



NEWSLETTER

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Strife at the Natural History Museum

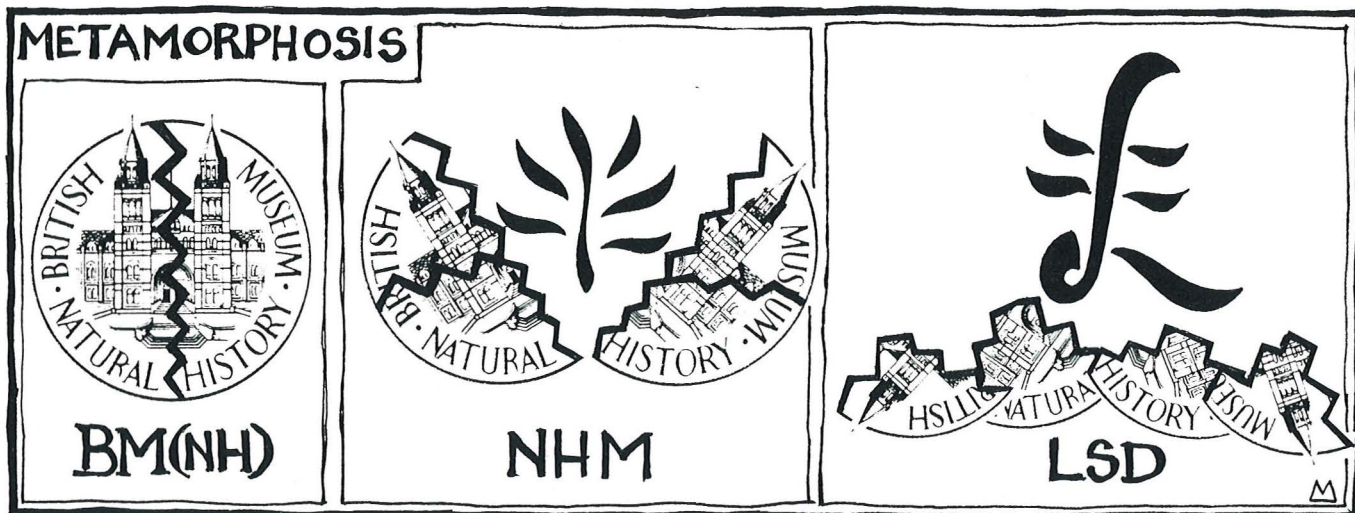
Radical change is the somewhat unusual flavour of the month at the Natural History Museum and that August, if slightly dusty institution has hit the headlines as never before. Dr Chalmers' Corporate Plan for 1990-95 was approved by the Trustees on 18th April, with no meaningful staff consultation as far as one can gather, and the long-rumoured prospect of scientific job losses suddenly became reality. About 100 jobs will disappear by 1992; 40 have already gone through natural wastage (the Plan actually says 'saved' but appears to mean the opposite) and 50-60 more will be lost over the next two years by a combination of natural wastage, redeployment, and voluntary and compulsory early retirement.

Assessments seem to vary as to what proportion of the losses is from the scientific establishment - about 43-46 seems to be the most likely estimate (about 15%).

Further information on what this actually means has come from the decent daily papers. Some sections and collections, like palaeobotany, appear to be losing their scientific staff completely. In

Botany, ten out of 49 jobs will go; in palaeontology, eleven out of 53; most of the Public Services Department seems to have been lopped. The latter despite the fact that there is to be a massive new exhibition programme at the museum: eight new permanent galleries during the next five years, presumably all developed through short term appointments and contracting out. If the furore caused by the architectural extravagances of the new BP-sponsored ecology gallery are anything to go by, this will not be an easy course to navigate. It is disturbing that the museum is so dependent on sponsorship for this ambitious display programme. It is deeply worrying that the staff who would have been competent at defending the scientific content of the galleries in the face of the expediencies of fashion seem to be on the way out.

The research thrust of the museum is now to be narrowed down to six areas: biodiversity, environmental quality, living resources, mineral resources, human health and human origins; what Dr Chalmers summarises as environmental, human wealth and human health issues.



According to NATURE, research themes characterised by their 'eyecatching banality'.

The riposte from the staff side says that, despite the stated aim in the Corporate Plan to concentrate on biodiversity as one of six research areas, the museum is closing down research on: recent and fossil mammals (except primates), testate amoebae, sponges, diatoms and bryophytes, taxonomic computing, fossil plants, fossil birds, modern bees and wasps, hemiptera (heteroptera) and weevils, building stones and gemstones amongst others. This in addition to research already closed down on modern birds and spiders, coelenterates, bryozoans, echinoderms and annelids. This, they say, makes the cuts inconsistent with the stated policy.

The division between 'curatorship' and 'scholarship and research', formerly reasonably well integrated at the museum, is to be widened to chasm-like proportions. There is an obvious similarity here with the restructuring at the V & A (which was so derided that it has been modified since its launch a year and a half ago) although the axe has not been wielded at such a lofty level (the keepers don't seem to be losing their jobs at the Natural History Museum). It would be wrong to think that all departments have been cut - the Department of Administrative Service apparently loses four posts but gains six. Well done Admin Services!

