

## Norwich area museums committee

Date: **Tuesday, 04 June 2024**  
Time: **14:30**  
Venue: **Mancroft room City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH**

### Committee members:

#### Norwich City Council:

Councillors Caine, Huntley, Kidman, Schmierer and Wright and 1 vacancy

#### Norfolk County Council:

Councillors Birmingham, Brociek-Coulton, Reilly, Rumsby, Ward and Watkins

#### Co-opted non-voting members:

Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund) and Felicity Devonshire (Friends of the Norwich Museums), Councillor Booth (Broadland District Council), Councillor Graham (South Norfolk) and Danusia Wurm (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society)

**Ex officio:** Councillor Kybird (vice chair, Norfolk Joint Museums committee)

### For further information please contact:

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For information about attending or speaking at meetings, please contact the committee officer above or refer to the council's website.



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## Agenda

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| 1 | <b>Appointment of Chair</b><br><br>To appoint a chair for the civic year 2024-25.   |         |
| 2 | <b>Appointment of Vice Chair</b><br><br>To appoint a vice chair for the civic year 2024-25.   |         |
| 3 | <b>Apologies</b><br><br>To receive apologies for absence  |         |
| 4 | <b>Declarations of interest</b><br><br>(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting)   |         |
| 5 | <b>Public questions/petitions</b><br><br>To receive questions / petitions from the public which have been submitted in accordance with the council's constitution.  |         |
| 6 | <b>Minutes</b><br><br>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024.   | 5 - 12  |
| 7 | <b>Norwich Museums Report - February to April 2024</b><br><br><b>Purpose</b> - To receive the report on the activities at the Norwich Museums for the period February to April 2024.  | 13 - 42 |
| 8 | <b>Reports from the Representatives of the Voluntary organisations</b><br><br>This is a standing item to receive reports from the non-voting members of the committee who represent the voluntary organisations that support the Norfolk Museums Service.<br><br><b>Community Culture Club: a museum creative wellbeing programme for people living with dementia - presentation</b><br><br>At the end of the formal business of the committee meeting members and interested parties are invited to remain for a |         |

presentation by Rosalind Hewitt, Learning and Engagement Officer, Norfolk Museums Service.

Date of publication: **Friday, 24 May 2024**





**Norwich Area Museums Committee**

**14:30 to 16:00**

**5 March 2024**

Present:

**City Councillors:**

Huntley (chair)  
Hoechner  
Kidman  
Schmierer  
Wright

**County Councillors:**

Ward (vice chair)  
Brociek-Coulton  
Watkins

**Co-opted non-voting Members:**

Felicity Devonshire (Friends of the Norwich Museums), Danusia Wurm (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society) and Councillors Graham (South Norfolk District Council) and Booth (Broadland District Council)  
Councillor Kybird (ex officio member)

Apologies:

County Councillors Birmingham, Reilly and Rumsby, and Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund)

Also present:

Robin Hanley, Assistant Head of Museums  
Stuart Garner, Operations Manager  
Jan Pitman, Learning Manager (Norwich)  
Francesca Vanke, Senior Curator of Norwich Museums and Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Public Questions and Petitions**

There were no public questions or petitions.

**3. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023.

#### 4. Norwich Museums Report – November 2023 to January 2024

The Assistant Head of Museums introduced the report (which is available on the website [here](#)) and proposed that he and his colleagues would present the relevant sections and pause after each section for members to ask questions or comment.

The Assistant Head of Museums presented Section 1, Infection Control Update, of the report. He confirmed that Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) was continuing to monitor infection levels and there had been no disruption found over the winter. The CO2 monitors remained in place across a number of sites. These monitors were also able to monitor the humidity and temperature remotely and some testing with the monitors had allowed for dashboards to monitor levels more closely. Further monitors were being made available to NMS by the County Council's property services to use across more sites. This would allow NMS to use the CO2 monitors to monitor the museums' sites environment as a potential alternative to the current system. The Assistant Head of Museums suggested that, in future, reports to the Committee the section on Infection Control Update could be omitted as this was now part of business as usual and if the situation was to change then this could be reported upon. The Committee supported this suggestion.

The Operations Manager presented Section 2, Norwich Museums Operations, of the report. Due to the ongoing Keep Project, the current opening arrangements were still in place, with the pop-up catering and retail facility within the Rotunda continuing to prove popular. The new entrance area was due to be handed back to NMS in Spring 2024 and would be made available to the public shortly thereafter. He detailed the number of ceremonies that had been held in Norwich Castle over the previous 12 months, which had generated an additional 18,397 in footfall.

The Learning Manager (Norwich) presented Section 3 of the report, Norwich Learning Team Activities – Highlights Report. The service was currently developing a new event for Key Stage 2 pupils at Strangers' Hall focussed on Robert Kett, and this would be piloted in early March 2024. The event would create a new immersive experience for pupils as it would allow pupils to meet different "characters" from that time period. For Key Stage 3 pupils, the Transatlantic Slave Trade event had recently been relaunched. This would continue to be updated to ensure that the subject matter was treated sensitively. A number of events were being planned as part of the Keep Activity Plan in advance of the re-opening, which included a "mystery" play, an immersive play performed by both actors and community groups at the Forum. This would be taking place the same weekend as the Lord Mayor's Procession and therefore would attract additional visitors. During the school holidays, a range of activities had taken place, including the opportunity for visitors to build a medieval town. The service was trialling new ways of engaging with pupils from more deprived areas of the city, which included providing free tickets to the families. The Learning Team continued to engage with a number of community groups and projects such as the UEA Norfolk Initiative for Coastal and Rural Health Equalities (NICHE) Kintsugi Project and The Garage's Creative Well-being Project. Work had started between the Learning Team and visitor services staff to develop

twice daily history highlights tours for members of the public by visitor services staff.

In response to a member's question the Learning Manager (Norwich) confirmed that pupils from the Robert Kett Primary School in Wymondham would be invited to take part in the new event focussed on Robert Kett.

A member queried what the sensitivities were around the Key Stage 3 Transatlantic Slave Trade event. In response, the Learning Manager (Norwich) said that the Learning Team worked closely with the Norfolk Record Office to understand the complexities of items in the collection such as the Paston Treasure and the county's links to plantations. The event also sought to highlight the abolitionist movement within Norfolk.

In response to a member's question, the Learning manager (Norwich) said that further work was needed to identify the schools that were not engaging with the learning service. The service would be reaching out to the schools and nurseries within one mile of Norwich Castle to understand the barriers for those attending. This included working with Earlham Nursery to provide transport for pupils to help alleviate this particular barrier.

Members commended the Learning Team on the breadth of events offered and the range of groups that the service worked with and would welcome further information on the work that was undertaken in relation to the effects of arts and culture on well-being. The Learning Manager (Norwich) commented that the service was increasingly using items from the NMS collections and using these in new ways.

The Assistant Head of Museums presented section 4, Kick the Dust: Norfolk – project activity update, of the report. The current project was funded through additional funding from the Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) Uplift award for the period 2023-26. While the focus of the activity for the current project was not in Norwich, activity in Norwich continued. The report detailed the number of young people who had taken part in activities related to the current project which had been running since May 2023. While the majority of activity took place face-to-face some continued to be hosted remotely. The new project involved NMS working more closely with the County Council's Information and Library Service and activity had therefore taken place at libraries. Involving young people was at the forefront of the project and young people were members of the project steering group to help shape the project and its activities. A key learning from the initial project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) had been the development of staff to more confidently engage with young people. As previously reported to the Committee a funding bid to the NLHF was ongoing in collaboration with YMCS Leicestershire, and this would be submitted in May 2024 which, if successful the delivery of the project would start in late 2024.

The Chair asked for the terms "intervention" and "opportunity" to be clarified in relation to the Kick the Dust: Norfolk project. The Assistant Head of Museums said that during the development of the initial NLHF funding bid, the service had looked how to classify the different types of contact the project could have with young people and how to record these, as one individual may have multiple

contacts with the service through the project. An “intervention” was any interaction that a young person had with the project and therefore it could measure the number of contacts an individual had with the project. An “opportunity” was an event that had been offered. Using these classifications the service had been able to monitor how the programme was engaging with young people.

