

# News release



16 June 2015

## Oxford Dodo makes epic journey from Land's End to John O'Groats in celebration of museums and galleries

A unique and ambitious tour celebrating museums and galleries across the country came to a close on Monday 15 June when the Oxford University Museum of Natural History's famous Dodo completed its journey from Land's End to John O'Groats, visiting 22 venues along the way.

The Dodo Roadshow was conceived to mark the Museum's nomination in this year's [Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year](#), the winner of which will be announced at Tate Modern on 1 July.

Joining the charismatic Dodo model in its travels was a cast of the precious head, which contains the only remaining soft tissue material of a Dodo in the world, and real foot bones from the same animal, representing some of the few organic pieces of Dodo remains.



At each stop, the Dodo met with a star object from that museum's collection and learnt more about it in an 'interview' that was published on the Museum of Natural History blog, [More than a Dodo](#). Along the way the Dodo met other extinct creatures, artworks, landmarks of industrial engineering, and even some poets (not to mention a giant papier-mâché albatross).

Both the Dodo and Museum staff were greeted by enthusiastic museum colleagues and members of the public, who were able to see the specimens and ask questions. Tamsin Loveless, Head of Communications & Development at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall, one of the stops on the Roadshow, said:

*“Offering access to collections across the country is core to our mission. To offer our visitors a rare glimpse of a much loved artefact and to share an icon in the natural world was an opportunity everyone thoroughly embraced. The initiative to tour a Dodo across the country, to engage with other Museums and to cross-pollinate collections and ideas is wonderful. We are very proud and privileged to be part of the Dodo Roadshow journey.”*

Professor Paul Smith, director of the Museum of Natural History, says:

*“The Dodo Roadshow has been incredibly successful – perhaps even more than we imagined. It has allowed us to make contact with museum colleagues across the length of the country, to celebrate their collections, and promote our Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year nomination at the same time. The Dodo model has proven to be a very popular character, with adults and children alike, and the opportunity to give wider access to some rare specimens is confirmation of the power and value of museum collections.”*

Across a single week the Dodo Roadshow visited the following venues:

**Monday 8 June** – LAND’S END Visitor Centre; National Maritime Museum Cornwall; Royal Cornwall Museum; Eden Project; Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

**Tuesday 9 June** – RAMM; Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

**Wednesday 10 June** – National Museum Wales; Black Country Living Museum; Compton Verney

**Thursday 11 June** – Derby Museum and Art Gallery; Stoke Museum and Art Gallery; Dunham Massey

**Friday 12 June** – Yorkshire Sculpture Park; The Whitworth; Dove Cottage

**Saturday 13 June** – Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery; Robert Burns Birthplace Museum; Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

**Sunday 14 June** – The Hunterian, Glasgow; Perth Museum & Art Gallery; RSPB Loch Garten

**Monday 15 June** – Ullapool Museum & Visitor Centre; North West Highlands Geopark; Information Centre, JOHN O’GROATS

The Roadshow has been documented via the Museum’s Twitter account (@morethanadodo and #dodoroadshow) and by the participating museums, in local media, and on a changing displays in the Museum café.

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## **Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year 2015**

The Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year 2015 will be celebrated on BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 3 and BBC News Online, in a series of broadcasts and online interactive presentations during the period leading up to the announcement of the winner on 1 July at Tate Modern. The other shortlisted museums are Dunham Massey (National Trust), Altrincham; IWM London (Imperial War Museums); The MAC, Belfast; HM Tower of London; and The Whitworth, Manchester.

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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 example of neo-Gothic architecture, the Museum's growing collections underpin a broad programme of natural environment research, teaching and public engagement.

#### **About the Dodo**

The Dodo is the most famous of all the creatures to have become extinct in historical times. The remains of the Dodo at Oxford are one of the greatest treasures of the Museum and the mummified skin from the head



of the Oxford Dodo is the only surviving soft tissue available for DNA research.

The Dodo was originally discovered by Europeans in 1598. It was a flightless bird that lived on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. Although the Dodos were easy to catch, their meat was not that tasty; their rapid decline was probably due less to hunting, and more to the fact that the dogs, cats, rats and pigs, introduced to Mauritius, destroyed the Dodos' eggs and habitat. The last widely accepted sighting of a Dodo was 1662.

### **About the Art Fund**

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art, driven by the belief that everyone should have access to great art. In the past five years the Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. The Art Fund also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including ARTIST ROOMS and the 2013-18 Aspire tour of Tate's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* by John Constable, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators.

The Art Fund is independently funded, with the core its income provided by 117,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 230 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibition. In addition to grant-giving, the Art Fund's support for museums includes the annual Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year, a publications programme and a range of digital platforms.