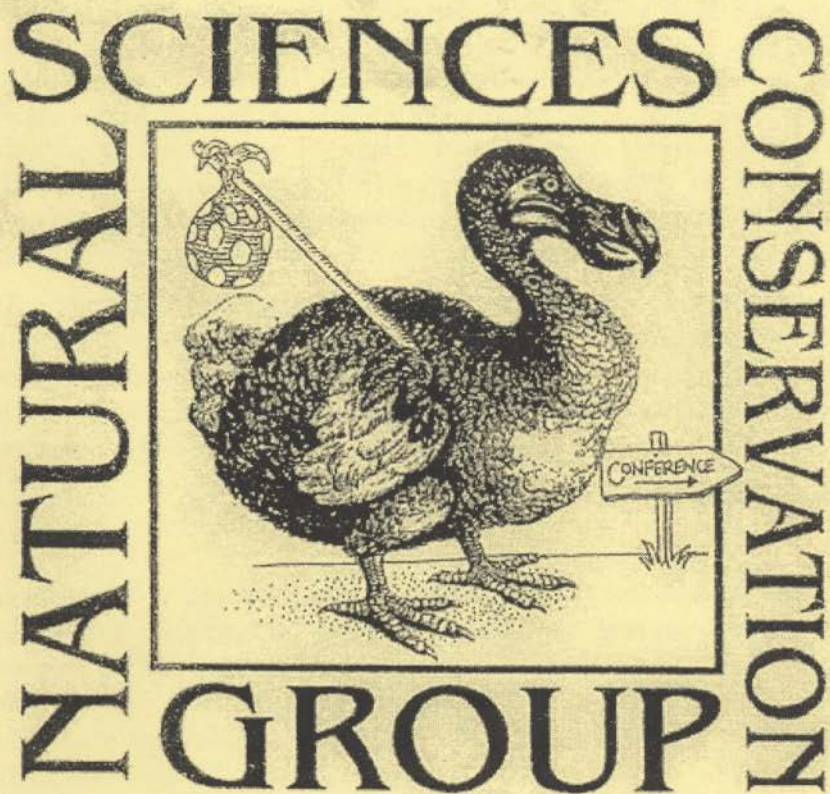


Natural Sciences  
Conservation Group  
**Newsletter**

Issue 7

Jan. 1998



Also in this issue: *News & events from the Conservation World*

## Editorial

Welcome to Issue 7 of our newsletter. As briefly mentioned in the last edition I have now taken over the editorial of this publication. Many thanks to Simon for his assistance in the last edition and also many thanks to all those who contributed, especially to the 'Flood' episode in the Ten Agents of Deterioration series. This is an extremely interesting feature and has attracted much attention.

You may have noticed the front cover depicts a 'travelling Dodo'. Some of our members who have been fortunate enough to travel (near and far) to conferences relating to natural history/conservation have reported back. I think this would be an interesting regular theme for our end of year issue, so please make notes next time you're away! This is a great way of communicating and exchanging new information, ideas, techniques. Many of those who attend these meetings have to write reports for governing bodies or organisations who provide grants. These reports could also be published here, remember a condition of many grant applications is the guarantee of communicating new found knowledge!

As I'm on the old 'appeal for articles' spiel, may I remind members that the success of this publication relies upon its members contribution. This newsletter is not only a vehicle for the publication of papers, it can also be used to facilitate interaction and conversation. Many thanks to those have contributed to this issue.

*Donna Hughes*

Any articles for inclusion in the newsletter should be sent to Donna at:  
The Botany Department, Liverpool Museum, William Brown St,  
Liverpool, L3 8EN.

E.mail: donna@nmgmnhc.demon.co.uk

If on disc or by attached e.mail file: in Word 6 or 7 format. Please also include hardcopy.

Articles for next newsletter needed by **16.04.98**

## View from the Chair

Firstly, may I wish all our members a happy and successful 1998 and looking forward, I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend our next AGM and meeting, in April. The theme will be storage, the venue The Conservation Centre, Liverpool, the organisers, Tracey Seddon and Donna Hughes. If you are in the process of a lottery bid, an area service grant aided project or an on-going exercise to improve or upgrade storage for natural history collections, start writing your paper or poster now and let us know about it.

Another important reason for attending the meeting is to vote on a new constitution. The committee have decided to try to gain charitable status for the group, largely in order to retrieve funds from UKIC held in the name of the old Natural Sciences Section. These funds can only be transferred to another charity with similar aims and therefor currently remain in limbo. We are working hard to read (and understand) the mass of information supplied by the Charity Commissioners and to extract the necessary bits, all being well, the committee should be able to approve a draft constitution and application soon which we will send to the Chanty Commission for comments before presenting it to you the membership.

The committee has also set up two working groups. Following discussion at last year's AGM one group has met to discuss the future direction of our organisation, Kirsten Walker (chair) reports on results in this issue. A second group is going to look into training in natural science conservation. Changes at MTI and moves to accredit conservators can only benefit from natural science input if we discuss and put forward suggestions. No-one else is likely to fight the natural science cause on our behalf, or at least to our satisfaction.

On the training front, one benefit of our corporate membership of the Conservation Forum is that we receive a block allocation of MGC training grant for our members to attend conferences. Conferences are only eligible if they are put into an annual forward plan, being drawn up early in 1998, our AGM and April Storage meeting will be on the list. If members are organising other meetings, for example on pest control, please let us know, grants can't be awarded to meetings not on the list. Applications for grant aid should be made to our committee who will then

allocate money on a first come first service basis. Sums are not enormous, but should cover several members attending the April AGM free of charge, or if we receive lots of applications, at significantly reduced cost.

The "Ten agents of deterioration" pull out and keep section of our newsletter has received a great deal of interest and praise, please keep the contributions coming. We are considering looking into publishing the articles, with up-to-date additions, once the series is complete, so if you suffered a flood last week, its not too late to write it up.

