

# A History of the Tiegs Museum 1887-1959

The University of Melbourne

Cultural Collections



Anna Coultas

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## PROLOGUE:

On the first day of semester, at the University of Melbourne, while trying to find a certain lecturer's office, a first year science student comes across a room at the end of the first floor corridor of the Zoology building. The door is open. Intrigued, the student walks beyond the doorway and discovers a long room, the walls and much of the floor space filled with large glass display cabinets. The student looks up, to stare at the skull of a large skeleton of a bird, a Moa to be exact, an enormous extinct bird from New Zealand, much bigger than an emu. The student's eyes widen and she continues through the room. The student can barely control her eyes which move swiftly over the cabinets trying to absorb all that is displayed inside them. There is a stuffed echidna, marsupial skulls, pickled rats, insects, stuffed birds, bones of a horse's leg and preserved earthworms. The student glances to the left and views an ape skeleton, a lion skeleton and a vicious looking stuffed Opossum. What kind of room is this, the student wonders, where did all of these skeletons and stuffed animals come from? The student then looked above her, at the top of the windows and a glass plate read The Tiegs Museum.

## Introduction

This is a history of the Tiegs Zoology Museum. It will cover the history of the museum from its establishment in 1887 to 1959 when it was officially called the Tiegs Museum. This work is by no means comprehensive; avenues of investigation regarding certain specimens of the collection are still to be explored. The history of the museum from 1960 to the present is not covered given time constraints and a dramatic reduction in the collection and donation of specimens for the museum during this time. This history will give a chronological biography of the Tiegs Museum, how it has grown and important donors to the museum over the years, whether they were passionate professors, ex-students or other tertiary or scientific institutions. This history will also discuss particular highlights of the museum such as the Moa skeleton. The Tiegs Museum is a product and a representation of the trends in zoology and in science over the years. The Museum was established at a very exciting time for science at the university and in the broader Victorian colonial society. As the multiple disciplines of science grew in importance at the university and in broader society, so too, did the collection at the Tiegs Museum. Holding representations of nearly all areas of the animal kingdom, the Tiegs Museum became and has remained an important part of the teaching of zoology at the university.

Until now, there has been little research into the history of the Tiegs Museum. One of the main primary sources used for this project was the *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne* which was begun in 1893 and is a catalogue of most of the specimens that belong to the museum collection. The Registrar's Correspondence at the University of Melbourne Archives was also useful for this project as a primary source, particularly for discovering when and why the Zoology Museum was named after Professor Oscar Werner Tiegs. Both primary and secondary source material about the Tiegs Museum is quite scarce. Secondary source material regarding the general history of the University of Melbourne, particular professors, the growth of science and museums in Melbourne in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were utilised for this project, as well as material about Darwin's evolutionary theories and the influence this had on zoology in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These secondary sources were particularly useful for gaining knowledge of the context in which the Tiegs Museum came to be established and the collection, donation and purchasing of zoological specimens between 1887 and approximately 1959.

In addition to being a useful teaching tool, as part of the cultural collections at the University of Melbourne the Tiegs Museum is also a valuable cultural heritage collection. This history will accompany the zoological collection at the Tiegs Museum. This project has been an attempt to piece together an interesting and informative history of the museum. Hopefully, the end product will give readers - whether they are animal enthusiasts, zoology professors or frightened first year science students- a window into the intriguing world of the museum, its stuffed, preserved and mounted animals and its fascinating history.



### **1887: Beginnings**

The year 1887 was an exciting year in the Science Department at the University of Melbourne. New chairs for particular scientific disciplines were being created in the wake of increased enrolments at the university, not to mention the continued growth and importance of science in the booming Victorian colony at the time. One of the newly hired professors for the university stepped off a ship from England with his wife in March.<sup>1</sup> This was the young and enthusiastic biologist Professor Walter Baldwin Spencer who would, in the

years that followed, become immensely influential not only in university life but also in Victorian society and most famously in the field of Aboriginal culture and modern anthropology.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D.J Mulvaney & J.H Calaby, *'So Much That Is New' Baldwin Spencer 1860-1929: A Biography*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1985, p.75.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Macintyre & R.J.W. Selleck, *A Short History of the University of Melbourne*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, pp.31-33; R.J.W. Selleck, *The Shop: The University of Melbourne 1850-1939*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, pp.374-382

Professor Spencer was to take the newly established Chair of Biology at the university. Biology along with chemistry and natural philosophy were areas in science that received their own chairs in the 1880s, rather than continue as part of Natural Science which was at the time the Chair occupied by Professor Frederick McCoy.<sup>3</sup> In 1888, the three year Bachelor degree in Science was introduced.<sup>4</sup> Science education at the university was becoming more structured and more professional.