Following an initial period of shock, the staff side is organising a campaign of industrial action and wider ranging pressures. An early one day strike by some staff members was followed by demands for consultations with the director before the Plan is presented to the Minister for the Arts. Threats of further industrial action hang in the air following the outcome of this meeting (unknown at the time of writing). A petition urging the Trustees to reconsider the Plan and use their influence to get proper funding is circulating around museums and research workers (if you want to sign the petition, contact: Lynne Patchett, IPMS Secretary, Department of Public Services, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD).

The campaign of pressure and comment from the wider scientific community has born fruit in the national press. So much has appeared that it is difficult to keep track of it all, but these are three relevant comments:

Dr Niles Eldridge, Dean of the Scientific Council of the American Museum of Natural

History, NY, says 'We just don't know whats out there (meaning species). To cut back now is a disaster. The Natural History Museum library is a treasure trove and its backbone the research scientists. We desperately need them. There is no point in maintaining a collection if research is not being done on it'.

From thirty staff of the Biology and Earth Sciences departments at the Open University (where Dr Chalmers worked previously) an open letter to Dr Chalmers printed in the Guardian from which this paragraph on the staff cuts is taken:

'We consider that the planned staffing cuts are both extremely unwise and injuriously introduced. We understand that one of the intentions of the cuts is to reduce the staff salary component of the Museum's budget, yet the scientific, technical and exhibition staff of the Museum are the essential mainstay of its work, providing a vital spread and continuity of expertise in curatorial management of the collections, in taxonomic methodology and the mounting of exhibitions. Once lost, such expertise would take a considerable time (and no mean expense) to re-establish. The cuts would therefore undermine the Museum's ability to pursue its essential purposes. We would be more than happy to support you in pressing for adequate funding for the Museum but condemn massive staff cuts, as a most inappropriate option.

From the Independent, 14th May 1990, Viewpoint by Beverly Halstead of Imperial College:

'The public galleries are due for an overhaul, but I fear we have people in charge who do not understand what the scientists actually achieve down in the depths of the museum. Now the criterion is what will draw the crowds and generate income. Roaring, growling, half-sized models of dinosaurs brings them in by the hordes. But a giant dinosaur toy is still a toy for all that. A genuine fossil bone, a jaw full of teeth, a nest of eggs, trackways where dinosaurs once trod, these are the objects to capture the imagination. Let us hope that they can find their place again in the hallowed halls of that Kensington cathedral of 67 million specimens.

As a matter of policy the director has placed the high-profile, commercial activities first in the queue for substantial backing. So dinosaurs and prehistoric humans are safe-guarded; for fossil mammals and birds - zilch. The fear is that there may be no place for the museum's scholarship in the public galleries. The dedicated, low-profile scientists are at the sticky end of things - they simply cannot compete in this particular game.

It is invidious that they should have to. The museum fulfils two distinct roles: entertainment-cum-educational on the one hand, scientific research on the other. It is wrong to set one side up against the other - it is wrong for the museum management to have to weigh the relative worth of the museum's separate functions.

The scientific research of the museum is concerned with collecting, identifying, describing, and classifying the natural world - taxonomy and systematics. It is the sort of activity that requires lifetimes of dedication. It is the compilation of the inventory of our planet. Like a dictionary, it will only be of use if it has all the words in it, not just the currently fashionable ones.

BCG RESPONSE

At the BCG AGM in Douglas the effects of the Corporate Plan on the existing staffing levels at the NHM, and the revised research strategy were discussed as far as possible. Those members present felt that BCG should take a strong stance on this issue and unanimously passed the following resolution, which gives the committee a lead in any further dialogue with the NHM management on the implications of the Corporate Plan.

'The BCG strongly condemns the Trustees and management of the Natural History Museum for the reduction in staffing resources resulting from the implementation of the recent Corporate Plan.

This will lead to the loss of irreplaceable expertise, in specific areas of the collections, unavailable elsewhere.

In addition, the inevitable damage that will be caused to collections, which are a vital part of the national and international heritage, represents an indefensible loss to science.'

THE CORPORATE PLAN, 1990-95: SOME DETAILS

The Corporate Plan itself is an eleven page document which cannot be reproduced here in its entirety. However, Section 2 titled 'The Mission' gives a set of objectives which the Plan then addresses in greater detail; this section is reproduced below. Section 3.3 is the strategy as it relates to science and, as this is the area which is probably of most relevance to BCG members outside the NHM, it is also reproduced below. Other key areas of the strategy are: Library,

Exhibitions, Education, Front of House, Estate, Financial Resources and Human Resources, all of which are dealt with in some depth. The final part of the Plan quoted below, section 4.2(c), deals with the impact of the strategy on staffing levels and is at the core of the present unrest.

Section 2 THE MISSION

- '2.1 This focus has recently been redefined in the following Mission Statement:-
"To promote the understanding and enjoyment of the variety of our natural world through high quality exhibitions, education and science"
- 2.2 It gives rise to the following key objectives for the next five years:-
- a) Science - for curation, to increase the efficiency of collection management and advisory services
- for research, to develop basic and applied programmes relevant to contemporary needs and issues
 - b) Library - to conserve the collections and provide a service to meet the needs of the Museum
 - c) Exhibitions - to improve the level of maintenance in the galleries
- to provide a comprehensive series of permanent exhibitions which are up-to-date and relevant to audience needs
 - d) Education - to complete the development of an educational programme tailored to the needs of the new National Curriculum
 - e) Front of House - to improve customer care
- to enhance further the environment and facilities provided for visitors
 - f) Estate - to maintain the estate to a high standard, particularly by reroofing the Waterhouse Building
- to ensure the proper housing of collections mainly through the replacement of the Ruislip store
 - g) Management - to bring about improvements in Museum organisation and management in order to build upon and develop the commitment and skills of its staff
 - h) Resources - to increase income in real terms, both from Grant-in-Aid, from other sources across all the Museum's activities, and by effective marketing
- to continue improving the effectiveness with which resources are used.'

