

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service

Curator Report

2010-11



Curator Report 2010-11

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Norwich Curator Team in 2010-11

This is the fifth annual report of the **Norwich Curator team**; part of Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service. The year 2010-11 has been another period of change for the Service, with continued budget pressures. At the same time, it has been the goal of the team that we continue to deliver high quality and accessible services, during what has been time of cost saving. This is also at a time when there is a national trend towards reduced physical access to museums. A challenging time indeed.

NMAS is now part of the larger grouping within NCC, called **Community Services**. This move has provided an opportunity for us to re-evaluate our priorities, in order to play our role within this newly formed Department, alongside our longer-established partners in the NRO and Libraries.

We appreciate that there is a need to continue to do what we do well but, at the same time, to explore new and better ways of providing and developing our services. The Curator team recognises our principal assets, in the form of nationally pre-eminent **Designated Collections**, while our buildings provide a range of potentially rich and stimulating learning spaces.

At this testing time we need to continue to evaluate our services and respond to what our users want. We are also currently working with a range of external partners. We need to continue to develop our existing partnerships as well as seeking productive new partnerships. We have also continued to be highly successful in attracting external funding; for projects, exhibitions and for acquisitions.

All staff have played a vital and unique role in this process. This report outlines some of the work that has been achieved towards our goals, both individually and collectively, through 2010-11. It is by no means a complete listing of all that has been achieved. It is a representative round-up of our activities and what has been submitted for inclusion by members of the team; serving to illustrate the range of work undertaken.

The report this year also includes contributions from the **Display** and **Conservation** Departments, who have been part of the Curatorial Department during the period.

Finally, it must be stressed that the work outlined in the following pages is once again a reflection of the work of NMAS as a whole. This has all been achieved through working closely with our colleagues across NMAS on a daily basis.

Dr John Davies FSA
Chief Curator and Keeper of Archaeology
December 2011

Meet the Curator Section

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2 WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC

Communicating with audiences

Communication is perhaps the most important aspect of the curator's role.

Curators transmit knowledge of the collections and their context to a wide range of audiences and in a variety of ways.

Many examples of how Curators communicate are shown throughout this report. New methods are explored and developing our audiences, through new approaches such as social media, are actively being explored.

During 2010, a major project involvement enabled NMAS to communicate with audiences in a very large scale, through our involvement in the **BBC History of the World** project.

The flagship project, which was an involvement of the British Museum and BBC, led to a 100-part series on Radio 4, featuring objects from the British Museum collections. Associated radio programming was developed across the country and John Davies was appointed the lead officer for Norfolk.

A successful series of events and broadcasts was achieved in partnership with BBC Radio Norfolk in late 2009 and through 2010. An initial 10 Norfolk objects were chosen to be presented nationally on the BBC media, coming from a range of museums. These were followed by another five objects in late 2010. These objects all have a local significance and global connections.

Outside broadcasts were achieved from NMAS museums, including Norwich Castle, Strangers Hall, Gressenhall Museum.

Chief Curator John Davies and Tim Pestell, Archaeology Curator, are now undertaking a publication based on the best and most significant Norfolk objects; *A History of Norfolk in 100 Objects*.



Exhibitions

Major exhibitions have been featured throughout the year at Norwich Castle, in the Norwich Union and Bernard Matthews (the 'T') Galleries, with works from the permanent collection being featured in other galleries.

Staff continue to work towards the future exhibition programme.

AT NORWICH CASTLE

Beatles to Bowie: the 60s exposed

Norwich Union and Bernard Matthews Galleries
Sat 8 May – Sun 5 June 2010

This exhibition was organised by the National Portrait Gallery. Celebrating the 1960s, the show looked at some of the leading personalities who became icons of the pop and music industry. Over 150 photographs, mainly from the NPG's collection, were shown and included rare portraits of the Beatles, David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones. The exhibition included a variety of ephemera and was enhanced with music of the 60s, and with a selection of costume from the collection at Carrow House.

Visitor comments

Amazing exhibition from the point of view of someone interested in photography and music. Fascinating!

Yay! Bob Dylan, Beatles, Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix in one place. And I'm only 11!

I'm 61, a musician, and so this is my golden age. I played on the same bill as The Who, Hendrix, Rod Stewart etc. Brilliant exhibition!



Visitors enjoying the paintings at the Bridget Riley exhibition.

The show was jointly paired, under a 60s theme, with **Bridget Riley: Flashback** from the Southbank Centre, London.

Bridget Riley: Flashback

Sat 5 June – Sun 5 September 2010

This was one of a major new series of Hayward Touring exhibitions from the Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre. Taking as its starting point the Collection's founding principle of supporting emerging artists through the purchase of their work, the series showcased world-renowned British artists whose works were acquired early on by the Collection. The monographic exhibitions combine early Collection works with new pieces sourced from the artists, giving a unique insight into the evolution of these key figures in British art. A series of talks were organised to coincide with the exhibition.

Visitor comment

Enjoyed all the lovely photos and I also love the Bridget Riley section - very in keeping with the 'pop' concept!

'Sixties Summer'

The two exhibitions were programmed together to provide a 'sixties summer'. The estimated number of visits was 37,589, including many first time visitors to Norwich Castle. This pairing of shows successfully attracted new audiences over the summer months.

The events programme was well-attended. Older visitors enjoyed sharing their personal memories during the Tuesday lunchtime talks, while younger visitors (16-24) queued for the chance to be given a 60s make-over at the 'Fab Sunday' event.



Visitor enjoying a makeover by our resident hairdresser Amy.

The Art of Faith: 3500 Years of Art and Belief in Norfolk
Norwich Union and Bernard Matthews Galleries

This exhibition was the culmination of an AHRC-funded research project run jointly with the University of East Anglia, exploring relationships between art, faith and locality. It comprised 151 objects, lent by the V&A Museum, British Museum and private individuals.

The exhibition was part of a wider project, which included a major publication, a conference, a catalogue and a specially-commissioned film 'Something Understood' by Chris Newby. This featured the practices of many faith communities in Norfolk today and formed one of the highlights of the exhibition.

Qur'an, 1799 - 1800
On loan from
the Denis Spittle
Collection
© Norwich Castle
Museum & Art Gallery.



'The Art of Faith' attracted over 26,000 visitors. It also received favourable reviews, including in The Times.

Visitor comments

The exhibition highlights the need for tolerance and mutual respect.

The inclusivity and breadth is awe-inspiring.

World class. I shall be returning for the fifth time!

With the help of a multi-faith advisory group, a popular range of outreach activities was organised. These ranged from lectures to dance and art workshops and, for the first time, lunch-time 'café conversations'.

An extensive education programme included a schools' website and a well-attended sixth-form conference – the first ever held at Norwich Castle.

Restless Times: Art in Britain 1914-1945
Norwich Union and Bernard Matthews Galleries
Sat 19 February – Mon 25 April 2011

This exhibition told the story of the period which became the turning point of the history of Modern British Art. It consisted of around 150 works including oil paintings, works on paper (including photographs), sculpture and ceramics. Works were loaned from national and regional museums as well as private collectors.

