Natural History archive secures Heritage Lottery



Painting of a Redwing by Thomas Bewick

The much needed funds will enable the local charity to significantly improve the long-term management, preservation and access to their internationally important collection of 16,000 artworks, photographs, artefacts, letters and diaries which are stored at the Great North Museum: Hancock in Newcastle. The project will also engage schools and groups of young people in the archive and its fascinating stories.

The society will be employing a part-time archivist and will also be recruiting volunteers to help them with the project. The collection includes original artwork by Thomas Bewick, the Northumbrian born wood engraver, and the project will make this available online for the first time.

June Holmes, who has helped care for the collection on a voluntary basis for nearly 20 years, said: “We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given this grant, which will enable us to properly care for the collection and make it available to the public for them to enjoy and research. There is lots of captivating history in the archive and we can’t wait to share it through this project.”

The archive is used by researchers, academics, authors, artists, students and by people worldwide and includes material from other famous naturalists including John Hancock who was behind the building of the Hancock Museum and Abel Chapman who helped save the Spanish Ibex from extinction. The collection also includes letters from Jean-

Francois Champollion which shed light on the work of the man celebrated as the founding father of Egyptology.

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: “The Natural History Society of Northumbria is one of the oldest natural history societies in the country and its collections dating back to the 18th century are bursting with stories and pictures which can connect people to their natural heritage – both locally and further afield. We’re delighted to support the society to secure the future of its archive and inspire the natural scientists of the future.”

Notes to editors

The Natural History Society of Northumbria

Established in 1829, the Natural History Society of Northumbria is one of the oldest natural history societies in the country.

The society owns the Great North Museum: Hancock and its many varied collections but lease them to the University of Newcastle on whose behalf they are administered by Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums.

It maintains the best natural history library in the region and an important archive and manage Gosforth Park Nature Reserve in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The society focuses on the study of the natural sciences, providing talks, field outings and education courses and publishing scientific papers and *The Birds on the Farne Islands*. The society is also involved in carrying out nature conservation and research, mainly on its nature reserve and through the Bird Ringing Group.

Most of this work is undertaken by members on a voluntary basis. It is a membership society and people pay an annual subscription to become a member. There are around 1,100 members.

The society was registered as a UK charity in 1963, charity number 526770, and its aims include promoting and encouraging the study of natural history, protecting the flora and fauna in the North-East of England, and caring for and extending its library and collections at the Great North Museum: Hancock.

For more information visit the Natural History Society of Northumbria website.