

## Norwich area museums committee

Date: **Tuesday, 05 March 2024**  
Time: **14:30**  
Venue: **Mancroft room City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH**

### Committee members:

#### Norwich City Council:

Councillors Huntley (chair), Hoechner, Kidman, Schmierer and Wright and 1 vacancy

#### Norfolk County Council:

Councillors Ward (vice chair) Birmingham, Brociek-Coulton, Reilly, Rumsby, and Watkins

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

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

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

### For further information please contact:

Committee officer: Leonie Burwitz  
t: (01603) 989255  
e: [leonieburwitz@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:leonieburwitz@norwich.gov.uk)

Democratic services  
City Hall  
Norwich  
NR2 1NH

[www.norwich.gov.uk](http://www.norwich.gov.uk)

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



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## Agenda

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**1 Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence

**2 Declarations of interest**

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting)

**3 Public questions/petitions**

To receive questions / petitions from the public which have been submitted in accordance with the council's constitution.

**4 Minutes**

**3 - 8**

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023.

**5 Norwich Museums Report - November 2023 to January 2024**

**9 - 40**

**Purpose** - To receive the report on the activities at the Norwich Museums for the period November 2023 to January 2024.

**6 Reports from the Representatives of the Voluntary organisations**

This is a standing item to receive reports from the non-voting members of the committee who represent the voluntary organisations that support the Norfolk Museums Service.

Date of publication: **Monday, 26 February 2024**



**Norwich Area Museums Committee**

**14:30 to 16:00**

**5 December 2023**

Present:

**City Councillors:**

Huntley (chair)  
Hoechner  
Kidman  
Schmierer  
Wright

**County Councillors:**

Ward (vice chair)  
Reilly  
Watkins

**Co-opted non-voting members:**

Felicity Devonshire (Friends of the Norwich Museums), Amanda  
Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund and Councillor Graham (South Norfolk  
District Council)  
Councillor Kybird (ex officio member)

Apologies:

County Councillors Birmingham, Brociek-Coulton and Rumsby,  
Councillor Booth (Broadland District Council) and Danusia Wurm  
(Norfolk Contemporary Art Society)

Also present:

Robin Hanley, assistant head of museums  
Jan Pitman, learning manager (Norwich)  
Emma Clarke, learning officer  
Francesca Vanke, senior curator of Norwich Museums and keeper of  
fine and decorative art

**1. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023, subject to noting that Councillor Kybird had sent apologies for that meeting.

**3. Norwich Museums Report – August to October 2023**

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

The assistant head of museums presented sections 1 and 2 of the report. He confirmed that the Covid-19 measures, as detailed in the report, were still in place. The situation was being monitored as the winter period due to the increase in respiratory infections. The pop-up café and temporary retail offer in the Rotunda continued to be popular and it was positive to see that some form of refreshments and retail offerings had continued. The number of ceremonies continued to be increasing and this had led to an additional 18,500 guests to the museum.

The learning manager (Norwich) presented section 3 of the report, Norwich Learning Team activities – highlights report. He highlighted the work that the service had done regarding Early Years learning through a partnership with Earlham Nursery. This partnership allowed the service to interact with families in a holistic manner and it was looking at ways of improving access for these visitors. This formed part of the Early Years learning Strategy which included the Early Years Saturdays. The focus on improving access was a key area for the service, and this would form part of a review of the learning service. Through the work undertaken with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) the service had been looking at different approaches to delivering the material. Members were referred to the number of activities that had taken place for a range of learners through events and conferences. Highlights of these events included tours of *The Last Voyage of the Gloucester* exhibition which were conducted in British Sign Language (BSL) led by a Deaf tour guide. The guide had been a participant of the Kick the Dust work experience programme. Further crossover with the Kick the Dust programme had been through the *Knights of the Sound Table* which was working with the Keep project to create a soundscape based on objects within one of the new galleries. This had encouraged the participants to engage with heritage objects in different ways. The service had also begun piloting a new Key Stage 2 event based in the Boudica and Romans gallery, which was enquiry based. This allowed the students to engage with the objects in the gallery and explore the information within. During the summer a number of events has been held around the *Gloucester* exhibition, which included *Shipwrecked!* an event that had been held in the Castle Quarter which allowed members of the learning team to engage with a broader range of people. The partnership with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) had given the opportunity to give visitors a better understanding of the work of the RNLI and water safety.

A member commented that it was positive to see the service looking at ways to break down barriers to engaging with people who would not ordinarily engage and queried whether any monitoring had taken place on the activity in Castle Quarter. The learning manager (Norwich) said that the service were looking at ways to monitor this in more detail. The people who had been engaged with during the event in Castle Quarter had been given free tickets to attend the Castle Museum. There had been a variable return on the number of tickets used and there were likely to be a range of other barriers to visiting the museums.

In response to a member's query the learning manager (Norwich) said that the focus of the Romans event was based on a particular time period during Boudica's revolt and therefore it did not necessarily contain references to Icenian sites near Thetford, however any queries related to this would be addressed during the sessions. A member queried whether the sessions also explored the historical fact of the adversarial nature of the time period. In response the learning manager (Norwich) said that the event was focused on the beginning of the rebellion and on the

experience of an individual who was caught between the Romans and Iceni. The schools that visited would then be able to explore with the pupils the details of the rebellion.

In response to a member's query the learning manager (Norwich) confirmed that activity similar to the Museums Club was still ongoing through a larger number of different groups. Some of these were through the Saturday events and other groups.

The assistant head of museums presented section 4, Kick the Dust: Norfolk – project activity update, of the report. The report detailed the total participation figures for the project that had been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) which had run from October 2018 to March 2023. The project had regularly been reported on to the committee. It had engaged with young people aged 11-25, particularly those aged 16-25, who experienced various access barriers to engaging with the heritage sector. The programme had been very impactful and important to the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) as it had changed the way of working for the service. The service had been able to secure additional funding through an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) Uplift award for 2023-26 which would enable NMS to continue to support young people. While the funding was focussed on other areas in Norfolk some activity would continue in Norwich. For the year 2023-24 the service had also received funding from Norfolk Public Health to support and measure activities related to improving the mental health of young people. Through the new programme NMS were partnering with the library service to deliver activities, including at library sites. The programme would look at building skills and their appreciation and understanding of their local culture and history. Data from the first six months of the project were included within the report and numbers would build as the project progressed. The data captured through the project, including measuring mental health outcomes, was key to communicate with stakeholders and sources of funding to demonstrate the impact of the project. Following the success of the Round 1 application to the NLHF Grants for Heritage NMS was working with YMCA Leicestershire on the Round 2 bid for the Your Heritage Your Future project. This bid was currently in the development phase and would be submitted in May 2024. If the bid was successful project delivery would start in late 2024.

Members commented that it would be positive to see the impact of the initial project on the young people involved. The assistant head of museums clarified that the data for the current project was based on a small sample size, but this would likely increase. If numbers for particular target groups did not increase, then NMS would be working with partners to conduct targeted work. Members were informed that where possible within data protection legislation, the service tracked the participants in regard to employment. There were Kick the Dust participants which were now employed by NMS.

