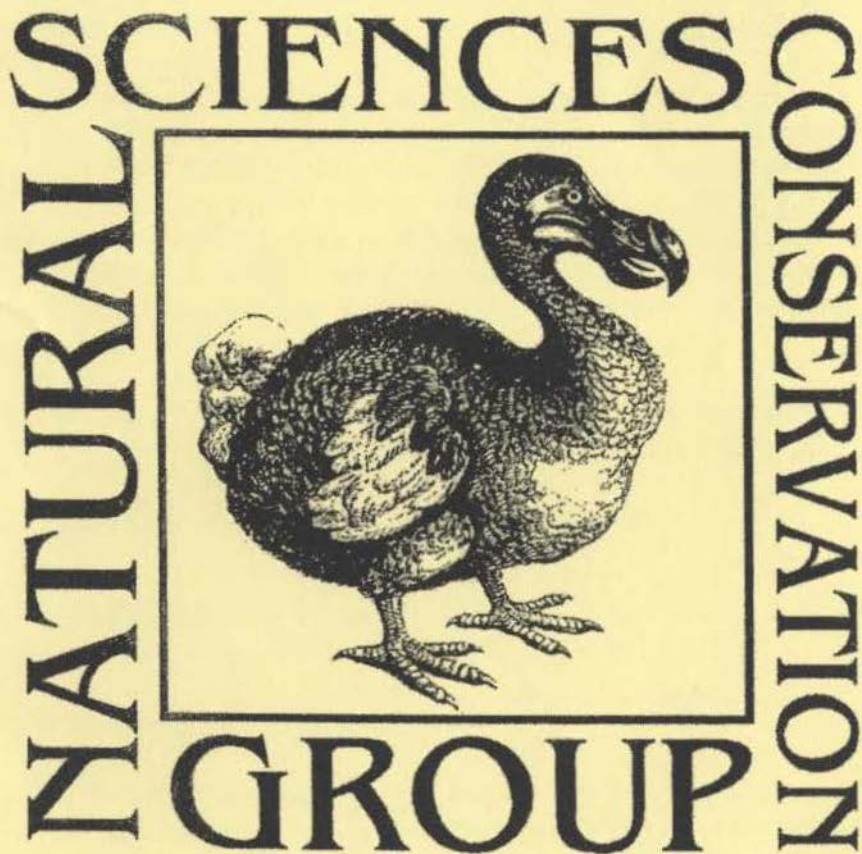


Natural Sciences
Conservation Group
Newsletter

Issue 11

May 1999

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*Insert: Ten Agents of Deterioration -
No.7 Light & UV'*

Editorial

Welcome to issue 11 of our newsletter.

This will be the last newsletter I will be producing here at Liverpool Museum (for the foreseeable future at least!). Last year NMGM was fortunate to be awarded a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will enable us to free up collection storage space back to its original gallery status which it was before WWII. The natural history collections will be housed in a new environmentally controlled storage area. As well as allowing greater access to the collections through the new exhibits, the scheme will provide better research facilities for visitors working on the reserve collections.

All this has meant that at the moment we are in the process of planning our move into temporary accommodation whilst building work is completed. As a result I will not have access to the facilities (or the time!) to process the newsletter. Due to this and my own imminent development plan (maternity leave commencing end of August), I will be standing down as Editor from the committee at our AGM. Many thanks to my colleagues at NMGM who assisted me over the last couple of years with NSCG related activities.

Please continue to let us know what's going on out there; what projects you're involved with, reviews of any courses you have recently attended.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue.

Any articles for inclusion in the next newsletter should be sent to Nick Gordon at: New Walk Museum, New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7EA.

Articles for next newsletter needed by **09.07.99**

NOTE: This is a temporary 'deposit' address for articles until the next Editor has been appointed at our AGM. Please watch this space for further information.

View from the Chair

Dear members, our AGM and Conference will be in Leicester on the 22nd and 23rd of June. The last time we met in Leicester was for the Risk Assessment Workshop in 1995. I hope the conference will be as well attended as the workshop.

By now you will have received the programme for the conference and a booking form, and I urge you all to attend. The lectures are of a high standard and cover a varied range of topics which will contain something of interest to all our members. (I am especially interested in the curry lecture at 7pm!).

