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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Collections Research in North East England

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during a visit to Europe resulting in his naming Unio corrianus Lea, 1834 (= Lamellidens marginalis (Lamarck) in her honour. The collection also includes specimens from Isaac Lea, J. G. Anthony, Hugh Cuming and others, and is still being actively added to. It is hoped that at a future date a more comprehensive history of the collection can be published, together with a list of all type, figured and cited specimens.

Fred Woodward
South Shields Museum

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COLLECTIONS RESEARCH IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND

The need for research into the location and condition of named collections in the natural sciences has been explained admirably by Geoffrey Hancock (1977, 1978a, 1978b), in describing the origins and function of the North West Collections Research Unit (NWCURU). The achievements of NWCURU are remarkable, raising collections from obscurity and making 'rescue' operations feasible. The lead taken by curators in the north west has been followed by those in the north east - an area defined as the counties of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Cleveland, and equivalent to the area covered by the North of England Museums Service.

North East England is a fairly compact unit, with the major museums being located in the industrial zones of Tyneside, Wearside and Teesside. There are at least 8 museums with natural science collections, but only two of these (the Hancock Museum and Sunderland Museum) have full-time curatorial staff with responsibility for biological and geological specimens. There are a number of smaller (and remote) museums - Berwick for example - many private collections (Wallington Hall, Craggside), and two major Universities housing collections. Obviously a great deal of potential for collections research! Two factors acted as a catalyst to the development of the work now in progress. Firstly, the regular meetings of the Natural History Panel of Museums North - a potential 'collections unit' in all bar name, and secondly the presence of NUMAC (Northern Universities Multiple Access Computer) and the proven ability of the available package SPIRES (Stamford Public Information and Retrieval

System) in handling museum data. The Hancock Museum had successfully stored information relating to geological sites and specimens using SPIRES, and had plans to install a terminal in the building and hire a card puncher.

Collections research was first discussed by the Panel in December 1978. The decision to begin the project was made immediately, with Susan Turner and myself taking on the task of designing a suitable form to collect the information, which would then be fed into NUMAC via the Hancock Museum. The final form evolved as something of a hybrid between NWCRU's 'Collections' and 'numerical assessment' forms - a completed form is given as an example. Grant aid (100%) was obtained from the North of England Museums Service (NEMS) to print 2000 forms, which were then distributed (along with sets of instructions) to panel members to complete. Meanwhile, Peter Robson - previously a member of the computing team at the Hancock Museum (Turner 1979) - had agreed to handle the computing side of the project. It is largely due to his expertise that considerable progress has been made, the file definitions and output format being completed in the spring of 1979. The sympathetic attitude of NEMS was also of prime importance, as they supplied the finance for Peter Robson's work for the Panel - it must be stated however that a considerable amount of his time has been given free of charge, and his interest in the scheme has been a most important element in its success. Data input has been carried out by members of the STEP cataloguing project at the Hancock Museum.

From April 1979 there has been a steady input of data. This has not been as spectacular as the rapid growth of NWCRU's files, largely I feel due to smaller numbers of specialist staff in the region, and certainly not due to lack of enthusiasm. Completing forms can be extremely frustrating, the realisation of how little is known about the majority of collectors and collections (even in museums with reasonable records) quite stunning. Inevitably much of the data input is far from complete, often no more than a name and a brief description of the collection. However, it is a beginning, and files can be easily recalled and updated as more research reveals more facts about the collection. One major problem that has occurred in the course of the work is the inability to avoid being sidetracked by such research. Filling in a form arouses curiosity, which is extremely difficult to control until the batch of forms is complete! The Captain Calver who appears on the completed form for example, led me a merry chase around various local Libraries, the Public Records Office and ended with a search for (and discovery of) additional 'Porcupine' material in the region. (Davis 1979)

