Museum of Zoology reopens thanks to mammoth volunteer effort!

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This week Sir David Attenborough will officially open the Museum of Zoology after a five-year renovation supported by National Lottery players.

Visitors can experience the museum at the Zoology Live! Festival, a weekend of free activities on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 June.

We met some of the project volunteer team, who told us how they took part in the redevelopment and how it affected them.

Bringing the museum into the 21st century

Zoology is the study of animals and the Cambridge museum explores stories of conservation, extinction, evolution and discovery.

A National Lottery grant of £1.96million helped the museum revamp its displays, create an entrance hall displaying its fin whale skeleton, and develop a learning programme to inspire a new generation of visitors.

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>
> Charis, museum volunteer

The museum has about two million specimens in its collections. Items on display include one of the world's most complete dodo skeletons and an elephant that had a starring role in '2001: A Space Odyssey'.

Charis, from volunteer to full-time job

An outstanding team of volunteers was instrumental in packing the collections and reorganising them into new purpose-built storerooms.

Charis Millett secured a job with the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge after acting as a volunteer and then Museum Technician at the Museum of Zoology.

> "I think it's amazing. There's stuff here that no one else is going to see anywhere in the world."
>
> Alex, museum apprentice

Charis, says: "No two objects are the same, so it was a really good way of testing your mettle about how you work round problems. For me it was invaluable, because what I did at Zoology is very similar to what I do now in my job. I probably wouldn't have got the job I am in now.

“I used to come to this museum a lot when I was younger and I remember it was kind of a bit of a secret to get to it. Now it’s been redone, it’s a lot more accessible for everyone. I think it looks a lot more modern.”

Alex, award-winning apprentice

Alex Tomkins joined the project as an apprentice and the apprenticeship gave him valuable experience of the world of work. He won a Volunteer Management award for his work and now works at Cancer Research UK.

Alex says: “I was nominated for the award because I worked with a team of volunteers five days a week leading them in the redevelopment. I think I was the youngest person who won it. That felt good! I was up against people that had way more experience and had been in museums longer than me."

About the new museum, he says: “I think it’s amazing. There’s stuff here that no one else is going to see anywhere in the world.”



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seum of zoology

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