

Norwich Area Museums Committee 12 September 2017

Norwich Museums briefing: July to August 2017

1. Exhibitions at Norwich Castle

1.1 *Small Stories: At Home in a Doll's House* (4 Mar – 25 June 2017)

Selected as one of only two UK regional venues, Norwich Castle Museum hosted this major international touring exhibition from the V&A Museum of Childhood. Showcasing a stunning collection of twelve of their best dolls' houses spanning 300 years, the exhibition proved popular for both families and doll's house enthusiasts from across Norfolk and beyond. The main exhibition was enhanced by the *Dream House 2017*, an installation of miniature dream rooms created by Norfolk artists, architects, makers, community groups and school children.

1.2 *Nelson and Norfolk* (29 July – 1 October 2017)

The *Nelson & Norfolk* exhibition was formally opened on 28 July by Dr Kevin Fewster, Director of National Museums Greenwich, Mark Pendlington, Chairman of the New Anglia Cultural and Cllr John Ward, Chairman of Norfolk County Council. The opening was attended by volunteer members of the East Norfolk Militia.



This major exhibition draws on some of the most extraordinary objects connected to Admiral Lord Nelson, reflecting his naval victories, his relationships and above all, his affection for his native county of Norfolk. The focal point for the exhibition is the 16x8.3m Tricolour Ensign of the French warship *Le Généreux*, which takes up one half of the whole exhibition, filling the first temporary gallery space. This is the first time the ensign has been on public display for 100 years.

Major loans include the Nile Coat from the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich and the bullet which killed Nelson from the Royal Collection. The exhibition is special for a number of reasons including marking:

- the first time the Tricolour has been reunited with the portrait of Nelson by William Beechey since 1863

- the first time the naval officer's coat and hat which Nelson wore at the Battle of the Nile have been seen in the same room since 1891
- the first time the Nelson bullet which delivered the mortal wound at the Battle of Trafalgar has ever been shown in the East of England

Other objects in this exhibition are drawn from NMS's own collections, including stored collections from Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Strangers' Hall, the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Norwich Castle Museum. Curators also worked in partnership with the Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk Heritage Centre to display fascinating documents and books including letters from Nelson and the Parish Register in which Nelson's baptism is recorded. Further loans came from the Nelson Museum in Great Yarmouth.

A complementary programme of talks and activities is running alongside this major exhibition. To date the exhibition has seen very strong levels of visits. On Wednesday 9 August the Castle saw 2,222 visitors, the highest number of paying visitors on record.

1.3 Colman Gallery temporary displays

The current exhibition in the Colman Project Space is *Magritte: The Lost Painting*. This explores the story of the detective work recently undertaken on NMS' Magritte painting *La Condition Humaine*, where a quarter of a missing Magritte painting, *La Pose Enchantée* was discovered underneath the later work. This discovery occurred whilst conservation of the painting was taking place in preparation for a recent loan to the Pompidou Centre.



La Condition Humaine by Rene Magritte

1.4 *Sixty years On – Highlights from Norwich Castle's Collection* (Timothy Gurney Gallery)

This exhibition showcases the modern and contemporary art acquired over the last 60 years with the support of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society. The show includes a range of works by artists including Prunella Clough, Graham Sutherland, Keith Vaughan and Frances Kearney.

2. Forthcoming exhibitions

2.1 Rembrandt: Lightening the Darkness (21 October – 7 January 2018)

This important new exhibition will centre on the nationally significant collection of Rembrandt etchings held by NMS, alongside selected loans from the National Gallery, the Royal Collections, the British Museum and the National Galleries of Scotland. A dedicated catalogue has been produced for this exhibition.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait with Saskia*, c 1636. Etching, Norwich Castle Museum

3. Norwich Castle Events

3.1 Archaeology Festival

In July Norwich Castle participated in the national Archaeology Festival programme. Activities included the family-focussed event day *A is for Archaeology* on Saturday 15 July, with metal detectorists and a range of characters providing a fun introduction to archaeology. The day was supported by Dr Natasha Hutcheson and the Sainsbury's Institute for the study of Japanese Art and Culture (based at UEA). During the following week there was a programme of talks including Faye Kalloniatis on the Norwich Castle Egyptian Collections, Dr Tim Pestell on the Binham Hoard and 2,000 years of Fake Coins with Dr Adrian Marsden. It is intended that the Archaeology Festival will become an annual feature of the Castle's events programme.

