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SOME NOTES ON THE DISPERSAL OF THE COLLECTIONS OF THE ORDNANCE SURVEY OF
IRELAND (1832 - 1843)

by C.E. O'Riordan, National Museum of Ireland.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1832 Captain J.E. Portlock was chosen to take charge in Ireland of the geological branch of the Ordnance Survey, which itself, had been set up some seven years previously. Extensive geological surveying was carried out in County Derry and parts of Counties Tyrone and Fermanagh, and a large collection of specimens was formed. Collectors were also employed in the fields of botany and zoology.

A museum was established in the Ordnance Survey Office in Belfast about 1837 to accommodate the material. Probably due to the expense of the survey, its activities were severely curtailed and the office and museum in Belfast were broken up in 1840 and everything connected with this department removed to the Ordnance Survey Office, Phoenix Park, Dublin.

Portlock, however, continued with his classic Report on the Geology of the County of Londonderry, and parts of Tyrone and Fermanagh which was published in 1843. Portlock's official geological work ended with the publication of this report. Prior to this however, preliminary notices were published in 1835 and 1837 which included botanical and zoological information.

In 1844 Sir Robert Peel's government decided to detach the geological surveys of Great Britain and Ireland from the Ordnance Survey Department and these were soon consolidated with the Geological Survey of Great Britain and Ireland under the Office of Woods and Forests. H.T. De la Beche was appointed Director General.

In accordance with the Minister General's and Board of Ordnance's order of 24th February 1845, Captain Larcom of the Ordnance Survey formally transferred the collections to the Geological Survey Office, Dublin. This transfer was acknowledged by H.T. De la Beche on 20th October 1845, thus placing the collections in the custody of the Geological Survey under the Office of Woods and Forests.

At this time the Government decided to establish in Dublin an institution somewhat on the plan of the then Museum of Economic Geology in London. However, it was to be more extended in scope, because in addition to its Museum functions, students were to be given lectures by a staff of professors. Initially, it was placed under the Office of Woods and Forests, but later it was transferred to a newly created Department of Science and Art.

The Museum's Director was Sir Robert Kane who was appointed in 1845. Two years later, Lord Castlemaine's house in 51 Stephen's Green (now the headquarters of the Office of Public Works) was chosen as a suitable location for the Museum, and on January 9th 1847 the Ordnance Survey Collections were handed over by the Geological Survey Office to the Museum of Economic Geology.

The galleries were completed in 1852 when the arrangement and classification of the collections were begun. In the following year the name was changed to the Museum of Irish Industry. Its two chief functions were exhibition and education. The 'exhibitional division' consisted of three distinct collections (1) the geological collections (2) the industrial collections (3) Portlock's zoological and botanical collections. The geological collections were comprised of (1) palaeontological collections of the Geological Survey of Ireland (2) duplicate specimens from the Museum of Economic Geology, London (3) Ordnance Survey fossils

collected by Portlock (4) rocks collected by the Geological Survey in the South and by Portlock in the North of Ireland (5) the Krantz cabinet of European rocks. The Geological Survey material, which was being augmented all the time, was solely in charge of the Geological Survey staff.

Following reports of a Royal Commission and a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1864 the Museum of Irish Industry was abolished as such and portion of the Ordnance Survey collections was transferred to the Natural History Museum of the Royal Dublin Society, now the National Museum of Ireland. The formal date of transfer was 25th September 1867. The educational function of the Museum of Irish Industry was later subsumed into the new College of Science.

DISPERSAL OF THE ORDNANCE SURVEY COLLECTIONS

(1) The Botanical Collections.

About 1834 Thomas Hopkirk was appointed botanist to the geological branch of the Ordnance Survey. As illness prevented him from taking up active duty, David Moore was appointed in his place. From 1834 to 1838 Moore collected widely, in Cos. Derry and Antrim, and particularly around Lough Neagh. When the Survey ceased botanical operations Moore obtained a post as curator in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

Though no specific mention is made in the Ordnance Survey MSS as to the disposal of the 3,000 odd specimens which were deposited in the Ordnance Herbarium, it seems that they were eventually transferred to the Museum of Irish Industry, and remained there until the Museum was abolished. It is presumed that they were transferred to the Natural History Museum with the zoological material in 1867 because reference is made in the Index of Authors in the second edition of Cybele Hibernica as follows: "Moore, David, Ph.D. Herbarium prepared for the Ordnance Survey and con-

taining a nearly complete series of the wild plants of Derry and Antrim, now preserved in the Science and Art Museum, Dublin Herb. Moore."

In 1970 the Herbarium of this Museum (now National Museum of Ireland) was transferred to the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Miss M. Scannell, Head of Herbarium confirms that there is material in Herbarium (DBN) labelled "Flora of Antrim by David Moore".

