



**NatSCA**

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

## NSCG Newsletter

---

Title: Travelling Dodos Conference & Meeting's Reports

Author(s): Seddon, T.

Source: Seddon, T. (1998). Travelling Dodos Conference & Meeting's Reports. *NSCG Newsletter, Issue 7*, 12 - 17.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/728>

---

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

# Travelling Dodos

## Conference & Meeting's Reports

### Visit to Canada 25 May - 9 June

#### Introduction

I was fortunate to undertake an internship at the Canadian Museum of Nature under Rob Waller in 1991, I have been back to Canada since for the SPNHC meeting in Toronto, but this was my first working return visit to the Ottawa.

During a two week visit in late May and early June, I was able to plan a busy programme. I participated in the Canadian Association of Conservators (CAC) conference, I visited three newly completed collection storage and conservation facilities, I completed a draft version of a paper on pollutant monitoring with co-authors Robert Waller and Jean Ttreault and I discussed in detail the design of the new Canadian Museum of Nature collections building and moving-in process. The visit to Montreal enabled me to visit the Redpath Museum, a smaller scale natural history museum.

I also managed to see Lost Worlds, (Jurassic Park II) almost two

months before it was released in the UK. This helped in the planning stage for a children's holiday session - we were able to design masks of the correct dinosaurs for participants to colour and take away.

#### The CAC conference

The conference was attended by a total of 142 delegates, mainly from Canada, a few from the USA and two from the UK. The meeting was held at the Canadian Museum of Nature "Victoria Memorial Building", the building in the centre of Ottawa that houses the displays. The meeting was refreshingly multi-disciplinary, with papers, posters and delegates coming from all subject disciplines. Coffee breaks and tours provided the best opportunities for meeting and talking to other delegates.

The conference commenced with the Per Guildbeck Memorial lecture, this year given by Bob Barclay of the Canadian Conservation Institute. He covered conservator's problems with divisions in rank, specialist

language, and image and ended by asking a plea for the re-enfranchisement of the term "restoration". This thought provoking lecture was followed by a very valuable series of talks on new building projects, in particular the design, moving the collection and human element at CMN. It is perhaps the human element that in our own project has received the least formal attention so far and so this presentation, combined with the chance to talk to Sylvie Marcil whilst at CMN provided some useful guidance on pitfalls to avoid. Barbara Njie's talk on the move and the chance to tour the CMN building with her reinforced the benefit of our policy of packaging and storage materials upgrades prior to the move. This saves both time and money on inserting and removing temporary packaging, but further work is required at Ludlow to reach a safe moving standard.

Practical talks of note included the review of corrosion products on bronzes by Lyndsie Selwyn, and the overview of laser cleaning in conservation by Carole Dignard, this was backed up by a comprehensive poster complete with samples. The talk on the Canadian Co-operative permanent paper project presented the very interesting interim result that other than

a slight loss of brightness, alkaline buffered lignin containing papers performed as well as lignin-free papers and in fact slightly better polluted atmospheres in long term ageing tests. This result has significant cost saving benefits in the designation of a permanent paper for government records.

The financial climate in Canada has changed dramatically since my 1991 internship. In 1991, funds appeared to be almost limitless in all government run institutions, in 1997, government institutions have cut back drastically on staff and are looking at cost-recovery from external clients and alternative ways of raising funds. This in turn has caused some conflict where large, well equipped government funded labs have tendered for projects normally taken by conservators in private practice. One session was devoted to talks exploring problems and policy in this area.

The final day of the conference contained a series of talks about actual conservation projects, many of which were large scale and/or carried out in field situations. My paper on the Conservation of the Whitby Saurians came into this category and was very well received. Interestingly, at least

three of the Canadian members of the audience had visited Whitby Museum and knew the specimens. The talk by two private conservators on ethics and costs of conserving (in situ) a Japanese Buddhist altar to a state in which it could be used daily raised some interesting points on compromises between full conservation and a workable and affordable project. The final session of the meeting included a talk on the development of a training course in preventative conservation, using a combination of risk-assessment workshop, a workbook and NVQ-style work place assessment. It that a similar model could be usefully developed in the UK as part of attaining NVQ at around levels 3 to 4 in conservation.

#### Facilities visited

I was able to tour three new buildings in the region, the CMN Aylmer building the Parks Canada building and the National Archives of Canada building. I o paid a return visit to the Canadian Conservation Institute, CCI, which has n a re-arrangement of labs and offices since 1991.

All three buildings were new since my internship in 1991, although surveying, sign brainstorming and staff training for the move to a new

CMN building was fairly well advanced in-house by 1991 and the initial design for the Parks build had been worked up in the mid 1980s.

