



RAT AND RODENT TRAIL

THE RATS ARE BACK!

SUITABLE FOR:

FAMILIES
AGES 6+



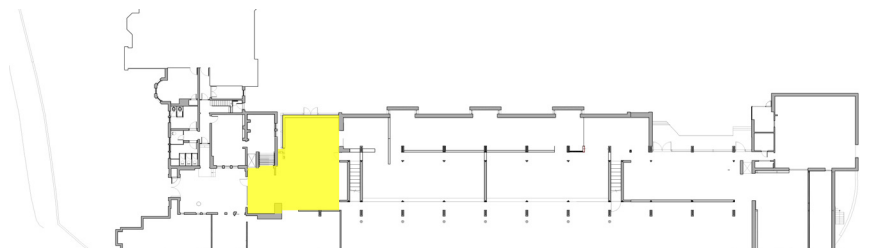
WELCOME

This trail guides you on a fascinating journey of exploration and discovery around the Museum. On the way you'll track down some amazing rodent-related stories. You'll also need to search, look and draw but remember, as our objects are precious, **please do not touch!**

So keep your eyes peeled for our rat below and if you ever feel lost, just ask a member of staff for help.

Some of you might remember the MERL rats in the old museum – a popular feature for many of our families! This trail is very much a work in progress and, once you have finished it, we would love to hear your thoughts! Please let us know your thoughts on the last page, and visit staff in the Earley Learning Studio to find out more!

WELCOME AREA

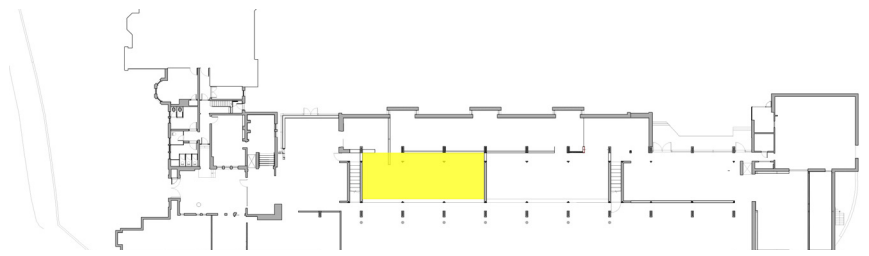


In the big glass case, you will discover a range of fascinating objects!

Museums and archives often have a hidden rodent problem. Amongst the objects in this case, can you find a wooden trap which was made in the early 1900s. Even though it's a museum object this trap caught a rodent in 2016! But what type of rodent is it?

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A YEAR ON THE FARM



Find an intriguing print by the artist John Nash which shows the sport of ratting. As this print of a painting shows, boys, men and dogs were all involved in the catching of rats as they fled from the stacks.

Did you know?

Rats could be an unwanted presence in corn stacks and could eat their way through a lot of the grain before the sheaves were threshed. There are reports of as many as 77 adult rats being discovered in a single stack of corn!

How many dogs can you see in this painting?

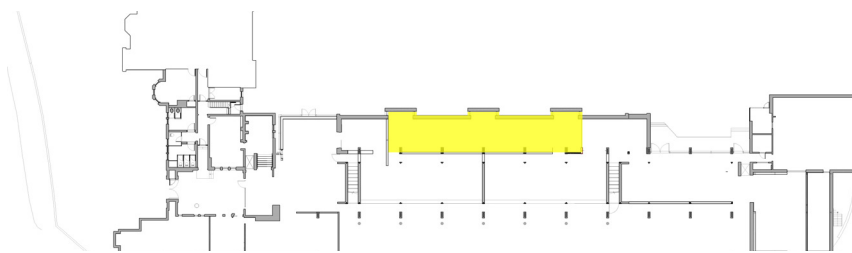
Explore the rest of this room and find a number of objects used for cutting and shaping hedges.

Rats can travel up to four miles to find a safe haven, food and water.

Rats in the country also live in hedgerows, and some of the objects in the case were used to maintain hedges. Choose one object and draw it in the box below:

The object I have chosen is a

TOWN AND COUNTRY



Rats like a warm, quiet place to nest and a mattress would be ideal home for them. Can you find a mattress that would fit the bill?

Have you found it? This particular mattress was in fact found hidden away in a wall, and has traces of rat poo in it! Can you see any?!

Continue to explore this gallery. Find and open a drawer labelled *Salmonella*.

Many farmers viewed rats as pests which needed to be controlled using poisoned bait and sometimes even gassing. Rodent poisons could include salmonella.

Can you find a picture of a rat in this drawer? What do you think the artist who drew it was trying to tell us about rats?

Pretend to be this rat – what movements and sounds might it have made?

Continue to explore this room and stop when you see a fire engine.

This fire engine is a bit older than the ones you usually see! Rats cause some costly damage to more modern fire engines by chewing through electrical cables.