The assistant head of museums presented section 5, Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn – project update, of the report. A photo within the report showed the installation of the glass roof in the atrium, this was a significant milestone of the project. Through the installation of the glass roof the Percival Wing was now weatherproof and this would allow other works to be started within the wing. The glazed atrium roof would allow visitors to see the Castle Keep as soon as they entered the museum, putting the Castle at the centre of their visit. Other works that were ongoing included the fit-out of the new shop, the re-installation of the City Crest

mosaic in the entrance area and the installation of the new lift in the Percival Wing. Within the Keep the steel work for the roof platform and the lift shaft had been completed. The new lift in this area would allow all visitors to access the battlements of the Castle. The oak floors within the Keep were shortly being installed along with division of the space. The display cases for the new British Museum Partnership Gallery were being manufactured and NMS was working closely with various colleagues from the British Museum. In preparation for the reopening the service had engaged a specialist PR company to create a strong campaign for the reopening. The company, Culture Communications Collective, had previously worked on other museum openings such as the opening campaign of the Museum of Making. The next major milestone of the project would be the installation of the glazed bridge which would connect the Percival Wing with the Keep. A tour could be arranged for members of the committee to view progress of the works. The chair commented that it would be beneficial to see the progress.

The assistant head of museums presented section 6, other activity across Norwich museums, of the report. The report included details of a range of activities at both sites. Members were referred to section 6.1 of the report, Museum of Norwich, a highlight during the period had been the deep clean of the museum during October. Staff from the Museum of Norwich had worked with NMS conservation teams and volunteers from English+ and Women at Work.

The learning manager (Norwich) presented the learning update for the Museum of Norwich. The Museum of Norwich had successfully applied for funding from UEA's Norfolk Initiative for Coastal and rural Health Equalities (NICHE) to continue running the Community Culture Club for a further three years. This club was a wellbeing programme for older adults with dementia. The funding would also allow this programme to be evaluated to demonstrate the impact of arts and heritage on wellbeing. The Museum of Norwich had also hosted an event for the Royal College of General Practitioners for new GPs working in the region. This and other events demonstrated the value of the Museum of Norwich as a venue for events and was an asset to the city.

The assistant head of museums presented section 6.2, Strangers' Hall, of the report. 2023 had been an important year for Strangers' Hall as it was the museum's centenary year of being a museum. Events to mark this celebration had been supported by the Friends of the Norwich Museums and the Freemen of Norwich. This included Free Admission days and the final event to be held before Christmas was the *After Dark Tour*, this tour would be held by LED candlelight. The museum had also offered free admission for Heritage Open Days. The senior curator had been working with the Norfolk Record Office to show archival information from the museum's opening in 1923 including photographs. The windows to Strangers' Hall had also been updated for the centenary and this should help draw visitors to the museum as it unified the frontage of the building. Due to the age of the building and the garden work was ongoing to maintain and conserve both. The museum had been gaining more attention both on social media and traditional media, especially in relation to the initiative that was looking to collect objects related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A member commented that the service should look at having information displays within the libraries that informed them of the museum sites in Norwich as these had proven to be popular. The assistant head of museums said that the service could

consider this and highlighted the increasing collaboration between the two services on social media.

The senior curator of Norwich Museums presented section 7, Norwich Curatorial update, of the report. She highlighted that the curator of historic art following the start of her latest exhibition in the Watercolour Gallery, *Where Land and Water Meeting: Norfolk's Rivers, Streams, Brooks and Broads*, would be doing further research on one of the artists. The artist was Catherine Maude Nichols and it was likely that the next exhibition by the curator of historic art would be a women-only exhibition. She was also conducting research on women artists and collectors in East Anglia. The curator of modern and contemporary art had been working on new exhibitions including one exhibition that would coincide with the re-opening with the Keep showing the breadth of contemporary art within the NMS collection. Within the Colman Project Space she had been working with artists to commission work that took inspiration from the Norwich School of Artists. The curator of the Norfolk Regimental Museum had been continuing her work to encourage new and younger visitors to the collection. This included the launch of a website and work with Norwich University of the Arts tutors who would be looking to incorporate items from the collection in their courses. The digital screens within the Rotunda had been reinstalled to allow visitors to engage with the collection, these had been removed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The senior curator of costume and textiles had been occupied with moving the costume and textiles stores from their location within Shirehall to allow for the remedial building works. This had involved a range of different items that had to be temporarily moved, including rolled textiles such as rugs and quilts, costume collections and the large collection of patterns and tools. The senior curator of Norwich Museums had recently opened an exhibition in the Time and Tide Museum based on the Turner painting *Walton Bridges*. She was currently working on a Turner based exhibition that would be in Norwich Castle in late 2024 and further updates about this exhibition would be brought to a future committee meeting. The senior curator of archaeology continued to be mostly occupied with the Castle Keep project but also worked on funding applications.

The assistant head of museums presented section 8, other developments, of the report. The Shirehall Courtroom works were ongoing to treat the dry rot. Through the works on the roof further issues had been identified but these would be addressed, ensuring that the roof would be secure. NMS were working closely with Norwich City Council conservation officers to ensure that the works conducted are done in a sensitive manner. The Wider Impact Group continued to meet as it monitored the operational impact of the Keep Project. The group was working in the fit out of the retail shop and the retail manager had been able to start planning the stocking of the new retail units within the shop. Within the restaurant the fit out was ongoing and it was hoped that both the new restaurant and shop could be brought into operational use in due course.

The assistant head of museums presented section 9, visitor numbers, of the report. The number of visitors had been increasing for the three Norwich sites and the overall number of visitors was starting to reach pre-pandemic levels. The Norwich Castle visitor numbers had seen a positive impact from both *The Last Voyage of the Gloucester* and the *Norwich Works* exhibitions. Strangers' Hall had seen positive increases due to the centenary celebrations. NMS continued to offer free admission to the Museum of Norwich for visitors to Norwich Castle due to the decreased offer.

The members thanked the assistant head of museums and his colleagues for the report.

**RESOLVED** to:

- 1) note the Norwich Museums Report August to October 2023; and
- 2) ask the assistant head of museums to organise another site visit of Norwich Castle for committee members.

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

The representative for the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS) had been unable to attend and a written report had been circulated to members and was available on the website [here](#).

Felicity Devonshire, Friends of the Norwich Museums, addressed the committee. A written report had been included within the agenda, the period had been relatively quiet for the Friends. The Friends had supported Strangers' Hall with their centenary and the organisation had been pleased to see the upgrade of furnishings within the museums. The Friends Tapestry that would be hung in the Castle Keep when it reopened was nearing completion and the Friends would organise a tea party for the volunteers who had worked on it as celebration before the Keep reopened.

Amanda Geitner, East Anglia Art Fund (EAAF), addressed the committee. The EAAF had been pleased to support the visual art programme within the Norwich sites including temporary projects such as the *Norwich Works* exhibition. The displays and levels of engagement with these had been positive to see.

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

CHAIR

## **Norwich Area Museums Committee 5 March 2024**

### **Norwich Museums Report: November 2023 to January 2024**

#### **1. Infection control update**

A number of the COVID-secure systems and procedures implemented across Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) sites during the pandemic remain in place. Infection control priorities remain:

- Ventilation
- Cleaning regimes
- Hand sanitisation

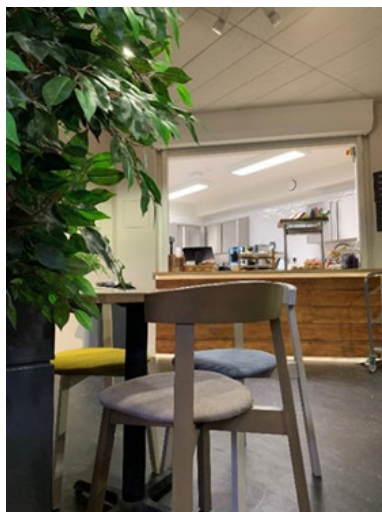
CO2 monitors provided through Norfolk County Council (NCC) continue to operate in a number of spaces across NMS where there is more limited natural/mechanical ventilation. These CO2 detectors are monitored locally by staff and also link into the LoRaWAN network, facilitating the use of monitoring dashboards to track live data and trends.

