



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Derbyshire County Council Expelled from Museums Association

Author(s): Not Listed.

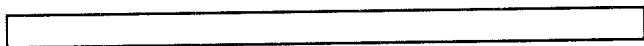
Source: Not Listed. (1991). Derbyshire County Council Expelled from Museums Association. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 5 No 7, 78 - 79.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/980>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

the opinion of the whole membership. However, the chairman will take into account the views of a cross section of the membership in formulating the evidence to be presented, and it will be published in a future edition of the Newsletter.

The deliberations and final report of the Sub-Committee are of great concern to BCG members, so the committee will try to keep everyone informed as to progress and results through the pages of the Newsletter.



News

North East gets first Travelling Biology Curator

'The region's first Travelling Biology Curator has joined the North of England Museums Service.

Mark Simmons, 27, aims to make the region greener by putting a halt to the damage which has been caused to north east biology collections from years of underfunding and lack of expertise. £10,000 will also be spent by the North of England Museums Service on improving the conditions of the collections. The project is joint funded by the North of England Museums Service and the Museums and Galleries Commission.

The new two year post and the £10,000 is welcomed by the region's museums and others who have campaigned for this injection of expertise and cash into the region's biology collections. Still seeking funds for this project, Sue Underwood, Director of NEMS says: "this, like all aspects of our work aims to improve both museums and the quality of life for people living in the north east".

Editor's comment. The above is quoted from the press release issued by NEMS. The creation of this post is the direct result of the 'Biological Collections UK' report and the Sunflower Campaign, both key elements of BCG's work over the past few years.

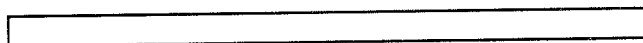


Ecology - a new gallery at the Natural History Museum

The British Petroleum sponsored Ecology gallery at the Natural History Museum was opened by HRH The Princess of Wales on 11th March. This is the first of a series of permanent exhibitions to be constructed as a direct result of the success of the Natural History Museum Development Trust Appeal which was launched in October 1989 and has already reached its £5 million target. It is claimed to be the first permanent exhibition on global ecology in the world.

The editor has not yet visited this exhibition, so here is a quote from the press release:
'Housed within a towering 'greenhouse', this massive exhibition steers away from doom and gloom environmental stories, and concentrates instead on building visitors' understanding of the delicate balance that exists in nature. Presented with a true picture of the underlying principles of ecology, they can make up their own minds about what should be done to conserve our fragile planet'.

This is clearly a major development and the editor would be pleased to receive any comments from members who have seen the exhibition.



Derbyshire County Council Expelled from Museums Association.

The Museums Association has expelled Derbyshire County Council from membership - the first time an institutional member has been expelled in the Association's 100 year history.

The expulsion follows Derbyshire County Council's decision to sell off part of its museums' collection to help contribute to the Council's funds rather than specifically to the museums.

The Museums Association noted that Derbyshire had failed to follow accepted procedures for disposal of museum items and refuses to use funds raised for the purchase of additions to the collection. These actions are contrary to the Museums Association Code of Practice for Museum Authorities.

The Association attempted to obtain from Derbyshire a written assurance that the items would only be sold in accordance with the Code of Practice. This they have failed to do.

Developments at Sheffield Museum

Tim Riley has accepted early retirement from his post as Principal Keeper of Natural Sciences at Sheffield City Museum and he left the museum on 1st February 1991. Derek Whiteley has taken over as Principal Keeper and his old post of Assistant Keeper (Zoology) is now frozen. Derek is, of course, Secretary of BCG, so he will need to take a sabbatical from these duties until he has settled in to his new job. The arrangements for this will be discussed at the AGM and reported on in the next Newsletter.

BCG takes Steps to Safeguard Uncurated Collections

Stickers are now available to help safeguard uncurated collections and individual specimens. Self-adhesive for glass, cardboard boxes, wood etc., these labels are available at £1 (stamps, cheque, P.O.) for 200 (including postage) from:
Biology Curators' Group
Derek Whiteley
City Museum
Sheffield S10 2TP

This is a prototype. If there is a demand we will produce other designs and other adhesives. Hopefully these labels may prevent future authorities 'burning their Dodos', 'doing a Barnsley' or assigning scientific collections to the skip. So if you visit a museum with no natural history curator, take some stickers with you to mark collections you think are of value and which could come under threat.

THIS COLLECTION/SPECIMEN
HAS SCIENTIFIC VALUE
DO NOT DESTROY/DISPOSE
WITHOUT CONSULTING AN
EXPERIENCED CURATOR
BIOLOGY CURATORS GROUP

In the Press

Conservation News (44, March 1991) has an interesting short review by Chris Nicholson of the production, properties and composition of Shellac. This is an insect product (species *Laccifer lacca*); some 75,000 individuals are involved in producing the raw material which goes into one kilogram of the finished material. It has traditional uses in taxidermy and as a bottle or jar sealant, but the main interest of the article is in the processing of the 'lac' and the farming of the insects.

The Systematics Association, in conjunction with the Linnean Society and CAB International, have produced an attractive and informative leaflet: **Systematics - the Study of Biological Diversity**. It covers the role of systematics, the contribution of systematics to science, the relevance of systematics and the need for more resources. The leaflet is probably not suitable as general museum give away, but it is useful for handing out to specific enquirers or to those who say 'what's it all for' - and this includes many councillors. Copies are available from: The Systematics Association, c/o International Mycological Institute, Ferry Lane, Kew, Surrey TW9 3AF.

Controversy on the use and value of herbarium specimens raged for a time in *Nature* last year. In *Nature* of 16 August, it was suggested by Clifford, Rogers and Dettman that taxonomists might usefully dispense with existing large herbarium collections, instead relying on type specimens and published descriptions of species. The response was massive and a read through the reply letters published in *Nature* of 20 September provides an overwhelming array of arguments, with examples, of why we should retain our herbaria in perpetuity. They cannot be repeated here, but these arguments form the bricks and mortar of the defences we are called on more and more frequently to construct in the face of uninformed criticism from 'busy administrators and politicians seeking quick remedies to immediate ills' (to quote from one reply).

Another defence of museum natural history collections came in *Nature* of 27 September with Jared Diamond reporting on current research using the polymerase chain reaction to extract, amplify and