

CURATOR'S REPORT

It was reported last year that, following the reorganisation resulting from the arrival of the Skinner collection, there is no room in our building for any additional cabinets. This remains true though some minor acquisitions were received in 2019.

The first acquisition was of miscellaneous specimens of several orders from the collection of our late member and former lanternist Michael Shaffer, for which we are grateful to his widow Monika. These are housed in 20 store boxes, of which the contents are being assessed and where appropriate specimens will be incorporated in the main collections. The labelling of specimens with determinations is variable and many lack data. I have begun to sort the three boxes containing Diptera, some of which had been identified by Michael's former colleagues at the Natural History Museum. In addition to specimens collected by Michael Shaffer himself, there are also some collected by Gerry Tremewan. Ian Masters has offered to record the data from the Lepidoptera, after which they can be made available to members.

The second acquisition was of two small cabinets of Lepidoptera, most of which were locally collected in the Wokingham area, donated by Alan Broodbank, not presently a member. The collection was formed in the 1960s and 70s by the donor and his friends Richard Beard and Terry Babbage. It comprises 46 species of butterflies and 320 species of larger moths, laid out with spaces for all then known British species. Again Ian Masters has offered to extract the data, which will be a useful addition to the local records.

Both collections were accommodated in the Howarth Room, which is now fully occupied as it had already been necessary to store some lower priority collections there, bearing in mind that it is not subject to the same air conditioning controls as the rest of the building. Also currently sited in this room is the 30 drawer "duplicates cabinet", moved there to make way for the Skinner collection. This cabinet contains specimens of butterflies and larger moths from donated collections that are surplus to our requirements and available for members to take away. Consideration of the most effective utilisation of space has led to the usefulness of retaining this cabinet being questioned, and its existence may not be widely known. It was publicised in 2004 when we had a "duplicates weekend" attended by a good number of lepidopterists, when the more interesting specimens were removed, but most drawers are now full again. The availability of specimens for members will be made known during events at the building, and whether we continue to offer this facility will be kept under review.

While the workshops continue to be successful, attendance of open days has remained low and dependent on a few regulars to be viable. In particular new members are encouraged to visit on these occasions to make use of the library and collections.

Donations of specimens to fill gaps in the collections are always welcome. I am grateful to several members for such donations, and I thank Ivan Perry for his further significant annual donation of Diptera to the Society's collection. Regular loans were made throughout the year to Steve Havers for photography of selected specimens.

PETER CHANDLER