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The slides were mostly in good condition, although there were a few where the mountant had dried out and/or the coverslip was broken. Some of the slides seem to be lost since the code numbers indicate at least 51 slides, also there are some specimens in the collection labelled by Beirne for which no corresponding slides exist.

A total of 29 pinned specimens from which sclerites were removed were found in the main collection of the BMNH. It is possible that some specimens were overlooked since they may have been redetermined and placed elsewhere in the collection.

Since the original list of slides and specimens was lost (B. P. Beirne, pers. com.) new lists were drawn up summarising the data on a) the slides of sclerites and b) specimens located in the BMNH collection from which sclerites were taken.

Curation

The following recommendations have been accepted by BMNH collections management in order to safeguard the slides from further deterioration and to maintain their usefulness:

In the short term:

a) Remount those preparations in immediate danger of deterioration, particularly: i) those where the coverslip is broken and there is the danger that the specimen will flake off and ii) those where the mountant has dried, allowing air to enter under the coverslip and there is the danger of the disruption of the specimen. It is recommended that a more stable, tried and tested medium such as Canada balsam should be used. Care will be taken to retain original slide labels where possible.

b) Where no deterioration is apparent, ensure that each slide is ringed with Canada balsam or Euparal to prevent drying of the mountant and entry of air bubbles.

c) Improve storage of and access to the slides by rehousing in a purpose built slide cabinet with suitable protective covers and divider labels. It would be most useful to future workers if the slides of larval skins were kept together as a body (the slides of diplazontine sclerites would stay together anyway under the present systematic arrangement of the BMNH Hymenoptera slide collections).

In the medium term:

d) Label all slides, with the current valid name of the species concerned.

e) Label pinned specimens (in BMNH collection) prominently.

f) Locate pinned specimens in other repositories (Stelfox and Gwynn material) and ensure they are adequately labelled and cross-referenced with their respective slides.

g) Investigate possibility of transfer of pinned specimens in other repositories to the BMNH so they are not separated from their slides.

h) Copy relevant lists and other appropriate documentation and place them both with the slides and also in the collection archive.

Summary

Information on the Beirne microscope slides at the Natural History Museum, London is summarised, including slides of final instar larval skins and the abdominal sclerites of diplazontine ichneumonids. Many of the original specimens from which the slides were made were located and lists of slides and specimens have been drawn up. Brief notes were made on the conditions of the slides and some recommendations for their curation are made.

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PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTION RELOCATION

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Introduction

These Guidelines arose out of the experience of the North West Collection Research Unit [NWCURU] over the last few years in relocating natural science material between institutions. It is hoped the Guidelines will prove useful to curators involved in arranging the relocation, or rationalisation, of collections, by helping both the disposing and the acquiring institutions to agree on all important aspects of the transfer in advance. The Guidelines should also inform the work of Collection Research Units [CRUs] around the country.

It is important to approach any such relocations in a positive manner, making it clear to all interested parties that the ultimate aim is to improve the curation, documentation and access to the collection.

Principles to follow on transfer

The Museums Association Code of Conduct for Museum Curators, and the Museums Association Code of Practice for Museum Authorities should inform and guide the decisions and practice of any relocation of collections.

It is suggested the following principles are adopted:

1/ The collection should only be acquired by an institution...

* When it fits their declared Collecting Policy

* Which has permanent curatorial staff posts in the appropriate discipline(s)

* Which has adequate backup for maintenance and conservation

* Which has resources in storage of at least as good quality as the disposing institution

2/ The collections should be relocated to the nearest suitable institution that can receive them. If no such institution can be found locally or regionally, the collection should be offered nationally or even internationally *via* suitable professional journals. Only if after a reasonable time no willing recipient institution comes forward should the sale or destruction of the material be contemplated. In the event of eventual destruction, the material should be photographed, and all documentation, including specimen labels, should be preserved.

3/ Collections should be moved intact - the 'all or nothing' principle - to prevent the collection becoming fragmented, or having material separated from any extrinsic documentation, thus making future research more difficult. This principle also precludes 'cherry-picking' by other, usually major, institutions, leaving the disposing museum with assorted 'rubbish' so that by a 'trickle-down' effect the least useful material ends up in the smallest museums who are probably the least able to cope with it or to use it!