Finally, I will be stepping down as chair in a few weeks time, a month or two short of the end of my term of office. This is in order to hand over the reins before a rather noticeable bulge turns into a baby. I would like to thank all those committee members, past and present, who have served with me over the years, particularly the officers who have assisted me during my term as chair. I am very proud of the collective efforts that turned an idea at the 1992 conference in Madrid into an active group of over 80 members. Lets keep the momentum going.

*Kate Andrew*





## NSCG Conference and AGM 1998

13-14th May

### CALL FOR PAPERS

This year our conference will be held at The Conservation Centre in Liverpool. The general theme of the meeting will be STORAGE. On the Wednesday afternoon there will be tours of the Centre's studios. Thursday will be the AGM, conference and trade fair.

If you would be willing to present a paper or poster please reply to Tracey Seddon using the insert slip provided. Also use this slip if you are interested in attending the conference. This is not a booking form but an indication of attendance and will assist in the organisation. The approximate cost will be £15 for members and £10 for non-members (*this has yet to be confirmed*).

Further information, confirmation of cost and a booking form will be forwarded to interested parties at a later date.

## Résumé from the Conservation Forum Insurance Seminar

29th September, 1997.

Conservation insurance is a constant but necessary financial headache for those of us who do freelance work. Public and object liability are still relatively inexpensive provided the insurers understand the nature of the objects and what they are actually covering. Understanding is lowest of the pile where natural sciences are concerned! Ask an art insurer about the value of a Stubbs - no problem, ask them about a *Tyrannosaurus* skull and they could probably manage, but the 'erm factor' increases dramatically when you come to a collection of spirit-preserved Jellyfish from the *Southern Cross* expedition. It is vital to have an insurance agent and underwriter who understand the nature and value of natural science objects or you will be quoted a 'ball-park' figure. This will be low to middle value and may range (for public liability) from about £200 p. a. to £700 or £800! Shopping around is important and you should always get the insurer to explain in plain English what is covered, rather than having to plough

through reams of Jargon in the small print.

Most employers insist on public liability in case a client damages themselves whilst in your studio or you accidentally damage the fabric of a building in which you are working. There are 5 basic risks:

- 1 loss/destruction
- 2 accidental damage (also during transport)
- 3 damage during conservation
- 4 damage to building or objects *In situ*
- 5 death or injury of third party

Another factor is the type of loss - total, diminution of value following damage/ repair and cost of repair. Remember that the loss of, or damage to, a valuable object can wipe out your business if you don't have insurance or have the wrong kind!

Public indemnity covers any lack of competence/ experience in your work and is useful but is expensive and not worthwhile unless you're repairing dinosaur skeletons or stuffed great auks. Giving wrong advice, however, can make you liable for compensation.

Some sort of personal insurance - against loss of sight, hands, brain

function (!! ) is also available and not too expensive. You have an accident which prevents you from working, this insurance will cover your loss of earnings.

Spike Milligan once wrote "Insurance is the white man's burden", some say that you can't have enough - if you can afford it. This can put your conservatorial fees up to an unrealistic level, although some clients are happier paying more if you are well covered. My personal approach is to have some insurance but also put some of the risk onto the client. If you are working with low value objects explain and agree, and get down on paper any exclusions which may apply with intending clients. Don't be unreasonable with your exclusion clauses, however, or you may come up against the 1977 Contract Terms Act!

Although one person had faced litigation whilst employed as an objects conservator, one final and thought-provoking question came from Bob Child, "Has any conservation litigation (especially relating to natural sciences) occurred yet?" As far as the meeting was concerned the answer was "no"!

*Simon Moore  
Hampshire County Museums*



## Courses & Meetings

The YNMC (Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council) . **Environmental Analysis and Energy Efficiency.** How to get the most out of environmental monitoring systems. At Yorkshire Museum, York, 18th February. For details Tel: Jane Walton 0113 263 8909.

The Biology Curators Group are holding a one day meeting **Entomology for Non-Entomologists: care of collections** on the 24th of February. For information contact Steve Hewitt, Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 8TP. Tel: 01228 34781.

The Museums Association are holding a one day seminar on **The Museum Environment**, focusing on techniques for establishing priorities for controlling and managing the museum environment. 25th February, Royal Horticultural Halls. For information Tel: Sue Robinson 0171 250 1836.

The Society of Archivists: **Focus on Conservation.** Basic information about archive conservation, environment, packaging, photographs, modern media, and the role of the national preservation office. Held in York, 5th March. Plus **Conservation Week of Lectures:** A full programme covering all aspects of archive conservation. Held in Oxford, 30th March - 3rd April. For details of both events contact Susan Bradshaw Tel: 01872 273440.

**Insect Pests in Museums.** 17th-18th March, Natural History Museum, London. A two day course covering topics including pests and damage, pest identification, pest environments, pest monitoring and pest management. For further details contact: Phil Ackery, Department of Entomology, NHM. Tel: 0171 938 8903, Fax: 0171 938 8937, Email: p.ackery@nhm.ac.uk

UKIC meeting **The Conservation of Objects Hazardous to Health.** 25th March, Science Museum. Aimed to raise awareness of such objects, looking at specific hazards, and options for their safe management. For details contact: Francis Bodie, Conservation Department, Museum of London, London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN. Tel: 0171 600 3699 x246, Fax: 0171 600 1058. e.mail: fbrodie@museum-london.org.uk

National Physical Laboratory **International Symposium on Humidity and Moisture** 6th - 8th April. The meeting will review current technology, explore active research developments and speculate on future needs and directions. For details contact: Tracey Collier, National Physical Laboratory, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 0LW, Tel: 0181 943 6121, Fax: 0181 943 2945 e.mail: dra@newton.npl.co.uk

The Biology Curators Group: **Wildlife Collections and the Law**, 30th April - 2nd May. The meeting (inc.AGM) looks at how the law applies to the care and use of biology collections and associated material. Venue: Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. For details contact Steve Thompson, Scunthorpe Museum Tel: 01724 843533.

The Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration: **The Impact of Location on Conservation Treatments.** 5th - 6th May, University of Dundee. For information contact: SSCR, Tel: 0131 556 8414, Fax: 0131 557 5977, Email: admin@sscr.demon.co.uk

The Society of Archivists and The Institute of Paper Conservation: **Care of Photographic, Moving Image and Sound Collections.** 20th - 24th July. Booking and registration details from: IPC, Leigh Lodge, Leigh, Worcestershire, WR6 5LB.