Study this fire engine closely. Where in England was it used?

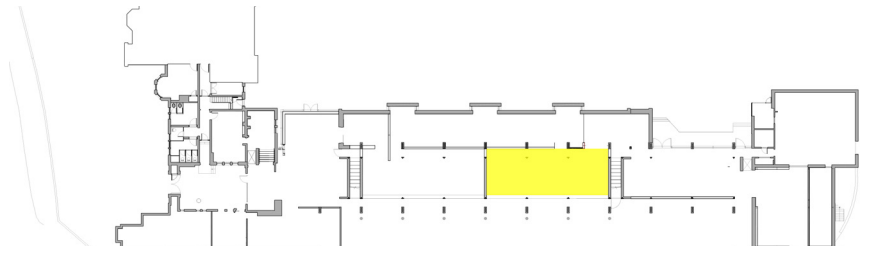
Near to the fire engine you will discover a case of objects, all focused on allotments and growing.

Rats have teeth that grow all the time and they need to wear them down by gnawing a range of things.

Can you spot a plant label in this case which has been gnawed or chewed by a rat?

What number can be found on the gnawed plant label?

MAKING RURAL ENGLAND



Explore this room and you will discover a case full of traps which were designed to catch animals of many shapes and sizes.

How many different animals can you see? Choose one and draw it in the box below.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a child to draw an animal inside.

The animal I have chosen is a

Continue through this room and stop when you find the beautiful toy farm in a case.

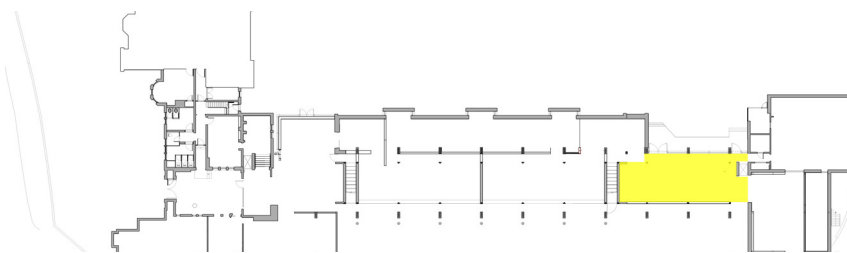
Can you spot the cat with her kitten in this model?

Cats have been used on farms to keep rodents at bay for a very long time. In the 1940s scientists showed that cats could be effective in rat control, but only within a small range (such as within a barn or in a garden). To be effective at controlling rats, cats also needed to be fed just enough milk to keep them on the farm, but not so much as to leave them with no interest in rat catching.



REMEMBER – Please keep your paws off our objects!

FORCES FOR CHANGE



At the start of the Second World War, rats were thought of as a threat to food production because of their appetite for animal feed, grain and crops. As well as the specialist pest officers, rats were also controlled by members of the Women's Land Army.

Find the photograph of Betty Merrett, who was a member of the Women's Land Army in the Second World War.

In this photograph, Betty is trying to catch rats. Looking at it closely, how do you think she is catching rats?

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Continue through the gallery and find the Museum's largest object: the threshing machine.

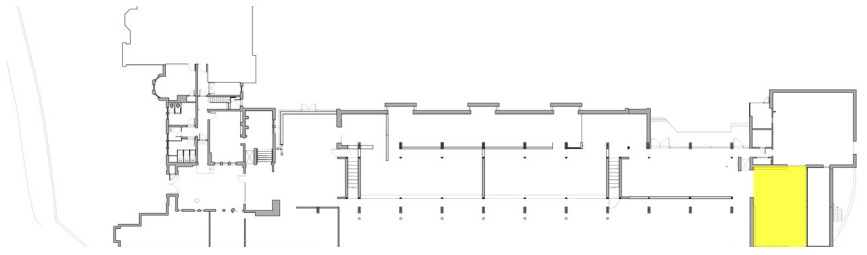
Rats lived in corn stacks and they would come running out as the stack was taken apart for threshing in a machine such as this one. Sometimes a farmer would hire a professional rat-catcher to be present at threshing time with some ferrets and terrier dogs to catch them.

Which company made our big blue threshing machine? Look for clues on its outside!

