Director’s introduction

It is a great pleasure to be able to write my first introduction to an Annual Review as the new director of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. The following pages illustrate a great deal of achievement during the 2011–12 year, in work spanning many different areas of activity.

However, the accomplishments and developments presented here are the result of work undertaken both before and after I took up the position of Museum director in February 2012. Many of the projects and changes that came to fruition during the year are thanks to the efforts and guidance of Professor Susan Iversen, who became the Museum’s acting director for sixteen months after Professor Jim Kennedy retired in 2010. Susan was instrumental in the reconstruction of the University’s Old Zoology area to create a new research facility comprising a visualisation unit and a laboratory. The lab has already been put to very successful use by our Education team for the delivery of our immensely popular DNA workshops for A level biologists. Funding for our new visitor centre was also secured by Susan during her acting directorship. This space is now used jointly with the Pitt Rivers Museum and is located in the refurbished chemistry glass-blowing lab adjacent to the Museum.

In August 2011, we began the first phase of our roof repair and cleaning work, successfully removing and reinstalling all the glass tiles in the south aisle by February 2012. Following this work it became clear that the remaining work would be disruptive over a long period if it was carried out in separate phases, so one of my first decisions as the new director unfortunately had to be to close the Museum to the public for a year while the remaining two-thirds of the roof was repaired. As I write, we are on schedule to complete the work in time for reopening in February 2014.

The previous year had been one of considerable uncertainty for staff who are funded by the Renaissance in the Regions programme. Renaissance was originally administered by the Museums, Libraries and Archives council, but this body was abolished in 2010. Thankfully, a consortium of the Oxford University Museums and the Oxfordshire County Council Museums Service was successful in its bid to become one of Arts Council England’s Renaissance Major Partner Museums. This brought £4.5 million of funding to the consortium that secured the posts of a number of Museum staff – and almost all of our Education staff – until March 2015. It also created the new Oxford ASPIRE partnership, which supports and extends the work of the consortium museums.

Another highlight from the year was the launch of an innovative JISC-funded consortium featuring the Museum, along with the British Geological Survey, the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge University, National Museum Wales, and the Geological Curators’ Group. Together this collaborative group is building an open-access online database of all the British fossil type specimens that are held in UK institutions. Meanwhile, and on a rather more basic level of public provision, we trialled a Museum café on the top gallery, offering visitors somewhere to sit, eat and drink for the first time. Not surprisingly, the café was popular and a café is now likely to become a permanent fixture on the gallery when the Museum reopens.

During the year we began to lay the foundations for what has since grown into a strategic vision for the Museum. This set of aspirations and objectives will guide the development of the Museum for the next five years.

With this in mind, and as this is my first formal review of our activities, I would like to say that I am proud to be leading the Museum into a challenging but exciting period of change and renewal. With the strategic vision in place and a desire to revitalise our displays, research, teaching and public engagement programmes, I look forward with confidence to our reopening in February 2014 and, of course, well beyond.

Professor Paul Smith
Director
May 2012

British fossil types to go online in JISC project

An innovative project to develop a collaborative database of all British fossil type specimens held in UK institutions began in May 2012. The project is being run by a JISC-funded consortium comprising the Museum and the British Geological Survey (BGS), the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge University, National Museum Wales, and the Geological Curators’ Group.

Type specimens are the original material upon which a new species is based and are the key reference points to which the scientific name is attached. As such, type specimens are fundamental to all ongoing taxonomic research.

Hosted on the BGS website, the database will contain text details of around 21,000 specimens drawn from the four institutions, along with high quality digital images of each specimen, plus 3D photography and a selection of rotating virtual 3D models. These models are based on high resolution laser scans around which the photography is wrapped to create a virtual fossil.

The online database will provide a single entry point for researchers wishing to discover more about the type specimens of any British fossil species. The website will also contain features for the general public, including grid references for each locality, showing graphical representations of type fossil localities across Britain, and a range of educational pages on fossils and 3D modelling techniques. The Museum has purchased its own NextEngine 3D laser scanner, which is available to other collections and will be used to augment the material on the Museum website.

All the images and 3D models on the main BGS database will be available for unrestricted free download.

The project is led by Eliza Howlett, with André Ashington working on data improvement and Sarah Philbs handling database development. Sarah Jooman is applying the 3D modelling to the creation of the laser scans. Lindsay Pericival, who is responsible for creating high quality images and stereo anaglyphs, came second place in the Research Digital Image category at the OXTALENT Awards 2012 for her stereo anaglyph of the Ordovician trilobite Trinucleus abruptus.

September 2011

Acquisition of the Sid and Pearl Freeman mineral collection

In September 2011, the Museum’s mineral collection was enhanced, for both display and research, by the acquisition of a substantial proportion of the Sid and Pearl Freeman collection. Sid and Pearl Freeman first expressed the desire more than 30 years ago that their personal collection of minerals should come to the Museum. These wishes were realised when their family invited us to make a selection from their extensive collection.

Pearl and her late husband Sid were judicious collectors of aesthetic and scientifically interesting specimens from all over the world, obtained mainly through dealers and other collectors. We selected around 1,200 specimens, including an exceptional suite of nearly 100 haryte specimens, fine examples of zorite group minerals from India, and superb examples of copper-lead-zinc mineralisation from the since-closed Tsumeb mine in Namibia. We were also able to add a number of books to our library.

We would like to thank Pearl and her family for their generous gift. A selection of specimens from the collection, along with material from the Norman Thomson collection (acquired in 2010), were put on temporary display for the one day ‘Nature’s Treasures’ conference. This was hosted by the Museum and run by the Mineralogical Society of London, the Russell Society, and the Geomicrobiological Association of Great Britain. Monica Price, assistant curator of Mineralogy, provided meteorites for delegates to view and handle, accompanying the demonstration of a virtual microscope by Andy Howlett and colleagues of the Open University.

October 2011

Arts Council England award creates ASPIRE

Arts Council England (ACE) took control of the Renaissance in the Regions museum funding programme in October 2011, after the Museums, Libraries and Archives council (MLA) was disbanded. Following an open application process, which began in September 2011, a consortium of Oxford University Museums and Collections and the Oxford County Council Museum Service was successfully awarded Major partner museum status by ACE in January 2012.

The Major Partner award carries funding of £4.5 million for the April 2012 to March 2015 period. It was awarded by ACE in recognition and support of the University and County Council museums’ drive to become a centre of national and international excellence and skills in the museum sector. Following the award, the successful consortium was branded as ASPIRE and the secretariat moved into refurbished offices in the old Zoology wing, led by project manager John Hobart.

November 2011

A two million year old hominid

In November 2011, the Museum was presented with casts of the skull and hand of Australopithecus sediba, a 1.9 million year old hominid species discovered in the ‘Cradle of Mankind’, north of Johannesburg in South Africa, in 2008. The casts were officially presented by Professor Loyiso Nongxa, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) at a ceremony attended by delegates including the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Collections Professor Ian Wilmshurst, the Acting Director of the Museum Professor Susan Foreman, and Malgosia Nowak-Kemp, collections manager for the Zoological and Geology Curators’ Groups.

The casts are a single entry point for researchers wishing to discover more about the type specimens of any British fossil species. The website will also contain features for the general public, including grid references for each locality, showing graphical representations of type fossil localities across Britain, and a range of educational pages on fossils and 3D modelling techniques. The Museum has purchased its own NextEngine 3D laser scanner, which is available to other collections and will be used to augment the material on the Museum website.

All the images and 3D models on the main BGS database will be available for unrestricted free download.

A selection of specimens from the collection, along with material from the Norman Thomson collection (acquired in 2010), were put on temporary display for the one day ‘Nature’s Treasures’ conference. This was hosted by the Museum and run by the Mineralogical Society of London, the Russell Society, and the Geomicrobiological Association of Great Britain. Monica Price, assistant curator of Mineralogy, provided meteorites for delegates to view and handle, accompanying the demonstration of a virtual microscope by Andy Howlett and colleagues of the Open University.