3.2 Pirates and Seafarers

The 2017 school summer holiday activity programme at Norwich Castle is themed around *Pirates and Seafarers*, providing a complimentary offer to the Nelson & Norfolk exhibition. The programme has been very successful, with visitor numbers increased on the previous year. The NMS learning team worked with Rob Johnson a PhD student at UEA who developed and delivered some entertaining scientific sessions on surgery at sea, contrasting past and present. The *Pirates and Seafarers* activities were promoted through a bus-back advertising campaign in Norwich over the summer months.



4. Freeman's free days

4.1 Museum free opening

Free admission was made available at the Museum of Norwich and Strangers' Hall from 25 July to 6 August thanks to the generous support of the Norwich Freeman. 2017 marks 700 years of the Freeman of Norwich and the open days at the Museum of Norwich and Strangers' sat alongside a wide programme of activities taking place across the city.

Free-entry
to Strangers' Hall and
The Museum of Norwich

*from Tuesday 25 July to
Sunday 6 August 2017*

Strangers' Hall, Charing Cross:
open on Wednesday, Thursday and
Friday 10am to 4pm and Sunday 1pm to 4.30pm

Museum of Norwich, Bridewell Alley:
open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4.30pm



Impact of Freeman's free admission over relevant dates:

	2016	2017
Museum of Norwich	571	3776
Strangers' Hall	544	3027

During the free admission period visitors were asked to complete a short evaluation survey. Key findings were:

- 42% of visitors had never been to the museums before
- 33% last visited more than five years ago
- 42% came because of the free day that was supported by the Freeman
- 57% had heard of the Freeman before
- Most people (28%) heard about the free days from social media
- 90% would like to return to the museum they visited within the next year

5. Stranger's Hall

5.1 Journey of a Freeman - Schools' Event at Strangers' Hall

The Freeman of Norwich sponsored an event for primary schools as Strangers' Hall as part of their 700th anniversary celebrations. Working with the Freeman, the NMS learning team wrote and developed the event *Journey of a Freeman*, focusing on the 16th century and how a Freeman made his journey from apprentice to master craftsman and finally to being a Freeman of the city.

Four event days took place across the summer term, with 209 children from four local schools participating. Schools reacted very positively to publicity about the event and all days were booked quickly. The Freeman also provided help towards the cost of travel which proved a particular draw.

During the day the children worked with four costumed characters:

- Lettice, a weaver's wife whose husband is a master craftsman and a Freeman of the City. During this session the children, in role as apprentices, created a simple piece of weaving which they took back to school.
- Thomas, a merchant and Freeman of the City. With Thomas the children investigated the magnificent merchants' marks in the museum and made their own merchants' mark.
- Katlin, the organiser of The Mayor's Riding. The children took part in a drama activity to help plan the Lord Mayor's procession. They dressed in replica Tudor clothes and role-played whifflers, clowns, sword-bearers, the Mayoral party, the Freeman, and of course Snap the dragon.
- Bess, the household servant of a Freeman. The children helped Bess to sort out some of her employer's possessions to make an inventory. They

worked with Bess to investigate genuine and replica objects from the 16th century.

The day ended with a procession around the garden and the children taking part in a ceremony in which they recited an oath in order to gain the Freedom of the City for one day. Each child then received a scroll which contained a free entry ticket to a Norwich museum.

The days proved to be very successful and produced very positive feedback.

‘The enthusiasm of the staff helped to engage the children and keep them focussed. All activities were thoroughly enjoyed’ - Year 6 teacher



6.0 Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell

6.1 Cecil Aldin – *The Art of Black Beauty* 25 July–25 November

The current exhibition at the Museum of Norwich marks the 140 years since Jarrold & Sons first published Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. The museum is displaying thirteen beautiful watercolours by the artist Cecil Aldin who was commissioned by Jarrolds to illustrate a later edition, published in 1915. The exhibition is part of Visit England's 'Year of Literary Heroes' campaign and is being promoted by visit Norwich.



