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George Wombwell's Travelling Menagerie

In the Aberdeen University Zoology Department Museum we have two skeletons, a tapir and a tiger, that are attributed to George Wombwell's travelling menagerie. Presumably they are from animals that died on visits to the north-east. George Wombwell was a well known 19th century showman - and his menagerie went the length and breadth of the country for many years. I would be interested in knowing if other collections have any of his specimens and if there is any archive of his correspondence, publicity material and so on. I'm sure much of it is ephemeral in local newspapers and so on and there are several accounts of the man that come up on a Google search, but if there is anything in more depth I would appreciate hearing about it, or about any of his showman competitors.

Dr Robert Ralph
robert.ralph@BTINTERNET.COM

The Remnants Of The Egg Collection Of Henry Fraser Walter **- The first Emperor penguin egg (*Aptenodytes forsteri*)**

The first Emperor penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) egg recovered is thought to have been brought back during the French South Polar expedition under Jules-Sebastien-Cesar Dumont D'Urville (1790-1842). Two ships, the 'Astrolabe' and the 'Zélée' departed Toulon on the 7th September 1837 and visited the South Orkney Islands, South Shetland Islands, northwest coast of the Trinity Peninsula, the Orléans Channel and Joinville Island, before returning to Toulon on the 6th November 1840, having been away for three years and two months. The egg was then purchased in Paris in late 1840 or 1841 by Dr (Sir) Henry Alfred Pitman, who subsequently sold the collection five years later to Henry Fraser Walter of Papplewick Hall, Nottingham (National Antarctic Expedition, Scott et al. 1907).

Contemporary accounts of H. F. Walter's collection are found in 'Great Houses of Nottinghamshire and the County Families' by Leonard Jacks, published in 1881.

"Three or four handsome walnut cabinets form part of the decorative furniture of this apartment. They contain a wonderful collection of birds' eggs—perhaps the best private collection in England. The eggs are arranged in layers of drawers, and are properly named and classified, some attention having been paid to the placing of the different sizes and to the arrangement of colours. Some of the foreign eggs are very beautiful in colour and shape, and there is an almost endless variety, from the tiny pearl-like egg of the humming bird to that of the extinct auk or of the hairy-looking apteryx of New Zealand, a stuffed specimen of which is to be seen outside, in the hall. Eggs of the ostrich, emu, cassowary, and the ova of the alligator are preserved in larger receptacles than the drawers of these cabinets, and two of the eggs of the largest of the feathered tribe have been made into very handsome vases, which form part of the pretty ornamentation of the drawing room"

H. F. Walter was a friend of John Wolley and his collection contained many of his eggs. The collection was bequeathed to his son, John Henry Walter who moved it to Drayton House, Norwich. Here the collection languished in a 'damp room' before being sold on Wednesday the 17th of April 1912 at No. 38 King Street, Covent Garden in Stevens auction rooms, by which time 'many of the eggs sold were not in good condition' (Chalmers-Hunt and Dance 1976). It is likely that the collection still contained the egg at this point as Edward Wilson saw the egg at Drayton and noted in his 1907 expedition report 'it has been my privilege to examine and compare [the egg] with those from Cape Crozier and I have no doubt, even if there had been any doubt before, that it is the egg of an Emperor penguin'. The sale seems to have included the majority of the collection, alongside two eggs of the Great Auk belonging to Lady Greville Smyth of Ashton Court, Somerset and a series of model great Auk eggs, as well as eggs of the Emperor goose [*Anser canagica*]. The manuscript catalogue of the auction details the sale as follows:

The collection of Birds' eggs,
Formed by the late H. F. WALTER, Esq., of Papplewick
And others;