‘We are delighted to have been given these casts, which are incredibly important items in the history of the development of hominoids, said Malgosia Nowak-Kemp. It’s too early to tell for certain, but Australopithecus sediba appears to be the closest relative to Homo yet discovered. It will prove an extremely valuable addition to the teaching collection of pre-and early-human casts which are used by students of Archaeology and Anthropology, Human Sciences and Biological Sciences.’ When not in use for teaching, the casts are displayed in the Primate and Human Evolution case along the lower northern aisle of the Museum.
January 2011

Le Conte type specimens discovered

While re-curating historical collections, Entomology staff are trained to recognize different handwriting styles, mounting methods, and locality data for individual specimens. This is important because it is often possible to add extra information to a specimen before it is re-housed. During the re-curating of a Hope-Westwood cabinet containing a number of beetle (Coleoptera) families, a series of specimens in the Histeridae family drawers appeared to be worth further investigation due to the style of the handwritten labels. The four drawers of Histeridae all contained a few specimens featuring the addition of ‘mihi’ after their scientific names on the labels. This caught our attention because this Latin word translates as ‘belonging to me’ and is almost always applied to a specimen before it is re-housed. The names on these labels were checked against Mazur’s World Catalogue of the Histeridae, where we discovered they were published by the naturalist and beetle specialist John Eton Le Conte (1874–1860), who had been a correspondent of FW. Hope. In 1845 Le Conte published *A Monograph of the North American Histeridae*, in which all these specimen label names were to be found. We discovered 43 species of Histeridae donated by Le Conte, and of these, nine have handwritten species names followed by ‘mihi’. They are currently being researched to discover if they are previously unrecognised type specimens.

July 2012

Joint bid secures World Heritage status for Chengjiang

A collection of exceptionally preserved Cambrian fossils has helped to secure World Heritage site status for their locality in Chengjiang, China. UNESCO granted the World Heritage status to Chengjiang following a bid involving the Chinese government and the Museum. Prior to the bid the fossils have already been the subject of a book, published in 2004, and various research publications, as well as featuring in a major exhibition in the Museum in 2010–11.

The bid resulted from the combined efforts of the Yunnan Provincial Government, two Chinese scientists from Yunnan universities, and three palaeobiologists from the UK, including the Museum’s Professor Derek Siveter. After an application process lasting several years and involving detailed responses at each stage, along with a visit to the field area by UNESCO officers, the Chengjiang site was admitted to the UNESCO World Heritage list at the final ratification meeting in St Petersburg, Russia in July 2012.

July 2011

Wallace letters digitised thanks to volunteer help

The historically important archive of letters from 19th century naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) was digitised and made available online for the first time. This resource includes material prepared by the Museum for the Wallace Letters Online website, which is hosted by the Natural History Museum, London, but forms part of the larger Alfred Russel Wallace Correspondence Project, of which Sir David Attenborough is patron.

Along with the British Library, Cambridge University Library, Natural History Museum, and the University of Oxford, the Museum provided scans of Wallace letters and other material in a project led by volunteer Annette Lord. Annette carefully scanned and transcribed more than 300 items, including a letter to Wallace from Charles Darwin. Along with the letters, the archive also contains lists of locations, some photographs, newspaper obituaries, and a booklet on spiritualism written by Wallace, with a note in manuscript at the front by his sister Frances ‘Fanny’ Sims. Topics covered in the letters vary widely, from discussions of scientific topics, and how to promote Darwinism, to family matters - trying to help his son with his studies, or finding a microscope as a birthday gift for his daughter, says Annette Lord. They also record Wallace’s discovery late in life that he was a year younger than he had thought. And there’s even a postcard written on his 90th – and last – birthday saying he was “feeling quite jolly.”

Over 4,000 letters written or received by Wallace survive, although the original manuscripts are held in the collections of more than 100 institutions and private individuals worldwide. Wallace Letters Online brings this material together in one place for the first time and includes correspondence between Wallace and Darwin about evolution by natural selection. www.nhm.ac.uk/wallacelettersonline

January 2012

School’s out, Natural History Club’s in

In January, the Museum piloted an exciting new opportunity for primary school students from the Headington Partnership to join a Natural History After-School Club. Club members were selected by teachers from students in the last year of primary school who had demonstrated a genuine interest in natural history.

The weekly, hour-long Club, led by primary education officer Chris Jarvis, is intended to use the Museum and its collections to help nurture students’ interests, expand their knowledge, develop independent study skills, and meet other like-minded children in their age group, some of whom they will meet again at secondary school.

“I felt privileged and excited… like the chosen one!”

Natural History After-School Club member

Participants learned how to collect and pin insects, how to date rocks from microfossils, how to classify life from kingdom to species, and how life and technology rely upon minerals.

The club will now run with the support of a Hope-Westwood cabinet containing a number of beetle (Coleoptera) families, a series of specimens in the Histeridae family drawers appeared to be worth further investigation due to the style of the handwritten labels. The four drawers of Histeridae all contained a few specimens featuring the addition of ‘mihi’ after their scientific names on the labels. This caught our attention because this Latin word translates as ‘belonging to me’ and is almost always applied to a specimen before it is re-housed.

The names on these labels were checked against Mazur’s World Catalogue of the Histeridae, where we discovered they were published by the naturalist and beetle specialist John Eton Le Conte (1874–1860), who had been a correspondent of FW. Hope.

In 1845 Le Conte published *A Monograph of the North American Histeridae*, in which all these specimen label names were to be found. We discovered 43 species of Histeridae donated by Le Conte, and of these, nine have handwritten species names followed by ‘mihi’. They are currently being researched to discover if they are previously unrecognised type specimens.

Above left: Crinoidea - a primitive arthropod

Above middle: Fuxianhuia - a nematomorph worm

Above right: Phyllocrania - a primitive arthropod

Below: A letter from Alfred Russel Wallace, reprinted with permission from the Alfred Russel Wallace Literary Estate

2011–2012

Visitor numbers

There were 557,644 visitors to the Museum this year, 7,107 more than last year.

The number of visitors to the Museum this year was 557,644, an increase of 7,107 over last year.
July 2012

A collection of teeth from rare prehistoric mammals

Living in the shadow of a diverse and highly-adapted dinosaur fauna, Mesozoic mammals are rare and little known. It was therefore very exciting to receive a donation of 130 tiny mammal teeth from the Great Oolite (Middle Jurassic) of Kirtlington, Oxfordshire, collected and presented by amateur geologist Eric Freeman. Mr Freeman’s donation brings into the public domain what is probably the most important private collection of such material in Britain, and, alongside our small collection of Stonesfield mammal jaws acquired in the nineteenth century, will be an extremely valuable resource for scientific study of early mammalian evolution and diversity long into the future.

Exhibitions

2010 – 2012

Goodbye Ghost Forest

After two years installed outside the front of the Museum, artist Angela Palmer’s Ghost Forest moved to its new permanent home in Wales in July. The trees, which have also been in Trafalgar Square and outside the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen, will now be based at the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthenshire. During its time at the Museum the Ghost Forest exhibition has been used for a number of educational sessions and events, as well as the high profile Grand Banquet of Rainforest Insects event.

May – September 2012

Out of the Woods

Wytham Woods, an area of ancient semi-natural woodland just outside Oxford, is owned and used by the University of Oxford as a site of ecology and population studies. During 2011, Robin Wilson and Rosie Jarvis ran a series of themed workshops, including The Art of Scientific Illustration; Linocut Illustration; Bookbinding; and a four-day Illustrated Book Course. Participants included A level and GCSE Art students, as well as adults, who all produced artworks inspired by specimens in the Museum.

November 2011

Mystical minerals

A temporary display of minerals and fossils with alleged mystical and healing properties was put together by Monica Price, assistant curator for Mineralogy, for delegates on the Geological Society’s conference on Geology and Medicine in November. The Amazing Minerals, Curious Crystals display attracted so much interest from visitors, that we decided to keep it out for much longer. The mineral component of the display remains on show at the far end of the upper gallery near our gemstone display.

September 2011 – April 2012

OneOak

An oak tree that had been growing for 222 years on the Blenheim Palace estate in Oxfordshire was the subject of OneOak, a fascinating exhibition of art, science and community participation. The tree was felled on 20 January 2010 and was donated by His Grace the Duke of Marlborough to the Sylva Foundation which has since used it to increase understanding of sustainable woodland management.