Section 3.3 THE STRATEGY (relating to Science)

- '3.3 The following strategy has been formulated:-

Science - for Curation and advice, the management and organisational structures are being redefined to ensure that resources can be focussed on:-

- continuing a basic level of care and maintenance of the collections
- making these materials available to research workers worldwide
- developing those parts of the collections that are relevant to the Museum's changing research programmes.

- for Research, the work is being reorganised into a series of programmes, appropriate to the Museum's remit, as follows:

- Biodiversity
- Environmental Quality
- Living Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Human Health
- Human Origins

These will be responsive to changes in audience needs and, by their interdisciplinary nature, will enhance collaboration between the Museum and other national and international organisations. The Museum will need to achieve a balance between a continuing requirement for experienced and expert staff with the need for 'new blood' appointments.'

Section 4.2 HUMAN RESOURCES, parts (c) and (d), impact of the strategy on staffing levels

'(c) Several parts of the Museum's strategy will have a direct impact on the existing staffing levels:

- in Science, a reducing grant in real terms requires the Museum to "cut its coat according to its cloth". At the same time it will have to inject new blood into priority areas and actively seek external funding to self-finance new appointments

This necessitates a reappraisal of the priority areas for science and a closer definition of posts and the management structure within the areas of curation and research. Associated with these changes will be the extension of fixed grading for some posts

- in Exhibitions, there is a need to reduce the level of in-house staff and contract out services in order to respond to fluctuating work loads and funding and import the best creative talent, cost effectively

- in Front of House, a shift from traditional warding, to information givers and security, will result in a redeployment of existing staff. In addition, day to day management of cleaning will transfer to the new

gallery team managers and the establishment of a single team for the shops admissions and enquiries.

(d) To summarise, two issues need to be addressed:-

flexibility - to respond to changes in audience needs whilst maintaining credibility and vigour

affordability - to reduce the overall level of staff to one commensurate with its needs and the funding available.

The net effect of meeting these two requirements is to reduce the existing staffing level by 50-60 posts, in addition to the 40 posts which will be achieved in 1991-92 by natural wastage. The reduction will be achieved in 1991-92 by natural wastage and redeployment where possible but some voluntary and compulsory early retirement will be necessary.

Underpinning this strategy is a need to increase investment in training and retraining. Staff will then have the appropriate skills to respond to audience demands thereby providing them with better job satisfaction and security for the future.'

Please bear in mind these are only short passages from the Corporate Plan. They are quoted here because they throw some light on the present controversies. In fairness, these quotes do not represent the full scope of the document. Members should note that further information is available from the Natural History Press Office on 071 938 8779.

December 19th and 20th 1990
SITEM

The International Show of Museographic Techniques will take place in Dijon, France, on 19th and 20th December in the Exhibition Park and Convention Hall. It is a show sponsored by the Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports and organised by OCIM, University of Burgundy. There will be a Nature and Environment section and associated conference organised by Science Musées Médias, an association of curators, technicians, scientists and journalists. It is a 'show' not a closed conference, and there will be events for the general public, exhibits by suppliers of museum equipment and, especially, innovative techniques in all spheres of 'science' curation and display. Full details from:
Office de Cooperation et d'information Muséographiques, 64 rue Vannerie, 21000 Dijon, France.

Letters

Dear John

Geoff Stansfield's paper in the Journal of Biological Curation 1 (1) only emphasised the lack of established facts about pest control methods and their effectiveness. Despite the substantial amount of literature on the subject are we any nearer reaching a consensus of what the most appropriate methods really are? It seems to me that the most favoured methods are generally passed on by word of mouth.

One such technique that has been recommended to me on several occasions, by separate and independent curators is the mythical 'overnight fumigation' of entomological cabinet drawers using dichlorvos. Precisely because it has always been related to me by word of mouth I am unsure of the origin of this technique, or for what it has been successfully used (e.g. Anthrenus or all insect pests; larvae or adults etc).

The method can be summarised as follows: the moment insect pests are discovered in a drawer isolate the drawer, drop in a small cube of Vapona and leave it overnight. The following day, remove Vapona together with the corpses of the unsuspecting beetles, confident in the knowledge that another infestation has been dealt with effectively. It sounds too good to be true - and, of course, it is.

A freeze dried adder on display at Sunderland Museum was the victim of a Ptinus tectus attack last year. The adder was removed from display and placed, together with a 2x1x1 cm block of Vapona, in a cellophane envelope and sealed inside a plastic container. This volume of Vapona should have been adequate to kill the pests according to the manufacturers instructions and was certainly as large as blocks allegedly used in entomological cabinet drawers.

I inspected the larvae the following day to make sure that they had done the honest thing and curled up and died - as you have probably guessed they had not. Nor had they the next day, nor the next, nor the next. They, in fact, continued munching and metamorphosing for the next five weeks before the three adults that emerged finally curled up their tarsi.

