

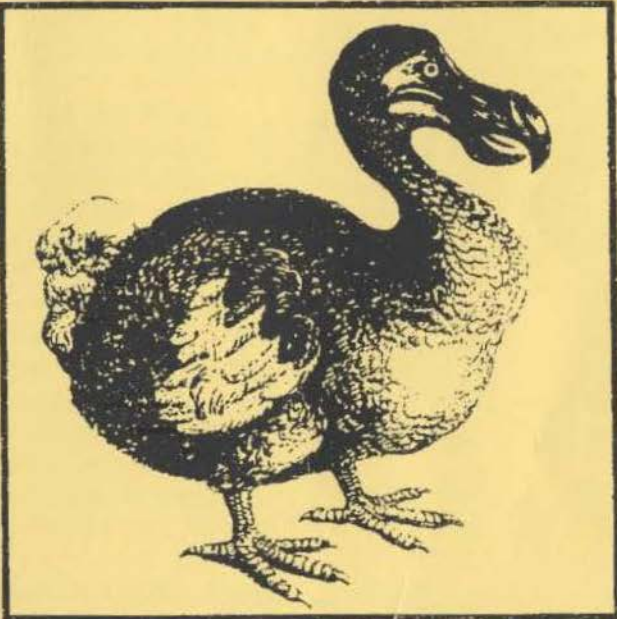
Natural Sciences Conservation Group

Newsletter

December 1996

Issue 4

NATURAL SCIENCES CONSERVATION GROUP

A detailed black and white stippled illustration of a dodo bird, shown in profile facing right. The bird has a large, hooked beak, a small eye, and thick, scaly skin on its neck and head. Its body is covered in dense, textured feathers, and it stands on two large, powerful feet. The illustration is enclosed within a simple black rectangular border.

International Congress, Cambridge
Slide Mountants Seminar

SPNHC Philadelphia

Editorial

Now that the season of mellow fruitfulness is once more upon us the fungi books get their annual dusting and perusal as the enquiries ('Is this edible?') come flooding in, mixed with concern about the increase of the wasp spider ('Can it sting?'). The latter enquiry has kept me busy as *Argiope bruennichi*, also known as the St Andrew's Cross spider, has done quite well along the south coast this year. An excellent year too for fungi after last years unseasonal drought. This year's damp but still (just) warm weather has sprinkled people's lawns with a wide variety from three species of ink cap to the snow white field mushroom lookalike (which is a *Lepiota*). A good year too for the nostril tickling stinkhorns (apparently they're edible but I failed to find a recipe in Carluccio's book!) and the inevitable brown Roll Rims (which are definitely not to be eaten!!!). Some more gastronomically-appealing species (mainly wood blewits) have appeared more recently however, and a few of these will probably bypass the collection - 'You're not going to eat THOSE?!', followed, the next day by 'How are you today?', not dead anyway!' the humour goes on.

Chris Collins has certainly been kept busy organising the Cambridge Congress and it was good to see some familiar faces from the Madrid and SPNHC conferences but more of that later. Now that summer is over and the worst of the insect infestations, time to start checking the RH of your stores before it goes off the scale and to check the fluid preservative levels? Finally, the usual moan (again?) - someone out there must have some views on Martin Elliot's paper (page 4 last issue) either supporting him or otherwise but (as usual) I have heard NOTHING!! Remember please that your editor is not expected to do it all himself and apart from a small group of regulars (to whom my heartfelt thanks) and despite frequent requests at committee meetings and elsewhere..... We all have to spread ourselves more thinly each year and even if you feel that your writing style isn't up to the mark I will ensure that it appears as prose worthy of *The Times*. If you find an *Anthrenus* larva munching your Christmas turkey lets hear about it, don't let apathy reign! Happy Christmas readers and writers especially.

Simon Moore

Letter from the Chair

Your committee has met twice since the last newsletter appeared, once at the Cambridge meeting and more recently at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on 14th November 1996.

Firstly a big thank you to all of you who prepared displays and took part in the 'Meet the UK Natural Sciences Conservation Community' workshop at the second world congress

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in Cambridge, the displays looked very impressive and we all seemed to be kept busy demonstrating and answering questions.

As a result of the meeting in Cambridge, we now have several new members and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome them and thank them for joining. We are also hoping to attract new members from the conservation courses that are beginning to cover natural science conservation and are planning to introduce a student membership category.