#### **2. Norwich Museums operations**

##### **2.1 Norwich Castle opening arrangements**

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

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



The new 'pop-up' café operating in the Rotunda

## 2.2 Norwich Castle ceremonies

The number of ceremonies taking place at Norwich Castle has continued to remain strong, with 732 completed within the past 12 months.

Month	No of Ceremonies	Footfall
February	53	1060
March	16	480
April	56	1678
May	65	1396
June	151	3468
July	73	2070
August	71	2120
September	69	2022
October	86	2253
November	33	729
December	40	825
January	19	296
<b>Total</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>18,397</b>



The Colman Gallery wedding space

## 3. Norwich Learning Team activity – highlights report

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

[Learning - Norfolk Museums](#)



## Recent recruitment

At the start of December, we welcomed Sophie Wilkins as a new Learning Assistant for Norwich Museums. Sophie joins the core team, having been a casual learning assistant for the past year. In addition to filling Sophie's old position, we will be recruiting a number of additional learning assistants in the coming months as we prepare for increased capacity following the re-opening of the Keep.

## Schools Learning

### **New KS2 Robert Kett event at Strangers' Hall.**

Planning and development is well underway for a new Robert Kett event for key stage 2 children (7-11 year olds) which we will pilot at Strangers' Hall in early March. The event aims to introduce children in the events of 1549 as they meet a range of characters from Mistress Sotherton's household, all of whom have different attitudes to the 'rebels'. The day will be a good opportunity for learning staff to use the rich settings of Strangers' to support a more immersive 'Theatre in Education' approach to museum learning than we usually adopt.

### **KS3 Transatlantic slavery event at Norwich Castle updated**

Norwich Castle's KS3 Transatlantic Slavery event re-launched in January. The event was updated following decolonisation training from the Historical Association. Teachers, museum staff and freelancers helped to develop and evaluate the day, which was experienced by forty, year eight students from Framlingham College.

We worked in partnership with Norfolk Record Office to introduce students to a range of documents, paintings and objects from our collections relating to transatlantic slavery and the impact of the slave trade and the abolition movement upon Norfolk.

A teacher from Framlingham College said: *"Great to see the primary sources, good selection...Really enjoyed the A-Z of Empire and the teapots...Thank you everyone for being so friendly. Great facilities and beautiful museum."*

### **Trainee History teachers visit Norwich Castle**

Trainee History teachers discovered the importance of learning outside the classroom at Norwich Castle in February. Twenty trainees from the University of East Anglia's History Post-Graduate Certificate in Education course were introduced to learning in museums

in general, and Norwich Castle in particular. They discussed learning outside the classroom, what good practice looks like and how it can inspire children to learn and achieve. Trainees explored the museum and came up with their own ideas about how our collections could support a school visit.

Laura London, History PGCE Tutor at UEA, said: *"It was useful to the students to find out how to organise and take trips in History, and events on offer at the Castle."*

### **Keep Activity Plan**

As the Keep re-opening draws nearer, we are finalising an exciting programme of supporting events funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund-funded project Activity Plan. These will both help to publicise the re-opening and enable us to test the new building. Events will include a Norwich 'mystery' play, performed by actors and community groups at the Forum in July, an immersive and accessible theatre piece performed in the Keep and a family fun day for foster and adoptive families.

### **Events and Visitor Programme**

#### **Merry Medieval Christmas at Norwich Castle:**

The Christmas programme (20-22 Dec 2023) at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery was inspired by medieval Christmas traditions and Henry I's festive visit to Norwich Castle in 1121. Our activities encouraged visitors to find out how people would have prepared for and celebrated the royal Christmas visit in the Middle Ages. Families were invited to 'unwrap' Christmas gift boxes scattered around the museum, step into 'royal' shoes at our medieval selfie station, build a medieval town covered in snow, explore feasting through imaginative play and exploration of objects, and relax in the quiet Christmas sensory area.



#### **Early Years and Family Saturdays**

Our new Early Years and Family Saturdays, held on the second and fourth Saturday of each month respectively, have become an important part of the learning team's delivery.

During our November Family Saturday on 25 November, we explored how animals protect themselves against predators and the cold/winter. Visitors were encouraged to make their own paper animal inspired by our Natural History collection, build a cosy animal den and compare arms and armour to animals and the protective parts of their bodies.



For the 27 January Family Saturday visiting families 'travelled' with us back to 60 CE – the year of Boudica's revolt. Visitors were encouraged to engage with various members of staff dressed up as Romans and Iceni and take part in their activities in order to inform a vote on who would win. The participants made torcs and explored Snettisham treasures, drew Iceni coins, compared Iceni and Roman ways of fighting through an arms and armour demonstration and re-enactment and explored objects owned by a Roman soldier.

These Saturday events offer us the chance to evaluate new approaches and activities in advance of school holidays. They are also a perfect opportunity for us to provide some assisted ticketing to families from target groups including those in more deprived areas. We supply free family tickets to a different setting for each Saturday event. To date, these have been redeemed by 435 family members from Magdalen Gates, Bignold and Lakenham Primary schools.

### **History Highlights Tours**

Members of learning team staff have been working with Visitor Services colleagues to develop and deliver a twice daily history highlights tour for the general public. The tour offers an introduction to the Castle Museum and some of its collections including the Snettisham Treasure, Munnings Gallery, Norwich School Artists, Paston Treasure and Singh Twins *Alternative A to Z or Empire*. In so doing, we consider how attitudes to collecting have changed over the past three and half centuries.

Visitor Services staff are delivering the highlights tours. We look forward to the re-introduction of Dungeons tours and Keep tours in the coming months. Staff have begun to assemble content for Dungeon tours which will offer a balance of accurate historical information and drama.

### **Community Culture Club 2023-2024**

We have just completed our third cohort of Community Culture Club, which ran from November 2023 to February 2024. The programme is currently supported by funding from UEA's NICHE Kintsugi research project, with a special focus on developing a creative embedded evaluation model.

*You care for me so well, you and your colleagues, nowhere else do I get this –*  
Community Culture Club 2023-2024 participant.

[illegible]

In April we will be delivering a workshop to 50-60 professionals at the NICHE Shared Learning event, allowing us to continue share the model of Community Culture Club and our creative embedded evaluation practice. We have a further two years of funding from NICHE and are excited about the continuing future of Community Culture Club.

In December we led two seminars for UEA's brand new MA in Health & Humanities. In the first session we welcomed two groups of students to the Museum of Norwich, guiding them through a session of Community Culture Club as if they were participants whilst explaining the meaning behind the choices we made in shaping the programme. We also discussed with the students our new embedded evaluation processes.

The following week we travelled to UEA and delivered a session where we talked about our careers, went into more detail about museums and creative wellbeing, set the students up with a practical session-devising task using objects and opened up questions about the sector including evaluation.

*Thank you so much for all these wonderful resources! And what a fantastic set of sessions you and Susie delivered to the students over the two weeks - we are very grateful* Dr Harriet Cooper, UEA, Lecturer in Medical Education (Sociology, Medical and Health Humanities)



A collective creative evaluation collage completed by UEA MA Health & Humanities students

### **The Garage Creative Wellbeing workshop**

We are continuing to nurture our partnership with The Garage's Creative Wellbeing project. In December we welcomed the group to Norwich Castle for a session all about Christmas through the ages. We smelt & tasted spices, made pomanders, and finished up by each making a Christmas cracker.