I know that I am not the only natural history curator to have been advised to use the 'overnight method'. My experience proves that for Ptinus tectus it does not work. It is a cautionary tale not to believe everything that is passed down the grapevine.

On a similar subject, we have recently had a collection of birds and mammals fumigated by Rentokil using their 'bubble', or, portable chamber. Following consultation with our specialist conservators and with Rentokil's own specialists we decided against using methyl bromide, due to the risks to collections and staff associated with this gas; in particular its rumoured absorption into fatty tissues etc.

The gas we used instead was phosphine. This was recommended on the grounds of safety and efficacy by Rentokil. The only disadvantage is the longer exposure time required - ten to fourteen days in the 'bubble'.

It is too early for us to comment on the results of our own experiences. So far, no insect pests have been found in the fumigated material. On the other hand the potential infestation was identified at a very early stage and few individual beetles were found (Ptinus tectus again - but in Newcastle this time!).

In my ignorance I had thought that phosphine fumigation had gone out with the Ark. If it is as good as it is claimed to be then why have we been agonizing over the pros and cons of methyl bromide for so many years?

I would be delighted to hear from anyone else who has had experience of using phosphine as a fumigant, both to find out their experiences and to establish how common its use is in museums.

Yours sincerely,

Alec Coles
Senior Museums Officer (Natural Sciences),
Tyne and Wear Museums Service

NEW DIRECTOR FOR THE MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

Mark Taylor was appointed MA Director in November 1989. He is an historian by education (degree from Birmingham University) and was in hotel management before joining the Association five years ago; his previous posts were Conference Manager and Director of Museum Enterprises (the Association's trading company).

One of his first public acts as director must have been to orchestrate the vociferous condemnation from the MA to the recommendation of the Parliamentary all-party Education, Science and Arts Select Committee that all major publicly-funded museums and galleries should urgently consider levying compulsory admission charges. BCG shares this view ('totally misconceived' to quote from the MA press release) and supports the Association in its stance.

NAME YOUR PRICE: PRICE YOUR NAME

This short but fascinating piece by John Vidal appeared in the Guardian of 12th January 1990 under the 'Eco Soundings' bye-line. No comment.

In hard times for science and museums the Natural History Museum has hit on a potential new way of raising cash. Come up with a reasonable offer or proposal which would help the museum and its work and you could have an insect named after you.

This comes out of a project which the museum has been doing with the Costa Rican government which involved American financiers Salomon Brothers co-ordinating a \$24.5 million package to buy 210,000 acres of land to be turned back into a dry forest national park. The Natural History Museum's contribution was to give technical expertise and they offered Salomons the chance to be remembered for ever by naming 13 species of recently discovered wasps after some of their directors. Salomons were so tickled that they waived the \$300,000 fee. Appositely, the wasps were parasites feeding on money spiders.

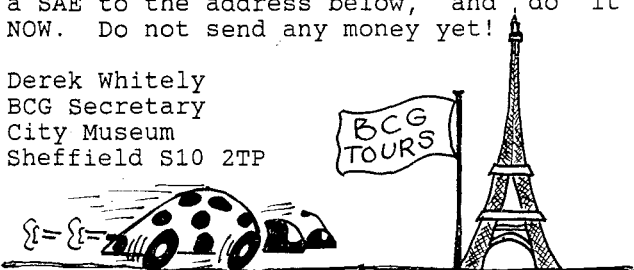
On this basis a name is worth many thousands and as thousands of new insects are discovered each year the financial possibilities are enormous. Dr Laurence Mound, chief entomologist at the museum, says he is always interested in finding ways to turn the museum's activities into cash. He's sold names before; a New Guinea sugar cane boss bought the name of a pest discovered on his land for a mere £300. Prices, he says, are negotiable.

BCG GO TO PARIS!

'Allo 'Allo! We are considering hiring a coach for a four-day study visit to Paris on 1st to 4th November 1990. The detailed itinerary is still to be worked out but it will include the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle with its new 400 million franc Zoology Gallery.

The coach will leave Sheffield, calling at Leicester and London. Members and guests are all welcome and booking will be on a first-come first-served basis. Costings are yet to be confirmed but we anticipate something in the region of £85-90 to include accommodation. If you wish to reserve a place (or places) send a SAE to the address below, and do it NOW. Do not send any money yet!

Derek Whitely
BCG Secretary
City Museum
Sheffield S10 2TP



SPNHC INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
IN MADRID, 1992

Announcing a major international Symposium of the Preservation and Conservation of Natural History Collections, organised by the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections. The symposium, backed by an international group of institutions and bodies including the Biological Curators Group is to be held at the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid, May 10 - 15 1992.

The Symposium will focus on the concerns of the Natural History community for the status and future of anthropological, biological and geological collections in a world that is changing technologically, politically, and environmentally.

Issues, such as education and training, methodologies, research, resource utilisation for collection care, and cooperative programs will provide an attractive agenda for individuals associated with these collections.

The meeting will provide the first international forum for all the major groups invited to discuss the problems facing natural science collections. 1992 is an important year for the European Community with the establishment of free trade and the conference should see the organisation of a major umbrella group to promote better contact and exchange between European Natural Science groups.

For more information see the flyer included with this newsletter - or contact: Chris Collins, Leicestershire Museums Service, 96 New Walk, Leicester LE1 6TD.

Chris is the British representative of SPNHC and is the symposium liaison officer for BCG and GCG. If you would like to submit a paper for inclusion in the symposium, contact Chris at the earliest opportunity.

