



Case 4 Mammal skulls: teeth and diet

This display of skulls and analysis of their dentition and diet links with the story of our museum. Elgin Museum was built in 1842 out of the urgent need to house the collections of our founders. Natural history donations feature strongly in the First Accession Book. Collecting in the 19th Century was a popular occupation, whether for aesthetic pleasure, in a spirit of scientific enquiry or for sport. Note the back of the skull of the Tiger (9), date and donor unknown, has been blasted away!

Our collecting policy now for natural history is very restrictive. We concentrate on conserving and sharing our existing material rather than acquiring more. Recent examples of research:

13. Asiatic lioness skull, collected by Forres-born medical doctor and palaeontologist, Dr John Malcolmson, before 1844. This has been sampled at the Natural History Museum's ancient DNA lab for a project at Queen Mary University, London.

14. Polar Bear, for which we have no history except it came to the Museum before 1978. An Edinburgh University palaeontology post-graduate student, here researching our Permian reptile material, spent some time comparing the anatomy with our extinct reptiles. Study of skull features is a key tool in interpretation of many aspects of earlier lifestyles and environment.

Display by Martin Cook, Museum Volunteer

Additional note by Janet Trythall, Museum Volunteer