To celebrate the OneOak exhibition, the Education team ran a series of themed workshops, reaching 177 pupils over four days. The Sylva Foundation had already worked closely with a group of primary schools to study the living tree, witness the felling and create charcoal from its wood. Chris Jarvis and Rachel Parle continued this relationship by inviting the schools into the Museum for a day. Each class of Year 5 and Year 6 students took part in three woodland themed workshops linked closely to the exhibition, including sessions on sustainable harvesting and creative work inspired by forest animals from around the world. Lynn Daley from Harcourt Arboretum brought the woodland indoors in the Tree Discovery workshop, where pupils explored the enormous dimensions of the OneOak tree by mapping it out in the Museum with ropes. This exhibition was also supported by Entomology staff who helped to prepare and present specimens from the British collections for display in the upper gallery. The insects were chosen by the OneOak team and arranged by exhibition curator Jane King and Amoret Spooner in the Entomology Collections.

Collections:

Goodbye Ghost Forest: The exhibition included over 100 works by a range of artists and was supported by the Entomology Collections for the Discovery and Grand Banquet of Rainforest Insects events.

Out of the Woods: The Education team ran a series of workshops as part of this exhibition, including The Art of Scientific Illustration; Linocut Illustration; Bookbinding; and a four-day Illustrated Book Course.

OneOak: This exhibition was supported by the Education team and the Entomology Collections.
**Remarkable Victorian Women**

In June, two time-travelling visitors from the past helped the Education team to pilot a new primary school session called Remarkable Victorian Women. This special joint project with the Pitt Rivers Museum centres on two famous female figures from the 19th century – palaeontologist Mary Anning and ethnographer Mary Kingsley.

Education officer Rachel Parle dressed as fossil hunter Mary Anning, revealing the story behind her famous finds through a Museum tour, fossil-handling and the recreation of beach fossil dig. Meanwhile, volunteers coordinator Caroline Cheeseman became Mary Kingsley and explored the West Africa collections in full Victorian dress in the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Remarkable Victorian Women is intended to give teachers a new and exciting way to cover many areas of their Key Stage 2 curriculum. The session was developed by Caroline Cheeseman, Rachel Parle, and Pitt Rivers Museum primary education officer Becca McVean, and was piloted with two local primary schools, St Ebbes and St Barnabas.

“There is a type of Gold that is false”

a primary student reports one discovery from the Remarkable Victorian Women session

Feedback from students and teachers was very positive. Teachers commented that they ‘loved the role play’ and ‘would definitely recommend it to other schools’. Remarkable Victorian Women was offered as a full primary school session in autumn 2012.

**Exploring our family of museums**

From June 2012 the University Museums piloted a new joint poster and leaflet, titled Explore. Displayed at each museum, the poster encouraged visitors to take the leaflet, which contained a handy map, and explore the other museums. The leaflet represented the first output from ASPRE’s joint museums audience development budget and has proven successful enough for an early reprint.

Separately, in May 2012, over 2,000 people enjoyed a brilliant Museums at Night event, jointly marketed across the four University Museums for the first time and billed as The Grand Tour. The Museum provided an eclectic all night programme of events, as well as events for families, schools and adults.

**Students, families and volunteers**

The Education department’s wide-ranging schools programme continued to be extremely popular, with 27,454 UK school students visiting 769 groups during the course of the year.

It was a record year for Family Friendly events too, with more than 120 days of activities. For the first time, families were offered object handling, a Museum tour and an amazing 3D film. The public activities were so popular that we allocated timed tickets in advance. More than 1,800 children took part in Planet Dinosaur during the course of the week.

**The evolution of Homo sapiens**

The popularity of the Museum’s undergraduate classes on Homo and hominin diversity and evolution for helped to secure funding of £2,044 from the University’s Boise Fund to purchase further casts to be used as practical teaching aids. The casts made from a durable material resistant to chipping and breaking, are particularly suitable for handling and teaching. They were immediately put to use by Malgorzata Nowak-Kemp, collections manager for the Zoological Collections, who has used them in a number of classes, as well as at a Boise Fund workshop talk titled From *Eoanthropus dawsoni* to *Australopithecus afarensis*: the use of hominin casts in undergraduate practical classes.

**A Question of Taste**

In 2011, the Museum was selected as one of 15 organisations to deliver a new DNA workshop for A level biologists. More than 130 students attended the workshops in spring 2012 to explore an unusual human trait, the ability of only some individuals to taste the bitter chemical phenylthiocarbamide. Chimpanzees share this trait and for a long time scientists thought it had arisen in a common ancestor. But recent DNA research shows this is not the case and that the similarity is a result of convergent evolution.

Teachers commented that the workshops into the school provision, with 271 people helping over the week.

**Planet Dinosaur**

“A herd of *Spinosaurus* skeletons has taken over the Museum!” So cried visitors to the Museum in November 2011. In collaboration with the BBC’s exciting TV programme ‘Planet Dinosaur’, the Education team offered a fascinating and fun opportunity to discover more about dinosaurs.

In this week-long event, the BBC’s huge *Spinosaurus* skeleton models were built by families, primary school children and a group of 80 Woodcraft Folk children, who explored the Museum by torchlight. Education officers delivered a bespoke workshop for primary schools, exploring new evidence about the dinosaurs featured in the BBC series, and including a full primary school session in autumn 2012.

The five hour workshops were led by secondary education officer Sarah Lloyd and head of education Janet Stott, and supported by a pool of ten University scientist volunteers, volunteering two per workshop. Students used high-tech equipment rarely available in schools to investigate their ability to taste the bitter chemical (their phenotype). They then analysed their own taste receptor genes (their genotype) by extracting DNA from their cheek cells and amplifying it using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). ‘The ‘taster’ and ‘non-taster’ genotypes are revealed by visualising the DNA using gel electrophoresis.

A Question of Taste was developed by the Association for Science and Discovery Centres, At-Bristol, the Centre for Life, and Nowgen, with support from the Wellcome Trust. The pilot project was very successful and the Museum plans to embed the workshops into the school programme.
Revealing architecture

The history and craftsmanship of the Museum’s magnificent 19th-century neo-Gothic architecture was illuminated through new architecture tours for adults, delivered by specially trained volunteers. A pool of volunteer tour guides completed a six-week training programme by volunteers and outreach manager Joy Todd, volunteers coordinator Caroline Cheeseman, and primary education officer Chris Jarvis. The training included information about the history of the Museum, the characters involved in its inception, and its architectural significance. The training also included tips and personal mentoring on public speaking, presentation of information, and group management.

These tours, running alternate Saturday mornings, have expanded the Museum’s small offering for adult public engagement. Although participant numbers have not been enormous – possibly due to timetabling – feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we hope to continue with the tours and to recruit more volunteers in the future.

A prize-winning experience

Luke Berry of Northfield School, Blackbird Leys, undertook a work experience placement at the Museum and was then awarded a school prize, presented by Radiohead bassist Colin Greenwood. Luke worked with Geology staff Elica Howlett and Andre Ashington for six half days during April and May. He hopes to return to the collections as a volunteer.

During the year, the Oxford University Museums and Collections hosted the first four trainers in an ongoing Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Skills for the Future’ training programme in Museum Education and Outreach. The initial three year grant from HLF, since expanded, funds trainers for 18 months to undertake six month placements in three of the four Museums and the Botanic Garden and Arboretum.

The trainership provides on-the-job training in museum education work, supported by a special programme of workshops looking at many aspects of the role, as well as the wider heritage sector. Scott Billings was the first trainer to be hosted by the Education department, starting in May 2011, and was followed by Lea Kloeppping in May 2012.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department.

Science Saturdays was developed by Scott Billings during his six month HLF trainership placement with the Museum’s Education department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

A team of six trainers were involved running eight sessions for HLF-funded trainees. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.

Science Saturdays

In November 2011, the Museum launched a new drop-in family event aimed at delivering hands-on, specimen-led science activities to older children, aged eight-plus. The weekly Science Saturdays strand is delivered by scientist volunteers drawn from the University and specially trained by the Joint Museums Education Department. The activity has since been entered for an award in the Educational Initiative category of the Museums + Heritage Awards.

