

ans of natural history seeking a break from the pleasure spots of the Midi may like to know that it is accessible and has wide-ranging holdings. Their website:

<http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/caom/fr/>

gives access details (in French only), but no appointment is necessary and a passport or other ID is the only support needed to get a reader's ticket. Everyone is entitled to two free days a year, after which a fee is payable for a seven-day or annual ticket. The building is near the University, between the motorway and the railway station, with bus connections nearby. Parking is available, the Reading Room is spacious and documents arrive promptly. Readers can use a digital camera, without flash, to copy documents and the staff are generally very helpful. Readers need to use the lockers to deposit all bags, etc. and once registered, you are assigned a locker key as well as a desk number and an electronic card to request items. Make a note of your Reader's number as you will need it to speed access for future visits! There is a small area with a coffee machine and water outside the Reading Room, and there are cafés nearby.

The resources available obviously include extremely rich and copious holdings of French official documents related to the former colonies, but also maps and plans and a very large collection of photographs and other images of all kinds. Because of the widespread distribution of former French colonies, the Library itself is very rich and, apart from open access bibliographies and atlases, has many English publications on areas adjacent to French colonies, such as India, South East Asia and the Pacific. There is no on-line catalogue of those holdings, only a card catalogue, but it

includes 18,000 monographs, 15,000 brochures, and 2,575 periodical titles, which include 1,204 overseas titles as well as 824 official publications. If you have been frustrated or daunted by the task of seeing material in the Bibliotheque National in Paris, try CAOM for a pleasant change!

Gina Douglas

22. The Society's Down House visit in 1981



A group of members of our Society went on a visit to Down House, the home of Charles Darwin, on 15 April 1981. Both of us were present at the time and recollect a pleasant and convivial private view of the house and gardens. We would like to hear from anybody who remembers the day, and especially if at the time Darwin's geological notebooks kept during the voyage of the *Beagle* 1832–1836 were on display. Darwin used 15 notebooks on the journey, varying in size and colour. At some stage in the early 1980s, his notebook relating to the Galapagos Islands disappeared. Fortunately it had previously been microfilmed. We would like to hear from anybody who may remember if attention was drawn to the notebook at the time, during this visit of the Society or in the same period.

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DIARY

Autumn Meeting 2008
Turner 500 & Hancock 200
Newcastle
5–7 September 2008
See Item 3

Natural History – Past, Present
and Future
Linnean Society of London
Saturday 11 October 2008
See Item 4

Spring Meeting and AGM 2009
Darwin's legacy: exploring
diversity and evolution in the
history of field biology
National Museum Wales
Cardiff
26–27 March 2009
See Item 5

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Lilium superbum, watercolour on vellum by
Pancrace Bessa (1772–1846)
See Item 6

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