UKIC have agreed in principal to release funds to us for a new poster and leaflet from the now wound up Natural Sciences Section, providing we have charitable status. To this end Maggie Reilly has started to wade through the documentation provided by the Charity Commission and we hope to propose the necessary amendments to the constitution to the AGM in Cardiff. In the mean time we hope to have modified our old poster and have produced a membership handbill (copies available from Nick Gordon) Also at the AGM, due to the staggering of terms of office several committee posts and officers posts, including that of secretary, will become vacant. Please think about standing and of course attending the meeting to vote. In order to improve communications, we now have committee members or co-opted members in common with SPNHC, BCG and GCG committees.

With this newsletter there is a preliminary announcement and call for papers for our AGM and annual meeting, to be held in conjunction with the Biology Curators Group. Julian Carter has arranged an impressive two days, but your contributions are required. Firstly let Julian know that you are interested in attending by returning the form, secondly, sign up to give a talk or present a poster (or both).

Finally the committee has decided to introduce a theme to our newsletters, that of the effects of the ten agents of deterioration on natural science collections. Many of you who attended the two day conservation risk assessment workshop run by the team from the Canadian Museum of Nature that we organised last year and will remember the ten agents. The second step of the risk assessment process involves calculations based on frequency of events and damage done to collections.

The aim of the themes is to build a more informed basis for frequency, type of damage and mitigation and we will be starting with fire. So, if your museum has experienced a fire, please write it up, if the fire was only small scale, smoke detectors picked it up and the fire brigade arrived within minutes; this is just as valuable information as a report of a fire that completely destroyed the entire museum store that had no one on site and no automatic fire alarm. We are also interested in conservation after fires, the effect of fires on storage cabinets and so on. Once we have covered fire we will tackle flood. To remind you the ten agents are:

physical forces, theft and vandalism, fire, flood, pollutants, incorrect temperature, incorrect relative humidity, light and UV, biological agents and custodial neglect. Simon Moore will be awaiting your information, whether it be a snippet or full length article.

So let me finish off by wishing you all the best for the forthcoming festive season.

Kate Andrew, Ludlow Museum.

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Conservation Forum

In June this year the NSCG joined the Conservation Forum. This is an umbrella organisation forming a collective voice for many conservation disciplines, with the aim of working together on matters of common concern. The Forum intends to:

- ◆ act together to set, maintain and improve professional standards
- ◆ speak with one voice on matters of common interest throughout the UK and abroad
- ◆ share expertise and information
- ◆ co-operate in activities of common interest

The Conservation Forum has been active since 1993 and is currently supported by the Conservation Unit of the Museums and Galleries Commission. Since 1995 the Forum's activities have been administered by the Consultant Forum Co-ordinator. Regular meetings are held with representatives from each of the professional bodies to discuss current and future projects.

The Conservation Forum is presently made up of the following professional bodies:

- The Association of British Picture Restorers (APBR)
- The British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association (BAFRA)
- The British Society of Master Glass Painters, Conservation Committee (BSMGP)
- The Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland (ICHAWI)
- The Institute of Paper Conservation (IPC)
- The Irish Professional Conservators and Restorers' Association (IPCRA)
- The Natural Sciences Conservation Group (NSCG)
- The Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration (SSCR)
- The Society of Archivists, Preservation and Conservation Group (SoA, P&CG)
- UK Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC)

The NSCG will benefit from membership of the Forum because it will raise the profile of natural science conservation within the conservation community. It will also allow us to be involved with some of the key issues and initiatives which currently concern the Conservation Forum, for example:

- ◆ Assessment and monitoring of professional standards
- ◆ Continuing professional development
- ◆ Co-ordination of the annual UK conference calendar
- ◆ Guidelines for competitive tendering
- ◆ Standard form of conservation contract
- ◆ Insurance tailored to the conservation profession

FIRE!!!



Request for papers, articles, anecdotes, pearls of wisdom

Over the next few issues we will be looking at various agents that adversely affect natural science collections. We need people to contribute their knowledge and experience of dealing with the different problems and hazards that face natural science collections and their curators and conservators. The first subject will be fire, appearing in the March issue.