In response to a member’s query, the Assistant Head of Museums said that the reason digital skills were included as a key aim for the new project was that digital skills were highlighted during a sector wide skills audit. Digital means were also becoming increasingly important to engaging with young people and other audiences. This did not assume that young people only wanted to engage with or to learn digital skills but that they could provide new ways of working with digital mediums. An example of this was a current project that was looking at creating digital resources such as a Zine version of the guidebook for Norwich Castle and digital tours. Young people involved with the Kick the Dust: Norfolk project had also been key in shaping the NMS social media channels. The project had shown the strength of collaboration between services both within the County Council and other organisations.

A member queried whether the University of East Anglia and Norwich University of the Arts students were aware that they were able to attend museums’ sites for free when presenting their student ID badge. The Assistant Head of Museums said that NMS worked closely with the universities on this but was reliant on the universities to communicate this with their students. The service would reach out to the universities again to reiterate the offer.

In response to a member’s question the Assistant Head of Museums said that he would reach out to the Kick the Dust: Norfolk co-ordinator to get a breakdown of activities that took place within the Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council areas and provide this.

A member asked whether the NLHF provided information on the criteria it used to assess funding bids and whether the current bid for funding was likely to be successful. The Assistant Head of Museums said that the NLHF had a strategic framework that bids were assessed against. This had recently been refreshed but broadly this aligned with Norfolk Museums Services’ values and missions. The service had a strong track record with getting funding both from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other organisations such as the Arts Council England.

The Assistant Head of Museums presented section 5, Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn – project update, of the report. The service had been unable to organise a tour for committee members as the service had reduced the number of tours to the site to allow the level of activity on the site to move quickly. He would liaise with the Committee Officer to arrange a tour for members at a later date. The report had a number of photographs showing progress of the site. The next section of the project to be handed back would be the Percival Wing in April 2024, which would then be opened to visitors. This included the new entrance to the museum, the restaurant and shop. All structural works had been completed within the wing including the mosaic of the City Crest and other tiled flooring. Construction work in the Keep had been focussed on the installation of structural elements on the roof including the new roof platforms and ensuring that these



were waterproof. Inside the Keep, the new floor levels had been installed which meant the partitioning of the space and electrical works could start. NMS had been working closely with the British Museum and agreed the loans for the British Museum Partnership Gallery and the interpretive text for the cases. A first draft of the audio-visual displays had been received and was being considered. The tapestry that would be displayed in the Keep was being put together ready for installation. He said that it looked likely that the Keep would be able to reopen in late summer 2024.

Members congratulated NMS for the segment on BBC Radio 4's Today programme on 27 February 2024 on the Norwich Castle: Royal Place Reborn project. The Assistant Head of Museums said that it was hoped that the Today programme would revisit Norwich to report on progress of the project. The service was always looking at ways to raise awareness of the project.

The Assistant Head of Museums presented section 6, other activity across Norwich museums, of the report. The report included details of a range of activities at both sites. Members were referred to section 6.1 of the report, Museum of Norwich, a highlight during the period had been a Christmas cracker-making workshop. Section 6.2 detailed the activities at Strangers' Hall for the period. Strangers' Hall had had a big year in 2023 as the museum had celebrated its centenary as a museum. Support for events to celebrate this anniversary had been provided by the Norwich Freeman's Charity and the Friends of the Norwich Museums. A key part of this had been the improvements to the frontage of the museums. A highlight in the activity programme in December had been a LED candle-light tour of Strangers' Hall during the evening. This had created a special experience for visitors and was a creative way of using the building and its collections. Due to the fabric of the building, the annual deep clean had taken place in January and February 2024. This was key to maintaining the building and collections as it was important to keep on top of dust and pests.

In response to a member's query the Learning Manager (Norwich) said that a separate Norwich Industries day event had been planned for schools to complement *The Norwich Industries Tours* at Museum of Norwich that were taking place on the first Saturday of the month until April 2024.

Members discussed the *Strangers' Hall After Dark* event and commented that it had been an innovative event and could be held annually. The service could also explore conducting similar events in Norwich Castle following its reopening, an example for this could be Berlin's *Long Night of Museums*, where museums across the city were open and hosted events. The Assistant Head of Museums said that museums felt different at night and the service would need to consider such events and look at suitable events. The sites were occasionally opened out of hours for commercial events or for private hire. The Operations Manager commented that Strangers' Hall was a natural location for a candlelight tour as it would have shown how the building would have been experienced by its occupants. The event had also highlighted the Christmas decorations and the opportunity to develop a core Christmas programme for Stranger's Hall.

The Senior Curator of Norwich Museums presented section 7, Norwich Curatorial update, of the report. The work of curators had been divided between

work on exhibitions and collections management. The Curator of Historic Art had been working on reorganising the collection including an audit of the collections. She had also been developing a future watercolour gallery exhibition on Catherine Maude Nichols and other women artists. Due to the works in Shirehall to treat the dry rot, the Senior Curator of Costume and Textiles had been working on collection management, and this included improving the documentation of the collection. She had been supported by volunteers to examine and repackage items within the collection. On 18 February 2024, the Senior Curator of Costume and Textiles had hosted the launch of a zine by local publisher Common Threads Press on embroidery, which had allowed visitors to view embroidery items from the collections. The Curator of the Norfolk Regimental Museum had been hosting students from Norwich University of the Arts. This followed from the relaunch of the website, which had attracted students to use the collections as a resource in their work. The Curator of Modern and Contemporary had recently worked with the Learning Manager (Norwich) on events related to the display of the film *Britannia* by Amarety Golding in the Timothy Gurney Gallery. She had also been working with the East Anglia Arts Fund on an exhibition within the T Galleries of Roger Ackling's work. The Senior Curator of Norwich Museums and keeper of fine and decorative art had been working on the Turner exhibition at the Time and Tide museum; *Crossings, Constructions and Connections* which had recently closed. She was now working on a forthcoming Norwich Castle exhibition; *JMW Turner and Changing Visions of Landscape*.

Members commented that they were pleased to see the forthcoming exhibition on women-only artists in the watercolour gallery to highlight the work of women artists in East Anglia. The Senior Curator of Norwich Museums said this would form part of a longer-term project to exhibit the work of women artists from the region.

The Operations Manager presented section 8, other developments, of the report. The Shirehall Courtroom works were ongoing to treat the dry rot. The work continued to be very complex due to the nature of the building and the number of structural timbers that had been affected. Due to the complexity and additional issues found during the course of the work, it was developing into a major capital programme as a number of additional points of water ingress had been found. Issues with subsidence had also been found within the building, which were believed to have been caused through the construction of the courtroom as it was likely that a slice had been cut from the Castle Mound to provide space to build the Courtroom. The service had a duty of care of the building to address the issues and was looking at ways to maintain appropriate access to all areas of the building for ongoing maintenance work once the project was completed. The Wider Impact Group was working alongside the Keep Project and the report detailed the activities that the Group was covering. Activity had recently increased due to the forthcoming handover of the Percival Wing. This activity included the introduction of a new ticketing system and a review of the customer journey. The customer journey would be very different from the original experience as visitors would be split between pre-booked tickets and those purchasing on the day. As the museum had been kept open throughout the project work was looking at bringing those galleries that had been closed to visitors back online, which included The Egyptian Gallery. A number of

legislative changes had been made in regard to security and health and safety and these needed to be considered and implemented.

A member queried how the works to Shirehall would be funded. In response, the Operations Manager said that the current project was funded from Norfolk County Council's capital funding. The wider works were still being scoped and sources of funding would be explored.

The Operations Manager presented section 9, visitor numbers, of the report. It was anticipated by the end of the financial year 2023/24 that visitor numbers for Norwich Castle would reach 125,000. This meant a return to pre-pandemic levels of visitors to the Castle. Other sites had also seen increases to the visitor numbers.

Members thanked the Assistant Head of Museums and his colleagues for the report.

**RESOLVED** to:

- 1) note the Norwich Museums Report November 2023 to January 2024; and
- 2) ask the Assistant Head of Museums to liaise with the Committee Officer to organise another site visit of Norwich Castle for committee members.

