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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Another AGM has passed (our 8th since we first formed within UKIC in February 1993 and our 6th as an independent group). Bob Entwistle came to the end of his three-year term of office and I thank him for all the time and effort he has spent furthering Natural Science Conservation interests. I am sure he will continue his good work on committee! I also wish to thank Adrian Doyle and Vicky Purewal who have retired from committee. You have a new Chair who is not a full time or accredited conservator, although conservator nonetheless and expert in the small field of microscope slide conservation. I hope to serve NSCG's best interests as I have already done as Secretary. The view from where I sit is good, with two seminars planned for later in the year, one on historic insect collections and one on fluid preservation "do we really understand it". My time as Chair may see much change but to put any changes into perspective, let me précis our history.

The origins of the group lie in a lunch-time meeting at the Madrid World Congress; on the care and conservation of natural history collections, in May 1992. Those present (Kate Andrew, Chris Collins and Steve Garland) arranged a meeting at The Natural History Museum, on the 4th November 1992, where they called themselves the natural science collections care group. At this meeting were presentations from the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC), from John Cooper (the then Geological Curators Group chair) and from the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC), the latter presented by a communication read by Kate Andrew. UKIC, who gave a very slick presentation, won the day. A working party met in York on 30th November 1992, where the group was constituted and a committee voted in place. The NSCG was formalised as a special interest group of UKIC in February 1993. Within two years, the UKIC changed their constitution so that it was necessary to be a member of UKIC before one could vote or be NSCG section committee members. We had a minority of 12 full members of UKIC within the NSCG membership and with the UKIC membership fee at about £60 (now about £120), we declared UDI and became independent.

Our membership has been growing steadily from the initial 25 to 130. We are a smaller and younger group compared to GCG and BCG but our in-

fluence on The National Council for Conservators and Restorers (NCCR) has been noticed and is greater than our small membership might indicate! NSCG is soon to take the Chair of this Council, which informs Government (via Resource) of our views as professional Conservators on National Policy. We have also gained charitable status for which we can thank Kate Andrew, Tracey Seddon and Maggie Reilly for their efforts.

Ever since we set up, a vision held by some, has been to see the amalgamation of all Natural Science collections care interests into one group, much along the lines of SPNHC in North America. Such views were published within The Newsletter (Issue 6, September 1997) when Simon Moore and myself put forward arguments for and against closer links with GCG and BCG, as well as the development of 'professional accreditation' within Conservation. Our own "way forward" working group, chaired by Kirsten Walker was set up three years ago to examine this issue and reported the need to maintain our identity as conservators. It also identified problems involved with the close association between GCG and The Geological Society.

Ten of our members have acquired 'Accreditation' via the 'Fast Track' route (with UKIC). So far there has been no Natural Science candidates for the new route to Accreditation via NCCR. This may reflect that many of our members are, like myself, hybrid conservators, curators, collections managers, registrars, education officers or whatever and so an accreditation for only part of our job is not so relevant to our professional status. Closer ties or even merging was discussed at both the BCG and the NSCG AGMs this year in Oxford. A working group will meet this summer to discuss this issue and the outcome of such talks will be published. If you have any strong views on the subject or on any other subject concerning Natural Science Conservation then please send letters to Darren Mann, our Editor, as 'The Newsletter' is the vehicle for your views! If we do merge with BCG our status on NCCR is assured, much as the Society of Archivists are represented and we will not have our views swamped by curators and managers because we will continue to make our conservation voice heard! One united group could mean an improved journal, one membership fee and better communication. Maybe GCG may be interested in joining such a united group?

Paul A. Brown