Have you had a fire recently or in the dim and distant past? How did you deal with it, what were the effects on the collections or your working practices? How does your disaster plan deal with fires? Are wooden cabinets better than steel ones or is this just anecdotal?

Any contributions from a few lines outlining your experiences or thoughts to fully researched and referenced papers are needed.

Contributions should be sent to :

Simon Moore, Hampshire County Museums Service, Chilcomb House,
Chilcomb Lane, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8RD

Microscope Slide Mountants, 2nd May 1996 Natural History Museum, London

This one-day meeting, organised by the staff of the Entomology Department of the Natural History Museum, London, was one in their series with the overall title 'Collection Views'. The sponsors were the Museum, who provided the venue and facilities, and Merck who provided the refreshments. The meeting attracted a wide range of disciplines, including staff from the Institute of Archaeology, and museum professionals from as far away as Bolton.

One of the organisers, Paul Brown, gave two talks, one of which, was the opener for the day. He explained that he had no formal training in biochemistry or histology and preservation/conservation when he became custodian of the largest discrete microscope slide collection (of aphids) in the Museum. This collection forms a solid 12 cubic metres of glass on the top (!) floor of the Entomology building. It also showed itself to be the biggest conservation problem for the department, when Paul conducted a Museum-wide survey of microscope holding as part of his master's degree in Museum Studies. He found that the most widely-used mountants throughout the Museum were Canada Balsam and Euparal. These products have good track records, having been used from the 1830's and 1940's respectively. In his own area crystallisation and blackening of Berlese gum chloral were major problems and many slides have been re-mounted in Canada Balsam. However, Paul's findings suggest that there was no perfect mountant on the market and that proper preparation and ringing would ensure better long-term results. He also reminded us that, when making or re-mounting slides, we must write the mountant used and date of preparation on the label.

Mary Spencer-Jones (NHM) asked us to ask ourselves why we were making the slides and to fit the mountant to the job. A batch of slides for teaching purposes could be mounted in a product designed for a short life span whilst Museum collections need to remain in optimum condition indefinitely. She urged the use of Canada Balsam ringed with shellac and a note of the technique used written on the label. One tip for removing cover-slips on slides that need repairing is to flick them off after deep-freezing. She also advocated the use of wet/jelly mounts for cavity/deep-cell preparation of small delicate specimens.

Chris Jones (NHM) showed the (mainly) life sciences audience something very different - the techniques used for mounting thin sections of minerals so that they can be examined in cross-polarised light to assist in their identification and classification. Small fossils, resin-mounted, produced very beautiful images when viewed microscopically with polarisers both above and below the subject. In the past, with the larger range of mountants used, all presented some problems but, now, many of these have been solved with the advent of U.V. cure resins and epoxy resins. One that is used was originally designed to bond the layers of laminated windscreens.

The workshops too were of a high standard but unfortunately were not organised in Peter York (NHM) showed the equipment and techniques used for all aspects of photomicrography - and the resulting photographs. He uses video, cine, 35mm, plate and has set up a time-lapse system that he has set up, controlled by computer. More recent advances such as laser confocal scanning, magnifying up to 30 000 times, were explained, but he reminded us that optics may still be better in equipment that is 100 years old!

Simon Moore (Hampshire Museums Service) described the restoration of the Quekett slide collection at the Royal College of Surgeons. These 150-year old slides were of anatomical and plant material mounted in Canada Balsam and as glass cells of fluid. About 10% of the collection was cleaned, re-mounted and the labels touched-up over the period allocated; many slides presented new challenges so that the method for dealing with the problems evolved during the course of the work. An account of the techniques used was published in *Microscopy*, vol.33: 489-494, 1979.

Around the room were displays by Bigneat (ductless fume hoods), Merck (mountants and accessories and Zeiss (microscopes) as well as an explanation of the method used for preparing and mounting diatoms by Karen Webb (NHM) and posters detailing some of the work of staff in the NHM Entomology department.

The day ended with a lively general discussion, which included comments on the pros and cons of Euparal and slide storage - horizontal versus vertical. It was a well-organised and useful meeting and the organisers and sponsors are to be congratulated. May this series of one-day meetings on specialist topics continue and develop.