**5. Reports of the Representatives of the Voluntary Organisations**

Felicity Devonshire, Friends of the Norwich Museums, addressed the Committee. A written report had been circulated to members (which was available on the website [here](#)). The Friends supported the Norwich Museums in a number of ways including support to Strangers' Hall for its centenary year, which had included funding to update displays using archive materials. Within Strangers' Hall the Friends had also been able to support the cleaning of a carpet through the bequest of a Friend. The Friends were looking forward to organising a tea party for its members and volunteers that had supported and worked on the Friends Tapestry that would be hung in the Keep upon its completion.

Danusia Wurm, Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS) addressed the Committee. NCAS had restarted its talks and events programme with a talk from the Vice-Chancellor of Norwich University of the Arts. Further talks would be taking place in April and May, details of which had been published on the NCAS website. This included a collaboration with the Norfolk and Norwich Festival to hold a talk with an artist. She highlighted that students were able to attend NCAS talks for free. NCAS had worked with the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art to host a Welcoming Patron event at Norwich Castle to welcome new patrons of the organisation. The support that NCAS provided to small local artists continued with the second round of bids for the *Small Grants Fund* having recently closed.

**RESOLVED** to thank Felicity Devonshire and Danusia Wurm for their reports and record the Committee's gratitude to the voluntary organisations that support the Norwich museums.

## 6. Schedule of Meetings – Civic Year 2024-25

(The chair agreed to take this as an urgent item).

The Committee Officer highlighted that the following schedule of meetings for the Norwich Area Museums Committee was proposed. This would be subject to approval at Norwich City Council's annual meeting.

**RESOLVED** to note the following schedule of meetings:

Tuesday 4 June 2024 at 14:30

Tuesday 3 September 2024 at 14:30

Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 14:30

Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 14:30

CHAIR

## Norwich Area Museums Committee 4 June 2024

### Norwich Museums Report: February to April 2024

#### 1. Norwich Museums operations

##### 1.1 Norwich Castle opening arrangements

Due to the ongoing construction works at Norwich Castle, visitors continue to use the external entrance door E8 as the temporary entrance and exit route.

The new 'pop-up' catering unit continues to operate within the Rotunda areas of Norwich Castle along with a seating section. This interim offer will remain in place until the new catering facilities open as part of the Norwich Castle project. A temporary retail offer continues to operate within the Rotunda, with increased lines of stock available for purchase.

##### 1.2 Norwich Castle ceremonies

The number of ceremonies taking place at Norwich Castle has continued to remain strong, with 718 completed within the past 12 months.

Month	No of Ceremonies	Footfall
May	65	1396
June	151	3468
July	73	2070
August	71	2120
September	69	2022
October	86	2253
November	33	729
December	40	825
January 24	19	296
February	27	592
March	37	809
April	47	1154
<b>Total</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>17,734</b>



The Colman Gallery wedding space

## 2. Norwich Learning Team activity – highlights report

The Norwich Museums Learning team continue to develop, deliver and evaluate the impact of learning programmes for priority and target audiences, including Norfolk schools and young people. Staff have carefully managed the reintroduction of in-person learning events at all three city museums. To explore the programmes in more detail and get involved, please visit the *Learning Hub* pages of the Norwich Castle website: [Learning - Norfolk Museums](#)



### School events

#### **Kett's Rebellion KS2**

In March we piloted an immersive and interactive Key Stage 2 event at Strangers' Hall which uses the backdrop of Kett's rebellion to help children to learn about life in Tudor England. 120 children participated in two pilot sessions in which they met members of Mistress Sotherton's household, from the high to the lowly, as they prepare for Mayor Codd to attend an evening feast.

The morning sessions introduce children to the running of the household, as they learn to dance, tidy Mistress Sotherton's bedchamber, weave cloth, find out about how to greet their 'betters', and meet a disgruntled servant. After lunch, the pace quickens – Kett's rebels have arrived at the City Gates and the household must decide what to do. Children act as messengers to take news updates to the different characters to find out what they think should be done – the final decision being whether we should join Kett's men on Mousehold Heath.





Feedback from the pilot events was overwhelmingly positive with both children and adults immersed and engaged throughout.

Teacher's comments:

*I felt it was much more interactive than the sessions you ran last year. The shorter more varied sessions worked very well and I felt the children were much more engaged with the activities.*

*The feedback from the children was extremely positive and our class of 30 all said they really enjoyed it and had a great time. Thank you!*

*The children loved that it was interactive and enjoyed debating.*

## Teacher training

Norwich Castle hosted two events focusing upon the impact of learning outside the classroom to more than 75 trainee teachers.

Over 30 primary and 15 secondary trainees from City College Norwich, the University of East Anglia and Suffolk and Norfolk School-Centred Initial Teacher Trainees were introduced to the museum sector in general, and Norwich Castle in particular. They discussed learning outside the classroom, cross-curricular learning, what good practice looks like and why it is important. They also explored how to use objects in their classroom teaching and why this can be such an impactful activity.

One trainee said: *"It was useful to understand how pupils would benefit from visiting the castle. It was interesting to hear about some of the history within the museum and the activities at the end inspired me to think of activities I could do at school in the future. The group activity was useful, it made me think of ways the museum could enhance learning."*

A tutor said: *"It was helpful to get an update on the work at the castle and find out which trips are currently*



*running. The afternoon provided an excellent rationale for the importance of visiting historic sites with young people.”*

## **Events and visitor programming**

### **Early Years & Family Saturdays:**

Our Early Years and Family Saturdays, held on the second and fourth Saturday of each month respectively, continue to be an important part of the learning team’s delivery.

In March, the Family Saturday event was devoted to medieval knights and their lives. Like many other Early Years and Family Saturdays, this event gave us the chance to explore new approaches to delivery. It was also an opportunity for us to test some new activities in advance of Easter holiday programme and the Keep reopening.

Visitors were invited to explore our galleries and collections in search of things a knight might need. They handled arms and armour to solve puzzles, tried out some medieval combat moves with Knight Club and got creative while making a split-pin knight and designing their own coat of arms inspired by our natural history collection. Our youngest visitors could step into the shoes of a medieval knight in our Early Years area where they got a chance to explore different materials, dress up and prepare a medieval meal and feed their hobby horses!

In April, our Family Saturday coincided with the film screening at Norwich Castle of *Fashion Reimagined* by Becky Hutner as part of UEA Green Film Festival. The film’s focus on sustainable fashion inspired the theme of our family event which explored fashion through ages. Visitors had fun ‘stepping’ into paintings using different props, trying on costumes from different epochs and designing their outfit of the future inspired by our fine art and natural history collections. As part of this event, we also invited a collective ‘We Wear The Trousers’ (WWTT) to share with our audiences their ideas on promotion of sustainable fashion and waste reduction.



As part of our Early Years and Family Saturday events, we continue to provide free family vouchers for different school settings including those in more deprived areas with the aim of broadening access.



## Medieval Easter at Norwich Castle

Easter at Norwich Castle was celebrated in medieval style as a time of rebirth, growth and renewal while we have been getting ready for the upcoming opening of the renewed Norwich Castle Keep.



As part of our Medieval Easter programme, our visitors were given a unique opportunity to see some religious objects that will be displayed in the Keep. Our family audiences were invited to follow our saintly trail inspired by these objects as well as explore medieval arms and armour, try medieval costumes and dragon capes in our Early Years playing area and get creative while taking part in angels and devils peg dolls making and printing of illuminated letters.

On Saturday 6 April, we had a special offer for our visitors. We invited our talented textile volunteers, who have been stitching the amazing Norwich Friends Tapestry for the Castle Keep, to speak to our audiences about their project. Visitors had a preview of a small part of our Norwich tapestry and some new medieval costumes.

## 'Slow You Down' Feb Half -Term programme

Our February half-term activities were inspired by the focus of this year's Norwich Science Festival on well-being and mental health. Visitors could unwind with a book or a jigsaw puzzle and listen to some calming musing in our 'chill out' zone. They could also take part in activities encouraging mindfulness and relaxation such as board games, sewing, mindful, and interactive art 'yoga' sessions inspired by our collection.