UKIC Archaeology Section **The Next Generation**, 12th September, Cardiff. The meeting will discuss issues affecting the future of conservation, including training and accreditation, priorities of funding and effectiveness of research. For further information contact: Susanne Ryder, Institute of Archaeology. Tel: 0171 387 7050 x2298. Email: s.ryder@ucl.ac.uk

**3rd Conservation Infra-red Users Group meeting.** 28th-30th May, Winterthur Museum, Deleware, U.S.A. meeting for those who apply infra-red spectroscopy to conservation and historic preservation questions. For further details contact: Janice Carlson, Conservation Division, Winterthur Museum, Tel: 001 302 888 4732, Fax: 001 302 888 4838, Email: jcarlson@brahms.udel.edu

The theme of The American Institute for Conservation's AGM this year is **Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.** 9-15th June, Arlington, Virginia. For further details contact AIC, 1717 K St NW, Ste 301, Washington DC 20006, U.S.A. Fax: 001 202 452 9328.

The conservators of Ethnographic Artefacts Group are hosting a one day seminar entitled **Conservators, Curators, Collaborators Seminar.** May, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. For further details contact: Rowena Hill, School of Conservation Sciences, Bouremouth University, Tel: 01202 595 267, Fax: 01202 595 255.

**Science Refresher: Plastic or Elastic?** Camberwell College of Arts. 16-17th July 98. Fee: £150. This course provides an introduction to the mechanical behavior of organic materials particularly textiles, paper products, plant materials and adhesives. For further details and booking forms please contact: Camberwell & Chelsea Short Course Unit, Camberwell College of Arts, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UF. Tel: 0181 514 6311. Fax 0181 514 6315



## CALL FOR PAPERS

### Reversibility - Does it Exist?

The British Museum Department of Conservation hold a three day conference on this theme, from the 8-10th September 1999 in London. Abstracts are solicited on the theme of reversibility as applied to cleaning, stabilisation, consolidation, assembly and restoration. Changes to the physical or chemical properties of objects as a result of conservation are also relevant.

Papers should explore themes and question current philosophy or accepted dogma, and should not shrink from controversy when relevant. Successful authors will be notified in May 1998. Completed text with all illustrations must be received by 31st January 1999. (NB. Submission of an abstract is acceptance of this timescale).

Abstracts by the 31st March 1998 to:

Sara Carroll,  
Department of Conservation,  
The British Museum,  
Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3DG  
Fax: 0171 323 8636,

## Braving The Elements

Conserving plant-fibre from around the world

An exhibition at The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. *Opened November 1997*

Braving The Elements, the new special exhibition at the Pitt Rivers Museum, answers these questions by bringing together fascinating and ingenious garments from around the world to show a wide selection of clothing specially designed to beat the weather. The garments are made from barely modified plant fibre and many have never been on public display before. The garments range from an enormous Portuguese riding cape, measuring 8' x 9', to sunhats, snow goggles and over-shoes. A shaggy rain cape from the Naga Hills in Assam is shown alongside a photograph of it being worn by its original owner. Another coat made from the spathe of the palm *Trachycarpus fortunei*, was recommended by Robert Fortune in 1847 as providing excellent protection from wind and rain, despite its 'comical' appearance.

These garments are now in need of protection if they are to be preserved for the future. The exhibition will explain the dangers posed to these objects by light, heat and moisture, the very elements they were designed to protect against.

The nature of decay, both in the natural and made world, will be explored through a series of hands-on items that visitors will be encouraged to investigate for themselves.

Key concepts in museum conservation work will be explained, with a short video providing information on the background to the exhibition, including some of the work carried out on the objects on display.

An education programme of events and trails for school visits, in association with Oxford Botanic Garden, has been arranged. In addition there will be meetings and visits arranged for interested museum professionals. The theme of Museums Week 1998 is to be 'Conservation', and the Museum aims to include the exhibition in a larger programme of conservation events being organised in and around Oxford. The exhibition will run for approximately one year.

For more information contact the Museum on 01865 270927

It is also possible to contact the Conservation Department on 01865 270941

# Travelling Dodos

## Conference & Meeting's Reports

### Visit to Canada 25 May - 9 June

#### Introduction

I was fortunate to undertake an internship at the Canadian Museum of Nature under Rob Waller in 1991, I have been back to Canada since for the SPNHC meeting in Toronto, but this was my first working return visit to the Ottawa.

During a two week visit in late May and early June, I was able to plan a busy programme. I participated in the Canadian Association of Conservators (CAC) conference, I visited three newly completed collection storage and conservation facilities, I completed a draft version of a paper on pollutant monitoring with co-authors Robert Waller and Jean Ttreault and I discussed in detail the design of the new Canadian Museum of Nature collections building and moving-in process. The visit to Montreal enabled me to visit the Redpath Museum, a smaller scale natural history museum.

I also managed to see Lost Worlds, (Jurassic Park II) almost two

months before it was released in the UK. This helped in the planning stage for a children's holiday session - we were able to design masks of the correct dinosaurs for participants to colour and take away.

#### The CAC conference

The conference was attended by a total of 142 delegates, mainly from Canada, a few from the USA and two from the UK. The meeting was held at the Canadian Museum of Nature "Victoria Memorial Building", the building in the centre of Ottawa that houses the displays. The meeting was refreshingly multi-disciplinary, with papers, posters and delegates coming from all subject disciplines. Coffee breaks and tours provided the best opportunities for meeting and talking to other delegates.

The conference commenced with the Per Guildbeck Memorial lecture, this year given by Bob Barclay of the Canadian Conservation Institute. He covered conservator's problems with divisions in rank, specialist

language, and image and ended by asking a plea for the re-enfranchisement of the term "restoration". This thought provoking lecture was followed by a very valuable series of talks on new building projects, in particular the design, moving the collection and human element at CMN. It is perhaps the human element that in our own project has received the least formal attention so far and so this presentation, combined with the chance to talk to Sylvie Marcil whilst at CMN provided some useful guidance on pitfalls to avoid. Barbara Njie's talk on the move and the chance to tour the CMN building with her reinforced the benefit of our policy of packaging and storage materials upgrades prior to the move. This saves both time and money on inserting and removing temporary packaging, but further work is required at Ludlow to reach a safe moving standard.