Restless Times was curated by Museums Sheffield as part of the Great British Art Debate (GBAD), which is a partnership between Tate Britain, Norfolk Museums Service, Tyne and Wear Museums and Museums Sheffield, supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and by the MLA Renaissance Programme.



George Henry, Hikers at Goodwood Downs.
Courtesy Museums Sheffield.

Additional works on paper shown in Norwich included drawings from the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum and two watercolours by Philippa Miller from Strangers Hall. A 'Restless Times' free newspaper was produced, on an 'On This Day' news stand. Vintage radios played period music and a compilation of spoken word items of national and regional importance.

An estimated 24,333 visits were made to the exhibition. Tuesday lunchtime talks were particularly well attended, with numbers ranging from 40-80. Special lectures were presented by the authors Virginia Nicholson and David Boyd Haycock, which attracted audiences of 50-80.

Visitor comments

Quite outstanding exhibition. Thank you.

Such a great exhibition – I've been here for nearly two hours! I particularly like the soundscape on the old wireless – a good contrast to all the visual artwork.

I was interested to see the painting of the destruction of Caley's factory in April 1942. It was the night we were bombed out of Trinity Street. We became nomads until 1946. In 1947 we were awarded a council house. My mother (age 97) still lives there.

Temporary Exhibitions (Permanent Collection Galleries)

Thinking on paper: Work in progress

Colman Watercolour Gallery

Opened April 2011

Exhibition of watercolours, drawings and prints.

Visual Dialogues

A partnership project with Tate which juxtaposed contemporary and historic works to generate creative responses to the collections. A work by British artist Ged Quinn, lent from the Tate, was installed in the permanent galleries (October 2010 – March 2011). This led to a group of young people producing work in response to the painting and its reference to landscape within the context of the Norwich School. Their works were also displayed within the galleries from January – May 2011.

A Skvader

Timothy Gurney Gallery

December 2010 – July 2011

This exhibition involved several partners including the Contemporary Art Society. Together with the public programme, this was guest-curated by collector and curator Alex Sainsbury and artist Lawrence Leaman. It brought together rarely-seen

historic and contemporary art alongside the work of three emerging artists who were commissioned to produce new work in response to the collections on display. These were displayed individually on a large-scale plinth over a two month period and then rotated for the next showing. The selected artists included Zoe Williams, Simon Davenport and Matthew Noel-Tod.

Organised as part of the Contemporary Art Society's Centenary Programme, the exhibition was accompanied by an extensive public talks programme, which coincided with the opening of each of the artist plinth presentations. They were well attended, each attracting over 80 people. New audiences were drawn to the museum, which included students, graduates from the Art School, as well as members of the artistic community of Norfolk.

Natural History displays

During 2010-11 the Natural History Department undertook a number of temporary exhibitions, which were installed at Norwich Castle and at other locations. The exhibitions presented in Norwich Castle were:

- A mounted temporary display of Horseshoe Crabs in case in the Keep.
- A mounted a temporary Exhibition about the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain (AHOB) Project Happisburgh excavations. This exhibition was shown in Norwich, Cambridge and Lancaster.
- A display of wildlife from Afghanistan, for the Regimental Museum, for inclusion in its summer exhibition.
- A display of Natural History objects was presented as part of the Sustainability Conference in Norwich Castle Museum.
- A display was contributed to the new Keep Prison display in Norwich Castle Museum (December 2010).

Interpreting and understanding the historic and natural environment

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service has always played an important role in the understanding of the historic and natural environment. The general public of Norfolk have long made use of the 'open door policy' and identification services, which have provided vast quantities of information for county records. The museums have also provided a major source of expertise, which has been integral in interpreting the material and species found in the county.

Although the Curatorial Department does not have a field function, staff maintain involvements with ongoing field projects which are run by external partners and which relate to our collections. Our collections and site archives are an invaluable resource for the partners and their work, in turn, adds more information and relevance to our collections.

Caistor Roman Town project

The Roman town at Caistor St Edmund is the largest Roman site in the whole of northern East Anglia. The only significant excavation to date has been that undertaken by Professor Atkinson between 1929-35. The excavation archive is held by NMAS and forms the largest component of the county Roman collections.

Fieldwork was resumed at the site in 2006 by a team from Nottingham University, which has involved geophysical survey and exploratory excavation.

Involvement with the ongoing project is being achieved through the Caistor Officer Group, which monitors progress, and is Chaired by John Davies. The Group also includes officers from Nottingham University, the Norfolk Archaeological Trust, English Heritage and Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

The AHOB project

The reporting of the initial discovery of a prehistoric handaxe on Happisburgh beach in 2000 to the Archaeology Department was to change the world view of the colonisation of western Europe by the first humans. This crucial discovery and the initial work on the site by Dr Peter Robins and Nigel Larkin, both of the Curator section, led to work which has now dated to first presence of humans in this part of Europe beyond 700,000 years ago – more than a quarter of a million years earlier than had previously been evidenced.

Study of the site at Happisburgh is now an ongoing project

which is part of the Ancient Human Occupation of Britain (AHOB) project, run by the Natural History Museum and British Museum. NMAS involvement is continued through David Waterhouse, Natural History Curator, and Nigel Larkin, NMAS Research Associate, who is a member of the national AHOB team.

AHOB continue to refer to the NMAS collections as part of the project and their findings serve to enrich our understanding of the site collection and archive held by the Service.

Metal-detecting liaison

Staff from the Archaeology Department continue to have an active relationship with metal-detecting in the county. Tim Pestell has attended metal-detector club meetings and stood in to help cover for members if the Finds Identification and Recording Service at these events. Staff also contribute specialist reports on objects for finders and for the HER.

Staff have provided support and talks to the American 'Discovery Tours' metal-detecting group.

Education and outreach

The staff actively work towards education outcomes. Learning is a key theme in all activities undertaken within the section.

Staff are regularly engaged in events, gallery talks, lectures, handling sessions, formal teaching sessions, giving workshops and working with researchers. During the period, staff undertook regular Tuesday lunchtime curator talks in the galleries and also trialled new 'Ask the Curator' sessions.

Members of the team also regularly participated in staff training, especially for the Interpreters.

During the period, other specific sessions included the following. This is not intended to be a complete list but is representative of what Curators have done.

Natural History:

Examples of Tony Irwin's sessions were:

- Easton College Conservation Management Course students, for a tour and discussion about relevance of museums to their work.
- University of the Third Age, concerning the Fountaine-Neimy butterfly collection.
- University of East Anglia, as a lecturer for the Taxonomic Collections course.
- 'Deconstructing the Natural History Gallery': a talk and discussion with students from UEA World Art and Museology course.

- Presented a short film about the Natural History Gallery at the NatSCA annual meeting in Plymouth.

Tony also gave other talks on subjects including, 'Curious Creatures', to groups including Time and Tide and Cromer Museums and the Friends of Norwich Museums.