BCG SPOT THE CURATOR COMPETITION



Yes, you guessed. The curator is behind the tree!

Photo from North Devon meeting 1989.

Book Reviews

THE MOTHS AND BUTTERFLIES OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND VOLUME 7, PART 1, HESPERIIDAE - NYMPHALIDAE; THE BUTTERFLIES.

Editor A M Emmet and J Heath. Harley Books. £49.50.

This volume must be considered as one of the trickiest for the authors to produce. Not only does it have to maintain the extremely high standards reached by earlier volumes in this series but it has to compete in a sector of the market already well catered for by many titles; that of butterfly books. British butterflies, with under one hundred species, form a favourite subject for comprehensive identification guides available with drawings, photographs, maps, graphs and many other details. Very few provide a really good account of our fauna.

This publication certainly surpasses any other with its extensive species accounts and revised, up-to-date distribution maps. Extremely detailed accounts of the life cycle of each species are given, and are accompanied by many recent observations concerning the conservation and management of habitats for many of the rare species. Despite the Biological Records Centre stopping its butterfly recording scheme in 1982, the maps have been updated and show significant improvements in coverage since the publication of the 'final' atlas.

Identification of our butterflies is usually achieved by 'looking at the pictures'. However, there are keys to all species and detailed descriptions in the text. Critical species are not a feature of the British butterfly fauna, but it is useful to have drawings of the genitalia of Essex Skipper and Small Skipper to hand for problem specimens. It is a pity that this was not done in Volume 2 of the series for Zygaena lonicerae and Z. trifolii!

A discussion about identification brings us to the plates. These tend to be the feature that attracts most comment whenever a book like this is published. All I can say is that I have set them alongside other 'classics' such as Souths British Butterflies by Howarth and the Field Guide by Higgins and Riley. Try it and I think you will agree that a really close look will show you the high quality and detail Richard Lewington has achieved in his immaculate reproduction of these by Harley Books. The detail outshines the competition. I am pleased that this book has not been tempted to illustrate all of the more unusual aberrations yet again. These tend to be of greatest interest to collectors, not to modern

field entomologists and ecologists. However, the text mentions most recognised aberrations and gives details of publications where they are illustrated. Welcome inclusions are the adventives and accidentally introduced species, many of which have not been illustrated before in British butterfly books.

The references are extensive and include a list of county and regional publications on butterflies. A useful reference for anyone extracting records from early lists is the first chapter examining the history of vernacular names. It is also an interesting read, discussing many early publications and early illustrations and descriptions of our butterfly fauna.

Finally there is a thought-provoking chapter entitled 'Re-establishment of Insect Populations' - essential reading, no matter what your views.

In summary, I was very pleased to find that this was not just another butterfly book as I suspected it might be!

Steve Garland

BRITISH WILDLIFE

Published by British Wildlife Publishing. ISSN 0958-0956. Subscription rate £15.95 p a. Published bi-monthly.

BRITISH WILDLIFE is subtitled 'The Magazine for the Modern Naturalist' and that sums it up pretty well. It fills a gap in the market that has been apparent for some time, treating field-based natural history seriously across a broad spectrum. Its appeal is mainly to the serious and informed generalist, which is how I would describe most museum-based biologists whose professional brief and personal interests cover field survey, biological recording, conservation, and related issues. It appears to do for general natural history what 'British Birds' does for ornithology: gives an in-depth study of a few selected subjects alongside newsy pieces on events and issues of interest to everyone.

Volume 1 number 3 illustrates this well. The in-depth papers include Basking Sharks (fishery and conservation), British River Plants and the threats they face (a readable and informative review by Nigel Holmes), Management of Peatlands for Conservation and the Identification feature is on British Toads and Frogs. This is a good mix and what is more important, the style of writing and presentation make the papers accessible so that the reader's interest does not flag half-way through; I wish I could say this of some other publications with a conservation theme!

The newsy sections are divided into Wildlife Reports (with summaries of current issues by well-known experts in the various groups, like Paul Bright for mammals; Chris Mead for birds; Brian Banks for herptiles; Alan Stubbs for flies etc - the coverage is extensive and very useful) and Conservation News (around-the-country format, including a section on political issues). The other feature sections are Reserve Focus (one reserve per issue - here Beinn Eighe, Wester Ross), Photofocus (barn owls) and Book Reviews. In summary, a stimulating 64 page read which you will not get through in one sitting but which will draw you back again and again.

It's a nice size, smaller than A4, bigger than A5, and the cover is unflashy - it has a 'traditional' look about it which I find is well in tune with the contents. The paper is of a good quality but there is some show-through of print; it is also acid-free so it should not deteriorate on the library shelf. The paper has a high quality finish which allows for good photographic reproduction - the coloured figures are as good as one would expect, but the black and whites are very grey on my copy and the publishers should perhaps pay more attention to these.

Where, then, does BRITISH WILDLIFE fit in the spectrum of biological publications? It clearly is not a learned journal - its much too accessible for that! It calls itself a magazine but to my mind that does not do it justice. Perhaps 'learned magazine' is a new category we can create for this informative, readable and altogether excellent periodical.

John Mathias

THE BUTTERFLIES OF THE LONDON AREA
By Colin W Plant

Published by the London Natural History Society, 1987. Price £15.95 (including p & p), payable to LNHS; available from C W Plant, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Herts CM23 3QP.

