

NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

26 January 2009

Item No. 6

GENERAL UPDATE ON THE NORWICH MUSEUMS

Report by the Norwich Museums Manager

<p>This report updates the Committee on work in the Norwich Museums over the last 3 months and forthcoming activities.</p>

1. Visitor Numbers

- o Total visitor numbers for the April to November 2008/09 for the Norwich Museums and Study Centres have exceeded this year's target for the same period by 1890, if one takes into account reduced numbers as a result of the temporary closure of the tunnel to the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum from Norwich Castle.
- o Visitor numbers at Norwich's branch museums (Strangers' Hall, The Bridewell and the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum) are similar with last year's figures, but those at the Castle have reduced by approximately 6%, possibly as a result of the very early Easter school holidays in 2008 and the ongoing impact of the current economic situation. This slight reduction is in line with performance by other museums throughout the country.

2. NORWICH CASTLE

2.1 Current and Recent Temporary Exhibitions and Events

- o **Norfolk Painters and Norwich Castle Open Art Show**
These complementary shows have been well received, provoking debate and discussion among visitors, and positive feedback in the local arts community. In the main temporary exhibition galleries, we showed works by Jon Kiki, Bruer Tidman and Susan Gunn, in three separate short exhibitions. These mainly large works really made the most of the imposing wall spaces in our large galleries – many had been especially painted for this exhibition opportunity. The Open Art Show was also a success, with a wide range of styles and subject matter represented in the chosen works.

All of these exhibitions were selling shows, and at least £13,000 of the proceeds will be retained by the East Anglia Art Fund to support Castle exhibitions in the future.

- o Norwich Castle hosted a Jarrolds fashion show on 26 November 2008. The event offered guests a private view of Susan Gunn's exhibition and the opportunity to meet the artist together an opportunity to view the season's fashions and some Norwich Shawls. Funds raised will go to EAAF and the Costume and Textile Association.
- o **Anglo-Saxon Art in the Round**
A small temporary exhibition called Anglo-Saxon Art in the Round on loan from the Fitzwilliam Museum has been displayed in the Anglo-

Saxon and Viking Gallery. It ran here until January 18th and displayed a selection of remarkable early Anglo-Saxon coins, part of a collection recently acquired by the Fitzwilliam, which illustrates the variety of designs used on these first English pennies. The display is supported by a selection of contemporary Anglo-Saxon objects, including a stunning gold and garnet-encrusted disc brooch similar to our own Harford Farm brooch.

2.2 Forthcoming Exhibitions and Events

- o An exhibition of works by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson in the 1930s opens on Saturday 31 January 2009. The exhibitions will be supported by an events programme including talks and workshops.

2.3 Further developments

- o The *Arts of Living* galleries, which were previewed by Committee members in December, opened to the public on Monday 19th January. These galleries showcase star objects from across our decorative arts collections, including costume and textiles. There has already been considerable press interest, and many groups and schools are keen to see the new displays. A formal launch event will take place in the spring.

- o **Seal Matrix Cataloguing and Conservation Project**

A recent project at the Castle has begun to catalogue, conserve and publicise its important collection of seal matrices to promote understanding of these objects as personal and official means of authentication and markers of identity.

A PhD student of Sandy Heslop in the School of World Art Studies and Museology at UEA began retrieving, cataloguing and photographing the seal matrices in the summer of 2007. With the support of Conservation Team, CUE East and Dr Tim Pestell the group undertook a two-day course on modern casting methods from Mike Neilson- Replication Technician from the British Museum. This now means that casts can be taken in order to improve public access to these objects. Funding to produce an illustrated catalogue of the collection is anticipated. An education and interpretation pack for the Museum, a public exhibition and re-housing of the collection is also intended.

- o The Mammal Gallery will close for re-display after Easter 2009, to be re-opened to the public during Autumn 2009. Improvements to the Ted Ellis Gallery and the Bird Gallery will be finished by Summer 2009 and a series of natural history family events are being organised for the summer holiday period following the relocation of the large freezer to Gressenhall.

3 STRANGERS' HALL

- o Norwich Museums focused its Christmas activities at Strangers' for the second year running. Activities included cracker making, costumed characters, musical entertainment and Father Christmas. The museum attracted a good level of visitors although visits to Father Christmas were a little lower than expected. However, this was Father Christmas's first visit to Strangers' for a number of years, an activity

which relies heavily on word of mouth and family tradition and one for which there is much competition. Staff will be evaluating the event and deciding what to repeat or change for next year.

- o The Bridewell Museum will be closed for approximately two years for redevelopment. Front of House staffing budgets and other related resources will be transferred from the Bridewell to Strangers' Hall during this period in order to deliver extended opening hours and enable Strangers' to increase existing and building new audiences including schools. It is hoped that the extended opening hours trial will be successful and that a sound business case can then be developed arguing for the continued extended level of opening hours. Strangers' Hall will be open to the public Wednesday through to Saturday from 1st April 2009.
- o **Poetry Project**
Strangers' Hall has been selected by poet Meirion Jordan as inspiration for a new poetry commission funded by Café Writers.