Community Producer Sarah Witcomb provided the following feedback: *We love our Creative Wellbeing visits to the Museum of Norwich and Norwich Castle. Our group ethos is to offer creative activities to support or improve wellbeing and our partnership with the museum team really does that. The staff provide a warm and welcoming space for the group to meet, which is no easy feat when working with a group of people with lived mental health issues.*



*The partnership brings a much-loved added layer to our Creative Wellbeing Project, where we can support participants to safely exploring new venues in the city, where they may otherwise be apprehensive or anxious, the museum team make it really accessible for us. The workshops we've attended have given us an opportunity to have discussions on local history, art and culture as well as try new things and expand our creative arts experiences. Thank you to a wonderful team and we hope to continue this partnership in the future. Partnerships like this are vital to our charity's work, both financially and to support the development of the participants in our group.*

We will be working with the group again in March at the Museum of Norwich.

### **Festival of Light at the Norwich Millennium Library**

We were invited to participate in the Festival of Light at the Norwich Millennium Library, which took place just before Christmas. The event was hosted in collaboration with the People from Abroad Team, who support refugees and asylum seekers across Norfolk. We brought two of the activities from the Norwich Castle Christmas programme; a spice smelling & guessing game and a crafting activity where families were invited to build a miniature medieval village out of cardboard – cotton wool snow was of course included. We brought along vouchers for our January *Family Saturday* to give out to families who had never been to the museum before and ended up distributing 24 vouchers in total.



### **Amartey Golding in-conversation with Dr Rosy Gray**

As part of the public programme for *Britannia* at Norwich Castle, we hosted an after-hours screening of the film and an in-conversation event with artist Amartey Golding and Curator Dr Rosy Gray.

Audiences heard Amartey speak about his artistic choices, with one attendee emailing us to say: *we found the discussion fascinating particularly Amartey's concept of dual ethnic personalities co-existing as a form of symbiosis in one person. And we found his (final) choice of music Dvorak's New World Symphony an amazing companion to the visual story.*



### **Amartey Golding: Our Collective Memory workshop.**

In this special workshop we invited audiences to join us to consider the wider context of *Britannia's* message, in particular focusing on Norwich Castle as the location for the work's presentation. We were joined for the event by special guest facilitator Dr Mark Hobbs (UEA). Mark is an academic and lecturer at the University of East Anglia in the Interdisciplinary Institute for the Humanities. Mark's primary research interests and publications are in the fields of memory studies, nationhood, trauma, nationalism, race, and racism. He is the Decolonising the Curriculum lead for his department.

The event comprised of a screening of *Britannia*, followed by a discussion chaired by Norwich Museums Learning Manager Dr Jan Pitman. Attendees were then given a tour of specially selected relevant objects in the collection by Amartey and Mark. There was then a second discussion and then a final screening of the film. The discussion covered several sensitive topics, but care had been taken by staff to create a safe space for all our audiences.

*I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed both the film and the event. Such an interesting take on the subject matter, thoughtfully expressed and the creation of a safe space for discussion. Well organised and excellent content. Thanks very much for putting on both the exhibit and the event.* – Attendee feedback

### **Norwich Works talks programme:**

Between December 2023 and February 2024 we have run a series of talks and East Anglian Film Archive screenings in the Town Close Auditorium as part of the public programme exploring our current temporary exhibition *Norwich Works: The Industrial Photography of Walter and Rita Nurnberg*. Several distinguished speakers spoke at the events. The curators of the exhibition, Dr. Nick Warr and Dr. Simon Dell, explored the photography of Walter and Rita Nurnberg and shared 'behind the scenes' aspects of the exhibition. Film-maker Roger Hewins explored the influences behind his film *Nestle Rowntree* shown in the exhibition. Local historians and writers Frances and Michael Holmes spoke about the story of the Norwich boot and shoe trade and Nick Williams,

the author of *Norwich: City of Industries* discussed the city's role as one of England's most important textile centres and its other important industries including brewing, engineering and the processing of food.

The talks and film screenings attracted many visitors, with the last talk being fully sold-out with over 90 attendees. The visitors repeatedly commented on how much they enjoyed the talks and film screenings and often shared their personal memories of Norwich industries during the events.

As a result, in March, together with curatorial team at the Museum of Norwich and our colleagues from the Millenium Library, the learning team will be collecting personal stories inspired by *Norwich Works* and the three industries discussed in the exhibition.



#### **4. Kick the Dust: Norfolk – project activity update**

##### **Background**

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

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

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

For this original project, total participation numbers from October 2018 to March 2023 were 13,905 interventions, involving 4,527 individual young people taking part in 7,039 hours of quality activity, taking us beyond the initial project target of 8000 interventions.

As the project developed, more young people took the lead in projects, shifting the percentage of activity at each of the 4 levels.

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

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

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

In total 420 staff took part in training, with 151 having taken up opportunities in lockdown. In addition, 45 young volunteers took part in training. Kick the Dust has supported 7 young people on its bursary traineeship programme, the last cohort finishing in May 2022, all of whom have secured permanent employment within the heritage sector. A further 6 young people completed the pre-traineeship programme. One Kick the Dust participant progressed onto the NMS Teaching Museum traineeship programme with 3 others applying for the role and being shortlisted. Two Young Ambassadors have progressed onto teacher training programmes. Our 7 Young Ambassadors have supported Institutional Change within NMS on the strategic Youth Board and Project Board. Staff from our Front of House (FOH) and Visitor Services teams have engaged in training such as mentoring and coaching, mental health first aid and creating autism friendly spaces which played a key role in supporting the new pre-traineeship pilot programme for YMCA clients and other vulnerable groups.

### **Current activity**

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

During 2023-24 NMS is also receiving funding from Norfolk County Council (NCC) Public Health to support Kick the Dust activities that focus on the mental health and wellbeing of Norfolk young people.

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

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

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

Young people will work alongside professionals to develop their transferable work-related and creative skills, through the co-production of activity and events, volunteering and work experience operating at a level that meets their needs.

**The following data is based on the start of this new project covering the period 1/5/23 to 30/1/24.**

**Number of interventions with young people:**

Between 1/5/23 and 30/1/24 there have been 1,199 interventions involving 674 individual young people taking part in 1,193 hours of quality activity. 91% of the activities were face to face, the other sessions being offered online with young people in the principal target areas.

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

- 20% of activity was at Player level (to introduce new young people to the project)
- 58% at Shaper level (longer term project with young people determining the content)
- 22% at Leader level (long term engagement – young people leading projects, acting at governance level, mentoring staff)
- 80% of all activity involved young people in leading and designing projects

Breakdown of activity taking place in each area:

- 42% (91 opportunities) in the West (covering Kings Lynn, Gressenhall),
- 18% (40 opportunities) in Thetford
- 18% (40 opportunities) in the East (covering Great Yarmouth, Cromer)
- 21% (44 opportunities) in Norwich
- Four opportunities were offered to young people at alternative venues outside of Norfolk

- 42 volunteering opportunities have been provided, with three young people taking on the role of Digital Buddy and seven as Young Ambassador.
- Of all delivery, 84% involves young people being part of a long-term group, providing them with a deeper understanding of heritage and allowing them to explore their identity, develop their skills and confidence and embed themselves more in their local communities, a key aim of ACE.