Practical talks of note included the review of corrosion products on bronzes by Lyndsie Selwyn, and the overview of laser cleaning in conservation by Carole Dignard, this was backed up by a comprehensive poster complete with samples. The talk on the Canadian Co-operative permanent paper project presented the very interesting interim result that other than

a slight loss of brightness, alkaline buffered lignin containing papers performed as well as lignin-free papers and in fact slightly better polluted atmospheres in long term ageing tests. This result has significant cost saving benefits in the designation of a permanent paper for government records.

The financial climate in Canada has changed dramatically since my 1991 internship. In 1991, funds appeared to be almost limitless in all government run institutions, in 1997, government institutions have cut back drastically on staff and are looking at cost-recovery from external clients and alternative ways of raising funds. This in turn has caused some conflict where large, well equipped government funded labs have tendered for projects normally taken by conservators in private practice. One session was devoted to talks exploring problems and policy in this area.

The final day of the conference contained a series of talks about actual conservation projects, many of which were large scale and/or carried out in field situations. My paper on the Conservation of the Whitby Saurians came into this category and was very well received. Interestingly, at least



three of the Canadian members of the audience had visited Whitby Museum and knew the specimens. The talk by two private conservators on ethics and costs of conserving (in situ) a Japanese Buddhist altar to a state in which it could be used daily raised some interesting points on compromises between full conservation and a workable and affordable project. The final session of the meeting included a talk on the development of a training course in preventative conservation, using a combination of risk-assessment workshop, a workbook and NVQ-style work place assessment. It that a similar model could be usefully developed in the UK as part of attaining NVQ at around levels 3 to 4 in conservation.

#### Facilities visited

I was able to tour three new buildings in the region, the CMN Aylmer building the Parks Canada building and the National Archives of Canada building. I o paid a return visit to the Canadian Conservation Institute, CCI, which has n a re-arrangement of labs and offices since 1991.

All three buildings were new since my internship in 1991, although surveying, sign brainstorming and staff training for the move to a new

CMN building was fairly well advanced in-house by 1991 and the initial design for the Parks build had been worked up in the mid 1980s.

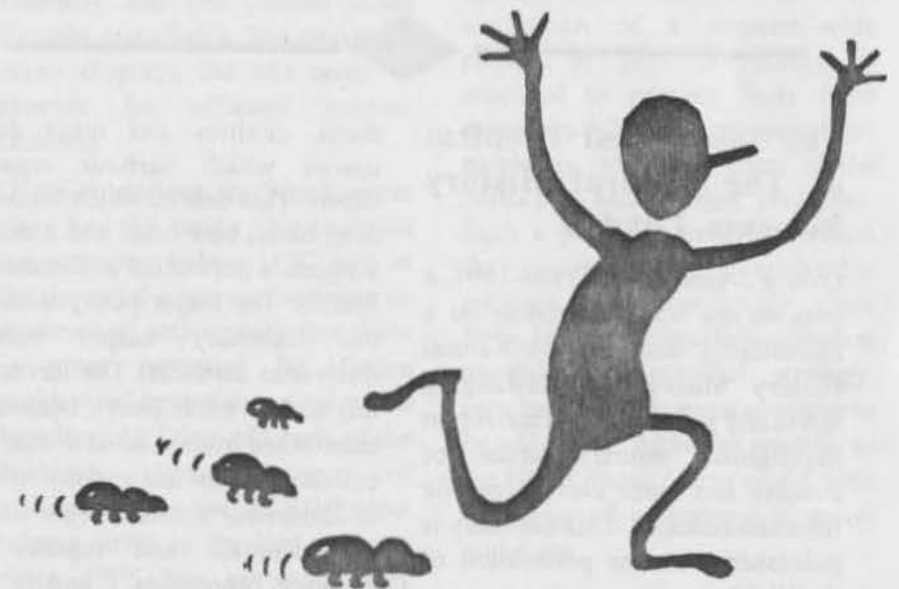
The three buildings provided quite a contrast. The National Archives building as a very architect led, innovative and striking design; a glass sided building with a huge curved roof (like a railway station) with an inner five storey building, three stories of concrete "bunker" containing the collection vaults, an office suite on top and then an "oil rig" platform above open to the outer roof containing the conservation and record copying suites. The airy feel and panoramic views from the conservation platform had a similar ambience to a roof garden.

The Parks Canada building was a modification of an existing standard two storey office building with architectural embellishments to the entrance hall area a the exterior of the building. This building houses conservation and research labs the library and administration.

The CMN building was a new build using standard building materials and methods yet it achieved an interesting appearance and functional layout. The building

# The Ten Agents of Deterioration

An issue by issue guide to the risks facing museum collections



## 3. Pests

**Newton, J et al**

Controlled atmosphere treatment of textile pests in antique curtains using nitrogen hypoxia - a case study. Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Insect Pests in the Urban Environment, Edinburgh, 1996.

**Peacock, E R**

Adults and Larvae of Hide, Larder and Carpet Beetles and their Relatives (Coleoptera: Dermestidae) and of Derontid Beetles (Coleoptera: Derontidae), Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects Vol 5 (3), W. R. Dolling and R. R. Askew (eds), Royal Entomological Society of London, 1993.

**Pinniger, D B**

Insect Control with the Thermo Lignum Treatment, Conservation News, 59, 1996.

**Pinniger, D B**

Insect Pests in Museums, Archetype Press, London, 1994.

**Reierson, D A et al**

Enhancing the effectiveness of modified atmospheres to control insect pests in museums. Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Insect Pests in the Urban Environment, Edinburgh, 1996.

**Rust, M K et al**

The feasibility of using modified atmospheres to control insect pests in museums. *Restaurator*, 17 (1), 43-60, 1996.

