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Title: Redisplaying the Rotunda Museum

Author(s): Watts, W.

Source: Watts, W. (2006). Redisplaying the Rotunda Museum. *NatSCA News, Issue 9*, 30 - 31.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/250>

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broken down. Moving forward to the development of DC2 and the permanent galleries, the museum has set up half-time secondments whereby staff members from science work in the offices of the programme and exhibition development teams. This has the advantage that, throughout the development of the DC2 public programme and the future permanent galleries, the interpretation, learning and design teams will have direct daily access to representatives from science. Even at this early stage in this work, these secondees are shaping our thinking about the practicalities of the museum's aspirations. They are able to give us a picture of where greater specimen access may cause problems, and we are able to explore solutions at an on-the-ground level rather than going up and down the various hierarchies (which is a genuine relief in a organisation of over 900 people).

Through our daily contact with these curators, we are exploring questions such as:

- If we want to place more of the collections in the galleries and provide access for the public, how can we continue to ensure access for research?
- How can we enrich the information recorded with the specimens to capture data that may be useful in the public domain as well as in the scientific?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current collection when it comes to suitability for display? We have a commitment to make more of the collections accessible, but the vast majority of the 70 million specimens were never intended for display. In the DC, this is not a problem as we are explicitly providing access to research collections, and the mode of storage is explained from the outset. In our permanent galleries, the display-quality of the specimens becomes more significant.

### Conclusion

We are not for a moment suggesting that the Natural History Museum is the only organisation exploring these possibilities, nor that we have it entirely right. Our intention in preparing this paper has been to give a flavour of what is a very exciting time for the museum. The DC project is the largest the NHM has embarked on since the opening of the Waterhouse building in 1881, and the Life Galleries have been largely untouched since 1989. I hope we have given a sense of the fact that these physical changes in the museum parallel some key philosophical directions that we, the government, our funders and many of our fellow museums are also exploring.

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### **Will Watts, Dinosaur Coast Project Officer, Scarborough Museums & Gallery** **Redisplaying the Rotunda Museum**

*'The Rotunda Museum is unique. It is perhaps the only museum whose design, original displays and even the stone of which it is built combined to express the logic of William Smith's ideas and the, then, brand new science of geology' (Professor Simon Knell, University of Leicester). The Rotunda Museum in Scarborough first opened in 1829 and over 175 years later it is the subject of a £4million redevelopment scheme due for completion in 2007. This paper will explain the rationale for the redisplay of the Rotunda Museum. How we plan to present Smith's ideas, in the context of the aspirations and diverse interests of the Scarborough Philosophical Society and its Museum, return the Museum to the cutting edge of science through the 'Shell Geology Now' gallery and provide the gateway to the wider geological heritage of the Yorkshire Coast through the Dinosaur Coast Visitor Centre.*

In 1827 a meeting was held in Scarborough to discuss the possible formation of a philosophical society and the building of a museum. Attendees at this meeting included Thomas Hinderwell a local natural historian and holder of large, varied and important collections from the area. Also present was William Smith, the 'father of English Geology' recently employed by Lord Derwent at the nearby Hackness estate as land steward.

Two years later in August 1829 the dream of a Scarborough based philosophical society with its own museum was realised with the opening of the Rotunda Museum, built to designs suggested by William Smith who also acted as foreman of works. The museum housed the collections of Hinderwell and other local collectors and covered a huge range of subjects from geology and natural history, through ethnography to social history, a truly cross subject display. Although the museum originally featured geology in pride of place this soon changed as other subjects became more prominent, including natural history and archaeology. These changes in interest coupled with the expansion of the museum through the addition of the two

wings in the 1850's saw the geology redisplayed in one of the lower galleries, no longer using Smith's concept of sloping shelves holding objects to mirror their natural 'stratigraphic' position in the field.

By the 1950's the museum had passed into the ownership of the local authority and all the geology and natural history was transferred to the recently opened Wood End Museum. The Rotunda now focused on social history and archaeology up until 2005. Forming part of Scarborough Museums & Gallery Service (along with Wood End Museum and Scarborough Art Gallery) the Rotunda has long been recognised as being of international importance and unique to Scarborough but local authority resources did not allow this importance to be realised.

During the 1990's the lack of resources to develop new exhibitions led the service under Dr Jane Mee to look at different ways of giving existing and new audiences access to the collections. These outreach projects included the Dinosaur Coast, run in partnership with Whitby Museum, North York Moors National Park Authority, English Nature, MLA Yorkshire (and its predecessors) and funded by both the ERDF and the HLF. The Dinosaur Coast project has delivered over 30,000 usages over its first 6 years, a figure that makes a substantial contribution to overall service visitor figures. The original aim of the project was to make more use of the geology collections held by Whitby and Scarborough, the ultimate reward of the project has been the establishment of a permanent geologist of the museum staff, and a demonstration that geology and natural history can be popular to visitors.

Following a review of service provision in the 2000's a decision was taken to transfer the operation of the museums & gallery service to an independent museums trust, at the same time plans to redevelop all the sites were drawn up. Building not only on its unique history but also on the success of the Dinosaur Coast outreach project it was agreed that the Rotunda should be redeveloped to reflect its origin and links to Smith, to highlight current geological research on the coast and to act as a gateway for visitors to the coast.

The total cost of this project will be circa £4million, with funding secured from the HLF (£2m), Yorkshire Forward (£500k), Shell (£300k), various other corporate sponsors and individual donations the museum closed in January 2006 and building work is expected to begin in August 2006. The museum consists of three main galleries (none of which are big) and each gallery will have a unique and challenging role to play.

The Gateway to the Dinosaur Coast Gallery will present visitors with a physical installation representing the coast, highlighting stories relating to the area, showing how the geology underpins these stories and giving people the knowledge and confidence to go out onto the coast to explore for themselves, hopefully then returning to the museum to follow up their discoveries. An exciting space using physical interactives, fossil identification workstations and toddler play stations.

Shell Geology Now is the second of the ground floor galleries and will showcase current geological research on the coast, including dinosaur footprints, coastal erosion and hydrocarbons exploration. This space will have a modern laboratory feeling and will attempt to highlight the relevance of geology to everyday life. The design team is working with the academic researchers in these fields to ensure the displays reflect the latest thinking in these areas, in return the museum showcases the work of the various institutions we are working with.

The final gallery and arguably the most important (certainly the most challenging) is the Rotunda gallery. The original 1829 circular gallery with its grade two listed 1850's cases will tell the story of William Smith, Scarborough in the 1830's, the early Scarborough Philosophical Society, the characters involved and much more, all underpinned by blocks of geology displayed as suggested by Smith on sloping shelves. This hugely challenging brief is being met by the Scarborough Museum team along with Event Communications Ltd the designers for the project. When completed the gallery will reflect the original intentions of the museum and display material from across the broad spectrum of the Scarborough collections.

The finished museum will provide a unique experience for the visitor that builds on (in this author's opinion) the three key elements for a successful museum, real people; the visitors and staff, real objects; over 1000 of them will be displayed, and real places; an awe inspiring 175 year old museum located yards from the stunning Dinosaur Coast.