

# NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

29 September 2008      Item No. 5

## GENERAL UPDATE ON THE NORWICH MUSEUMS

### Report by the Norwich Museums Manager

<p><b>This report updates the Committee on work in the Norwich Museums over the last 3 months and forthcoming activities.</b></p>
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#### **1. VISITOR NUMBERS (Appendix A - to be tabled)**

- o Total visitor numbers for the April to August 2008/09 for the Norwich Museums and Study Centres have comfortably achieved this year's visitor numbers target for the period. They are lower than last year's figures as a result of the closure of the tunnel to the Regimental Museum, the very early Easter school holidays and the less favourable economic environment.
- o Strangers' continues to attract higher numbers of visitors than prior to the Mayors and Magnate's project. Not only have the new displays and interpretation improved the visitor offer at Strangers', but also the associated promotion has made the museum more visible to the public.
- o The Norwich Museums contributed to another fantastic offer across Norwich for Heritage Open Days co-ordinated by Norwich HEART. Norwich Castle was open for free Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2008, the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum and the Bridewell were open free of charge Thursday 11 to Saturday 13 September 2008, and Strangers' Hall was open for free on Friday 12 and Saturday 13 September 2008. There were special tours and other activities at the smaller sites. Visitor numbers were good, and feedback positive.

#### **2. NORWICH CASTLE**

##### **2.1 Current and Recent Temporary Exhibitions and Events**

- o The new show in the Colman Watercolour Gallery is titled 'Norfolk Sky and Sea: A selection of 19th and 20th century works from the Norwich Castle collection'. It opened in April and will run for a year. Curated by Norma Watt, the exhibition features fine watercolours by members of the Norwich School including works by John Sell Cotman, John Thirtle and Henry Bright.
- o The Autumn 2008 show *Norfolk Artists* includes 3 consecutive shows celebrating the three local artists Bruer Tidman, John Kiki and Susan Gunn together with the *EAAF Open Art Show*, a selling show, in the Timothy Gurney Gallery.

## 2.2 Forthcoming Exhibitions and Events

- o 2009 will kick off at the end of January with an exhibition of Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson in the 1930s.

## 2.3 Further developments

- o The *Arts of Living* Gallery Development Project is progressing well despite delays relating to the case manufacturers. Museums and HEART staff have been working together to develop additional interpretation materials and is due to open November 2008.
- o The Wolfson/DCMS funding application to re-display the prison displays in the Keep basement has been successful. £70,000 has been awarded towards the development to be launched in 2010. Re-locating the current prison displays into the basement will free up an area of the main keep floor, where we intend to put more emphasis on the medieval castle story.
- o This represents the second element of planned display improvements to Norwich Castle Keep. The improvements have been developed in a modular approach as it is unlikely that funding would be available for re-displaying the entire Keep. Instead a range of funding opportunities are being pursued as and when available to fund discrete elements of the displays. NB A Heritage Lottery Fund *Collecting Cultures* bid was submitted in November 2007 which included new medieval displays in the Keep and the Chief Curator is currently investigating the opportunities for EU funding.
- o The Bird Gallery is currently closed while we refresh the displays, and also to enable a major programme of freezing items from the Natural History and Social History Collections to take place as a pest control measure. It is due to re-open later this year.

## 3 STRANGERS' HALL

- o On Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 June 2008, Strangers' Hall hosted a very successful summer event, with early music and dance, talks, and teas in the garden. One of the aims of the weekend was to highlight the contribution of the Friends in making Strangers' Hall garden such a beautiful green place to explore in the centre of the city, and it certainly looked lovely for the weekend. 300 people attended the event, and feedback was positive.
- o Strangers' Hall garden has since been part of a Silver award-winning entry in Anglia in Bloom, as part of the Norwich Lanes area. The shrub planting at Strangers' was especially commended by the judges, who were very complimentary about the garden.
- o On Wednesday 11 June 2008, Cathy Terry and Victoria Mitchell (NSAD) held an informal study day on the Norwich textile pattern books, inviting experts from different fields to assess the books for historical importance and future conservation and display possibilities. Sue Kerry, President of the Textile Society discussed the books in relation to industry practice and provided suggestions for future initiatives.

- o Norwich Museums are once again focusing its pre-Christmas activities at Strangers' Hall on the basis that the site is more intimate and better suited to this type of activity. This year's offer will also include meeting Father Christmas.

#### **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. The Study Centre will re-open to the public in early 2009. A range of events and activities are being planned.
- o Funding has been secured to fund a Positive Action Trainee post who will work alongside and support the Costume and Textile Curator over a two year period whilst studying for a museology qualification at Leicester University.

#### **5 ROYAL NORFOLK REGIMENTAL MUSEUM**

- o Work is progressing on enhancing elements of the displays and investigations with regards funding sources and planning permission are taking place with regards replacing the stair lift with a platform lift.
- 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.