Professor Spencer, along with Professor David Orme Masson who was to fill the new Chair of Chemistry, committed themselves to improving the study and research of science at the university. They achieved this even during the hardship of the economic crash of the 1890s.<sup>5</sup> With Spencer's specifications a new building for biology was constructed and it included state-of-the-art laboratories, an area for live animals to keep for dissection, an aquarium and a greenhouse. The Biology building was quite close to the building, which housed the National Museum of Victoria. This museum was home to a rich and diverse array of zoological specimens from all over the world but these were considered too valuable to be handled by students, and Spencer, who considered it an essential part of learning biology to have actual teaching collections, began his own museum of biological and zoological specimens.<sup>6</sup>

This was the birth of the Zoology Museum, which decades later would be named the Tiegs Museum. It was housed in the Biology building and would remain there for just over 100 years, before it was moved to the more modern Zoology building in 1988. The collection of specimens began almost as soon as the door to the museum could open. Spencer and many of the other staff and students in the school of biological studies were influenced heavily by the new evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and his supporter T.S Huxley. Darwin's theories of evolution which rocked the creationist theory of the world to the core had a profound influence on science and especially biology and zoology. Evolutionary theories, together with the enthusiasm for collecting in the latter half of the nineteenth century, made a

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<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Rasmussen, *A Museum for the People: a history of Museum Victoria and its predecessors 1854-2000*, Melbourne, Scribe Publications, 2001, p.99

<sup>4</sup> Macintyre & Selleck, *Short History of the University of Melbourne*, p.34

<sup>5</sup> Mulvaney & Calaby, '*So Much That is New*', p.77; Rasmussen, *A Museum for the People*, pp.97-99

<sup>6</sup> Mulvaney & Calaby, '*So Much That is New*', p.82; Rasmussen, *A Museum for the People*, p.99

potent mix for enthusiastic scientists. Spencer, and other staff members such as Arthur Dendy, wasted no time in collecting specimens as they went on weekend field trips to Port Phillip Bay, Mornington, the Dandenong Ranges and even further afield to towns such as Castlemaine and even interstate.<sup>7</sup>

The collecting of zoological and other biological specimens was also very popular in Melbourne society in general. There were numerous scientific societies such as the Royal Society of Victoria and the Victorian Field Naturalist's Club, whose members included professors from the university and general enthusiasts. In the past these institutions and individuals donated to the National Museum of Victoria or kept specimens as part of personal collections. In the infant years of the Zoology Museum, societies and individuals such as those mentioned above donated specimens to the museum, particularly Australian fauna which was unlike the flora and fauna of other continents and still somewhat a mystery to scientists.

Unfortunately, though it is evident that there was enthusiastic collecting of specimens to build up the museum for the School of Biology, besides sketchy labels attached to some of the specimens, no other records were written down until six years later. One example is a specimen of shell that Professor Spencer collected whilst in Queensland in 1892,<sup>8</sup> but the specimen was not recorded in the Register as part of the catalogue until two years later and after many other specimens had been recorded, which were donated to the museum and not as old. One can only guess that Professor Spencer and the other staff were too caught up in the excitement of collecting and also too busy coping with their hectic and demanding teaching loads to keep thorough records of the specimens they added to their museum.

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<sup>7</sup> John Mulvaney, 'Baldwin Spencer: Evolution and Melbourne University', in Hoorn, J. (ed.) *Reframing Darwin: Evolution and Art in Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2009, p.86

<sup>8</sup> Entry Number 159: *Thersites (informis: Mousson)*, Jandina QLD, Professor Spencer, collected in 1892, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological school University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tieg Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed in 2009

### Frederick McCoy and the National Museum of Victoria

*This is a picture of the National Museum of Victoria as it appeared inside the building on university grounds from 1856-1899. Professor Frederick McCoy, one of the founding professors of the University of Melbourne was the Chair of Natural Science which included the teaching of biology until 1887. He relished his position as Director of the National Museum, for many years eagerly adding to its numerous collections of zoology, mining*



*technology, geology and agriculture. The specimens belonging to the National Museum were not used for the teaching of zoology at the university and there seems to have been little intermingling of specimens between the two museums until many years later, when the identification and housing of zoological specimens, particularly native specimens, was handled in a much more cooperative nature. McCoy was a well known and decorated palaeontologist. In*

*the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century McCoy published two well illustrated works which were very useful reference books for zoology and palaeontology, especially for the identification of certain specimens over the years.<sup>9</sup> More than once in the Register there is a reference to McCoy's Podrumus of the Zoology of Victoria.*

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<sup>9</sup> Rasmussen, *A Museum for the People*, p.57



## 1893: The Beginning of the Historical Record for the Tiegs Museum



This is an image of a *Bufo vulgaris*, which is a European or common toad.<sup>10</sup> This was the first specimen written down in the Register for the departmental Zoology Museum. The Register's official title is: *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*. This toad specimen was written in the Register in 1893, six years after the establishment of the museum in the School of Biology. Between 1890 and the beginning of World War One (WW1), the most prolific amount of collecting, donating and purchasing for the museum occurred. In 1893, the museum received numerous international donations. It can be debated as to whether or not these specimens were in the museum collection before 1893 but the records are quite detailed, suggesting that these rather large shipments came from Britain and prompted the need for a Register for the specimens.

