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## The Biology Curator

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it real ?" – they could mean "Is it alive ?" – a very different question. It is also important to remember what these objects may not be telling us – for instance, information about the behaviour or movement of animals.

### The real natural history

Dr James Brock, Keeper of Natural History, Horniman Museum, talked about the real natural history – our natural history collections in museums. Natural history museums and their curators have a poor public image. To improve this image museums need to explain why they have such collections and what curators do with them. People often do not realise that real natural history specimens are used in education, supporting conservation initiatives, and in research that leads to the understanding of systematics, biodiversity and evolution.

### Taxidermy – an outsiders view

Maurice Davies, Assistant Director, Museums Association, felt that taxidermy in museums was a wonderful and popular resource. He urged museums to do that resource justice by improving the presentation and interpretation of such material.

A lively debate followed the presentations. The subjects discussed included attitudes to taxidermy, zoological material and past collecting; interpretation of natural history collections, access to collections and research in natural history museums.

### DAY 3: Tour of the Powell-Cotton Museum Stores

On day three of the meeting the remaining BCG delegates and members of the Taxidermy Guild viewed the storage areas behind the scenes at the Powell-Cotton Museum. The museum has large collections of animal skins and osteology, including important collections of skull material. This material is invaluable for research purposes because of the data collected with the specimens. Malcolm Harman, Assistant Curator (Natural History), told the group about ongoing initiatives to improve storage of the collections. As with most museums, there is a perennial lack of space for storage. The tour ended with a visit to Quex House.

For further information about the Powell-Cotton Museum please contact the curator, John Harrison, at The Powell-Cotton Museum, Quex Museum, House & Gardens, Quex Park, Birchington, Kent CT7 0BH. 01843 842168.

Sarah Kenyon

Natural Sciences Curatorial Officer

Saffron Walden Museum.

## The Scarce Hook-tip Moth *Sabra harpagula*

From its discovery in 1837 to its apparent demise in 1938, the Scarce Hook-tip Moth *Sabra harpagula* was only known from Leigh Woods on the edge of Bristol, the southern side of the Avon Gorge. Until it was found in 1962 in the Wye Valley the moth was thought to have become extinct, happily it still thrives at the latter locality but it has never been seen again in Leigh Woods.

As part of a project mapping the past and present status of moths in the Bristol region, I would be extremely pleased to hear from any museum or individual who has specimens of this moth in their collections. I am particularly keen to receive data from Bristol specimens but even if you do not have time to extract the data I would very much like to know if you have specimens.

The moth was never very common at Leigh Woods and it should be possible to build up a database of virtually every Bristol specimen still extant. It is hoped the information gained from them will also shed light on which years were good seasons for the moth and how successful the old collectors were in breeding them. Details of the method of capture would be particularly useful as would knowing of blown larvae or other life stages.

If you can help please contact:

Ray Barnett, Collections Manager, City Museum & Art Gallery, Queen's Road, Bristol BS8 1RL Tel.: 0117-922 3600 E-mail: ray\_barnett@bristol-city.gov.uk

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(Please send on disc using Word for Windows or ASCII-file with hard copy).

**Copy Dates: 8th January for March, 8th May for July and 8th September for November**

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