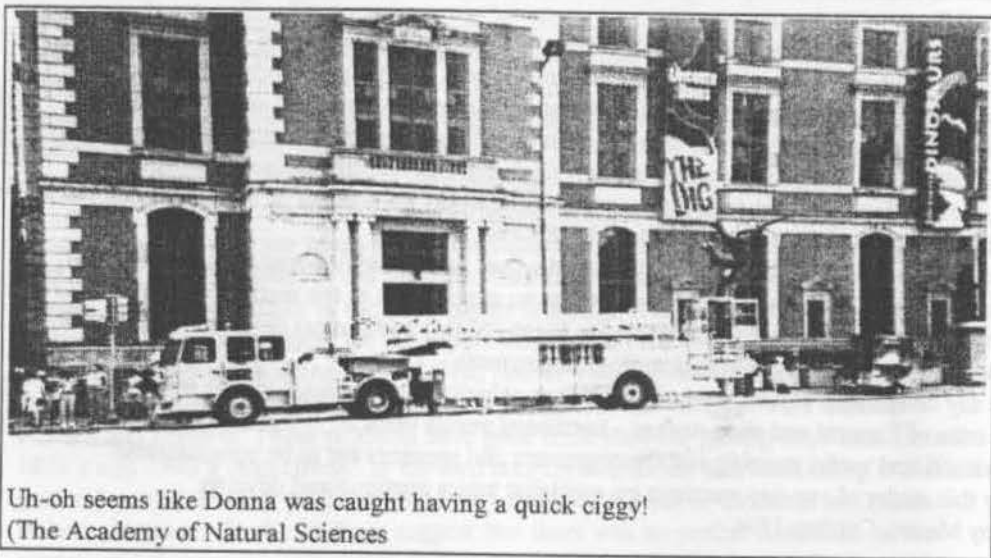
Jenny Moore, October 1996.

The SPNHC Conference, 1996 Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia

This year's SPNHC (Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections) conference was held at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, USA. The conference had a central theme based on 'Historic Natural History Collections', and a workshop on the 'Valuation and Insurance of Natural History Collections'. Fewer Brits made it to this year's conference than last year's at Toronto, probably reflecting on both tighter budgets and the Cambridge WCCR to be held in August.

The talks occurred over two days and were then followed by the workshop. The whole event was surrounded with organised tours of other institutions and the Academy's collections. A particularly interesting tour was held at the end of the first day's talks. Called the 'Historic Museum Round Robin Tour' it took in two museums. The first was the 'Wagner Free Science Institute' which is set in one of Philadelphia's less salubrious neighbourhoods. The natural history museum part of the Institute is remarkable in that it

has not changed in over 100 years, and consists today of both original cases and style of specimen presentation. The next museum was the Mutter Anatomical Museum which was not to the taste of all, but certainly fascinated most of us! It was difficult to know whether to be impressed or disgusted at the displays, though the best material was in store! The end of conference banquet was particularly fine being held in the academy's Dinosaur Hall, with an excellent spread of food and a free bar!



Uh-oh seems like Donna was caught having a quick ciggy!
(The Academy of Natural Sciences)

The talks started with **Meredith Lane** of the National Science Foundation (NSF) discussing the changing views of natural history collections. The main issue comprised the bringing together of all the available collection data of all institutions and that a state of co-operation not competition was required. NSF is working on the development of computers in natural history collections, but finds there is the problem of standardising both the database and the fields used.

The delegates were encouraged to 'think of new and expanded ways to contribute and make relevant to society the output of natural history collections'. The act of any museum trying to database its entire collection as a whole is daunting, but which can be started by putting selections of an institution's collections onto the World Wide Web.

Robert Waller (Canadian Museum of Nature) discussed preventive conservation planning, specifically for large and diverse collections and relating this to implementing and being responsible for funds directed towards preventive conservation measures. Robert outlined the means for setting up such plans with the objective of creating pragmatic method for setting priorities which adopts or adapts existing systems. The plan looked at three systems:

Risk assessment and management.

Categories of specimens.

Collection profiling.

It was concluded that several frameworks must be applied which require a great deal of information, but which can be done in a manner which is possible. The advantages of planning means effective use of resources, accountability, a sense of accomplishment and overall success.

Robert Huxley (Natural History Museum) described the reorganisation of posts at the NHM to the assembled audience, many of whose institutions had or were undergoing similar changes. It was explained that curation had been recognised as an activity in its own right which had led to the development of a more co-ordinated collection management structure allowing museum wide programmes (pest control, training, data capture) with overall co-ordination by a cross disciplinary steering group.