The significant donors to the museum were large scientific institutions themselves: the British Museum and the Royal College of Science in South Kensington. The Royal College of Science donated various specimens to the Zoology Museum at the University of Melbourne for many years. These donations included many European animal specimens, and other specimens from exotic islands in the Pacific or countries in Asia or Africa, reflective of the visits British scientists could make to the numerous and diverse colonies of the British Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>10</sup> Entry Number 1: *Bufo vulgaris*, Coimbra Portugal, Donated by Mr. Boulanger, British Museum, 1893, *Register of Specimens for the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed in 2009

Also in 1893, the biology staff and its Chair, Professor Spencer welcomed donations of specimens from one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Britain, the Oxford University Museum. This included a European hedgehog which is still on display in the Tieggs Museum.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the Oxford University Museum, many other universities and institutions in Britain donated to the zoology museum at the University of Melbourne. This included Trinity College Laboratory, Manchester Museum and the University of Edinburgh.

It is not surprising that there were numerous large donations of zoological specimens from Britain at this time. Many, if not all, of the professors across the university were British. Professor Spencer was British as was Dendy and the ties between Britain and Melbourne and indeed Australia at this time were very strong.<sup>12</sup> In the Biology department many of the staff came from Britain and had ties to institutions there. Spencer no doubt encouraged the use of these international ties as well as the avid collecting that was occurring. If he was to achieve his goal of improving science education in his new home, world class specimens useful for the teaching of biology, in particular, zoology would be necessary and essential.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the donations and purchases from international institutions or individuals, travelled for weeks and weeks on ships. They would arrive at the Port of Melbourne and be transported to the Biology building at the University for unpacking, recording and display. The numbers of specimens that arrived with all the necessary information were, more often than not, far out-numbered by the specimens with little or no information or history at all. This resulted in a rather sparsely filled and incomplete Register at times. In later years when particular specimens were thrown out of the collection because of damage or poor preservation, rarely is a reason or date listed.

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<sup>11</sup> Entry Number 77: *Erinaceus europaeus*, no location given, Oxford University Museum, 1893, skeleton, *Register of Specimens in the Museum for the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tieggs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed in 2009

<sup>12</sup> Macintyre & Selleck, *Short History of the University of Melbourne*, p.60

Donations from institutions in continental Europe also began at this time. There were various purchases from the Naples Bird Laboratory in the 1890's and also in later years.<sup>13</sup> But similar to many other donations around this time the histories of many of the specimens from Naples were incomplete.

In addition to the numerous international donations to and purchases for the Zoology Museum during Spencer's time as Chair of Biology (1887-1919), the collection of native specimens from all over Australia was prolific too. The Biology School was called a society of log rollers as students and staff spent much time on field trips turning over logs to see what kinds of creatures were underneath.<sup>14</sup> They would bring the specimens they discovered back to the university campus for dissection, research or display at the museum. Then they would discuss the results at meetings of the university Science Club which was established in July 1888 which were often frequented by some of the science professors such as Spencer who spent a large amount of his own time "turning over logs." The exciting nature of discovery and growth in science was felt all over Melbourne during this time period. There was a genuine scientific community in Melbourne conducting exciting and interesting research about anything and everything related to science. It was a very active time for scientific societies and institutions, government scientists, expeditions, as well as the Faculty of Science and all its departments and student science clubs. Many of the scientific societies and institutions donated to the museum collection in the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This included The Royal Society of Victoria, The Royal Zoological Gardens, Baron von Mueller who was in charge of the Royal Botanical Gardens and others. Many staff members of the university were also members of some of these private scientific societies and institutions. The increase and fervour of scientific thought and research during the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries goes hand in hand with the increase in zoological specimens at the museum.

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<sup>13</sup> Naples Bird Laboratory made several donations to the museum over the years, mainly in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tieg's Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>14</sup> *Melbourne University Review*, IV (1888) pp.93-4: Science Club, 5 July 1888, in Mulvaney & Calaby, 'So Much that is New', p.85

In 1899 Frederick McCoy died and the National Museum which had been his pride and joy for nearly 50 years was moved to Swanston Street to accompany the National Gallery and the Public Library. Professor Spencer was nominated Honorary Director of the Museum and it is from this time on that a relationship between the two museums formed. They exchanged specimens and assisted each other with identification and classification of various specimens over the years. In fact, in 1968 many specimens that had been a part of the university zoology museum for many years were donated to the National Museum. This included a large number of native specimens, particularly from the large collection of zoological specimens that Spencer had collected as the nominated zoologist to go on the Horn Expedition to central Australia in 1894.