This book has got to be the 'Rolls-Royce' of local butterfly publications. In this extraordinarily comprehensive work Colin has left no stone unturned to provide a detailed historical and up to date account of the butterflies within 20 miles of St Pauls (3424 square kilometres), the recording area of the London Natural History Society. Seventy-four species are listed and described, including residents, migrants, extinctions, aliens and species of dubious origin (for example the Blue Pansy (*Junonia oenone*) an African butterfly captured in an exhausted condition in Roehampton

on 5 June 1950). There are many other examples, all well worth documenting, and adding a touch of spice to the main meat of the book.

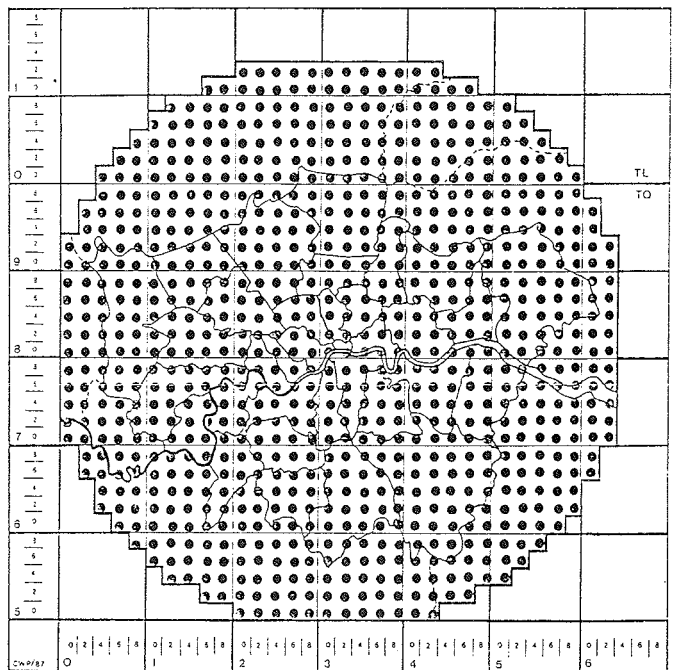
The distribution maps are beautifully produced in two colours on a tetrad (2km square) basis, and are obviously well researched, and appear to be as definitive as distribution maps can be. Small Tortoiseshell has been recorded from every tetrad, demonstrating that, at least, all squares have been visited during the amazingly short date band 1980-1986. Thus, an accurate base-line has now been established, and future surveys in the 1990s and beyond will be able to demonstrate real changes in distribution.

The book is liberally illustrated throughout with colour photographs from transparencies. Whilst I have seen better portrait photographs of many species, it is refreshing to see butterflies in their natural habitats looking very much alive. I admire the author's courage for including shots of some of my European favourites, Long-tailed Blue, Scarce Swallowtail, Milkweed and Apollo, at the expense of some more frequent London species.

Ian Robertson provides an interesting preface about the relationships and liaison between the Passmore Edwards Museum and local natural history societies, which is well worth reading in itself.

I must confess, I am a long-standing fan of the London Natural History Society. It is a good example of a traditional natural history society

SMALL TORTOISESHELL 1980-1986



which is sufficiently flexible to meet the challenges and demands of modern natural history. This book reflects a society spending its resources in pursuit of its objectives - the publication of scientific information.

Introductory chapters include a history of recording, current situation, geology, habitats, conservation, attracting butterflies to the garden, useful addresses and a well-balanced argument on collecting.

There are, no doubt, one or two hair-splitting criticisms that connoisseurs of London's butterflies may find, but most of the errors I spotted have already been sorted out by an erratum slip.

The odd page size (220mm x 180mm) results from printing the maps equal in size to earlier works on London's fauna and flora so as to allow for the eventual production of compatible overlays.

The apparent high price reflects modern production costs; however, the book sells at only a few pence above cost price, and is really a bargain! I recommend this book to everyone interested in butterflies, and it should be essential reading for all London and Home Counties naturalists. Even though I live 150 miles away I still find myself dipping into this book from time to time.

Derek Whiteley

PROVISIONAL ATLAS OF THE CLICK BEETLES (COLEOPTERA : ELATEROIDEA) OF THE BRITISH ISLES
by Howard Mendel

Published by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, 1988. Price £5.50
ISBN 1-870393-11-2

This atlas summarises records gleaned by the national click beetle recording scheme, which is organised by Howard Mendel with the aid of the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood. Of the 76 species of click beetles currently on the British list as many as 19 are listed in the Red Data Book of British Insects. Many of these are relict species associated with ancient woodland habitats and so an atlas summarising their British status and distribution provides invaluable sustenance to the current debate on insect indicator species of ancient woodland.

To each species the atlas devotes a page consisting of a 10km dot map and a numerical table showing vice county distribution. A map and key to vice

counties is provided at the beginning in order to interpret these tables. Symbols representing three data classes are used in the dot maps in a way which is informative, but not confusing, although of course it must be kept in the mind that the modern increase in recording obscures the visual portrayal in the maps of the real decline of many of the species. Two date classes are used in the vice county tables. Three extremely rare species and several extinct species are given separate treatment in an introduction which describes their recorded history in the British Isles.

It is heartening to see a number of museums mentioned in the acknowledgements. Surely this type of project must be a major justification for providing the resources which our insect collections require for their upkeep. It is to be hoped that the publication of this provisional atlas will stimulate museums and individuals to contribute further records to the recording scheme for eventual publication in the final atlas.