David Waterhouse's sessions included:

- University of the Third Age, concerning Norfolk's Geology.
- University of East Anglia, as an advisor for the Taxonomic Collections course.
- Norwich Dragon Festival – outreach with collections in two schools (Mattishall Primary School and West Earlham Junior School), in association with Dragon Hall.

In February, David participated in a **Science Café debate** about communication in biology, at the Horniman Museum, London. David won **'The Communication Cup'**.

David gave other talks, on the subjects of:

- '100 Million Years of Norfolk Geology'
- 'Re-stuffing the Natural History Gallery'
- 'Dioramas: windows into nature'
- 'How to Dig up a Tyrannosaurus rex: adventures in the mid-west of America' - 'Happisburgh Hominins'

David also spoke to:

Norfolk Wildlife Trust; Time and Tide Museum; Norfolk Mineral and Lapidary Society; Cromer Museum; Lithics Study Society.

Archaeology Department:

John Davies gave talks to a range of groups, on the subjects of:

- 'Boudica's Norfolk'
- 'The Introduction of Coinage to East Anglia'
- 'The Norwich Castle Iron Age Collection'
- 'Boars, Bulls and Norfolk's Celtic Menagerie'
- 'The Norwich Castle Roman Collection'
- 'Boudica: Her Life, Times and Legacy'
- 'Roman Norfolk'
- 'The Roman Town at Caistor St Edmund'
- 'The Romans in East Anglia'
- 'The Life of Boudica'
- 'The Gorleston Hoard and the Bronze Age in Norfolk'
- 'Late Iron Age and Early Roman Norfolk'
- 'Introduction to Norwich Castle Museum'
- 'Archaeology and Metal-detecting in Norfolk'
- 'A walk around the Boudica Gallery'

He spoke to groups including:

The Hanworth Society; The Friends of Cromer Museum; Time and Tide Museum; King's Lynn and West Norfolk Archaeological

Society; U3A Artefact Group, Norwich; The Mattishall Society; The British Federation of Graduates; Lowestoft Archaeology and Local History Society; Blakeney Area Historical Society; Great Yarmouth U3A Group; National Association For Roman Archaeology, at the UEA; Bexley Archaeological Group; Cromer Museum; the Friends of King's Lynn Museums.

John's other presentations included:

- 'Caistor St Edmund Roman Town Walk and Talk'.
- 'Late Prehistoric East Anglia'; a taught course for University of East Anglia.
- 'The Iron Age collections and behind the scenes tour'; 'Meet the Curator' event at Norwich Castle.
- Flint handling for 'Stone Age Day', at Cromer Museum.
- A site tour of Burgh Castle, for 'Discovery Tours'.

Tim Pestell gave numerous talks. His subjects included:

'Early East Anglian Monasteries'
'Evidence for the Vikings in Norfolk'

- Tim also spoke on the subject of 'Treasure and Museum Acquisition' for the Museums Eastern Archaeological Network event at Colchester Castle.
- He spoke on the subject of 'The early medieval church in Suffolk: A review of recent research' to the Archaeology in Suffolk conference, Ipswich.
- He spoke on 'Imports or immigrants? Reassessing Scandinavian metalwork in Late Anglo-Saxon East Anglia', to the East Anglia in its North Sea World conference, UEA.
- The clustering of bracteates in East Anglia' (with Charlotte Behr) – joint paper to the Saxonsymposium, Haderslev, Denmark.
- Guiding University of Chester students around museum galleries.
- Specialist guiding of Anglo-Saxon gallery for members of the Association for Roman Archaeology.

Alan West delivered lunchtime talks at Norwich Castle and provided specialist involvement in the 'Stone Age Day', at Cromer Museum.

Art Department

Harriet Loffler gave presentations to groups which included:

- The Bridget Riley exhibition as lunchtime talks and to EAAF members.
- A lecture at NUCA on contemporary responses to landscape (to coincide with the **Visual Dialogues** project).
- Lecture to art history graduates at UEA on the role of the Contemporary Art Curator.
- For the opening of the **Skvader** exhibition.
- Talks to U3A groups on the **Skvader** exhibition.

- Contributed to a SHARE workshop on the subject of creative collaborations using the **Skvader** exhibition as a case study.
- Talk to parents from the Hamlet Centre on the **Skvader** exhibition.

Harriet organised a series of pilot events entitled **Art Salon**, comprising artist interventions, film screenings and performance as part of the Great British Art Debate.

In December 2010 Harriet visited India with the Contemporary Art Society as research for the **Material Response** project; a residency artist exchange between India and Norfolk. A relationship has been forged with the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai.

Giorgia Bottinelli provided a range of presentations to groups, including:

- A talk on 'still life' to a group of still life artists.
- Talk to U3A group on the Norwich School.
- Talk about the Fine Art collection to NUCA tutors.
- Talk to the Friends of Norwich Cathedral about the Art Collection.

Andrew Moore gave the following presentations:

- 'Presenting European Masters at Norwich Castle', at the National Gallery
- 'Understanding Portraits' at National Portrait Gallery
- Norfolk River Scenes, gallery talk.

Decorative Art

Francesca Vanke gave talks on the subjects of the decorative arts to:

Aylsham Local History Society; Brooke History Group; the Association for Retired Insurance Staff; the British Federation of Women Graduates; the Cringleford Historical Society; the Ipswich Institute.

Her subjects included:

- teapots
- Norwich Silver
- Lowestoft Porcelain
- Chinese Porcelain
- the History of Porcelain
- Food and Drink through the Ages
- History of Jewellery
- 1960s Fashions

Some specific sessions undertaken by Francesca included:

- Hosted a workshop and took part in a 'Café Conversations'

session on the **Art of Faith** exhibition.

- Spoke at the **Art of Faith** sixth form conference.
- Lunchtime talk on 'Alice Liddell and Victorian Childhood', in conjunction with Alice in Wonderland Film Festival. Gallery talk and study session for NUCA students, followed by visit to NUCA to critique students' work.
- Induction sessions for NUCA tutors.
- Talk to UEA Museology students about how to create a Decorative Arts gallery.
- Talk to 'Gifted and Talented' sixth formers on 'The Curators Role', organised by UEA at Norwich Castle.

3 IMPROVING THE COLLECTIONS AND DISPLAYS

Acquisitions

The process of acquisition conforms to the NMAS mission statement to 'hold our common heritage in trust and make it available to the widest possible audience'. Acquiring new material to enhance existing museum displays is an integral aspect of the curatorial role.

Acquisition is not an exercise in gathering more material that will fill storerooms, but a dynamic expression of the county's rich heritage within the museum, while being preserved to the highest possible standards for future generations to enjoy.

Acquisition is a selective process, undertaken in line with agreed collecting policies for individual museums and the overall NMAS Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

This collecting process is undertaken alongside an ongoing and rigorous rationalisation programme, through the **NMAS Rationalisation Committee**.

Acquisition is both an active and passive process. **Active collecting** is where curators look for gaps in the existing collections, while **passive collecting** is where items are offered to the museum.

Archaeology collecting

The greatest pressure on acquisition for archaeology is as a result of the huge number of new discoveries that are being made through the agency of metal-detection in the county. Norfolk yields more archaeological finds than any other county in Britain, hovering between 40-50% of the total finds recorded from the whole of England and Wales.