6.2 Norwich Pride: *Duvet of Love*

To support July's Norwich Pride event the Museum of Norwich unveiled the *Duvet of Love*, an art work by local artist David Shenton. The work is a bold artwork depicting a male couple embracing. It is a mosaic, made up of thousands of pin badges, pinned to a double duvet cover. The badges were collected by the artist and his friends and are a combination of historic badges and badges of local and social historical relevance, dating from the 1970s to the present day. This display formed part of a programme of work that has been developed independently by SOCOL trainee Freya Monk-McGowan. In addition to the Duvet display, Freya, supported Teaching Museum trainees David Holgate-Caruthers and Nicoletta Foden- Hall in the curation of a small pop up exhibition and the development of a podcast trail around the city, featuring people from the LGBTQ community speaking about their experiences.

7. Learning Team activities and projects

7.1 Katrina Siliprandi

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Katrina in July. She worked for NMS for over 30 years and under her stewardship learning was placed at the very heart of museums.

7.2 Sandford Award

The NMS learning team has again been awarded a national Sandford Award for Heritage Education. The judge commented,

Norwich Castle spans over 900 years of history and is home to an outstanding collection of art, archaeology and natural history. Its castle keep and galleries offer inspirational surroundings for a range of learning programmes tailored to the educational requirements of visiting school groups at all levels.

7.3 Summer School for Looked After children

This annual event was a great success. Eight children aged 10-12 years participated in a medieval themed programme. The programme was led by NMS learning staff and generated very positive feedback from the children, our partner Norfolk Virtual School for Children in Care and the volunteer helpers including trainees from the NMS Teaching Museum programme:

"It was very rewarding to see the children growing in confidence as they worked with their mentor and every child left the Castle on the last day happy, confident and proudly displaying something they had created Brilliant." – Maureen Steward, Norfolk Children's Services.

I enjoyed every moment of summer school, from learning about the castle with the medieval knight to balancing plates and hula hooping with the jester! Seeing

the children inspired to learn and be creative was truly the best part for me.
Nicoletta Foden-Hall, Teaching Museum Trainee.

7.4 GCSE history teachers' conference

The new History GCSE specifications allow schools to undertake a local history study as part of their course. Norwich Castle has been chosen by the OCR Examination Board to be an exemplar for their option B course. This has been the spur for the NMS learning team to organise a second conference for secondary History teachers, looking at improving practice and what the museum can offer. Staff were delighted to welcome over 30 teachers to the Castle on 19 July.

7.5 A-level Law project

Working in partnership with the newly-formed Norfolk County Council 16+ advisory group and Springboard East Theatre Company, the NMS learning team has developed a new event for A-level Law students from three local 6th form colleges. Law is a very popular A-level subject and it was positive to be able to extend the current learning offer in this new subject area. The focus was the trial of John Stratford, the Dumpling Poisoner in the 1820s. The two days were well received, including an EDP article. The event will be offered to more schools next year.

8. Other Developments

8.1 HLF Kick the Dust programme

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded Norfolk Museums Service a Round 1 pass for a grant of £776,500 for the project Norfolk Journeys, under the HLF's new Kick the Dust programme. This will be a consortium project delivered in partnership with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions (a youth arts network in Great Yarmouth). The project aims to engage with around 8,000 11-25 year olds – including those most hard to reach - during a four year period from 2018-22. Through the project the young people will be able to participate in a range of structured heritage activities that will develop their skills, experience and confidence. NMS will be submitting round 2 paperwork to the Heritage Lottery Fund in February 2018 and funding should be confirmed in March 2018. Project activity would then start in spring 2018.

A summary of what the project aims to achieve:

“This project will create a model that will facilitate sustained engagement with the young people of Norfolk, including those most hard to reach. NMS will work with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions, two organisations with a strong record of engaging the most vulnerable young people. Young people will create an individual journey into active engagement with Norfolk's heritage, using structured progression pathways based around a menu of options, tailored to meet individual needs. Specialise mentoring and the support of NMS will ensure

young people reach their potential and achieve their aspirations. Outcomes for young people will include certificated skills and training, enhanced employment opportunities, active involvement in programming and a chance to shape the direction and governance of heritage organisations.”

The competition for this grant was extremely fierce with only 12 projects being awarded funding across the whole country. <https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/news-features/kicking-storm-young-people-shake-heritage>

9. Visitor Numbers

Detailed visitor figures up to the end of August 2017 will be circulated at the meeting.

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