There was a large increase in the number of students studying science during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some went on to conduct post-graduate research at the University of Melbourne and other institutions. By the turn of century, in the School of Biological Studies at the university, an increasing number of students were women and some of these women went on to become staff members under Spencer. More importantly these women staff members contributed significantly to the museum's collection of zoological specimens.

### Dr. Georgina Sweet



*Georgina Sweet was born in 1875. Georgina had discovered a love of scientific discovery through her father who was an amateur geologist and science enthusiast who had an impressive collection of fossils and had on various occasions in the 1890s donated specimens to the fast growing Tiegs Museum collection. Georgina Sweet enrolled at the University of Melbourne in 1892 and whilst there completed a Bachelors and Masters of Science and then a Doctor of Science.<sup>15</sup> She was the first female Doctor of Science to graduate from the University of Melbourne. She also became one of the most respected and distinguished scientists of her time. Georgina Sweet began working as a lecturer and demonstrator at the School of Biological Studies under Professor Spencer in 1909. As a staff member, Sweet conducted research into Australian mammals and also lectured in parasitology at the new veterinary school in 1910. Whilst Spencer was on leave in 1916-1917 Professor Sweet was appointed as Acting Professor for the School of Biology and was the first woman to do so. In 1919 Sweet was the first woman at the university to be promoted to Associate Professor. Sweet retired from the zoology department and then from her position in the veterinary school two years later. She remained heavily involved in activities at the university, particularly pushing for women's rights and equal opportunities. She also headed many other institutions and was well known for her philanthropy. Not only was she a pioneer in terms of women's opportunities in the university field but she was a well-noted and distinguished scientist.*

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<sup>15</sup> Georgina Sweet graduated from BSc in 1896, MSc in 1898, received the McBain scholarship from University of Melbourne 1898, graduated as a Doctor of Science in 1904 in Fay Anderson, 'Georgina Sweet: A Brilliant Career', Snapshot Bright Sparcs, [www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs](http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs), Australasian Science, May 2000, p.46, accessed 26th August 2009

Georgina Sweet was one of the small numbers of female staff members in the Biology School who made a significant contribution to the departmental museum. The Biology School under Spencer employed the first full time female lecturer, the first two female associate professors at the university as well as the first two female acting professors.<sup>16</sup> Other female scientists such as Dr. Gwyneth Vaughan Buchanan also contributed to the specimen collection at the museum. Staff members were some of the most prolific collectors of museum specimens. They were heavily involved in identifying and classifying certain specimens as, more often than not, they were the experts and the very people who would use the specimens for teaching and research in the Biology School.



Georgina Sweet had a great interest in Australian animals. One of her donations to the museum collection was a stuffed skin of an echidna which is still displayed at the museum.<sup>17</sup> Georgina Sweet like other staff members on their research trips and even their sabbatical leave throughout the whole existence of the museum, collected specimens that could be added to the

collection. Sweet donated a lion skull and jaws to the museum that she discovered in Tabora South Africa.<sup>18</sup> Though no date is given, Sweet did travel the length of Africa on a sabbatical in 1922, which is more than likely to be when she collected the skull.

<sup>16</sup> John Mulvaney, 'Baldwin Spencer: evolution and Melbourne University', in Hoorn, J. (ed.) *Reframing Darwin: Evolution and Art in Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2009, p.87

<sup>17</sup> Entry Number 1968: *Echidna aculeata*, donated and identified by Dr G. Sweet, stuffed skin, no location or date, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tieg's Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>18</sup> Entry Number 1562: *Felis Leo*, Tabora South Africa, Associate Professor Sweet, Skull and jaws, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tieg's Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

No donation was too unusual or insignificant for the museum to collect. More and more donations came from all over the world from all different types of institutions and individuals. The donation relationship continued with many universities and colleges in Britain in the lead up to WW1. Donations and even purchases grew to include universities and institutions such as the Prague Museum.<sup>19</sup> The specimens that were received from the Prague Museum all arrived identified and named. This was a rather intriguing situation, duly noted in the Register.<sup>20</sup> Not all donations were received with all the relevant information for the staff which is obvious considering the large gaps within the pages of the Register.

The years of WW1 (1914-1918) were particularly lean in terms of additions to the actual collection of the museum. It is not too hard to understand why there was less collection and donation of specimens to the museum at this time. University life in general was altered significantly by WW1. Enrolments during the war years dwindled and there was significant interruption to teaching as many male students left their courses to join the armed services. Staff members too, many being British, rallied behind the cause.<sup>21</sup> Though new specimens were not as numerous, work at the museum was still busy because even by 1914, listing all the specimens in the Register dating from 1887 was not completed.