Renaissance Globe Project

A collaborative project focused on the art, science and craftsmanship of globe-making featured extensive involvement by a number of the HLF trainers. The HLF-funded Renaissance Globe Project was led by the Museum of the History of Science, which worked with this Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Museum of Oxford to create giant, metre-diameter polystyrene globes for use in a wide variety of creative activities for school groups, families and the public. Lea Kloeppping coordinated a team of volunteers at the Museum, who worked with a range of audiences to create a globe that revealed information about different animal habitats. The globe also featured adaptations at different time periods. It is available for public display.
Research

The Pre-Raphaelites and the Museum

The Pre-Raphaelites were actively involved in the design of the Museum itself, while their art was directly cited as a model for its decoration. The Museum agreed to support Dr John Holme’s research from October 2012, with the ultimate aim of producing an exhibition, together with a programme of talks, and scholarly and educational literature.

Blood-sucking flies in Armenia

Honorary associate Dr Adrian Pont spent two weeks in Armenia during May 2012 collecting flies, in a project supported by the Natural History Museum, London. The fieldwork was carried out in association with the International Science and Technology Centre in Moscow under a project titled ‘Molecular genetic monitoring of blood-sucking flies (Diptera) as a basis for the biological control of vectors of dangerous infectious diseases and precautions against the acts of biological terrorism’. The fieldwork was conducted under the direction of Drs Maria and Karina Harutyunova of the Institute of Molecular Biology, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia.

Sacrificial secrets at Pompeii

The remains of sacrifices and burnt offerings were uncovered in the House of the Epigrams at Pompeii thanks to work carried out by students for the Museum’s Environmental Archaeology Unit. According to Professor Mark Robinson, who leads the Unit, a number of different discoveries were made at the site, including some curiosities, such as an ostrich egg, apparently displayed around the edge of the garden. Sacrificial offerings included entire domestic fowl, but only tokens parts of sheep and pigs. Plant offerings included stone-pine cones, fruits such as figs, and even a couple of seeds of black pepper, which would have been imported from India. Mark Robinson was invited to the University of Lund to lecture on the project.

Speedy shrimp assessment in Mexico City

The second and final workshop for the global freshwater shrimp conservation assessment, under the umbrella of the EU-BIOFRESH project, took place in May at the Instituto de Biología, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City. The Museum was represented at the workshop by Zoology assistant curator Sammy De Grave. Quick progress led to all 126 Neotropical species being covered in just two days. Many shrimp specimens came back to Oxford following the workshop.

Collecting in Kazakhstan

Entomology Collections assistant curator Darren Mann and honorary associate curator Jon Cooter were invited by the Siberian Zoological Museum of the Institute of Animal Systematics and Ecology, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, to join a collecting expedition to Kazakhstan. Darren and Jon visited the Atyz-Emel National Park, covering some 4,000 square kilometres of desert and rocky terrain in southeast Kazakhstan, between the Ili River and the Ak-Tau mountain range.

Around 4,000 specimens were collected during the expedition, mostly of beetles, but also numerous other bugs, bees and even a shrimp. A good-sized field collection of Coleoptera was made in Kazakhstan and a smaller collection in Siberia. This included several very poorly known dung beetles; a wide variety of weevil species from the banks of the Ili river, Karasuk lake and in the environs of Novoishirsk; and some scarce ‘oil beetles’ in Kazakhstan. The majority of this material was new to the Museum’s collections and, in cases where we have long series, can be used as valuable exchange material.

Work continues on the Herefordshire Lagerstätte fossils

Professor Derek Siveter stood down after 23 years as assistant curator, and later as acting curator, to take up a senior research fellowship, but research continued on the exceptionally preserved soft-body tissue fossils of the Herefordshire (Silurian) Lagerstätte. Although the £335,000 NERC-funded research grant for the ‘Reconstruction of the Herefordshire Lagerstätte’ came to an end in September 2011, research and publication will continue for several years yet on the fossils that have been analysed. There are many more exceptionally preserved fossils still to be investigated from this geological horizon and Derek has subsequently returned to the Museum in a part-time capacity to continue this work.

Derek has also worked on the Chengjiang (Cambrian) Lagerstätte, and was, in recent years, one of the key authors of a world heritage bid to UNESCO, which reached a successful outcome in the summer of 2012 (see Highlights).
The collections

Improving the online collections

A comprehensive upgrade of the collections databases was completed during the year and a bid was submitted to Arts Council England's Designation development fund to digitise the Museum’s William Smith archives and make them available online. In July 2012 an EP Abraham Internship Programme student began a project to digitise archives relating to the building of the Museum. The project provided a valuable learning experience ahead of future digitisation projects in the Archive.

The historically important Corsi collection of polished stone is now available on a specially-compiled website, thanks to an Esmée Fairbairn Foundation-funded collaboration between the Museum and the University’s Web Design Consultancy. Lindsay Prevital was appointed project assistant in September 2011, working with Mineralogy Collections assistant curator Monica Price and head of IT Sarah Phillis to clean and code the data and prepare images of the 1,000 stones. Lisa Cooke’s English translation and commentary of Faustino Corsi’s (1771–1845) Catalogo ragionato dei minerali di Corsi was checked and augmented by Monica, and Dr David Bell, a retired member of the Earth Sciences department staff, gave welcome help in preparing geological descriptions of the igneous material.

The Corsi website was launched at the end of May 2012. A launch event including a short talk by Monica about the collection, displays of Corsi specimens, and informal demonstrations of the website, was attended by the University Vice-Chancellor, colleagues from other museums and institutions, artists and members of the stone trade.

www.oum.ox.ac.uk/corsi

Dismantling dinosaurs

Dr Paul Barrett and Dr Susannah Maidment of the Natural History Museum, London worked with Paul Jeffery and Juliet Hay from our Geology Collections on the careful dismantling of the skeleton of the dinosaur Cumnoria in the main court. As well as being examined and photographed, the presence of expert help allowed us to identify and re-mount previously mis-allocated bones, particularly in the dinosaur’s feet. A new fixing technique was applied which leaves the specimen more secure and gives individual bones far better support and freedom from wear and abrasion.

Eliza Howlett assumes care of Palaeozoic collections

Eliza Howlett has taken over responsibility for the Palaeozoic collections. Eliza has continued her work on improving their curation, arranging a series of trips to Nuneham Courtenay church to bring back material from the University of Hull Collection, which was then cleaned and sorted by a number of volunteers. She began work on Paul Clabey’s database of the 16,000 Lyell specimens, adding full stratigraphic details in order to make searching easier. Since November, she has been running the Oxford end of the JISC-funded project ‘GB/3D Fossil Types Online’.

Wager archive grows with donation

The archive of material relating to geologist and explorer L.R. Wager (1904–1965) was augmented in September 2011 when, following the death of his widow Phyllis Wager, his family agreed to donate a substantial amount of material to the Museum. The donation was mostly composed of photographs, but also included diaries and maps relating to East Greenland and the Himalaya.

The archive of material relating to geologist and explorer L.R. Wager (1904–1965) was augmented in September 2011 when, following the death of his widow Phyllis Wager, his family agreed to donate a substantial amount of material to the Museum. The donation was mostly composed of photographs, but also included diaries and maps relating to East Greenland and the Himalaya.

We are in the process of digitising this material, beginning with photographs and diaries relating to Wager’s 1933 Mount Everest expedition. The geological diaries and around 550 photographs have already been scanned, and a start has been made on a transcription of the diaries.

In January 2012 Dr David Waters, curator of Mineralogy Collections, gave a presentation using Wager’s photographs and diary entries to a meeting of Himalayan researchers from Oxford and the Open University. The presentation highlighted Wager’s observations on the structure now known as the South Tibetan Detachment System, and showed how Wager’s work could be applied to modern research. The presentation can be seen in full at bit.ly/oumwager.

Library sets strategy

The Hope and Arkell Libraries have seen considerable change in the past year. In August 2011, Kathleen Santry was appointed as assistant librarian and archivist, with Mark Dickerson continuing as librarian one day a week. During the year, Kate completed training in cataloguing on Oxford’s new system, Aleph, and in Oracle financial software. She also attended a Heritage Lottery Fund funding workshop, in preparation for funding bids for archival projects. At the same time, the Library Committee was reformed to oversee the strategic direction of the libraries, and comprised library staff, the director, and representatives from each of the collections, IT and Education departments.