John Simmons (Natural History Museum, Kansas) explained the setting up of the US Organisation for Biodiversity Information, US-GOBI, in April 1996 with the aim of setting up the infrastructure required to organise the information derived from biological collections and associated biodiversity for maximum accessibility - 'biological collections to function as a community in response to the global biodiversity crisis'.

Onto historic collections. **Jane Pickering** (Oxford University Museum) considered the items surviving in the Tradescant Collection from the 17th century. Of the original '12 cart loads' of specimens making up this collection only 40 specimens, all zoological, have survived. Using the risk assessment system developed by Rob Waller, the collections survival over the last 400 years was considered, showing that most damage has occurred as a result of pest infestation and custodial neglect.

Robert Huxley (that man again) gave his second talk of the day (a bit keen!) on the challenges facing the large historical herbarium collections at the NHM. Some 200 000 specimens were collected before the 1800's. The current state of access and storage to this material is unsuitable.

The collections were open to the usual risks such as fire and theft, although some collections had the additional risk of pirates plundering the ships when returning to Britain! The collections need to be properly assessed and prioritised to direct remedial conservation work such as reinforcing paper mounts, separating prints from drawings and methods to reduce handling. The hope is to set up a special collections room with the collections themselves being digitised and collated on a database to allow greater availability of information.

On a different type of historic collection **Tom Strang** (Canadian Conservation Institute) described the work the CCI had been carrying out on a permafrost fossil tree site in Northern Canada which has intact but fragile, unpetrified cones, needles, tree stumps and leaf remains. The CCI has been using PEG (polyethylene glycol) to try and conserve the fossil material as it is similar to wet archaeological wood. They have also been using parylene coating technology to try and consolidate this very delicate subfossil material. The greatest threat to the site now appears to be 'ecotourism' trampling over the site. Already visitor damage has occurred at the site which has no protected status.

Anatomical collections featured quite strongly at this conference. **Thomas Crist** (The Wistar Institute, Philadelphia) described the conservation work carried out on the fluid preserved collections at the Wistar Institute, and the health and safety plans developed so that this work could go ahead.

Problems with fluid preserved anatomical collections were also discussed by **Andries van Dam** (Museum of Anatomy, Leiden). Problems encountered are decreasing fluid levels, loosening of lids, and warping of plastics. These can be related to the usual environmental changes and diffusion effects. To combat temperature variation Andries recommends the following to reduce the effects of increased pressure: fill container with ethanol based solutions to 90% of volume and aqueous fluids to 95% volume.

With diffusion effects it has been noted that silicon rubber sealants gives rise to a greater water loss than sealants such as Tixophalte (Shell). This is important to consider since a negative pressure can be caused by diffusion, especially with plastic containers which will ultimately deform. The result is that plastic containers tend to require regular venting, but to do this regularly is time consuming. This has led to the development of a two way valve to prevent pressure changes in such storage vessels.

Gretchen Anderson (The Science Museum of Minnesota) described the use of conservators in 'visible labs' as a means of raising public awareness.

The theme of fluid collections was continued by **Lisa Palmer** (Smithsonian Institution) who discussed the importance choosing the correct type of storage container and how this affects fluid quality. A survey of a whole variety of container types was carried out. Overall it was found that there was little difference between types of glass jars. Most differences appear to relate to container volume, particularly the fluid to specimen ratio. Plastic containers were found generally to be unsuitable for long term storage for ethanol based fluid collections. It was noted that the greatest variable in this study related to collection management, the need to standardise and not rely on folklore.

Janet Waddington (Royal Ontario Museum) talked about the problem of a white efflorescence which has been observed on calcitic echinoderm and some bivalve fossils from the Silurian. The fossils are stored in wooden draws of oak or plywood with many variants in finish. Much testing has been done, but overall no conclusion to the cause of

the efflorescence could be found though it is thought possible that the cause could relate to a one off event such as a past period of very high humidity.