## **Norwich Works Industries Tours**

Between February and April 2024, we continued to run The Norwich Industries Guided Tours at the Museum of Norwich complementing *Norwich Works: The Industrial Photography of Walter & Rita Nurnberg* exhibition at Norwich Castle. The tours highlighted objects in the collections that linked to three of the industries photographed by the Nurnbergs: shoemaking, chocolate manufacture, and constructional engineering.

The feedback gathered from the visitors who attended the tours was very positive:

*'I enjoyed the wealth of knowledge of information delightfully shared.'*

*'The tour had made me want to visit the display of photos at the Castle.'*

*'Not from the area so nice to hear about the history of Norwich.'*

*'Will look out for other tours from Norwich museums.'*

From May onwards, on the first Saturday of the month, the visitors to the Museum of Norwich will be able to join us on a Building History Tour.

## **BSL Norwich Works tours**

Following the success of our British Sign Language (BSL) tours of *The Last Voyage of the Gloucester* exhibition, we commissioned local young historian and Deaf BSL user Daniel Jillings to deliver BSL tours of *Norwich Works*. Both tours sold out, and tour attendees were pleased to learn that the exhibition had five BSL labels, accessed by scanning a QR code. Daniel had researched d/Deaf factory workers, and tour attendees shared stories of their relatives who had worked in the factories.

Daniel Jillings participated in the online Kick the Dust work experience programme last year and we are delighted to be working with him to offer BSL tours for our temporary exhibitions. We are planning to offer BSL tours of the exhibition *SUNLIGHT: Roger Ackling* in August.



## The Garage Creative Wellbeing workshop

We are continuing to nurture our partnership with The Garage's Creative Wellbeing project for adults. Using the session model developed for Community Culture Club, we explore the collections at the Museum of Norwich through gentle discussion, object handling, exploring the galleries, and a craft activity. In March we looked at the shoe collection and created shoe bunting as a group. The group will be coming back in June to work with poet Daisy Henwood, as part of her Arts Council funded project *FOUND*, exploring museum collections across Norfolk through creative writing.



## Mini Symposium: In the footsteps of medieval Norfolk

In April we welcomed visitors to a special mini medieval symposium to celebrate Easter. The Royal Palace Reborn curatorial team gave talks focusing on themes of religion, pilgrimage, and the changing seasons.

The talks were very well received by an engaged audience and included:

*Rediscovering the Bishop's Palace in Norwich* by Andrew Ferrara

*Discovering the Archaeology of Pilgrimage at Bromholm Priory* by Dr Tim Pestell

*Nature and Nurture: Medieval depictions of the Labours of the Months* by Dr Agata Gomolka

## Norwich International Youth Project visit Museum of Norwich

Norwich International Youth Project (NIYP) is a charity supporting young people in Norfolk who are seeking asylum, have refugee status or are otherwise displaced from their country of origin. In April, we welcomed twenty-four NIYP young people to the Museum of Norwich for a special after-hours visit. The group were able to explore the museum at leisure and take part in a creative writing and craft activity with Norfolk Museums staff alongside writer Daisy Henwood. Daisy's workshop was part of her Arts Council funded project *FOUND*, exploring museum collections across Norfolk through creative writing.

This poem was written by Sammir, age 14, from Afghanistan, following the visit:

*In Norwich hearts a museum stands  
Guardian of tales from distant land  
Within its walls history comes alive,  
in every artifact, every archive  
From medieval times to modern day  
Museums halls tell stories in their own ways*

*Whispers of battle fought and won  
 Echoes of life lived now done  
 Curtains drawn back on ancient scenes  
 Revealing the past the vibrant greens  
 A factory of knowledge where each display  
 Unravels the mysteries of yesterday  
 Listening closely you'll hear the call  
 Of voices long gone yet standing tall  
 The tales engraved in every stone  
 In Norwich's Museum history's throne  
 Beneath the gaze of stars above  
 Visitors wander filled with love  
 For the stories woven the memories shared  
 In this museum more history's bared*

The NIYP Project Worker sent the following feedback after the visit:

*We just wanted to say a massive thank you for yesterday! We really appreciate you and the team being so welcoming, accommodating, relaxed and friendly to the young people. It was lovely to have the space to ourselves and be allowed to roam freely, so thanks for setting that up and staying late. Some of them had never been before, so it was cool to show them something new, and a lot of them really enjoyed the interactive elements.*



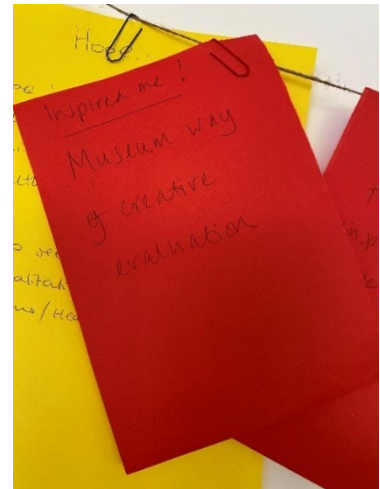
## **Norfolk Initiative for Coastal and Rural Health Equalities (NICHE) - Shared Learning Event / Norfolk & Waveney Arts and Health Collaborative Symposium on Arts and Health/Creative Health project evaluation methodologies**

We are currently running a three-year research project on embedded creative evaluation, focussing on our Community Culture Club programme, funded by NICHE.

The first year of the project has now finished and we were pleased to be invited to report on our experience so far at both the NICHE Shared Learning Event at UEA in April and the Norfolk & Waveney Arts and Health Collaborative Symposium at NUA in May.

The response following both events was overwhelmingly positive, particularly from colleagues working in Public Health.





## From Norwich with Love

Work is well underway on an exciting new performance project as part of the Castle project Activity Plan. We have commissioned local writer Shey Hargreaves to write a brand-new play that celebrates the history of Norwich by telling the stories of some of the people who shaped the City to-date. The play will be performed by two professional actors from local company Quill & Inkling and they will be joined on stage by a community cast of eighty people from local music and dance groups.

The play will be performed twice outside The Forum on Saturday 13 July, as part of the Lord Mayor's celebrations, and performances will last 30 minutes.

*Meet the movers, shakers, and rule-breakers of Norwich's past in this fast-paced, family-friendly performance. Discover the stories of those who challenged the status quo and find out how their lives helped shape our fine city over the last 2,000 years. Drums, dance and a live choir come together to bring some of the city's most exciting stories to life.*



### 3. Kick the Dust: Norfolk – project activity update

#### **Background**

The first Kick the Dust project delivered by Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and ran from October 2018 to March 2023.

The target audience for Kick the Dust activity is young people aged 11-25, with a particular focus on young people aged 16-25 who do not normally engage with the heritage or consider it relevant to their lives. Priority participants are young people facing multiple challenges and barriers, including YMCA clients and other young people engaging with NCC and partner organisations specialist support services. Key project partners include YMCA Norfolk, Creative Collisions (Great Yarmouth) and NCC Children's Services, Libraries and Public Health.

Kick the Dust provides a progression pathway for young people, enabling them to use heritage to develop their confidence, skills and routes into employment using the *Player, Shaper, Leader* model.

For this original project, total participation numbers from October 2018 to March 2023 were 13,905 interventions, involving 4,527 individual young people taking part in 7,039 hours of quality activity, taking us beyond the initial project target of 8000 interventions. As the project developed, more young people took the lead in projects, shifting the percentage of activity at each of the 4 levels.

- 25% of all activity was at Player level
- 40% at Shaper level
- 35% at Leader level
- 86% of all activity in March 2023 involved young people in leading and designing projects, taking on the role of Young Ambassador and playing a leading part in the Youth Board.

Breakdown of activity taking place in each area from October 2018 to March 2023:

- 47% (1,449 opportunities) in the West (covering Kings Lynn, Thetford and Gressenhall),
- 27% (825 opportunities) in the East (covering Great Yarmouth, Cromer and Sheringham)
- 26% (771 opportunities) in Norwich
- 331 volunteering opportunities have been provided to 180 individual young people.

