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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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operational details and other developments for Ann to tell you about in a future article!

I would just like to end with this plea. An initiative like SEARCH has a knock on effect in other spheres of operation, not least for conservation and collections management. For us it has meant a complete reappraisal of our acquisitions policy. We now have a particular need and use for foreign material which in the past we refused or redirected to other museums. So if anyone is responsible for good quality non-data foreign material and wishes to investigate the possibility of transferring it to a good home would they please contact Ann Nicol at SEARCH, 50 Clarence Road, Gosport, Hants. PO12 1BU (0705 501957).

*Chris Palmer, Keeper of Biology and Curator of Havant Museum, Hampshire County Council Museum Service.*

### **PARROTS at Oldham and elsewhere**

*Pieces of Eight, Pieces of Eight; Polly, Pretty Polly; Punch on Parrots; Monty Python and the deceased Norwegian Blue; Endangered Hyacinth* - these were all phrases racing around my mind as I took up the post of Exhibitions Officer in Natural History at Oldham Museum. My predecessor, Jane Mee, had completed a feasibility study into the idea of a parrot touring exhibition before moving on to Ludlow, leaving me with copious information and an exhibition to organise!

Part of the agreement with the Museums and Galleries Commission to obtain financial assistance was that the tour should be well booked and this was one of my initial tasks. To my surprise the tour was almost fully booked within about six weeks of advertising - all this before we even began to put the exhibition together. This, in my opinion, highlights the demand and need for touring exhibitions - unfortunately the subsequent closure of the touring exhibitions unit means that small local museums like Oldham will find it virtually impossible to obtain funding to tour exhibitions in future.

*Parrots* was an exciting venture because of its multidisciplinary approach, incorporating art, literature and humour within a natural history framework. I was also very pleased to be organising a touring exhibition in natural history because we seem to see so few of them around.

Much of my time initially was taken up with looking into the loaning of material as Oldham had very little in its own collection relating to parrots. Our access to items for the exhibition was determined largely by money - we could not for example afford to pay

couriers to accompany items from one museum to another. However, most of the museums approached were exceedingly helpful and agreed to loan relevant material.

The exhibition eventually came to fruition; loans were completed; text written and the exhibition designed and built. It opened in Oldham on April 4th 1993 and is currently touring.

*Sian Owen, Exhibitions Officer (Natural History) Oldham Museum*

### **University of Leicester, Dept of Museum Studies Science and Natural Science Courses**

For the first time, the Department of Museum Studies is inviting applicants wishing to take individual one week science and natural science modules. These modules form part of the University Diploma/M.Sc. in Museum Studies. Students wishing to go on to take the other modules which make up the course will be credited with the modules they have already taken. Other modules look more closely at the non-discipline based aspects of curation, for example, preventative conservation, documentation practice, collection management policies etc.

#### **Sciences 1: Science Collections, 28 Feb - 4 March 1994**

This course will take a wide look at science collections in museums, and is aimed particularly at students interested in the history and philosophy of science. The course will examine the nature of these collections, practice in collecting and conservation, directions for research and the basics of collections management.

#### **Sciences 1: Natural Sciences Curatorial Course, in collaboration with BCG, GCG and Leicester Museums, 7 March - 11 March 1994**

A practical look at collecting and field recording techniques, preservation, conservation, storage, documentation, taxonomy and research. The course will discuss those aspects of curation which are specific to the natural sciences. It will include field and laboratory work, lectures and seminars. It will discuss in equal measure good practice in geology and biology.

This one week course replaces the Sheffield based Natural Sciences Curatorial Course. It aims to build upon the success of the Sheffield course particularly in its continued commitment to practical work but with the added incentive of potentially contributing to a recognised qualification in museum studies. The course is also run on a firmer footing as it no longer depends on student numbers to run.