Norfolk also continues to see more cases of Treasure (the 1996 replacement of 'Treasure Trove') than any other county in the UK.

The Norfolk ploughsoil is being drained of archaeological finds at a higher rate than at any other time in its history. Among the new discoveries are many items of national significance, which deserve to be acquired for a museum collection.

NMAS continues remains committed to attempting to acquire the best and most significant of these finds for the enjoyment, enrichment and study of future generations.

The Collecting Cultures Project

This scheme is enabling the enhancement of the archaeology collections and displays. The project, worth £220,000 in total, remains a major part of the Department's work programme, through to 2013. This funding was successfully acquired from an

HLF scheme, supported by the Friends of the Norwich Museums.

This project is enabling the strategic acquisition of important objects, as well as the development of a website to include 'star object trails', and an associated education programme.

Acquisitions

Important recent acquisitions include:

- A very rare Iron Age bronze boar figurine.
- A magnificent 6th century Visigothic buckle plate, imported to Britain from Spain.
- A lead-filled Late Anglo-Saxon censer cover that had been re-used as a weight.
- An assemblage of objects from Beachamwell, including Anglo-Saxon cemetery material.
- Two highly ornate enamelled 7th century Celtic mounts.
- A die used to create punched designs on an Anglo-Saxon 'bracteate' pendant.
- A gilt 8th century Anglo-Saxon brooch with blue glass inlays.
- A significant addition to the numismatic collection was a very rare Anglo-Saxon penny found in central Norfolk, struck in the name of Aethelred, a king of East Anglia. This is only the sixth example ever found of this type.
- A medieval silver seal matrix depicting the figure of a woman
- A fragment of gold Anglo-Saxon bracteate
- A glass Iron Age bead
- A very rare Iron Age spoon, which was used in a ritual context



The Iron Age boar figurine from east Norfolk.

We also continue to receive generous donation from members of the public. In the last six months these include:

- A bronze Viking ingot
- An Anglo-Saxon sword pommel
- Numerous items found by 'Discovery Tours'; an organised team of American metal-detectorists.

Natural History

Most Natural History acquisitions tend to be in the form of donations. Key acquisitions during the period include:

- The Ranwell Herbarium from University of East Anglia
- The Dick Hamond marine zoology collection and archive from executors (which involved large scale house clearance)

Fine Art:

The following works were acquired during 2010-11:

- Tom Wood, *Study for Portrait of Timothy Colman*, gouache on paper
- Cedric Morris, three paintings and 18 drawings
- Chris Newby, *Something Understood*, film commissioned for the Art of Faith exhibition.
- Graham Sutherland, *Study for Thorns*, oil on canvas

Decorative Art:

The following works were acquired during 2010-11:

- English delftware plate, inscribed to 'Charles Cordy. Norwich, 1758'
- Group of glass vessels comprising a Japanese tea service *The Crown Princess Takes Tea*, by Catherine Coleman, 2009
- a major collection of English Glass was taken on a five year loan.

Negotiations were also begun towards the acquisition of English studio ceramics as a future bequest.

Bequest

- 17th century silver spoon

A significant achievement was the successful application in the **Crafts Council/Art Fund Collect 2011 Competition**. Francesca Vanke, with Andrew Moore, won a pair of porcelain vases for the collection, against national competition. They acquired a pair of porcelain vases *Kangaroo and Emu Lost in Chintz* by Robin Best (2010).

This fine achievement attracted national publicity on Radio 4.

Improving the permanent galleries

Labels were updated in the **Norwich Silver** display in the Keep.

New illustrated information sheets were provided in holsters in the **Boudica Gallery**.

Information sheets have been updated for the **Anglo-Saxon and Viking Gallery**.

Part of the new loan collection of English glass has been exhibited in the Fitch Room.

There were two re-displays within the permanent Fine Art collection: in **The Northern European Paintings Gallery** and in the **Colman Project Space**, where a Gary Breeze exhibition was installed.



The new glass accessible entrance to the Bridewell Museum.

Developing our museums

The Bridewell Museum Project

The past year has seen much change at The Bridewell Museum. The Bridewell Redevelopment Project is now well underway and the building looks transformed. The new entrance on Bridewell Alley has revolutionised access into the museum.

The museum is now fully visible and accessible from the street, solving many of our previous issues and concerns. You can't miss it now!

The new entrance area is inviting and filled with light, thanks to the large windows and curved glass vestibule. The Carrow Works Fire Engine and beam engine stand proud, giving visitors a sneak preview of what is within.



The newly renovated courtyard at the Bridewell Museum.

Two new lifts within the building give access to all five levels of the museum.

The courtyard has been transformed into a useable space at last. With french doors from the reception area; visitors can now get a glimpse of the building in a way that was impossible before.

The roof is now fully water tight and the galleries have been redecorated waiting for installation of the new displays. Old wooden floors have been lovingly brought back to life thanks to a local team of polishers.

Our new public facilities are greatly improved, with an accessible lavatory, baby change and new ladies and gents loos.

The year ahead is busy again for the curators, designers and conservators as we work towards the new displays.

Jenny and Hannah are very grateful for the efforts of all the NMAS team, who are making the museum fit for the 21st Century.

The Keep development project

Norwich Castle Keep was identified through the Service Planning process as the next substantial display priority within NMAS. The phased approach to this project has previously been reported to NASAC. The phases of the project, as currently identified, are as follows:

Norwich Castle Keep was identified as the next substantial display priority within NMAS, through the Service Planning process. This is being undertaken by way of a phased process, as outlined in the **Curator Report 2009-10**. Significant progress has now been achieved in all areas:

Phase 1 To remove and re-locate the existing prison displays from the Keep main floor and clear space for a focus on the Norman and medieval period.

A new display within the Keep basement was completed in 2010. This well-received presentation chronicles the history of Norwich Castle as the County Gaol.

Phase 2 To develop research links between the Norwich Castle and the British Museum and to develop a major British Museum collaboration project.



Vanessa Trevelyan speaking at the launch event for **Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England** at the British Museum.

On the 16th February 2011, Norwich Castle and the British Museum launched a new partnership with the aim of creating major new displays in Norwich Castle Keep. The event was held in London, at the British Museum. The project, titled: **Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England**, was launched by the TV historian Michael Wood. The plan is to bring together some of the outstanding collections from London and Norwich in major new displays at Norwich Castle. Together, the Designated archaeology collections at Norwich castle and the medieval collections at the British Museum will enable an unparalleled insight into life, work and faith in East Anglia in the medieval period.

At the British Museum event, the new design vision was presented. Together with ideas for major partnership object-rich displays, setting Norwich and Norfolk in the context of wider themes of life in medieval England.