In total 420 staff took part in training, with 151 having taken up opportunities in lockdown. In addition, 45 young volunteers took part in training. Kick the Dust has supported 7 young people on its bursary traineeship programme, the last cohort finishing in May 2022, all of whom have secured permanent employment within the heritage sector. A further 6 young people completed the pre-traineeship programme. One Kick the Dust participant progressed onto the NMS Teaching Museum traineeship

programme with 3 others applying for the role and being shortlisted. Two Young Ambassadors have progressed onto teacher training programmes. Our 7 Young Ambassadors have supported Institutional Change within NMS on the strategic Youth Board and Project Board. Staff from our Front of House (FOH) and Visitor Services teams have engaged in training such as mentoring and coaching, mental health first aid and creating autism friendly spaces which played a key role in supporting the new pre-traineeship pilot programme for YMCA clients and other vulnerable groups.

### **Current activity**

Following the successful conclusion of the National Lottery Heritage Fund funded Kick the Dust project, Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) has secured additional funding through an Arts Council England NPO Uplift award for the period 2023-26. This will enable NMS to continue to support young people in the three Levelling up for Culture places of Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Thetford. This additional funding will enable young people to participate in high quality cultural and heritage activities that develop their creative and digital skills and potential, as well as prepare them for the workplace.

During 2023-25 NMS is also receiving funding from Norfolk County Council (NCC) Public Health to support Kick the Dust activities that focus on the mental health and wellbeing of Norfolk young people.

NMS is partnering with Norfolk Library & Information Service (NLIS) to deliver this exciting programme of activity enabling us to strengthen partnership working between museum and library staff and increase levels of cultural engagement by young people in a sustained way, employing the successful Kick the Dust approach to youth engagement that uses the three-stage progression model Player-Shaper-Leader. The programme will be aimed at those in the three priority places aged 16-25 years, with opportunities for 13–16 year olds to engage as part of the progression framework.

The key aims of the new Kick the Dust project are to:

- develop transferable work-related skills with the aim of supporting more working age young people into employment, training or further learning;
- develop digital skills linked to creative industries to address the digital skills gap in heritage and cultural sectors;
- increase young people's creative skills and for young people to gain a range of new cultural experiences;
- encourage an appreciation of the history and culture of their local communities.

Young people work alongside professionals to develop their transferable work-related and creative skills, through the co-production of activity and events, volunteering and work experience operating at a level that meets their needs. Feedback from young people shows that they value the skills they develop as part of the project with the top five skills being cited as: problem solving, digital, communication, team working and creativity.

The following data is based on the start of the project covering the period 1/5/23 to 20/3/24.

### **Number of interventions with young people:**

Between 1/5/23 and 20/3/24 there have been **1535 interventions** involving **768 individual young people** taking part in **1441 hours** of quality activity. **92%** of the activities were face to face, the other sessions being offered online with young people in the principal target areas.

This blended approach offers a wider range of opportunities for young people to engage in heritage:

- 16% of activity was at Player level (to introduce new young people to the project)
- 64% at Shaper level (longer term project with young people determining the content)
- 20% at Leader level (long term engagement – young people leading projects, acting at governance level, mentoring staff)
- 93% of all activity involved young people in leading and designing projects

Breakdown of activity taking place in each area:

- 40% (115 opportunities) in the West (covering Kings Lynn, Gressenhall),
- 17% (49 opportunities) in Thetford
- 22% (63 opportunities) in the East (covering Great Yarmouth, Cromer)
- 18% (52 opportunities) in Norwich
- Five opportunities were offered to young people at alternative venues outside of Norfolk
- 46 volunteering opportunities have been provided, with 3 young people taking on the role of Digital Buddy and 8 as Young Ambassador.
- Of all delivery, 84% involves young people being part of a long-term group, providing them with a deeper understanding of heritage and allowing them to explore their identity, develop their skills and confidence and embed themselves more in their local communities, a key aim of ACE.

The young people have access to all of NMS sites and can visit with a friend or family member for free during their engagement for that year. Free passes were issued to those beginning on the programme in June 2023. Data shows that passes are being used outside of the times the young people would attend a session in their home museum.

We continue to deliver a blended training offer for all staff and volunteers who support youth engagement in NMS. Staff input to the training programme will be formulated as the project progresses and needs are identified. Social media training working with a specialist from Libraries has been embedded into team meetings which include three of our Young Ambassadors who are acting as Digital Buddies. Further opportunities are being planned for the Summer terms to include SEND and Mental Health First Aid training. The team accessed the 'Childhood Adversity and Creating a Trauma Informed Environment' in October 2023 and March 2024 and '*I'm a teenager get me in there*' training in January 2024 at Ely Museum (as part of the new 'Your Heritage Your Future'



National Lottery Heritage Funded project) which will inform future delivery. Safeguarding training has been delivered to all team members through NMS.

Our offer to support young people around the important theme of mental health and wellbeing is on-going and this will be measured through the new evaluation framework using data from the young people's feedback forms as well as the new narrative evaluation which is being rolled out from September 2023 to September 2024. At the end of the NLHF funded project in March 2023, 26% of young people identified as having a mental health issue. Up to 20/3/24 data shows that **43% of the individual young people who have taken part in the new programme of activity identify as having a mental health issue** (a slight decrease on the previous reporting period) showing the need for this programme. Through a systematic approach to evaluation, in partnership with Libraries, the team will be able to demonstrate impact on mental health on those talking part and the young people will be able to monitor their progress through the programme in relation to skills, confidence and mental health. Narrative evaluation will further demonstrate impact.

NMS and NCC continue to work together through the 'Making Creative Futures' group, chaired by the Kick the Dust Project Coordinator, where members from across Children's Services and Norfolk Public health identify ways to engage the hardest to reach and most vulnerable children and young people through a joint effort. The group continues to play a key part in the delivery of activity as part of the DfE funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) project through the Big Norfolk Fun programme ([Big Norfolk Holiday Fun - Active Norfolk](#)) and through our own contributions through our Kick the Dust offer. The focus is on mental health and wellbeing and has representation from the NCC Public Health team who bring a different perspective to the meetings. This group acts as the vehicle to share best practice, ideas and resources and its membership continues to grow.

**Target audiences: (some young people fall into more than one category) as of 20/3/24**

- FE/HE – 47%
- YMCA clients – 8%
- Secondary schools – 35%
- Young people with mental health issues – 43%
- SEND – 3%
- Outside of mainstream education – 20%
- NEET – 35%
- Looked after children and adopted living those at home - 2%
- Care Leavers – 2%
- Young Carers – 4%
- New arrivals and refugees – 8%
- Pregnant young mums and teenage parents – 1%

In terms of how young people find out about Kick the Dust, the Kick the Dust website is being used effectively with 32% of young people finding out about the project through

the updated web pages ([Kick the Dust - Norfolk Museums](#)); 18% through a family member, 17% coming via one of our partner organisations and 11% having already taken part in a previous Kick the Dust project.

### Impacts on mental health and well being

The new young people's feedback form includes the 78 positively worded items from the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale for assessing a populations' mental well-being. The Young Ambassadors developed the new framework alongside Norfolk Public health, and this allows us to measure impact in this key area. In addition, we are implementing a narrative evaluation model working with a smaller number of young people who are part of a long term project group which will be reported on at the end of the summer to provide a richer story to accompany the raw data.

From the Young People feedback forms, following their involvement in Kick the Dust, **67%** strongly agreed that this had had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing with a further 33% agreeing that their involvement in Kick the Dust has helped them have more positive mental health. An additional question has been added to identify young people with neurodivergent tendencies and is showing that since March 66% of young people engaged in Kick the Dust identify as neurodivergent which is significant when designing new activity in terms of additional barriers these young people may face.