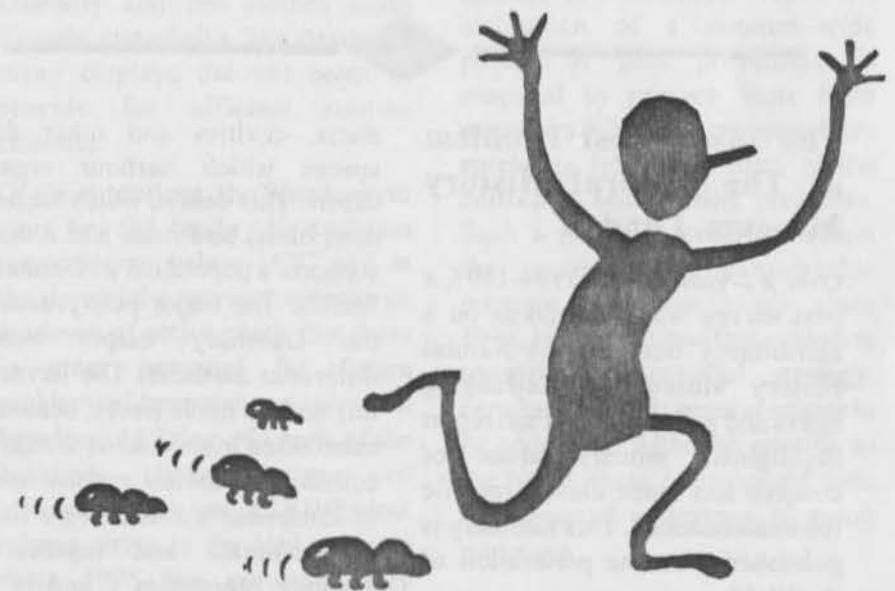
The three buildings provided quite a contrast. The National Archives building as a very architect led, innovative and striking design; a glass sided building with a huge curved roof (like a railway station) with an inner five storey building, three stories of concrete "bunker" containing the collection vaults, an office suite on top and then an "oil rig" platform above open to the outer roof containing the conservation and record copying suites. The airy feel and panoramic views from the conservation platform had a similar ambience to a roof garden.

The Parks Canada building was a modification of an existing standard two storey office building with architectural embellishments to the entrance hall area a the exterior of the building. This building houses conservation and research labs the library and administration.

The CMN building was a new build using standard building materials and methods yet it achieved an interesting appearance and functional layout. The building

# The Ten Agents of Deterioration

An issue by issue guide to the risks facing museum collections



## 3. Pests

**Newton, J et al**

Controlled atmosphere treatment of textile pests in antique curtains using nitrogen hypoxia - a case study. Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Insect Pests in the Urban Environment, Edinburgh, 1996.

**Peacock, E R**

Adults and Larvae of Hide, Larder and Carpet Beetles and their Relatives (Coleoptera: Dermestidae) and of Derontid Beetles (Coleoptera: Derontidae), Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects Vol 5 (3), W. R. Dolling and R. R. Askew (eds), Royal Entomological Society of London, 1993.

**Pinniger, D B**

Insect Control with the Thermo Lignum Treatment, Conservation News, 59, 1996.

**Pinniger, D B**

Insect Pests in Museums, Archetype Press, London, 1994.

**Reierson, D A et al**

Enhancing the effectiveness of modified atmospheres to control insect pests in museums. Proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Insect Pests in the Urban Environment, Edinburgh, 1996.

**Rust, M K et al**

The feasibility of using modified atmospheres to control insect pests in museums. *Restaurator*, 17 (1), 43-60, 1996.

**Seddon, T M**

Pest Control: 'Vapona' Approval & CO2 Fumigation, *Conservation News*, July 1993, 15-16.

**Seddon, T M**

Dichlorvos Approval. In: Pest Attack and Pest Control in Organic Materials, Postprints of the UKIC Furniture Section conference, London, 1996, 43.

**Seddon, T M**

The Big Chill. In: Pest Attack and Pest Control in Organic Materials, Postprints of the UKIC Furniture Section conference, London, 1996, 44-45.

**Strang, T J K**

A review of published temperatures for the control of insect pests in museums. *Collection Forum* 8 (2) 1992, Canada.

**Zycherman, Lynda A and J R Schrock**

A Guide to Museum Pest Control, Association of Systematics Collections, 730 11th Street NW, Washington DC 20001-4584, USA, 1988.

Tracey Seddon  
The Conservation Centre  
NMGM

houses the library, research and collections and administrative staff, conservation, preparation and research laboratories and the National Natural History Collections.

