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more, our present collections have fallen into decay.

If Natural History museums are to continue in their role of educating the general public and displaying exhibits rather than purely storing scientific information taxidermists must be encouraged to continue to improve standards and to train other Naturalists in the art.

Chris Stoate
Natural History Officer
North of England Museums Service

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A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE MAJOR NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS
AT THE DORMAN MUSEUM, MIDDLESBROUGH

The present building of the Dorman Memorial Museum was presented to the town of Middlesbrough by the late Sir Arthur J. Dorman in memory of his son, Lieutenant G. L. Dorman and the men of the 3rd Battalion, Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Regiment, who fell in the Boer War of 1819-1902. This coincided with the gift by the late Sir Alfred E. Pease of a large collection of mammals, birds and other specimens brought mainly from East Africa.

The building was opened in 1904 but in fact there had been a museum movement for some years before this. This movement was mainly in natural history, indeed the Dorman Museum can be said to have its roots in natural history.

In 1868 the Cleveland Literary and Philosophical Society with its connected Field Club decided to establish a museum. Objects were collected in the ensuing years and placed in the new hall of the society in 1877-1878 as exhibits of the Field Club and Science sections of the Society. In 1884 these, (by now large), collections were given into the care of the Free Library Committee of the Corporation. They were stored in various places before being exhibited in rooms in the Municipal Buildings on Dunning Street. These exhibitions were opened to the public in 1890 and formed Middlesbrough's first public museum for ten further years.

Situated at the main entrance to Albert Park, the Dorman Museum was extended in 1968 and there are plans for further extensions in the future to provide much needed storage and display areas.

The Keepers

With its background of natural history the Dorman Museum has naturally enough had a number of naturalists among its staff.

Mr. Baker Hudson Curator (1904-1923)

This first Curator was a well known conchologist and Secretary to the Conchological section of the Yorkshire Naturalists Union in the late 1800's. His mollusc collections and books came to the museum on his death.

Mr. Frank Elgee Assistant Curator 1904-1923
 Curator 1923-1932
 Honorary Curator 1932 until his death in 1944

Mr. Elgee, a famous local naturalist, was given the popular name 'the man of the moors' because of his love for the Yorkshire Moors and his expertise on their natural history, geology and archaeology. His published works include 'The Moorlands of N. E. Yorkshire, Their Natural History and Origin' and 'Early Man in North East Yorkshire.'

On his retirement in 1932 his wife Mrs. H. W. Elgee B. A. became curator.

Mr. G. G. Watson Curator 1965-1975

Mr. Watson has done much to promote a good relationship between museums and the public, especially involving young people. He was the founder of the British Young Naturalists Association in Scarborough in 1957.

Mr. Cliff Thornton Curator 1975-1979

A Curator of wide interests who initiated the Zoological gardens at Preston Hall Museum, Stockton, and many interesting local studies.

The Collections

The original nucleus of the collections and displays at Middlesbrough had a scientific bias; birds, birds eggs, crustacea, butterflies and moths, a few local antiquities and a large geological collection, chiefly local. Added to these was the Pease collection of African mammals and birds. Since Local Government reorganisation over the last decade this emphasis has changed, together with the specimens. The present display is as follows:-

Ground floor

Gallery 1

The History of Middlesbrough

Gallery 2

The Geology and Industries of Teeside, plus unrelated, individual display cases.

Gallery 3

The Nelson collection of birds and eggs with some table displays of molluscs, herbaria, insects and geology.

Gallery 4

A 'flexible' gallery mainly used for temporary displays.

Upper floor

Displays of North Eastern potteries.

The present natural history collections are those that remain after the Local Government re-organisation. In 1974 many of the exhibits were removed to form the nucleus of displays and collections in neighbouring districts. Also many specimens were found to be infested and consequently had to be destroyed. Yet others were directed into the School Loans Service, now a County function. Much of the Pease Collection was dispersed in this way.

As far as I have been able to ascertain during my short time in my present appointment the following major collections (in part or complete) can be found on display and in store at the museum.

Ornithology

The Nelson collection

172 cases of mainly Yorkshire birds collected by Mr. T.H. Nelson of Redcar and presented by Mrs. Nelson in 1918. About 435 species are represented, some of the rarer being the Little Bittern, Red Crested Pochard, Wood Sandpiper, Levantine Shearwater and Kentish Plover. Under the terms of the bequest the cases are in their original arrangement and the specimens are in a good condition. This provides an interesting historical aspect to the display.

There is also a collection of 2,700 eggs representing 253 species (apart from about 30, stolen in 1974). Treasures of this collection mentioned in a reprint from the North Western Naturalist (Dec 1935) are "A fine series of Guillemot eggs from the Speeton and Bempton cliffs, and two clutches of Ruff eggs from the Teesmouth Marches....."

A bookcase from Mr. Nelson's own library holds a valuable collection of interesting books on natural history, mainly ornithology.

Mollusca

Dorman Collection

Lieutenant G. L. Dorman, in whose memory the present museum building

stands, was a keen naturalist, collecting shells as well as ethnographical material from all parts of the world.

The Official Guide to the Museum (1909) says that 'In the Dorman Collection is an almost complete series of volute shells and numerous beautiful cowries (Cypraea).' The collection dates mainly from the late 1800's.

The Fryer Collection

This comprehensive, world-wide collection was made by J. H. Fryer of South Shields and presented to the museum in 1904 on the event of his death.

There are good examples of many species, in fact together with the Dorman Collection it spans most of the mollusc families.

Geology

Collection of Dr. W. Y. Veitch

At one time the Honorary Curator of the Museum (1904) Dr. Veitch presented a series of fossils and minerals.

The Hawell Bequest

A large collection of shells, fossils and minerals bequeathed by the late Rev. J. Hawell, Vicar of Ingleby Greenhow, in 1904. Among the rock and mineral specimens of Cleveland are maps and photographs. The collection is noted in detail by Rev. Hawell in a number of catalogues, some in the museum.

Entomology

Some of the more spectacular examples of insects are on display in the Nelson Gallery and a number of cases are in store. Some are from small collections but I believe the bulk of the butterfly collection is from Mr. Frank Elgee. Also in the early 1900's the Victoria and Albert Museum presented a large collection in 18 cases, illustrating the classification and geographical distribution of the Coleoptera.

Botany

The Herbarium of Margaret Stovin

This beautiful collection of British and Exotic species made in the early 1800's was presented in 1922 by Lt. Col. J. B. Pennyman. The plants are in a large number of volumes, British and Exotic kept separately. There is a detailed classification and details about each plant based mainly on "Smiths English Flora (1824)" and "Sowerby's English Botany".

Sowerby Plates

A collection of hand-coloured illustrations from the 1st edition of Sowerby's "British Botany" (1790-1814). These formerly belonged to R. A. Salisbury of Leeds, a well known British botanist who pencilled notes on the plates. At one time they were on display illustrating cases showing the orders of British flowering plants and typical habitats.

There can be added to these collections a miscellanea of specimens from a number of different collectors, mainly local. In time I hope to assess these and obtain a clearer idea of the extent of the natural history collections at Middlesbrough.

Denise Cutts
Dorman Museum

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