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<sup>19</sup> The Prague Museum made a large exchange of specimens to the Zoology Museum in 1902; please refer to Entry Numbers 1208-1217 in *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>20</sup> Entry Numbers 1208-1217, In exchange from the Museum Prague, received named, dated 1902, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>21</sup> Macintyre & Selleck, *Short History of the University of Melbourne*, pp.59-60

### **A New Chair and a New Chapter:**

The end of WW1 and all its devastation brought about many changes to Victorian society as well as university society. Enrolments dramatically increased, so did the need for staff and proper equipment for students and staff. In the Biology department changes were also occurring. During the last years of the war Professor Spencer had been on leave from the university and Georgina Sweet had run the department in his stead. In 1919 Professor Spencer retired from the Chair of Biology which he held for 32 years. It was the end of a significant era for the science department as Spencer was the second of the three brilliant staff members who did such important work to develop and cultivate a thriving science department at the university. Professor Wilfred Eade Agar from Britain was appointed to replace Spencer. He would take up the newly established Chair of Zoology at the university. In 1919, zoology and botany were distinguished separately from biology and given their own chairs. The Biology building which housed the museum became the Zoology building. Professor Agar brought changes to the zoology department. Agar introduced cytology and genetics into the curriculum as well as initiated studies about marsupial chromosomes and conducted research on gene inheritance in cattle.<sup>22</sup>

In the years after the war, the collection, donation and purchasing of specimens was reasonably slow to pick up momentum again. It was not until approximately 1925 that new specimens started coming to the museum. There were not as many specimens coming from Europe or Britain, this is perhaps because much of continental Europe and Britain were trying to recover and rebuild after the terrible years of the war. 1925 saw the first large donation from the United States of America (USA). There had been one or two, very early on in the existence of the museum but no donations of more than one specimen at a time. This

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<sup>22</sup> Agar, W.E. biographical entry, in Australian Dictionary Biography, Research School of Social Science Australian National University & University of Melbourne Australian Science & Technology Heritage Centre, *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm>, accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009



particular donation in 1925 consisted of numerous zoological specimens from the University of Michigan.<sup>23</sup>

This donation, along with others which were smaller from institutions such as The American Museum of Natural History, marks the beginning of many years of exchange with US universities and scientific institutions. As a result of the shift in major donors from Europe to America, the range of animals to be displayed in the museum increased. It is one example of how far the consequences and impact of devastating or wonderful world events can reach into society. The end of the war and the reconstruction, rebuilding and recovery thereafter expanded the range of sources from which the museum received donations.

Collecting and donating specimens remained a popular occupation of many of the staff at the museum during the twenties. Dr G.V. Buchanan, a graduate of the University of Melbourne, returned to teach zoology in 1921. She was an enthusiastic collector of specimens for the museum. She spent time in far north Queensland collecting specimens from the Great Barrier Reef, Low Islands and Heron Island.

A particularly interesting specimen that Dr. Buchanan apparently donated to the Zoology Museum was a sea cucumber which she collected in Cairns, QLD; its scientific name is *beche de mer*, although it appears in the register as *bichi de mer*. This specimen was never placed on display in the lovely wooden cabinets that lined the museum walls, nor was it placed in storage, readily available for research. This specimen was not even sent to Melbourne. The *beche de mer*, after its collection and identification by Dr Buchanan was prepared for cooking!<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Entry Numbers 1579-1594, all donated from the University of Michigan, 1925, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>24</sup> Entry Number 1699: *Bichi de mer*, Cairns QLD, donated and identified by Dr. Buchanan, prepared for cooking, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009.

The twenties were a time of enthusiastic collection and donation of marine specimens for the museum. In addition to Dr. Buchanan's donations from Queensland there were other significant donations to the collection. In 1925 a student of zoology at the University of Melbourne won a scholarship to travel to Queensland and conduct research on the Great Barrier Reef. The student was Phillip Crosbie Morrison, an enthusiastic naturalist with a keen interest in marine biology. He spent six months in Queensland on the HMAS Geranium researching the marine life on the Great Barrier Reef. He brought a vast number of specimens back to Melbourne, which he donated to the zoology museum.<sup>25</sup>



There is a deep mystery surrounding two specimens which were donated or collected by the museum, in approximately the twenties or early thirties. These two specimens are full skeletons of a lion (*Felis leo*) and a seal (most likely *Otariidae*). There is no record of where these specimens came from, who donated them and when they arrived at the Zoology Museum. It was suspected that the Royal Zoological Gardens had donated both skeletons but, their records only go back as far as 1948, so there is no way to check this claim is true. There is also a possibility that the lion skeleton was donated from the circus, but again there is no evidence to

verify this. In late 2009, both skeletons were transferred to their new display cabinet in the museum. The origins of the lion and seal skeletons remain a mystery.

