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Author(s): Bloomfield, R. M.

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MUSEUMS & GALLERIES COMMISSION

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES COMMISSION.
REPORT 1987-88

The above volume recently arrived in the BCG postbag. A glossy and colourful 96 page account of the good work of MGC and its agencies, including The Conservation Unit. However natural history (excluding geology) hardly features at all. The appendices provide precise details of grants, which are summarised below:

MGC Local Museum Purchase Grants 1987-1988

Administered by the V&A Museum:	£1,149,820
Administered by the Science Museum:	£ 130,352
amount spent on Biology	£ 0
Conservation grants:	£ 179,935
amount spent on Biology	£ 0
Conservation unit grants:	£ 41,823
amount spent on Biology	£ 0
Capital Grants:	£ 220,325
amount spent on Biology	£ 5,850

These statistics are interesting to say the least. The disparity between the 'arts' and 'sciences' is more than apparent, but why so little spent on biological projects? Is it because there is nothing on the market for us to purchase? Is there a shortage of local money to match the grants? Are requests for grants being turned down? Are biologists aware of the terms of reference of these grants?

Any comments?

Derek Whiteley
Secretary

Letters

Dear Sir

I read Ms Pickering's criticism of First Impressions (Vol 4 No 9) with interest but was disappointed to find it ill-informed.

The objective of the exhibition was to look at early observation and recording of natural history in Australia, not to examine the social history or 'human' aspects of the settlement story. Contrary to the suggestion

that the exhibition only deals with the 'great men', over half of the original works of art displayed are by either George Raper, an able seaman, or Thomas Watling, a convict transported for forgery! These artists drew scenes of the first settlement and of native Australians, and these were included in the exhibition to give some idea of the atmosphere of the colony.

However, this aspect was not pursued any further for lack of exhibitable material; we did not wish to create a 'book on the wall' and social history is dealt with better elsewhere, eg Robert Hughes' THE FATAL SHORE. As for the Aboriginal question, contrary to the criticism, we chose deliberately to broaden the brief to acknowledge the effects of European settlement on the indigenous population; to quote from the AV 'First Impact', which summarizes and concludes the exhibition: "As so often happened greed and prejudice led to exploitation of the Aboriginal communities and a breakdown of their culture".

Yours faithfully

Dr Robert M Bloomfield
Exhibition Content Co-ordinator
British Museum (Natural History)

REQUEST FOR CARCASSES

The Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge, is building up a reference collection of disarticulated skeletal material and would be grateful for whole skeletons or carcasses - male, female and juvenile, of the species listed below.

If possible the following information about the animal would be appreciated:

- 1 Total weight
- 2 Age
- 3 Sex
- 4 Where it died
- 5 When it died
- 6 Cause of death
- 7 Whether wild, domestic, or feral
- 8 Where possible height at rump and shoulder; and for small mammals total length, head and hind foot length
- 9 Any other details available.

Mammals

Common rat (Rattus norvegicus)
Shrew - all species
Voles - all species
Mice - all species except Field and Yellow-necked mice

Bats - all species
Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus)
Brown hare (Lepus capensis)
Mountain (Arctic) hare (Lepus timidus)
Fat dormouse (Glis glis)
Hazel dormouse (Muscardinus avellanarius)
Garden dormouse (Eliomys quercinus)
Red squirrel (Sciurus vulgaris)