

Collections Team newsletter



“Migration is fundamental to the human condition”

Michael Wood, introducing films by MA students from the University's School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at Manchester Museum on 19th June 2017

This newsletter focuses on recent work by the Collections Team on the Collecting Life project about migration. These newsletters are distributed from time-to-time, to give people an idea of the range of work that we do at Manchester Museum.

Migration is part of the Museum’s thematic or contemporary collecting initiative, which makes the case for collecting at a time when, in many museums, it is in decline.

Migration was an important factor in the referendum about the UK’s

membership of the EU, the election of Donald Trump in the USA and the recent general election.

This issue features our recent work on migration, including Syrian artist Zahed Taj-eddin’s interventions in the Ancient Worlds galleries to highlight the Syrian refugee crisis, and the refugee life jacket display in the Museum entrance.

In addition, read about our latest current temporary displays, especially the new *Object Lessons* exhibition.

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Recent and upcoming exhibitions from the Collections Team



Object Lessons (May – Aug 2017) celebrates the scientific model and illustration collection of George Loudon.

Each of these finely crafted objects was created for the purpose of understanding the natural world through education, demonstration and display (see page 3)

Making Monsters - Pokemon Go and the Manchester Museum (June – Sept. 2017)

Since Pokemon Go launched in the Summer of 2016, Manchester Museum has been visited by a variety of different Pokemon creatures, joining the diverse collections of real-life animals that fill our cabinets and vivarium. This display seeks to understand the link between the real and the imagined animals, looking at historical interpretations in medieval treatises, and contemporary ideas, such as Pokemon. The display case can be seen in 'The Study' on the 3rd floor of the Museum.

Contacts for exhibitions

Academics who are interested in taking part in exhibitions or related events should contact:

[Henry McGhie](#), Head of Collections, Curator of Zoology

[Bryan Stith](#), Deputy Head of Collections, Curator of Archaeology

[David Gelsthorpe](#), Curator of Earth Sciences

[Dmitri Logunov](#), Curator of Arthropods

[Campbell Price](#), Curator of Egypt and Sudan

[Rachel Webster](#), Curator of Botany

[Stephen Welsh](#), Curator of Living Cultures

Shabtis: Suspended Truth (May – Aug 2017) Artist and archaeologist, Zahed Taj-Eddin's exhibition in the Ancient Worlds gallery uses ancient materials to explore important contemporary social issues (see page 5)

Research for new South Asia Gallery

With the new South Asia Gallery opening in 2020 work is under way to identify and research relevant objects in the Museum collection. Contemporary collecting will feature in the gallery.

The collections are revealing some fascinating objects from the Indian sub-continent that we hope will be of great interest not only to Manchester's South Asian communities but to all our visitors.

Object Lessons Exhibition at Manchester Museum

David Gelsthorpe



The object-rich exhibition looks at this incredible collection through themes such as Craftsmanship, the Teaching Museum and the Microscopic. It combines George's collection with the best models and illustrations from Manchester Museum and World Museum, Liverpool.

The beautiful objects blurred the boundaries between art and science and brought together the world's leading scientists and most accomplished craftsmen. They reflect a moment in time when scientific discovery was rapidly developing, but technology could not keep up with techniques to record such findings.

Craftsmanship features the highly-acclaimed Blaschka glass models, created by German glassworkers Leopold Blaschka and his son Rudolf.

'A search for beauty, wonder, or magic in individual objects and illustration'

George Loudon

In **Understanding the Body** models are used to explore the shape, movement and function of the body.

Recording the Extraordinary focuses on unusual things that are difficult to describe in words. Early illustrations of the Aurora Borealis, sit alongside a plaster moon crater and a globe of the stars.

Exaggerated papier-mâché flowers and an Edwardian pop-up human anatomy book form part of **Looking Inside**.

Teaching Museum takes an overarching look at the context in which these models were created. Highlights include Japanese teaching scrolls from 1843 and wax fruits.

Revealing the Microscopic includes early French flea photographs and models of pollen and penicillin.

Framing Time Some of the first illustrations of the Grand Canyon are shown alongside early reconstructions of long extinct fossils.

A refugee's life jacket at Manchester Museum

Bryan Sitch



“It is one of literally hundreds of thousands of life jackets abandoned on the island by refugees after crossing the narrow but dangerous straits between Turkey and Lesvos.”

