

Correspondence and Comment

Entomological History

I should like to support Michael Darby's suggestion that the Society concerns itself with the historical aspect of our science. Regarding Sherborn's *Where is the --- collection* (1940) there was in fact an attempt to update this by the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History (now the Society for the History of Natural History). Questionnaires were sent to Museums in 1971-2 and although many were completed and returned on the whole the response was poor. The only results from these questionnaires, after many years of further work was Ron Cleevely's *World Palaeontological Collections* (1983). Dr Paul Whalley originally held the completed entomological questionnaires but as many of the major Museums had not responded (the too numerous Lepidoptera collections being the problem) no further progress was made. Some years ago he passed these completed questionnaires to me for safe keeping. Since then, as Dr Darby observes, data on collections in the North East and North West have been published.

There is a collection of photographs of entomologists formed by the late Dr C.D. Day in the Hope Entomological Collections at Oxford.

There is certainly considerable interest in the history of science now and our eminent contemporary, the Institute of Biology, has recently formed a History of Biology group which publishes a small journal *Biology History*. No doubt the Institute's objectives and teething problems could be studied to our advantage.

Certainly at least a temporary committee should be formed and perhaps the appointment of at least a part-time Archivist considered. I believe Dr Darby is currently interested in biographical work on British Coleopterists and I share that interest for Dipterists. I am also compiling a bibliography of British entomological books. Perhaps other Fellows could now declare their historical interests.

K.G.V. SMITH
70 Hollickwood Avenue
LONDON N12 0LT

Where do dipterists go — and why? (Part 2)

What Laurence wrote about the Diptera Section of the BM(NH) may be spreading internationally. Almost the same words could be used to describe the current situation at the Canadian National Collection (CNC), Ottawa, and to a lesser extent the employment of dipterists in the rest of North America.

When I first knew the CNC (1963), the dipterists then in residence, Chilcott, McAlpine, Shewell and Vockeroth, had the job for life. Now I find that I can count at least six taxonomists who worked in the Diptera Section over the past decade who have left (Peterson, Wood and Borkent to new jobs; Shewell, McAlpine and Teskey retirement; Chilcott died in the field (1967)) and now only Vockeroth remains. A hymenopterist was brought in to help out despite the availability of other excellent but un- or under-employed Canadian dipterists (Currie, Griffiths, Marshall & O'Hara). We, in Washington at the National Museum of Natural History, have also lost dipterists through retirement and career changes (Knutson, Wildcr), but overall we have managed to replace most of them [we are down two from our peak of seven]. However, in North America we have lost all of our teachers (Alexander of Massachusetts, Berg of Cornell, Byers of Kansas, Cook of Minnesota, Hardy of Hawaii, and Schlinger of California, Berkeley), who trained this generation of dipterists. Only Steve Marshall of Guelph and Monty Wood of Carleton are training dipterists today!

So, one can ask what is causing this rapid population decline of fly specialists? Some sort of Hennigian Curse? Or short-sighted Administrators?

F. CHRISTIAN THOMPSON
Systematic Entomology Laboratory, USDA
c/o U.S. National Museum NHB-168
WASHINGTON, DC 20560
U.S.A.

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Editors:

J.A. BULLOCK
Dept of Zoology
University of Leicester
Leicester LE1 7RH

P.F. CREDLAND
Dept of Biology
Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
Egham, Surrey TW20 OEX

Assistant Editors:

Dr T.H. Jones, Dr G.E. Rotheray, Dr M. R. Shaw, Dr I.J. Kitching

Business Manager: G.G. Bentley

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