



**NatSCA**

Natural Sciences Collections Association

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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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# News

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## New Exhibitions

At the National Museum of Wales a major new permanent exhibition 'Man and the Environment' opened to the public on 18 July. The exhibition looks at the impact that humans have had on aspects of the natural world and at the ways in which the animal kingdom has been utilised and exploited. The Aberthaw humpback whale and the world's largest leatherback turtle are displayed along with specimens from the mollusca and entomology collections. [Would anyone wishing to do a short critique of this exhibition please get in touch - Ed.]

Meanwhile Oldham museum is planning a touring exhibition on all aspects of 'Parrots' including the current threatened status of some species. More details in the next BCG Newsletter. Meanwhile anyone wishing to find out more can do so by contacting Oldham direct.

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## Reorganisations

The natural sciences departments at both the Ulster Museum and Kelvingrove, Glasgow are being subject to reorganisation. At Ulster we understand that the Botany, Zoology and Geology departments are being merged to form a single natural science department under a single Keeper.

At Glasgow the situation also involves a merger to form a single department. In this case the Natural History Department will merge with the Transport Museum to form a new Science Department. (Try and work that one out !). The rationale we understand is that this will make it easier to produce 'ecological' displays. Certainly some displays will be needed as the bird gallery has just been commandeered to make another ace cafe. Further news on this and other changes will follow in the next newsletter.

Please note that the 'people' section otherwise known as 'musical curators' will return in the next issue. Please send any information to the Editor.

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## Publications

The National Museum of Wales has added 'Snowdon's Plants since the Ice Age' to the list available from their Botany Department. This 32 page booklet is also available in Welsh. Price £3.75 incl. postage. A Flora of Glamorgan is also in press.

The BSBI can now offer a new 'List of Vascular Plants of the British Isles' by DH Kent. Available from BSBI Publications price £11.50.

More local publications are available from Stoke Museum with the addition of spiders and flies to the series of Staffordshire atlases and checklists.

In press is the South-east Collections Research Unit's catalogue of natural history collections, more details later.

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## Meetings

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The two items below relate to the two highly successful meetings held by BCG over the last year. Firstly, the Secretary's report followed by a list of your committee members. Followed by an account of the meeting in Burnley last year on live displays in museums. Please note your nearest committee member and feel free to pester them for information or indeed pieces and suggestions for the newsletter. Thanks should go to Steve Hewitt and his colleagues at Carlisle for organising an enjoyable and informative AGM and to the Cumbria constabulary for directing the diehards to a late night source of the amber nectar.

## Secretary's Report (given at the Carlisle AGM)

In my first year as secretary and looking back at previous reports it is patently or painfully obvious just how conscientious and hard working Derek Whiteley was. He is an incredibly hard act to follow and I hope we can maintain some of the momentum he created.

Again, it has been a very busy year for your committee. We met six times at various locations throughout the country including London, Glasgow, Newcastle and yesterday here at Carlisle. Once again our sincere thanks go to these institutions for their hospitality.

The AGM at Liverpool was a resounding success and well attended with several excellent papers on a variety of 'green issues' and their reference to museums and out thanks must go to Kathie Way and Clem Fisher for organising the event and for their patience, tolerance and understanding.

Most of my work on committee last year was spent organising a seminar entitled 'The Educational Role of Live Exhibits' held at Towneley Hall in October 1991. About 40 people attended from a variety of organisations including museums, zoos, public aquaria, the RSPB and the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust. We hope to publish the proceedings at some future date.

Two leaflets were launched by the BCG:

## The Sunflower Campaign

The Sunflower Campaign leaflet was put together by Derek Whiteley of Sheffield Museum and Alec Coles of Tyne and Wear Museum Service. It was primarily formulated to be sent to influential people including governing bodies, councillors, trustees, etc to lobby support for the care and maintenance of natural science collections. Additional copies can be obtained from Alec. Once again our sincere thanks must go to him for the effort he has put in on this project.

## Animal Welfare Leaflet

The second leaflet concerns Animal Welfare in Museums from methods of collecting to keeping live exhibits. It is aimed at the general public to dispel some of the myths surrounding the acquisition of natural science material in museums.

Gordon Reid put this leaflet together with Bill Pettitt adding some final touches. Further copies can be obtained from me at Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museums.

I am also putting together a register of natural science conservation material suppliers, this is in response to requests from several BCG members who are experiencing problems obtaining smaller quantities of chemicals, eg. phenoxotol. I have approached several suppliers and after explaining the problem have received very favourable responses. I hope to make this register available in the near future. I would like to keep it updated so any further information would be extremely useful.

This year the BCG is putting on a display at the Museum Conference in Plymouth. We would like to publicise our activities and generally raise the profile of the group. However, we do need graphic material in the form of a photograph, press cuttings, etc., eg Beetle Down material. Volunteers are also needed from the Plymouth area or delegates attending the conference to man the stand for a few hours. I will be taking the stand down but I would appreciate it if someone could bring it back to a museum in the north west. Any offers? If you are interested in getting involved in this project, could you please let me know?

Again the regular work of the committee continues and we still operate the watchdog scheme on posts lost and created and collections at risk. Steve Judd is collating this scheme on behalf of the committee so any information should be passed on to him at the Natural Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. We will continue to lobby institutions and governing bodies when these threats materialise. We had some success in this area and I believe we were instrumental albeit on a small scale in

supporting Lancashire County Museum's efforts to appoint a Natural Science Curator. A letter from John Blundell at Preston seemed to verify this.

Future work for the committee includes organising seminars on a variety of topics including the value of natural science collections which we hope will take place at Manchester Museum in the near future. Travelling exhibitions in conjunction with MGC to take place possibly at Ludlow in February 1993 and next year's AGM in Inverness.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks on behalf of the membership to the BCG committee for all their hard work and to Richard Sutcliffe who retires after three years. Two new members of committee will hopefully take up their new role after this AGM and I would like to welcome Jane Mee from Ludlow Museum and Jane Pickering from Oxford University Museum.

Mike Graham  
BCG Secretary

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## Committee List 1992

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