In December 2016, I went to the Greek island of Lesvos to collect a refugee's life jacket for Manchester Museum's Collecting Life project. This initiative aims to re-energise collecting in museums, which is largely in decline because of cut-backs and pressure on storage space. It also seeks to collect objects that illustrate current debates in wider society, with themes such as migration and climate change.

By collecting and displaying a refugee's life jacket, Manchester Museum is actively engaging with visitors and the wider public about one of the major challenges of our time, migration. Migration is very important politically, and has been cited as a major factor in the outcome of the referendum about the UK's membership of the European Union and of the presidential elections in the United States.

The Museum is very grateful to the Municipality of Mytilene for presenting the life jacket for the collection. It is one of literally hundreds of thousands of life

jackets abandoned on the island by refugees after crossing the narrow but dangerous straits between Turkey and Lesvos. In 2015 up to 10,000 refugees were arriving on Lesvos every day and the island's population was doubling every ten days. Many of the refugees were fleeing the civil war in Syria. Some 500,000 people have been killed in the Syrian conflict and eleven million people have been forced to leave their homes. Nearly one hundred people drowned off the coast of Lesvos in just one week early in 2016. Even more people have lost their lives trying to cross to Italy from North Africa.

Since its installation on 3rd March 2017, the life jacket has drawn a very positive response from visitors, as well as from researchers in the UK and abroad, and it has stimulated lots of comments on social media. We are encouraging people to share their comments and responses to the display on social media using #MMLifeJacket

Shabtis: Suspended Truth

Campbell Price



Responding to the current political debate on the subject of migration, Manchester Museum has commissioned a gallery installation by Syrian-born artist Zahed Taj-Eddin, which reflects on the Museum's Egyptology collection and themes of freedom, movement and identity. As part of our curatorial project entitled 'Collecting Life', Zahed Taj-Eddin was inspired particularly by Manchester Museum's extensive collection of shabti figurines, which were placed in large numbers in tombs to act as servants for the afterlife. He has previously created 99 faience ceramic

"You may forget, but let me tell you this: someone in some future time will think of us."

Sappho c. 630- c. 570 BC

'Nu' Shabtis for popular shows at the V&A, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology and elsewhere.

Zahed's new work in Manchester places a multitude of his 'Nu' Shabti figures in new and unexpected contexts, many suspended as if floating in the main Ancient Worlds gallery space. The focus of the installation is to reflect the experience of migrants on a boat travelling across the Mediterranean towards a new existence.

Zahed said: "For this new installation I decided to suspend my 'Nu' Shabtis in the Museum galleries. They are taking a new journey into time and space; suspended between the past and the present, searching for a new truth, different from the one they were made for. The display invites visitors to think about ancient and modern human issues such as the beliefs and actions that lead us to venture into the unknown and explore a better life beyond."

The installation is accompanied by a display of more than 250 ancient examples from one of the world's most important private collections of shabtis, many never seen on public display before.

#MMshabtis

A century of invasion – an unwelcome newcomer in northern waters

Dmitri Logunov



The Manchester Museum's specimen of the male Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*), collected from Ribble Estuary, Lancashire, in 2007.

The Chinese Mitten Crab (*Eriocheir sinensis*) is an accidentally imported species in the North Sea, which is considered one of the World's 100 worst invasive species. The crab first appeared in northern Germany in 1912. It was unintentionally brought from China, apparently as a stowaway in the ballast tanks of cargo ships. Since 1912, the crab has dramatically spread over northern Europe. It was first recorded from Thames River in 1935. Now it is also established in the Rivers Humber, Medway, Tyne, Wharfe and Ouse, increasing its range throughout England and Wales by several tens of kilometres a year.

This crab lives both in fresh and salt waters. In autumn, adult crabs undertake a mass migration from freshwaters to river estuaries for reproduction, crossing long distances over dry land. In October-

December, crabs mate, females produce eggs and move deeper to the sea where eggs and several larval stages develop. Young crabs migrate back to freshwaters. They reach sexual maturity in three years and then migrate back to the sea to reproduce.

