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## The Biology Curator

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# The Biology Curator

*The Publication of the Biology Curator's Group*

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## Diary Dates

### BCG

22 Sept. 1998	MA conference
Late Oct. / early Nov. 1998	Study trip to Dublin and Belfast.
Late Jan. 1999	Geology for Biologists, somewhere in Yorks/Humbs region.
April 1999	AGM and meeting, with Guild of Taxidermists, Powell Cotton Museum.
Oct./Nov. 1999	Return to Leiden
Oct./Nov. 2000	Study trip to St. Petersburg.
Oct./Nov. 2001	Don't tell anyone, but possible trip to America.

### GCG

24 Sept. 1998	Joint meeting with History of Geology Group, London.
29 Oct. - 2 Nov. 1998	Study trip to Netherlands.
2/3 Dec. 1998	AGM and meeting, Nottingham.
20 May 1999	25th anniversary meeting, London.
Late 1999	Study trip to Paris.

## BCG Chairman's Report

BCG has had another busy and successful year. There have been two major issues occupying the Committee's thoughts, both of which follow on from last year. Firstly the work of the Collections Monitoring Cell, led by Mike Palmer. In October 1997 BCG launched its Collections at Risk Action Packs (as described in the March issue of TBC) at the Natural History Museum, attended by representatives of MGC and some AMCs. Their production had been flagged up in the August issue of the Museums Journal. These packs are largely the result of much hard work by

Mike who has also dealt with many specific cases of collections at risk as well. It also seems, sadly, that much of the Chair's work will continue to be writing letters on BCG's behalf about these cases. Mike has done sterling work in this area, for which I am very grateful and I know he would welcome help!

The other area which has occupied our time has been biological recording and the proposed National Biodiversity Network. I will leave Steve Garland to tell you the details. BCG organised an emergency meeting on the subject in July at the NHM and Dave Mellor was funded by a consortium of museums, plus BCG, to help prepare documentation for the NBN bid. We still await the outcome of the bid.

Over the year we have commented on a number of policy documents: the National Strategy for Systematic research produced by the Systematics Forum; MTI's National Training Strategy and several local policy statements associated with our monitoring of collections at risk. We also worked with the MGC and DoE to implement the new Taxidermy regulation EC 338/97; the result of this is that registered museums are automatically eligible for an exemption certificate.

I have attended two meetings of the MGC's Collections Research Working Party on BCG's behalf. This working party was set up in January 1998 to look at a scheme "to identify and record the significance of collections in every discipline throughout the UK". It is intended to be the 'recognition' scheme mentioned in Treasures in Trust, although probably changed out of all 'recognition'! The working party is looking at how an encyclopaedic database can be produced, building on existing work. The MGC has commissioned a survey of surveys which, not surprisingly,

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**Deadline:** All items for next publication to reach Editors by 8th September 1998.



has shown how far ahead natural science collections are compared to other areas. Although politically the MGC may need to rank collections, they do not see this as a priority for the new scheme. Currently the idea is to have a database linked to the MGC website by the year 2000. The natural scientists on the working party are Phil Doughty, Dave Hill and myself. If you have any thoughts on this issue then please do let me know as the MGC are anxious to have as much consultation with the profession as possible.

There are many people who have worked very hard for BCG this year. I would like to thank Pat and Kath at Bolton for all their work on The Biology Curator, and Steve Garland's work for a special issue on microscope slides funded (thank you) by the NHM. Any suggestions for other 'special issues' are welcomed (preferably with some means of funding them!). We have had a number of successful meetings this year and I would like to thank Kathie Way, Steve Hewitt, David Carter and Steve Thompson for running them. Finally I would like to thank all the Committee for their hard work especially Steve Thompson and Kathie Way for keeping everything running and Helen Burchmore for ably taking the Committee minutes. We say good-bye to two Committee members, Maggie Reilly and (shock, horror!) Steve Garland. After 18 years, during which time he has served as Editor, Chairman and, latterly, doing lots of hard work leading the Biological Recording cell Steve is leaving. It just won't be the same without you!

Jane Pickering (Chairman)

## Minutes of the 1998 AGM, held at the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh on 30.4.98

Apologies for absence: Simon Hayhow, Mike Taylor, Pam Copson.

Minutes of the last meeting. Two corrections to spelling of names, Hayhow not Heyhow, and Allan not Allen. The minutes were otherwise accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

Chair's report:

Secretary's report:

Treasurer's report:

The accounts were proposed by Rob Huxley and seconded by Paul Brown.

Elections:

Two members stood down, Steve Garland and Maggie Reilly. Special mention and particular thanks were given to Steve Garland for a remarkable eighteen years service on committee, and he was wished the best of luck in standing for MA Council. Don't forget to vote for him.

Two new members were elected:

Howard Mendel (a genuine volunteer! Hip hip hooray), proposed Jane Pickering, seconded Steve Thompson.

Shona Allen, proposed Nick Goff, seconded Steve Thompson. Due to the difficulties for Scottish members

travelling to meetings, the duties of this post will in fact be shared by Shona, Mark Simmons and Steve Moran. Our thanks to them for their cooperation.

The next AGM will be held at the Powell Cotton Museum as part of the joint taxidermy meeting in April 1999. Date yet to be decided.

### Secretary's Report

Committee has held four meetings since the last AGM, one more than normal due to the extra work needed for such things as the Collections at Risk Action Packs. Attendance has been good, as ever, with at least eight of the thirteen members present on all occasions.

It is fair to say that BCG continues to go from strength to strength. Our major achievement this year has perhaps been to produce the aforementioned action packs, which were launched at the NHM in October last year. Many, many thanks to Mike Palmer for the enormous amount of work he has put into this project. In the meantime, we continue to liaise with MGC and the Systematics Forum over issues of mutual concern, such as collections at risk and the recognition scheme. That our star is in the ascendant should be apparent from the fact that we have made it into the Museums Journal several times in the last year, including a major contribution to August's cover article, and that we were approached by the Sheffield Museums Trust Advisory Council to nominate a member to the council. Our nomination was Derek Lott, who attended the first meeting recently. It seems people do know we exist.

We continue to organise popular meetings, last years Vienna trip being filled and enjoyed to the full (so I am told). More than 40 people have also dragged themselves northwards into the arctic wastes once already this year, for the excellent entomology meeting in Cardiff. Many thanks to Steve Hewitt and David Carter for their work in putting that together. It makes it all the more impressive to have 60 people at this meeting in Edinburgh, and thanks to all who made it. Future meetings planned are to include another MA conference session, study trip to Dublin and Belfast at the end of this year, a meeting on geology for biologists at the beginning of 1999, a joint meeting with the Guild of Taxidermists in April 1999 and a return trip to Leiden at the end of next year. We are also intending to run a trip to St. Petersburg in 2000 (assuming the world doesn't end on January 1st).

We are undertaking an ongoing membership drive, to attract particularly members from groups outside of the curatorial community, believing that the well being of our collections is of interest and importance to a much wider group of people than just ourselves. As ever we welcome thoughts from the membership on this and any other issues.

Steve the secretary.

### Treasurer's Report

This year has seen BCG's bank balance in profit again — but only just. The Vienna study trip went against the trend of previous years by showing a small loss despite subsidy from MGC and BCG. To offset this, the 1997 AGM showed a profit, albeit not as great as that suggested by the