Derek Lott

PROVISIONAL ATLAS OF THE TICKS (IXODOIDEA) OF THE BRITISH ISLES
by K P Martyn

Published by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, 1988. Price £4.00
ISBN 1-870393-09-0

This atlas deals with the 23 British species of ticks, which are a group of ectoparasitic mites familiar to many people who take their dogs for walks in the country or even those who wander bare legged through sheep pasture with tall grass.

A brief introduction summarises information on taxonomy, ecology and the medical importance of these animals in a concise, but informative way. A checklist of species is included in order to update the superceded nomenclature in the standard identification work. A map showing the spread of records used in the atlas reveals a surprisingly comprehensive if thinly scattered geographical coverage. The London area shows a relatively dense concentration of records. Sources of the records included in the atlas are listed and there seems to be ample scope for improving on the density of records over much of the country by reference to provincial museum collections.

Each species within the atlas is allocated a double page spread comprising a 10km square dot map and some text. Unfortunately no information on dates of records is

given with the maps, which makes appraisal of distribution difficult in a country with such a rapidly changing environment as ours. However this is more than compensated for by the text, which gives details of biology and ecology for each species. Information on medical importance and morphological characteristics are included where appropriate. Comprehensive lists of recorded hosts are appended for all species.

To a non specialist such as myself the variations shown by different species in their ecologies are surprising and the whole book makes interesting and informative reading. Ticks are animals which have their niche in the public consciousness and yet they are little known amongst general biologists. This publication, apart from being a distribution atlas, is a hand reference guide to this fascinating group.

Derek Lott

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT FOR MUSEUMS
by D Andrew Roberts (Editor)

Published by Museums Documentation Association, 1988, pp 237. Price £30. ISBN 0-905963-61-X

For those who were unable to attend the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT FOR MUSEUMS (the title given to the first Annual Conference of the Museums Documentation Association) held in Cambridge from 26-29 September 1987, this compilation of papers, expertly compiled and edited by Andrew Roberts, has to be the next best thing. A well finished, hardback volume, it is divided into sections devoted to Surveys of Collection Management Systems and Practice, System Design, Role of Professional Groups, Procedural and Policy Developments in Individual Museums, Training and Advisory Developments, Consultancy Support for Museums and Collections Management Systems. The thirty-six papers have an inevitable bias towards the experience of staff in museums and related institutions in Britain and North America, but it is pleasing to read contributions from colleagues in Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands.

To review each and every contribution is impossible here, but the highlights for me included Jane Sledge's SURVEY OF NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND PRACTICE, (Chapter 3) written with humour and obvious understanding of the museum condition. Her paper ('about the search for the Holy Grail of collections management, the ensuing misconceptions and expectations ...') is thought-

provoking and yet somehow reassuring in reminding us that even in North America the need for standards and compatibility has yet to be realised ('If you believe this, there is a very interesting bridge in Brooklyn that's for sale').

The antipodean papers were also refreshing, and I especially enjoyed John Hodge's COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT IN RELATION TO MUSEUM STUDIES TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA (Chapter 29) which highlighted the separateness of institutions and the dichotomy of Art Galleries and Museums in that country as factors posing particular problems for training in collections management. Training for collections management is perceived as an important need - it crops up throughout the volume and not just in the Training and Advisory Developments section. Joanne Neri's personal experience of training at the Center for Museum Studies of John F Kennedy University (Chapter 30) helps to put many student needs in focus. In her words 'Efforts to open channels of communication between students and professionals of museology have ... never been more dynamic, however, (they) have also never been more urgent'.

Reading about museum documentation is, understandably, not always entertaining. However, this volume always makes interesting reading, and provides a valuable 'state of the art' reference work, as well as a record of what must have been an excellent conference. I must try not to miss the next one.

Peter Davis

THE INSECT AND SPIDER COLLECTIONS OF THE WORLD

by R H Arnett and G A Samuelson

Published by E J Brill (Leiden) and Flora and Fauna Publications (Florida) 1986; pp220, spiral bound, thin card covers. Price Gld 41 (£14 approx). ISBN 90-04-08192-5

The bulk of this directory consists of two lists of public and private insect and spider collections arranged alphabetically by country and owner respectively. The first list is interesting because it lists all the countries of the world whether or not they have collections (even Antarctica which is not a country in this sense) and therefore includes useful negative information. In this respect it also lists those known collections but from which no return was received to the questionnaire. Obviously North

America is most comprehensively covered. The ubiquitous problem of relying on this means of gathering information, that of the lack of interest in many people (who claim to be too busy as an excuse), must be as frustrating to the compilers as it is to the user. The curator who does not make an effort to respond to these projects is committing a form of slow suicide as the collections will not get used or become regarded as worth adding to.

This situation is particularly well illustrated in the British section. Twenty-one institutions are listed of which nine did not return their questionnaires. There are some odd mistranscriptions here of places such as Brambler for Bramber (which as the so-called National Butterfly Museum no longer exists) and Werneth Park appearing in Nottingham rather than Oldham (which also suffered a demise of sorts, explaining the lack of return) while Peterborough is listed under Priestgate, the name of the street on which the museum is found. The work of the Collection Research Units makes this kind of effort redundant but does not as yet reach such a world wide audience. Do the entomologists out there really think that there are so few places to consult in this country or indeed that there are only five in the whole of France?

