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## **Mounted Bird Collection from the old Burton Museum** **- Bill Grange, Derby Museum and Art Gallery**

*Report on mounted bird collection from the old Burton Museum, now at Burton Meadowside Leisure Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs*

On 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006, I examined the collection and spent about two hours photographing it and making notes.

There is a substantial amount of material, the birds and some historical items (of which more later) being displayed on a large landing as a remnant of the old Burton Museum.

The main part of the collection is a series of cases joined together as a single unit, 17 feet or so long, with the joints masked off by wide moulding strips. I assume that this is how they were displayed in the old museum – but they must have been dismantled prior to being transferred to the leisure centre. I have no idea how easy they would be to take apart again, I attach a drawing, showing the separate case components and their measurements – each numbered to relate to the accompanying photographs.

All these cases are in the same style, including the written labels for each of the specimens, with common name and region of origin, as the other Moseley material transferred to Derby Museum in 1980 - so I can safely assume that they are part of the Moseley Collection of Rolleston Hall, mounted and set up by the famous taxidermist, A. S. Hutchinson of Derby (c. 1870). There are approximately 100 specimens of birds, most 'exotic', mainly from Asia and the Americas. The birds are mounted on modelled branches and rock-work, with added dried vegetation and with a plain painted background. There is no attempt to recreate the birds' original habitat, typical of Hutchinson's work. For a good illustrated account of the work of Hutchinson see the website at: <http://www.taxidermy4cash.com/hutchinson.html>

The quality of the material is generally good, with some good mounts, even by modern standards. In general the larger birds are better mounted than the smaller ones. Pest attack seems to have been confined to only one of the case units, with some damage to feathers of at least two specimens and tell tale dead bodies of moths immediately below. However, it appears that this is an old infestation. There has also been a little fading of some of the material.

The environmental conditions of storage are fairly satisfactory, being clean and apparently dry (though I didn't take any relative humidity readings). The birds do face towards some windows, approximately 20 feet away, which is far from ideal.

In addition to the main collection, there are three isolated cases, featuring respectively - an immature Mute Swan (42 x 19 x 43 in; A Flamingo (16 x 16 x 58 in.); Water Rail (14 x 14 x 6.5 in). These may also be by Hutchinson. Again, there appeared to be no taxidermist's labels, nor any information on where or when they were collected. These three items are good quality mounts and in good condition.

The quality and history of all of the bird material, not least as examples of the work of a renowned Victorian taxidermist, means that they should definitely be retained intact.

### *Other Items*

There are two other items of social history on display in two separate island cases and I attach photographs of these, too.

These are:

A metal model of the Ferrybridge, Burton, made in the 1890s by Herbert Lakin of Burton (approximately 4ft in length).

A doll's house, made by the Barton under Needwood W.I. in 1925 (approx. 3ft 3in long).

I was also shown two large model ships, a tea clipper and what appeared to be an early 19<sup>th</sup> century fighting ship. They appeared to be of very high quality and in excellent condition.

Both were in island cases in a storage area. The local significance of these was not apparent. It was not possible to photograph them at the time.