**Seddon, T M**

Pest Control: 'Vapona' Approval & CO2 Fumigation, *Conservation News*, July 1993, 15-16.

**Seddon, T M**

Dichlorvos Approval. In: Pest Attack and Pest Control in Organic Materials, Postprints of the UKIC Furniture Section conference, London, 1996, 43.

**Seddon, T M**

The Big Chill. In: Pest Attack and Pest Control in Organic Materials, Postprints of the UKIC Furniture Section conference, London, 1996, 44-45.

**Strang, T J K**

A review of published temperatures for the control of insect pests in museums. *Collection Forum* 8 (2) 1992, Canada.

**Zyberman, Lynda A and J R Schrock**

A Guide to Museum Pest Control, Association of Systematics Collections, 730 11th Street NW, Washington DC 20001-4584, USA, 1988.

*Tracey Seddon  
The Conservation Centre  
NMG*

houses the library, research and collections and administrative staff, conservation, preparation and research laboratories and the National Natural History Collections.

Funding regimes were also very different, both the Parks and Archives building ere briefed and equipped from a wish-list and much to the surprise of Parks staff, the wishes were largely granted. The Parks building internal arrangements re designed by individual lab teams with certain specialist pieces of equipment re-used, but new benching, whereas the Archives building seemed to be design to one concept and seemed to be all new. The CMN building was equipped from an entirely different stand - that of re-using as much as possible existing equipment and furniture (including items such as fume cupboards and elephant trunking but upgrading to a standard range of new storage furniture based on good quality units already in use in many of the collection areas. The upgrades and re-packing of specimens into good quality specimen containers as part of the move preparation resulted in a huge saving on temporary packing materials and time, unpacking once moved in was largely unnecessary because of

these upgrades.

Problems with the building on moving in were very different. At the National chives, the uncompromising design of unfinished concrete in the storage vault has led to retrospective sealing and in one case painting inside the vaults; corridors remain unsealed and rather dusty. A last-minute modification to the design of the fine art vault had to be made at the concrete pouring stage when it s realised that the ceiling height would not be high enough for large pictures.

The building seemed to incorporate a huge amount of expansion space, however, collecting policies include all Canadian broadcasting, government paperwork an so the rate of accrual of material must be high. The conservation suite was breathtaking - it resembled a show room packed with the most modern equipment rather than a working space, however the conference tour did take place a few days fore the official opening and staff were clearly preparing for this event.

At the Parks building, problems arose due existing structures within the building, such as pillars and a rusting floor, but modifications to improve spaces we made as building progressed. Flow and movement of

objects through the building seemed to be well thought out, with labs for heavy and large items close to the loading bay on the ground floor. UV filtering was not installed on windows and various problems were encountered with ceiling heights. The most noticeable factor within the building is that it was designed with mid 1980s staffing levels in mind, these had been dramatically reduced in recent years and so labs were very spacious.

With the CMN building, it was decided that seismic strengthening was required after room layouts had been designed. This led to problems with locations of a few doors and also interfered with the smooth running of some areas of mobile rking. These problems have now been rectified. During my visit, fine tuning o the four climatic zones on the HVAC system was being carried out with conservation and building management staff working together. Collections are housed in appropriate zone, but cabinets have doors to allow further buffering ( and al w for microclimate generation if required) rather than trying to create very tight RH and temperature levels. The outer lm corridor all around the collection pod provides further buffering from climatic extremes and so reduces HVAC running costs further.

Corridors, doors sizes and routes for objects through the building seemed very well thought out. The last of the collections moved in only about two months ago, so sorting out is still in progress.

I was able to pay a short visit to the Canadian Conservation Institute. Since my 1991 internship, staff numbers have also been reduced. The building was in he process of being re-organised with office spaces being separated from laboratory areas. The organisation structure has also changed, with EDR section now called preventive conservation. Funding is such that CCI services, such as photocopying papers in the library, are now being charged for.

My visits in the Montreal area included the Redpath Museum, the Rutherford Museum and a Parks Canada site at Fort Lennox. The Redpath Museum is an historic University Museum, built in a traditional style with display cases and layout similar to that of the Sedgwick Museum in Cambridge. I was able to return a selection of important specimens to the curator of palaeontology that had been outstanding- loans to researchers in the UK and advise on treatment of an ichthyosaur originally from Somerset). The displays are open

to the public and are popular (particularly the fossil reptiles and mummies) but with a change of director, university teaching related displays are to be phased in.

The Rutherford Museum is the Physics department museum, open by appointment on . It displays the scientific equipment, published work and some personal item of Earnest Rutherford from the period in which he worked at McGill University d a also collection of historic scientific instruments. Whilst the display ca nets are very well made and the museum rooms nicely designed, the choice of material (an oak-like wood) has caused corrosion of the lead items on display and e labelling needs improvement..

Fort Lennox is a very well camouflaged former British garrison on an island a he mouth of the Riveliex River, this river drains Lake Champlain into the St Lawrence river. The officers lodgings contain a display of excavated and conserved artefacts relating to the garrison, other restored and partially furnished as are shown to visitors on the guided tour. Having visited the Parks Canada conservation laboratories, it was interesting to visit a site in their care.

## Conclusion

This visit proved a worthwhile, stimulating (and exhausting) experience. I have been able to feed back many of the ideas noted in the new buildings visited the team of architects working on a new museum resource centre for Ludlow. (A forthcoming lottery bid). As ever, meeting colleagues and exchanging ideas has been a valuable experience.

Funding for this visit was generously provided by an overseas travel grant from the Canadian Association of Conservators, a training panel award from Shropshire County Council and a travel grant from the Museums & Galleries Commission.

*K.J. Andrew  
Shropshire County Curator of  
Natural History*





## BCG Study Trip - Vienna

13-16th November 1997

Its November so it must be time for the BCG study trip to foreign climes. A break with tradition (does two years running make a tradition?) led to a bleary-eyed group assembling at Heathrow Terminal 2 instead of Waterloo Eurostar Terminal. A laughing and joking group then boarded Austrian Airlines flight OS452 bound for Vienna and strapped themselves into their seats ready for take-off. Two hours later we all laughed and joked as we finally took off after passenger miscounts and nosecone problems delayed departure.