Of the 34 responses to 20/3/24, the following data chart highlights how young people were feeling before taking part in Kick the Dust:

<b>QUESTION – pre engagement</b>	<b>All of the time</b>	<b>Some of the time</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>None of the time</b>
I've been optimistic about the future	0%	39%	27%	21%	12%
I've been feeling useful	0%	45%	39%	6%	9%
I've been feeling relaxed	0%	33%	21%	0%	15%
I've been dealing with problems well	0%	48%	6%	39%	6%
I've been thinking clearly	0%	36%	9%	39%	12%
I've been feeling close to other people	0%	24%	18%	42%	15%
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	0%	24%	9%	36%	30%

The following data chart highlights how 12 young people were feeling following their engagement in Kick the Dust between June and March 2024 (NB: Part 2 is only completed once a young person has finished a group/ activity and has had a 121 session with the Project Worker):

<b>QUESTION- post engagement</b>	<b>All of the time</b>	<b>Some of the time</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>None of the time</b>

I've been optimistic about the future	8%	33%	58%	0%	0%
I've been feeling useful	33%	25%	42%	0%	0%
I've been feeling relaxed	33%	33%	25%	0%	8%
I've been dealing with problems well	17%	17%	58%	1%	0%
I've been thinking clearly	18%	25%	58%	0%	0%
I've been feeling close to other people	33%	8%	50%	8%	0%
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	42%	8%	50%	0%	0%

From the additional questions asked of the young people taking part, the programme is meeting their needs and helping them see themselves in a museum or heritage setting, with 83% stating the programme went above their expectations.

- 100% of all young people strongly agreed that the museum was a safe space for young people like themselves who were struggling;
- 100% strongly agreed they were given a voice that was listened to;
- 75% strongly agreed that they understood heritage better than they had done before taking part with a further 17% agreeing;
- 67% strongly agreed that following their engagement heritage was more relevant with a further 25% agreeing. The same numbers stated that they felt heritage represented young people like themselves;
- 92% stated they now had a greater understanding of museums and the job roles available with 67% strongly agreeing that they could see themselves working in the sector;
- 67% strongly agreed that the skills they had acquired would be useful to them in the future with a further 33% agreeing;
- 64% strongly agreed they felt more connected to their local community than previously with a further 36% agreeing;
- 81% agreed that their involvement had helped them to explore and feel more connected to their own identity and heritage.

## Summary

The NLHF funded Kick the Dust project ended in March 2023 with evidence clearly demonstrating the impact on young people and staff engaging in activity. The programme is now moving into a its second year of the ACE funded project. Kick the Dust is a three-stage journey, with young people developing transferable work-related skills including digital skills and gaining experiences that they would struggle to find elsewhere, to support them in securing employment. Whilst young people cite being involved in curation and creating exhibitions as the main areas they have enjoyed, it is through these activities that they hone their skills and understanding of the workplace, which will help them secure employment longer term.

Our aim as we move forward is to support more working age young people to progress into employment, training, or further learning and long-term volunteering.

The strong partnerships that have been developed through Kick the Dust provide a strong base on which to build, bringing new young people into museum and library spaces.

Success comes in many guises and this month another of our YMCA young people has progressed into independent living and taken on a part time role, with the Kick the Dust programme giving her the confidence to take these steps. Another former YMCA client who was part of Kick the Dust is completing her first year of studies whilst working in the Visitor Services team for Norwich Castle. Former participants and Young Ambassadors have since progressed into employment or onto further and higher education, having gained the confidence to move towards their goals. Another Young Ambassador has secured a bursary to run her own project through Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge and will be working with groups in Norwich and Great Yarmouth on a creative writing project.

#### **New funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund**

A successful National Lottery Heritage Fund Grants for Heritage Round 1 application was submitted to the NLHF for the Your Heritage Your Future (YHYF) project. The application was submitted by YMCA Leicester, with NMS as Lead Partner. This complex application was put together by a joint project team of staff from YMCA Leicester and NMS, who are now working on the Development Phase of this application, ahead of a Round 2 bid submission in May 2024. If the Round 2 bid is successful, project delivery would commence in later 2024.

### **4. Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn – project update**

#### **4.1 Main construction works**

In August 2020 the Keep and surrounding site areas were formally handed over to the Principal Contractor, Morgan Sindall Construction following Contract Award for the main build. Internal and external secure hoardings are in place to demarcate the construction site and delineate the contractor compound on the mound. There is an additional contractor compound and deliveries access point in the Lower Castle Gardens. A tower crane has been installed on the mound. An internal hoarding line runs across the entrance to the Rotunda, separating the construction zone from the areas of the museum that remain open to visitors throughout the project.



Drone image of the construction site

Sectional completion of the first phase of the project took place on 11 August 2022, with the formal handover of the new WC block area, which includes accessible toilets, baby changing facilities, a new Changing Place and a 'pop-up' catering facility. The Changing Place is now fully operational and registered <https://www.changing-places.org/find?toilet=2026>.

The installation of internal steelwork structures in the Keep has been completed, with new floor levels installed. Joinery and mechanical & electrical installation is ongoing. The final phase of steelwork installation has been completed on the Keep roof, with the new rooftop platforms installed.

In the new entrance area and adjoining Percival wing of the building, the installation of the new glazed atrium roof has been completed and fitout works are ongoing, including shop fitout.



New entrance atrium showing glazed roof (L), ticketing desk, shop and café levels (R)

A verbal update on recent progress will be provided at the meeting.



## 5. Other activity across Norwich museums

### 5.1 Museum of Norwich

The Museum of Norwich team has been busy delivering a broad range of activities.

Staff have been working on more community and wellbeing projects, supporting local students, becoming more entrepreneurial with renting out our corner shop to carefully selected partners and planning upcoming community-based exhibitions. All the while, our social media presence continues to improve and expand, communicating to an ever-growing audience.

#### Corner Shop Collaborations

Last Christmas, we worked with local printmaker and designer Mandy Doubt, by renting out our little corner shop for three days. This collaboration was a great success, generating a small income from rental as well as an 'experience' for shoppers and visitors alike, adding to our Christmas programme.

In February, we repeated this, by working with Petra Boase, a Norwich based designer and stationer, who stocks in high end stores like Liberty of London. Petra was looking for a space to celebrate 25 years in business, create a place for a little community interactivity and a space to sell a small sample of her work.



the

#### February half term

We had a fun February half term, celebrating the local tradition of Jack Valentine. Little parcels were hidden around the museum for children to find as part of a trail and then they were able to settle down and create their own Valentines 'zine. Over this period, we welcomed 678 visitors.

#### Easter school holidays

The Easter school holidays are always a good time to interact with visiting families. This year, we created a sweet Easter bunny trail around the museum, with the chance for kids to join in with crafts, such as make your own Easter bauble and a little bunny. On Tuesdays, we also had a session led by a member of the Learning Team about the heritage of chocolate, from its early beginnings to its role in our local, industrial past.

Over this period, we welcomed 1,172 visitors.



### **Working with Young People**

We continue to work with young people in a variety of ways. We often support students from a range of institutions, such as City College, UEA and Norwich University of the Arts. Curator Hannah Henderson works annually with the Textile Design BA students at Norwich University of the Arts and has recently been asked to be a member of the judging panel for their Design Awards ceremony at the end of their three year course. Other student groups visit more informally, with small groups from City College making use of the museum in different ways.

We recently received some positive feedback which states,  
*“Thank you so much for having this facility free of charge for our students. Without it they would not have this enriching experience. All the staff and volunteers were really knowledgeable and helpful.”*  
City College Tutor

### **Work Experience Students**

In March, we hosted work experience students from Sewell Park Academy and City of Norwich School. Two of these students helped us with stock taking in our shop, itemising over 300 products. At the end of the week, the students met with Hannah Henderson, Curator, who talked to them about the community and communications work the team do behind the scenes.

### ***Knights of the Sound Table – a Kick the Dust project***

Over the last few months, we have been we have been hosting a group of young people on Thursday afternoons, led by writer Jacqueline Burgoyne, on a support project for the Castle Keep redevelopment. The young people have been busy creating a soundscape, animations, and graphics for their project, and it has been a pleasure to see their ideas coming to fruition.



### **Art at Work Partnership**

It had previously been reported that following on from our first partnership with Art Work, an arts and wellbeing organisation, they were able to attract further funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This funding enables more groups to be based at the museum for the next three years, meeting in blocks of eight weekly sessions, three times a year.

