



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

NatSCA News

Title: The Origins of NatSCA - a personal history

Author(s): Moore, S.

Source: Moore, S. (2005). The Origins of NatSCA - a personal history. *NatSCA News, Issue 5*, 31.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/304>

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.

The Origins of NatSCA - a personal history **- Simon Moore, Conservator of Natural Sciences**

'He likes playing about with dead bodies' was how my House Master at Bradfield rather scurrilously described my academic interests to my Mother back in er... 1965! Two and a half years later I started my career as a Scientific Assistant in Spiders but before the end of the year had been transferred to the more suitable Histology & Preservation section of the BM (NH) as it was then known. After 12 years the section was disbanded for rather political reasons and I found myself again the curatorial fold. A further 11 years on, I had had enough of the occasionally specialised and rarefied academia and chose a new start in my principal interest of being a conservator of natural sciences out in the sticks of Hampshire.

The first 'jolly' was a conference in Ipswich where I met Bob Entwistle and a number of other core NH conservators. The *Life After Death* conference, as it was titled, was the first stage in kick-starting thoughts about founding a Conservation Group. During my last years at the NHM I gave a talk to a group of colleagues, including Maggie Reilly, at Manchester Museum under the auspices of Velson Horie (and where John Peake gave his notorious 'why do we need NH collections?' talk). With all this knowledge and talent around we needed a more specialist group. Many knew about BCG (but not all) and some were unsure of submitting conservation-oriented papers to the BCG journal as they felt it was more about curatorship. This divisiveness was, I felt, unhelpful, but might be solved at a later date.

By the time of the Madrid Conference in mid May 1992, the need for a specialist Group was keenly felt and a number of us including Chris Collins, Maggie Reilly, Kate Andrew, William Lindsay, Bob and myself (any others?), met to hammer out a plan whereby we could form under the umbrella of a larger and established organisation such as SPNHC, UKIC or ICOM. I was detailed to investigate UKIC and at a steering committee meeting in Peterborough, hosted by Simon Trodd, we opted for UKIC. In these more uncomplicated days, it was only a formality for UKIC to welcome us as the Natural Sciences Conservation Section and I opted for being editor of our page/s in *Conservation News*. The first founding meeting of our new Group/Section took place in February 1993 and was held at York Museum and hosted by William who became our first Chair. We welcomed as many curators onto our otherwise rather small membership, as wanted to be involved with our Group. During this year, a select group of five of us (including myself) was funded by the Pilgrim Trust to attend the SPNHC Conference in Victoria on Vancouver Island, along with visits to Museums in Chicago, Ottawa, Toronto, Denver and Austin (Texas). This proved to be highly interesting and most enjoyable for the lucky 5 who reported on their exploits in much detail after their 3 weeks away.

The next year UKIC underwent the all-too-familiar re-shuffle and opted for charitable status spelling complications for our mixed-role membership. Rather than say goodbye to our faithful curatorial membership we opted out of UKIC in 1995 and became the Natural Sciences Conservation Group. Bob chose the Dodo for our logo despite some voices saying that our group shouldn't be seen to be as dead as...!

The new Group was quick to stand on its own two feet and developed considerably welcoming in more members from abroad, especially from countries without such a core to help guide their footsteps in this comparatively newly-recognised discipline. For 5 years we continued and thrived as such and gradually became more and more entangled with BCG and it seemed sensible to converge and become a larger group with one conference, one journal, one membership and a (much-needed) bigger voice. There were a few dissenters who argued that it was unwise to become a minority group within a larger one and that our discipline would slowly be subsumed into curation. Assurances were made that our Group would have a 50% committee representation, despite our smaller membership, and that the conservation side would still be kept distinct from curation. The latter point was also necessary for our group to fit in with NCCR.

In 2002, following much hard work especially with the Charity Commissioners, NatSCA was formalised as a new group, converged from NSCG and BCG at our formative AGM in 2003, hosted at Manchester Museum. Since then I have seen the group grow both in size and prowess and I personally find that although I have to beat the occasional drum for Conservation, it is so much better to have one voice, one membership &c. Next year will see us at the NHM as part of the SPNHC Conference (June 12-19th) and I hope we will be ably represented by our membership.