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

We continue to deliver a blended training offer for all staff and volunteers who support youth engagement in NMS. Staff input to the training programme will be formulated as the project progresses and needs are identified. Social media training working with a specialist from Libraries has been embedded into team meetings which include three of our Young Ambassadors who are acting as Digital Buddies. Further opportunities are being planned for the Spring/summer terms to include SEND and Mental Health First Aid training. The team accessed the '*Childhood Adversity and Creating a Trauma Informed Environment*' on 31 October and '*I'm a teenager, get me in there*' training in January 2024 at Ely Museum (as part of the new *Your Heritage Your Future* National Lottery Heritage Fund funded project) which will inform future delivery.

Our offer to support young people around the important theme of mental health and wellbeing is on-going and this will be measured through the new evaluation framework using data from the young people's feedback forms as well as the new narrative evaluation which was rolled out from September 2023 to September 2024. At the end of the NLHF funded project in March 2023, 26% of young people identified as having a mental health issue. Up to 30/1/24 data shows that 47% of the individual young people who have taken part in the new programme of activity identify as having a mental health issue (although this is from a smaller number taking part) showing the need for this programme. Through a systematic approach to evaluation, in partnership with Libraries, the team will be able to demonstrate impact on mental health on those taking part and the young people will be able to monitor their progress through the programme in relation to skills, confidence and mental health. Narrative evaluation will further demonstrate impact.

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

team. This group acts as the vehicle to share best practice, ideas and resources and its membership continues to grow.

**Target audiences: (some young people fall into more than one category) as of 30/1/24**

- FE/HE – 44%
- YMCA clients – 8%
- Secondary schools – 39%
- Young people with mental health issues – 47%
- SEND – 3%
- Outside of mainstream education – 25%
- NEET – 31%
- Looked after children and adopted living those at home - 0%
- Care Leavers – 1%
- Young Carers – 6%
- New arrivals and refugees – 6%
- Pregnant young mums and teenage parents – 1%

In terms of how young people are finding out about Kick the Dust, it is clear that the Kick the Dust website is being used effectively with 50% of young people finding out about the project through the updated web pages ([Kick the Dust - Norfolk Museums](#)); 17% coming via one of our partner organisations and 17% having already taken part in a Kick the Dust project in the past.

**Impacts on mental health and wellbeing**

The new young people's feedback form includes the 78 positively worded items from the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale for assessing a populations' mental well-being. The Young Ambassadors worked alongside Norfolk Public health team to devise the questionnaire, and this will be used in addition to the other measures to show impact in this key area.

From the Young People feedback forms, following their involvement in Kick the Dust, 50% strongly agreed that this had had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing with a further 50% agreeing that their involvement in Kick the Dust has helped them have more positive mental health.

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

- 100% of all young people strongly agreed that the museum was a safe space for young people like themselves who were struggling;
- 100% strongly agreed they were given a voice that was listened to;
- 63% strongly agreed that they understood heritage better than they had done before taking part with a further 25% agreeing;
- 63% strongly agreed that following their engagement heritage was more relevant with a further 25% agreeing. The same numbers stated that they felt heritage represented young people like themselves;

- 85% stated they now had a greater understanding of museums and the job roles available with 50% strongly agreeing that they could see themselves working in the sector;
- 63% strongly agreed that the skills they had acquired would be useful to them in the future with a further 38% agreeing;
- 43% strongly agreed they felt more connected to their local community than previously with a further 57% agreeing;
- 72% agreed that their involvement had helped them to explore and feel more connected to their own identity and heritage.

## Summary

The NLHF funded Kick the Dust project ended in March 2023 with evidence clearly demonstrating the impact on young people and staff engaging in activity. The programme has now moved into a new phase, with funding support from ACE and NCC.

Kick the Dust is a three-stage journey, with young people developing transferable work-related skills including digital skills and gaining experiences that they would struggle to find elsewhere, to support them in securing employment. Whilst young people cite being involved in curation and creating exhibitions as the main areas they have enjoyed, it is through these activities that they hone their skills and understanding of the workplace, which will help them secure employment longer term.

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

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

Recently one of our YMCA young people progress into independent living and gain a place on a Level 3 Access course, with the Kick the Dust programme and pre traineeship giving her the confidence to take these steps. She has also secured a role in the Visitor Services team for Norwich Castle. Another participant is now a core member of staff on the Visitor Services team at Gressenhall. Another young person has progressed from being a Young Ambassador to gaining a L4 Apprenticeship with Channel 4 in London and 2 others have secured places on the MA in Museum Studies in Norwich. One former Kick the Dust participant has secured an internship with the United Nations. Another young person has secured a bursary to run her own project through Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge.

Quotes from our Young Ambassadors regarding their engagement in Kick the Dust and their involvement in the 'Done and Dusted' celebration event, show the impact that the programme has had on them.

*'Kick the Dust gave me hands on experience of the industry I want to work for while becoming more proficient in the skills I need to get me there.'* Chloe, Young Ambassador (Chloe is now on a Level 4 Apprenticeship working in London for Channel 4)

*'The most important thing that Kick the Dust did for me was increase my confidence through representing the voices of other young people, inspiring me to pursue a career*

*in the museum sector by showing me that it's a place where I'm able to make positive institutional change.'* Emily, Young Ambassador (Emily is now studying for an MA and remains an active Young Ambassador)

*'Kick the Dust has played such a key part in my life and helped me secure employment when most doors were closed to me, giving me the skills and confidence to move forward. It is like being part of a family'.* Jazz, Young Ambassador (Jazz has worked on another KTD project and is an active Young Ambassador)

*'My experience has been highly positive. It has allowed me to connect with other young people with a similar interest in the industry. It has also provided me with varied work experience that will contribute significantly to my search for employment in the sector. I have learnt so much more about the heritage sector and the abundance of roles at play, which has led me to new interests and career goals. Engaging with people currently working in the sector has been invaluable and deepens my understanding of the importance of the work the museum services do in the local community.'* Marr, Young Ambassador (Marr is studying an MA at UEA and remains an active Young Ambassador)

*'I'm so pleased to say that I was awarded one of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival's Bursary for Young Creatives. Thanks for all your help with my application, it was much appreciated, and I really look forward to working on this further. Couldn't have done it without your help and the help of Kick the Dust! '* (Rosa, Young Ambassador and Norwich participant)

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

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

As part of this development phase, a group of young people from Norfolk who are NMS Kick the Dust Youth Board members, met recently with their counterparts in Leicester, as part of a structured weekend consultation event supported by NMS and YMCA Leicestershire project workers. More information is provided below.

### **YHYF Forum visit to Leicester**

On 16 and 17 February 2024, representatives from the NMS Kick the Dust Youth Board and the YMCA's Midlands Youth Heritage Forum met up in Leicester for two days full of heritage visits and discussion. Amongst visits to some of Leicester's top heritage attractions, the group reviewed their involvement in the Your Heritage Your Future project and made key decisions about the project going forwards.

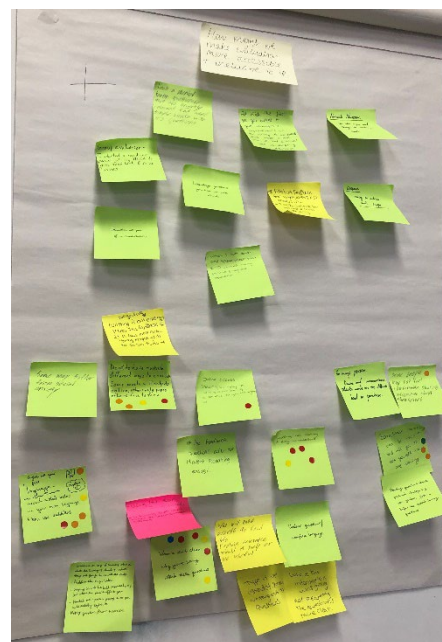
The trip was attended by four young people from the Norfolk Youth Board, three from the YMCA's Youth Heritage Forum, and the current trainee working at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery. Staff present included the Strategic Lead for the East Midlands,

the Project Officer in East of England, YHYF's Evaluation Consultant and the Youth Mentor/Documentarian for the pilot phase.

