

News release



19 September 2018

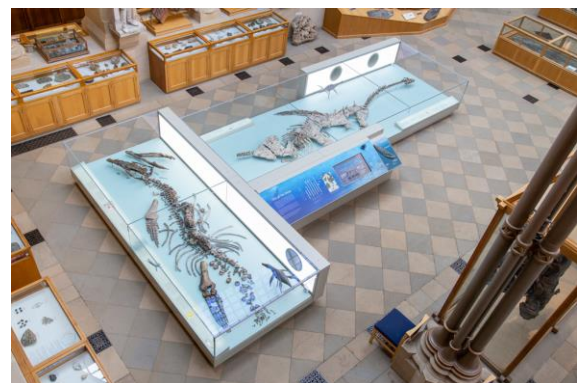
Jurassic reptiles come Out of the Deep in new museum display



The fossilised remains of two Jurassic sea reptiles that were found in Britain form an impressive new exhibit just opened at Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

Visitors to the Museum will see the rare and remarkably complete skeletons of two plesiosaurs, marine reptiles which became extinct around 66 million years ago. Brought to life through digital animations, physical models and touchable elements, the *Out of the Deep* showcase is the largest single new permanent display to be added to the Museum in decades.

The short-necked plesiosaur, known as a pliosaur, was discovered by a former Museum curator in the 1990s in Yarnton, Oxfordshire, just a few miles from the Museum. The larger



long-necked plesiosaur was found in a quarry in Cambridgeshire in 2014 by the Oxford Clay Working Group, and donated to the Museum's collections by the quarry's owner Forterra. On display together for the first time, these specimens highlight the UK's exceptional fossil heritage and provide a glimpse of some of the life inhabiting the marine environment of the Jurassic period.

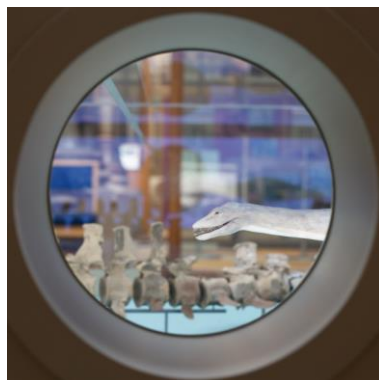
Specially commissioned digital reconstructions present a picture of central England 165 million years ago: submerged 50 metres underwater in a warm, shallow sea, teeming with life. Visitors will learn how the fossils were discovered and collected, how museum palaeontologists investigate specimens using cutting edge technologies, and discover how scientists piece together evidence to understand the evolution of life on Earth.



The project has been generously supported by grants from the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund, and WREN's FCC Community Action Fund.

"As the largest single new showcase to be installed in the museum for many years, the *Out of the Deep* display reinvigorates our central court and provides something new for our regular visitors," says Professor Paul Smith, director of Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

"After working on these two fantastic plesiosaur skeletons for many months, it's hugely exciting to be able to display them together and in full for the first time since their discovery. What's so special about these specimens is how complete they are, particularly their skulls. It's still amazing to me that they are 165 million years old," says Dr Hilary Ketchum, collections manager at the Museum. "These fossils help us build up a picture of life in the Jurassic seas, and the videos in the new display will show visitors the real work of palaeontology in action."



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Notes

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Notes to editors

About the Museum of Natural History

Founded in 1860 as the centre for scientific study at the University of Oxford, the Museum of Natural History now holds the University's internationally significant collections of entomological, geological and zoological specimens. Housed in a stunning Pre-Raphaelite-inspired example of neo-Gothic architecture, the Museum's growing collections underpin a broad programme of natural environment research, teaching and public engagement.

In 2015, the Museum was a **Finalist in the Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year**. In 2016, it won the top accolade, Best of the Best, in the **Museums + Heritage Awards**.

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