These crabs can cause serious ecological damage. As adults usually burrow in muddy riverbanks, they can damage them, modify natural habitats and compete with native species. There are no effective means to control this crab species. In Germany, special traps were used during mass crab migrations, but they proved to be ineffective. However, the crabs are edible and even considered a delicacy in China. Thus, maybe these crabs should just 'be eaten' to stop them damaging British wildlife?



Manchester Museum's collection of Crustacea.

Repatriation of human remains to New Zealand

Stephen Welsh



Curators with Te Herekiele Herewini, Manager Repatriation, (centre right) and Ms Moana Parata, Collections' Manager, from Te Papa Tongarewa in New Zealand at the recent ceremony to repatriate a Moriori jawbone at Manchester Museum

On Monday 22nd May Manchester Museum repatriated the jawbone of a Moriori ancestor to colleagues from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. This was one of several repatriation ceremonies taking place across Europe, and in total 63 Māori and Moriori ancestral remains were repatriated. Upon their return to Te Papa on Monday 29 May 2017 they were greeted by Māori and Moriori descendants in a traditional *powhiri* ceremony.

The information associated with the jawbone indicated that the collector was Henry Ogg Forbes (1851-1932). He was director of the Canterbury Museum in New Zealand in 1890-93, during which time he collected Moriori ancestral human remains. Research undertaken by Te Papa indicated there was strong evidence to suppose that the majority of Maori or Moriori ancestral

remains removed at this time were collected, stolen or traded by crown agents or people working on their behalf.

It is not known how the human jawbone from the Chatham Islands came to Manchester Museum. However, collectors at the time often sent complimentary specimens to museums in the hope of seeing themselves listed as benefactors in the institutions' annual reports.

Over the past several decades Manchester Museum has worked closely with indigenous groups to ensure the return of ancestral human remains to both Australia and New Zealand. In a rare case staff also worked with the Japanese embassy to return the remains of a Japanese soldier killed in Myanmar during the Second World War.

Recent Conference Presentations by Members of the Collections Team

Every year members of the Collections Team contribute to many conferences and seminars, drawing upon their knowledge of the collections and understanding of the disciplines in which they work.

Henry McGhie, Head of Collections and Curator of Zoology, spoke at Culture Action Europe, Budapest in January 2017 on 'The next paradigm for sustainability: let's create a story of positive change'. In February 2017, he co-organised with Prof Walter Leal of MMU the World Symposium on Climate Change Communication in Manchester. In April 2017, Henry presented at Museum Practice Seminar, British Museum: 'Less information, more inspiration'. This presentation focused on so-called 'difficult subjects' and aimed to encourage delegates to consider the wider impacts of their work, in terms of supporting public action around global issues, connecting with the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement. In May 2017, Henry and Jonny Sadler (Manchester Climate Change Agency) spoke at the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change, 5th Dialogue on Action for Climate Empowerment in Bonn about 'Cities and museums fostering climate education and empowerment, Manchester Climate Change Agency and Manchester Museum'.

Bryan Sitch, Deputy Head of Collections and Curator of Archaeology, spoke about the Museum's international work in relation to archaeology, including the refugee's lifejacket, at the Chartered Institute for Archaeology conference in Newcastle on 20th April.

David Gelsthorpe, Curator of Palaeontology spoke at the World Symposium on Climate Change Communication on 22nd-24th February. David also helped run the conference with fellow team members Rachel Webster and Dmitri Logunov, chaired one of the sessions and networked with climate researchers from across the world. David also spoke at the Natural Science Collections Association conference *Evolving Ideas: provocative new ways of working with collections*, at the University Zoology Museum in Cambridge on 20th -21st April.

Dmitri Logunov, Curator of Entomology, and Rachel Webster organised a two-day conference 'Unlocking the vault: making the most of scientific collections' on 26th-27th June, which is inspired by the Museum's Object Lessons exhibition.

Campbell Price, Curator of Egyptology, spoke about 'Ancient Egyptian Magic in the Museum' at the Durham University History Conference on 4th February.

Rachel Webster, Curator of Botany, and Louise Watson from the Front-of-House team demonstrated the effectiveness of our Museum Comes To You project at 'Talking Tables' during the networking lunch at the Age Friendly Museums Network Cross-Sector Conference held at the British Museum on 16th February 2017.

Jenny Norton-Wright, Early Years curator, has attended several conferences and promoted the Ellerman project.

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[Zahed Taj-Eddin talks about migration from Syria](#)

