

A History of Taxidermy: art, science and bad taste.

P. A. Morris, MPM Publishing 2010.

400 pages, colour throughout, over 130,000 words and more than 1,100 pictures.



Taxidermy is a part of both our social and natural history. This book provides a review.

The development, over 300 years, of mammal and bird taxidermy, including elephants and even humans, are reviewed, along with attempts to locate the oldest existing stuffed animals. The controversy regarding the use of arsenic as a preservative is assessed, with some surprises.

Several chapters describe in detail how taxidermy businesses operated in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Their different styles of products, trade labels (including some poems from them!) and their major groups of customers, ranging from huntsmen to bird collectors and householders, are described, with many quirky stories, historical snippets and wry comment.



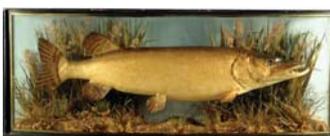
Although the main focus is principally on British taxidermists, as taxidermy for domestic decoration became so important here, the general picture would also apply to contemporary taxidermists in Europe and the USA. A whole chapter is devoted to the special features of American taxidermy and how different it is from that of Europe and how some aspects of it reached world supremacy. Frequent reference is also made to American taxidermists in other chapters and the Foreword is by Larry Blomquist, publisher of a major American taxidermy magazine.



A review of taxidermy books published in Europe and the USA makes some interesting revelations about who thought of what first.



A final chapter on taxidermy today discusses and dissects the unsubstantiated complaints and ignorant criticisms made of this subject. There is a discussion on what to do about bad taxidermy and its display, and also how professional organisations now strive to attain perfection in this field of artistic endeavour, benefitting from new skills and materials.



Overall the book aims to show that taxidermy has many different dimensions, such that the reader will not hurry past the next time they see a stuffed animal, but stop and think “Hmm, that’s interesting...”



A History of Taxidermy: art, science and bad taste - It's all here!



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