<sup>25</sup> Great barrier Reef Expedition, HMAS Geranium 1925; please refer to *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

In the thirties, despite the hardships of the Depression, steady donation and collection of specimens for the museum continued. Donations were mainly from Australia although there are a few one off donations that are particularly interesting. In 1932, the Zoology Museum received two specimens from the *British Australian and New Zealand Antarctic research Expedition*, organised and led by Douglas Mawson which travelled to Antarctica between the years 1929-1931.<sup>26</sup> The two specimens were spiders (*Gephaolodiscus sp.*) and donated by Professor T. Harvey Johnson.<sup>27</sup>

Specimens also continued to come from all over the world but in isolated donations of one or two at a time. A Specimen of a bowfin fish (*Amia calva*) was identified and donated by a staff member from McGill University in Montreal Canada in 1937.<sup>28</sup> These specimens and others like them, demonstrate that the ties with overseas universities and scientific institutions were still strong and important for the exchange of information, research and specimens. The collection at the Zoology Museum at the University of Melbourne would not be as rich as it is today without the large proportion of donations from individuals and institutions overseas.

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<sup>26</sup> Mawson, Douglas. biographical entry, in Australian Dictionary Biography, Research School of Social Science Australian National University & University of Melbourne Australian Science & Technology Heritage Centre, *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm>, accessed 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009

<sup>27</sup> Entry Number 2022 & 2023: both *Gephalodiscus sp.*, Antarctic, Professor T Harvey Johnson, from Mawson Expedition, 1932, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>28</sup> Entry Number 2246: *Amia calva*-Distribution; Rivers & Lakes of Central and Southern North America, Donated and Identified by Dr. L.R. Richardson from McGill University, Montreal, Canada, Dec 1937, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

### Dinornis robustus: the Moa skeleton



*In 1935, a previous student of the University of Melbourne, Dr. George Armstrong, presented a large skeleton and a display case to contain it to the Zoology department to add to their collection.<sup>29</sup> The skeleton was of the largest species of Moa, a now extinct flightless bird from New Zealand. The skeleton is well over seven feet tall and the most impressive specimen in the zoology museum. It is interesting to note that though the Moa is the most outstanding specimen in the museum collection, only its name was recorded in the Register.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps the specimen was so rare and obvious to most staff and students at the university, recording all the details of it in the register seemed unnecessary. In 2008, the Moa was removed from its dusty storage boxes and put together in its new display cabinet where it can be seen today by visitors to the Zoology Museum.*

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from W.E Agar-Vice-Chancellor regarding donation of Moa Skeleton and cabinet to zoology departmental museum, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1935, University of Melbourne Archives, Registrar's Correspondence UM312, accessed 26<sup>th</sup> August 2009

<sup>30</sup> Entry Number 2179: *Dinornis robustus*, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School, University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

Similar to the years immediately following the end of WW1 and into the twenties, the trend in the thirties was still for donations to come mainly from American universities and scientific institutions. Australian specimens were also collected and donated to the museum at a steady pace. By the late 1930s the Register had been more or less brought up to date with the specimens in the collection of the museum.

### **A Change of Pace**

After the commencement of World War Two (WW2) the collection and donation of specimens to add to the museum slowed significantly. There are virtually no entries recorded in the Register, between 1942 and 1945. This was more than likely due to the enhanced war effort in Australia after the Japanese attacks on Darwin and Sydney in 1942. In 1941 there were two very interesting additions to the Zoology Museum. Both specimens had travelled a long way to be housed in the museum's collection. A specimen of camel spider (*Galeodes sp.*) was donated to the museum by Captain John Agar (more than likely a relation to Professor Agar) of the AIF from Tobruk in June 1941.<sup>31</sup> The other specimen of note, which was donated to the museum in 1941, was found in the bladder and liver of a human at the Cairo General Hospital. It was an example of the parasitic worms that cause the disease *Bilharzia*. This specimen was donated and identified by J McNally.<sup>32</sup> Though it was donated to the museum in 1941, it was not entered into the Register until 1990. It was one of a number of specimens with a similar history. They were donated to or collected for the museum but not properly registered until many years later, mainly when the Zoology Museum moved from the old Zoology building to the new building in 1988.

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<sup>31</sup> Entry Number 2359: *Galeodes sp.*, Tobruk, June 1941, donated by Cpt. John Agar, AIF, identified by WEG, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tieg Zoology Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>32</sup> Entry Number 2698: *Bilharzia*, Cairo General Hospital, 1941, donated and Identified by J. McNally, found in human bladder and liver 1941, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

When WW2 ended the collection and donation of specimens, similar to what had occurred after WW1, was slow to pick up momentum. There was one large difference, though, donations to the museum and collecting for the museum would never again be of the volume and fervour that occurred from the museums inception in 1887 to the mid 1930s.

Donations continued to come from all over the world, illustrating a continued dedication to representing as many branches of the animal kingdom both vertebrate and invertebrate in the museum collection. In 1948 Oscar Werner Tiegs is appointed Chair of Zoology at the university. Tiegs had his own influence on the teaching of zoology at the university just as Agar and Spencer had in their time.