Phase 3 In collaboration with partners in southern counties of England and in Calvados in **Normandy**, to explore and interpret the international context of Norwich Castle's Norman heritage. A partnership, under the name of **Norman Connections**, has been



TV presenter Michael Wood examines objects from Norwich Castle at the British Museum event.

established between the partners:

- Norwich Castle
- Colchester Castle
- Rochester Castle
- Hastings Castle
- Caen Castle
- Falaise Castle
- Bayeux Tapestry Centre
- Calvados Tourism Department

Funding for the partnership has been formally secured from the *Interreg IVa France (Channel) - England Programme* and this will run through 2013.

The project will develop a shared approach to the conservation, interpretation and display of our respective Norman monuments, artefacts and documents. In doing so, the partners will benefit from the shared professional experience of the partnership. It will also explore the creation of a Norman Heritage Tourism Trail, which will span both sides of the Channel.

Norman Connections will enable us to:

- Explore the architecture of the Norman Keep more fully
- Develop the interpretation and understanding of the Keep by comparison with its French counterparts
- Explore new methods of display
- Improve existing Keep displays
- Provide the opportunity for international object loans
- Enable a dialogue for the exchange of expertise between partners in the areas of historical knowledge, museum skills and tourism
- Promote Norwich's Norman heritage to wider audiences across southern England and Normandy

Norman Connections Partnership castle at Falaise, Lower Normandy. Constructed immediately after the completion of Norwich Castle.



Phase 4 will bring to fruition the complete re-interpretation of the Castle Keep and the integration of the British Museum collections and NMAS collections in the new displays.

Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum

On Saturday 23rd July 2010 the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum celebrated the 20th anniversary of its opening. Visitors had free entry for the day and were offered birthday cake. Over 250 people joined in the celebrations.

On the 20th September the Trustees hosted a lunch at the Norfolk Club for the volunteers to thank them for their hard work over the years. Some have been associated with the Museum over the whole 20 years, and four are ex-members of NMAS staff who regularly return to help behind the scenes.

However, change is afoot, and Autumn 2010 and Spring of 2011 were used as preparation time for the closure of the Shirehall displays prior to a move up to the Castle. All objects on display have been photographed and measured. A complete inventory of the current stores was made; the contents of each box checked and repacked with fresh tissue.

Space in the Castle was negotiated, objects selected and designs made for an initial interim display to follow on immediately from the closure of the Museum.

Using the collections

Collections are at the heart of what the Curator section does. We care for objects, identify, research, interpret, describe, document, display and use them in a variety of ways – many of which are illustrated throughout this report.

Below is a compilation of different ways in which the Natural History collections have been used during the year.

- Steve Davis (of University College, Dublin) used the beetle collections to identify archaeological remains.
- Lucy Flowers (of Royal Holloway, University of London) used the geology collections to pursue research wolves and early dogs.
- Marzia Breda (of the Natural History Museum) used the geology collections to research Pleistocene deer, including a species of *Dama* which is newly identified.
- Roger Bristowe (from Copplestone, Devon) used the butterfly collections to research the taxonomy and distribution of *Brassiolidae*.
- students from the Norwich University College of the Arts use the collections for their project work in a variety of ways.
- Mike Toms (of the British Trust for Ornithology) photographed birds' eggs for a new field guide.
- Tim Strudwick used the insect collections to extract records and identify specimens of bees and wasps.
- Doreen Wells used the insect collections to extract records and identify specimens of ants. She also donated specimens of ants to complement our existing collections.
- Norfolk Moth Survey recorders used the moth collections to extract records and check identifications.
- Andrew Duff used insect collections to prepare a new manual of British Beetles.
- Mike Buckley (of York University) used the Pleistocene mammal collection for protein analysis.
- Dr Tony Irwin (Senior Curator) worked with PhD students from the UEA School of Biosciences regarding reference collections (Natural History Collections benefit from being worked on by these students, alongside the staff).
- Norfolk Pine Marten samples were sent for DNA analysis (to the Vincent Wildlife Trust).
- Part of the type series of *Aphrodes aestuarina*, from the Edwards Homoptera collection, were lent for DNA typification, through Jo Bluemel, at Cardiff University).

4 IMPROVING ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

Developing access to knowledge and information.

Case Study 1 The Ancient Egyptian collection

Research Associate Faye Kalloniatis is working towards the production of a fully illustrated catalogue of the Egyptian collection, which will eventually be published. This project is also serving to raise awareness of the collection locally, nationally and internationally.

Study of the collection led to renewed awareness of a rare ancient Egyptian shroud, dated to c1,550 BC, which is inscribed with hieroglyphs of chapters from the Book of the Dead; spells designed to help the deceased on their journey to the afterlife. The shroud, part of the 1921 Colman donation, has remained in store, unable to be properly viewed or researched.

In January 2011 a joint project, generously supported by Partnership UK, was begun between Norwich Castle and the British Museum. The aim was to unroll the shroud, conserve it and study the inscribed text for the first time. It is hoped to discover its ancient owner, provenance and something of the religious beliefs and practices of the ancient Egyptians.

The shroud has now been fully exposed and is being conserved by the British Museum textile conservators, with involvement and assistance from the Norwich Conservation team. Two shroud study days were held, at the British Museum and Norwich Castle, which included contributions from a range of international specialists.



Dr John Taylor (British Museum) and team examine the shroud with Faye Kalloniatis (centre).

The study has shown the Norwich shroud to belong to the 18th dynasty, of which only a few are known worldwide. A second phase of study is being planned and papers are currently being written by the Research Associate and the BM project team.

Case Study 2 **The Snettisham collection**

One of the most important and famous British archaeological sites is Snettisham in west Norfolk. Norwich Castle is home to a substantial part of the magnificent **Snettisham Treasure** of gold and silver jewellery – the component that was found between the initial discovery in 1948 and the British Museum excavation in 1990. Now, a full study of the collection is being undertaken in preparation for its publication.

John Davies is currently writing a catalogue of the NMAS Iron Age collection. Staff at the British Museum are also currently preparing the definitive publication of the Snettisham Treasure. A team of specialists from the national museum spent a week with the Archaeology Department to study and record specific parts of the Norwich collection. Eventually, two works, relating to Snettisham and associated material will be published.

Four members of the British Museum Scientific Research Department spent two days studying the Norwich torcs and looking, in particular, for traces of organic remains. Initial results indicate that some original material is still present, despite it having been discovered and excavated over 60 years ago.

Public enquiries

Dealing with enquiries from the public is undertaken within all sections. Such enquires have been particularly heavy for the Natural History and Art Departments. In the case of the latter, Giorgia Bottinelli answered *176 enquiries* during the period, which involved identifications, visit requests, image requests and requests for information on specific artists.

Material studied

In the case of **Decorative Art**, researchers have visited the Study Centre to study such material as:

Nursery china
Teapots
Lowestoft porcelain
Civic swords
Glass
Silver plane
1930s ceramics
To discuss Art Nouveau

The following study sessions were held in the Decorative Art Study Room:

- 4 study sessions with U3A groups on the History of Decorative

Arts, Ceramics and Teapots

- A Silver Society study session and tour
- 2 NUCA student study sessions
- Study session and tour for two Norwich Cathedral Friends groups
- Study session on English glass (this was over-subscribed)
- 2 study sessions for Chinese Creative Writing Group from UEA
- Session for disabled students about collections/museum work.

