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The Museum Leadership Programme, Sept. 1997

The 31st of August 1997 may or may not provide lasting memories for all of us. For me, it will be one of catching a train to Norwich to embark on a two week intensive residential course run by the University of East Anglia, called the Museum Leadership Programme. The publicity for the course promised to identify and develop leadership talent from among the various specialists in museums and galleries and develop a range of relevant skills such as: recognising various styles of leaderships development of interpersonal skills, management of change; dealing with funding and governing bodies; managing capital projects and budget management. Best of all it offered the chance to spend two weeks away from work with colleagues at similar levels in a range of institutions.

At the time I felt very much in need of some training and development in these particular skills and was delighted when I was accepted on the course. When it came to leaving home, however, I was more reticent. It was a relief to discover that most of the other participants felt the same way and


it did not take long for people to get to know each other and start to make friends. This was helped by the excellent accommodation, good food and the beautiful surroundings of the University of East Anglia campus.

The course was extremely well organised and had obviously been put together with a great deal of care and thought for each component. Every day covered a different aspect of museum leadership with a different tutor. All the course tutors provided informative and stimulating sessions and participation within the group was also at an extremely high level. Everyone was keen to learn from each others experiences and to share their own problems with the group. The course provided us with an enormous amount of information to take in and to refer to in the future.. It also provided eleven new contacts in the museum world and on a personal level it gave me more confidence and knowledge to deal with work and the problems that arise on a day to day basis.

Was the course worth spending two weeks away from work and the financial cost of attending? I would recommend it to anyone who is at a senior level within their organisation and is leading a group or

team of others. The course is relevant, well run and extremely enjoyable, definitely worth persuading your boss to let you go!

*Kirsten Walker
Horniman Museum*



Botanical Collections - Kraków 26th - 29th June 1997

This year I attended the Second International Conference on the Preservation of Botanical Collections. The meeting was organised by the W. Szafer Institute of Botany at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Three people from the UK attended, Aileen Collis & myself from the NMGM and Vicky Purewal from NMGW. The English speaking contingent was completed by Ann Pinzl, from Nevada and committee member of SPNHC. The majority of the other 50 delegates were either from Russia, China, Ukraine or Poland. The next meeting, due to be held in 2000, will be hosted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. In the hope of improving UK representation at this meeting, I have agreed, along

with Vicky Purewal, to act as 'Liaison' for the UK. This, in part, is my first communication! I hope to publish information as it develops through this newsletter.

A couple of the papers directly dealt with conservation concerns of botanical collections themselves; Vicky's 'Assessing herbarium collections: the choice of criteria for condition surveying' and a paper entitled 'Wax technique to conserve plant fossils and mammoth bones' presented by Shyamala Chitale from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Ohio. The rest of the presentations meanwhile dealt with explaining the contents of a herbarium's collections, emphasizing its value and in turn its worthiness for preservation.

One got the idea that the fact that the meeting actually took place, and communicated the importance of collections was itself helping to preserve these collections. This is an important aspect of collection preservation, especially when justifying the funding of staff and resources; an issue that the Natural Sciences Conservation Group know all too well.

*Donna Hughes
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Merseyside*