

## **Shropshire Museum Resource Centre to be closed?**

Shropshire Council have announced their intention to make all three permanent staff at the county Museum Resource Centre compulsorily redundant. If this happens it will effectively close the Centre to public access and mothball the collections.

The Museum Resource Centre is a Shropshire-wide facility located in Ludlow in a purpose-built structure which also houses the library, completed in 2001 at a cost of over £2½M and opened by the Queen in 2003. It contains the collections of geology, entomology, invertebrates, taxidermy specimens, ceramics, costumes and social history for the whole county. These have been built up over the past 150 years by the people of Shropshire and by those undertaking specialist studies here.

The geology collection has fossils of great international importance. These include material collected by founder members of the museum, notably Dr. Thomas Lloyd and Rev. Thomas Lewis, which enabled the famous scientist Sir Roderick Impey Murchison to bring order to the rock series now known world-wide as the Silurian System, named after a Celtic tribe that lived in the region. Some of the subdivisions are named after local sites, including Ludlow, Ludford and Wenlock. Geologists from all over the world come to see these collections and use them together with the exposures they came from to link with their own rock sequences, vitally important for interpreting the planet's evolution and what lies beneath our feet.

The Resource Centre also hosts Shropshire's natural history collections, and provides items for educational visits by schools and a rolling programme of public exhibitions, most recently the stories and memorabilia of local residents who were affected by World War 1.

The Resource Centre attracts visitors to Shropshire, for tourism, education and research, contributing significantly to the local economy. Construction was largely financed by Heritage Lottery funding together with smaller grants from local businesses and individuals as well as the Council, providing secure environmentally-controlled storage and inspection facilities. Informing the public was a condition of the grant being awarded and the staff have built up active schools, volunteer and educational programmes for all ages.

However, without staffing by professional and appropriately qualified personnel, the Museum Resource Centre cannot function, and yet, as Lottie James, the Chair of the Friends of Ludlow Museum says 'Shropshire Council has made no attempt to protect the money for these three posts and sees redundancy with effective closure as the easy option'.

For further information contact Lottie James at: [SaveLMRC@gmail.com](mailto:SaveLMRC@gmail.com).