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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Conservation and the Herbarium - Conference Report

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Source: Edmonds, J. (1993). Conservation and the Herbarium - Conference Report. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 6 No 2, 15 - 16.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1897>

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numbers considerably. Amongst the curatorial delegates there were at least eight members of BCG of whom six were speaking to one or other of the themes. The highlight for me was the quietly polished but passionate account by a Professor of Anatomy at Glasgow, of William Hunter's work. As Hunter published little outside his work on the human gravid uterus, it was maintained that an analysis of his collections in combination with the archives would show him to have been a forerunner in many fields of medicine, but little recognised to date. No doubt others will have their favourite(s) and those who were not there will have to console themselves with the odd paper which may be published subsequently. It is not currently the policy of SHNH to attempt to print complete proceedings as matter of course.

E. G. Hancock

Conservation and the Herbarium - Conference Report

A one-day conference organised by the Institute for Paper Conservation in collaboration with the National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside (NMGM) and the National Museum of Wales (NMW) was held on 14 May, 1993 at Liverpool Museum and was attended by 40 delegates. Speakers included Dr Angus Gunn, Sally Ann Yates and Tracey Seddon (NMGM), Bob Child and Vicky Purewal (NMW), Dr Rob Huxley (Natural History Museum) and Kate Edmondson (Kew). The sessions were chaired by Dr John Edmondson (NMGM) and Steve Garland (Bolton Museum), and the meeting concluded with a tour of the herbarium, and a demonstration of the conservation project on the Roylean herbarium by Donna Hughes (NMGM).

Conservation is currently achieving a high profile in Liverpool, with the creation of a new Conservation Division of the NMGM.

Conservation staff who currently occupy sections of the various museum buildings will soon be housed together in a large city-centre listed building which is currently being converted and refurbished. The additional resources becoming available for conservation are now beginning to have an impact on many of the NMGM's collections, including those of the Botany Department which comprise more than 330,000 specimens.

The conference provided an opportunity to hear of some of the latest developments in materials and techniques used in the conservation of herbarium specimens and other botanical materials, and to learn of procedures adopted in various other large institutions. The publication in 1992 of the second edition of "The Herbarium Handbook" by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Museums & Galleries Commission's "Standards in the Museum care of Biological Collections", have helped to draw attention to the complex issues relating to the exceptionally demanding range of compositions and structures found in botanical collections.

The use of an ultrasonic humidifier for separating dried specimens which had been adhered to their backing sheets was one of the techniques described by Sally Ann Yates, who was standing in for her colleague Nicola Walker. Angus Gunn provided an overview of past and current practice in herbaria, while Bob Child covered the topics of environmental standards and pest control. Vicky Purewal described a recent conservation survey of the botany collections at the National Museum of Wales, while Rob Huxley spoke of the recent organisational changes at the Natural History Museum and the opportunities for closer monitoring of specimen handling by visitors and for loans. Kate Edmondson presented an illustrated account of the project to conserve botanical prints and drawings at Kew, where until very recently there had been no professional involvement by in-house paper conservators. Tracey Seddon's talk focused on the conservation of mixed-media botanical models, such as those made by R. Brendel of Berlin at the turn of the century. A new method of storage and transport was shown, and detailed techniques for the conservation of damaged models were described.

There was a lively discussion at the conclusion of the paper-reading session, where issues such as the conflict between safe storage and the scientific uses of plant collections were further aired. Five trade stands were also provided, allowing some of the latest materials and equipment to be demonstrated during the meal - and tea-breaks.

This was a very successful conference, not least because it brought together people from two rather different cultures - paper conservators and botanical curators - and provided a valuable

opportunity to exchange ideas and learn about new approaches to the problems of conserving botanical material. The theme highlighted by the first speaker, Dr Angus Gunn, that a dialogue between conservators and curators was an essential part of solving these problems, was taken up by subsequent speakers, and everyone enjoyed an excellent lunch provided by Sue Flackett's team of caterers.

John Edmondson

Diary Dates

The care of spirit-preserved material is the subject of a one day BCG meeting planned for the 25th October at the Natural History Museum, London. The provisional programme covers topics such as containers, labels, rehydration techniques, storage etc. BCG members will have had a mailing about this meeting but further details can be got from Kathie Way at the NHM.

27 October is the start of National Dormouse Week and the launch of a national dormouse survey of England and Wales. Survey packs and further information from English Nature (NDW), Northminster House, Peterborough, PE1 1UA.

11-12 April 1994 are the dates of a joint BCG/GEM conference in Oxford. The BCG AGM will be on Tuesday 12th. More details to follow.

Exhibitions

Primates - a new permanent exhibition at the NHM opened in July and explains the lifestyle and behaviour of the group while drawing parallels between humans and other primates.

Megabugs - also at the NHM, this temporary exhibition of giant robotic insects including a 5 metre-long locust and a 6 metre-long stick insect is already pulling in the crowds. Until October.

On Wenlock Edge - is a new exhibition at Much Wenlock Museum on the wildlife of Wenlock Edge from prehistory to the present day. Open Mon-Sat 10.30-1.00 and 2.30-5.00. Further details from Much Wenlock, Museum, High Street, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6AE. Tel 0952 727773.

People

Professor Robert May FRS will succeed Sir Walter Bodmer FRS as Chairman of the Trustees of The Natural History Museum in January 1994. Prof. May is Royal Society Research Professor, Dept. of Zoology, Oxford University and Imperial College and President of the British Ecological Society.

Dr Neil Chalmers has been confirmed as Director of The Natural History Museum for a further five years.

Steve Thomson has not only taken over the BCG Secretaryship but has obtained the post of Keeper of Natural Sciences at Scunthorpe Museum. He moved from Clitheroe in April.

Registration Proposals from FENSCORE to the Museums and Galleries Commission.

PREAMBLE.

In past decades UK natural science collections demonstrably have suffered disproportionate damage and loss when compared to all other types of museum objects. It is a sad fact that because they are erroneously perceived to have a higher 'value' the most mundane social history or decorative art object almost invariably receives far more cossetting than any natural history specimen housed in the same institution, despite the growing importance of the latter material to society. Although through the efforts of Biology Curators Group, Geological Curators Group, and the Collection Research Units, this situation is steadily improving, a large part of the nation's heritage represented by natural science collections is still at risk. Natural history collections require curatorial and conservation care that is different in kind from that needed by collections of human artefacts. Because of this FENSCORE makes the following recommendations to the Museums and Galleries Commission, with a request they be incorporated into the Registration Guidelines as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS for the REGISTRATION GUIDELINES.

1. Because of the special curatorial needs of natural science collections there should be a