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Introduction

This is the second part in our pull-out guide to risks facing museum collections. In this issue we look at Flood. The following 3 articles describe different causes of flood. All these incidents occurred recently and we are grateful for the contributors putting 'pen to paper' whilst still most likely mopping up!

Whilst there are various preventative measures one can take, and a disaster plan in place, often the flood itself will trigger different measures for the emergent removal and protection of the specimens. Sally Ann Yates offers some useful advice on effective salvage methods.

The next issue will deal with 'Pests'. Articles are invited on experience of breakouts, control methods and conservation of damaged specimens. Please also note the 2 events at The NHM and The Conservation Centre featured on page 5 of this newsletter.

Donna Hughes



Burst pipe at Hampshire County Council Museums Service, 6th January 1997

A Happy New Year, especially to our site manager at Chilcomb House in the form of a burst pipe in the loo in the Old House store, situated near the front entrance. Above the burst is a small storeroom with paintings, some prints, drawings, ephemera and books. Water flooded behind the old-fashioned fuse box but did not seep into it. Both water supply and power were turned off before anyone entered the building! Water also flowed into the corridor and

seeped through into stores, through carpets and under doors. Luck was on our side, however, a further one hour of incoming water would have started to affect the nearby main store for prints and ephemera.

As usual, prompt action saved nearly all the material - emergency lighting was set up using an on-site petrol generator since no mains electricity or lights could be used. Puddles were vacuumed away and staff quickly removed artefacts to safe and dry stores. Bubble-wrapped paintings were immediately unwrapped to remove trapped water. These were slightly moist and could simply be blotted dry - a few more hours and they

would have required extensive drying and conservation. The affected area itself and moist objects were not warmed due to likelihood of warping. Instead, sheets of blotting paper were used to draw moisture out of the worst affected items and portable de-humidifiers were quickly installed. The air-drying programme was entirely successful.

The casualties were two school photographs and some unimportant picture frames whose gesso became detached. The silver linings to this cloud were not only the prompt discovery of the flood, just in time forestalling a more serious disaster, the water bypassing the fuse box but also a review of the plumbing, electricity and other services to this building. We hope that these will be renewed with an up-to-date system as soon as possible.

*Simon Moore
Hampshire County
Museum Servicee*

Flood in the Biology Stores at Bristol Museum

During autumn and winter months of 1996 the Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery suffered a series of floods. This report concentrates on the first and largest of those floods in the biology stores and discusses how techniques were developed for dealing with subsequent floods.

Background information

On the morning of Sunday 29th September a roof gully area was discovered, by patrolling security staff, to be flooding. The rain had been heavy for several days and the gully drains had been blocked by debris. The water had reached a depth of 2 ft in places and was flooding into the adjoining Geology store. The museum has a disaster plan and the Conservation Manager was called out to supervise this emergency. The Fire Brigade found the gully difficult to access and were unable to pump the water out. Subsequently, contractors cleared the blocked drains by rodding, thus releasing a huge volume of water into the drainage system.

What caused the flood in the biology store?

The water gushed through the drainage system at high pressure