Our AGM this year is especially important. Donna Young our Editor must unfortunately give up the editorship and we urgently need a replacement. I appeal to any members of the group who have the energy and enthusiasm to put themselves forward and help us in our hour of need. Donna has done splendid work over the last few years and I hope we can maintain her high standards. Please remember that the newsletter is only as good as its contributors, and we need you all to contribute.

We are to lose a number of committee members this year, and I'd like to thank Tracey Seddon and Kirsten Walker for their years of service. They will be missed. Tracey has been involved with the group from the start and helped organise our first Liverpool conference.

For the AGM and conference to be a success we need your support and attendance. Over the past year we have seen the membership of the group grow, and with threats to collections and posts becoming more prevalent, our group is needed more than ever.

Many of your colleagues will soon be receiving our new leaflet through the mail. The committee has put together a marvellous leaflet to advertise ourselves to the natural science world at large, and as a result we expect to increase our membership in the coming months.

The group, and especially Paul Brown and myself, have been active in the dreaded accreditation debate. Through our intervention we have been successful in supporting and progressing member's applications. I hope to see as many natural science conservators as possible applying for accreditation. This cannot but help to raise the profile of natural science conservation.

See you all in Leicester, and I hope you will all buy me a drink!

Bob Entwistle

Conservation Focus

News and Events from the Conservation World

Grants Available from the Museums & Galleries Commission

International Travel Grants

This scheme aims to promote longer-term contacts and mutual co-operation between UK and overseas museums and to enable museum and conservation professionals to maintain and develop their skills and knowledge.

Applicants should be permanent UK residents working in, or primarily for, museums or museum-related bodies. Eligible projects include study tours and attendance at museum and conservation-related conferences held outside the UK. Priority is given to projects which will establish longer-term partnerships with overseas museums and related organisations. Grants will not normally exceed £500 and 50% matching funding is normally required.

Application deadlines are 1 June, 1 September and 1 December 1999.

MGC Conservation Grants

The schemes under this heading are designed to encourage and promote high standards of conservation and collection care to the benefit of UK museums.

- a. **MGC Conservation Grants: Partnership Projects:** These grants support collaborative projects which pool resources and expertise to promote or develop conservation in the UK.

Eligible applicants are partnerships comprising conservation professionals in the public or independent sectors and/or Registered

museums and museum-related organisations based in the UK. At least one partner should normally be a museum or museum organisation. Each partner will be expected to offer something tangible to the partnership. Applicants who are eligible for support from the Scottish Conservation Bureau are expected to apply there in the first instance.

Eligible projects include initiatives aimed at promoting and advocating conservation; the enhancement of strategic provision of conservation services; research and development work; and other projects meeting the scheme's purpose which have the support of a number of partners. Remedial conservation of museum objects is not eligible for support.

Grants will usually be a proportion of the total actual project's costs, generally up to 50%. Projects costing less than £4,000 are not eligible for support. Application deadlines are 1 June and 1 December 1999.

- b. MGC Conservation Grants: Professional Development:** These grants enable conservation professionals to maintain and develop their skills and knowledge and students to broaden their experience of professional conservation practice. Grants are available under three headings.

1) Continuing Professional Development Grants

Eligible applicants are conservation professionals in the public or independent sector based in the UK. Applicants who are eligible for support from the Scottish Conservation Bureau are expected to apply there in the first instance. Grants are available towards attendance at relevant short training courses and conferences in the UK; distance learning; and work experience placements in the UK. Matching funding of at least 50% will normally be required. Projects costing less than £200 are not eligible for support.

Application deadlines are 1 June, 1 September and 1 December 1999.

2) Student Placement Grants

Eligible applicants are full-time primary conservation training courses in the UK that lead to a recognised qualification. Students are not eligible to apply for direct support. Grants are available to support students' work placements, attendance at conferences and other relevant involvement in professional activities. The application deadline is 1 June 1999.

Following a review of the MGC's grant schemes and a refocusing of its support for conservation, Continuing Professional Development and Student Placement grants will be withdrawn in 2000.

3) Conservation Internships

The MGC will also be offering four fully-funded one-year internships to students who will have completed the final year of a UK conservation course in 1998 or 1999. Details will be advertised via the training courses. For further information, contact the MGC Training Development Officer.

For further details contact:
Ruth Selman
Grants & Lottery Officer
Museums & Galleries Commission
16 Queen Anne's Gate
London, SW1H 9AA



Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material (PRISM) Fund

Administered by the Science Museum on behalf of the MGC, the PRISM Fund aims to further the preservation in the public domain of items or collections important for the history and development of technology and science in all their aspects.

