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Minutes of the BCG Annual General Meeting

Held on Wednesday, April 10th, 2001 at University of Newcastle Upon Tyne

1. Apologies for Absence:

Adrian Norris, Charles Pettit, Alan Howle

1. Minutes of the last AGM:

The minutes of the year 2001 AGM were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

1. Matters Arising:

Included in other agenda items.

1. Chairman's report:

This has been a very interesting and active year for BCG. Two major issues arose from last years AGM at Oxford. The first was as the result of a presentation by Stuart Davies, Director of Strategy and Planning at *Re:source* about the activities of the Regional Museums Task Force during which it became clear that we would have to act quickly if our views were to be taken into account. This resulted in a hurriedly convened special meeting at The Natural History Museum to discuss how we could usefully contribute. After considerable work by several members, but particularly Steve Thompson and Nick Gordon, a submission was sent to the Task Force and this was published in last August's issue of the *Biology Curator*.

The second issue was that of a possible merger with the Natural Sciences Conservation Group. Following lively discussions at the AGM's of both groups, a special meeting was convened at The Natural History Museum to discuss the issue further and as a result, both groups conducted a 'straw poll' of their memberships. As both groups received a strong vote in favour of taking the matter forward, we shall be voting on this very issue in a few minutes time. I am personally delighted that we have made so much progress over this matter and look forward to the result of today's vote.

I have already mentioned the *Biology Curator* but I feel that I must highlight the excellent work that Nick Gordon has done as acting editor. In the last year we have had two fat

issues with plenty of interesting content and I gather that Nick has another in the pipeline. A new development in the way that we communicate is through the development of our website. Thanks to the efforts of Lindsey Loughtman and Peta Hayes at Manchester, we now have an extremely attractive website which I hope that you will have all seen by now.

Amongst our other activities this year, the highlight must be the extremely successful study visit to Washington and New York in February. This was our most ambitious study trip so far and thanks to Kathie Way's excellent organisation, everyone enjoyed an extremely full programme of visits and tours. Nick Gordon has been busy again as our events organiser, setting up a well attended and very successful workshop on Mammal Collections held at the Grant Museum of Zoology at University College and also organising this conference here in Newcastle University.

I am pleased to say that we were represented at last years MA Conference in London last October where I chaired a session under the title Museums Biodiversity and Community. The speakers were Caroline Holmes from Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service, Trevor James, the Network Development Officer for National Biological Recording Schemes and our very own Nick Gordon. Although attendance was rather disappointing, we had a good response from those attending and rather managed to overrun our time as usual.

Finally I would like to thank all of our committee members for their efforts during this busy year. It seems to be an unfortunate fact of museum life that we are all required to do more and more in less and less time with less resources and I think I am a safe in saying that this applies to all of our committee members. Nevertheless, our committee meetings have been well attended and I would

particularly mention Steve Thompson's sterling efforts as Secretary and Jo Hatton's efficient handling of the minutes. If today's vote is in favour of merger, I visualise an even busier and more rewarding year ahead.

1. Secretary's report:

2001 / 02 has been a very busy year for everybody, and committee activities have been very much a part of that, despite the fact that committee members find themselves ever more stretched for time. All our activities have been maintained, and indeed, generally with ever increasing quality.

Mike Palmer, having returned to full time curatorial work, attacked the collections monitoring task with renewed vigour. It has to be said that we greet this with ever so slightly mixed feelings, as this section of the committee meetings rarely leaves us feeling more cheerful than we were at the beginning of the meeting. However, this is perhaps the most important role for the group, promoting the care of collections around the country and we never give up, with one or two collections coming repeatedly for discussion. The former Passmore Edwards collections have been on the agenda since I joined committee, and sadly, do not look as though they will be removed from it in the near future. Also sad is the fact that Mike has been forced to stand down from committee, and we will be looking for some enthusiastic, not to say masochistic, volunteer to take his place.

The Biology Curator is going from strength to strength, under Nick's caretaking hand, and has got both larger and posher over the last few issues. Nick has been particularly successful in persuading speakers at meetings to submit their papers for publication, and these have been printed in an unprecedented, indeed near miraculously, short time after the meeting has taken place.

Nick has also been doing a superb job on the meetings programme, and we are experiencing excellent attendances at the events we organise. This also includes the foreign trips, and the US trip in February was as well attended as ever, being fully booked as usual,

despite our considerable fears over how popular it was likely to be, and turned out to be absolutely superb. Our many thanks to Kathie for doing the usual superb job.

It will have escaped no-one's attention that the last year has been filled with talk of the proposed merger of ourselves and NSCG, with an eye towards the possible joining forces with GCG at a later date. This followed a discussion and proposal that came quite out of the blue at last year's AGM. It has certainly raised passions, and there will undoubtedly be a few unhappy people whatever happens. However, our straw polls have showed a considerable majority in favour of a merger, and the committees, I can promise you, seeking to do what is best for both groups in what is looking to be an increasingly tough world for museums as a whole.