After arriving and installing ourselves in the Hotel Post in the Stephansdom quarter the usual sightseeing and hostelry visiting ensued.

The next day a short tram ride across town took us to the Museum. The Museum of Natural History is set in the same grounds as the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Museum of Fine Arts) and is almost a mirror image. Construction began in 1871 and the museum opened in 1889. While almost identical outside to the Fine Art Museum, the museums differ by their interior decor, reflecting

the nature of the collections.

A welcome address and introduction outlining the history of the buildings and collections was followed by tours of the different collections.

### Botany Tour

The herbarium was divided over two floors due to pressure of space. The collections were arranged alphabetically by psuche cryptograms, ferns and vascular plants up to Leguminosae on the upper floor and the Leguminosae onwards downstairs. Staff comprised of 4 botanists and 4 technicians with a heavy reliance on volunteers.

The museum had an active collecting policy but obtained most of its material by exchange with 50 other institutions, concentrating on Mediterranean, Middle East and North African material.

Downstairs the collections were housed in wooden cabinets which had an extensive overflow of material to be accessioned stored on top of them. Herbarium sheets were stored in folders in uniformed size boxes with drop fronts. The boxes were not purpose built or made from conservation grade material but bought off the peg from a stationary supplier which was the first shock

of the day. The second came when asked about pest control. The collections were

fumigated twice a year using a mix of dichlorvos and permethryn using a fogger/mister. This was carried out on the entomology section's advice and the fumigant used was a compromise because "we are not allowed to use efficient poisons"! Previously they had been using DDT!

Leaving the downstairs section, being careful not to disturb and the layers of dust we made our way upstairs to the recently refurbished botany section. Here the collections are housed on a new roller racking system using the same boxes as downstairs. The conversation then turned to funding, were we heard the familiar tale of government indifference and threats of huge cuts to palpable empathy around the room.

### Directors Talk

After coffee and strudel we were then given a talk by the museum Director on the history of the collections and the future direction he would like to see the museum taking. After describing how much of the display taxidermy is 80-90 years old. He then went on to decry the move of museums into multimedia at the expense of real

objects; "how can virtual reality do it.. its an illusion, a manipulated image with no link to the real world". It was further expounded that this type of 'nature' exists within the realms of the BBC and National Geographic and should museums be going down this road? This was not some Luddite rant against technology but sought to place objects at the heart of the museum, a plea for "well stuffed museums, not just well stuffed objects". The following demonstration of using a microscope to generate 3D images of live specimens sought to demonstrate how 'hi-tech' is a tool to be used not a be-all-and-end-all; a point well made.

### Lepidoptera Tour

The entomology section staff has 8 staff and 4 technicians with specialists in the areas of Lepidoptera, Coleoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera and Neuroptera.

The Lepidoptera collections were arranged systematically by geographical area and comprised over 2.5 million specimens with over 20,000 genital preparations. Collections were stored in drawers in a mix of wooden cabinets, metal racking and storeboxes of mixed materials. Some of which were non-conservation standard, such as

the cabinet housing the genital preparations, which was made out of fibreboard. Like most of the collections, parts of the store were quite new, though some odd choices of materials had been made, including an external blinds system which was only designed for internal use and they had subsequently found that it could not be opened and closed properly.

### **Palaeontology Tour**

The palaeontology section was split into two main stores and a preparation/conservation lab. The original store houses the collection systematically in wooden cabinets. Type and figured material are incorporated into the main sequence. Not surprisingly, the collections were strongest in Austrian material but there was also active collection from other countries.

A new store had been developed in the basement, and as with the other disciplines, there had been a move towards using roller racking with some fixed shelving. The roller racking supported cabinets with interchangeable drawers so they could mix and match according to the size of the specimens. Problems had been encountered however with the drawers tipping when opened. Space had been

allowed for expansion of the collection within this store, whereas the old store in the main museum was full to capacity.

The preparation/conservation laboratory was well equipped including air abrasive units, a large box vacuum chamber, rock cutting machinery and fume cupboards, and was staffed by two full-time technicians.

One of the main current projects was a new display in the fossil galleries, which were closed to the public during our visit. New case lighting was being installed and specimen selection was still going on, with some material being brought in especially for the new display. Some objects were in the gallery which this group were privileged to see, including a giant leaf fossil and some impressive marine reptiles fossils.

The palaeontology library had also been installed on new roller racking to make best use of limited space. There was a problem however with smaller books falling through the sides of the shelves.

### **Ornithology Tour**

The birds constitute some of the oldest collections held by the museum, including Johann

Natterer the Elder's collection of 600 birds amassed by his falconer. The collections have been progressively built up and now take over almost all of the ground floor storage area. The collections were somewhere in the magnitude of 150,000 specimens with the skins collection alone containing over 100,000 specimens including 12,000 Brazilian bird skins.

There are two full time staff, one working exclusively on Venezuelan Rainforest birds and a librarian who also functions as a technician. The museum employs three taxidermists which the bird section had claim to half the time of. The bulk of the collection is stored in wooden cabinets in a tray system within wooden drawers. As with the herbarium, the trays were not acid-free. Some of the drawers and trays were very crowded though with space at a premium throughout the museum this was unavoidable. As with other sections the collections were fumigated twice a year. Again they had no pest problems.

The museum is still actively collecting, and when queried on this, the curator gave a robust defence of the museum's policy of shooting specimens for the collection.

### **Museum Displays**

I found the displays of the museum were after a while very disheartening. As the Director had said, the vast majority of the displays had not been touched for 80-90 years and this became very apparent as you walked through the displays. Galleries were arranged taxonomically, with the geology and anthropology galleries downstairs and zoology upstairs.

Almost all objects were displayed in cabinets on a shelving system, with almost none of

cases having internal lighting. Cases and objects were illuminated by natural daylight and a mixture of electric lights, primarily used for gallery and not specimen illumination.

Many specimens were badly faded especially those close to windows. There was no labelling beyond a common name and Latin name for each specimen.


