

THE DODO DREAMS OF FLYING AGAIN

Christine Taylor, Keeper of Natural Sciences at Hampshire County Council – and balloonist – combines her job and hobby in a visit to Bristol

One of the exciting aspects of my job as Keeper of Natural Sciences is the occasional coming together of occupation and hobby!

Amongst the 500,000 objects that I care for are a set of dodo bones that were retrieved from a marsh on Mauritius by George Clark who presented them to his friend, William Curtis, (the founder of the Curtis Museum in Alton, Hampshire) in 1867.

The dodo was a large flightless bird, related to the pigeon. It lived only on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. Dodos were common when the island was first discovered by Europeans in 1598. Unfortunately the settlers introduced pigs, dogs,

cats and rats which preyed on the dodos, leading to their extinction in about 1680.

Dodos have long been a source of fascination to me and the opportunity of working with British company Bright Bricks to create an exhibition of extinct animals made from Lego, based on the Natural Science collections of the Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service, led to (amongst other things) a flock of dodos being commissioned.

The first dodo arrived in November, to great excitement, just in time for an event that I was attending on the Isle of Wight. Since then the dodo has been photographed at sites around Hampshire and beyond.

However, it has always



been an ambition of mine to see a dodo fly! The weather in southern England has meant that there have been few opportunities for flying hot air balloons with our friends recently. Fortunately we have been able to combine a trip to Bristol with a visit to Cameron Balloons. Hannah Cameron was very welcoming and open to the rather surreal suggestion that we could bring along a nearly life-size Lego dodo.

Touring the factory was amazing – sheets of brightly coloured fabric being cut out and sewn into beautiful balloons. We took photos of

the dodo in the sewing rooms, in a basket and also by the small inflatable balloon in the foyer. After all that carrying around we aren't surprised that dodos were flightless – they are definitely heavier than air!

I still haven't seen a dodo fly, but with the weather improving there is a chance that this ambition may be fulfilled shortly!

In the meantime, following their recent "residence" at the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke, you can see our flock of dodos and other extinct animals including a sabre-tooth cat, as they tour other Hampshire museums throughout the year.



BALLOON FABRICS MADE IN SWITZERLAND

HIGHEST SECURITY
LONGEST LIFE-CYCLE
LOWEST GAS CONSUMPTION

Ask your balloon manufacturer
to make use of the qualities of
HOT AIR and HOT AIR TOP



MEYER-MAYOR AG
CH 9652 NEU ST. JOHANN
www.meyer-mayor.ch