EXPLORE KING’S CURIOSITIES

On the 18th of April a new exhibition space for the University of Aberdeen’s museum collections opened its doors at 17 High Street, opposite King’s College Chapel at the heart of Old Aberdeen.

King’s Museum is now open to all, offering a contemplative and compact space on campus where the whole community can explore a selection of intriguing cultural treasures from the University’s seven museum sites. More than ever, this is a space which welcomes everybody. We invite you to visit and view its inaugural exhibition, ‘100 Curiosities’, which showcases an eclectic selection of fascinating artefacts chosen by 100 supporters. See pages 2-3 for more Museum News.

With special thanks for articles to HeadLines (Library & Historic Collections online magazine, available at www.abdn.ac.uk/library/ezine/) and the University of Aberdeen Communications Team.

EVENTS
At a Glance
(see inside for details)

♦ ‘100 Curiosities’ Exhibition
April – May
King’s Museum,
17 High St, King’s College Campus, Old Aberdeen

♦ Word Festival
13th-15th May
Various events and venues
(see pg. 5 for details of Library and Special Collections events)

♦ Night at the Museum
Sat. 14th May, 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm
King’s Museum (as above)

♦ Friends’ AGM
Thu. 26th May, 7:00pm
Old Senate Room
King’s College Campus, Old Aberdeen
followed directly by:

♦ Judging a book by its cover: what bindings can tell us about books
Presented by Jane Pirie, 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm

♦ Visit to Aboyne and Deeside Festival
23rd July, (With AU Alumni Association: further details on pg. 9)
Although this is Scotland’s newest museum, it is also in a sense the oldest, having its origins in a museum collection in existence in King’s College in 1727. By the end of the eighteenth century King’s College and Marischal College both had established museums, with their purpose-built galleries forming an important part of the nineteenth century buildings of the colleges. The King’s College museum of that period was diagonally opposite where the new museum is today, forming part of the west front of the building. Nowadays the old museum building houses the Divinity library, complete with glazed display cases now used as book shelves.

Today, the University of Aberdeen’s museums are among the largest and most important in Scotland, having been awarded the status of a ‘Recognised Collection of National Significance’. The collections reflect the activities of generations of students, staff, and friends of King’s College, Marischal College and University throughout its history. They include hundreds of thousands of specimens collected as a result of scientific research, such as those in the geology, anatomy, pathology, herbarium and zoology collections, many of which are on show in the university’s Zoology Museum. Likewise, scientific instruments have been preserved, ranging from late 18th century demonstration apparatus made by Professor Patrick Copland to those associated with 20th century electronics research. Other items reflect the interest that scholars had in local history and natural history, alongside collections amassed by those who travelled much more widely. Among these are the collections of medical graduate Robert Wilson who travelled in Egypt and the Near East in the early 19th century, and those of another medical student, William MacGregor, who rose to become colonial governor of Fiji, New Guinea, Nigeria, Newfoundland and Queensland. He donated his collections to the university in the hope of encouraging other students to be equally adventurous, declaring that there was ‘more to the world than ‘Aberdeen and twal’ mile roon’.

As King’s Museum will be far too small to show more than a minuscule fraction of these collections, it will instead have a programme of exhibitions that will change every few months. This will also enable students and university staff to collaborate with museum professionals to curate exhibitions that will bring the results of recent research to a public audience. With an educational programme for schools, the museum’s evening lecture series and other events such as the annual ‘Night at the Museum’, the museum will become a place where objects and ideas can be explored in many ways that would have been inconceivable to those who have collected and curated the collection over the past centuries. We hope that the museum will become a friendly place, where passers-by – students, staff, tourists, anyone - can drop in for a break and look at something interesting; a place of stimulation and reflection in the middle of the busy campus.

By Neil Curtis, Head of Museums
The ‘100 Curiosities’ exhibition will be open throughout May at King’s Museum.