Meirion has been commissioned to write a pamphlet-length collection of poems in response to a chosen area of relevance to Norfolk. The aim is to add to the county's reputation for literature by encouraging the development of new talent within the region. One outcome of the project will be a series of poems exploring and responding to the role of outsiders in Norwich, from its beginnings as a Saxon settlement in post-Roman Britain, through to the modern city as home to a substantial international student population. Taking its direction from Strangers' Hall, the poems are intended to represent the rooms of a house, each from a different period of time and connected to the next in loose chronological sequence but like any house, in no way insulated from the other rooms whose inhabitants have not quite faded out of earshot. They will be published by Gateway publications, and we hope to hold an event relating to the commission in for Refugee Week 2009.

4 CARROW HOUSE COSTUME AND TEXTILE CENTRE

- o Building work continues at Carrow to create an accessible toilet, kitchen facilities and access into the Conservatory. Floors have been stripped of old carpet to reveal beautiful original oak floors and some redecoration of public areas has taken place. Unfortunately the re-opening of the Centre planned for this month has been further delayed as a result of the discovery of asbestos glue on ceiling tiles planned to be replaced. Norfolk Property Services are assessing the situation and will complete the building works once a solution has been identified.
- o With a view to improving the public spaces at Carrow the Costume and Textile Association and the Friends of Norwich Museums have been asked to contribute funds towards the fit-out of the Library and new furniture for the entrance area and conservatory.
- o An MLA funded trainee began a two-year programme at Carrow in November 2008, working alongside and supporting the Costume and Textile Curator whilst studying for a distance learning MA in Museums Studies at Leicester University.

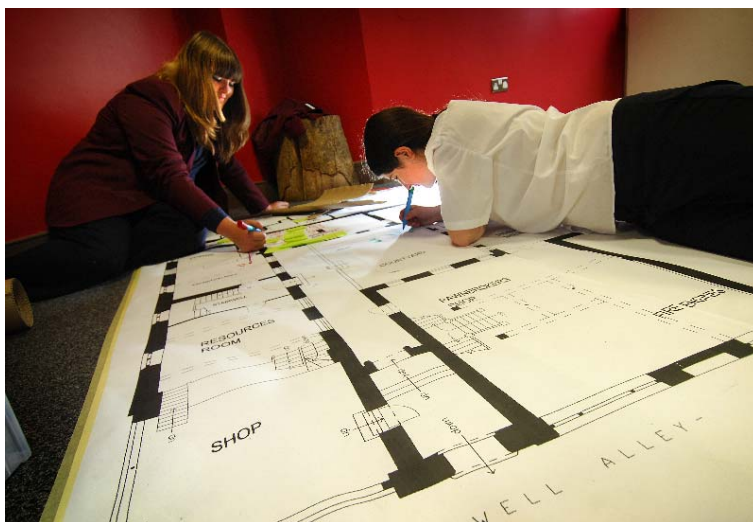
- o The Norwich Development Officer and Costume and Textile Curator have been preparing a funding application to the Esmée Fairbairn Museums and Heritage Collections Funding Strand to raise funding to support the creation of a 2.5 year documentation post to catalogue and photograph the costume and textile collections. If successful this will provide significantly improved access to the collections.

5 ROYAL NORFOLK REGIMENTAL MUSEUM

- o Funding sources and planning permission are being investigated in order to replace the stair lift with a platform lift.
- o **Their Past Your Future award: Norfolk Men on National Service**
This exciting new project at the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum involves school students from Diss High School and ex-National Servicemen working with NMAS staff to explore the experience of National Service. It will generate a new permanent display and learning materials about the post-war years and National Service, including the Korean War and Cyprus emergency. The project has recently received £9,750 funding from the Big Lottery Fund's 'Their Past Your Future' funding stream through the MLA. The project is a discrete element of a larger redisplay of the whole of the post First World War section of the Museum, which will be completed over the next few months.
- o The tunnel to the Regimental Museum from Norwich Castle has been closed due to problems with the emergency lighting system and closure of the corridor gallery in Norwich Castle during the installation of the Arts of Living Gallery. Visitors are still offered free access to the Regimental Museum via the Castle Gardens.

6 BRIDEWELL MUSEUM

- o View of the young person in re-designing the Bridewell



Over the past 6 months a group of 15 x 13-15 year olds from Hellesdon High School have been working on a consultation project to inform the re-design of the Bridewell. The students have visited other sites to see what good practice looks like, and come up with ideas and suggestions for the re-design of Bridewell. We were

fortunate to be chosen to be part of a wider AHRC project which gave the opportunity for the Hellesdon students too work with Architecture students form University of Sheffield to build a model of their design.

The students were invited to present at a conference in Leeds on 4 November 2008 to an audience of 60 academic and museum professionals. They were superb – and it was good to see the Bridewell given a national presence.