### Decisions made and insights gained

The young people chose a collective name for their group going forwards working on the project: the YHYF Forum. They also:

- Provided feedback on the infographic drafts, choosing a final version they preferred.
- Took part in a workshop led by the Evaluation Consultant, making key decisions about how evaluation should look in the delivery phase and how to remove barriers to taking part in evaluation.
- Went on a tour of Leicester Museum, led by Nuura, the trainee, so that they could learn about the museum but also ask her questions about the traineeship and formulate their own ideas on how the traineeships could be adapted in the delivery phase.
- Prior to their visit but as part of YHYF, the NMS Youth Board gave feedback on flyers about the project to be handed out at the SHARE conference on 11 March.
- The YHYF Forum noted that ensuring definitions of heritage are broad is important, particularly for young people from global majority backgrounds.
- Identified that clear signposts for further work for young people after the traineeships will be important.
- Evaluation needs to consider and clearly communicate why data is being collected and what it is being used for, particularly for young people with complex needs.



The group's ideas on how to make evaluation more accessible and inclusive

### Learning

Throughout the visit, it became apparent how important being part of a heritage youth board was to the young people's sense of identity. This was for a number of reasons, including:

- Increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of taking part in something new and, importantly, travelling to new places and being independent.
- Meeting other people in a space to share similarities but also learn about different viewpoints, stories and histories.
- Improved wellbeing through social interaction and being able to have fun as a group at heritage sites.

Quotes from participants:

*"[I have gained] confidence...Chinese society is a bit competitive...I'm always comparing myself to other people and thinking that I'm not good enough. So, I think now I'm probably more confident with my language and my study, and feel braver to try something new."*

*"This completely takes me out of my comfort zone. I would never be like "I want to go to museums", or I'd never travel outside of my hometown, because I only did that with family, and I don't have contact with them...It has encouraged me to travel by coach and stuff like that. And that sort of opened up my mind and brought down a wall, and also doing it now, like I could feel fully comfortable do by myself. And I think that's something that I didn't expect at all, which I again, will forever cherish."*

*"When I joined Kick the Dust, I got to work with people who really challenge my views of things...it's really interesting to have different perspectives to me and interesting stories and views of history and things like that. It's such a great life skill to have friends who are different from you and respect their opinions."*

Being part of the group has also expanded horizons for the young people. It has given them the opportunity to explore new areas – this was particularly highlighted when all but one of the group visited the King Richard III centre in their free time, even though it was not a planned activity – and has also opened up new career possibilities for them and affirmed that the heritage sector is a space that they belong in.

*"Another thing is I've also had something to look forward to. For as in for my future. It gives me that plan."*

*"It's helped me realise what I want to do in terms of a career because I did the online work experience with Kick the Dust back when I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and then I really enjoyed that. So, I decided to join the board from that. Just getting the chance to see...how the museum industry works really helped as well, to help me decide that was something I'm interested in. I don't think I would have done a Museum Studies course at Durham University without having done that, to be honest."*

*"It's definitely given me confidence and the ability to talk to people who are involved in museum services at a high level, and not feel too intimidated."*

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

### **5.1 Main construction works**

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



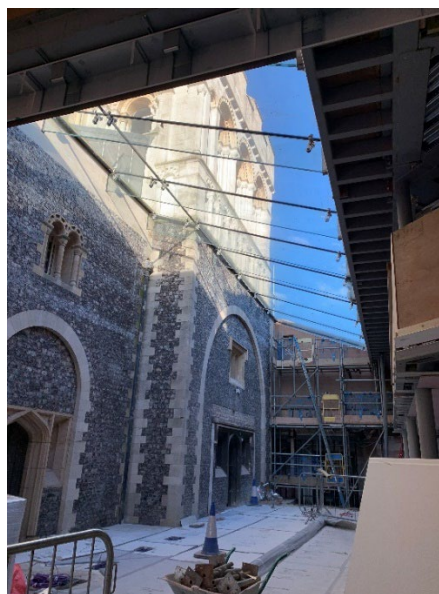
Drone image of the construction site

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

The installation of internal steelwork structures in the Keep has been completed, with new floor levels installed. Joinery and mechanical & electrical installation is ongoing. The final phase of steelwork installation has been completed on the Keep roof, with the new rooftop platforms now being installed. Installation of structural steels has been completed in the new entrance area and adjoining Percival wing of the building. The installation of the new glazed atrium roof in the entrance area has been completed and fitout works are ongoing, including shop fitout.



Installation of rooftop platforms on Keep



Atrium interior showing glazed roof

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

## 6. Other activity across Norwich museums

### 6.1 Museum of Norwich

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

#### Norwich Industries Tours:

We launched *The Norwich Industries Tours* at Museum of Norwich on the 6 January 2024. These guided tours complement the current exhibition at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery: *Norwich Works: The Industrial Photography of Walter & Rita Nurnberg*.

The tours highlight objects in the collections that link to three of the industries photographed by the Nurnbergs: shoemaking, chocolate manufacture, and constructional engineering. The tours will run on the first Saturday of the month January 2023 - April 2024. The tours have been received very favourably. Our feedback included the following comments:

*A great addition to a wonderful museum experience.*

*It is such a good idea to do snapshots of the Norwich Industries – not overwhelmed with information about all of them. I am really looking forward to more of these.*

*Easy to understand, friendly, knowledgeable guide.*

#### Christmas cracker making workshop at the Museum of Norwich

As part of our festive programme across the Norwich museums, we commissioned artist Sarah Cannell to deliver a Christmas cracker making workshop, inspired by the Tom Smith crackers in the collection. Attendees were treated to a tour of the crackers on display, handling of collections and were all delighted with their final creations. Sarah had even made a template for a miniature cracker to match the ones on display!



## 6.2 Strangers' Hall

### Strangers' Hall Centenary Programme

The newly installed front window displays and interior graphic panels, generously funded by the Freeman of Norwich and Friends of Norwich Museums have proved very popular with the public, as have the new information folders and QR code interpretation. The street front of the museum has been newly painted and an eye-catching combination of cutout figures, iconic buildings and objects have been installed in the windows. Our commissioned designer Hannah Broadway was invited to encapsulate Strangers' long history in an engaging and contemporary way, which she has done by creating displays which are playful and imaginative, yet based on real people and museum objects. Community groups and young people participating in the Kick the Dust project provided collage portraits of Norwich's finest.



New window displays at Strangers' Hall

Inside the museum new interpretation panels use archive photos and documents from the early days of the museum. They tell the story of the founding of Strangers' Hall by Leonard Bolingbroke, his '*munificent gift*' to the City of Norwich and the opening as a City of Norwich Museum in 1923. They throw light on Strangers' Hall's pioneering work in the vanguard of the early Folk Life museum movement in the UK and the era of significant donations including the Brereton collection.