Name that beetle!

The Guardian’s online Name a Species competition featured an image of *Brindalis porcicollis* – a shiny sand scarab – which was supplied by the Entomological Society of London. As well as being given individual names for ten threatened UK species, the competition asks readers to name that beetle!

![Above: Brindalis porcicollis, a scarab beetle as part of a common name](image)

Library sets strategy

The Hope and Arkell Libraries have seen considerable change in the past year. In August 2011, Kathleen Santry was appointed as assistant librarian and archivist, with Mark Dickerson continuing as librarian one day a week. During the year, Kate completed training in cataloguing on Oxford’s new system, Aleph, and in Oracle financial software. She also attended a Heritage Lottery Fund funding workshop, in preparation for funding bids for archival projects. At the same time, the Library Committee was reformed to oversee the strategic direction of the libraries, and comprised library staff, the director, and representatives from each of the collections, IT and Education departments.

Eliza Howlett assumes care of Palaeozoic collections

Eliza Howlett has taken over responsibility for the Palaeozoic collections. Eliza has continued her work on improving their curation, arranging a series of trips to Nuneham Courtenay church to bring back material from the University of Hull Collection, which was then cleaned and sorted by a number of volunteers. She began work on Paul Clabey’s database of the 16,000 Lyell specimens, adding full stratigraphic details in order to make searching easier. Since November, she has been running the Oxford end of the JISC-funded project ‘GB/3D Fossil Types Online’.

Wager archive grows with donation

The archive of material relating to geologist and explorer L.R. Wager (1904–1965) was augmented in September 2011 when, following the death of his widow Phyllis Wager, his family agreed to donate a substantial amount of material to the Museum. The donation was mostly composed of photographs, but also included diaries and maps relating to East Greenland and the Himalaya.

We are in the process of digitising this material, beginning with photographs and diaries relating to Wager’s 1933 Mount Everest expedition. The geological diaries and around 550 photographs have already been scanned, and a start has been made on a transcription of the diaries.

In January 2012 Dr David Waters, curator of Mineralogy Collections, gave a presentation using Wager’s photographs and diary entries to a meeting of Himalayan researchers from Oxford and the Open University. The presentation highlighted Wager’s observations on the structure now known as the South Tibetan Detachment System, and showed how Wager’s work could be applied to modern research. The presentation can be seen in full at bit.ly/oumwager.

Library sets strategy

The Hope and Arkell Libraries have seen considerable change in the past year. In August 2011, Kathleen Santry was appointed as assistant librarian and archivist, with Mark Dickerson continuing as librarian one day a week. During the year, Kate completed training in cataloguing on Oxford’s new system, Aleph, and in Oracle financial software. She also attended a Heritage Lottery Fund funding workshop, in preparation for funding bids for archival projects. At the same time, the Library Committee was reformed to oversee the strategic direction of the libraries, and comprised library staff, the director, and representatives from each of the collections, IT and Education departments.

Eliza Howlett assumes care of Palaeozoic collections

Eliza Howlett has taken over responsibility for the Palaeozoic collections. Eliza has continued her work on improving their curation, arranging a series of trips to Nuneham Courtenay church to bring back material from the University of Hull Collection, which was then cleaned and sorted by a number of volunteers. She began work on Paul Clabey’s database of the 16,000 Lyell specimens, adding full stratigraphic details in order to make searching easier. Since November, she has been running the Oxford end of the JISC-funded project ‘GB/3D Fossil Types Online’.

Wager archive grows with donation

The archive of material relating to geologist and explorer L.R. Wager (1904–1965) was augmented in September 2011 when, following the death of his widow Phyllis Wager, his family agreed to donate a substantial amount of material to the Museum. The donation was mostly composed of photographs, but also included diaries and maps relating to East Greenland and the Himalaya.

We are in the process of digitising this material, beginning with photographs and diaries relating to Wager’s 1933 Mount Everest expedition. The geological diaries and around 550 photographs have already been scanned, and a start has been made on a transcription of the diaries.

In January 2012 Dr David Waters, curator of Mineralogy Collections, gave a presentation using Wager’s photographs and diary entries to a meeting of Himalayan researchers from Oxford and the Open University. The presentation highlighted Wager’s observations on the structure now known as the South Tibetan Detachment System, and showed how Wager’s work could be applied to modern research. The presentation can be seen in full at bit.ly/oumwager.

Library sets strategy

The Hope and Arkell Libraries have seen considerable change in the past year. In August 2011, Kathleen Santry was appointed as assistant librarian and archivist, with Mark Dickerson continuing as librarian one day a week. During the year, Kate completed training in cataloguing on Oxford’s new system, Aleph, and in Oracle financial software. She also attended a Heritage Lottery Fund funding workshop, in preparation for funding bids for archival projects. At the same time, the Library Committee was reformed to oversee the strategic direction of the libraries, and comprised library staff, the director, and representatives from each of the collections, IT and Education departments.
Cataloguing, documenting (and scaling spires)

Cataloguing the Museum’s collections is an ongoing task, but a vital one in order to create a resource for further study and teaching. Here is a selection of some of the important cataloguing work that took place during the year.

**The George Rolleston archive**

A professional archivist was appointed in January 2012 to complete a basic catalogue of the archive of Professor George Rolleston (1829–1881), who became the first Linacre Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at the University of Oxford in 1860, the same year the Museum opened. This appointment was made possible thanks to an award of £6,750 from the University’s John Fell Fund, after an application by Malgorzata Nowak-Kemp, collections manager for the Zoological Collections, and Alison Roberts, curator of European and Early Prehistoric collections at the Ashmolean Museum, which holds the archive.

Rolleston was a close colleague and protégé of the evolutionary biologist Thomas Huxley, and was one of the most influential and distinguished scientists in Oxford during the later nineteenth century. Presently, only the papers relating to his archaeological work in Oxfordshire are catalogued – less than 15% - but there is strong potential for the remaining material in the Museum and Ashmolean to contribute to research on the history of science at Oxford, as well as to the documentation of his collections, including human remains, which are held at the Museum.

**Cataloguing the Cretaceous**

Over the course of the year Geology’s Andy Ashington succeeded in cataloguing some 10,372 specimens from the historic Cretaceous collections, working under a twelve month project funded by the E.P.A. Cephalopora Fund. With the contribution from other staff, interns, temporary workers and volunteers included, we have catalogued a grand total of 12,725 specimens this year.

Jacqui Machin was employed for a month to continue work on Palaeontic material from the J.H. Huxtable and J. Parker Collections. In all, 379 specimens were catalogued, completing the documentation of the Huxtable material, while additional Parker material found in our ‘boxed series’ means that there are some 680 Parker specimens still to be catalogued.

**Cenozoic mammal fossils catalogued for JISC project**

Renaissance money transferred from the Mineralogy Collections following the departure of Jo Corp enabled the Geology Collections to pay Sarah Joomun for five months to start upgrading records of UK type specimens in readiness for the start of the JISC project (see Highlights). With Elka Houtett, Sarah co-supervised E.P. Abraham Internship-student Emma Jude, cataloguing and researching Cenozoic mammal specimens, including Eocene material from France presented by Georges Cuvier to William Buckland, and Pleistocene material from Kent’s Cavern, Devon, collected by W. Pringley.

**Wasps and beetles**

A donation to the Museum of around 8,500 beetles (Palaeartic Coleoptera) housed in some 30 cabinet drawers was made by Chris Rayden. After being frozen at -30°C for two weeks after arrival, to destroy pests that had infested the specimens, the entire collection was accessioned as one lot and is being labelled and re-curated for inclusion in our main holdings.

Entomology’s Amoret Spooner undertook more beetle cataloguing when she arranged and expanded the world (non-British) collection of Coleoptera according to the up-to-date Bouchard catalogue of 2011. The collection space has been expanded to allow for the cataloguing of more beetle families in the collection, such as Carabidae, Cerambycidae and Scarabaeidae. The new cataloguing and labelling makes the world Coleoptera collection much easier to navigate for staff, volunteers and visitors.