- o The Heritage Lottery Fund has approved key elements of the project plan, including the project staffing structure, schedule, project budget and procurement methods, and the project has now officially commenced.
- o Tenders will be invited for undertaking architectural services and recruitment will begin for the new post of Museum Project Officer with the intension of having both in place by Easter. Existing displays are being dismantled prior to packing and relocation to a temporary store. A public engagement plan is under preparation, the delivery of which will underpin the development of the museum displays.
- o **Yarn Day.**
The Bridewell closed its doors for the planned development project on Saturday 1 November 2008, ending the season with a very popular Yarn Day event, which also included activities at Strangers Hall. Nearly forty volunteers from across Norfolk came to demonstrate their skills, including weaving, felting, stump working and lace making. Visitors to the Bridewell or Strangers got a free ticket to the other museum on the day so they could visit both museums on a 2 for 1 basis.

7 NORWICH LEARNING TEAM

o Developing Alternative Settings for Training Teachers

Norwich Castle is taking part in a groundbreaking project to pilot using museums as part of school-based placements (teaching practice) for trainee teachers. We are working with UEA and Long Stratton High School to form the Norwich Triad, one of five in the region. Two trainee teachers will spend 10 days in the museum during their year's training and disseminate back to others on the course. It will give museums a higher profile amongst the teaching profession and promote increased and better school use.

The project is funded by TDA (Training and Development Agency which is responsible for teacher training) and managed by Philip Stephenson from University of Cambridge; the fact that we were asked to participate demonstrates that our work with Teacher Training over the past few years has been recognised and valued by UEA and University of Cambridge.

o Early Years In Service Training. 'Making the Most of your Museum – 1 October 2008

This training day for Early Years practitioners in the County ran with 15 participants from pre school groups, playgroups and schools. It was delivered by Michelle Sorensen along with Amanda Brown, a County early years trainer.

This looked at how the museum can support the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. It linked with aspects of the documentation and requirements, looked at the activities and experiences we provide and developing practical ideas /approaches to working in the galleries with the participants.

We aimed to raise awareness of the potential of museums, collections and objects for the development of learning.

Evaluative comments included;

'Good to see how the museum can be used with young children'

'Enjoyable course –lots of ideas'

'Very enjoyable day. I never realised that a visit to museum could so easily tie in with EYFS

'All very encouraging. We will be running the course again in March 2009

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

a) Finance	None
b) Property	None
c) Staff	None
d) Information Technology	None

CONCLUSION

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

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NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE - 26 JANUARY 2009

ITEM 6 - GENERAL UPDATE ON NORWICH MUSEUMS - APPENDIX A - 2008/09 VISITOR NUMBERS and TARGETS by MUSEUM

			APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	YEAR TO DATE
NORWICH	Castle Museum	TARGET	13638	11090	8470	11408	24498	10087	14720	8036	5606	8082	12799	11567	101947
		ACTUAL	12434	12184	12003	12933	20502	10905	13366	9085	0	0	0	0	103412
		VARIANCE	-1204	1094	3533	1525	-3996	818	-1354	1049					1465
	Norwich Castle Study Centre (Shirehall)	TARGET	261	276	314	270	293	481	358	325	149	259	264	253	2576
		ACTUAL	278	211	205	185	155	507	349	313	0	0	0	0	2203
		VARIANCE	17	-65	-109	-85	-138	26	-9	-13					-373
	Carrow House	TARGET	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	0
		ACTUAL	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		VARIANCE	0	0	0	0	0								0
	Bridewell Museum	TARGET	1332	752	636	472	1304	1087	917	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	6500
		ACTUAL	732	673	920	756	1016	872	963	283	0	0	0	0	6215
		VARIANCE	-600	-79	284	284	-288	-215	46	283					-285
	Strangers Hall	TARGET	190	387	404	418	987	790	593	751	259	237	529	455	4520
		ACTUAL	569	589	679	481	577	833	536	616	0	0	0	0	4880
		VARIANCE	379	202	275	63	-410	43	-57	-135					360
	Royal Norfolk Regimental	TARGET	219	231	208	172	330	407	265	501	73	199	141	253	2334
		ACTUAL	382	502	292	206	370	445	596	272	0	0	0	0	3065
		VARIANCE	163	271	84	34	40	38	331	-229					731
	Royal Norfolk Regimental via Castle	TARGET	1873	1080	886	1359	3037	998	1566	673	625	593	1326	986	11471
		ACTUAL	929	6	178	1599	1179	124	221	134	0	0	0	0	4370
		VARIANCE	-944	-1074	-708	240	-1858	-874	-1345	-539					-7101

NB Tunnel to Regimental Museum was closed mid April to late June due to emergency light problems and again from mid-August to present day due to installation of Arts of Living in Corridor Gallery leading to stairs.

Total Target		129348
Total Actual		124145
Total variance		-5203

TOTALS EXCLUDING RNRM VIA CASTLE.

Total Target		117877
Total Actual		119775
Total variance		1898