Mon: 9:30am - 4.30pm  
Tue: 9.30am - 7.30pm  
Wed: 9.30am - 4.30pm  
Thu: 9.30am - 4.30pm  
Fri: 9.30am - 4.30pm  
Saturday: 11am - 4pm

The opening exhibition is inspired by the ‘History of the World in 100 objects’ project of the British Museum and BBC, but also by the title of an early 19th century catalogue of ‘the principal curiosities natural and artificial preserved in the museum’ at Marischal College.

Rather than being selected by a single curator, this exhibition has relied on a hundred of its friends to select the objects displayed. Each person has chosen an object that has a personal resonance and has written a caption of 100 words to explain its significance. Contributors include scholars who have selected an object that relates to their own research, such as a historian who chose a Renaissance coin minted in Aberdeen; a zoologist who picked a set of shark jaws; and a geologist who chose a trilobite fossil. The importance of working across disciplines is seen in a number of cases: for example a geologist and a historian jointly selected a fossil fish collected by the 19th century geologist Hugh Miller, and his publication about the fossil, entitled ‘The Old Red Sandstone’. Others have shown different ways of relating to objects, including the designer who has chosen some examples of wooden typefaces and the father who chose a coffee pot, reflecting on the necessity for caffeine when raising a small child.

Not all have found a prose caption to be the only way of interpreting an object. A former artist-in-residence has displayed a painting alongside a Maori treasure box which was its inspiration, while other labels read more like short poems. The connections between some objects and the people who selected them are not immediately obvious, such as a postgraduate student who picked an Aberdeen-made cheese dish, a primary school class who chose a 17th century silver beaker, a local resident who chose a wood-working tool and an author who chose a prehistoric flint. To find out why, you will have to visit the exhibition!

This is a contemporary version of the Early Modern idea of a ‘cabinet of curiosities’, but instead of being open only to a privileged few, the exhibition is the creation of a range of people with different perspectives. It hopes to challenge the idea of curiosity by exploring how objects can inspire wonder, imagination and personal meanings. As visitors look at objects from many times and places, they will come to understand more about themselves and their own culture as much as gaining an insight into the lives of other people.

By Neil Curtis, Head of Museums

MAIR ABOOT MUSEUMS IN AAL AIBURDEEN

Wendy Pirie, Head of Administration and Planning, gives a Doric digest of museum news:

“Foo’r yi deein? Noo, ah wis winnierin if yi kent thit wiv a new museum on I High Street? It’s in I aal Clydesdale Bunk, jis across I road fae Kings, in it’s caad Kings Museum. It’s afa graan – nae big mind you – afa bit afa bonny. Yi see wi hiv a greit big museum it Marischal College bit et’s bin shut for twa eers or mair see - ins it i Cooncil is taakin owter maist o it fir ther new offices. Wee aa I bildin work, ere wis nae wai it quid bide opin so naebiddy his bin ere fir ages. Neil, the boss mannie, wis afa pit oot it naebody quid see aa I afa rare stuff it wi hiv, in ony wy, he wis aye hopin it he’d git a shottie it hae - in somewye in Aal Aiburdeen, aside a i students, fir an “on-campus resource” it wid maak it easier fir fowk tae git richt in aboot tae aaa o I treasures. So aats fit I first show’s aaa aboot – ets caad 100 Curiostes, in et his a richt conglomeration o rare things.

Neil, the boss-mannie, wis afa pit oot it naebody quid see aa I afa rare stuff it wi hiv, in ony wy, he wis aye hopin it he’d git a shottie it hae - in somewye in Aal Aiburdeen, aside a i students, fir an “on-campus resource” it wid maak it easier fir fowk tae git richt in aboot tae aaa o I treasures. So aats fit I first show’s aaa aboot – ets caad 100 Curiostes, in et his a richt conglomeration o rare things.

In annither thing, Neil’s bin workin wee some students in laatin im Curate thir ain exhibitions: nae jist wee I 3-D stuff, bit thiv bin workin wi archival papers its aboot I same stuff in aaa, so aats fit the neest exhibition’ll be. Nae aabiddy gits tae dee aaat kin o thing in ither places, so wir students is fair chuffed thit they can. Noo if yir wantin tae ken mair aboot wir museums, yi quid hae a look it wir website it ess address www.abdn.ac.uk/museums/ Or if yir needin ti hae a news, jist gees a phone!”

