Press Announcement – 18 September 2013

Cambridge Landmark Dismantled

The iconic whale skeleton outside the Museum of Zoology will be dismantled next week as part of the development project which sees the museum closed for three years.

The large finback whale which has been owned by the University of Cambridge since May 1866 will once again be put into storage while the Museum of Zoology refurbishment is carried out.

The whale, which was washed up at Pevensey Bay in Sussex in 1865 was originally put on display by the university at the old Museum of Zoology where it suspended over skeletons of an African and Indian elephant and stretched the length of the gallery. This building was subsequently demolished in 1965. The skeleton was then brought out of storage to be re-displayed in its current location above the entrance to the new museum building where it has been since 1996; the team used the original metal framework designed by the University’s Engineering Laboratory in the 1890s, and an extra beam built by Mackay Engineering, to suspend the whale on the podium. It took 19 men to carry the whale skull up the stairs!

Now, Nigel Larkin, a specialist conservator with vast experience of dismantling large zoological artefacts has been brought in to take apart the Cambridge landmark that has taken pride of place outside the Museum of Zoology for nearly 30 years and been part of Cambridge’s history for over 140 years. The spectacular skeleton which is nearly 70 feet long would have been the frame for an animal weighing around 80 tonnes so the task Nigel is undertaking is not an easy one and will take several weeks.

We invite press to a photo call with Nigel Larkin on Monday 23 September at 4pm. Nigel will also be available to answer questions at this time.

To confirm your attendance and for any further press or media enquiries please contact Verity Sanderson, University of Cambridge Museums Marketing and Press Coordinator on 07872 410663 or vcs25@cam.ac.uk