

Maps Group Visit to The Lapworth Museum of Geology



On Wednesday 26th April 2017 the Maps Group organised a trip to the Lapworth Museum of Geology on the Birmingham University campus and 13 members duly reported for duty and travelled by the 09.17am train to the university.

The museum director, Jon Clatworthy met us and led us on a tour of the exhibits for more than 2 hours, concentrating on the rocks and minerals at our request.

The history of the building and the accumulation of the collections is a fascinating tale too long to re-tell here but includes it being an engineering workshop, an ambulance station before becoming a home for one of the largest geological collections in the UK, following the transfer of the university from Mason College in central Birmingham. The Holcroft family who owned mines and quarries in Dudley were major benefactors and donated a magnificent fossil collection to the museum. The museum is named after Charles Lapworth the first professor of geology at Mason college and all his archives are stored in the museum



More recently a lottery grant has enabled the complete refurbishment of the museum which has been completed very successfully.

During the re-fit the collection of 250,000 objects was moved three times and as Jon said, an accredited museum needs to know what it has, where it came from and where it is now and at the moment he's sure of the first two but not of the last one. The museum has only four members of staff and relies on 70 active volunteers and student placements.

After Jon had taken us around the exhibits and explained the design philosophy of the museum we were taken to back room storage areas where amongst other items we handled gold, ruby silver and platinum nuggets plus THE type sample of the famous **Dudley bug** from the Wren's nest. All very valuable.



After lunch most of the party toured the Barber Institute art gallery which has a wonderful and representative collection of painting and sculpture covering the last 500 years

Combination of visits to the museum and art gallery or Winterbourne house and garden makes for an excellent day out and is highly recommended.

Alan Hughes
Maps Sub Group