



St Aubyn collection

News on the project –September to December 2008

Monday 29 September to 13 October 2008

During this time the herbarium was dusted with a soft brush. It was interesting to look at all the specimens again, and it was particularly intriguing to find strands of hair attached to a Plum tree specimen. Throughout the herbarium there were many hairs on the twigs and flower heads, some of which were coloured and could have come from clothing. It was impossible to date most of the hairs, but the ones on the Plum tree ran through the glue. These of course could be animal hairs from when it was collected, or they could belong to Sir John or someone in his family. What was interesting to note was that the hairs must have been there when Sir John attached the specimen to the sheet of paper...

Monday 13 October 2008

Today we got an email from Margaret Morgan at the [Royal Cornwall Museum](#). She is translating the Count de Bournon catalogues. Apparently de Bournon put little red labels on some minerals to highlight something of interest, and she wondered if the labels were still on the specimens. Amazingly enough, these little labels are still on the specimens. The red ones have turned an orange colour over the years and there are also some blue ones. Each one is triangular shaped. This is great news, as we wondered where the little triangular labels had come from, and we now know that they are almost 200 years old!

Thursday 30 October 2008

Today I attended a meeting at the Linnean Society to talk about the James Edward Smith herbarium. John Edmondson at [Liverpool Museums](#) has been busy documenting the presence of Smith specimens in different herbaria all over Europe. This includes the few specimens that we have in the St. Aubyn herbarium. Members of staff from several institutions spent the day in the Linnean Society discussing how we could carry out an online digitisation project for the Smith herbarium. I felt really privileged to be invited to such a prestigious place and to be able to include Sir John's herbarium in the project.

Thursday 13 November 2008

This morning, members of the Natural History team went to the [Marine Biological Association](#) (MBA) to have a look at their library. We wanted to see their book on seaweeds by John Stackhouse, who was Sir John St. Aubyn's friend. We also wanted to see if they had any other historically important books.

The Keeper of Natural History managed to find a copy of William Borlase's book on Cornish Natural History. William Borlase was Sir John St. Aubyn's teacher and therefore played an important role in initiating Sir John's fascination with botany and mineralogy. To find this book by Borlase was a real bonus, and we have since asked the librarian if Plymouth City Museum could loan these books for the St. Aubyn exhibition in 2010.

Monday 15 to Friday 19 December 2008

All of this week the St. Aubyn project conservator and I cleaned all of the old drawers that housed the St. Aubyn mineral collection when it was in [Devonport Museum](#). The drawers had not been cleaned for over 40 years and they were pretty dusty. I was also involved in transcribing the labels inside the drawers, so that the information that they have written on them can be stored permanently on our database. Hopefully it will be possible for you to see the drawers once they are finished, as the Natural History department are intending to exhibit some of them in the St. Aubyn exhibition next year.