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Natural Sciences Collections Association

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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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In **The Linnean** issue for January 1990 (volume 6 part 1) there is an impassioned plea from R H K Disney for the continued funding of taxonomy in this country. He clearly points out the Catch-22 which is effectively blocking Research Council funds for taxonomic research: Research Councils will fund an investigator's salary only in 'exceptional circumstances' because workers are normally expected to be employed in UK Higher Education Institutions; the Higher Education Institutions are no longer interested in taxonomy for many reasons (it doesn't pull in corporate cash; it's unfashionable etc) so they don't employ taxonomists; therefore Government funding is effectively denied to taxonomic research. So who funds taxonomy?

Disney tried to get funding from a variety of private and government sources to continue his research and his analysis of the results is fascinating. The most nigardly response came from government organizations (zero); the most positive from 'mega-millionaires' (averaged at £5.59 per mail shot). I think the moral of this is that mega-millionaires are worth cultivating!

In the same issue the current position regarding Flora Europaea is outlined, including changes to the Editorial Committee and Secretariat (which is now based at Liverpool Museum).

It was heartening to see a short piece in **Focus** (8), the Newsletter of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, celebrating 60 years of museum work by Norah McMillan (Mrs Mac). Her first job was in the Ulster Museum but she has been at Liverpool Museum for many years where she is the fount of all knowledge concerning the Mollusca and the Museum's shell collections. There's a lovely picture of her too!

## Biological Collections UK - MA Report

I have obtained a couple of mint-condition copies of this enormous tome to sell at the bargain basement price of £10. First-come, first-served. Postage (quite substantial, I should imagine) is extra.

Derek Whiteley, City Museum, Sheffield S10 2TP

# Programme

## 1991

**April 4-7** AGM meeting at Liverpool with the title **Dead or Alive: Museums and Green Issues**. Accommodation at the University. Booking forms sent out with this Newsletter. Return to Clem Fisher at Liverpool Museum as soon as possible. Details below.

**July 22-26** **Museums Association Conference on the theme: Interpretation**. BCG hopes to run one of the workshop sessions and one of the trips will be to the Farne Islands. There will be a BCG stand for the first time.

Autumn meeting to be arranged, possibly on the theme: **Valuing Collections**.

## 1992

**April or May** AGM meeting with the proposed theme: **Natural History Archives**. Venue to be agreed, but hopefully in the North-East of England.

**May 10-15** SPNHC sponsored meeting, joint with many international museum organisations, to be held in Madrid on the theme: **The Preservation and Conservation of Natural History Collections**. Further details elsewhere in this issue. Booking form has been issued. Contact: Julio Gisbert or Fernando Palacios, Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, José Gutiérrez Abascal, 2, 28006 Madrid, Spain.

**September 18-20** Joint meeting in Liverpool with BOU and Society for the History of Natural History on the theme: History of Ornithology.

## BCG AGM Meeting 1991 Dead or Alive: Museums and Green Issues

April 4th to 7th 1991

Dale Hall, University of Liverpool

This conference will explore our role as curator in the 'green' age where we are increasingly used as spokesmen on environmental issues.

**Thursday 4th** Registration

**Friday 5th** 'Making your museum environmentally friendly': talks on recycling, museum shop