Tel: +44(0)1224 274301
In late March the UK’s largest bus and rail operator, FirstGroup, announced that it has provided a generous £50k worth of funding for the construction of the University of Aberdeen’s new library.

The news marks the third major charitable announcement from FirstGroup this year. In January it pledged £100k toward the construction of the proposed Aberdeen Aquatic Centre. Meanwhile, last month the company revealed that it has raised £4m in cash and kind for its charity partners, Save the Children, over the last four years.

Former Chief Executive of FirstGroup and current Senior Governor at the University of Aberdeen, Sir Moir Lockhead, joined Professor Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, at the site of the library this morning where construction has reached a new milestone with the completion of the building’s striking front elevation.

Sir Moir said: “The new building promises to be the finest library facility in the UK. I am proud that FirstGroup is part of that, proud too that the University of Aberdeen is investing in world class facilities.”

He continued: “Aberdeen is FirstGroup’s home - the city has supported us as we’ve grown to become the UK’s largest transport operator and a global leader. Being able to support projects such as the new library and the proposed aquatic centre is a privilege and allows us to give something back to the city.”

Professor Diamond, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, said: “The new library has been designed to meet not only the needs of students but the wider community with a flexible range of uses accommodating everything from quiet individual study through to group and seminar work, exhibition and events.

“We are grateful for the donation from FirstGroup as the library reaches another significant milestone. The library is an iconic building for Aberdeen and will provide significant public access to our rare historic collections.”

First’s £50k contribution will support the creation of a quiet study area on the third floor, offering fantastic views of Aberdeen, and is expected to be one of the most frequently used areas of the library.
SPREAD THE WORD!

There’s another full and fascinating programme of events for the University’s annual Writers’ Festival, 13th-15th of May. For more details pick up a brochure around campus or from Aberdeen Box Office or look online at www.abdn.ac.uk/word.

Here are some highlights featuring our collections, all of which are open to all, and FREE:

Images of North
King’s College Centre, King’s College
A permanent display of paintings of Scotland and the Arctic, Inuit sculptures and objects relating to life in the Arctic.

Gray Stuff
Old Town House, throughout May
An exhibition of drawings and other works by Scottish literary legend Alasdair Gray. Real and Imagined World, a print by RSA exhibited artist Victoria Crowe will also be one show, and is for sale, with proceeds to go to supporting the new Library.

‘Create your own Curiosity’ Workshops
14th May 12pm-2pm, & 3pm-5pm (all ages), 7pm-9pm (adults only) King’s Museum. Booking essential.
As part of the night at the museum event, the museum will host workshops, inviting you to make your own items to display in the cabinet of curiosities!

Night at the Museum
14th May 6pm-10pm, Zoology Museum, King’s Museum and other venues
The University will celebrate its museums with a special night-time opening. Email museum.abdn.ac.uk for details.

400 YEARS OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

On Tuesday 1 March, Professor Alister McGrath delivered the first in a series of lectures to mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Bible. Commissioned by King James I, this Authorised Version, as it is sometimes known, was published in 1611, and has had a profound and widespread influence on the English language and on British society and culture over the last four centuries. This lecture series, comprising six lectures throughout March, April and May, aims to honour and commemorate this seminal text while placing it in its wider context.

Professor McGrath is Head of the Centre for Theology, Religion and Culture at King's College London, and is no stranger to the University of Aberdeen, having delivered the Gifford Lectures in 2009. He is a prodigious author of many leading texts, including In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible (Doubleday, 2001). Subsequent lectures have been given by Dr Eyal Poleg and Professor David Fergusson of the University of Edinburgh, Professor Naomi Tadmor of Lancaster University, Professor Adrian Thatcher of the University of Exeter, and Professor Gordon Campbell of the University of Leicester. For full details of the programme please visit www.abdn.ac.uk/king-james-bible.