The present position is that some 137 records have been entered onto

MUSEUM	SUNDERLAND
M. D. A. CODE	TWCM5
RECORDER	PSD
CURATOR	NT SINCLAIR

NAME OF COLLECTOR (OR COLLECTION/EXPEDITION)	SURNAME	CALVER	INITIALS	E.K.	TITLE	CAPTAIN	
	CHRISTIAN NAME(S)	EDWARD KILLWICK					
	DATE OF BIRTH	1813	PLACE OF BIRTH	SOUTHWOOD			
	DATE OF DEATH	1892	PLACE OF DEATH	VEVEY, SWITZERLAND			
PERIOD OF COLLECTION	1869 & 1870						
ASSOCIATED PERSONS	SURNAME	INITIALS		TITLE			
	SURNAME	INITIALS		TITLE			
	SURNAME	INITIALS		TITLE			
GEOGRAPHICAL REGION OF COLLECTION	COUNTRY	COUNTY/REGION N.E. ATLANTIC					
	SITE	SITE N. G. R.					
SUBJECT(S) OF COLLECTION	Zoology (Foraminiferal Oozes & marine invertebrates)						
NUMERICAL ASSESSMENT GROUP/SUBJECT	GROUP/SUBJECT	fossil/ modern	British	Foreign	Figured & cited	Types	Totals
	Foraminiferal Oozes	mod	36				36
	Mollusca	mod	13				13
	Echinodermata	mod	8				8
	Anthozoa	mod	5				5
	Crustacea	mod	4				4
PRESENT LOCATION OF COLLECTION	MUSEUM/OTHER INSTITUTION	Sunderland Museum.					
	METHOD OF ACQUISITION	gift.	DATE	pre 1879	ACCN. NO.		
	COLLECTION AMALGAMATED OR A SEPARATE ENTITY	separate					
	ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION						
LITERATURE REFERENCES TO COLLECTION	Anon. Sunderland Daily Echo November 6 1879						
	Anon. Sunderland Library Circular, 1910, p 386						
	Davis PS (1979) Collections from the dredging expeditions of the Porcupine in N.E. England. Porcupine Newsletter.						
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	Anon (1894) 'Captain Calver' Dodds Almanac, Sunderland.						
	Dawson LS (1855) Memoirs of hydrography, Eastbourne						
MISCELLANEOUS DETAILS	Small collection of dredgings, mainly unidentified but with full data.						
	See also Chas. Dawson Collection, Hancock Museum (further specimens from dredging expeditions of H.M.S. Porcupine).						

the computer. An attempt is now being made to obtain data for all named collections within museums where a Panel member is working before the end of December 1979, when help with data input at the Hancock will cease with the demise of the STEP scheme.

On the computing side, two varieties of output format have been devised, one of which is shown, as well as the normal default computer output. In addition, Peter Robson has developed a protocol, or automatic command system, which will enable any panel member to input data at the Hancock Museum terminal. In simple terms, this system takes the initiative away from the operator, and gives it to the computer, which is then steered by the protocol. This means that the operator no longer needs to know how the system functions - he or she merely has to respond to a series of questions put by the computer, and thus in the process builds a complete record into the data bank.

A similar protocol system could be devised to assist the operator in carrying out a successful search of the data base. The essence of protocol usage is that it provides a means for the would be operator who is totally unfamiliar with computer methods to handle the system with ease and efficiency.

The final and most sophisticated step to be taken is the development of translation programs to enable a free-flow of data between SPIRES and the Manchester equivalent data-base, FAMULUS. This achievement would of course represent a highly desirable state of affairs.

Geoffrey Hancock (1978a) hoped that NWCRU would be the forerunner of similar regional projects 'culminating in a national index of collections'. In the north east it is felt that a reasonable start has been made in the region toward that goal.

Peter Davis
Sunderland Museum

References

Davis, P. S. (1979) Collections from the dredging expeditions of HMS Porcupine in N. E. England. 'Porcupine' Nsltr.

Hancock, E. G. (1977) North West Collections Research Unit. Biology Curators Group Newsletter V1 No. 7 p. 24-28.

