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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Museum News

Author(s): Not Listed.

Source: Not Listed. (1984). Museum News. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter, Vol 3 No 10*, 600 - 604.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1308>

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MUSEUM NEWS

Borough of Brighton

The Booth Museum of Natural History

Dyke Road, Brighton

On 30th April Charles Steel, Principal Keeper of Natural Sciences left the Booth Museum to take up the appointment of Principal Keeper Support Services at Portsmouth City Museum and Art Gallery. He has since been replaced by Dr. Philip Armitage who was Head of the Environmental Archaeology Section, Dept. of Urban Archaeology in the Museum of London.

During the past year a number of notable insect collections have been acquired in addition to our steady flow of acquisitions. The sale of the National Butterfly Museum at Bramber, W. Sussex provided an, albeit expensive, opportunity to purchase some useful specimens which have gone towards filling gaps in the collection and boosting certain genera. A total of 13 lots were purchased containing a little over 400 specimens, at a cost of £1100. Funds were provided by a Science Museum Grant-in-Aid, money from Friends of the Museum and from a film company who were using museum facilities as part of film set. Further specimens were obtained from Dr. Arthur Allyn who purchased a very large part of the National Butterfly Museum collection. We exchanged a number of butterflies with him on completion of the auction.

A further collection was obtained via the BM(NH) made by M. Pantling in Africa.

Limited sales of the successful publication of Halls Monograph on the Nymphalidae (see October Newsletter) continue. We also kept sales of the Sussex Plant Atlas (£7.95) produced by the Museum, and our other major publication: A History of the Butterflies and Moths of Sussex (£9.95). Both publications are extremely useful and contain a wealth of data. The latter book also contains both monochrome photographs and 90 moths and butterflies illustrated in full colour. Preparations are in hand for the production of a ring-bound Sussex Lichen Flora.

A new Geology Gallery will be opening shortly. By the summer of 1985 a new temporary display on dragonflies and conservation, with a proposed title of "Tigers of the Skies", will be ready. This is being sponsored by Ilford Ltd. and will consist of 20 or more screens of colour photos, many showing hitherto unknown aspects of dragonfly biology. Full details later in this column.

Recent acquisitions at Bolton Museum

Notes on collections acquired fairly recently may be of interest to others. If other institutions were to follow suit it will provide an immediate updating of the FENSCORE database via the pages of the Newsletter. (Although the details still have to be forwarded through CRU's to Manchester in the usual way in order to be computerised).

Plants

Fox, Brian W. (Professor)

A small flowering plant herbarium of 700 sheets collected between 1948-1978 mainly from Lancashire, Wiltshire, Northumberland & Durham, Bute and Outer Hebrides. It includes over 100 aliens from local Lancashire tip sites collected in collaboration with Rev. C. E. Shaw, Roy Lancaster, Charles Howe and J. E. Louseley. Brian Fox has donated them to his native town but retains a comprehensive collection of lichens on which he currently works. (Acc. No. 85.1985).

Flora of the Chorley Area

This is a long term project and the main collaborators are depositing voucher material in the Bolton Museum herbarium. Chorley is an adjacent district, just outside the current Greater Manchester area.

Insects

Tutt, James William (1858-1911)

One store box containing two series, of the Muslin Moth and the Map-winged Swift, about 150 specimens in all. These include a number of other collectors and although they do not include a startling range of varieties it is nice to have some material from this famous entomologist. (Acc. No. 56.1984).

Edwards, W. F.

Edwards lived at Baycliffe, nr. Ulverston, Cumbria. When he died (c.1960), Mr. John Heath got the cabinet from his widow for use by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (J.H. was then employed at the Merlewood Research Station). When John Heath moved to the Biological Records Centre at Monkswood Experimental Station the collection went with him. I used specimens from the collection to make genitalia preparations which were used to illustrate the Critical Species guides published in the Entomologists' Gazette (e.g. Vol. 20 (1959), pp.263-269). This was when I was temporarily employed there while still a student, during the summer vacation of 1968.

Meanwhile my father obtained from his widow several store boxes of moths, a 10-drawer cabinet of foreign Lepidoptera (plus a few insects of other orders), a small collection of bryophytes and several books. The majority of these are still in the familial home in Ulverston apart from the bryophytes which were obtained by Merseyside County Museums in 1970 and the British non-lepidopterous insects which I have accessioned into Bolton Museum.