One of the interesting points found in this guide is the use of codens, a term preferred to acronyms, for each institution. This has been developing now since the same authors used letter

codes in a survey of beetle collections in 1969. It has become more refined following a paper by Heppner and Lamas ACRONYMS FOR WORLD MUSEUM COLLECTIONS OF INSECTS, ETC; (Bull Ent Soc America, 28; 305-316) so that now it rivals the scheme used to identify herbaria. If you have not got one of these four letter codes then you should have filled in the questionnaire! Alphabetical lists of codens and curators are given at the end as well as the collectors represented in the museums as listed in the returns. This last is a useful addition to the growing number of lists of named collections for the seeker after lost type specimens or historical trifles as well as research material in the main sense.

The list of private collections is admittedly only scraping the surface of the numbers that must exist and is also primarily concerned with the United States. An interesting aspect to this list is that the problem of the transience of such collections is overcome by requiring each private collection entry to be registered with a public institution. The chances of finding them in fifteen years time is thereby considerably increased.

Altogether, this compilation has much to commend it and extends the knowledge and utility of collections in several directions. If the authors were to consider updating it perhaps a series of local editors, one for each country, would be useful.

Geoff Hancock

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BCG SPORT

Sir Rat - the sequel

Hi sports fans, time to hear the news and views that really matter from your man on the penalty spot once again. So what's new in the hustle bustle world of professional iguana tweeking this month I hear you ask. Well ... not a fat lot really. Transfer news has been a bit slow. Perhaps all you canny lads are holding on for the big spending spree of the new season, who knows.

News too late for my last missif is that Jane Mee is now at Oldham Athletic alongside fellow newcomer Simon Hayhow. What is it with these youngsters, they don't seem to be able to last the full 90 minutes any more. It hardly seems like yesterday since she joined Chester and got their name included in the prestigious 'B---r off' tournament. News reaching us here at BCHQ suggests that inclusion could have been a bit premature with what looks like being at least an 18 month stay with the non-leaguers on the cards due to management apathy (will it never cease?) Not an enviable position with the World Cup just round the corner. This probably being the only cup that Oldham aren't in the running for this season!

More great news for the women's game comes with two new signings in the south west where Clare Valentine fills Simon's boots at Plymouth (so to speak), and the long awaited 1st Division debut of Kate 'take it to the max' Hebditch at Dorset. Talking of Boots it seems that Sir Rat really scored with his recent forecasts at Exeter. It can now be confirmed that they have lost their captain to the competitive world of solo match commentaries.

Hopefully by the time you read this there may be more info on the Kirklees front, but as we always used to say in the Murmansk mixed synchronised breakstroke team - 'A frozen position is a vulnerable position'. Talking of vulnerable it seems that Colin 'can I describe a species before I've even found it' Plant has managed to retain his place at Passmore Edwards Academicals despite the recent Pools tax shake up.

A mysterious note stating 'Knox for Bucks' has me a little curious. Has anyone (D)NA information on that one? The two new 'centre' halves at Liverpool in the shape of Steve Cross and Jo Sax and drugs and Rock'n'roll recently showed their faces at a secret training camp somewhere in Yorkshire. Talent scouts

were impressed not so much by the tight ball control on show during the week as the enthusiasm and drinking habits displayed by all concerned. Now we know why they burn out so young!

Over to the veterans now and it would seem that after 30 years with Ludlow, John Norton is hanging up his boots for a well earned move to the role of spectator. Likewise, testimonial time in 1991 for Maurice Johnson at Lincoln. It's good to know that some of us can last the distance well into extra time.

So what's in store for us in the 1990's? Well, after last year where we couldn't see the goal for the strikers perhaps we'll be seeing more in the way of real ... achievement - and I don't mean all seater galleries! Let's hope this 'Blancheflower' campaign really hits the mark when those swilling drinks in the Director's box realise that the rest of the stand is crumbling before their very eyes. Perhaps then they'll spend less time concerned with the pre-match entertainments and more on the backbone of the game - the reserves!

Has anyone out there copped (pun) a load of the reborn GCG newsletter by any chance? Nice try, but ... where's the sports page? 'Musical curators' just isn't going to cut it is it? I expected a bit more humour from a team that once issued leaflets boasting the most vulgar finger gesture this side of show jumping. Let's try to live up to the witty title shall we chaps? 'Graptolite' would have been more appropriate and 'Dinosnore' has been suggested!

While we're on the subject of time wasting (sorry GCG this is what's known as a 'joke' - look it up) have any of you coaches out there suffered the full affects of the WOSHH (Waste of Staff Hours, Honestly) regulations? Apparently match injuries can now only be dealt with where the player can be removed to an adjacent fume-cupboard and if linament is required should only be handled with appropriate protective clothing. Even if you're able to strictly comply with these measures you can still be in trouble. Our own coach was caught using a pain killer spray in the cup tie against Bolton and was promptly beaten to death by the home team for encouraging the greenhouse effect. How anyone who even contemplated curry-lures in his stores can claim to be environmentally friendly is beyond me. Perhaps it's because naphthalene promotes hair loss

That's enough waffle for now fans. Just remember if you want the facts turn to Sir Rat on the back page. After all the front page invariably turns out to be a figment of the Editor's imagination ...

Sir Rat Buzzbee

