

THE secrets of Folkestone's past are being brought to life by new project Navigating History.

The brainchild of innovation company Proboscis and curator Deborah Smith, it aims to promote local history collections by commissioning artists to create projects from them.

Folkestone library and museum was one of three institutes in the south east chosen to take part in the scheme and, in the first part of a weekly series, KATHRYN TYE focuses on the work of artist ROB KESSELER and his creation *Botanizing the Library*...

The flora of Folkestone is the focus of Rob's unusual creation.

The senior lecturer in ceramic design at Central St Martin's university, London, decided to approach his project by using the work of past Folkestone botanists Henry Ulfyett and Jocelyn Brooke.

He has chosen passages from their texts and illustrated them with old and new photographs of the town and photographs of the museum's botanical specimens.

In an unusual touch, Rob has also taken microscopic images of pollen from the specimens, photographed them at a magnification of 2,000 and dyed them the colour of the actual flower.

Rob said: "I have always been interested in biology and art and, although I was forced to abandon science at school after

Navigating *History*

failing my mock exams, I refer to nature in all my work. When I first visited Folkestone library last year, to create a proposal, I was struck by the huge amount of botanical specimens and decided to base my work on them.

"I enjoy tying strands of information together, so this has been a dream project.

"Although it can be difficult to get at the archives, once you lift the lid there is a wealth of information."

In addition to a display at Folkestone museum, Rob's finished work can also be seen in a limited edition 48-page book and series of bookmarks, available from Ottakar's bookshop.

Project co-ordinator Deborah Smith said: "We have been delighted with how the artists have all approached the project in different ways.

"Hopefully it will demonstrate to the public the wide range of resources on offer to them at Folkestone library, completely free of charge."

Botanizing the Library will be on display in Folkestone library and museum until November 27.

For more information about the new exhibition, phone Folkestone library on 01303 256710.