### Oscar Werner Tiegs

*Oscar Werner Tiegs was born in 1897 in Brisbane Queensland. He attended the University of Queensland where he was able to build on and extend his passion for insects and biology. Before moving to Melbourne to work in the Department of Zoology in 1925, Tiegs was in South Australia, helping to establish a Department of Zoology at the University of Adelaide. Tiegs was a lecturer and then an associate professor at the University of Melbourne. Like so many biology and zoology staff before, Tiegs regularly contributed to the museum collection. As he was interested in insects, Tiegs devoted much time to the study and research of invertebrates, mainly insects and myriapods.<sup>33</sup> In 1948, Tiegs was appointed as the Chair of Zoology. In a letter of thanks to the Vice-Chancellor, Tiegs promised that "...to the best of my ability I will try to maintain the high standard set by my predecessors."<sup>34</sup> In this role, Tiegs spent much devoted much time to the expansion and organisation of the Zoology Museum, demonstrated by his cramped handwriting frequenting the Register so regularly from 1925 to the early fifties.*

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<sup>33</sup> Tiegs, O. W. biographical entry, in Australian Dictionary Biography, Research School of Social Science Australian National University & University of Melbourne Australian Science & Technology Heritage Centre, Australian Dictionary of Biography Online edition, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm>, accessed 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009

<sup>34</sup> O.W. Tiegs, Letter from O.W. Tiegs to Vice-Chancellor acceptance and thanks for the position as Chair of Zoology, June 1947, University of Melbourne Archives, Registrar's Correspondence, UM312, 1947/1060, accessed 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009

As Chair of Zoology Oscar Werner Tiegs worked hard to extend the museum collection of zoological specimens, to aid with teaching undergraduate science students. Under his tenure as Chair of Zoology there were significant donations from Borneo, South America, Universities in Northern America and even Europe. In the late forties and early fifties there was a slight increase in the amount of insects donated and collected to add to the museum. This is more than likely due to Tiegs' own passion for insects and his research regarding invertebrates.

One spectacular if not totally disgusting addition to the Zoology Museum was presented to the museum on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1951. It was a model of an *Echinococcus granulosus* which is a Hydatid worm.<sup>35</sup> The model was prepared by the Museum of Applied Science. Not only does this stress the importance of all different animals being represented for instructive purposes in the museum but it also shows that there were strong links between the university Museum and the larger institutions such as the National Museum of Victoria, which is now Melbourne Museum and the Museum of Applied Science which is now Science Works. There were numerous other donations from the National Museum in the fifties as well other references to the National Museum as the identifier of certain specimens. One example of this was a specimen that Professor Tiegs had discovered on university grounds. The National Museum was able to identify it as a Nodala spider.<sup>36</sup> The spider specimen is still on display in the Tiegs Museum although it is almost invisible now. The National Museum also received donations from the Zoology Museum. As mentioned previously, many of the specimens that Professor Spencer had collected and donated to the museum on the Horn Expedition in 1894 were donated to the National Museum in 1968.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Entry Number 2411: *Echinococcus granulosus* (Hydatids), Model showing L.H of Echinococcus prepared by the Museum of Applied Science and presented to zoology department, 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 1951, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Zoology Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>36</sup> Entry Number 2491: *Nodala* sp. (Arachnida), found in university grounds, donated by O.W.Tiegs, identified by National Museum, Jan 1956, *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009

<sup>37</sup> *Register of Specimens in the Museum of the Biological School University of Melbourne*, from 1893, Tiegs Zoology Museum, Zoology Department, University of Melbourne, accessed 2009



## The End of the Specimen Golden Age

In November 1956 the much loved and respected Professor of Zoology, Professor Oscar Werner Tiegs died unexpectedly in his home. F.H. Drummond was appointed as Acting Professor of Zoology until a replacement for Professor Tiegs was found. During this time F.H. Drummond sought permission to create a memorial for Tiegs. In 1958 he wrote to the Vice-Chancellor asking permission to name the museum after Tiegs who had, in Drummond's opinion, "...devoted a great deal of time and thought to the preparation and display of material in the departmental museum."<sup>38</sup> Drummond's letter also included a desire to have a brass or bronze plaque made to put in the museum. Drummond's request was approved and in either late 1958 or early 1959 the Zoology Museum was officially named the Tiegs Museum. Above the entrance to the museum was a glass plate with the museum's new name printed on it.