Eligible Applicants include fully or provisionally Registered English and Welsh non-national museums and galleries, or charitable organisations engaged in the preservation of scientific, technological and industrial artefacts or monuments, even though they may not be eligible for Registration.

Eligible Projects include the purchase of any moveable object or group of objects illustrating history of any branch of technology or science (including natural history); the purchase of archives and manuscript material with a significant technological, scientific or industrial content (excluding books acquired for library or reference purposes); the conservation of material either on acquisition or from existing collections; and transport costs associated with purchase or conservation including, in certain circumstances, the dismantling and re-erection of structures of technological significance.

Grants Available are a maximum of 50% of the eligible costs for purchases and shall not usually exceed £20,000 on any one item. Up to 70% may be awarded for conservation projects. At least half of the remaining eligible costs must be raised locally.

Applications can be submitted at any time.

Contact the Manager, PRISM Grant Fund.
The Science Museum, South Kensington
London SW7 2DD
Tel: 0171 938 8005
Fax: 0171-938 9736 or e-mail:
prism.fund@nmsi.c.uk

Deodorising Skeletal Material

In issue 10 of the NSCG newsletter, Simon Moore commented on a method for deodorising skeletal material using perfume oil. This was a novel and adaptive solution for dealing with a smell problem with 'hands on' educational material. However before using such a method a couple of points need to be considered:

- The cause of the smell. In the case quoted, shark vertebrae, the cause of the smell is probably residual fish oils in the cartilage of the skeleton. These oils will constantly migrate out of the skeletal material for a long period of time. Removal of these oils, as far as is possible, will help reduce the smell. The rehydration step Simon used, a dilute solution of Decon 90, will aid in the removal of such oils, but care must be exercised in using Decon 90. This is a highly alkaline solution and prolonged immersion will promote hydrolysis and damage proteins. Lipids are also soluble in alcohol, and a prolonged alcohol storage step may also aid in the removal of excess oil.
- Perfume oils contain volatile organic compounds, and thus their long-term effects need to be considered.

Whilst I have no answer to Simons particular problem with the shark vertebrae, removal of the oils as much as possible should help. For use with such 'hands on' specimens it may also be worth considering impregnating with a consolidant such as primal or PVA.

As a slight aside, and not as an answer to nasty niffs in the skeletal store, there is an effective odour neutraliser available from Neutron Industries (0800 393948). This is NI-712 and can be used as a pump spray or by pouring the fluid into granule dispensers for long term effect. However this is a citrus oil terpene and hence has a volatile component. Thus it cannot be recommended for use in collection storage situations.

*Julian Carter
Zoological Conservation Officer
National Museum and Gallery of Wales*

Additional Note regarding deodorising smelly bones/specimens:

Taxidermists with smelly specimen problems routinely use a product called Malogon, purchased as a concentrate. It has a lemon-lime smell and is water soluble. Fish to be mounted can be pre-soaked overnight. Available in half litre bottles (£9.95) from EYIdentity products (Wales), Tel: 01686 622675 Fax: 01686 622921.




New SPNHC Leaflets

Like ourselves (see 'View from the Chair'), the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections have brought out a new and more colourful leaflet. One contains information about SPNHC along with brochures and membership applications and the other promotes their two storage publications.

If your institution is hosting a meeting in the future and are willing to display the leaflets please contact Lisa Palmer (Treasurer) on palmer.lisa@nmnh.si.edu or Ann Pinzl (see below) to arrange a bulk delivery.

If you would like to know about joining this society you can contact Ann Pinzl (Membership Committee Co-chair) by email on apinzl@iahonton.clan.lib.nv.us



The Ten Agents of Deterioration

An issue by issue guide to the risks facing museum collections



7. Light & UV

UV filter film generally has a limited effective life, so therefore should be checked regularly with a hand-held UV meter and replaced when necessary. The actual specimens themselves should be regularly checked for signs of damage, as it is the cumulative effect of light rather than brightness which ultimately leads to a specimen's deterioration. A photograph taken prior to display could be used as a comparison.

The recommended maximum illuminance for the limitation of light damage is 50 lux for the exposure of botanical, entomological specimens, fur and feathers (*MGC Standards*). For un-dyed organic material such as leather, horn, bone, and wood, a higher level of 200 lux is acceptable. The maximum UV radiation limit for all biological specimens is 75µW/lumen.