These are perhaps the most important issues that we have dealt with over the last year, but certainly not the only ones. An issue where we have yet to see what the effect will be on the collections in our care is that of the recent Renaissance in the Regions report. Because of the short deadlines allowed to us, it was difficult to formulate a formal response from the committee. I put in a response, as BCG Secretary but not on behalf of BCG, though I tried to get as much feedback as I could. This was published in *The Biology Curator*, and I would be happy to hear what other people have to say, and as a committee, we would be grateful for the comments of the membership, as indeed, we seek feedback on all issues that we seek to deal with. And as I usually end with a comment on that theme I will stop here today.

1. Treasurer's report: 01.04.2001 – 31.03.2002

I am pleased to report that this year end we are back in profit and the group's bank balance is looking healthy at over eleven and a half thousand pounds; however, it should be noted that we only paid for two issues of *The Biology Curator* during this financial year.

To my astonishment this year's study trip to the USA actually came in under budget and

even made a profit of £23! I have to say that this was due in large part to the heroic self-sacrifice of the noble few who endured bed bugs, cockroaches and other privations so that I could swan about in a penthouse suite. Thanks to Nick Gordon, last year's AGM and the Digital Learning meeting both made a profit; the final accounts for the Mammal meeting in December cannot be presented since there are still some delegates who haven't yet paid but it is expected that this meeting too will show a small profit.

The increased level of subscription revenue this year is mainly due to a sustained campaign of harassment of late payers which recovered a lot of arrears; despite this we are as usual well into April with around 17% of the membership in arrears for 2002. We are also about to lose another ten members who have not paid since January 2000, a list of their names is appended below.

Fourteen new personal members have exactly cancelled out resignations/deletions but only 5 new institutional and overseas memberships failed to halt the continued decline year on year.

Deletions for non-payment 2001/2002

Malgosia Atkinson, Oxford
Kelvin Boot, Exeter
Malcolm Herman, Powell-Cotton
Tony Irwin, Norwich
Gwyneth Jones, Cheshire
John Mathias, Leicester
Julian Porter, Bexhill-on-Sea
Simon Trodd, Peterborough
Ann Wood, Cardiff
Fatima Hernandez Martin, Tenerife

1. Other reports:

No other reports were given.

1. Proposed BCG /NSCG Merger:
After some initial discussion regarding the merger, it was decided to vote on the two proposals by show of hands from the floor.

Proposal 1: To merge Biology Curators Group and Natural Sciences Conservation Group to form a single organisation.

Proposed by David Carter, Seconded by Peter Howlett

Votes for: 24
Votes against: 0
Abstentions: 0

Proposal 2: Subject to both organisations voting in favour of the proposal to merge (above), the chairmen of the respective groups are directed to set up a joint committee to write a constitution for the combined organisation and recommend the mechanism for merging; to be presented to the Annual General Meetings in 2003 at a joint meeting (NSCG/BCG).

Proposed by David Carter, Seconded by Rosina Downe

Votes for: 24
Votes against: 0
Abstentions: 0

1. Election of officers:

Three committee members had resigned during the course of the year, Sam Hallett, Lindsey Loughtman and Mike Palmer. One nomination had been received for an ordinary committee post for Sankurie Pye from the National Museums of Scotland. Sankurie was duly elected onto committee through a unanimous show of hands from the floor. It was decided to leave committee membership at 11 for the current year, and await the outcome of the NSCG vote over the proposed merger. In the interim period co-option of temporary committee members could be utilised to carry out specific tasks as and when required.

1. Any other business:

No other business was raised.

1. Date and venue of next AGM:

To be announced.

**DETAILS OF EXPENDITURE &
INCOME FOR THE PERIOD
01.04.2001 - 31.03.2002**

DETAILS OF EXPENDITURE & INCOME FOR THE PERIOD 01.04.2001 - 31.03.2002

INCOME	
Subscriptions	3483.00
2001 AGM	2301.05
USA Study Trip	19,000.00
Digital Learning Meeting	770.00
Interest on bank account	202.56
Sales/advertising/donations	48.75
TOTAL INCOME	25,805.36
EXPENDITURE	
2001 AGM	1721.64
50% of AGM profits passed to NSCG	289.70
USA Study Trip	18,977.23
MA Conference expenses	44.00
Digital Learning Meeting	378.45
Publicity materials	224.51
Annual Invoice mail out	41.24
Committee expenses	110.00
N. Gordon expenses	47.50
Treasurer (post/stationery/Xeroxing)	55.84
Biology Curator 20	1330.32
Biology Curator 21	1062.14
Total expenditure	24,285.57
Income over expenditure	1,519.79
Total at bank 31.03.2001	10,149.24
Total at bank 31.03.2002	11,669.03
MEMBERSHIP (Last two years' figures in brackets)	
Personal members	206(206)(227)
Institutional members (UK)	71(74)(67)
Overseas members	38(42)(50)
Exchanges	5(5)(5)
Total membership	315(322)(349)
Due to be deleted after AGM	10
Potential income from subscriptions	£3,283(£3,388)(£3,571)