4/ If any collection has strong local associations with the disposing institution, then there should be a very strong presumption that the collection will not be relocated, but that a formal contract for suitable ongoing care will be arranged with a nearby institution with the correct natural science skills available.

5/ That full transfer of title documentation will be provided by the disposing institution once the collection has been moved. If the terms of the original gift of the collection are in any way restrictive it is best that legal advice is obtained.

6/ That expert conservation advice will be sought on any potential dangers to the material in moving it.

7/ That once the collection has been relocated, the information about the transfer will be submitted (usually *via* the local CRU) to the national FENSCORE database, and also will be published as appropriate by the Biology or the Geological Curators Group.

Decisions needed once relocation proposed

The following points should be discussed between the donating and receiving institutions, and the agreements reached should then be incorporated into a written document. It is suggested that the agreement is shown to the local Area Museum Council [AMC] and/or CRU for comment and approval before being finally jointly submitted for formal acceptance by the governing bodies of all institutions involved. The only exception here would be in the case of true emergency action, eg. where the disposing institution can no longer protect the collection because of *force majeure*.

Which collections are included? These should be clearly and unambiguously described in the agreement, to avoid mix ups or arguments during the removal. When more than one acquiring institution is involved, it would be advisable for coloured tags/stickers to be attached to all cabinets and boxes, etc., to help ensure the material all ends up in the intended place. Extrinsic documentation, such as field notebooks, history files, manuscript and printed catalogues, *must* be kept with the collection to which it refers, and should be packed in colour coded containers.

Who pays for what? It is suggested that normally the acquiring institution(s) would be expected to pay for the packing, transport, and storage of the material, but it is hoped that such costs would be

eligible for grant-aid from the local Area Museums Service, and given a high priority for such aid.

The timetable for the move. The disposing institution should undertake to make the collections readily available as necessary, and also if possible arrange for local help with the packing and loading of the material. The acquiring institution(s) should undertake to adhere to the agreed timetable, and remove all the material by the agreed date.

Settlement of disputes. In the event of a dispute arising that cannot be resolved locally, it is suggested that the matter be referred for arbitration to an *ad hoc* independent body. Such a body could consist *ex officio* of the Chair of FENSCORE, the Chair of one nearby CRU (or their nominees), together with a senior BCG or GCG member from the region concerned and acceptable to both sides; it is of course vital that none of these people are directly or indirectly involved in the disputed relocation.

After relocation.

It is the duty of the acquiring institution to curate, conserve and document relocated collections to the same standard as their other collections.

If subsequently an acquiring institution, for valid reasons, decides to pass on a part of a collection to another suitable institution, it is the responsibility of the giving institution to

* fully document the material transferred, pass one copy to the new acquiring institution, and keep one copy permanently with the remainder of the collection,

* inform the FENSCORE database of the move,

* publish details of the fresh move *via* BCG or GCG.

NOTES, BIOGRAPHIES AND OBITUARIES

Adrian Norris, Assistant Curator Natural History, Leeds City Museums

The present financial climate in museums, galleries and other similar institutions both national and local mitigates against even simple and basic forms of collection research. Most museums have, for example, collections for which the name of the donor and/or collector is known, but time has never been available to research and locate any further information.

Several museums and institutes are also known to have indexes of obituaries etc., often from limited runs of specialist journals, and there are even a few published catalogues relating to specific interest groups. Some of these indexes and catalogues are well known to some curators, but very often they are not known, or are not easily available.

Using modern technology, we could help each other in a form which would save both time and money, as well as assisting our work. To this end several of the natural historians within museums in Yorkshire and Humberside are getting together to produce a catalogue of published notes, biographies, bibliographies and obituaries found within, a limited number of locally available journals. The idea is that this information will be distributed free to any museum requiring it in the form of a floppy disk which can be read by any IBM compatible P.C's.

Several other people have shown interest in this project and it has been suggested that the service should be made available nationally. If the disks are to be of any value on a national basis, however, larger numbers of journals would have to be searched than are available locally. If other natural historians are interested in this project and are willing to assist by extracting information from card indexes, journals or any other sources I would be interested to hear from them. To obviate duplicated effort, I will publish periodic updated lists of the journals that have or are being covered.

It would be helpful if intending collaborators would adopt a standard syntax for their entries. This would allow the information to be merged later with other peoples work, and also would facilitate the conversion of text or word-processed files into a