The latest cohorts for the new sessions are now running. We are now well underway with the first year, and participants are enjoying focusing on the Tudor & Elizabethan period and exploring new creative techniques, alongside learning about the history of the Strangers' and broader textile practices. These groups are attracting many people who are not traditional museum visitors and encouraging them to see our spaces and collections in a different light. What's more, this continued partnership will enable our team to learn first-hand from expert practitioners in wellbeing arts work, enriching our own practice and enhancing future public programmes.



### Community Culture Club

Another strand of our wellbeing work has involved the museum hosting the creative wellbeing programme *Community Culture Club*. Now in its third year, this programme is designed for older adults living with dementia, carers, people with long-term health conditions and those who are lonely or socially isolated. The programme has recently secured funding from UEA's NICHE research project, which will support three further cohorts, with a special focus on developing a creative embedded evaluation model. The last session was delivered this month for this latest cohort, with planning already underway for the next group starting again in the autumn.



Here are some quotes from our past participants:

*"The nurturing I have received within the group is helping me recover from my experiences of loss and to rebuild my confidence. I have a greater sense of belonging and ability to plan outings for myself now. Kindness can be contagious and so I hope that the improvement in my wellbeing might allow me to respond with compassion for others who are lonely or suffering."*

*"You care for me so well, you and your colleagues, nowhere else do I get this."*

### Working with new communities

Assistant Curator Bethan Holdridge continues to support our friends and colleagues at *English +*, a Christian charity that supports new communities to speak English, form friendships and foster a mutual support network. The group meets monthly and focuses on a different activity, be it a visit to the new temporary exhibition, walking tours of the city and even a trip to the Theatre Royal for the panto last Christmas. The latest



programme has included a visit to Strangers' Hall, a trip to see the *Norwich Works* exhibition and supporting an event for Refugee Week. It is always a pleasure to spend time together, catching up with regulars and extending a warm welcome to new joiners, from far afield as Brazil, Hong Kong, Iran and Nigeria.



### **Familiar faces in *Norwich Works* Exhibition**

The recent *Norwich Works* exhibition at Norwich Castle featured our album of photographs by Walter and Rita Nurnberg, from the Edwards and Holmes shoe factory. It has been good to see how local people have responded, with some of them even recognising themselves or friends and family in the images. This included Margaret, who had been photographed in her youth whilst working at Mackintosh / Caley in 1958. Derek James from the EDP has provided support in promoting and celebrating these personal stories.

Bethan Holdridge and colleagues ran a memory collecting day on 22 March at the Millenium Library, for more people to share their stories. We have also been welcoming visitors to our new, monthly Norwich Industries tours, which linked the museum's collections to the Norwich Works exhibition's themes. These have been a successful, with lots of positive feedback.

*"We really enjoyed the Norwich Industries tour. Joolz was friendly, intelligent and eager to answer all our questions. Thank you!"*

### **Muslims: Norwich**

#### **A photographic exhibition by Khalil Mitchell**

Over the past two years, we have been working with Maria Pavledis, Community Librarian for Norfolk Library and Information Service, and photographer Khalil Mitchell.

During the pandemic, we became aware of Khalil's beautiful portraits and images of the community based at Ihsan Mosque and Islamic Centre. Since then, we have been working with him to develop a travelling exhibition which will feature some of his best images. Khalil's photographs capture the everyday lives of the current members of the community including worship, work and family life.



The exhibition will be launched at the museum in June and will then travel to libraries across the county. The exhibition will then become an online archive as part of Picture Norfolk, with the potential for touring to other venues.

### **FOUND: Poetry project**

Staff are working in partnership with local poet Daisy Henwood on a brand-new project funded by Arts Council England. *Found* is a poetry and art project exploring the collections and communities behind various Norfolk Museums Service sites. Over six months, Daisy Henwood will research, write, facilitate, and produce an exhibition with the community of found poems created from Norfolk heritage spaces and collections across the county, to be displayed in our temporary exhibition space in Autumn/Winter 2024. A pop-up version of the exhibition will then be displayed at Gressenhall and Time & Tide, allowing audiences across the county to access the work.

## **5.2 Strangers' Hall**

### **Strangers' Hall Centenary Programme**

The Strangers' Hall 100 Centenary project has provided the opportunity to build on the enhanced profile by planning legacy projects to conserve collections and provide additional interest for visitors. With the support of the Friends of Norwich Museums, the first legacy project has been carried out. This is the conservation and cleaning of two overmantel paintings in the Great Chamber and Georgian Dining Room. The Great Chamber Overmantel has recently been reinstalled in the Georgian Dining Room after successful conservation by Alice Tavares da Silva. This depicts a busy Middle Eastern port scene with shipping, merchants and traded goods. It was donated to the Museums Service in 1930 following removal from an 18<sup>th</sup> century house in St George's Street. Whilst it forms the focal point of the room surface dirt, streaks, scuffs and overcleaning all detracted from visitors' enjoyment of this interesting scene. Off-site conservation treatments included a wet clean, removal of paint residues, filling and retouching paintwork and application of protective varnish. Now that the panel is back in site some of the lovely details previously obscured can be appreciated. Staff are currently carrying out research into the location of the port, the imports and exported goods depicted and the merchants in their European and Middle Eastern dress.



## **Building, Housekeeping & Conservation**

Repairs to the front range roof, which had caused leaks and damp in the Morning Room, have taken place and a dehumidifier installed to help dry out the exterior wall. Following this year's deep clean, furniture that had been frozen in the Deep Clean was replaced in the room settings. The programme of regular housekeeping has restarted and gratifyingly, 2023 was recorded the lowest totals for moths on record, endorsing the NMS strategy of integrated pest management which is carried out regularly throughout the year.

Specialist historic upholstery conservator Heather Porter visited the museum to carry out an investigation of the eighteenth century settee in the Georgian Dining Room. The piece is being assessed as to whether it would benefit from conservation treatment including the replacement of the synthetic modern fabric with a more authentic for period fabric. The investigation revealed a wealth of detail painstakingly recovered by Heather, from examination of previous layers of upholstery and stuffings, the shape of the numerous nail holes and even surviving fragments of previous cover fabrics. A full report has been provided which we hope will form the basis of planned improvements as funding permits.



## **Curatorial**

Senior Curator Cathy Terry gave a talk on the Strangers' Hall centenary and recent conservation work at the museum to the Friends of Norwich Museums AGM in March. Cathy also provided a training session on working in historic houses for the 2023-4 NMS Teaching Museum trainees and hosted photographic training given by Sarah Stephens.

Bethan Holdridge met and advised the City WI on the visit of Queen Elizabeth I to Norwich in 1578 and the group subsequently went on to win the People's Choice award in their Centenary Salver competition. She also delivered a tour looking at the work of the museum for UEA History and Cultural heritage students.



Work has continued to develop and trial the 'Visual Stories' technique of interpretation of museum objects and spaces using pictures not words with Inclusive Design specialist Cassie Herschell-Shorland. Clients from the Suffolk base 'Brave Heart' organisation and members of English plus have tested the materials and provided feedback which will inform the final versions of the interpretation. The Strangers' Hall team also provided a training session on historical sources for the study of the museum for the Strangers' Hall volunteers and an opportunity to view the recent work of the Norwich Photographic Society, the result of the photographic record they carried out in the Museum in autumn 2023. A selection of images from this selection, together with a set of display prints, will be added to the collections as a record of the museum in 2023.

### **Exhibition**

The *Booksapes Collective* exhibition *Miscellanea* is being installed and will run until 2 June. Artists Jules Allen, Karen Apps, Jen Fox, Jo Howe, Heather Hunter and Chris Ruston have devised a series of installations in the Victorian Rooms of the Museum. They aim to re-awaken lost or little-known aspects of the Victorian era by viewing them through a contemporary lens. Specially devised to match the collections, they provide perspectives on the lives of prominent women writers to the sinister practice of baby farming. Inspired by collections from taxidermy to shell collecting and herbaria, the spectacular group installation, is based around the invention of the kaleidoscope in 1816 and its popularity in Victorian homes.