In the case of **Archaeology**, researchers have visited to study material which includes (this is a selective list):

Prehistoric flints from a range of sites including Happisburgh, Grimes Graves and Kelling
Bronze Age spearheads
Iron Age coinage, pottery, torcs, metalwork items and the Snettisham Treasure
Anglo-Saxon objects and cemetery collections
Medieval seals
Coin brooches
Papal bullae
Ancient Egyptian objects

Researchers have visited to study our collections from the following institutions worldwide:

University of Cardiff
University of Nottingham
British Museum
University of Southampton
Verulamium Museum
University of Cambridge
University of Oxford
University of Chester
University of York
University of Kent
English Heritage
University of Sheffield

Leiden University, Netherlands
Kyushu University, Japan
Ohio Wesleyan University, USA
Alabama, USA
University of Giessen, Germany
Neues Museum, Berlin
Museums of Caen and Falaise, France

Curators also provide their specialist knowledge and expertise to visiting students through discussion and mentoring.

5 INVESTING IN THE SECTOR

Research Associates, volunteers and placements

Research Associates

The position of Research Associate was created within the Curator Section of NMAS in 2005. This has been a new initiative which is not done anywhere else.

The role is undertaken on a voluntary basis to undertake a specific programme of research on an agreed area of the NMAS collections. Applicants are already acknowledged skilled specialists in their own field and become Honorary members of the Curatorial Team, based at Norwich Castle Study Centre, for the duration of their project. The position lasts for a finite duration (normally three years).

The programme has been well-used and has been highly successful to date. Major studies and catalogues are being achieved. The programme has included some researchers of national reputation and also some ex-members of staff.

The list of Research Associates to date is:

		date from
Dr Peter Norton	Geology Collection	2005
Professor Peter Robins	Prehistoric flint collection	2006
Faye Kalloniatis	Ancient Egyptian collection	2007
Nigel Larkin	Geology / palaeontology	2009
Norma Watt	Cotman and Norwich School	2009
Martin Warren	Geology collection	2011
Dr Harriet Foster	Archaeological glass	2011

Volunteers

Volunteers play a regular and important role in all departments, undertaking a range of duties. Some examples relating to volunteer contributions in two curatorial Departments are given below.

Archaeology

The Archaeology Department has benefitted from a programme of engaging University-based interns in recent years. During this year Eileen Jahnke, a history graduate from Potsdam University in Germany, has provided support to the team. Eileen received funding for a 7 month placement with the Department as part of the EU's 'Leonardo Programme'. This placement has provided her with invaluable curatorial experience and she intends to develop a career as a museum curator. She is now returning to Potsdam to complete an MA degree.

Another significant contribution has come from Dr Matthew Sillence of the University of East Anglia, who has continued his work on the Department's historic seal collection on a voluntary basis. Matthew's work has established the collection to be one of the best collections of seal matrices in the entire UK.

Natasha Harlow has undertaken two significant projects as a volunteer. As a member of the Caistor Excavation Project Team, she has undertaken research into the Caistor Roman town archive and has also undertaken oral history recording in relation to archaeological discoveries.

Natural History

The Natural History Department makes regular and intense use of volunteers, devoting Wednesdays each week to their involvement. The work undertaken during the year has involved the weekly contributions that are listed below:

Paul Escott – spirit collection maintenance
 Stuart Paston – identification of flies
 Colin Dunster – botany cataloguing
 Hattie Aldridge – botany cataloguing
 Bob Leaney – botany cataloguing
 Peter Ellenger – geology cataloguing
 Martin Stolworthy – geology cataloguing
 Peter Nicholson – invertebrate cataloguing and collection maintenance
 Janet Wolstenholme – archive cataloguing and transcription, collections cleaning and repair
 Danyal and Opee Choudhury – osteology cataloguing
 Peter Hoare – cataloguing erratics and Hallam Ashley photographs
 Kirsty Garrod – cataloguing HM Customs confiscated collection of reptile skins
 Roanna Benfield – transcribing geology manuscripts
 Zoe Way – transcribing geology manuscripts and cataloguing fossil mollusc collection
 Jonathan Stewart – fossil elephantid preparation

Volunteer Conference 2010

In November 2010 the Curator section held the third in a series of annual events established to involve the volunteers who have contributed to the work of NMAS, at all of its sites, over the preceding year. The event was held at Norwich Castle, attracting a full audience in the Town Close Auditorium.

The event was held specifically to celebrate the work of all of our volunteers and enabling volunteers and staff to come together to share experiences and awareness of our activities and priorities.

The morning session comprised formal presentations by

volunteers and staff while the afternoon provided an opportunity for participants to learn about the many varied aspects of Museum Service work, through a series of workshops (led by staff).

Partnerships

Partnerships provide advantages and can help the organisation progress at a time of financial stringency. Joint working arrangements are often required to fulfil agenda requirements. In essence, they allow us to do more than we could do alone.

Staff have been involved in close working relationships with a number of outside bodies, on behalf of NMAS.

We have **formal partnerships** with:

The Tate – currently manifested under the title of ‘The Great British Art Debate’.

The British Museum – under the title of Partnership UK.

Norwich University College of Art

These partnerships enable us to:

- jointly develop and share high quality loans and loan exhibitions.
- expand the content and appeal of our exhibitions across the community through loan works of the highest quality.
- Pool resources and jointly curate loan exhibitions.
- develop opportunities for staff skills learning and development.
- enhance the profile of NMAS working as a prominent regional partner with institutions of international standing.

Other partnerships

- Staff continue to work closely with colleagues in various departments at the **University of East Anglia**.
- **Norman Connections** is a new international partnership involving sites in Kent Sussex and Normandy. This exciting project is outlined in Section 3 above, in ‘*Developing Our Museums*’.

Other partnerships and close working relationships are currently in place with:

The Victoria and Albert Museum
The Natural History Museum
Linnaean Society Taxonomic Advisory Group
Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service
Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership
Natural Sciences Collections Association

Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society
Geological Society of Norfolk
Chalk East
Ancient Human Occupation of Britain Project
The Palaeontological Association
Newsletter
Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society

Staff also belong to regional **Subject Specialist Networks (SSNs)** in the fields of Archaeology and Natural History.

Supporting the sector

Natural History

The Natural History Department undertook a number of training sessions aimed at supporting colleagues across museums and in support of the discipline. These included:

- Undertaking a Day School concerning “Using Natural History Collections”.
- A visit to Aldeburgh Museum (Suffolk) to advise on collections and displays.
- Providing a talk to Essex Field Club (near Chelmsford) to advise on storage and rationalisation.
- Providing a tutor to the advanced Integrated Pest Management course at Cambridge.
- Visit to Wells Field Study Centre to provide advice to Wells Town Council about their taxidermy collection.
- Providing advice and support to the Norwich Dedza Partnership, who are working on the design for a new museum of Malawi Rock Art.
- Providing advice to Norfolk Records Office about the Norfolk Biological Records Centre Archive.
- And generally contributing to the Eastern Region Natural History Network.