Lighting within a case or gallery can be an intensive source of heat and reduce relative humidity. Exposure therefore should be monitored at different times during the day. Ventilation needs to be provided to dissipate any excess heat. It may not be the actual specimen that is directly affected by the heat but the means of mount/display method. At Liverpool we had an incident where the delicate petals of a herbarium specimen, which was adhered to its mount fragmented. This was most likely due to the contraction and expansion of the adhesive used.

If the lighting is within the case, ideally a cold source of light should be used, e.g. fibre optics or fluorescent tubes with the motor outside the case. Alternatively, keep the lighting outside the case altogether.

Rates of chemical degradation of organic material will also be increased with temperature. Light radiation, UV in particular, speeds up this degradation by photo-oxidation. Substances can be more or less susceptible to this type of damage depending on which parts of the spectrum they absorb or reflect. For example, materials that appear red to us will absorb mainly in the blue end of the spectrum (shorter wavelength; more damaging). Therefore, red materials are often weaker than the same materials which are coloured blue.

*Donna Young
Liverpool Museum*

Courses and Meetings

Handling the Past

29 June 1999 Public Records Office, Kew

The Public records Office is holding a one day forum for a limited number of participants to discuss issues relating to the training of staff in the proper handling and care of archival and library material. It will be aimed specifically at non-specialist staff. The forum will take place at the Public Record Office, Kew. The fee for the day will be £30.00.

For further information and to reserve a place, please contact:

Sue Seber, Preservation Services
PRO, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU
Tel: 0181 876 3444 ext 2440
Fax: 0181 392 5254
E-mail: preservation@pro.gov.uk

Reversibility – Does It Exist?

8 – 10 September 1999

London

The British Museum Department of Conservation, will hold a three-day conference from 8-10 September 1999 in London.

The concept of reversibility as applied to cleaning, stabilisation, consolidation, assembly, and restoration will be addressed, as will changes to the physical or chemical properties of objects as a result of conservation. The conference will be confined to the portable heritage, excluding buildings but including mosaics and wall paintings.

For further information and registration pack please contact:

Sara Carroll, Department of Conservation
The British Museum
Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3DG
Fax: 0171 323 8636
E-mail: conservation@british-museum.ac.uk

Herbarium Techniques and Management

University of Birmingham, School of Biological Sciences
Tutor: Richard Lester, BSc PhD Lecturer in Plant Taxonomy.

An introduction into the role and significance of herbaria and the practical skills required for the collection, preservation and management of herbarium specimens. This course is aimed at people with an interest in plant collections and will be particularly relevant to National Collection holders and botanists.

This course will be offered on two occasions over three Saturdays and will look at:-

- The history and role of herbaria.
- The practical skills required in collecting, preserving and maintaining plant specimens.
- The principles of herbarium management.
- The legislation relevant to the collection, use and exchange of herbaria specimens.

The course is taught in the School of Biological Sciences, near to the University Station, and students will have the opportunity to study the nationally important University of Birmingham Herbarium.

Saturdays 10.00 – 4.00pm, 9, 16, 23 October 1999
Fee: £50 for three days (£45). Please bring a packed lunch.
Code: Q/98N/001/SB

Advance enrolment, with fee, is essential. For further details please contact:

Pat Smith, Director of the Botanic Gardens,
School of Continuing Studies
58 Edgbaston Park Road
Birmingham B15 2TT
Telephone: 0121 414 4944

Teaching Skills for Conservation

5 – 10 September 1999 West Dean College Chichester

Part of West Dean College's Professional Conservators in Practice programme.

Course Leader: Robert Ferguson, Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of London Institute of Education, has considerable experience in the design and presentation of courses for teachers of conservation, including the Getty-MGC course, Conservation Teaching Excellence in 1990.

Participants will have the opportunity to review their existing teaching skills, and to acquire new ones. They will identify conservation contexts where a traditional lecture might be required and others which call for an objectives-based approach. They will examine a range of teaching formats, with an emphasis on developing trainees' practical skills; and will learn to write objectives, and plan courses and presentations. The course will be participatory throughout in a spirit of mutual support and learning.

Closing date for applications 25 June 1999

A Limited number of Bursaries are available.

