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REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN, YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 1977

Two major projects have been achieved this year mainly due to the activities of the Secretary and the Committee representatives in the North West of England. This was accidental in that it was imperative that the BCG submit evidence to the Standing Commission concerning the National Plan for Museums and there was very little time to do so. Accordingly, questionnaires were sent out and analysed by the Secretary and Chairman within a short period of time at the beginning of the year. The results of this survey are shortly to be published as a finished document in the form in which it was submitted to the standing Commission, with some minor additional statistical analyses.(See note elsewhere).

Secondly, the arrangements for the major meeting of the year "The Function of Local Natural History Collections" which was held at Liverpool in September, naturally devolved upon the members there. This seminar, over a two day period, was very pertinent in every respect to the aims of the BCG. I believe that the demand for this group arose from a belief that natural historians as a part of the museums profession had not had the opportunity to meet and discuss common problems and that the concern for the importance of the collections of scientific and taxonomic value had been losing out to discussion on new display policies and other, outside the strict realms of curatorial, influences.

The Liverpool seminar brought together, as it has probably never done before, the provincial museum curator with others of similar interests, especially those employed in the Natural History Museum in London, on a level at which communication was not only possible but readily achieved. The meeting was attended by so many of the members and others in universities and other institutions that the BCG as a committee felt more than justified in organising the two days programme. The possible spin-off of related activities as a result of what was said and proposed is equally gratifying. The increased levels of communication between London and elsewhere, and the development of the North West Collection Research Unit (report elsewhere) have resulted directly from this meeting.

Concurrently with these activities concerned with collections, the BCG were invited to organise a specialist session at the Museums Association Annual Conference at Bradford. The subject of legislation on conservation as it related to museum activities was thought to be particularly interesting and had not been discussed in depth before.

Several members of the committee have been actively involved with the development of Record Centres in provincial museums and this is culminating in 1977 with a comprehensive meeting at Monkswood, headquarters of the Biological Records Centre, on this subject. The Professional Groups Committee (nee Professional Services) has met twice during this year and has been attended by BCG representatives. The Secretary's and Editor's report give all the details of these involvements and the outcomes of the discussions.

Finally, the AGM and session on biodeterioration on 3rd December 1977 should finish 1977 as the second year of an active Biology Curators' Group. As retiring Chairman I would like to think that the continued activities of BCG in the field of collection research and enlightenment would continue and that election to an ordinary committee member for 1978 should be an opportunity to pursue this policy.

E.G. Hancock.