Aberdeen holds several early editions of the Authorised King James Version in its Special Collections. The King James Bible was originally printed solely by Robert Barker, the King’s Printer, as a large folio designed for public use in churches, but smaller formats followed. We hold a particularly fine quarto copy from 1613 from Barker’s press. The ornate title page features a heart-shaped text panel flanked by the four Gospel writers, one on each corner. They are bordered by crests representing the twelve tribes of Israel on the left, and by depictions of the twelve Apostles on the right. In common with other early editions, the main text is printed in two columns and characterised by a black letter typeface. This Bible belonged to Dr James Melvin (1795-1853), graduate of Marischal College, a distinguished Latinist and rector of Old Aberdeen’s grammar school. It was presented to the University Library by its then-librarian, W. Douglas Simpson, in 1957.

By Jo George, Assistant College Registrar, College of Arts and Social Sciences and Keith O’Sullivan, Senior Rare Books Librarian
Family historians flocked to the February Friends of Aberdeen University Library talk, held in the Old Senate Room, to learn about the eclectic collections on offer for genealogical research. Our resident expert Andrew MacGregor, Deputy Archivist, gave a lively and informative overview of the wealth of fascinating and often surprising documents available from the University’s 500-plus years of hoarded history, followed by the chance to leaf through a selection of original documents from our impressive archives.

The University’s collections are especially strong in five main areas: University Records, Business Collections, Family and Estate Records, Institutional Records and Local Printed Material. These collections offer huge potential for researching your roots. Why not spend an afternoon spotting family faces in the University’s sports team photos from the 1870s; leafing through local industry records, such as P&O Ferries’ salary books, to see how much your great-grandfather earned; browsing the records of notable local estates like Duff House, to see what servants there were up to in the 1760s; finding baptisms, marriages and burials in local church records, or reading about your news-worthy relatives in local papers from centuries gone by? Our archives are open to everyone!

In addition to our printed documents, there is an increasing number of instantly searchable archives now available online. Special Libraries and Archives have set up the In Memoriam database to commemorate staff, students and alumni of the University who laid down their lives during the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. If you have any stories or additional biographical information to add, particularly images of the servicemen who died in WW2, then please do get in touch with Deputy Archivist Andrew MacGregor to add your contribution to our records. Also, two significant digitisation projects are underway for the George Washington Wilson Photographic Collection and Harbour Board Collection, which will help bring the lives and landscapes of the past to life in extraordinary detail. For more information about online archives look online at www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/Online_collect.shtml, or to get started in the search for your own family history simply request a free directory of resources for family history research and start tracing the routes to your own roots.

Routes to your North East Roots: Researching Family History in Aberdeen City and Shire is available from libraries, family history centres and VisitScotland tourist information centres, or contact Andrew MacGregor on 01224 272972. For even more help and information, new webpages will be available from the 16th May at www.northeastscotlandroots.com/

By Georgia Brooker, Friends’ News Editor

DE-MYSTIFYING FAMILY HISTORY

ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC JOURNALS FOR ALL

The last decade has seen a phenomenal shift in the delivery of information from print to electronic format, especially in the area of journals. This has helped academic libraries save space by removing duplicated print runs from the shelves. However, it has disadvantaged members of the public as they have been unable to access the electronic version due to licensing restrictions imposed by the database providers. This is gradually changing and we can now offer a selection of our databases to non-members of the university.

We are among the first in Scotland to offer a Walk-in Users’ Service. From a dedicated computer in Queen Mother Library, members of the public, school pupils, retired staff and students from other universities can now access databases like JSTOR, Science Direct and many other major academic publishers. Books from the 15th century onwards, the 19th century Press & Journal, parliamentary papers and international bibliographies are now accessible to anyone who registers for this free service. Users can book an hour’s slot in advance and download articles onto a USB memory stick or other data storage device. The service is available to within 1 hour of the library closing, 7 days a week.

By Gillian Dawson, Information Consultant
THE MYSTERY OF THE MONEY AND THE MISSING RAILINGS

CAN YOU HELP US SOLVE THIS TRANSATLANTIC PUZZLE?