### Visitor Programme

Events in celebration of Strangers' Hall's centenary year included the final workshop of our joint venture with Norfolk Record Office, *Treasures under your Bed*. This offered a chance for participants to learn about how to care for their own family records at home and also have a look at the extensive Strangers' Hall archive. As part of a training day for the volunteer team, Senior Curator Cathy Terry gave a talk on the life and work of Leonard Bolingbroke and the team provided updates on building, conservation and interpretation.

One outcome of our enhanced profile brought about by the *Strangers' Hall 100* programme is an increasing social media engagement during the year. We ran numerous mini-campaigns that were all linked by a collections focus and culminating in

regular posts to reveal the public's top ten favourite objects in a promotion organised by Daniel Bokenham, Teaching Museum Communications Trainee, entitled *Strangers' Things*. When comparing August to December 2023 to the same months in 2022, some of the Instagram metrics show significant improvement, with a 48.7% increase in profile visits, 10.3% increase in followers, 397% increase in profile reach and 1000% increase in post likes.

The month of November also saw staff and volunteers alike learning the craft of making felt animals to create '*Mouses' Christmas House*' – an exploration for families in which visitors were invited to create their own mouse mask and then locate all the mini- mouse scenes. Mice had moved into the entire museum, with miniature scenes playing cards in the Georgian Dining Room, scaling Christmas trees to put up lights, singing carols, wheeling in vast stocks of cheese, preparing the Christmas dinner and more.



The highlight of Strangers' Hall Christmas celebrations this year was '*Strangers' Hall After Dark*'. This new twilight event gave participants a sense of life in a prosperous Norwich merchant household in the age before gas or electric lighting and what it is like moving around a building like Strangers' Hall after dark.



Strangers' Hall curators Cathy Terry and Bethan Holdridge led the tours, setting the scene of the wealthy merchant family the Sothertons and their large household gathering in the Great Hall for feasting, singing, dancing and merrymaking during the twelve days of Christmas. Weaving in the story of lighting in the home from rush light

holders to lanterns and chandeliers, they led visitor around the darkened period room displays holding LED candles. In the Great Chamber participants were asked to imagine themselves sitting down for a business meeting with Mayor Joseph Paine in the first days of the Restoration. Small torches were also provided so visitors could see the detail of paintings and objects and the reflections of brass, gilding and mirrors. 456 visitors enjoyed our Christmas season this year, with the evening events being fully booked. Feedback included:

*I have to say it's the best Christmas event ever!!!!*

*It was wonderful to walk around with 'candles' each. Bethan is a superb speaker, & the refreshments in the Undercroft (especially as you catered for vegans!!) was a nice finishing touch & because the mince pies weren't just supermarket bought kept us feeling we were back in time -also we LOVED the mice.*

*We would like to say a HUGE thankyou to everyone for all their hard work in making it so special.*

### **Building and Conservation**

The 2024 Deep Clean took place in January and early February 2024, organised by Assistant Curator Bethan Holdridge, with the help of team-leaders David Harvey and Anne Jones and the input of 38 volunteers, including English +, UEA students (including one work placement), Aviva staff and NCC Adult Social Services. The Work Placement officer in the Skills and Employment team who facilitated the latter reported on the positive benefits of this collaboration:

*Lisa said she really enjoyed it and didn't want to leave! She said her support worker went with her for the first 3 sessions and then she made her own way there by herself and that she made friends and had a lovely time!*

*This is really important as it's the first time she has ever carried out any meaningful work experience, she immediately wanted me to find her something else to keep her occupied so thank you so much for giving her the opportunity, it really is so valuable and can now be added to her CV.*



Deep Clean in progress

During the 2024 Deep Clean closure, freelance art conservator Alice Tavares Da Silva worked onsite to carry out much-needed conservation and cleaning work on the double-

panelled classical landscape painting in the Great Chamber. From an examination of paint application she was able to suggest that the painting was carried out in situ, we might guess by a local artist familiar with the vocabulary and artistic conventions of the time, and influenced by northern European/ Low Countries styles. The painstaking removal of old wax and dirt caused amongst other things by soot and tobacco smoke, as revealed details of the painting not previously visible and also enhanced the soft pink of the sunset in the sky. The second overmantel painting, an 18th image of merchants in a middle Eastern trading port, exchanging cargoes and news, is current being worked on by Alice in her studio.



Conservation work on the panelled painting in progress

During the Deep Clean opportunity was taken to change all batteries on high level fire detector heads in the Great Hall and to carry out changes to replace fluorescent lighting in the museum stores with LED strips in line with fire safety report recommendations. Repair work on roof leaks and guttering has also been carried out. Work is also due to take place on window frames in the front courtyard and to address the cause of a leak through the Morning Room window.

### **Current programme**

Strangers' Hall reopened to the public on 14 February and the half term event *Say it with Flowers* focussed on the secret language of flowers, with a new object- based 'zine' trail and craft activity based on Victorian floral picture frame. A workshop for NMS Teaching Museum trainees, looking the issues in documenting some of our more controversial collections was successfully run by Wayne Kett, Documentation Officer.

Curators are currently working with Cassie Herschel-Shorland and English+ Norwich to devise and trial the production of *Visual Stories*. These are interpretation resources for interpreting museum objects that do not rely on language skills, aimed at non-verbal users and other people who do not speak English. This is now at the testing and evaluation stage and we look forward to the production of resources in the late Spring.

A collaboration with Bookscapes Art Collective featuring collection- inspired display is planned for June 2024. This will focus on the Victorian displays and will include researched thematic installations based around particular objects from stained glass, to taxidermy, shellcraft and musical boxes, providing with the aim providing contemporary insight into the home lives of Victorian people, as well as related family activities for visitors.

Curatorial involvement has included the visit of Rachel Silberstein researching Chinese markets for 18<sup>th</sup> century Norwich textiles, researcher interest in the Sarah Glover and Dennes collections and numerous offers of donations collection, which are currently being evaluated.

## 7. Norwich Curatorial update

**Dr Francesca Vanke, Senior Curator of Norwich Museums and Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art** is mainly occupied with the Turner exhibitions. *Crossings, Constructions and Connections* is about to close at Time and Tide in Yarmouth, and visitor figures so far have been very good, with 600 more visitors than usual for the month of December. Francesca delivered a teaching session on curating the exhibition for our Teaching Museum trainees in November and was interviewed by a group of young people from East Norfolk College, who made a film to play in the gallery during the exhibition's run, and later go online. She also gave a curator's talk about the exhibition.

Francesca is working on the forthcoming Norwich Castle exhibition, which will be entitled *JMW Turner and Changing Visions of Landscape*. She has secured some prestigious loans to complement *Walton Bridges*, including three other versions painted by Turner over the course of his career. These have never been displayed together before, and one (see below) has always been privately owned. Norwich Castle will be the first museum ever to exhibit this painting.

Francesca has also just been successful in being appointed to the Acceptance in Lieu committee of the Arts Council.



JMW Turner, *Landscape with Walton Bridges*, 1841, private collection

**Dr Giorgia Bottinelli, Curator of Historic Art**, has been busy with a re-organisation of the art stores, researching for her forthcoming watercolour gallery exhibition, and completing a new acquisition. The beautiful floral still life in the Dutch style was painted by Lewis Hubner (c1694-1769), a German émigré artist who settled in Norwich around 1740.



Lewis Hubner *Mixed Flowers in a Basket on a Grey Table*, undated, NMS

This painting complements another work already in our collection. They may originally have been intended as a pair. Both pictures will shortly be displayed together in our *Painting and Collecting in Northern Europe* gallery.