It is therefore a fortuitous coincidence that on John Heath's retirement he negotiated for the main collection to be transferred to a museum in the north west of England and Bolton was suggested. Of great additional interest are two manuscript catalogues of Edwards' which give a key to the numbered system of cross reference. Included in one of the books is a catalogue of a collection of birds' eggs (although where the specimens are now I have no idea, not recalling any references to birds' eggs at any time) and a list of the aforementioned bryophytes.

Edwards was Manager of the Passenger Division of the old LMS railway. A number of specimens are from Crumpsall, Manchester; the majority are from north Lancashire with the balance from a scattering of localities throughout the British Isles.

The 18-drawer cabinet now in Bolton Museum (Acc. No. 235.1981) was made by W. Downing of Whip's Cross, Walthamstow and contains approximately 3000 specimens of butterflies and larger moths. Most of the drawers have past evidence of a slight Museum Beetle infestation but none of the specimens appear damaged and most have good data.

Coleoptera

A small collection of beetles from pitfall traps were donated by an undergraduate student after using the facilities of the museum to complete her third-year project. These are from a transect of a field in Bradshaw, Bolton.

Geology

Kerr, James (Dr.)

A small collection of fossil plants was acquired from the family's estate (after auction). These are mainly from the Rossendale area. Bury Museum and Art Gallery has a collection of minerals of his but are no longer pursuing a policy of acquiring natural history collections. (Acc. No. 58. 1984).

E. G. Hancock.

T. D. Fearnough butterfly collection.

In 1983 we were bequeathed the collections and library of Mr. T. D. Fearnough following his sad death.

He lived and worked in Sheffield, where he made extensive studies of the local lepidoptera. Following his retirement in 1961 he moved to the Isle of Wight where he continued his interest. The collection is housed in two fine ten-drawer cabinets and contains a large number of beautifully set butterflies with neat, concise data. Many aberrations and varieties are included and several have been figured in national journals. The only moths are 2,650 specimens of 174 species of Geometridae preserved in an unorthodox fashion. The wings only are mounted under squares of clear, adhesive plastic in 'stamp album' style books. Most carry full data and all are in excellent condition.

Specimens in both collections are mostly from the Isle of Wight and Sheffield areas. Fearnough's diary contains numerous records from the same areas from 1948 to 1982.

His library contains most of the standard texts on butterflies and their aberrations and includes a separate from the Entomologists' Record and Journal of Variation (1972), Volume 84 entitled "The Butterflies of the Isle of Wight" by T. D. Fearnough. It is interleaved and contains a few annotations.

Another notebook contains a list of references to species mentioned in the diary of Dr. Blair from 1945 to 1952 (stated to be held in Red House Museum, Christchurch, Hants.) and in the diary of J. Wright from 1953 to 1965. The

notes were written by J. Wright but the meanings of the tables of species and numbered references are not clear. A few letters between Wright and Blair; Wright and A. J. Wightman, Wright and F. J. Stone and Wright and (J. H. Vine Hall?) of Kirkby Lonsdale are loose in this notebook.

Finally, the collection contains two volumes of superb watercolour paintings of world Papilio species. This is by no means a comprehensive study, but the detail of the pictures shows that they must have been drawn from actual specimens.

And finally..

The following are two quotations lifted from the new publication "Nature conservation in Great Britain" (N.C.C. 1984)..

"Under the RSNC's umbrella, the Trusts retain local autonomy and concentration of effort, through both site safeguard and their educational, advisory and information work. Their members have played a large part in the identification of prospective SSSIs and reserves, and in other surveys and recording schemes which link with others such as enquiries by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Biological Records Centre's mapping schemes... ..Trusts have increasingly employed conservation officers and wardens and have become much involved in liaison with local planning authorities and in dealing with public inquiries and the provision of advice to various parties." (p.24 section 5.4.2)

The above appears under the chapter titled "Growth of the non-governmental organisations, 1945-1984"

The following piece appears under the chapter titled "Education, the media and recreation."

"The museums, including the British Museum (Natural History), have developed conservation and ecological exhibits and have an important role in stimulating interest in natural history, especially amongst the young. Some provincial museums and universities have developed local records centres supplementing the national collection of data in the Biological Records Centre of ITE. Their collections also continue to be an important source of reference and data supporting survey and other research." (p.39 section 9.2)