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It is this particular brand of personal viewpoint and familiar representation that makes this both an excellent book to recommend to people wanting to get a feel for what science is all about and a good read for those of us with more background knowledge. Indeed, my friend's particular enthusiasm was based on the idea that it would be good for all science teachers to read the book to help them see the big picture and to fire their own enthusiasm for the subject.

It also serves the purpose of an introduction in another very valuable way. It has a set of notes to go with each chapter, which themselves contain many references to the literature, and a 14 page bibliography, nearly 300 books, many of which have become standards in the interpretation and popularisation of science. If you are a Bill Bryson fan, you will no doubt have read this book already. And if you can't stand those ignorant amateurs getting into things they were better staying out of, just put that to one side for a while and read it anyway.

Rowland Ward, Taxidermist to the World

Reviewed by Simon Moore

Many of us know of Pat Morris's keen interest in the history of taxidermy and taxidermists and may have attended his lectures on the A-Z of taxidermists. I missed the letter W, unfortunate since it must have been fascinating. His book, covering the biography of Rowland Ward as a person and author plus the history of the firm, is both encyclopaedic and balanced with humour, including much material from the final years of the firm. The fact that the firm outlived its celebrated principal by 64 years is a fitting testament to its work and workforce.



Both the firm of Rowland Ward and the significance of its product come up repeatedly in my own work as natural sciences conservator and adviser. This book will be a most useful tool since it shows many examples that typify Ward taxidermy combined with the paper labels and ivory discs that were used as the firm's stamp of manufacture with date ranges where known. Other Ward artefacts are also listed and show the firm's chronological progression from Piccadilly through Grosvenor Street and finally to Wood Green as social taste in taxidermy gradually dwindled.

The social history is every bit as important as the taxidermy focus, the glittering clientele on the one side but showing how items that we would presently consider either non-PC or kitsch, were quite the norm during the heyday of British taxidermy. The Hall Porter's chair built from a young elephant's body would be reviled today but would have been popular as a rich man's novelty and may still grace the hall of a large property. For me the drinks cabinet (c. 1875) made from an elephant's foot (even with a hinged lid!), typifies the eclectic angle of taste in the High Victorian period when attitudes towards ex-

exploiting animals were very different to those of today. The author keeps an open mind and sense of humour towards these social aspects that would appal nowadays. The author gently reminds us that lapses in taste were ‘down to the customer’ and not necessarily the firm that made them!

The book also gives an insight into the workaday life of the 1950s and 60s at the workshop in Leighton Place, not so long ago, yet how different from the present. The type of work, including specialised packing and the long hours and small wages! The author has worked in potted biographies of many employees, some of whom are still living. He shows their character and humour in a refreshingly candid way. This candour extends to the occasional failures, usually from improving on the initial work of a native preparator in the field!

The author lets us in on such trade secrets as the facsimiles that were made of the Dodo and the Great Auk and how 120,000 feathers would have to be glued onto each manikin! The latter is particularly significant since the genuine birds command huge prices at auction. Prices from period catalogues and special jobs are also quoted to giving an idea of the economic changes and show how much people were prepared to pay for an item or commission.

Despite its rather hefty price for a comparatively slim volume, the book is packed with information about taxidermy techniques and changing attitudes balanced with period social history and humour.

