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Partnership with local and national specialists to improve the taxonomic veracity of local collections and to catalogue existing collections

Partnership with local specialists to provide archival facilities for documents associated with local collections and local recording (e.g. personal notebooks)

Recording schemes and local museums should develop partnerships so that local and national specialists work together with museums to develop the taxonomic skills of new cohorts of recorders, using local collections and local facilities.

Local museums, and especially their governing bodies, should be more aware of the vital role they could and should play in interaction with field naturalists and biological recording initiatives. In most cases museum professionals already have a duty to promote the use of collections in their care and most museums have, or should have, collection policies. It would be advantageous if museum accreditation could take account of this important aspect of the role of museums in society. Only by reinforcing the need for museums and the relevance of the collections that they hold to the society that they serve, will we be able to continue to justify the existence of and demand for resources for museums.

Acknowledgements

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Colour Change in Cabinet Skins

As a professional bird illustrator, I have used the collection at Tring for many years for reference, and have

become interested in the question of the alteration of plumage colours in cabinet skins.

There are nowadays a large number of illustrators using the collection at Tring, and there is a continuing assessment of racial differences based on small variations of plumage colour. I would like to raise the issue of trying to establish exactly what colour changes take place in skins, and what impact this might be having on all the work that is going on.

Thinking about this has led me to re-read the article published in 1947 in *British Birds*, Vol XL, pages 322-325 by Reginald Wagstaffe and Ken Williamson on "Cabinet colour changes in bird-skins and their bearing on racial segregation". This is really quite alarming, in that substantial colour changes in even recently collected material were detected by comparison with freshly dead birds. Presumably some changes take place soon after a skin is prepared, and some over a much longer period of time. I guess that the slow-down in collecting in recent years will render much comparison impossible, and which of the historic skins really retain validity? Much of the collection at Tring is already old - what will it be like in 50 years time?

I wonder if there are any recent studies by museum workers anywhere on this topic? It could certainly be interesting to compare freshly dead collected material from Africa, for instance, to existing skins, to determine what changes have taken place. In critical groups like greenbuls and warblers it might help to have a note actually published near the relevant plates to alert users to the situation.

I would be very interested to hear the views of BCG members, and whether they think it would be useful to initiate some research or debate. It may well be, of course, that much has been published within the museum world about this subject, and I would certainly be interested to get details.

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Did Richard Buxton ever collect any *Rubus* specimens?

The artisan botanist Richard Buxton (1786-1865) author of the *Botanical Guides to the Flowering Plants about Manchester* (1849, 1859) actually studied the Manchester *Rubi* for no less than seven years. Buxton although only a clog-maker by trade realised that his knowledge of local botany actually exceeded that of 'more learned men'. Perhaps he was referring indirectly to botanists such as L. H. Grindon (who also produced a *Manchester Flora* in 1859) and J. Sidebotham? A few specimens of a very limited number of bramble species were collected by Grindon and Sidebotham during the 1840s from the Manchester area and are housed at Manchester Museum (MANCH) mainly within the Charles Bailey collection. It should be noted however that a collection of *Rubus* stem leaves presumably of local brambles is to be found in Grindon's herbarium of cultivated plants (MANCH) which would probably have been used in botany class demonstrations. These local exiccatae fall short of a complete representation for the *Rubus* accounts

compiled for the local floras of the time. Perhaps a comprehensive collection of *Rubus* specimens was never actually compiled? If this is the case modern day batologists can only suggest possible identities for the bramble records of the mid 19th century.

In view of Buxton's emphasis on his superior knowledge of the genus *Rubus* it was thought that Buxton may have collected a series of specimens during his seven years of investigation of the genus. Kent & Allen (1984) indicate that Buxtonian specimens are housed at Oxford (OXF), however D. E. Allen informs the author in correspondence that he can not recall having ever encountered any *Rubus* specimens collected by Buxton. Serena K. Marner, the manager of the Druce-Fielding herbarium at Oxford informs me that although there are specimens collected by Buxton of *Carex* species and bryophytes at OXF no details of any *Rubus* specimens are listed. Perhaps if any specimens were ever collected they may have been passed onto an associate or were purchased by a collector after Buxton's death? Another possibility is that although Buxton may have known the Manchester bramble species very well indeed, his social situation was such that he could only manage to collect a few sedges and bryophytes, Buxton being a poor man who resided as a lodger with his sister in Gun St. Ancoats, Manchester.

Several species of bramble which occur in the Manchester area will soon be described by the author of this Article. Could Buxton have collected specimens of any of these undescribed brambles? He would certainly have seen such plants whilst carrying out his research of the genus and may have been able to distinguish such plants from related taxa. Also many Cheshire/Lancashire species remained undescribed until Alan Newton tackled the genus in 1970s and again Buxton would have almost certainly have encountered such plants on his forays.

If any museum curators or readers can locate or know of the existence of any Buxtonian bramble specimens I would very much appreciate the forwarding of details, which will be included in the *Rubus* accounts for the Flora of Salford, the forthcoming Lancashire Flora and the descriptive papers.

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E.C.Riggall - Lost Beetle Collection and Data

Does anybody know the whereabouts of the collections of E.C. (Carey) Riggall? I am beetle recorder for the Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union and I am preparing a county fauna of Lincolnshire beetles.

Carey Riggall lived at Louth and then Collingham near Newark and collected in both Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire in the 1940s to 1970s. He was recorder for

Lincolnshire for the LNU for that period and local naturalists supplied records and specimens to him over the whole of that period. His collections and possibly his notebooks, were sold when he died in 1974. Fifty store boxes were delivered to Watkins and Doncaster in Kent but unfortunately there is no record of what became of them. He kept 'the records', i.e. those of the LNU, which presumably dated back to the earlier recorders of Arthur Thornley and William Wallace. These records have not been found either but were used to compile the county fauna, produced between 1907 and 1914 (Thornley and Wallace 1907-1914).

Lincolnshire is a fairly poorly recorded county, entomologically. This represents a huge gap in the date coverage for both counties and it would be useful to follow up some of his published records. Can anyone help with further information?

Roger Key, 67 Peterborough Road, Crowland, Lincs., PE6 0BB. 01733 210541

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Book Review

Natural History in Wales

National Museums and Galleries in Wales

Editor: D.M.Spillards

ISBN: 0 72000 0440 S First Published 1997

This is a well presented book, full of attractive photographs which, as a teacher, I find appealing since I like 'picture books'. Whilst I like the book and find the text well written, easy to understand and accurate, I do have some problems - just who is the book aimed at ?

Tourists may find the book an attractive souvenir and certainly many photographs evoke for me, memories of happy holidays spent in Wales, exploring its beaches, woods and mountains. However, this appeal may be limited due to the vast task that the authors have set themselves, since there is little coverage about specific areas.

I am sure that the text will work well in the museum alongside the displays for it does give a real feeling for the variety and 'specialness' of Wales. Many visitors may be inspired to explore some of these habitats and will seek out more specific information about the region they are visiting and I can also see this text being very useful as a starting point for the study of a variety of natural history topics.

Trish Harper

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