Staying on the subject of efflorescence, **David Von Endt** (Smithsonian Institute) revisited Byne's disease, raising some interesting questions. Byne's disease forms on mollusc shells as a result of volatile acids released from wood leaving a white efflorescence on the shells which essentially consists of a calcium formate - acetate complex. Various materials were tested for their ability to induce Byne's disease: oak; pine; poplar; masonite; paper trays; cork; cotton. Mass spectrometry was used to examine chemical change. Overall, only cotton wool did not induce Byne's disease on the shell material. However in only one case was the calcium formate - acetate double salt found, which was considered to be the main component of Byne's disease. The efflorescence was found to be composed primarily of calcium formate and calcium acetate, and another related but previously undescribed mineral. SEM studies also showed the presence of micro-organisms on some of the shell samples, which may suggest another mechanism for the formation of this efflorescence.



Don't you wish we could store our fossils in cabinets like these!

The conference finished with a series of talks related to computers and the utilising of databases which essentially consisted of people demonstrating their various systems.

The morning of the second day also saw an amusing 'interlude' billed as 'Video presentation: A different kind of science and conservation at the Academy'. In the first clip the video shows the catching of a new species in Yellowstone National Park - a "Barney". The next clip showed Earle Spamer and Ned Gilmore of the Academy looking very serious and sitting in immaculate lab coats being interviewed on the Canadian 'Discovery' Channel about the discovery of this new species, "Barney" (-a cuddly purple dinosaur) and how they tracked its movement to a shopping mall by following press reports! How a straight face was kept whilst being interviewed.....

Overall a good conference which was worth attending, even if it meant having to check numerous American bars and late night diners!

Julian Carter, Conservation Officer
Zoology Department
National Museum and Gallery of Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF1 3NP

Second World Congress on the Preservation and Conservation of Natural History Collections. 20th to 24th August 1996, University of Cambridge

This meeting was well attended by the Museum community from around the world and promised to be exciting for that reason alone. It was a wonderful opportunity to see how things are done elsewhere and to make useful contacts. However, the common theme uniting the delegates soon became clear. Lack of funds, lack of understanding of their role by the public and government alike and subsequent lack of confidence in the future. Despite this, the work on show in the excellent range of posters and workshops was heartening and the individual's commitment to their collections undeniable. I was not alone in feeling that there was too much emphasis in the oral presentations on senior management strategies for maintaining their institutions, important though this obviously is. More presentations of hands-on work by innovative curators and conservators would have been welcome. It was hard to find everyone you wanted to talk to AND find time to view the contents of the many poster rooms during the breaks. However, the general impression was of a high standard of organisation, presentation and entertainment set in splendid venue; the organisers and sponsors are to be congratulated on their efforts to give everybody a good time. However, one small niggle about the University catering as related to cost must be mentioned. The meals were imaginative but quite expensive, on one occasion I was given the smallest main course I

had ever been seriously offered anywhere (and anyone who knows me will realise how unfortunate that was!).

Jenny Moore, October 1996.

Cambridge 1996 - The International Congress - an overview

En garde Chris Collins! I recall his talk at Toronto (SPNHC 1995) where he glibly told the assembly that the Cambridge Congress would comprise less talking and more doing, less 'suits' and more solving of conservation problems. In reality there were many suits from as many different nations who mostly had the same basic message 'If only there was more money/positive political attitude towards the excellent work being achieved by museums that were currently so undervalued....' Apart from preaching to the converted (alas!) many of the speakers were repeating this theme from their own point of view, some with accents that were hard to follow. Despite this the talks were, generally, of a high standard and showed the progress of taxonomy and the achievements of using hi-tech equipment to reveal all sorts of hitherto-undiscovered data about museum specimens.

More specifically, Sir Robert May mentioned the problem of too many students bettering themselves with post grad. qualifications but which were unsuitable for the more essential posts of collections managers. This statement on its own was significant since there are still those who unfortunately maintain that museum collections are an expensive luxury and that all data from them could be logged into databases and then the specimens disposed of. Bearing in mind what modern day computer viruses can do and have done to any institutions I can scarcely start to understand this attitude; more of this later.

The second day's talks centred around using collections as a resource, particularly for raising money from industry using geological material; the question of who, in reality,



Richard Leakey in full flow

owned a museum's collections. Tom Strang, with Sally Shelton as co-writer, wittily stimulated the intelligence of the audience with his black hole theory (or was it an exploding universe?) and the necessity of stabilising the exterior morphology of 45M year old pine cones. The final full day concentrated on collection development in poorer more far-flung countries and financing natural history museums. Neil Chalmers, latterly, exhorted the importance of culturing the Press and using them to bring museums into the finance raising limelight. This was followed by talks about fund-raising in which William Vartorella organised courses specifically to upgrade museum collections.

