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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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England, built up over a period of about 25 years contact with naturalists in the area (initiated by Alfred Hazelwood) and have very little in the way of published notes on the area.

How did Andrew Mayoh of Adlington, near Chorley, Lancashire, acquire this item before he gave it to us? He bought it from W. Dodd of 17 Oxford Street, Barrow-in-Furness who was selling off his library of bird books in 1946 and there the story ends. Incidentally, W. Dodd had a collection of 6,000 Birds' Eggs (of which 500 were destroyed in the Blitz on Barrow). Does anyone know where they are now?

E. G. Hancock
Bolton Museum.

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MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE -
SPECIALIST SESSION - WEDNESDAY 11 JULY

Provisional arrangements for the BCG Specialist session are as follows:

Meet at Cumberland House, Portsmouth by 10.30 a.m. A tour round the Museum will be followed by a local field trip. Lunch (will anyone not having the official lunch let Peter Sewell, Keeper of Natural History at Portsmouth, know) will be followed by an afternoon session devoted to 'The relevance of natural history collections in the leisure age'. Speakers will include Peter Sewell and Peter Morgan, and it is hoped that a representative from the British Museum (Natural History) will be present to speak about exhibition policy at that establishment.

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1978/79

In reviewing the last year of BCG activities, the first thing to notice is that it had lasted fifteen months. The only benefit the group appears to have gained from this is that the officers have had an extra three months to produce their reports, but in the case of the Chairman's remarks this has not been used to much advantage.

It is a temptation in annual reports to recite the year's activities, but most of these have been well reported in the Newsletter. Unfortunately the two meetings held since last year's AGM have only

attracted about a quarter of the membership, but it is to be hoped that many more will be attending the major Conference on the history of Museums in April. The quality of papers to be presented seems to be outstanding, the topics have an international range - and there will be a major publication on the same topic produced after the Conference. Even those not attending should try to get to London on Tuesday April 3rd, not only because it is the BCG AGM but also to visit Kew and meet many museum colleagues from abroad.

In the absence of meetings the burden of communicating between members has fallen to the Newsletter; a task it has fulfilled with admirable style and wit. This publication is a great credit to the group and has gained us many friends. A measure of its success has been the number of original suggestions taken up by other museums (notably the work on locality spread in collections) and accounts of previously unpublished collections appearing as a result of the regional themes.

Remaining unpublished, however, is the 1977 BCG survey of provincial museum collections. By the time this report is prepared the Committee will have met to decide on the action necessary to speed the appearance of this survey but I will be doing everything possible to ensure that the results appear in some form in time for the April Conference, even if the final printed version (for which members' subscriptions have already paid!) is delayed until supplementary grants are available.

1978 did, however, see the production of the 'Handbook for Biological Records Centres', jointly sponsored by BCG and the Biological Records Centre. The response has been gratifying and the Nature Conservancy Council has bought copies in some quantity. I could perhaps suggest that the mechanics of records centres have received sufficient attention and more thought should be given to the relationships of this work to normal curatorial activities, but there are in fact suggestions that regional centres are disrupting established record 'supply routes' without providing a regular service themselves. With the departure of Frank Perring to the depths of Lincolnshire, and the stated intention of BRC staff to visit all regional centres in the next year, I would hope that BCG will give time to discussion of biological recordings in its next session.

I suppose it is inevitable the Chairman's report should contain platitudes about girding loins for the future and so on, but I do feel that the BCG has not yet realised the influence it can have on museums and the care of biological collections. I fear that the only way to achieve this laudable state is to adopt a more 'political' approach to our professional status, although not, I hope, with the single-mindedness of some other groups. For this reason, among others, I feel it would be wise for me to resign from the Chairmanship of the group in the hope

and expectation that someone more able and experienced is elected, with the ability to command respect in the upper orbits of museums and biology. I do hope, however, to stand as Secretary and give time to supporting the endeavours of Chairman and Committee. Perhaps the one aspect of the BCG I would like to emphasise is that there is a danger that the executive could become too remote from the members and the aims of the group. The way members can ensure that this does not happen is by making their views known at every opportunity.

Finally I would like to place on record my thanks to the Committee for their support in the last fifteen months and pass on my best wishes to the new Chairman.

Stephen Flood
St. Albans Museums

TREASURERS REPORT 1978/79

The financial year for BCG closed on 9th January 1979, on this day the group had assets of £306.01. A detailed breakdown of the accounts is shown below. A few points may need explanation. The large surplus is a result of a subscription rise for 1978 and the unfortunate delay in publication of the Collections survey, for which this sum is earmarked.

Sales of the BRC/BCG Handbook have been going well with a return so far of £60.20.

I have agreed a deposit account for the Liverpool Conference surplus of £68.38. This account is to be kept in reserve for financing similar activities, while at the same time securing a little interest.

This year's major items of expenditure are the BRC/BCG Handbook and Newsletters.

The question of back issues of the Newsletter had been raised by many people and costs of production are being examined.

Payment of subscriptions for 1978 started very slowly and reminders were repeatedly sent out. Out of a total membership of 180 there are still 31 subscriptions outstanding. It is hoped that the introduction of Standing Orders will speed up the paying process and negate the need for a memory. New members continue to drift in.