For further details and an application form please contact:

Lis Vinson, West Dean College, West Dean
Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ
Tel: 01243 818277
Fax: 01243 811343
E-mail: lvinson@pavilion.co.uk

Archaeological Sciences 99

The next meeting will be held on 20-22 September 1999 by Bristol Archaeological Sciences Research Group at the University of Bristol.

Call for Papers: Papers and posters are invited on any science-based archaeological topic, and in particular on the following multidisciplinary themes:

- Early technology and materials
- Post deposition processes
- Landscape and site reconstruction
- Palaeo agriculture and economy: regional trends
- Skeletal biology: markers of health and status in past populations

Please reply to:

Ticca Ogilvie/Fiona Macalister, City Museum and Art Gallery,
Queen's Road, Bristol, BS8 1RL
Tel: 0117 922 3612 / 922 3607
Fax: 0117 922 3616
Email: general-museum@bristol-city.gov.uk.

Professional Conservators in Practice

Oct 1998 – Sept 1999

West Dean College

The new programme aims to give mid-career conservators, or recently graduated conservator-restorers the opportunity to find specialist training in specific aspects of their profession, or to refresh their skills and knowledge of new developments in materials and techniques.

Human Remains: Conservation, Retrieval and Analysis

7-11 November 1999

Williamsburg, VA, USA

This conference is being organized by the Departments of Conservation and Archaeology at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Conservators, archaeologists, curators, bioarchaeologist and physical anthropologist have been invited to submit abstracts on such specific topics as field techniques, ethics, display issues, legal issues, current research and scientific analysis, new techniques/technologies and specific case studies.

Each of the disciplines invited to the conference, approaches human remains from a different point and often at a different time from the others-at times the techniques used by one discipline may impede the work of another.

The aim of the conference is to serve as a forum for discussion between the various professions and to foster interdisciplinary understanding on matters relating to the need for standardization and the potential for developing policies and procedure relating to the removal, documentation and storage of human remains.

For further information:

program – Emily Williams

Department of conservation – BHW

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

PO Box 1776

Williamsburg

Tel. (757) 220 7079

E-mail: ewilliams@cwf.org;

general – Deb Chapman Tel. (800) 603-0948 or

(757) 220-7182, E-mail: dchapman@cwf.org

New Publication

Mount-Making for Museum Objects

By Robert Barclay, Andre Bergeron, and Carole Dignard, with illustrations by Carl Schlichting

v + 57pp. Published by: Canadian Conservation Institute, Ottawa, Canada.

Price approx. £ 26

ISBN 0-660-17531-2

This publication is what it says it is and exactly what one would expect; it is intended for the relatively new mount-maker. The book's strengths lie in the fact that it stresses the use of different materials in good detail and is very good at stressing the conservation requirements of the specimen during mount making; and it is a good reference guide for the relative beginner. The book defines the importance of using conservation grade materials, using established techniques.

The diagrams are useful and informative and the book as a whole is a really good reference book though not a particularly good read. The book is simple in style, but there is no mention of potential problems or Health and Safety considerations.

Based on workshop experience of mount-making for artifacts the book stresses important conservation principles, with a strong emphasis on preventive conservation. The different materials used for mounting objects are discussed in full, including padding and cushioning used, finishing materials and adhesives, for example the use and application of cross-linked polyethylene foam in the mounting of a violin was described in extensive detail. The methods used for measuring objects for mounts is covered in detail.

The photographs are somewhat dreary and uninteresting (some are even out of focus) and could do with being livened up a bit; in particular, colour

photographs and diagrams would be more useful and interesting aesthetically. The book includes a useful bibliography and an appendix of tools and equipment.

The book is a little limited in the variety and size of objects covered, and in the absence of reference to natural history objects highlights a need for such work to be covered elsewhere. Despite this I think the book would be useful to natural history mount makers.

Overall the book is a good general introduction to the theory and practice of mount making and it is a good reference guide; the book would be particularly useful for relatively new mount makers.

*D.R. Gray
The Natural History Museum*



Accreditation

Simon Moore sits as the Group's representative on the UKIC committee dealing with accreditation for conservators. For those of you involved with natural sciences who have applied, Simon is available to assist and give guidance with the application. He has noted that there are one or two innocent looking pitfalls in the 'sponsor' section tickboxes which **must** be filled in. Simon is willing to advise on suitability of sponsors. He can be contacted at the address shown on the last page.

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