Posters were so numerous that one hardly had time to look at them all let alone discuss their content. These were, in the main, more relevant to museum work and problems encountered with collections and were of a high standard. Particularly memorable were those of Paul Hillyard - computer generated labels forming 'alphabet soup' which attracted much discussion, also the Smithsonian Institution team's effect of fluid-preserving tissue elements, one of Madrid's CSIC posters about the existence of insect



Simon's freeze drying fat under discussion by Mary Spencer-Jones and Shirley Stone
pests in fossil invertebrate collections and Andries van Dam whose poster related to fluid-preserved collections and interactions between jars, fluids and sealants.

The workshops too were of a high standard but unfortunately were not organised in parallel so that all the computer/internet workshops took place on the one afternoon as did those for conservation the next day. This was disappointing since it limited attendance at only one workshop per afternoon and those from the NSCG who attended, were stuck answering questions about our own projects and were unable to attend other relevant workshops; it also removed two thirds of our intended audience. Nonetheless about 30-40 delegates came and discussed conservation problems in the petrology lab, where we had set up our displays.



Paul in a 'brown study' (sorry) and Donna humidifying plant specimens to relax them



Caroline Cotgrove showing Ann Pinzl herbarium specimens

This was followed by a most enjoyable soiree of watching Elizabethan dancing, set in the Tudor dining hall of St Johns College where we could see and hear the rhythms and steps of different dances, some with hops and much twirling of the leading leg and foot. Eventually everyone (?) was drawn into a farandole that wove its way in and out. The Congress Dinner, in the same venue was a most worthy occasion and was enjoyed by those who attended.

Despite the disappointments the conference, as a whole, was enjoyable and went very smoothly, thanks to Chris and Margaret Johnson and helped by the wonderful architecture and atmosphere of the old buildings of St John's College. Chris had obviously worked hard to get as many world-wide speakers as he did and this was reflected by the high attendance.

Simon Moore.

Fund Raising Workshop

Cambridge Conference 23.08.1996

This workshop titled 'Strategic Philanthropy and the Global Village: Tactics for funding Natural History Collections' was presented by William F. Vartorella who works for Craig and Vartorella Inc., a company in the U.S. who advises museums on gaining outside funding. William's approach was educational, very informative and also entertaining as he illustrated his experiences of successful funding projects.

To be successful in raising sponsorship, on whatever scale or size of project, we have to investigate prospective funders fully. Sounds obvious, but valuable time and effort is wasted pursuing companies whose goals do not match the criteria of our work. So firstly we have to understand the needs, goals and desires of companies and foundations which are our potential donors. A place to start could be something as simple as looking through the glossy ads in the Sunday papers. Many companies use, in the currently fashionable sense, images of the natural world to illustrate the 'caring' and 'global' context of their industry or product.

The workshop strongly emphasised the need for us to have an understanding of business culture and, where relevant, a society culture, e.g. when dealing with the Japanese where there are definitely certain ethical rules to follow. Experience has demonstrated how the board of a company/trust will want to know how the board of the requesting organisation works, and what moneys individuals on the board themselves are willing to invest in their own organisation.

Advice was given on how to know which non-profit making funder could be your potential donors, such as finding someone whose mission statement complements your own, and which has a track record of achievement in delivering both services and in grantmanship. When putting together a request for funding it is important to be professional and William went through his ten rules for constructing a proposal. It has to be noted that William's 'rules' have been successful in securing millions of dollars from companies and foundations around the world and I think all of the delegates left this workshop enlightened and inspired by a very dynamic man.

Donna Hughes

National Museums and Galleries of Merseyside, Liverpool

Job Advert

Proposed Geological Conservation Opportunity (3 week contract)

Kate Andrew expects to be returning to Whitby Museum in late April and early May to complete conservation work on a case mounted *Teleosaurus* and several fossil hand specimens. One additional conservator with some geological expertise will be required to assist and interested parties should telephone Kate for further details on 01584 873857

Are We Relying too Heavily on Computers?

