

THE GRANT MUSEUM

Boys walk past this stone at School every day blissfully unaware of what the Grant Museum was. In the 1880s Merchistonians were literally spread all over the globe and an idea was hatched to ask them to "send" the world back.

An old boy Alexander Innes Grant died in New Zealand in 1885 and a museum was set up in his honour the following year. The scale was astonishing...curios from around the globe came in....some perhaps incongruous to modern thinking. Over 5000 geological samples, hundreds of stuffed birds, a butterfly collection that rivalled any other in the UK, a human skeleton, a piece of Admiral Nelson's flag from Trafalgar and my favourite, a copy of a letter "written" by Jesusand so the list goes on and on. A new building was constructed to house it...the collection was vast. But here is the thing...what became of it? When the School moved to Colinton in 1930 it apparently disappears from the School record.

One rather sad letter to the Merchistonian magazine in 1929....gives us a hint:

Dear Sir,

I observe with horror and regret the gross neglect of the Grant Museum...which through the loving care and unflagging zeal of Merchistonians was collected and arranged at no little expense of time, money and energy. Is it not an act of vandalism that so many valuable specimens should be given over to the ravages of dust, decay and damp? The writer then, perhaps, rather undermines the seriousness of his point by signing himself...

Sir Whisker Fureigh-Phaiss G.A.S, B.A.G.

Nevertheless, what became of the Grant Museum? Was it thrown away, lost or sold when the School moved? ...perhaps a very few artefacts remain in the Biology department display cabinets or is it on extended loan to a museum...waiting to be reclaimed?

If you know...do tell...it will help the descendants of Sir Fureigh-Phaiss to sleep easier!

History lesson over!