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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Letters

Dear Derek,

An enthusiast or another would-be profiteer from a small museum's under curated collections?

We were recently visited unheralded by someone claiming to be Keeper of Micro-lepidoptera at the Natural History Museum. He had neither introduction nor proof of identity and was not named in the **Museums Yearbook**.

In the absence of the Assistant Keeper responsible for natural history he attempted to browbeat the receptionist and attendant staff into affording him access to the reserve lepidoptera collections.

He was then most insistent that he came in again to talk about the pretext of his visit, that a student had been told by someone at an Oxford museum that material from the Walker collection had been sent to the Isle of Man.

Even when he had been told: a) that the policy of the Manx Museum was not to acquire non-Manx material, b) that the collections had been thoroughly worked through by several experts and, c) that the collections were currently inaccessible because of gallery reorganisation, he continued to hector the Assistant Keeper. He was accompanied by a woman who exhibited surprising ignorance of the British distribution of the aquatic plants she was stated to have researched.

A subsequent phone call established that there was indeed a person with the name supplied on the Natural History Museum staff list, but the Manx Museum staff were left wondering was this a genuine enthusiast faced with a wholly unexpected opportunity to search for 'lost' collections, or a would be profiteer looking for under-curated material in a small museum.

Since any of us may have such an opportunity may we commend the carrying of some form of institutional identification and, perhaps, a more conciliatory attitude.

Yours faithfully

Larch Garrard
The Manx Museum

Dear Mr Whiteley

Natural Sciences - Lancashire Museum Service

Further to your letter of 11th June and our subsequent telephone conversations, you will be pleased to learn that our Committee agreed yesterday to establish a post of Senior Assistant Keeper (Biology), Scale 6. It is intended that the post-holder will spend six months of the time on peripatetic work with museums in Lancashire and the remainder of the time dealing with our own collections and displays, including arranging for the return of the Harris Museum material to Lancashire. I hope that the post will be advertised in late September/October with a view to filling the vacancy from the beginning of January 1991.

There is no doubt that the Biology Curators Group have been instrumental in encouraging greater care of natural science collections in Lancashire, and it must be regarded as a real success story for the Group. Congratulations!

Yours sincerely

John Blundell
County Museums Officer

Dear Derek

Thank you very much for inviting me to give a talk at the BCG meeting (in North Devon).

I did enjoy this occasion very much and I appreciate especially the care you gave to the preparation of the seminars. Most of the speakers are very interesting. I, as an overseas member could truly feel your intention to make the meeting a successful one and I am grateful for your hospitality to the stranger from Taiwan who had only his museum to demonstrate. I have only recently started my research and I still have a long way to go.. It may be that in the future I shall have cause to request some further help!

With best wishes

Francis Y T Chang (Mr)