Hancock, E. G. (1978a) The North West Collection Research Unit. Museums Journal V77 No. 4 p. 188.

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: RECORD-NUMBER = 300;
: MUSEUM-NAME = SUNDERLAND;
: MDA-CODE = TUCMS;
: RECORDER = P.S.DAVIS;
: CURATOR = N.T.SINCLAIR;
: COLLECT-PERIOD = 1869 & 1870;
: MISCELLANEOUS = SMALL COLLECTION OF DREDGINGS, MAINLY UNIDENTIFIED BUT WITH FULL DATA. SEE ALSO
: HANCOCK MUSEUM. (SPECIMENS FROM HMS PORCUPINE).;
: COLLECT-SUBJECTS = ZOOLOGY;
: NAME = CALVER, EDWARD KILLWICK;
: COLLECTOR-TITLE = CAPTAIN;
: ADDRESS = 16, ROKER TCE., SUNDERLAND.;
: DATE-OF-BIRTH = 1813;
: BIRTH-PLACE = SOUTHWOLD;
: DATE-OF-DEATH = 1892;
: PLACE-OF-DEATH = VEVEY, SWITZERLAND;
: COUNTRY = N.E.ATLANTIC;
: SUBJECT = FORAMINIFERAL Oozes;
: SUBJECT-ASSESS;
: MODERN = YES;
: BRITISH = 36;
: TOTALS = 36;
: SUBJECT = MOLLUSCA;
: SUBJECT-ASSESS;
: MODERN = YES;
: BRITISH = 13;
: TOTALS = 13;
: SUBJECT = ECHINODERMATA;
: SUBJECT-ASSESS;
: MODERN = YES;
: BRITISH = 8;
: TOTALS = 8;
: SUBJECT = ANTHOZOA;
: SUBJECT-ASSESS;
: MODERN = YES;
: BRITISH = 5;
: TOTALS = 5;
: SUBJECT = CRUSTACEA;
: SUBJECT-ASSESS;
: MODERN = 4;
: TOTALS = 4;
: MUSEUM-OR-OTHER = SUNDERLAND;
: DATE-ACQUIRED = PRE 1879;
: ACCESS-NUMBER = NONE;
: MEANS = GIFT;
: CONDITION = SEPARATED;
: AUTHOR+DATE = ANON, 1879;
: TITLE-ETC = ANON, SUNDERLAND DAILY ECHO, NOVEMBER 6, 1879;
: AUTHOR+DATE = ANON, 1910;
: TITLE-ETC = ANON, SUNDERLAND LIBRARY CIRCULAR, 1910, PAGE 386.;
: AUTHOR+DATE = DAVIS, 1979;
: TITLE-ETC = P.S.DAVIS. COLLECTIONS FROM THE DREDGING EXPEDITIONS OF HMS PORCUPINE IN NORTH EAST
: 1979.;
: AUTHOR+DATE = ANON, 1894;
: TITLE-ETC = ANON, CAPTAIN CALVER. DODDS ALMANAC, SUNDERLAND. 1894;
: AUTHOR+DATE = DAWSON, 1855;
: TITLE-ETC = L.S.DAWSON, MEMOIRS OF HYDROGRAPHY. EASTBOURNE. 1855;
:
:****

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NAME: CALVER, EDWARD KILLWICK
(CAPTAIN)

ADDRESS: 16, ROKER TCE., SUNDERLAND.

BORN: 1813, AT/IN SOUTHWOLD

DIED: 1892, AT/IN VEVEY, SWITZERLAND

PRESENT LOCATION DETAILS OF THE COLLECTION:

MDA CODE: TWCMS

COLLECTION RECORDER: P.S.DAVIS

MUSEUM CURATOR: N.T.SINCLAIR

MISCELLANY: SMALL COLLECTION OF

DREDGINGS, MAINLY UNIDENTIFIED BUT
WITH FULL DATA. SEE ALSO DAVISON C.
COLLECTIONS, AT THE HANCOCK MUSEUM.
(SPECIMENS FROM HMS PORCUPINE).