Despite there being an incredible diversity of well prepared specimens, gallery after gallery of ranks of specimen was very wearing, and you found yourself almost walking straight through galleries and not taking very much in. The exception to this was the children's galleries which had a

similar approach to the Natural History Centre at Liverpool and Bolton, with many interactives, hands on material and some live specimens. The problems with the displays had been identified by the Director during his talk but with little political will to fund redisplay work, the museum is facing real problems. While the Director was keen to take the museum forward as a more public oriented institution, directing more resources towards exhibitions, education and schools, this was not shared by some of the curators. This conflict between scientific and social purpose is a significant difficulty facing the museum.

Thanks must go again to Kathie Way for organising another succesful and illuminating BCG trip. Long may they continue.

*Nick Gordon*

*Buckinghamshire County Museum*



## Archives - Museum of Natural History Vienna

The complete written and pictorial documentation of the Museum's history from its beginnings to the present day are catalogued here. It is not only items on paper which are held here, historical artefacts such as early typewriters used and old instruments used in microscopic preparation by Emperor Francis I, the founder of the museum are housed. A new compactorised storage system (1995) holds the collection. The system is made of wood and it was noted that this was purchased due to its slow burning time in the event of a fire; the contents would not be heated as quickly as would with a metal system. Inside the cabinets all the paper items are stored in acid-free boxes which are capable of absorbing water in the event of flood damage. A paper conservator is employed who monitors all materials used within Archives, but has little involvement with archive standards adopted by curatorial departments.

The department also holds a collection of videos depicting and recording temporary exhibitions and events held in the museum. As the stability of the tape material


can not yet be measured, they will have to be periodically checked and copied again if necessary.

One of the interesting botanical holds was a bound volume of 'Flora from the Yellowstone' (Park), a gift to the museum from the Arch Deacon Ferdennand. I was intrigued to find that unlike most herbaria the historical material had been removed from the Botany department and placed within Archives. It was explained that the material was not scientific material, of no taxonomic value and therefore was not to be curated. No historical research is carried out by the curators. The material was by no means stored and forgotten about. The herbarium sheets were stored in a fridge in the basement of the museum along with other sensitive material such as the photographic collection. Some of the sheets where in print-type cut mounts from when they had been used for exhibition. The sheets (mainly cultivated plants from the Emperors' garden) had not been remounted but left on their original sheets to illustrate the historical aspect of early herbaria.

Once a month an open day, "Jour Fixe" der Abteilung Archiv, is held. Here an individual collector and their collections are

concentrated on. Associated material from the archive department such as note books and collecting artefacts from expeditions are displayed, along with specimens collected. The next event to take place after we arrived was an open day on Ida Pfeiffer (1797-1858), a zoologist, botanist and ethnographer. The day was also intended to mark the 200 years since her birth.

*Donna Hughes  
Liverpool Museum*





## The Museum Leadership Programme, Sept. 1997

The 31st of August 1997 may or may not provide lasting memories for all of us. For me, it will be one of catching a train to Norwich to embark on a two week intensive residential course run by the University of East Anglia, called the Museum Leadership Programme. The publicity for the course promised to identify and develop leadership talent from among the various specialists in museums and galleries and develop a range of relevant skills such as: recognising various styles of leaderships development of interpersonal skills, management of change; dealing with funding and governing bodies; managing capital projects and budget management. Best of all it offered the chance to spend two weeks away from work with colleagues at similar levels in a range of institutions.

At the time I felt very much in need of some training and development in these particular skills and was delighted when I was accepted on the course. When it came to leaving home, however, I was more reticent. It was a relief to discover that most of the other participants felt the same way and

it did not take long for people to get to know each other and start to make friends. This was helped by the excellent accommodation, good food and the beautiful surroundings of the University of East Anglia campus.

The course was extremely well organised and had obviously been put together with a great deal of care and thought for each component. Every day covered a different aspect of museum leadership with a different tutor. All the course tutors provided informative and stimulating sessions and participation within the group was also at an extremely high level. Everyone was keen to learn from each others experiences and to share their own problems with the group. The course provided us with an enormous amount of information to take in and to refer to in the future.. It also provided eleven new contacts in the museum world and on a personal level it gave me more confidence and knowledge to deal with work and the problems that arise on a day to day basis.

Was the course worth spending two weeks away from work and the financial cost of attending? I would recommend it to anyone who is at a senior level within their organisation and is leading a group or

team of others. The course is relevant, well run and extremely enjoyable, definitely worth persuading your boss to let you go!

*Kirsten Walker  
Horniman Museum*

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## Botanical Collections - Kraków 26th - 29th June 1997

This year I attended the Second International Conference on the Preservation of Botanical Collections. The meeting was organised by the W. Szafer Institute of Botany at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Three people from the UK attended, Aileen Collis & myself from the NMGM and Vicky Purewal from NMGW. The English speaking contingent was completed by Ann Pinzl, from Nevada and committee member of SPNHC. The majority of the other 50 delegates were either from Russia, China, Ukraine or Poland. The next meeting, due to be held in 2000, will be hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. In the hope of improving UK representation at this meeting, I have agreed, along

with Vicky Purewal, to act as 'Liaison' for the UK. This, in part, is my first communication! I hope to publish information as it develops through this newsletter.

A couple of the papers directly dealt with conservation concerns of botanical collections themselves; Vicky's 'Assessing herbarium collections: the choice of criteria for condition surveying' and a paper entitled 'Wax technique to conserve plant fossils and mammoth bones' presented by Shyamala Chitale from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Ohio. The rest of the presentations meanwhile dealt with explaining the contents of a herbarium's collections, emphasizing its value and in turn its worthiness for preservation.

One got the idea that the fact that the meeting actually took place, and communicated the importance of collections was itself helping to preserve these collections. This is an important aspect of collection preservation, especially when justifying the funding of staff and resources; an issue that the Natural Sciences Conservation Group know all too well.

*Donna Hughes  
National Museums & Galleries on  
Merseyside*

## HERITAGE 2000

### MUSEUM PEST MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Pest problems of various types and magnitude have plagued collections of artefacts ever since man started to show an interest in his past.