### **Learning**

The period has been busy with 17 school groups visiting as well as an interesting range of adult learning groups. A particular highlight has been the trials of the new whole day Robert Kett event for Key Stage 2 children by the Learning team. The event aims to introduce children in the events of 1549 as they meet a range of characters from Mistress Sotherton's household, all of whom have different attitudes to the 'Kett's rebels'. It has been delightful to observe the keen engagement of the students when

participating in this immersive event, which used the period room settings to advantage and introduces Strangers' Hall former residents.

## Events

The Easter family event *That's the Bunny* offered Easter-themed Bunny craft activities and a chance to look at the Museum's colourful papier mâché eggs. Also in April we welcomed the *SqueezeEast* Concertina group to the museum. They entertained Sunday afternoon visitors playing a selection of period tunes that dated back to 1621. Forthcoming family event *Colourful Worlds* for May half term will be based on the kaleidoscope installation in the Miscellanea exhibition.

## 6. Norwich Curatorial update

**Dr Francesca Vanke, Senior Curator of Norwich Museums and Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art** is mainly working on the forthcoming Norwich Castle Turner exhibition, which will be entitled *JMW Turner and Changing Visions of Landscape*. She has now finalised all the loans and is also working on a catalogue to accompany the exhibition. The scope of the show will be wide, looking at ideas of landscape from 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, and Turner's place in creating the landscape genre. As well as seven paintings and ten watercolours by Turner, it will include work by artists who influenced him, such as Claude Lorrain.



Claude Lorrain, *The Father of Psyche*, 1663, National Trust, Anglesey Abbey

Norwich Castle's exhibition will be the first of around a dozen shows organised by museums all around the country which will continue throughout 2025, the bicentenary of Turner's birth. The publicity will be led by Tate Britain, whose exhibition will close the series at the end of next year. We will therefore be able to share in this nationwide publicity, which will help raise the profile of the Castle at this critical point.

**Dr Giorgia Bottinelli, Curator of Historic Art**, is writing the labels for her new exhibition for the watercolour gallery, on the work of Catherine Maude Nichols (1847-1923), a brilliant but little-known Norwich-born artist and printmaker, many of whose works have never been displayed before. The exhibition is due to open by the end of June.

Giorgia has also been doing the work surrounding the recent generous bequest of a painting and fifteen drawings by John Sell Cotman. All sixteen works have been on long-term loan to the Castle since 1983. The drawing are mainly landscapes which supplement and complement the permanent collection, alongside two portraits of Cotman's wife Ann and son John Joseph as a young man. These portraits will soon go on display in the Castle.



*Boy at Marbles*, John Sell Cotman, 1808

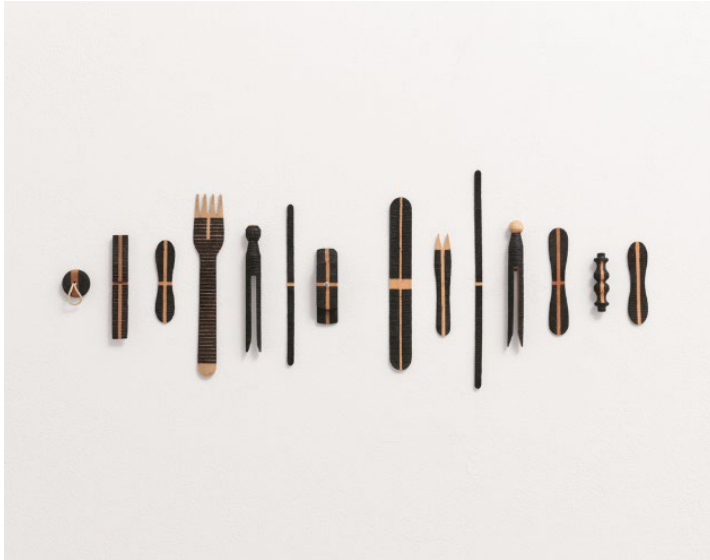
The painting is a rare portrait by Cotman and depicts his youngest brother Henry, who was twenty years his junior. This charming portrait is on display at the Castle and is a firm favourite with public and staff. Cotman has painted Henry at the age of six. Holding a white marble in his right hand, he looks out at the viewer as if he has been interrupted in his game.

### **Dr Rosy Gray, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art**

Rosy has been mainly working alongside Amanda Geitner on the major new exhibition and catalogue, *Roger Ackling: Sunlight*, exploring the work of artist Roger Ackling (1947-2014), which has just opened at the Castle.

Ackling's method of working was via burning wood – he focussed sunlight through the lens of a hand-held magnifying glass to scorch patterns of lines on the wooden surface. He used driftwood collected from the beach at Weybourne near his home on the north

Norfolk coast, as well as reclaimed, broken and discarded materials, such as wooden lolly sticks, picnic forks and clothes pegs, as seen below.



Roger Ackling, *Voewood*, 2011

**Kate Thaxton, Curator of the Norfolk Regimental Museum** has a new NMS Teaching Museum Trainee, Sam Wiggin, who will be working alongside her until next April. Sam is working on a Far East Prisoner of War exhibition for next year – three territorial battalions of the Royal Norfolk Regiment were taken prisoner on the fall of Singapore in February 1942. They were part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division which also included Suffolks and Cambridgeshires, which makes the story of FEPOWs particularly pertinent in East Anglia. With the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of key moments in the history of the 2WW taking place this year (Battle of Kohima, D-Day) and next year (VE Day & VJ Day) the RNRM is dealing with lots of requests for information and there will be regular posts on NMS social media.

Other than a purely historical use of the collection, we have opened up the Museum to a group of Fine Art students who have enjoyed mini residencies. Many students do not realise they can visit the Norwich museums for free and that there are reserve collections that can be accessed. This year the students took part as an extra-curricular activity, and have produced a wide variety of artwork, from holographic images to quilts. This pilot project with NUA will expand next academic year. We plan to adapt a display space to showcase some of their work in the Shirehall where the reserve collection is held.





Student responses to the Regimental collections, by D Tyhurst and J Walsh

**Ruth Battersby, Senior Curator of Costume and Textiles** has been celebrating the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Costume and Textile Association with a lecture outlining the incredible support given to the Museums Service. This important anniversary was also marked by a celebratory toast from the Lord Mayor at the Maker's Festival in April. Ruth has just accessioned a new donation: a stunning 1869 shawl made by the firm of Towler, Rowling and Allen which features a two-colour design, and a complex and beautiful woven design which was marketed as a prototype of a shawl that was presented to Queen Victoria. This donation is the third example in the collections of the same design but made in different colourways which offers an insight into the marketing practices of Norwich shawl manufacturers.



Norwich Shawl, 1869

The Costume and Textile department has also had donations of two waistcoats from the descendants of the Coulton family of Pentney, who originally settled in Norfolk in 1760, with generations of the male line practising as solicitors. One of the waistcoats dates from the 1780s and the other from the 1850s, showing changes in both the style in terms of shape and in the designs and motifs of the embroidery.





Silk waistcoat, late 18<sup>th</sup> century

While the majority of the collections are off-site, Ruth has been concentrating on improving documentation by adding images to the database and generating online content for the website, based on the *Textile Treasures* exhibition in 2021, working with a new volunteer and with a UEA Cultural Heritage Placement student.

**Dr Tim Pestell, Senior Curator of Archaeology** continues to be fully occupied with the Norwich Castle Keep project, although he also continues to work on the Leverhulme-funded Rendlesham research project, for which he sits on the steering group for their NLHF-funded element. Tim has also continued to sit on the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Works of Art.

## 7. Other developments

### Courtroom

Works within the Shirehall Courtroom to treat the outbreak of dry rot are progressing well. The Courtroom roof to the South and West has been stripped back with a temporary roof installed. Repairs to one of the internal south wall plates is complete and works to same issue on the west side is about halfway complete. Works have also been completed to the roof dragon beams.

The works to the Costume & Textile Store within the Shirehall now include works to external window lintels, further roof beam replacements, repairs to the roof castellations and the replacement of roof slates.



The Courtroom roof under repair

## 8. Visitor numbers

Updated visitor figures will be circulated at the meeting

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