Chris Banks, the University Librarian, recently received a query from America which set off a train of research within Library and Historic Collections. Jeff Schneider, a member of the International Bank Note Society, is an avid collector of world paper money. In his collection he has three Scottish notes which feature King’s College. The three notes are dated 1947, 1955 and 1961. The eagle eyed collector noticed that the earliest image from 1947 showed King’s College with railings at the front but the later two did not. Mr Schneider had searched the internet for images of King’s College with railings but had been unable to find any. His next step was to contact Chris to see if she could shed any light on the matter.

Chris forwarded the query to Special Libraries and Archives where Michelle Gait, Reading Room Manager, took up the challenge. She searched the recently digitised George Washington Wilson Photographic archive and managed to locate several images which depicted King’s College with the railings using the digital search tool. These images, two dating most likely from, or before, the 1870s, and a third listed in a later catalogue, show quite a tall railing extending the length of the lawn at King's College along in front of the chapel and the Divinity buildings to the right of the archway. Like the railings, the Professor's House on the lawn now also no longer exists.

The assumption of course is that the railings were removed during World War 2 to reuse the metal as part of the war effort, along with railings from throughout the UK. The 1947 North of Scotland Bank note showing railings is part of a series which started in 1938, whilst the 1955 Clydesdale & North of Scotland Bank note is part of a series first produced in 1950. Any pictures used for the 1938 issue would have been pre-war whilst the engravings used for the other two would probably have been post-war. Unfortunately it hasn’t been possible to trace any photographs taken during the war period which might have shown exactly when the railings were removed.

In his communication with us Mr Schneider referred to a book by James Douglas entitled Scottish Banknotes (London: S. Gibbons Publications, 1975). We were pleased to discover that we have this book in our own library collection (on Floor 1, Queen Mother Library at 33253 Dou s), and it has a wealth of information on the development and design of Scottish banknotes. Mr Schneider himself wrote an article on collecting Scottish banknotes, "Oh Those Beautiful Scotties", published in 2005 in the Journal of the International Bank Note Society, vol. 44 (1). The article title refers to a quote from the 1939 American movie "Gunga Din".

Mr Schneider would be delighted to hear if anyone has photographs of King’s in the immediate pre-war era which might show the existence of the railings then. If you are able to help please contact Special Libraries on Tel: +44 (0)1224 272598.

By Lin Masson, Senior Information Assistant, Taylor Library
HELP REBUILD A LIBRARY

Imagine the destruction of an entire national/university library – two million books and 6000 valuable rare items and documents going up in smoke. That is precisely what happened on 26th August 1992 in Sarajevo when, following shelling by first the Yugoslav and then the Serbian armies, a fire destroyed the national and university library of Sarajevo and the bulk of their collection.

An initiative is now underway to rebuild the library. The request to individuals and libraries is modest: send two books.

In their words:
-the first book you send us to be a contemporary publication in one of the world languages, related to common knowledge in social or natural science (Philosophy, Law, Medicine, Literature etc...), which can benefit our students in many ways (please see the list of suggestions on our webpage)

-the second book to be in your own language, related to your city, culture, history, geography, architecture etc... so that our library users can benefit from this multilingual and intercultural exchange.

For further details of the books4vijecnica appeal see their website at www.books4vijecnica.com/.

By Chris Banks, University Librarian and Director of Library and Historic Collections

THE COLLECTION OF CATHERINE IRVINE GAVIN

“Recently I completed upgrading the catalogue records for a collection of novels written by Catherine Irvine Gavin, held at Special Libraries and Archives. As many of the cover illustrations depicted buxom heroines in ruffled gowns I wondered how these novels, which at first glance bore similarities to bodice-rippers, had come to be in the university’s holdings.

I imagined their creator to be a Barbara Cartland-esque writer of romantic fiction and was intrigued to learn how wrong my assumptions had been. Catherine Gavin may have written historical sagas which came packaged as romantic epics but her work drew on a background of academic excellence and professional achievement strongly linked to the University of Aberdeen.