Honorary research associate Chris O’Toole finalised the manuscript of a catalogue of the families of aculeate Hymenoptera, or stinging wasps, whose type series were split between the Museum and the Natural History Museum, London.

**Scaling the spire of the University Church**

Finally, Philip Powell has continued to catalogue material collected during the construction of the M40 through Oxfordshire, and to answer enquiries on building stones. In April, he was invited to climb the scaffolding on the spire of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin to identify stones for two research students working with Professor Heather Vine from the School of Geography and the Environment on agents of deterioration in building stone.

Idlewild Trust grant for net-winged insect specimens

An Idlewild Trust grant of £3,000 was successfully secured by Amoret Spooner for the conservation and digitisation of our internationally important Neuropteroid collection, or net-winged insects. This is a significant collection, not only in quantity, but in the quality of the specimens. Families included in the order Neuroptera are Ascalaphidae (Owlflies), Chrysopidae (Lacewings), Ascalaphidae (Mantidflies) and Myrmeleontidae (Antlions).

The grant, which was awarded in May 2012, was used to transfer the collection from Victorian cabinets in the Museum’s Huxley Room to new drawers and cabinets in the Upper Poulton Room. Although the Victorian cabinets are in good condition for their age, there was still a high risk of pest infestation; because Neuroptera are so fragile any pest damage could easily result in the destruction of a potentially important specimen.

As part of the move, Amoret and Zoe Simmons photographed the original drawers, before relabelling and organising the draws and cabinets into a catalogue arrangement, leaving room for further expansion. Re-curating specimens in this way involves some investigation into their provenance and importance. ‘It is necessary to check each specimen to identify its importance’, says Amoret. It was expected that there would be type (original) specimens in the collection that had not been recognised previously. Identifying these involves researching the handwriting of the collectors, the locality data, and the way in which the specimen was originally curated. We found 21 specimens consisting of four species that were types and these are now placed within the Hope Entomological Collections type collection.●
Partnerships

Oxfordshire Goes Wild

The ninth annual Oxfordshire Goes Wild event took place in the Museum in April, in partnership with the Oxford Nature Conservation forum, attracting well over 1,000 people. Along with live animals, games, specimens, and information about local wildlife and botany, visitors were also able to meet 17 local and national nature and wildlife conservation groups and find out about their work. The Museum acts as a focal point in this effective partnership, bringing together different interested groups and engaging the public on a range of wildlife conservation issues.

Fossil rescue for Wood Eaton Quarry

The year saw the start of a collaborative project with the University’s Department of Earth Sciences and the Natural History Museum, London, to provide advice on maintenance and to undertake a rescue dig of vertebrate-bearing geological horizons at Wood Eaton Quarry, Oxfordshire. Wood Eaton is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) thanks to the exposed highly fossiliferous Middle Jurassic strata that are found in the disused quarry.

The site has previously yielded cetosaurus and stegocephalus bones, but it is scheduled for a partial landflling operation in 2013 onwards. With the help of local geologist Alan Banyard, staff from the Museum have secured the cooperation of site operators McKenna Plant Hire, and negotiations began with the land owners, the Church of England, for permission to temporarily extend a small portion of the current excavation. Grant funding to continue will be sought once all appropriate permissions are in place.

Ichthyosaur conservation for Abingdon Museum

Collaboration with Abingdon Museum continued, with Geology Collections staff Juliet Hay, Eliza Hoodell and Philip Powell visiting the Museum in April to install the ichthyosaur skeleton that Juliet had conserved prior to the formal reopening of the Museum in July. The near-complete ichthyosaur originates from the Kimmeridge Clay (Upper Jurassic) of Curtis’s Pit, Abingdon, and comprises some 200 separate bones. Most of these were in fragments, which were cleaned and re-joined in the Museum’s lab, before being carefully packed for transport back to Abingdon.

Running the Museum

A new space for visitors... and a new place to eat

Work began on a new space for visitors to both the Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum, through the conversion of the old glasshousing laboratories adjacent to the Museum. This flexible space is designed to give both museums new facilities to expand and diversify their activities, as well as provide much-needed additional toilets. The visitor centre will be used for educational sessions with schools groups and the public, as well as for other special events. Separately, plans for the trial run of a cafe area on the upper gallery were agreed, giving visitors a chance to enjoy a hot or cold drink and a snack inside the Museum for the first time. Feedback from this trial was positive and it is now expected that a cafe will become a permanent feature of the Museum when it reopens early in 2014 following completion of the roof repairs.

Towards a new Museum strategy

In 2012, we began the process of developing a new strategy for the Museum that will express our ambitions over the next few years. To kick things off the executive group and Board of Visitors convened for an away-day at Jesus College in June to pull together initial thoughts and ideas. Numerous aspects of the strategy were further developed over the summer of 2012. A series of working groups on public engagement, interpretation, research, and collections started to meet ahead of an open discussion of the plans with staff. Museum director Paul Smith subsequently presented a strategic vision document to all staff, which laid out the Museum’s ambitions for education, exhibitions, research, stewardship and leadership.

Raindrops stop falling on our heads

The first phase of roof repairs, which commenced in August 2011, was completed by our contractors Beard Construction and specialist heritage architects Purcell in February 2012. The careful removal, cleaning and resealing of the roof’s original glass tiles has resulted in light, but no longer water, flooding into the Museum’s south aisle, setting the stonework aglow. Following the success of this first stage the Board of Visitors decided in May 2012 to proceed with the initial three-year plan to repair the whole of the roof.

After all the requirements for the repair work were carefully considered it became clear that the Museum would have to close to the public for the duration of the work, throughout 2013. To remain open during the work, or to carry it out in two phases, would be much more complex, time-consuming and considerably more expensive, with a much impaired visitor experience in the meantime.

Staff changes

Renaissance-funded curatorial assistant in the Mineralogy Collections, Jo Corp, left to pursue a new career with Thames Water. Jo had continued to make excellent progress in addressing cataloguing backlogs in the petrological collections and we would like to thank her for an exceptional contribution. Jo’s efforts included: Cleaning and reorganising some 26,000 thin sections; reorganising 2,100 specimens in the Miscellaneous Rocks collection; cataloguing and digitising in excess of 9,400 specimens; and the decanting and rearrangement of much of the collections of Lawrence Wager (Professor of Geology, 1950–1965) following the transfer of the old Earth Sciences basement store into the Museum’s control.

Lindsay Percival was appointed in September as project assistant for development of the Cori website and her post was extended for a further three months. In addition to her work on the website, Lindsay catalogued archives relating to the Cori collection, and she assisted with the preparation of displays, the transfer of the Freeman collection and other curatorial activities.

Bethany Palumbo accepted the post of life sciences conservator in June, moving to Oxford in August 2012 from the American Museum of Natural History where she undertook a conservation fellowship. Bethany became responsible for the integrated pest management (IPM) at the Museum.
Unsung Hero

Roy Overall, caretaker and documenter of the Museum’s swift colony for almost 50 years was justly awarded the Unsung Heroes prize in the 2012 round of Art Fund Prizes. Roy took over the monitoring of the swifts in 1962, ringing more than 4,000 birds during his involvement with the Oxford Swift Project. In 1965 a roof repair made it possible to increase the number of glass-backed nest boxes in the tower ventilation holes from 40 to 80 and add another 67 beneath the eaves, quadrupling Roy’s work.

On the TV

For three days in May, Sir David Attenborough filmed a new television series called ‘Natural Curiosities’ in the Museum. The series, which is produced for UKTV’s Eden channel, featured the chameleon, giant, midwife toad and butterfly collections from the Museum. Our librarian Mark Dickerson provided archive material for the series and many curatorial staff helped facilitate the filming. The series was broadcast in January 2013.

ITV also took over the Museum in July to film an episode of crime detective drama ‘Lewis’. The episode featured Sanjeev Bhaskar as a murderously brilliant detective and Gareth David-Lloyd as the series’ key benefactor. Both of them had appeared in the series’ pilot episode of 2010.