(2) The Zoological Collections

The names of the individual Ordnance Survey collectors are difficult to trace. However it is known that eminent naturalists such as William Thompson, Robert Ball and Alexander Haliday were involved in the identification and classification of the fauna.

The zoological collections originally consisted of over 8,000 specimens of vertebrates and invertebrates as well as some birds'eggs. These were handed over to the Museum of Irish Industry, Dublin in 1847 except for over 100 duplicate specimens of mounted birds which were presented to the Museum of Trinity College, Dublin.

Subsequent to the abolition of the Museum of Irish Industry the zoological collections were passed to the Natural History Museum of the Royal Dublin Society in September 1867. That Museum, as previously stated, now forms part of the National Museum of Ireland.

(3) The Geological Collections

The dispersal of the geological collections was somewhat more complex, and the individual sub-collections are best treated separately.

Minerals

The Ordnance Survey mineral collection consisted of an "office set"

of some 800 specimens and, in some cases up to six additional sets amounting to some 900 specimens and 200 further samples making a total of 1900 in all. The collection was transferred to the Museum of Irish Industry in 1847. Some of these specimens were eventually transferred to the Natural History Museum, presumably in 1867, because sixty-three specimens in the collection can be definitely recognised as Ordnance Survey material. Most have the MSS numbers. The fate of the remainder of the mineral collection is not known.

Rocks

No mention is made in the Ordnance Survey MSS of any rocks in the collection. Twenty-five rocks are itemised in the Inventory Catalogue (No 2) of the Collection of Irish, British and Foreign Rocks in the Industrial Museum of Ireland, as being collected by the Ordnance Survey. About half were collected in Cos. Antrim, Derry and Tyrone and the remainder in Co. Donegal. None of these specimens are in the National Museum Collections, and in view of their absence from the MSS Catalogue it is unlikely they were ever deposited in this Museum.

Fossils

Only a very brief summary of the major taxonomic groups and numbers of fossils in each group is mentioned in the Ordnance Survey MSS. Five sets are listed and a further 70 boxes of duplicate fossils. One of these sets, containing 1614 specimens was sent to the Museum of Economic Geology in London (now the Institute of Geological Sciences).

According to Tunnicliff (1980) the fossil collection was split, probably between 1854 and 1857. Apparently some of the Portlock material was transferred to the Ulster Museum in Belfast. Further material was transferred to the Geology Department of Trinity College Dublin. Tunni-

cliff (1980) has catalogued the Lower Palaeozoic Fossils now extant in these collections. Not all the fossils have been accounted for, it is understood.

Mc Henry and Watts (1895) refer to a "portion of the famous Portlock Collections" in the Geological Survey of Ireland Collections" which were displayed in the National Museum of Ireland from 1890 to 1924. These particular collections were exhibited by the Geological Survey in the National Museum, but were curated and maintained by the Survey staff.

In June 1922 the Museum was closed to the public for two years because the adjoining Leinster House was taken over by the new Irish Free State Government in order to hold the Dáil (Parliament) there. In 1924 the entire Geological Survey exhibition was dismantled, packed and removed into storage in the Geological Survey Office, by officers of the Geological Survey. Included in this removal was the Survey's Portlock material. There are no Portlock fossils in the National Museum's own collections.

APPEAL

It is quite likely that sets of specimens from the Ordnance Survey Collection have been deposited in other Museums or Institutions in Ireland or the United Kingdom. These notes, it is hoped, will encourage curators to supply additional information concerning these collections, if they are, in fact, still extant.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Mr. D. Felton and Miss G. Griffiths for searching through the Museum catalogues and providing lists of Ordnance Survey material in the National Collection. Thanks are also due to Miss M.

Scannell, Head of Herbarium, National Botanic Gardens, Dublin for information concerning Ordnance Survey material in Herbarium (DBN).

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Mystery of the trout that was a salmon

by Avril Lansdell
Curator
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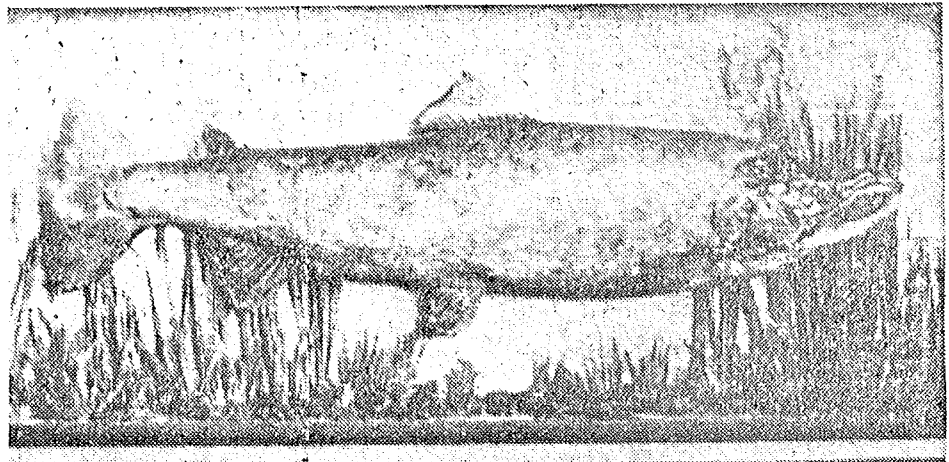
THE historic Weybridge Salmon is a large stuffed fish, mounted in a glass case which now hangs at the top of stairs at Weybridge Library.