MUSEUM: SUNDERLAND

CONDITION: SEPARATED

ACQUISITION DETAILS:

ACQUIRED: PRE 1879

ACCESS NUMBER: NONE

MEANS: GIFT

RECORD NUMBER: 300

MUSEUM: SUNDERLAND

COLLECTION SUBJECT: ZOOLOGY

PERIOD OF COLLECTION: 1869 & 1870

COLLECTION SUBJECT: FORAMINIFERAL OOZES

MODERN: YES

BRITISH: 36

TOTALS: 36

COLLECTION SUBJECT: MOLLUSCA

MODERN: YES

BRITISH: 13

TOTALS: 13

COLLECTION SUBJECT: ECHINODERMATA

MODERN: YES

BRITISH: 8

TOTALS: 8

COLLECTION SUBJECT: ANTHOZOA

MODERN: YES

BRITISH: 5

TOTALS: 5

COLLECTION SUBJECT: CRUSTACEA

MODERN: 4

TOTALS: 4

COUNTRY: N.E.ATLANTIC

REFERENCES RELATING TO COLLECTION:

ANON, 1879

>>>> ANON, SUNDERLAND DAILY ECHO, NOVEMBER 6, 1879

ANON, 1910

>>>> ANON, SUNDERLAND LIBRARY CIRCULAR, 1910, PAGE 386.

DAVIS, 1979

>>>> P.S.DAVIS. COLLECTIONS FROM THE DREDGING EXPEDITIONS OF HMS PORCUPINE IN NORTH
EAST ENGLAND. PORCUPINE NEWSLETTER 1979.

ANON, 1894

>>>> ANON, CAPTAIN CALVER. DODDS ALMANAC, SUNDERLAND. 1894

DAWSON, 1855

>>>> L.S.DAWSON, MEMOIRS OF HYDROGRAPHY. EASTBOURNE. 1855

Hancock, E. G. (1978b) A Collection rescue operation in the north west. Biology Curators Group Newsletter V1 No. 10 p.33-34.

Turner, S. & Robson, P. (1979) Computer controlled databank system at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne. Biology Curators Group Newsletter V2 No. 5 p.209.

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INSTITUTIONS WITH NATURAL SCIENCES COLLECTIONS IN TYNE AND WEAR - A BRIEF HISTORY AND LIST OF MAJOR DONORS

Local Government reorganisation in 1974 resulted in the formation of a County Museums Service for the Metropolitan County of Tyne and Wear. Of the ten Museums brought under the County umbrella, three had collections of biological specimens - South Shields Museum, the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead and Sunderland Museum. The latter has collections of some significance, and became the focal point for the natural sciences section of the service. Centralisation of specialist collections in the various disciplines took place from the inception of the County Service, and the majority of the natural sciences collections previously stored at South Shields and Gateshead had been transferred to Sunderland by 1976.

The following notes outline briefly the development of the three institutions concerned, and the principal donors of biological specimens.

South Shields Museum

The first Working Men's Club and Institution in Britain was established in South Shields on March 11th 1850, in a schoolroom in Queen Street. By 1865 the membership had grown to 463, and new premises had been leased in East King Street. Although the Institution provided recreational facilities - these included rooms for bagatelle and chess and a large yard for quoits - its main function was as a library, newsroom and centre for debate. Two scientific societies, the South Shields Microscopical Society (founded November 4th 1861) and the South Shields Geological Club (founded October 9th 1862) were established as offshoots from the Institution and a small museum was established to exhibit items 'of scientific and mechanical interest'. Little is known of the personalities, achievements and eventual fates of these two societies. Only the Geological Club's first President, George Lyall, F. G. S. (1818-1896), appears to have had a scientific reputation, being a notable and active member of the Tyneside Naturalists Field Club.