In December, Giorgia also hosted a curators' study day, welcoming twelve curators of prints and drawings from national museums in England and Northern Ireland for a tour of the collections and the current exhibition in our watercolour gallery, *Where Land and Water Meet*.

**Dr Rosy Gray, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art** has been hosting a series of events to go alongside the film commission, *Britannia* by Amarte Golding, which has been on display in the Timothy Gurney Gallery. These include two highly successful 'in-conversation' events with the artist.

Rosy has also been working with artists Daniel & Clara on a new commissioned series of photographic images, *The Lost Estate*, which draws on the work of the Norwich School of Artists. This has just opened in the Colman Project Space.



Daniel & Clara A *Sudden Downpour* (from *The Lost Estate*), 2023

Rosy is also working alongside Amanda Geitner on a major new exhibition and catalogue exploring the work of artist Roger Ackling, opening on 18 May. *Roger Ackling: Sunlight* will reveal moments of innovation and change in Ackling's work through a series of chronological installations. It will be the most significant exhibition of his work to date, exploring the entire length of his artistic career.

**Kate Thaxton, Curator of the Norfolk Regimental Museum** has mainly been occupied with hosting students from Norwich University of the Arts. The re-launch of the website has proved very successful at attracting students to access the collections as a valuable resource.

Two small touchscreens have been re-installed in the Regimental displays on the Norwich Castle Rotunda balcony - providing both chronology and details of objects in the cases. In addition, a larger touchscreen has been installed with an interactive display that enables visitors to explore various elements of life within the Norfolk Regiment over the years. Subjects include Food, Family Life, Pay, Barracks, Uniform, Service in India, and Sport. It was written and designed by Kate, and volunteer, Sarah Salmon.

**Ruth Battersby, Senior Curator of Costume and Textiles**, has been focused on collections management. While the building project to replace damaged plaster continues in the main Costume & Textile store space, work is ongoing to improve storage and documentation of the collections stored in the Women's dress store. Volunteers are repacking boxes, removing objects, and refolding textiles with fresh tissue paper and repacking accessories, such as belts in trays with bespoke 'slots' for the objects to sit in which ensures minimal risk from movement. While objects are being repacked, the digitised documentation is checked to confirm the correct location is recorded in the database. They are working on various collections including shawls, both those made in Norwich and from other manufacturing centres like Scotland and Kashmir, embroidery samplers, belts, and stockings.



Boxed and hanging collections



Rolled textiles, plan chests and shoes

Ruth has been able to arrange some opportunities for people to see the stored collections by using the Town Close Auditorium, while the Study Room in the Shirehall is unavailable. So far this year, the Norwich University of the Arts Fashion Design students have seen some of the outerwear collections, and the Art at Work project participants have visited the therapeutic textiles collection.

On Sunday 18 Feb Ruth hosted a book launch for local publisher Common Threads Press for their new 'zine *Stitching Freedom*, where over 130 people came to hear the author speak and view the Lorina Bulwer embroideries. Other projects in the planning stages with support from the Costume & Textile Dept. include a repacking project of Grout's textiles at Great Yarmouth, to deliver events for the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse programme this summer. Ruth also aims give a talk for the Costume and Textile Association's activities at the Maker's Festival at the Forum in April.

**Dr Tim Pestell, Senior Curator of Archaeology** continues to be fully occupied with the Norwich Castle project. As detailed in previous reports, Tim still continues some of his archaeology curatorial work: answering enquiries, writing funding applications for new acquisitions, and working with finders and landowners concerning Treasure cases. He continues also to work on the Leverhulme-funded Rendlesham research project, for which he sits on the steering group for their NLHF-funded element.

Tim has also continued to sit on the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Works of Art.

## 8. Other developments

### Courtroom

Works within the Shirehall Courtroom to treat the outbreak of dry rot are progressing well. The Courtroom roof to the South and West has been stripped back with a

temporary roof installed Repairs to one of the internal south wall plates is complete and works to same issue on the west side is about halfway complete. Works have also been completed to the roof dragon beams.

Norfolk Museum Service staff have been working alongside Norse and Norwich City Council Planning colleagues. As part of the project, we are aiming to significantly improve the drainage systems, so that future water ingress can be avoided. Norwich City Conservation Officers have been in attendance on a regular basis and have now approved the proposed gutter detail, along the western side of the building.

The works also includes the requirement to make significant repairs to the roof and walls of the Costume & Textile Store within the Shirehall. These works are outside the original project scope and now include works to external window lintels, further roof beam replacements, repairs to the roof castellations and the replacement of roof slates.

There are concerns regarding water ingress within some other historic areas of the Shirehall. The Victorian Prisoners Tunnel and another room within the building are being investigated by damp specialists, Hutton and Rostron. Once these investigations are complete, a plan will be formulated whereby all damp and water ingress issues can be addressed along the western (Castle mound) side of the building.



The Courtroom roof under repair



The internal bird nest scaffolding within the Courtroom

### **Wider Impact Group**

Since the start of the Norwich Castle project a separate project group was formed to help facilitate the operational implementation of the project. Its core aim being to ensure we can successfully operate as an accessible museum throughout the construction works and to plan for and implement the new facilities as they come back online. The Wider Impact Group is led by the Operations Manager and the areas covered include the following:

- Planning for operational changes to the museum
- Branding
- Managing the introduction of new admission and ticketing systems
- Implementation of the new catering and retail outlets
- Developing a new venue hire offer for Norwich Castle
- Introducing new signage and wayfinding
- Managing the visitor journey
- Creation of a tours including a new dungeon tour experience
- The reinstallation of galleries and facilities
- Planning for legislative Health & Safety and Premises Management considerations

The working group will continue up to and beyond the completion of the Norwich Castle project and we will continue to update members on developments in future museum committee reports.



An illustration of the new Retail shop at Norwich Castle

## 9. Visitor numbers

			APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	YEAR TO DATE	TOTAL
N O R W I C H	Castle Museum	2021-22	0	2,732	5,309	8,053	12,796	7,652	8,964	6,226	4,068	4,962	8,110	6,605	60,762	75,477
		2022-23	8,129	6,857	9,070	8,289	9,390	8,084	8,900	7,259	2,995	7,483	7,914	14,373	76,456	98,743
		2023-24	13,471	9,922	10,889	12,590	15,391	10,647	11,597	7,256	6,079	6,031			103,873	103,873
	Norwich Castle Study Centre (Shirehall)	2021-22	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	7	3	23	27	12	62
		2022-23	24	59	43	56	46	29	85	46	49	82	116	121	519	756
		2023-24	106	53	126	92	101	75	63	79	178	58			931	931
	Museum of Norwich	2021-22	0	115	504	595	614	842	749	767	422	647	1,308	1,165	5,255	7,728
		2022-23	1,406	1,552	1,044	1,666	2,476	1,970	1,431	1,406	1,387	1,185	1,587	1,917	15,523	19,027
		2023-24	1,589	1,378	1,241	2,064	2,059	2,381	1,824	1,329	821	1,244			15,930	15,930
	Strangers Hall	2021-22	0	0	0	24	39	450	508	521	460	0	302	883	2,002	3,187
		2022-23	478	642	639	635	779	843	713	620	863	16	329	966	6,228	7,543
		2023-24	468	522	453	1,185	1,699	962	850	770	470	0			7,379	7,379

### Report contact:

Dr Robin Hanley  
Assistant Head of Museums  
Norfolk Museums Service,  
Shirehall,  
Market Avenue,  
Norwich NR1 3JQ.  
Tel: 01603 493663  
Email: [robin.hanley@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:robin.hanley@norfolk.gov.uk)