This fish has an interesting history, both as a fish and as a museum specimen, and can rightly be classed as a local "curiosity." Its history starts on March 9, 1861, when a local professional fisherman, Mr. George Keene (who made his living by hiring boats and giving advice to gentlemen who wished to fish in the Thames), found it, floating on the surface of the water.

There was a mystery about the fish from the beginning, and it was described as a "long lean fish, very much out of condition, only faintly spotted and both upper and lower jaws beaked, indicating old age."

George Keene thought it was a trout, but as it was different from the trout which he normally caught, thought also that it came from somewhere else and had been put in the Thames after its death. Even so, he had it stuffed and mounted in a bow-fronted glass case with a label saying: "Taken in the Thames." Two other trout, stuffed and mounted by the same taxidermist, were labelled "Killed in the Thames."

While at the taxidermist it was seen by two fish experts, Frank Buckland, who was to become Inspector of Salmon Fisheries in 1867, and Sir William Jardine, who was a Commissioner for Salmon Fisheries in England and Wales. Buckland thought it was not a



Thames trout, but did not like to say that it was a salmon, while Sir William Jardine said it was definitely a salmon.

A controversy raged over this fish in Victorian sporting magazines for many years for the simple reason that in 1861 the Thames was so polluted that the experts could not believe that a salmon could survive in it to reach as far above London as Weybridge.

George Keene kept the fish for the rest of his life, but his widow sold it in 1889.

In 1914, it was sold again to J. E. Harting, a well-known naturalist, who presented it, with several other specimens from his own collection, to Weybridge Museum. Mr. Harting first took the fish to the British Museum (Natural History) and showed it to a Mr. G. A. Boulanger, who pronounced it a salmon.

For many years it had pride of place in the museum, but during the 1930s, after J. E. Harting's death, the museum's natural history collection was largely dispersed and the fish relegated to a storeroom. After the Second World War, some museum specimens (largely natural history) were transferred to the loft over old stables which were being used as a general storage space for all manner of unwanted objects and furniture. The museum had been allocated a small por-

tion of the stables in which were kept agricultural specimens.

In 1974 the stables were pulled down. Shortly before this museum staff were told that everything in the stables was to be destroyed and that they could remove anything they wanted including anything from the loft. Accordingly, the present museum staff explored the loft — a dangerous task as part of the floor was rotten — and unearthed a great many treasures, some of which had been lost over the years.

Most of the natural history specimens were moth-eaten and rotten and had to be thrown away, but miraculously the fish had survived. Although the glass of its case had been smashed, the back on which the fish was mounted, and the base, complete with its artificial reeds and stones representing the river-bed, remained intact.

It was a filthy dirty, but a young art student, Mr. John Pulford, then employed as a Saturday receptionist-museum assistant, cleaned and revarnished the fish. Elmbridge Council's carpenters made a new case, and the fish, and its reeds, were transferred. It was exhibited under the title, *A Fishy Mystery*, and the magazine cuttings relating to it were shown with it.

In 1979, Mr. Alwyne Wheeler, of the British Museum (Natural History), published a book, *The Tidal Thames*, referring to all the well-known fish that had been caught in the Thames. At the time, however, he did not know of the Weybridge Salmon. Having learnt of it he came to visit the museum, and has now duly pronounced it to be a salmon, that, in spite of the Thames pollution, could well have migrated upstream to Weybridge.

His findings on the fish were published in *The London Naturalist* in 1980. The museum now proudly exhibits the fish, and also sells re-prints of Mr. Wheeler's article for 20p. Anyone wishing to know more details of this remarkable fish is recommended to read it.

Weybridge Museum will be open during August from 2 p.m.-5 p.m. each weekday and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2 p.m.-5 p.m. on Saturdays. The main gallery of the museum will be closed, however, during September, October and November for a complete refurbishing and the construction of a new natural history gallery.

During this period, old photographs of the district and photographs of museum specimens on the recently-reddecorated stairs, together with the archaeology gallery in the museum vestibule, will be open.

The salmon will also be on display.

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