From Fraserburgh, Catherine Gavin (1907-1999) began her studies at the university at 16, graduating M.A. in History and English literature in 1928 and subsequently Ph.D. in French History in 1931. She was active in numerous student organisations such as the Dramatic Society, The Debater, and The Literary Society and was well-known as a public speaker, raising the profile of female students within the university community. She was a vocal member of the Unionist Association and this political activity was notable at a time when women’s suffrage remained a contentious issue. After graduation, Catherine Gavin held posts with the Scottish Unionist Association and stood as a candidate for parliament at the age of 24. Although she was unsuccessful at election, her campaign skills were praised and her youth and gender was frequently the subject of comment.

Dr Gavin returned to the university as an assistant in History in 1932-1934 and 1941-43, finally leaving to pursue a distinguished career in journalism. This saw her become the first women leader writer at a London publication before putting her expertise in French history and politics to great use as a British war correspondent in Paris. Present at the German surrender at Rheims in May 1945, Dr Gavin was decorated for her contribution to the war effort.

After marriage to an American man, she moved to the US and wrote several historical novels based on her deep knowledge of European history. Catherine Gavin maintained a life-long interest in the university. She was honoured with a D.Litt and served as a member of the Committee of the University Development Trust. A room in the King’s College Conference centre bears her name and it is appropriate that her fascinating career and connection to this institution is commemorated.”

By Mairi Henderson, Cataloguer
The Alumnus Association provides a programme of academic and cultural talks and visits, and supports the University and its students in a range of ways: helping graduates to keep in touch with the University. Support; providing financial support for particular projects (with recent help for the production of a CD of music by the King’s College Chapel, and the production of a history of the University’s archive and library collections); arranging and participating in social events for students, and helping to convey to the University’s formal bodies the views of students, on their perceptions of the University and the city.

Forthcoming events include, on 1 May, a visit to the Cowdray Hall to hear performances by the finalists in the Ogston Music Prize; on 18 May, a visit to the dairy at Mackie’s of Scotland - famous for it’s ice-cream! - hosted by Maitland Mackie; and on 23 July, a visit to the Aboyne and Deeside Festival to attend a performance of renowned Irish music and dance group “Absolutely Legless”, with optional pre-performance supper.

The Association is delighted to welcome to its events visitors who may wish to consider membership but who would like to attend one or two events before making a commitment.

For more information about these and other planned events, contact Association Secretary Alan Towns at 01224 589812 or at abalas@btinternet.com, and for information about membership of the Association see the University website www.abdnalumni.org.

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The University of Aberdeen has made available online over 35,000 high resolution digital versions of images originally taken during the latter half of the nineteenth century by the Aberdeen photographic firm George Washington Wilson & Co*. The collection was first digitised in the mid-1990s, but advances in web delivery since then have allowed these high resolution images to be made available online for the first time.

The extraordinary benefit of this digital repository, which has recently been featured extensively in local and national press, is that it is now possible to zoom in to each high resolution image and spot never-before-seen details, opening up a plethora of possibilities for research into family history and social change. It’s possible to pick out individual faces, street signs, window displays, and much more.

Born in the North East of Scotland, George Washington Wilson (1823-93), became established in Aberdeen in the 1850s as an 'artist and photographer'. Wilson’s camera ranged all over Britain and the colonial townships of South Africa and Australia, as well as the western Mediterranean.

The new online George Washington Wilson collection is part of an ongoing enhancement of access to the Library’s extensive digital image resources. The database will soon be enriched by the addition of the Aberdeen Harbour Board Photographic Collection, which contains around 6,000 images from the 1880s to the 1930s.

*The stock of G. W. Wilson & Co. was auctioned off in 1908. The plates passed into the possession of Fred Hardie, and then to the photographer, Archibald J. B. Strachan, who, on moving to new and smaller business premises in 1954, offered them to the University Library. The University is pleased to acknowledge the foresight and beneficence of Mr Strachan.

Thanks to Mary Sabiston, Project Assistant - Photographic Collections for article updates
The Friends have given generous assistance to the purchase of two acquisitions of strong local interest.

Funding was granted in the last financial year, before Special Libraries and Archives begin the move to our accommodation in the new building.