For modern conservators this permanent risk of damage to collections by rodents, insects or birds is something that must always be considered, but is a discipline in which there is comparatively little specialist knowledge compared to other fields of pest control.

In response to this problem, some of the leading experts in different aspects of museums pest control have come together to offer the definitive range of solutions to almost any problem - but at a cost that recognises the limited budgets that restrict many conservators.

#### Heritage 2000: Collaborating Partners

**Igrox Limited:** Specialists in Integrated Pest Management services to food, heritage and health industries. The company's three divisions comprise of Pest & Hygiene Management, Fumigation and Remedial, all of which have specialist disciplines applicable to the heritage environment.

**David Pinniger:** Specialist entomologist and museum pest control consultant formerly with Central Science Laboratories at Slough. Now an independent consultant and author of books and articles on museum pest control.

**Thermo Lignum UK:** Specialists in heat treatment of museum and other valuable artefacts. The non-chemical Thermo Lignum technique is rapidly becoming the preferred treatment option for many pest problems associated with artefacts. The system is also available in some circumstances for de-toxification of timbers to remove residues of lindane (gamma-HCH) or PCP.

**Bob Child:** Head of Conservation at the National Museum of Wales, pest control consultant to the National Trust and author and expert on conservation and museum pest control.

Heritage 2000 is able to offer the following specialist services for the trustees of heritage collections.

- a) **Evaluation of Initial Problems and Requirements**  
This would be carried out by a biologist from Igrox Ltd. A report and subsequent discussions would then agree a plan of action for the future.
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Igrox Ltd are able to provide cover nationally with technologists experienced in running complex Integrated Pest Management contracts in food, health and museum environments, supported by its separate Technical Services/QA function. Annual pest management contracts use the Heritage 2000 reporting system. Typical pest problems covered could include any rodent, bird or insect problems, including textile pests, stored product pests and woodboring insects.
- c) **The Effects of Post Control Measures on Artefacts**  
Where there is doubt about the appropriateness of a specified pest management regime or course of treatments for a specific artefact, Bob Child, the conservation consultant, will advise as necessary.
- d) **Heat Treatment**  
The Thermo Lignum controlled heat and humidity treatment of infested artefacts has rapidly become a popular option amongst conservators for treating a wide range of woodboring and textile pest problems.
- e) **Fumigation**  
Igrox Ltd are the UK's leading fumigation company. Currently, nitrogen, phosphine and methyl bromide are options available from Igrox Ltd for use on museum artefacts.
- f) **Remedial Timber Treatment and Damp Proofing**  
Igrox Remedial Division are able to offer specialist advice and treatment if required.

If you wish to know more about Heritage 2000, please contact:

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Technical Services  
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Oakdale Road  
Clifton Moor  
York, YO3 4XL

Tel: 01904-693595 Fax: 01904-693602

## N.S.C.G. Committee Members

**Chair: Kate Andrew**

Ludlow Museum  
Old Street  
Ludlow  
Shropshire, SY8 1NW  
Tel: 01584 873857  
Fax: 01584 872019

**Secretary: Paul Brown**

Dept. of Entomology  
The Natural History Museum  
Cromwell Road  
London, SW7 5BD  
Tel: 0171 938 8903  
Fax: 0171 938 8937  
e.mail: [pab@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:pab@nhm.ac.uk)

**Treasurer: Maggie Reilly**

Zoology Department  
Hunterian Museum  
Glasgow University  
Glasgow, G12 8QQ  
Tel: 0141 330 4772  
Fax: 0141 330 5971  
e.mail: [mreilly@museum.gla.ac.uk](mailto:mreilly@museum.gla.ac.uk)

**Committee members:**

**Robert Entwistle**

Ipswich Borough Council Museum  
High Street  
Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 3QH  
Tel: 01473 213761  
Fax: 01473 281274

**Nick Gordon**

County Museum Technical Centre  
Tring Road  
Halton  
Buckinghamshire, HP22 5PJ  
Tel & Fax: 01296 696012

**Donna Hughes**

Botany Department  
Liverpool Museum  
William Brown Street  
Liverpool, L3 8EN  
Tel: 0151 478 4373  
Fax: 0151 478 4390  
e.mail: [donna@nmgmnhc.demon.co.uk](mailto:donna@nmgmnhc.demon.co.uk)

**Simon Moore**

Hampshire County Museums  
Chilcomb House  
Chilcomb Lane  
Winchester, SO23 8RD  
Tel: 01962 846337  
Fax: 01962 869836  
e.mail: [musmsm@hants.gov.uk](mailto:musmsm@hants.gov.uk)

**Victoria Purewal**

National Museums & Galleries of Wales  
Cathay's Park  
Cardiff, CF1 3NP  
Tel: 01222 573345  
Fax: 01222 239829  
e.mail: [vicky.purewal@nmgw.ac.uk](mailto:vicky.purewal@nmgw.ac.uk)

**Tracey Seddon**

Textiles & Organics Conservation  
The Conservation Centre  
Whitechapel  
Liverpool, L1 6HZ  
Tel: 0151 478 4843  
Fax: 0151 478 4990  
e.mail: [tracey@nmgmcc4.demon.co.uk](mailto:tracey@nmgmcc4.demon.co.uk)

**Wendy Simkiss**

Geology Section  
Liverpool Museum  
William Brown Street  
Liverpool, L3 8EN  
Tel: 0151 478 4212  
Fax: 0151 478 4390  
e.mail: [earth@nmgmeps1.demon.co.uk](mailto:earth@nmgmeps1.demon.co.uk)

**Kirsten Walker**

The Horniman Museum  
London Road  
Forest Hill  
London, SE23 3PQ  
Tel: 0181 6991872 x123  
Fax: 0181 2915506  
e.mail: [walker@horniman.demon.co.uk](mailto:walker@horniman.demon.co.uk)

**Glenys Wass**

Palaeontology Conservation Unit  
The Natural History Museum  
Cromwell Road  
London, SW7 5BD  
Tel: 0171 938 9269  
Fax: 0171 938 9277



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