University Geology Museum Designated Collection of Outstanding Importance

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The Lapworth Museum of Geology at the University of Birmingham has been designated as a collection of outstanding national and international significance by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

The museum, which is based in the University's College of Life and Environmental Sciences, dates back to the 1880s and is one of the oldest specialist geological museums in Europe. It is home to more than 250,000 specimens, ranging from amber to giant reptiles as well as early scientific instruments, geological maps and photographs and archaeological artefacts.

Named after Charles Lapworth, the University's first Professor of Geology, the collection brings together internationally important specimens and unique local collections to explain the history of the earth at a global and regional level. Among the best known of the artefacts is the 'Dudley Bug' from the Wren's locality in Dudley which contains a preserved, 425 million year old tropical reef environment. The Dudley Bug is a trilobite – these were sold by quarrymen and miners in the area, in order to help supplement their wages.

Other pieces include a beautifully drawn scene of mining in the Black Country during the nineteenth century. This is part of an archive of Staffordshire mining preserved in the Lapworth Museum Archive and is very accurate in its depiction of mining methods and equipment, and of great importance to historians and industrial archaeologists.

The Shotton collection D-Day landing maps are part of a unique archive, which demonstrate how military geology was applied to the preparations for the D-Day landings on the Normandy beaches and the advance across north west Europe. Professor Shotton was Head of the Department of Geology and later Vice Principal at Birmingham. The maps record in great detail the characteristics of the beaches and the sediment, so that large numbers of personnel and vehicles landing did not become bogged down and trapped on the shore.

Professor Paul Smith, Professor of Palaeobiology and Director of the Lapworth Museum says, 'We are delighted that the museum has been recognised as a collection of national and international significance, it is an essential building block in making the Lapworth more accessible to the public. We would like the museum to be used not only as a resource for those with an interest in geology and palaeontology, but also as a centre for understanding environmental change through time.'

As part of the celebration to mark the new status of the Lapworth Museum, Dr Iain Stewart of BBC 2's programmes 'Earth: The Power of the Planet' and 'Earth: The Climate Wars' will be delivering a lecture entitled 'Un-Natural Hazards: The Cultural Geology of Risk'. The lecture takes place in the Haworth Lecture Theatre at 5pm on Monday 20 October, is free and open to the public.

Ends

Notes to Editors

The Lapworth Museum is located in the Aston Webb Building at the University of Birmingham. Opening times: Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm and Saturday and Sunday 2 – 5pm. Admission is free.

Visit the **website (http://www.lapworth.bham.ac.uk/)**

Education

The museum provides for school, college adult education and community groups.

Events

The Lapworth Lectures take place on evenings during University term time. These lectures are on a wide range of geological subjects aimed at students, amateur enthusiasts, and the general public.

Identifications

The museum provides a free identification service for geological items.

For further information

Kate Chapple, Press Officer, University of Birmingham, tel 0121 414 2772 or 07789 921164.

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