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The Biology Curator

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Good news from Scarborough's Wood End Museum from Jane Mee

The collection of over 100,000 items in the natural history collections at the Wood End Museum are to receive funding of £98,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for storage, documentation and conservation work. The improvements will transform access to these collections, making them available for use, both by the public as well as Museum and Gallery staff working on exhibitions etc. for the first time in over ten years.

Councillor David Thompson, Chair of the Leisure and Amenities Committee, comments: "Natural History is extremely popular with children, making Wood End Museum a popular venue with families. The work on the Natural History Collection is the first step in preparing it for display, use in loans boxes and workshops as well as for reference and research. We are very excited about the potential of this Collection for education and entertainment and are looking forward to involving the local community in the project as it develops over the coming months. The support of the Heritage Lottery Fund will make all the difference."

Jane Mee says that this will include a two year contract for a project manager (natural history curator). She says that the project resulted from a Collection Assessment Survey carried out by Derek Whiteley and Paul Richards at Sheffield; nice one guys!

Bad news from Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire County Museums Service is having to slash its curatorial workforce. It seems that most posts will go under savage cuts, including the Natural Sciences post of Nick Gordon and even that of the Director. BCG has been active in Nick's support, and I understand from Nick that there are moves afoot to try to save the biological recording post.

Bad news from Derby

A recently received letter from Nick Moyes at Derby City Museum informs us that his post, Assistant Keeper of Natural History and Records, will be deleted. Nick will probably not be sacked, merely redeployed somewhere else within the Council! There will then only be one post left in the Natural History Department in Derby.

Please keep Mike Palmer informed of any further bad or good news.

Steve Garland, Bolton Museums, Art Gallery & Aquarium

Wolves in Scotland

Does anyone have any information about wolves in Scotland (other than noted in the books by J. E. Hartig and J. Richie)?

I am particularly interested in a wolf killed by Sir E. Cameron in 1680 which was stuffed and was still around in 1818 when it was offered for sale in the disposal of the London Museum.

Please contact: David Mackenzie, 52, Crewys Road Childs Hill, London NW2 2AD

Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust

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SURVEY OF SKELETAL MATERIAL FROM GORILLAS

In collaboration with colleagues I am carrying out a survey of skeletal material from gorillas in museums and other collections in Europe. This study is a continuation of the research started in London in April 1994, when my wife and I had been evacuated from the war in Rwanda. While the mountain gorilla remains the particular focus of interest, our work has now been extended to include lowland gorillas.

The purpose of this survey is two-fold:

a) to list existing collections of gorilla skeletons and bones with a view to compilation of an inventory of such specimens. In due course it may be possible to catalogue gorilla skeletal remains on a world-wide basis.

b) to describe and diagnose pathological lesions e.g. healed fractures and osteostrophy, in the specimens examined — and thus develop a database of skeletal disease in gorillas, both free-living and captive.

Your collaboration in this work would be welcomed.

Prof. John E. Cooper FRCPATH, FRCVS
Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust

LATEST RESULT, JUST IN!!!

Natural History 1 Social History (Weapons Div.) 0

If you are running a major new national museum dedicated to arms, weapons and war, but are visitorially challenged, what do you do? The answer is to put on a natural science exhibition!! The Royal Armouries in Leeds are showing a Dinosaur exhibition to bring in the public; is there a strange irony here? Maybe natural science collections are good after all; if only museums did not have all those terrible animals, plants and fossils to look after. If dinosaurs can be used to justify the maintenance of a weapons collection, why on earth do we have such a problem justifying the maintenance of natural science collections?

Steve Garland.
Bolton Museum