The section also undertook a number of temporary exhibitions, which were installed at different locations. These included:

- Lending a case of Fountaine butterflies Swaffham Museum for an exhibition.
- Lending Natural History objects to Time and Tide Museum for the “Two Shores Exhibition”.
- Providing illustrations and new text and labels for an update within the Time and Tide “Early Years Gallery”, Great Yarmouth.

Archaeology

In February 2011, members of the Archaeology department participated in the Museums Easter Archaeology Network training day, arranged for non-specialist and independent museums staff in the region. This was organised in conjunction with Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service and the meeting was held at Colchester Castle.

Curatorial Advisors

Staff within the section have supported independent museums in the region through their role as Curatorial Advisors.
Museum

City of Norwich Aviation Museum, Horsham St Faith	Alan West
Diss Museum	Ruth Burwood
RAF Air Defence Radar Museum, Neatishead	Kate Thaxton
Swaffham Museum	Cathy Terry
100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum, Thorpe Abbots	Tim Pestell
Mundesley Maritime Museum	Sarah Norcross-Robinson

Committees

Tim Pestell continues to sit on the Department of Culture, Media and Sport *Treasure Valuation Committee* and to serve on the Bury St Edmunds Cathedral Fabric Advisory Committee and the Council of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society.

Tony Irwin is a Committee member for the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalist Society.

David Waterhouse is Secretary for the Geological Society of Norfolk.

Andrew Moore sits on the National Gallery Art Research Advisory Committee, the Public Catalogue Foundation Advisory panel, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art Advisory Council and the Art Fund Norfolk Committee.

Harriet Loffler was appointed to the Steering Committee of the Turning Point network; an Arts Council funded strategy to encourage more partnership working across arts and heritage organisations in the Eastern Region.

Loans

The Department continues to receive regular requests for loans from its collection. During this period, requests for future loans came from:

- Falaise Castle, Calvados, **Normandy**, for artefacts of the Norman period, for a new display in their Keep.
- A national exhibition at Goldsmiths' Hall, City of London, on the use of gold through history, entitled 'The Glory of Gold: The Story of Britain and Gold'.
- The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for an Iron Age electrum torc from south-west Norfolk.
- National Trust Sutton Hoo, for the Balhild matrix and Anglo-Saxon female accessories.
- Ipswich Museum, for the Happisburgh flint collection.
- Swaffham Museum, for Norfolk Anglo-Saxon material.

Material from the collection was loaned to the following institutions:

- Nottingham University. Samian ware pottery from Caistor St Edmund
- The Grosvenor Museum, Chester. For its Vikings exhibition, 'Reap and Tillage'.
- The Museum of Normandy, **Caen**, for artefacts associated with Caen stone, for their summer/autumn exhibition.
- The Norfolk Record Office, for its 'Norfolk in the North Sea World' conference/exhibition.

6 THE DISPLAY DEPARTMENT 2010-11

This has been yet another extremely challenging year for the Display Department. The capital funded Bridewell redevelopment has dominated the workload of the department which has been involved in developing the gallery concepts and detailed gallery layouts. The layouts for the galleries were completed by June and sent to a fit out company in July. Other elements that the department has been involved in on the project has included the development of the graphic design concept, signage, procurement, case dressing design, design and construction of structures, development of interactives, and advising on the procurement of AV equipment. Presently the department is putting together a range of detailed schedules for both procurement and installation with a view to opening the museum in July 2012.

Dovetailing in with the Bridewell workload the department has also been heavily involved in the temporary exhibition programme at the Castle Museum including Beatles to Bowie, Bridget Riley, The Art of Faith, Restless Times, Hubert Duprat, Family Matters, Children's Show, Skvader, Ged Quinn, Visual Dialogues, and Gary Breeze. In supporting this programme the department helps with procuring and scheduling in a wide range of different contractors from painters to graphic designers. If time allows the in-house department has the capabilities of not only absorbing a great deal of the project co-ordination for production and installation but can also design and produce graphics, case dressing and 3D structures.

Countywide the department was responsible for assisting with the Circus exhibition, Two Shores and Saucy postcards at the Time & Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth.

Display team working on installations at the Bridewell Museum redevelopment project.



We have also coordinated the refresh of the Keep basement, with the new Prison Gallery, and also the refresh of the Colman Watercolour gallery, this was repainted and all of the back boards were freshly fabric covered (this had not been done since the late 1980s). With the project curator, the department designed and produced the Women's Land Army at Gressenhall which opened in summer 2011.

We are continuing to work with Volunteers who remain a valuable part of our team, in particular Ken Heathcote, formerly head of the display department, who regularly helps us out.

We shall shortly be beginning work on the Colman Galleries refurbishment, whereby there is a detailed installation schedule which has been planned so that while the work is going on, there will always be part of the galleries still open to the public and for school groups to use.

In the future, once the Bridewell has been completed we shall be moving straight on to some significant projects including the Keep main floor and the new Regimental permanent displays.

7 THE CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT 2010-11

The Conservation Department has continued to support numerous exhibitions, projects and collections care activities across the NMAS sites this past year, whilst also developing in-house expertise through challenging conservation projects and training. It has a pivotal role working with all the different departments and sites to ensure the safe access of the museums' collections in all their uses. Reaching and working with wider public and professional audiences has also been a major focus this year.

The Team

The Conservation team comprises currently 9 members of staff, 1 full-time and 8 part-time including a temporary maternity cover post. Included is the post of Conservation Co-ordinator which supports the work of the team through vital co-ordination, planning, liaison and administrative duties. The formation of this post in 2009 has invigorated the department and contributed to more efficient ways of working throughout NMAS.

A significant change for the team this year has been the loss of their line manager, the Collections Management post in December 2010.

Exhibitions

NMAS has a busy temporary exhibitions programme which the Conservation team supports through advice on object selection, display environment, and handling and transport as well as the treatment of artefacts to maximise their safe access on display. In addition to working with NMAS collections, conservators frequently need to help ensure the safe care of loans to and from external institutions.

A notable exhibition this year which illustrates the multi disciplinary nature of a conservator's role at NMAS was "The Art of Faith", at Norwich Castle Museum. This major exhibition encompassed a very broad range of objects and materials including textiles, paintings, stone, leather, metals and polychrome sculpture, and also involved a wide variety of external organisations, from national museums to private individuals to Norfolk churches. The exhibition also enabled the Conservation Team to collaborate with external conservators, sharing professional skills, knowledge and research.

In all, during April 2010 to March 2011, eleven temporary exhibitions were supported across the service which accounted for approximately 20% of the team's time.

Capital Display Projects

The Bridewell Museum Redevelopment Project has been a major focus for the Conservation Team during this period. Members of the team have been integral to the process of safe removal and transfer of the museum's collections off-site and

have been working with curatorial and display colleagues in the assessment of objects for display. Conservation treatment of several thousands of objects continues in preparation for the opening of the museum in June 2012. Many of the objects selected have never been treated or displayed before, or have presented particularly challenging problems due to size and /or condition. Information uncovered from the conservation process has added to the curatorial records and in turn contributed to the accessibility of the object. These opportunities have enabled staff to focus and develop their conservation skills further, to broaden their experience and in turn, share skills with volunteers and interns.