High speed connectivity

The IT department completed a substantial upgrade to the Museum’s ICT infrastructure with the installation of four new IGB network switches. These replace the older 100Mb switches and a new switch serves the new laboratory, offices and visualisation suite.

The Museum’s link to the outside world – our FroDo switch – was also replaced with a substantial upgrade to the network switches. Three replace the 32 boxes, only six were incubating. In mid-June we were observing egg rejection and it was clear that clutches were being abandoned by parents. The first chick to hatch died a few days later, which is exceptional for swifts. In the end, of the 32 nests started only 14 chicks fledged from just eight nests, about a quarter as many as usual.

It is to be hoped that the small number of birds returning this year indicates that they might have bred elsewhere further south, and that they might return in 2013 if the weather is better. Nevertheless, 2013 will be a critical year for this colony. We shall monitor again during the year and no adult swifts were handled, however, the latest summer on record did not help matters.

The swifts arrived back very late and were low in number. By 30 May nests had started in 26 boxes, and at least ten of these had eggs. But torrential rain on that day prevented the adults from feeding and of the 26 adults sitting in 17 boxes, only six were incubating. By mid-June we were observing egg rejection and it was clear that clutches were being abandoned by parents. The first chick to hatch died a few days later, which is exceptional for swifts. In the end, of the 32 nests started only 14 chicks fledged from just eight nests, about a quarter as many as usual.

It is to be hoped that the small number of birds returning this year indicates that they might have bred elsewhere further south, and that they might return in 2013 if the weather is better. Nevertheless, 2013 will be a critical year for this colony. We shall monitor again without handling adults, and hope that the swifts are not too disturbed by the essential repair work to the Museum roof.

Landscaping gets underway

The year marked the start of a substantial exterior landscaping project to improve the area immediately in front of the Museum. The scheme may include some subtle lighting of the architecture to enhance the appearance of the Museum at night without causing excessive light pollution. Some original features will also be reinstated as the new railings and the shape of the redrawn lawn will mimic the Museum’s original landscaping design, created in mid-19th century when the Museum was founded.

High speed connectivity

The IT department completed a substantial upgrade to the Museum’s ICT infrastructure with the installation of four new IGB network switches. These replace the older 100Mb switches and a new switch serves the new laboratory, offices and visualisation suite.

The Museum’s link to the outside world – our FroDo switch – was also replaced with a substantial upgrade to the network switches. Three replace the 32 boxes, only six were incubating. In mid-June we were observing egg rejection and it was clear that clutches were being abandoned by parents. The first chick to hatch died a few days later, which is exceptional for swifts. In the end, of the 32 nests started only 14 chicks fledged from just eight nests, about a quarter as many as usual.

It is to be hoped that the small number of birds returning this year indicates that they might have bred elsewhere further south, and that they might return in 2013 if the weather is better. Nevertheless, 2013 will be a critical year for this colony. We shall monitor again during the year and no adult swifts were handled, however, the latest summer on record did not help matters.

The swifts arrived back very late and were low in number. By 30 May nests had started in 26 boxes, and at least ten of these had eggs. But torrential rain on that day prevented the adults from feeding and of the 26 adults sitting in 17 boxes, only six were incubating. By mid-June we were observing egg rejection and it was clear that clutches were being abandoned by parents. The first chick to hatch died a few days later, which is exceptional for swifts. In the end, of the 32 nests started only 14 chicks fledged from just eight nests, about a quarter as many as usual.

It is to be hoped that the small number of birds returning this year indicates that they might have bred elsewhere further south, and that they might return in 2013 if the weather is better. Nevertheless, 2013 will be a critical year for this colony. We shall monitor again without handling adults, and hope that the swifts are not too disturbed by the essential repair work to the Museum roof.

Landscaping gets underway

The year marked the start of a substantial exterior landscaping project to improve the area immediately in front of the Museum. The scheme may include some subtle lighting of the architecture to enhance the appearance of the Museum at

Appendices

Appendix 1: Visitors of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History at 31 July 2012

The Vice-Chancellor A.D. Hamilton, MA, PhD, FRS
Lord Keble, MA, DPhil, FRSE Chairman
Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor A.L. Warnmes, BSc, PhD
The Junior Proctor Dr A.B. Zavatsky, BSc, MA, DPhil
Assessor: Dr H.L. Spranger, BA, MA, DPhil
Professor P.C. England, MA, DPhil, FRSE
Professor R. Forty, BA, MA, PhD, ScD, FRSE, FGS, FLS
Professor G. Costow, MA, PhD
Dr L. Gilmour, MA, PhD, FSA, AMA
Professor A.N. Hallday, BSc, PhD
Professor P.H. Harvey, MA, DPhil, DSc, FRSE
Professor P.W.H. Holland, MA, PhD, DSc, FRSE
Professor J. Michie, MSc, MA, DPhil
Dr M. O’Hannon, MA, PhD
Professor M.P. Smith, BSc, PhD (Secretary)

Appendix 2: People

Staff of the Museum at 31 July 2012

Director: Professor M.P. Smith, BSc, PhD
Administration: Ms W. Shepherd, BSc

The Hope Entomological Collections
Curator: Professor D.J. Rogers, MA, DPhil
Assistant Curator: Mr D.J. Mann, BSc, PET

University Support Staff: Mr K. Child, BA; Mr J.E. Hogan, BSc; Ms Z.M. Simmons, BSc (maturity leave); Ms A. Spooner, BSc; Miss J. White, MA, BA.

Geological Collections
Assistant Curator: Mr P.A. Jeffery
Curatorial Officers: Dr E.A. Howleden, RN
University Support Staff: Mr A.P. Ashington, Mr J. Hay, BA; Dr S. Joomun, BSc, MSc, PhD; Mr J.E. Percival, BSc
Research Assistant: Dr C.A. Lewis, BSc, MSc, PhD

Mineralogical Collections
Curator: Dr J.D. Whyers, MA, DPhil
Assistant Curator: Miss M.T. Price, BSc, MSc

Zoological Collections
Assistant Curator: Dr L. De Graeve, BSc, MSc, PhD
Curatorial Officers: Mr M.B. Nosaw-Kemp, BSc, MSc

Hope and Arkell Libraries
Librarian: Mrs M. Dickerson, MA, Dip. Inf. Man.
Assistant Librarian: Miss K.L. Santy, BA, MLIS

Information Technology
IT Officers: Ms S. Philipps, BA
IT Assistant: Dr R. Paley, BA, MA, DPhil

Education and Outreach
Head of Education: Mrs J. Stott, BA, PGCE, MA
Secondary School Officer: Ms S. Lloyd, BSc, PGCE
Primary School and Family Officer: Mr C. Jarvis, BA, PGCE, FLS
Community Officer: Mrs S.J. Griffiths, BA, MA
Volunteers Co-ordinator: Mrs J. Todd, MSc
Volunteer and Outreach Assistant: Dr C.J. Chreese, MA, BSc, MPhil
Education Assistants: Mrs R. Paley, BA, PGCE; Ms S. Dogberry, BA, MSt

HLF Skills for the Future Project Co-ordinator: Mr N. Stevenson Trainer Education Officer: Scott Billings, Rana Ibrahim, Lea Klopstenger and Vicki Wood

Central Services
Administrator’s Assistant and Director’s Secretary: Ms K.A. Andrews-Speed
Accounts Clerk: Mrs K. King
Front of House Manager: Mr A. Archer
Deputy Front of House Manager: Mr I. Hussain
Mr A. Woodward, BA, MA
Front of House Staff: Ms A. Edwards, BA, Mr J. Chu, MA; Mr S. Williams, BA
Facilities Manager: Mr C. Borriss
Cabinet-maker: Mr W. Richley
Workshop and maintenance: Mr P. Johnson
Shop Supervisor: Mrs V. Cawkell, BA Hon, CGMHC
Shop Assistants: Mr P. Pumpanita, Miss G. Moliga, BA, Ms G.M. Moretti;
Cleaners: Mr G. Coates

Honorary Associates (Curation)
Mr M. Ackland, BA
Mr J.R. Davies, MA, MSc
Mr R. Gabriel
Dr J.W. Ismay, BSc, PhD
Mr I. Lambury, MPhil
Dr A.C. Punt, MA, DSc
Mr H.P. Powell, MA

Honorary Associates (Research)
Mrs E.M.H. Cooke, MA
Mr J. Cooter, BSc
Mr G. de Rougemont, BA
Dr J. Kathirithamby, BSc, PhD
Dr T.S. Kemp, MA, PhD
Professor W.J. Kenchey, MA, BSc, PhD, DSc, FGS
Dr G.C. McGavin, BSc, D.I.C., PhD
Mr C.O’Toole
Mr R. Overall
Professor D.J. Steere, MA, BSc, PhD, DSc
Professor K.S. Thomson, MA, BSc, PhD

Research Units

Environmental Archaeology Unit
Director: Professor M.A. Robinson, MA, PhD, FSA
DPhil students: D. Challinor, MA, MSc (St Cross), H. Heslop, BA, MPhil
(Merton), L. Ledwick BA, MSc (St Cross), E. Ryan BSc, BA, MSt (St Cross)

Appendices
Appendix 3: Finance

General

The University’s General Board made a grant towards recurrent costs totalling £375k for the financial year ending 31 July 2012. In addition we received this year’s instalment towards recurrent costs from HEFCE amounting to £300,000.

