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## Biology Curators Group

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Title: Sought

Author(s): Stanbury, D., Lingwood, P.

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## SOUGHT

It has been suggested to me by Gavid Bridson of the Linnean Society that I contact you with a problem that I have about the official collections made by H.M.S. "Beagle" 1831-36. I was Historical Adviser to the television series "The Voyage of Charles Darwin" and I am currently writing a book about the work of the "Beagle" and although I can track down the specimens and collections which were brought back by Darwin, I know that both the captain, Robert FitzRoy, and the acting surgeon, Benjamin Bynoe, made official collections of plants, birds and possibly even minerals for the official naval collections at the Haslar Hospital. I am trying to track down any specimens or documentation connected with this collection which I am aware was given to the British Museum. David Stanbury, 16 Ian Court, 2 Dacres Road, London SE23.

Peter Lingwood who has been researching into the voyage of the Challenger and other naval expeditions sends the following notes.

1. Albert Gunther (The History of the collections contained in the Natural History departments of the British Museum, Vol. 2 Appendix 1912 HMSO 109 pp,p.5) states:

"The Zoological Collection at the Haslar Hospital which contained the Fishes of the Voyage of the "Erebus" and "Terror" as well as other types was transferred to the Museum in 1855. The specimens arrived without labels and many were in a bad condition, and for economy's sake a solution of chloride of zinc had been used instead of alcohol!"

Presumable only those specimens which could be individually identified i.e. type and figured specimens, could have been re-ascribed to specific expeditions or donors. The remainder, because of their anonymity, would be almost impossible to re-identify today even if they are still at the British Museum (Natural History) and have not been disposed of as 'duplicates'.

2. Gruber, J. W. (1969) who was the "Beagles" Naturalist, British Journal for the History of Science 4, 266-282 contends that Robert McCormick, the ship's surgeon, considered himself the 'official' naturalist but was thwarted from performing the duties of a naturalist by the presence of Darwin. It seems unlikely that McCormick succeeded in collecting any specimens because, as he complained, every obstacle had been placed in the way of his getting ashore and making collections. As a result he sought to be replaced and left the ship to return to England in the April of 1832, after only 4 months aboard the "Beagle".

On a slightly more hopeful note Lloyd & Coulter (1963, Medicine and the Navy 1200 - 1900, Vol. 5 1815-1900 p.75) state that Bynoe's collection of Birds and Insects is 'now in the British Museum' and that his plants are in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Unfortunately they do not state the date or source of their information.

According to "Natural History Manuscript Resources in the British Isles" (reviewed elsewhere in this Newsletter) there is Robert Fitzroy material preserved in the Michael Faraday Correspondence Collection at the Institute of Electrical Engineers and in the correspondence files and his own account of the discoveries of the "Beagle" at the Royal Geographical Society. Benjamin Bynoe does not appear in the index.