##### **5.1 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, in the next few months.

#### **6 BRIDEWELL MUSEUM**

- o The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded The Bridewell Project £998,000 towards a total project cost of around £1.4m. The project was one of 8 projects out of 16 awarded HLF funding at the September HLF Trustees meeting. The project will provide access into and around the building together with refurbishment and decoration, improved visitor facilities and re-displayed and interpreted collections. HLF were particularly supportive of our aim to involve the public in the development and implementation of the project. One of the first tasks of the project team will be to develop a public consultation programme.

## **6.1 Refugee Week**

The Bridewell has worked with Norwich Multi-Agency Forum for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (NASREF) and The British Red Cross to offer a week's programme to celebrate Refugee Week 2008.

Thanks to the hard work of Melissa Hawker, Interpreter, the museum has been able to offer a range of activities throughout the museum as well as presenting a small display about how Norwich has welcomed refugees throughout history.

On Saturday 21 June 2008, we offered free admission to the museum, with access to two special events: a talk about how Norwich has offered refuge over the years to various communities; and later in the day, a one-off handling session, looking at how Norwich welcomed children from the Kindertransport scheme before the outbreak of World War Two.

A small group from the Gateway Protection Programme Education Group visited the museum, and the children originally from Zambia, enjoyed partaking in some of our fun activities. The group leaders were pleased to revisit again and said all the young people enjoyed the event.

## **6.2 Hellesdon High School Consultation Project**

The Bridewell has also been fortunate to work with Hellesdon High School on an exciting consultation project. The AHRC funded project enabled the museum to work with the school, to ask the young people to consider what they want from a museum of Norwich and how they might want to improve the galleries. Partners in the project included NMAS, AHRC, UEA, Sheffield University and Hellesdon High.

The project has involved visits of NMAS staff to school, student visits to the Bridewell, Inspire Hands On Science Centre and Time and Tide Museum, as well as an exciting day's activities when Architecture students from Sheffield University came to help the students explore their gallery ideas through the creation of 3D models. The results were fascinating. The event was filmed by a local film maker and the young people's responses were recorded through a video booth. Later in the year, the students have been invited to a university conference to talk about the project.

This consultation, with this most elusive of audience groups, has been a key part of an ongoing public consultation programme to inform proposed developments at Norwich Castle. Staff have been interviewing visitors to the Bridewell during the school summer holidays to find out what they want to see from a re-developed museum.

## **7 NORWICH LEARNING TEAM**

### **7.1 Summer School Norwich Castle 2008**

We developed and ran two summer schools at Norwich Castle this summer. During each of the five-day summer schools, young people researched their favourite pictures in 'People's Choice'. 18 young people

aged 10-13 years participated in the first week. 4 of these were gifted or talented, 2 were SEN non-statemented, 1 was a student at risk of disaffection and 4 were in receipt of free school meals. The second week was organised for a group of 13 Looked after Children aged 9 – 12 years. 3 of these youngsters were SEN statemented and 3 were SEN non-statemented. They were all in foster care.

Participants worked as a learning team, with the young people supported and helped by peer tutors, volunteers, some older volunteers, museum staff, artists including a painter, a dance teacher, an animator, a musician and a sculptor.

Two workers from Tricia Ciappara's education support team for children in care also assisted the second week. Norfolk Library and information Service provided books for interest and research and the staff member with responsibility for Looked after Children within NLIS led a writing workshop. Everyone learned from each other, not just skills and knowledge, but developing understanding about things such as how people learn, how to encourage and motivate, how to co-operate to achieve more. As well as the tangible creative responses to the pictures, there was much talking and thinking about art.

This is illustrated by some of the young people's thoughts on their achievements during the week:

- o *I made an abstract model to represent our painting (Matthew)*
- o *I have achieved seeing the artist's feeling in his pictures and emotions (Alice)*
- o *I have learned that in a painting there is a lot more in it than just colours (meaning, story) (Georgie)*
- o *I have achieved discussing a picture and trying to interpret it (with my group) (Ellie)*

All the young people participated in the final presentations and everyone co-operated to achieve the final productions. After the performance the young people received certificates of achievement. These were presented by Councillor John Gretton at the second summer school.

The weeks were punctuated by activities related to team building, learning to learn skills, building self esteem and confidence. Many of the young people commented that they felt more confident when they reflected on the week:

- o *My confidence grew throughout the week (Matthew)*
- o *My confidence grew with Peter (Kinsey, referring to a student volunteer who mentored him throughout the week)*

The museum was able to bring together educational, social and cultural resources to create quality learning experiences for the young people.

The week was also about having fun together as we have learned; we played lots of games and had some very good laughs. We all made some new friends and the young people felt safe and cared about.

- o *I have achieved making new friends and learning to get along and listening to their opinion (Ellie)*
- o *I made friends (Aston).*

### 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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