Grants awarded and donations received

This year we again raised considerable amounts through external grants and awards.

- B. A. Alten Charitable Trust
- Negm Foundation
- P. D. Skirrow Trust
- Sir F. E. Wood Trust
- Sir V. E. Wood Trust
- J. M. Cottrell Trust
- Sir W. H. Wood Trust
- Sir W. H. Wood Trust

Appendix 4. New acquisitions

Entomological Collections

A total of 86 accession lots of 49,422 specimens were received by donation to the department.

Notable donations include:

- 38 Calliphoridae & Muscidae from Thailand (from K. Mookhapha)
- 10,000 Coleoptera from Borneo (from E. Slade)
- 7,000 Coleoptera from Sperkadis (from S. Longhorn)
- 30 Accessions Series hand specimens and thin sections from Rum
- Paratype: Psilinopus vicarius (♂ & ♀) from E. Hijmen
- 20,000 British Insects (from T. Maeda)
- 39 Hymenoptera from Zambia (from M.N. Mitchell)
- Paratype: Niphornus hoffmanni (♂ & ♀) from S. Longhorn
- 2,000 Insects from Kazakhstan (from J. Cooter and D.J. Mann)

Geological Collections

By purchase

- None

By donation

- Parasite casts of trace fossils from the Ediacaran of Shropshire and Newfoundland, 16 specimens (from Dr A.G. Lai)
- Arthropods from Devonian of Japan, 2 specimens (from Prof. D. J. Siveter and Dr M. Williams)
- Collection of fossil, mineral and rock specimens, including important Jurassic mammal remains from the Great Oolite of Kirtlington, Oxfordshire, c.7,000 specimens (from Mr E. F. Freeman)
- Cretaceous invertebrates from Texas, 30 specimens (from W. Jolley)
- Large collection of fossil, mineral and rock specimens, mostly Eocene fossils from the Barton Beds of Barton on Sea, Hampshire, and other Cenozoic material, 10,000 specimens (from P.S. Clasby)

Appendix 5. Loans


Entomological Collections

- In total 71 loans were issued of 7231 specimens.

Geological Collections

- Nine loans were sent (5 to the UK, 2 to Germany and 1 to Sweden).
- A total of 34 specimens were sent, including Cambrian and Silurian trilobites, Devonian fish, Jurassic invertebrates, Cretaceous coleoids and a cirriped.

Mineralogical Collections

- Seven specimens formed 10 short term loans during the course of the year, all to departments of the University for undergraduate and summer school teaching, and for public lectures.
- Sixty four mineral specimens are on long-term loan to the Earth Sciences Department for undergraduate. Museum specimens employed for teaching by the Curator include the usual Stanton ore collection for third-year teaching Natural Resources; and about 50 Accessions Series hand specimens and thin sections from Rum as support for undergraduate mapping projects: these reveal the remarkable history of the development of the volcanic centre. The Curator took this opportunity to acquire over 100 photomicrographs of selected thin sections, partly to aid the Earth Sciences examiners in project marking, but ultimately as a teaching resource in igneous and metamorphic petrology.
- 29 samples were supplied for destructive research.

Zoological Collections

- Total of 42 invertebrate and vertebrate loans (totalising several hundred specimens).
- Vertebrate: 8 loans, 7 loans for filming and 1 for research
- Neurochordes: freshwater unguipul and Naturamuram
- Senckenberganlage 25, D-60325 Frankfurt am Main, Germany for 20 specimens plus circa 200 specimens for practical classes.

Zoological Collections

- Crets of skull and hand of Apatosaurus bernardini from Wits University, South Africa.
- The Hope and Arkell Libraries

Over the year 3.4 linear meters of new material was added, including 46 books and 301 periodical parts. In addition over 200 archival items were scanned or photographed, including nitate negatives from the L. R. Wage collection and manuscripts and photographs from the History of the Building of the Museum collection.

The most significant purchases were


The most significant donations were

- British Dragonfly Society publications for 2011-12 from Dr M. Damm
- Studia dipteronologia (from Dr P. Pont)
- Zoology in the Middle East (from Dr P. Pont)
- British Tarantula Society Journal (Angela Hale)
- Arthropoda Selecta (Dimitri Logaros)

Appendix 5. Loans


Entomological Collections

- In total 71 loans were issued of 7231 specimens.

Geological Collections

- Nine loans were sent (5 to the UK, 2 to Germany and 1 to Sweden).
- A total of 34 specimens were sent, including Cambrian and Silurian trilobites, Devonian fish, Jurassic invertebrates, Cretaceous coleoeds and a cirriped.

Mineralogical Collections

- Seven specimens formed 10 short term loans during the course of the year, all to departments of the University for undergraduate and summer school teaching, and for public lectures.
- Sixty four mineral specimens are on long-term loan to the Earth Sciences Department for undergraduate. Museum specimens employed for teaching by the Curator include the usual Stanton ore collection for third-year teaching Natural Resources; and about 50 Accessions Series hand specimens and thin sections from Rum as support for undergraduate mapping projects: these reveal the remarkable history of the development of the volcanic centre. The Curator took this opportunity to acquire over 100 photomicrographs of selected thin sections, partly to aid the Earth Sciences examiners in project marking, but ultimately as a teaching resource in igneous and metamorphic petrology.
- 29 samples were supplied for destructive research.

Zoological Collections

- Total of 42 invertebrate and vertebrate loans (totalising several hundred specimens).
- Vertebrate: 8 loans, 7 loans for filming and 1 for research
- Neurochordes: freshwater unguipul and Naturamuram
- Senckenberganlage 25, D-60325 Frankfurt am Main, Germany for 20 specimens plus circa 200 specimens for practical classes.

Zoological Collections

- Crets of skull and hand of Apatosaurus bernardini from Wits University, South Africa.
- The Hope and Arkell Libraries

Over the year 3.4 linear meters of new material was added, including 46 books and 301 periodical parts. In addition over 200 archival items were scanned or photographed, including nitate negatives from the L. R. Wage collection and manuscripts and photographs from the History of the Building of the Museum collection.

The most significant purchases were


The most significant donations were

- British Dragonfly Society publications for 2011-12 from Dr M. Damm
- Studia dipteronologia (from Dr P. Pont)
- Zoology in the Middle East (from Dr P. Pont)
- British Tarantula Society Journal (Angela Hale)
- Arthropoda Selecta (Dimitri Logaros)
Zoological Collections

Invertebrate vertebrate 126 visitors totalling 157 days. Vertebrate visitors (60 visitor days): 123 visitors to the collection; over 200 students attending practical classes; 6 organised groups for talks and tours (about 100 individuals); Harvard University (16 students + 3 teachers); Texas University (14 students +1 teacher); Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society (14 members); Allied Texas University (15 students +3 teachers). Scientific Writing workshop (13 participants +2 teachers); Namutian Orangutan Society. (Oxford based charity). Oxford University – introduction to the OUMNH (16 students)

Appendix 6. Publications

Entomological Collections


Environmental Archaeology Unit


Environmental Archaeology Unit


