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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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of Rogaland in SW Norway. In total about 1000 sheets of vascular plants.

Due to collections from my colleagues my own fieldwork, and several private donations the herbarium now consists of 3,000 sheets of vascular plants, and collections of bryophytes and algae. Our main interest is plants used by man, and anthropochorus plants (Ed. I do not know what this is either).

Speakers at the Liverpool Conference claimed collections from 18th century to still be very valuable. Let us hope that the curators at Stavanger in say 2200 will consider the work done in 1977 as valuable and well curated!

Together with a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, British Museum, and Butser Ancient Farm, in Petersfield, the Liverpool Conference made my 1 week stay in Great Britain a very successful one. I have learned a lot and should be pleased to welcome to Stavanger any British Curators.

Sverre Bakkevig,
Arkeologisk Museum,
i Stavanger, Norway.

A SNAILMAN'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE

Natural History is a diverse subject, and museums are a pretty heterogeneous collection of Institutions; small wonder then that natural historians in museums tend to be a motley crew! But at Liverpool in September representatives of many different aspects of our profession came together intellectually as well as physically. Between the National and the large Regional museums cooperation, not confrontation, was the keynote; and both these groups were made aware of the importance of the smaller local museums, and their collections.

Indeed, one of the most valuable results of this meeting was to illustrate how pointless was the "them, them and us" attitude often found among museum natural historians. We all have the same problems it transpired, whether we be a specialist in the largest or a lone worker in the smallest museum, and the curator of

the latter is quite as likely as anyone to be able to supply the missing piece that makes sense of someone else's jigsaw. Lone workers some may be but after Liverpool none can again feel alone.

Another major lesson from this Conference was that between us we guard a huge national (and international) resource, and we must all look to our collections, cataloguing these and, most important, disseminating the results of our work; probably the job of most immediate and most lasting use we can do. But also speaker after speaker gave examples at once both hilarious and horrific of apparent rubbish, found in such unlikely sites as old air-raid shelters or embedded in barn walls, that proved on research to have great historical and/or scientific importance. So we must get out into the area around actively to track down and document the multitude of collections in nearby institutions languishing for lack of expert curatorial attention; such collections are often in imminent danger of destruction following the recent upheaval of local government reorganisation. The present chaotic situation is probably historically unique, for most collections of note still in private hands should now end up in a reputable institution, but rescuing the casualties from past beneficence is a task we, the current generation of natural history curators, must not shirk. I am happy to report action is already underway in the North West region, about which more details appear elsewhere.

Maybe its just because I had more to learn than most, but I consider this was probably the most stimulating and fruitful meeting I have attended in the past decade.

Charles Pettitt,
Manchester Museum.
(via RRS "Challenger",
Ardossan).