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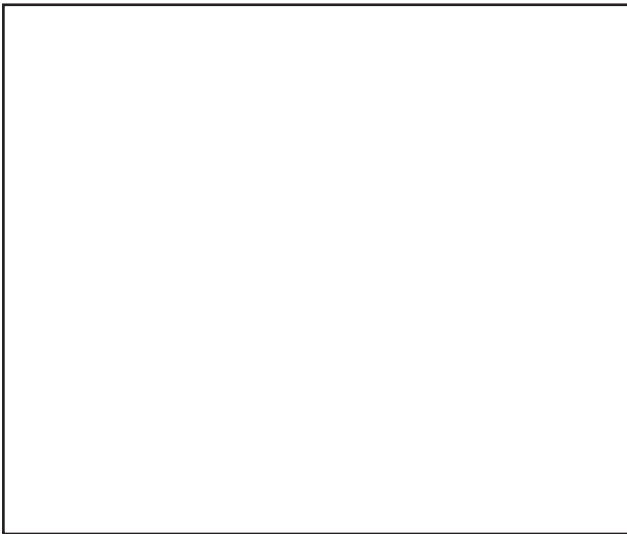
OUR COUNTRY LIVES



Thatched or straw roofs could offer safe, warm places for rats to live and breed – and in particular for black rats who liked to climb!

Find the Museum's impressive figure of King Alfred made of straw.

Draw him in the box below:



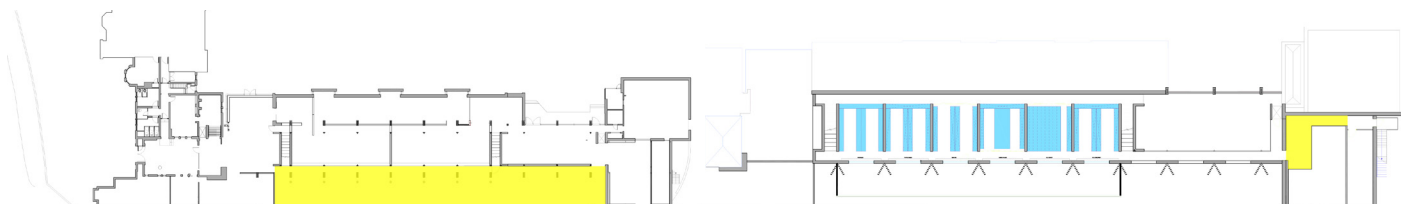
Did you know?

There are 56 species of rat. There is a difference between the Black or Ship's Rat (*R. Rattus*) and the Brown Rat (*R. norvegicus*) which have both lived in Britain. The black rat climbs into lofts and is happy to live in houses near to people. The brown rat heads downwards, and prefers to keep its distance from humans by burrowing and living in tunnels.

REMEMBER – Please keep your paws off our objects!



WAGON WALK & LADYBIRD GALLERY



In this gallery you will find one collection of objects which makes this museum unique: our wagons.

Find the wagon with the fabric roof or hood. Look at the wagons and the clues around it. Who do you think might have owned a wagon such as this one?

This is actually a miller's wagon, and not a cowboy's!

Rats love grain, so they liked to pick up the fallen wheat, barley, millet, oats and flour in wind- and watermills.

Our miller's wagon was owned by a man called Benjamin Cole. He ran the Codicote and Kimpton mills near Luton, on the Hertfordshire border. His wagon would often carry three tons and two horses were needed to pull it when fully loaded. On it you will see a six-pointed star on its front which is believed to be a decoration.

If you owned a wagon, what symbol would you use to decorate it? Draw it in the box below.

Now head upstairs to the Ladybird Gallery – either head back into Forces for Change to take the lift or stairs, or continue to the end of the Wagon Walk and go up the stairs next to the Welcome Area case.

In some cultures rats have an incredibly positive role, such as how in Hinduism rats are symbols of the ability to overcome obstacles. In China the rat is associated with abundance, prosperity and times of plenty. Rats have long featured in stories and popular culture – for example, a witty rat pops up to narrate the links between event in Lion TV's programme *Horrible Histories*.

Look at the collection of Ladybird Books in this room. Which book by Kenneth Grahame has a rat playing a leading role? (You will find a clue on the cover)

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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Thank you for completing our **Rat and Rodent Trail**!

This trail is very much a work-in-progress, and we would be extremely grateful if you would answer the questions below, then rip this page out of your booklet and hand it in to a member of staff.

1. Did you think there were:

Too many objects in the Trail	<input type="checkbox"/>
The right amount of objects in the Trail	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too few objects in the Trail	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Did you think there was:

Too much information about the objects	<input type="checkbox"/>
The right amount of information about the objects	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too little information about the objects	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Did you think the language was appropriate for your child's or childrens' age?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age/s of your child/children:	

4. Would you have used this trail if it came on:

An app for your phone/tablet that you download yourself	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
A tablet provided by the Museum	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. If you answered Yes to Q.4, please tick the digital features which would interest you:

Options to discover more about objects online	<input type="checkbox"/>
A themed game to accompany the trail	<input type="checkbox"/>
A game on the website which gives you clues to find bonus rate objects in the Museum	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Would you be interested in a similar Trail designed for adults:

On paper for in the Museum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online with more digital content	<input type="checkbox"/>

To hear more about the Museum's activities for children, please let us know your name and email address to be added to our mailing list: