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NatSCA News

Title: SPNHC visit to the Horniman Museum

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Source: Hatton, J. (2005). SPNHC visit to the Horniman Museum. *NatSCA News, Issue 6*, 42 - 43.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/292>

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Tiffany Adrain (university of Iowa) offered a very clear presentation on the project to improve the curation standards in palaeontology collections, the survey format that she showed was very useful and I hope to get a copy of the form to put in my collection of functional survey formats.

Unfortunately I was committed to attend a small Japanese lacquer seminar at 6.30 the other side of London so I did not get much of a chance to look at the posters.

In conclusion:

This has rather run away from reviewing the conference, but then this is a personal view and what I got out of it.

Perhaps there were too many papers delivered; one had the impression of running a marathon. To ask questions in front of such a distinguished assembly especially since time was so short you had to be very brave. Thankfully all the delegates are listed in the booklet with the schedule and abstracts provided in the goodies pack. I think somehow I prefer more intimate meetings like the one in Norwich two years ago, (I could not afford the one in Dublin). But really it was a wonderful conference, a moment to reflect on my own 'Standards' and to feel quite satisfied with myself: at least I am trying. Tuesday was good but Wednesday was better and Thursday was wonderful, I finally got a free lunch.

SPNHC visit to the Horniman Museum

- Jo Hatton, Deputy Keeper of Natural History, Horniman Museum

A select few collections managers and conservators from as far a field as Ipswich, Amsterdam and New York were accompanied by Lorraine Cornish from the Natural History Museum south of the river to visit the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, South London.

The Horniman Museum, named after its founder, the Victorian tea trader Frederick Horniman, opened its doors in 1901, and was dedicated with the surrounding land as a free gift to the people of London by Horniman forever for their recreation, instruction and enjoyment. The original collections comprised natural history specimens, cultural artefacts and musical instruments. Due to the specific natural science orientated interests of the SPNHC audience it was decided to focus on the natural history and conservation aspects of the museum. Various tours of different areas of the museum were organised and took place during the course of the day.

The day started with a tour of the Horniman Gardens by Gordon Lucas, the Garden Manager. Endlessly enthusiastic, he informed the visitors that the garden on its own attracts more than 200,000 visitors a year and is cared for and maintained by a dedicated team of gardeners and volunteers who look after the continually changing displays such as those in the sunken garden throughout the year. Staff are keen to improve links with the museum itself and form one of the partners to the Plant Cultures Project coordinated by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and other Museums. A display of economically important plants from Southern India have been planted along one of the borders with interpretation to help promote cultural links between the public and the museum collections with further information available on the website.

Next a visit to the Environment Room, a space dedicated to promoting links between people and the environment. Lucy-Anne Bishop, the Environment Project Manager informed the visitors of the purpose of the space, which contains a very popular observational beehive, information and reading area and panels of information that focus attention on both local and global conservation issues. It also highlights issues such as sustainable development. It was then a short walk to one of the most innovative museum buildings to be built in recent years – the Centre for Understanding the Environment or CUE building, which opened in 1996. It houses the Education Department and was undergoing work to install the museum library at the time of the visit. CUE is an energy efficient ecologically friendly building built from sustainable resources, complete with grass roof; the building provides a link between the Museum's collections and the living world of the Horniman Gardens.

The afternoon began with a tour of the Conservation Laboratory lead by Louise Bacon and Sherry Doyal, Head and Deputy Head of Collections Conservation and Care. The group were given an overview of the kinds of work undertaken by the section, more specifically in relation to natural history. The conservators carry out most hands-on conservation of natural history material both in the public galleries and in store.

They also carry out preventive conservation in the form of environmental monitoring and control; pest control, testing and give advice on the correct display and storage materials to be used museum wide. A tour of the natural history gallery also drew attention to some of the problems inherent in historic galleries – namely environmental control, dust accumulation, materials and the variety of skills involved in looking after the range of material on display – taxidermy, fluid preserved specimens and fossils are all housed in the gallery and need regular monitoring and maintenance.

The final visit of the day was to the Natural History Laboratory where Jo Hatton, Deputy Keeper gave a brief introduction to the size and scope of the collections. These comprise approx. 250,000 zoological, geological and botanical specimens and are still being added to through active research. Treasures in the collection include Horniman's original entomological specimens such as the type of the Horniman Butterfly (*Papilio hornimani*) and the more recent addition, the Edward Hart collection of case mounted birds. Set amongst painstakingly detailed natural scenes they provide accurate breeding records and snapshots of what the environment must have looked like 150 years ago. Followed by a tour of the gallery and a discussion involving the challenges of re-interpreting historical galleries we made our way back to the conservation building for a cup of tea. After a quick look in the shop, and a trip back over the river on a blazing hot day, we were in plenty of time to meet up with old with friends at the SPNHC icebreaker back at the Natural History Museum. I hope everyone in the group enjoyed their day.

Many thanks go to Louise Bacon and Lorraine Cornish for organising and coordinating the visit and to all the staff at the Horniman Museum for showing people around.

For further information about the Horniman Museum, Gardens or Collections visit www.horniman.ac.uk

Risk Assessment workshop at the Natural History Museum

- Katherine Andrew

The risk assessment workshop was one of three workshops on offer over the final two days of the conference. Seventeen multinational participants joined Dr Rob Waller of the Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN) on the final Saturday of the meeting for an intensive but most enjoyable day. The group were divided into three teams who for the purposes of the day designated themselves The Pink Ladies (all ladies), The Unreadies and The Specimens.

The first exercise of the day was to identify a range of risks to collections and group the causes into the agents of deterioration, with the tenth agent now re-named the slightly less controversial "Dissassociation" rather than "Custodial Neglect". So no excuse now on coming forward for articles for *Natsca News* on this potentially embarrassing topic.

Groups graded each others identified risks as type 1,2 and 3, ending up with help from the course leader with 24 risk scenarios depending on frequency and degree of damage (some levels of risk are unlikely or impossible, for example, a constant and gradual fire with low level of damage is unlikely). The next step was to assign values to four factors that resulted in a numerical quantification of risk and the potential to rank. The teams then tried the ideas out on groups of real objects in the museum galleries and reported back on their findings, in the process trying to shake off museum visitors who had mistaken us for tour guides.

CMN has carried out this exercise on its own extensive collections with those collections generally most at risk across a range of agents and types identified as the fluid preserved collections. It is interesting to note that Darwin Centre phase 1 started by addressing the fluid collection care issues at the Natural History Museum, although possibly for other reasons rather than as a result of applying this methodology.

The workshop is also run as a two day session. A combination of a slightly faster pace, shorter breaks and the course workbook meant that participants were given the same information but had slightly less time to discuss and digest it. Two participants had attended the course before and were at something of an advantage over others with this head start especially at the stage of the day when we started to quantify risks. For a first timer or a team building exercise, two days would be a better time frame.

This is only the second time that the risk assessment workshop has been run in the UK. It was NSCG (one of the pre-cursor bodies to NatSCA) who commissioned the workshop first in 1995, running it as one of the