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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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trilobite handles encourage people to open the drawers and benches alongside provide seating for appropriate levels of contemplation. The accompanying text is carried on trilobite bats (imagine a chopping board - trilobite on one side, text on the other) leaving the display uncluttered with words.

Photographs, on a panel hanging above, relate the Silurian reef scene to similar habitats in the world today and to reefs that can be seen fossilized *in situ* in the cliff and quarry faces of Wenlock Edge.

A visitor-operated model demonstrates how the Edge was formed. The simplicity of the final model, bicycle-pump and push-chair wheels provide the technology, belies the amount of effort that went into its design. Mechanical difficulties and establishing exactly what the model needed to demonstrate were only resolved after considerable and sometimes heated discussion and the model is a credit to the ingenuity of our technical staff (and the impetus of a shoe-string budget). And it met with the approval of the local geologists.

It was quite an interesting experience extracting a list of about 12 plants "characterizing" the Edge (wood, meadow and regenerating quarry) from three of the local botanists; and then establishing which reliably indicated the presence of limestone and even more difficult, the presence of an ancient wood or meadow; and then to find the relevant photographs (at no cost); Hairy Violet had to go - not even the botanist who had enthused about its presence on Wenlock Edge had captured it on film.

Symbols were used to indicate the preferences of the flowers (habitats, lime-loving, ancient habitat). I thought this was a pleasingly simple way of getting the message across but the use of symbols seemed to cause our graphic designer a considerable amount of stress.

The limestone approach also provided an excellent opportunity to transform wildly exciting dot (distribution) maps (taken from the 'Shropshire Flora') into an interactive display. Dot maps for yellow-wort, pyramidal orchid and heather and a sliding geology overlay make the connection between limestone and plant distribution (and again, you can sit down to do this one).

The 'Caring for Wenlock Edge' panel uses photographs to show the National Trust in action; opening up ancient routeways, excavating lime kilns, botanically surveying the 'Pudding Bag' (Yes! - a limestone meadow); putting up fences; taking down conifers (and the subsequent transformation of the ground flora) and my favourite - pollarding Wenlock's ancient limes.

One of the most pleasurable aspects of this project was the number of people who eventually became involved; from the National Trust staff who marched me up and down the Edge in search of lime trees and lime kilns, to the quarrymen from ECC Quarries, who found a magnificent lump of limestone with lots of fossils (What clues can you find to Wenlock's past?) and lined up to have their photograph taken (for comparison with the 19th century predecessors); from the scientists of Marine Research Labs who searched slide collections for aerial photographs of patch reefs, and Shropshire's naturalists who provided images of wild flowers to the town archivist and local historians who provided images and documents pertaining to the lime-burning industry.

The display has now been open for one season (April to September). We have received positive feedback from both members of the public and schools; a teachers' pack will be available next year and better promotion should increase the number of school visits, and yes, our man from the Countryside Commission is quite right, a leaflet is needed to help visitors make that link between display and countryside.

*Jane Mee  
Curator of Natural Sciences,  
Ludlow Museum*

### **ITS ALL GREEK TO ME**

Has any one else received the letter below which was sent by Treda Ltd of Athens to Kelvingrove Museum? Although a suitable subject for our amusement there is a serious side to the approach which (and apologies to Treda if I have misconstrued their letter) seems to be seeking surplus specimens for resale. Anyway, here it is:

*Sirs, We have a company of import - export and we are interested to supply from you some kinds.*

- 1. For insects generally (butterflies - scarabees) from all over the world, but especially from Europe.*
- 2. For spiders, scorpions etc, either salted or proplastics.*
- 3. For fishes, salted, sea born, living on the borders of a lake or river fishes European, specially proplastics.*
- 4. For proplastics of dolphins, sharks, whales etc.*
- 5. For European shells.*

*In Greece are going to be founded a lot of museums of Physical History and we intend to supply them all these kinds and the museums are going to create gift shops.*

*Our cooperation is going to be as follows: for every order you'll send us the proportionate invoices and we'll send you immediately the money.*

You are kindly requested for lower prices in order to have profits, because as you know we are going to resell them.

The Greek Market is very interesting.

Looking forward to your answer and the relative price list, we hope our future cooperation will be profitable.

Faithfully yours

### Beware Replica Eggs!

Hands up the readers of *The Mail on Sunday*. The accompanying magazine carried a conspicuous advertisement by Emerald Collectables for a series of life-size replica birds eggs "developed in liason with Colin Harrison - for 26 years curator of the British Museum's famous collection". The eggs do seem to be accurate replicas, Colin Harrison calls them the most accurate he has ever seen, and the vendors "expect the collection will discourage those wishing to steal birds eggs - after all why steal one when you can now legally own such a perfect replica?" Setting this dubious argument aside, the collection will have introduced to the open market a set of accurate fakes for potential substitution into museum collections. If even the tight security of the Jourdain Collection at Gloucester can be breached and clutches stolen (3 Gyr Falcon clutches have been noted as missing) it is galling to have to beware of yet another potential weapon in the armoury of the egg thieves.

**Advertising Rates** - relevant advertisements from suppliers etc. are welcome. The current rates (copy supplied) are:

Full page	£40 per issue
Full page (3 Consecutive issues)	£100 (total)
Half page	£25 per issue
Quarter page	£15 per issue
Inserts (350 supplied ready for insertion)	£25 per issue

Contact: The Editor, M A Taylor, Perth Museum, George Street, Perth, PH1 5LB (tel 0738 32488) OR The Treasurer, Ms K Way, Mollusca Section, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD (tel 01 938 8892).

**Back Issues** - The editor now has the stock of back issues. A full list will appear in the next newsletter. Meanwhile, any enquiries to the editor.

The views expressed in the Newsletter do not represent the views or policy of the Biology Curators Group Committee or membership except where specifically stated.

Subscription rates are £8.00 for individual membership and £15.00 for institutional and overseas membership. Application forms from the Membership Secretary on request.

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