Funding regimes were also very different, both the Parks and Archives building ere briefed and equipped from a wish-list and much to the surprise of Parks staff, the wishes were largely granted. The Parks building internal arrangements re designed by individual lab teams with certain specialist pieces of equipment re-used, but new benching, whereas the Archives building seemed to be design to one concept and seemed to be all new. The CMN building was equipped from an entirely different stand - that of re-using as much as possible existing equipment and furniture (including items such as fume cupboards and elephant trunking but upgrading to a standard range of new storage furniture based on good quality units already in use in many of the collection areas. The upgrades and re-packing of specimens into good quality specimen containers as part of the move preparation resulted in a huge saving on temporary packing materials and time, unpacking once moved in was largely unnecessary because of

these upgrades.

Problems with the building on moving in were very different. At the National chives, the uncompromising design of unfinished concrete in the storage vault has led to retrospective sealing and in one case painting inside the vaults; corridors remain unsealed and rather dusty. A last-minute modification to the design of the fine art vault had to be made at the concrete pouring stage when it s realised that the ceiling height would not be high enough for large pictures.

The building seemed to incorporate a huge amount of expansion space, however, collecting policies include all Canadian broadcasting, government paperwork an so the rate of accrual of material must be high. The conservation suite was breathtaking - it resembled a show room packed with the most modern equipment rather than a working space, however the conference tour did take place a few days fore the official opening and staff were clearly preparing for this event.

At the Parks building, problems arose due existing structures within the building, such as pillars and a rusting floor, but modifications to improve spaces we made as building progressed. Flow and movement of

objects through the building seemed to be well thought out, with labs for heavy and large items close to the loading bay on the ground floor. UV filtering was not installed on windows and various problems were encountered with ceiling heights. The most noticeable factor within the building is that it was designed with mid 1980s staffing levels in mind, these had been dramatically reduced in recent years and so labs were very spacious.

With the CMN building, it was decided that seismic strengthening was required after room layouts had been designed. This led to problems with locations of a few doors and also interfered with the smooth running of some areas of mobile rking. These problems have now been rectified. During my visit, fine tuning o the four climatic zones on the HVAC system was being carried out with conservation and building management staff working together. Collections are housed in appropriate zone, but cabinets have doors to allow further buffering ( and al w for microclimate generation if required) rather than trying to create very tight RH and temperature levels. The outer lm corridor all around the collection pod provides further buffering from climatic extremes and so reduces HVAC running costs further.

Corridors, doors sizes and routes for objects through the building seemed very well thought out. The last of the collections moved in only about two months ago, so sorting out is still in progress.

I was able to pay a short visit to the Canadian Conservation Institute. Since my 1991 internship, staff numbers have also been reduced. The building was in he process of being re-organised with office spaces being separated from laboratory areas. The organisation structure has also changed, with EDR section now called preventive conservation. Funding is such that CCI services, such as photocopying papers in the library, are now being charged for.

My visits in the Montreal area included the Redpath Museum, the Rutherford Museum and a Parks Canada site at Fort Lennox. The Redpath Museum is an historic University Museum, built in a traditional style with display cases and layout similar to that of the Sedgwick Museum in Cambridge. I was able to return a selection of important specimens to the curator of palaeontology that had been outstanding- loans to researchers in the UK and advise on treatment of an ichthyosaur originally from Somerset). The displays are open

to the public and are popular (particularly the fossil reptiles and mummies) but with a change of director, university teaching related displays are to be phased in.

The Rutherford Museum is the Physics department museum, open by appointment on . It displays the scientific equipment, published work and some personal item of Earnest Rutherford from the period in which he worked at McGill University d a also collection of historic scientific instruments. Whilst the display ca nets are very well made and the museum rooms nicely designed, the choice of material (an oak-like wood) has caused corrosion of the lead items on display and e labelling needs improvement..

Fort Lennox is a very well camouflaged former British garrison on an island a he mouth of the Riveliex River, this river drains Lake Champlain into the St Lawrence river. The officers lodgings contain a display of excavated and conserved artefacts relating to the garrison, other restored and partially furnished as are shown to visitors on the guided tour. Having visited the Parks Canada conservation laboratories, it was interesting to visit a site in their care.

## Conclusion

This visit proved a worthwhile, stimulating (and exhausting) experience. I have been able to feed back many of the ideas noted in the new buildings visited the team of architects working on a new museum resource centre for Ludlow. (A forthcoming lottery bid). As ever, meeting colleagues and exchanging ideas has been a valuable experience.

Funding for this visit was generously provided by an overseas travel grant from the Canadian Association of Conservators, a training panel award from Shropshire County Council and a travel grant from the Museums & Galleries Commission.

*K.J. Andrew  
Shropshire County Curator of  
Natural History*