Several other major museum re-display projects have also presented similar opportunities. These included the Women's Land Army gallery at Gressenhall, the Prison display in the Castle Keep, the Cotman & Crome art galleries and Colman watercolour gallery at Norwich Castle, and the display of the Seahenge central stump at Lynn Museum.

In total, these capital display projects accounted for a further 20% approx. of the team's time during the year.

Collections Care

Collections care work is one of the fundamental responsibilities of the Conservation Dept. This includes caring for collections in storage, on display, during study and in transit through appropriate methods of handling, packing, storage, environmental monitoring etc. The team works with on-site staff to improve conditions for the collections and thus increase their access. Examples of collections care activities this year include programmes of conservation housekeeping and deep cleaning at Strangers Hall Museum, Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse, Ancient House Museum Thetford, and Cromer Museum. The vulnerability of objects on open display necessitates careful monitoring and maintenance. Work at Strangers Hall in particular has addressed problems of pest infestation and the accumulative effects of annual housekeeping combined with more frequent maintenance



Conservation work in progress on the Seahenge central stump, Lynn Museum.

has significantly reduced insect activity and thus minimised irreversible damage to the collections. Developing volunteer skills and interest in these activities has also been an important focus of the work.

Another major collections care project which required input from the Conservation Team was the pack up of the Kings Lynn Town House Museum following its closure.

In total, collections care work accounted for a further 15% approx. of the team's time during the year.

Training, Advice & Outreach

Each year, the department is approached for opportunities for work / volunteer placements and student internships.

These placements range from a few days to several weeks and often involve applications from those who are interested in Conservation as a career, to students already embarked on formal conservation courses, who need additional training and experience in a work environment. Several placements were accommodated over the past 12 months. Staff were engaged in providing different levels of training in a wide range of activities, promoting conservation and increasing peoples' understanding of the profession. This was also applied through provision of training and advice for in-house NMAS colleagues.

Training has also been facilitated on a more formal platform through workshops and conferences. The Renaissance Regional Conservator, based in the department, in conjunction with the Conservation Co-ordinator, organised the biannual East Anglia Conservators Forum for the third consecutive year. This forum enables conservators from the region, whether employed by heritage organisations or in private practice, to gather and discuss focused issues and share work experiences and current research. A conference on Lighting in Museums & Galleries was also organised by the same members of staff. This attracted a wide and diverse audience from the heritage sector and received very positive feedback. It also generated income for the department.

Training by the Regional Conservator and supported by the NMAS Conservation Dept, for the wider regional museums network, has also been a significant contribution through workshops facilitated by the Renaissance SHARE programme. The Conservation Department has been working with the NMAS Access Officer and Learning Department and has been increasingly included in behind the scenes tours for members of the public. These have proved very popular and have added another dimension to collections and information access.

Staff Development

Continuous staff development is important in keeping up to date with the latest techniques, equipment, materials and scientific research in the Conservation profession. Various members of staff have attended conferences in the year including "Big

Stuff" – a conference on the conservation of large size objects in collections from aircraft to tractors etc., and a study day at the British Museum on the conservation of an Egyptian shroud from the NMAS collections. In relation to this, 3 members of staff benefitted directly from a partnership project with the British Museum which involved the conservation and investigation into an Egyptian shroud from the NMAS Archaeology Department. The project, over a course of 3 months, gave NMAS conservators the opportunity to work alongside British Museum conservation colleagues, sharing skills and knowledge on the treatment of an extremely fragile Egyptian linen burial shroud.

During 2010, a Conservation Collections Technician from the team, having consolidated several years of in-house training and previously completed two externally assessed conservation related courses, transferred to the post of Assistant Conservator. In January 2011, a textile conservator joined the team for the first time, in a maternity cover post. This is proving to be a very successful addition to the team and is helping to expand the experience and knowledge of colleagues in the dept in the area of textiles and costume conservation and mounting.

Also, in January 2011, a new Conservation Collections Technician joined the team and is training in-house under the supervision and mentoring of conservation colleagues and is working towards the Institute of Conservation (ICON) Conservation Technician Qualification.

8 APPENDIX

Communicating through publications and other media

Staff in the Curator team form the front line in dealing with requests for information from the public, researchers, other museum staff and the media. Curators are regularly contacted by television and radio to supply knowledge, information and to participate in media broadcasts. A selection of Curatorial staff involvements during 2010-11 are summarised below.

Television appearances

In June 2010 the Natural History Department supported and worked with BBC **'Springwatch'** on an item on flies. Tony Irwin was featured on the broadcast and was subsequently presented with the special 'Geek Award' as part of the programme!

In July 2010 David Waterhouse worked with **Anglia News** on item about the Happisburgh excavations.

The Archaeology Department provided a major input into the **'Time Team Special'** production about the Roman Town at Caistor St Edmund. Staff were interviewed and collections used in filming.

Archaeology Department staff also made major contributions to the following television programmes:

'Cold Case' – Bodies in the Well (Alan West)

'Digging for Britain' (Alan West and John Davies)

Michael Wood's **'History of England'** documentary (Tim Pestell)

John Davies was interviewed as part of a video documentary about the **'History of Sedgeford'** for Poppyland.

Alan West briefs TV presenter Dr Alice Roberts before filming for the TV programme 'Digging for Britain'



Radio appearances

Francesca Vanke appeared on Radio Norfolk regarding the **Art of Faith** exhibition and project.

Francesca Vanke was interviewed on Radio 4 and Radio Norfolk, following her success in the **'Collect 2011'** competition. (See Section 3, 'Acquisitions', above).

Francesca Vanke, Giorgia Bottinelli, Tim Pestell and John Davies all contributed live interviews for History of the World outside broadcasts for Radio Norfolk.

Publications by staff

The Curatorial section employs subject specialists of national standing. They pursue research into their specialist areas; important research normally undertaken in their own time. It is important that such original research is published, which further underpins the status of the Museums Service, its collections and staff.

During the year, the following publications were achieved.

Tony Irwin wrote four chapters for the multi-author **'Dipterist's Handbook'**, published by the Amateur Entomologists Society.

John Davies contributed a section and catalogue on **'Coins'**, to the monograph, **'Romano-British and Saxon Occupation at Billingford, Central Norfolk'**, East Anglian Archaeology 135.

John Davies and Tim Pestell continued writing **'A History of Norfolk in 100 Objects'** (completed in December 2011, for publication in 2012).

Tim Pestell wrote a paper on the **Norfolk gold bracteates** for the **Sachsensymposium Proceedings** with Dr Charlotte Behr of Roehampton University.

John Davies edited (and contributed chapters to) the book **'The Iron Age in Northern East Anglia: New Work in the Land of the Icenii'** (published December 2011).

Andrew Moore, John Davies, Tim Pestell and Francesca Vanke contributed sections for the book **'The Art of Faith: 3,500 Years of Art and Belief in Norfolk'**.

