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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Title: Dealers in Natural History, London 1822

Author(s): Lingwood, P.

Source: Lingwood, P. (1984). Dealers in Natural History, London 1822. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 3 No 10, 589 - 590.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1301>

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## Dealers in Natural History, London 1822

Today there are few dealers that specialise exclusively in natural history objects. One might hopefully conclude that the decline in man's acquisitive nature has been matched by a concomitant development of his inquisitive character. Unfortunately, dealership in some taxa has been driven underground by legislation.

In the nineteenth century, however, natural history dealers flourished in Britain; they formed an essential link between the traveller and the dilettante collector who, through lack of commitment or means, was unwilling or unable himself to collect or finance others to do so.

The natural history collecting craze became almost self-generating; the growth in demand for items made dealership lucrative and the existence of more dealers made collecting by the casual traveller the more attractive. The greater the supply of material the greater the number of dealers who could earn a living from trading. Inevitably, supply would outstrip demand and Dance (1966) lists a number of shells which fell in value as more specimens were found. The temptation both to dealers and travellers to preclude or counteract falling prices by making each specimen more individual must have been strong and there is no doubt that deliberate misidentification and false locality data were used to this end. Dealers also often resorted to publishing the description of new species based on inconsequential differences. Although their taxonomic stance can be justified in hindsight I suspect that originally much of it was for gain and a comparison of those which indulged in this "splitting" as opposed to those who preferred "lumping" i.e. the oversimplification of specific characters, were for the most part dealers.

Whatever the true intentions of the dealer he was an essential link between the traveller and the collector. William Swainson (1822) recognised this in his Naturalists' Guide and after detailed description of how to collect the specimens he included a list of dealers. It is worthy of note that at that time there were nearly 25 in London alone; a clear indication of the considerable demand for their services. The preponderance of dealers in birds and shells probably reflects Swainson's own preferences but can, therefore, be regarded as virtually complete, at least for the capital. The rather flattering comment about Humphrey, although arguably justifiable, owes much to Swainson's contact with him as a boy.

**P. Lingwood**

Dance, S. P., 1966 - Shell Collecting, An Illustrated History, London.

Swainson, W., 1822 - The Naturalists' Guide for collecting and preserving subjects of natural history and botany, London. (p67 and 68 of the Appendix are reproduced opposite).

## LIST OF DEALERS, &amp;c.

IN OBJECTS OF, OR CONNECTED WITH, NATURAL HISTORY.

This list will be useful, not only to those who reside in London, but such as occasionally visit it. But by far the most considerable number of shells, both in variety and perfection, may be procured at Mr. Mawe's, No. 149, Strand; and of birds, at Mr. Leadbeater's, Brewer Street, Golden Square.

## SHELLS.

Mr. GEORGE HUMFREY, *Leicester Street, Leicester Square; the father of Practical Conchology in this country.*  
 Mr. GEORGE B. SOWERBY, *King Street, Covent Garden.*  
 Mr. BULL, *124, Leadenhall Street.*  
 Mr. DEARCKLEY, *Newington Causeway.*  
 Mr. DANTZIGER, *23, Greek Street, Soho.*  
 Mr. FOX, *Shoe Lane.*  
 Mr. MARCUS HYAMS, *Regent Street.*  
 Mr. HYAMS, *54, Holywell Street, Strand.*  
 Mr. HARWOOD, *Houndsditch.*  
 Mr. PALING, *Butt Lane, Deptford.*  
 Mr. LATHAM, *Old Compton Street.*  
 Mr. NOSADA, *Coventry Street; also in Prints, Drawings, &c.*

Mr. NOSADA, jun., *27, Warwick Street, Golden Square; Curiosities, &c.*  
 Mr. RATLEY, *Duke's Court, St. Martin's Lane; Microscopic Objects, Minerals, &c.*  
 Mr. RYALS, *John Street, Clerkenwell.*  
 Mr. STUCHBURY, *3, Dove Court, Old Jewry.*  
 Mr. THATCHER, *Newman Street, Oxford Street.*  
 Mr. TURNER, *215, Whitechapel Road.*  
 Mr. WILLIS, *120, Chancery Lane.*  
 Mr. WATERWORTH, *103, Houndsditch.*  
 Mr. NIGHTINGALE, *143, Leadenhall Street.*  
 Mr. WHITE, *12, Cross Street, Newington Butts.*

## BIRDS.

Mr. B. LEADBEATER, *Animal Preserver to the British Museum, 20, Brewer Street, Golden Square.*  
 Mr. KEMP, *37, Northumberland Place, Commercial Road; live and dead Birds.*  
 Mr. TURNER, *215, Whitechapel Road; ditto.*  
 Mr. WILLIS, *120, Chancery Lane; Shells and Curiosities.*

## INSECTS.

Mr. LATHAM, *Old Compton Street.*  
 Mr. RATLEY, *Duke's Court, St. Martin's Lane.*  
 Mr. STUCHBURY, *3, Dove Court, Old Jewry.*  

The Entomologist may be furnished with every kind of apparatus necessary by application to

 Mr. SAMUELLE, *through Mr. T. Boys, 7, Ludgate Hill.*  
 Mr. TUTHER, *Queen Street, Russell Square.*