pronged with public talks and demonstrations, school education programmes and newly launched 'Sea Watch Programme'.

Rod's talk was deliberately left until the final session to provide the meat for a very lively discussion.

The knives were out and cynical purists amongst the delegates felt that the approach of the Sea Life Centre left a lot to be desired, especially their monetary donations and affiliation to Marine Conservation Society. Nevertheless, they do get

their message across to several million paying visitors per year.

The overall response to the seminar seemed to be enthusiastic with about 40 delegates taking part. There was a roughly even split between museum and non-museum organisations, including zoos, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, RSPB and private aquaria, with delegates from all over the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland.

We hope to produce some, if not all, of the papers in an edition of the Journal.

Diary Dates

September 4-6

National Bat Conference, Stirling. Details from Bat Conservation Trust.

September 14-18

Museums Association Conference Plymouth, 'A sense of place, museums in the landscape.' Who can say more? Watch out for the BCG stand. Details from the MA.

September 17-20

BCG / BOU / SHNH Conference on the history of ornithology (flyer enclosed). Lat bookings accepted until August 31.

September 21

NFBR Annual Conference, Nottingham, 'Environmental Recording: Who Pays the Piper?' Booking forms from Graham Walley, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham NG8 2AE.

October 5

Problems in storage - a one day meeting organised by Glasgow Museums and including a contribution from Frank Howie on pest management. Registration fee £45. Details from Glasgow Museums, Kelvingrove, Glasgow G3 8AG.

November 19 - 20

Scottish Museums Council / Museums Association Conference, 'The Greening of Museums', Edinburgh. Yes the title is familiar isn't it? Registration fee for both days £90. Further details from SMC or the MA. Included in the programme is a paper from Giles Clarke on the "most ambitious gallery in the United Kingdom dealing with an environmental subject". Yes, its the NHM's Ecology Gallery.

BCG Spring Meeting 1993

Travelling Natural History Exhibitions - a one day meeting in Shropshire. Further details to come.

BCG AGM 1993

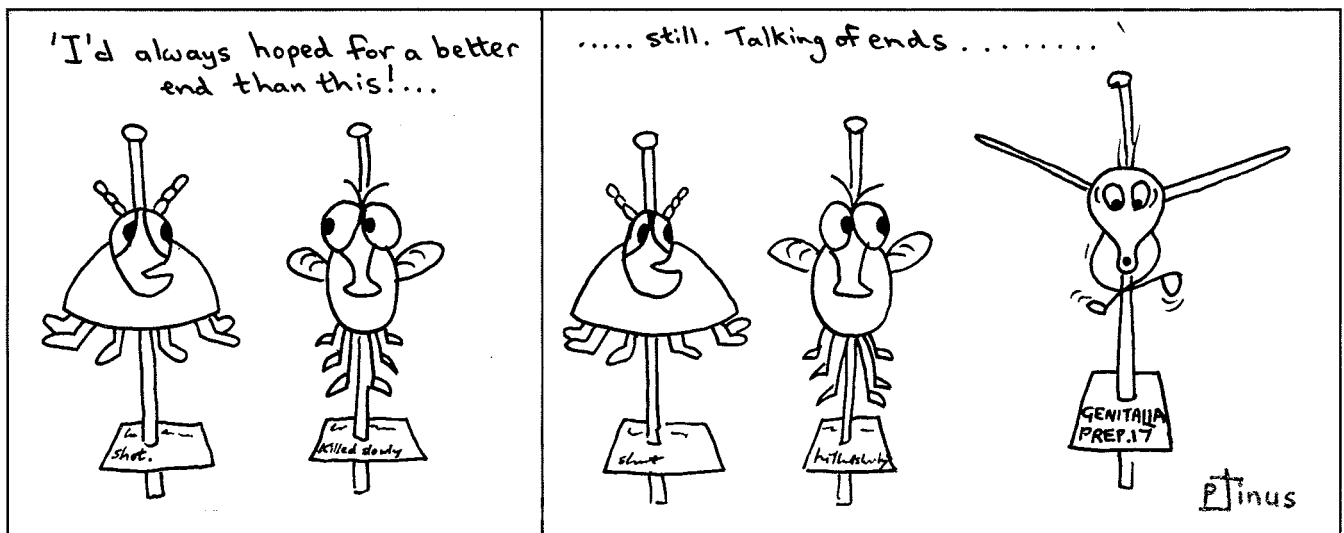
Inverness Museum 28 - 29 May - further details to come.

Information Wanted

John Rocke (fl. 1840-1881) of Clungunford House, Shropshire. Would anyone with information on the whereabouts of Rocke's collection of mounted birds which was removed from the house during one of the World Wars, please contact Mr Jonathan Roberts, Clungunford House, near Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 0QL. Mr Roberts has a manuscript catalogue of the collection.

Do you recognise the following numbers written in black ink at the top of the data labels of Common Blue butterflies: 14592, 16853, 20588, 20591, 41432, 41435, 41445, 41448, 41508, 41752, 41767, 41775, 41776? Associated names are Druit and J.P. Curtis and localities include Cornwall and Ireland. If so please contact Colin Plant at the Passmore Edwards Museum.

Dr Carlos Urdiales would be interested to hear of any skins, eggs, skeletons etc. of the following species collected in Spain; Bittern, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis and Andalusian Hemipode. Please contact Dr Urdiales at Parcela 58-B, 21760 Matalascanas, (Huelva), Spain.



Deadline

The deadline for the next issue will be September 30th. Please forward any contributions to the Editor, from whom back issues are available on request.

The views expressed in the Newsletter do not represent the views or policy of the Biology Curators Group Committee or membership except where specifically stated.

Subscription rates are £8.00 for individual membership and £15.00 for institutional and overseas membership. Application forms from the Membership Secretary on request.

Ecological Joke

Seen on a car in Perth – “What do you call 32,000 dead red deer? – A start.”

Published and Printed at Northern Whig Ltd.,
Limestone Road, Belfast, BT15 3AH.

© The Biology Curators Group ISSN 0144 - 588X