Firstly, we were able to buy a collection of Aberdeen book sales catalogues, dating from 1881 to 1896. The collection consists of some 36 octavo-sized catalogues, mostly printed by the Aberdeen auctioneer Alexander Brown. It was formed by one J. N. Duncan, of the People’s Journal, who seems to have attended most if not all of the sales, noting many prices. It is likely that the catalogues cover just about every book auction held in Aberdeen over a period of fifteen years. The value of this collection lies in both its potential for provenance research and, more broadly, the picture it offers of book-trade activity in Aberdeen in the late-Victorian period.

Secondly, the Friends contributed two thirds of the cost towards a copy of Xantippe, or ‘the Scolding Wife’ (1724). The poem is a satire concerning itself with the marital difficulties encountered by young Scottish women. Authorship has been attributed to William Forbes of Disblair, who may have hailed from Aberdeen. This is an extremely rare first edition: Aberdeen holds a copy of Forbes’s anti-Union satire, A pill for pork-eaters (1705), but only one other copy of Xantippe, at the National Library of Scotland, had been traced.

By Keith M C O’Sullivan  
Senior Rare Books Librarian
An extensive catalogue of British flowering plant specimens has been made available online, offering an insight into environmental changes and species distribution over a 200 year period.

Project assistants have just finished cataloguing all sheets of British flowering plant specimens in the University’s Herbarium, which is a ‘Recognised Collection of National Significance to Scotland’ and more than 39,000 catalogue records for this collection can now be seen online at www.abdn.ac.uk/museums, significantly increasing the accessibility of this important collection which will help researchers investigate environmental change, extinction and the history of science. The Herbarium is one of just two major herbaria in Scotland; the other being the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RGBE), whose database does not currently contain records for Scotland and Britain. This recent cataloguing work at the University of Aberdeen has made an important step forward on a national scale.

The project has been blossomed with the aid of the Museums Galleries Scotland Recognition Fund, which supported the creation of the first 11,000 records for British flowering plants as part of a ‘Re-uniting the Parts’ project last year, and has now funded the creation of an additional 28,000 records. The database contains a wide variety of information about the British flowering plants in the Herbarium; including family and species names, names of collectors and collection locality information.

Curator of Documentation and Fine Art, Shona Elliott explains a little more about the project: “We only had information about the Herbarium plants on their individual specimen sheets prior to the start of these Recognition projects so we’ve taken a big step forward getting so many records online. Access has been significantly increased to a collection that was previously all but invisible to researchers other than specialist taxonomists”.

Other members of staff involved in the project were Mike Arnott (Web Author and Technical Consultant), Claudia Cabarcas-Thomas, Leilani Caithness and Nicola Dixon (project assistants), Neil Curtis - Head of Museums, Dr. Jennifer Downes — Curator (Exhibitions and Science) and Alan Knox (recently retired Head of Museums).

Project Assistants are now starting work on the next Recognition-funded project which will continue the development of on-line access to the University’s Herbarium and also enhance the accessibility of the University’s Zoology Museum collection. Amongst the specimens to be catalogued are polar specimens from the two collections, British bryophytes and lichens and approximately 40,000 insects. Records for all these specimens will be put online near the end of this year.
Friends are warmly invited to our Annual General Meeting to be held from **7pm to 7:30** in the Old Senate Room on King’s Campus, on **May 26th**. The brief meeting will be followed by a chance to listen to a talk by expert Jane Pirie, Information Officer and Rare Books Cataloguer from Special Libraries and Archives, about the ancient art of bookbinding. Come along and learn about the materials and techniques used, and see some of the beautifully crafted examples from our collections. Light refreshments will be provided.

### Sites and Opening Hours

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<th>Sites</th>
<th>Opening Hours</th>
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| **QML/Medical/Taylor Libraries**           | Mon-Sat: 9 am - 10 pm (all close at 8 pm on Fridays)  
**Sun**: 11 am - 10 pm (QML) 
1 pm - 10 pm (Taylor and Medical) |
| **Reid Library, Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health** | Mon-Fri: 9 am - 5:30 pm |
| **Special Libraries & Archives Reading Room** | Mon-Fri: 9.30 am - 4.30 pm |
| **King’s Museum**                          | Mon-Fri 9:30 am -4:30 pm  
Open until 7:30pm on Tue  
Sat: 11am - 4pm |