

Acting Director of the Sedgwick Museum appointed¹

Dr Elizabeth Harper has been appointed Acting Director of the Sedgwick Museum following the retirement of Dr Ken McNamara.

Liz Harper is an internationally renowned palaeontologist with an expertise in bivalve molluscs both fossil and living. She has a long association of some 34 years with the Department ever since she was an undergraduate at Gonville and Caius College. Her association with the Sedgwick Museum and its collections also dates back some 30 years since her postgraduate research on post-Palaeozoic fossil bivalves.

Liz's research was recognized in 1990 with the President's Award of the Palaeontological Association and the Annual Award of the Malacological Society of London in 1991. Subsequently she was awarded a Research Fellowship at Gonville and Caius in 1992. Her connection with the college has continued ever since. She was elected a Fellow in 1994, a College lecturer and Director of Studies in Earth Sciences since 2004.

Over the years, the continuing significance of Liz's research has been supported by grants from NERC and the EU Marie Curie network. She has been awarded visiting fellowships to the Smithsonian Institution, the Australian Museum (Sydney) and the University of Hong Kong. Altogether her research has led to the publication of some 100 papers.

Liz Harper's contribution to malacology and palaeontology in general has been recognized within the profession by her election to the Council of the Malacological Society of London, the Vice-Presidency of the Society in 2000 and election to the Council of the Palaeontological Association.

Her connection with the Museum was formally established in 2004 when she was made an Honorary Curator of Invertebrate Palaeontology. And in 2016 she became temporary director of the Museum whilst Dr Ken McNamara was on sabbatical leave.

Liz's research has given her an extensive practical experience of using museum collections both at home and abroad. Her long experience of the Department of Earth Sciences and the Sedgwick Museum has given her an understanding of the workings of an established University museum with large historic collections.

Liz replaces Dr Ken McNamara who has been Director of the Museum since 2011 and is now retiring and returning to Western Australia. Amongst his many achievements as Director, Ken made new appointments to the staff, which have helped improve the visitor experience and enabled a program of new exhibits. The exhibits showcase research in the Department and display material from the Museum's extensive collections.

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Ken's tenure has also instigated a number of high profile digital projects. They include an interactive gallery display of fossils from the collection of the Renaissance artist Agostino Scilla, which are part of the Woodwardian collection. An eBook of Scilla's treatise on palaeontology 'Vain Speculation Undeceived by Sense', is available as a free download from the Museum website.

Although retiring as Director, Ken continues his researches on a wide range of palaeontological topics and his biography of the founder of the Museum - John Woodward.

Douglas Palmer, Sedgwick Museum