This is quite an old chestnut for many who work in museums but experience has shown this question to be vindicated many times over. A Canadian Institute of Natural Sciences had their entire data of more than several years entirely erased overnight by a time delay computer virus. This meant that both hard discs and backup discs were completely erased since the virus only became active six months after it had entered the system and back-up discs had become infected as well as the mainframe.

Bearing this in mind and the fact that I'm not a computer Luddite, is it wise to adopt the attitude of a certain speaker at the Manchester (1989) one day conference that we should log all known specimen data, including DNA fingerprint, into a computer and then chuck out the specimens? This suggests that old-fashioned visual taxonomy is a dead duck and that new characteristics which are still being discovered, would not be able to be compared with older specimens! How can the expert-in-the-street/field identify specimens by using DNA alone? Another curator in an internationally renowned museum outside of Europe maintains that labels should only be computer written/printed. Considering the problems with suitable papers and, especially printer inks that have only stood the test of time for a few years - is this wise? I remember Paul Hilyard's excellent poster at Cambridge and the problems of 'alphabet soup' relating to computer-printed labels. I still use my trusty, albeit crusty, rapidograph to record accession numbers on the backs of computer-printed labels.

Any news views on this subject should be submitted to me by March 1st 1997 and please let's hear from you!

Simon Moore

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Registration of interest and call for papers



'What's in the Box?' Collections Access and Care - New Directions for the Next Millennium

A joint two day Conference, with AGMs, between the Biology Curators Group and the Natural Sciences Conservation Group

National Museum and Gallery of Wales
16th and 17th April 1997

A two day Conference, combined with the AGMs has been organised by the BCG and the NSCG to be held at the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff, on the 16th and 17th April 1997. The central theme will be on exploring aspects of 'Access' and 'Care', though papers on any relevant subject will be welcome.

Put these dates in your diary and register now! See you in Cardiff!

Costs are provisional and include tea coffee, lunches and evening reception but exclude the Ceilidh event.

NSCG/BCG members - £25
Non-members - £35

PTO

Provisional Programme

Wednesday 16th		Thursday 17th	
9.30 - 10.00	Registration	09.00 - 12.00	Talks
10.00 - 12.00	Talks	12.00 - 13.00	NSCG AGM
12.00 - 13.00	BCG AGM	13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch	14.00	Collection Tours
14.00 - 17.30	Talks		
19.00 - 20.00	Reception and Buffet		
20.00	Ceilidh		

Please tick boxes as appropriate. This is only to register interest and a call for papers. There is no need to send money now.

- Full 2 Days. NSCG/BCG members - £25, Non-members - £35
- Single Day. 16th/17th April. Members £15, Non-members £20
- Evening Ceilidh event (Cost to be confirmed, but will be in region of £7)
- I wish to present a talk/poster at the conference (enclose details)
- Accommodation details in Cardiff
- Collection tours - I would be interested in seeing the following areas:

Conservation facilities, Entomology, Mollusca, Vertebrates, Botany,
Mineralogy, Palaeontology, Other (e.g. Museum of Welsh Life)

Name:

Address:

.....

Postcode:

Return To: Julian Carter, Zoology Department, National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NP.

Tel. 01222 573230 **Fax** 01222 239009.

Membership Renewal/New Membership

Members are politely reminded that subscriptions are due on the 1st of January 1997. The annual subscriptions for the group are:

UK personal	£10
UK Student*	£5 (*new membership rate)
Overseas personal	£15
UK Institutional	£25 (1 set of publications plus 3 membership rate places at meetings)
Overseas Institutional	£35 (1 set of publications plus 3 membership rate places at meetings)

Membership renewals and new memberships should be sent to:
Maggie Reilly, Zoology Section, Hunterian Museum Glasgow University, Glasgow G12 8QQ

✕

- I would like to renew my subscription
 I would like to join the Natural Sciences Conservation Group:

Name.....

Address.....

.....

..... Post Code

- Please tick one category:
Personal Subscription (UK) - £10
UK Student - £5
Personal Subscription (overseas) - £15
Institutional Subscription (UK) - £25
Institutional Subscription (overseas) - £35

Cheques, in sterling, should be made payable to Natural Sciences Conservation Group and sent to:

Maggie Reilly, Zoology Section, Hunterian Museum Glasgow University, Glasgow G12 8QQ