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Ancient Greek skulls in the Oxford University Museum, Part I: George Rolleston, Oxford and the formation of the human skulls collection

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Abstract

This article looks at the role of George Rolleston (1829–81), the first Anatomy and Physiology Professor at Oxford, in forming an impressive collection of crania and in bringing closer together archaeology and physical anthropology in a professional, systematic and specialized way. It discusses Rolleston's approach to the study of crania and the ways through which he was able to procure several hundreds of specimens, which after close examination were put on display in the University Museum. From this brief overview it becomes clear that skulls and bones were not neglected in the scramble for 'objects' in the nineteenth century but played a significant role not only in the University's natural science education but also in anthropological and archaeological research.

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