This glass plate no longer hangs over the entrance to the museum but hangs to the rear of the museum against the window. In addition to naming the museum after Tiegs, the Royal Society of Victoria of which Tiegs was a member also honoured him at a Symposium held in December 1959 at Wilson Hall. Professor Mayr from Harvard University

was guest speaker at this symposium which had been organised to celebrate the centenary of the Royal Society of Victoria as well as the centenary of the release of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. This keynote address was named the Tiegs Memorial lecture as it was

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<sup>38</sup> F.H. Drummond, Letter to Vice-Chancellor from Acting Professor F.H. Drummond, Department of Zoology, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1958, University of Melbourne Archives, Registrar's Correspondence, UM312, 1958/1405:Tiegs, Prof. O.W. Memorial, accessed 30/10/09



Tiegs' idea to bring Professor Mayr out to Australia to speak to the fellows of the Royal Society of Victoria.<sup>39</sup>

In the years after the Zoology Museum was named after Oscar Werner Tiegs, the collection and donation of specimens slowed almost to a halt. New restrictions and guidelines came into existence that did not allow the easy collection of species that would be interesting and useful for the university staff members teaching zoology. In addition, by the sixties the Tiegs Museum already had a large and diverse collection representing all areas of the animal kingdom. There were a few isolated donations to the museum over the next 50-60 years but largely the Golden Age for collection and donation to the Tiegs Museum had passed. Under a new professor, the Zoology department took a new direction with teaching and research. These changes also impacted the Tiegs Museum, but the details of this are for another volume of the museum's history.

## **Conclusion**

The Tiegs Museum of Zoology, its growth over the years and what types of specimens were collected at particular times is reflective of the trends in the teaching of zoology through the decades at the university. The museum is also a product and a representation of general trends in science and the local, national and international scientific communities throughout the years. This is nowhere more true than in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries where Melbourne society was captivated by Darwin's evolutionary theory and the growth and new discoveries in all areas of science. The Tiegs Museum can even be described as a product of particular professor's passions over the years such as the passions of Professors Spencer, Agar and Tiegs. Professor Spencer and his colleagues both in and outside the university went on many collecting sprees or expeditions to build up a Zoology Museum that was both diverse and interesting for the teaching of biology and zoology at the University of Melbourne.

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from Royal Society of Victoria to University of Melbourne re: Tiegs Memorial Oration, 1959, University of Melbourne Archives, Registrar's Correspondence, UM312, 1959/1572, accessed 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009

The Tiegs Zoology Museum and all the specimens in its collection remains a relevant and important part of the teaching of zoology at the University of Melbourne. It is also an important part of the history of science education and research at the university.

If you are ever walking down the first floor corridor of the Zoology building, take a moment to wander through the Tiegs Museum. Not only does the museum remain a useful teaching tool, but it is a fascinating place, overflowing with history, some of which is still to be written.

## Source List of Images

1. Image of the Tiegs Museum Register, from Tiegs Museum website: [www.zoology.unimelb.edu.au/tiegs/collection/](http://www.zoology.unimelb.edu.au/tiegs/collection/). Photograph courtesy of Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, accessed November 2009.
2. Image of Professor Walter Baldwin Spencer, in front of the lake and old Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne, circa c.1900-1920. University of Melbourne Archives, University of Melbourne Photographs Collection, 2017.0071.00619.
3. Interior of National Museum. Photographic reproduction of engraving by Frederick Grosse that appeared in the 'Australian News for Home Readers', 25 July 1865. University of Melbourne Archives, University of Melbourne Photographs Collection, 2017.0071.00274.
4. Image of European Toad (*Bufo vulgaris*) in a jar. Photograph courtesy of Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, accessed 28th October 2009.
5. Photograph of Dr Georgina Sweet, University of Melbourne, 15 September 1925. University of Melbourne Archives, University of Melbourne Photographs Collection, 2017.0071.00531
6. Image of Echidna (*Echidna aculeata*) in display cabinet, Tiegs Museum. Photograph courtesy of Anna Coultas, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009.
7. Image of the lion and seal skeletons in their new display cabinet in the Tiegs Museum. Skeletons donated to the museum possibly from 1920-1940. Photograph courtesy of Anna Coultas, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009.
8. Image of Moa skeleton (*Dinornis robustus*) in new display cabinet 2008, from Tiegs Museum, [www.zoology.unimelb.edu.au/tiegs/collection/highlight03.html](http://www.zoology.unimelb.edu.au/tiegs/collection/highlight03.html). Photograph courtesy of Tiegs Museum, Zoology Department, accessed November 2009.
9. Image of Moa skeleton (*Dinornis robustus*) in its old display cabinet in the old zoology building, from Tiegs Museum website: [www.zoology.unimelb.edu.au/tiegs/background/](http://www.zoology.unimelb.edu.au/tiegs/background/). Photograph courtesy of Dr Murray LittleJohn, accessed November 2009.

10. Image of Glass Plate 'The Tiegs Museum', which was donated to the museum in 1959 in honour of Professor Oscar Werner Tiegs, Chair of Zoology (1948-1956), Photograph courtesy of Anna Coultas, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2009.

**Please Note:** All Photos taken by Anna Coultas that were used in this project and those that were not will be donated to the Zoology Department and the Cultural Collections of the University of Melbourne.

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