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The Biology Curator

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Author(s): Thompson, S.

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Newcastle AGM — 30 April 1996

1. Apologies were received from Helen Burchmore, Mike Graham, Mike Taylor, Paul Harding.
2. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as an accurate account of that meeting.
3. There were no matters arising.
4. The chairman's report was read by the secretary.

Chairman's report:

It is with mixed emotions, (mainly relief, euphoria and a profound sense of relief), that I retire as chairman of BCG and hand over to Mr. Pickering's wife. I have enjoyed my association with committee over my eight years as member, secretary and chairman, and look forward to being a drone again.

This was another busy year for committee, with several successful meetings, notably Bolton and Liverpool. Both were of a practical nature, with demonstrations as well as talks.

The work of the editorial cell continues with a slightly rejigged, (for which read completely changed), editorial team comprising Patricia Francis and Kathryn Berry at Bolton Museum, with Steve Garland as office junior.

With the current economic climate and severe budget cuts, we have been particularly concerned with collections at risk. Letters are sent to directors and chief executives, with mixed results. If they are completely ignored we continue to badger them with phone calls and follow up letters. The major problem is that we don't get to hear about the problems sufficiently early.

Some review of the committee's cell structure and operation and certain problems identified. For example there has been no mechanism for reporting back to committee, the committee has not been pro-active in assigning tasks to the cells and general communication to and from the cells has been poor. We hope that this year these problems will be successfully dealt with, and that we can look forward to new campaigns, more excellent meetings and a closer relationship with other groups.

I would finally like to close by passing on my best wishes to Jane, who will be an excellent chairman, being conscientious, diplomatic, gets things done and doesn't stand for any nonsense. I believe the committee is in safe hands for the future.

Regards,
Mike Graham,
Chairman.

5. Secretary's report:

This year has been a slightly fraught for BCG committee. With ever increasing workloads for everybody, trying to make sure that the work of the committee is done to a satisfactory standard has become yet more difficult. It has been noted that The Biological Curator has been appearing rather late over the course of the year, and steps are in hand to deal with this. However the group has managed to maintain its good record of well attended meetings. Last years AGM took place during what turned out to be a most

successful international conference. September saw us celebrate the BCG's 20th year, with an enjoyable meeting in Bolton, the scene of the groups foundation. November recorded a good turnout for what was by all accounts an excellent trip to Belgium. And in February we held another successful workshop meeting, on botany for non-botanists. The committee feel that three meetings a year, of these three types is a good way of addressing the various needs of the group, though if anybody has any bright ideas we will always be glad to hear about them.

The committee held three meetings in 1995/96, with an emphasis being placed on sorting out the problems with the journal and getting the cell structure of the committee working to its full potential. We hope that 1996/97 will see considerable improvement in both these areas. In the meantime we have continued to cover the usual issues. One of the areas we have been keen to pick up on are those collections at risk. 1995/96 saw us looking at Doncaster, Lincoln, Passmore Edwards, Kendal, Dundee, University College - London, and Bristol, of which the dismal situation at the Passmore Edwards, gave us the greatest cause for concern, and which is still not satisfactorily resolved. The situation at Bristol is looking worrying, and has prompted us to look towards the action described in Mike's report with regard to a higher profile policy on collections at risk. Please let your committee know of any similar problems that you are aware of. Recent editions of the Museums Journal indicate that the situation is going to look considerably in the near future. The earlier we become aware of problems the more effective any action we take is likely to be.

On the brighter side we can now say that we have a new editorial team in place, based on the team at Bolton. Please make their job easier by generating material for the Journal. Items to go to Patricia or Kathryn at Bolton Museum, full address on back page.

Please remember that while the committee is here to serve the needs of the membership, they can only do that if the needs are being made known. Thank you.

Steve Thompson
Secretary.

6. Treasurer's report was read by the secretary.

Treasurer's report:

This year has seen BCG's bank balance continue to rise steadily. Particularly encouraging is the way in which our larger meetings and trips have started to show a profit, enabling us to subsidise smaller meetings and attendance at other relevant meetings.

I hope the membership will agree that the move of our account to the Midland's Small Treasurer account has been beneficial, as evidenced by the respectable sum in interest accrued over the year, especially as compared with the five pounds obtained with the Royal Bank of Scotland! Towards the end of the year I intend to send out standing order forms to members and hope that as many as possible will take advantage of this facility. Increasing numbers of institutions are now paying by BACS, which works fine when the information about the payee actually reaches the statement. However, in every case this year I have had to phone the bank to find out where the money came from.