

## The Norwich Area Museums Committee

### Briefing Paper December 2014

#### Visitor Numbers 2014/15 – See Appendix 1

Visitor numbers across all three sites were lower this October than in 2013/14, nearly 11% lower at Norwich Castle. This was largely due to lower visitor numbers over the half-term school holiday as a result of the unseasonably warm, dry weather and high levels of Halloween event competition across the city. However, visitor numbers across the Norwich Museums to 31<sup>st</sup> October remain 10% higher than for the same period in 2013/14. The increase is due to the significant and cumulative rise in visitor numbers at Norwich Castle where numbers were still up by 14% at 31<sup>st</sup> October compared with the same period last year,

The high visitor numbers at Norwich Castle has been reflected in good admission income and secondary spend in the Castle's café and shop.

Visitor numbers to date at the Museum of Norwich and Strangers' Hall continue to be slightly lower than in 2013/14 as reported at the June AMC meeting, although the September figures at both sites were very good, large as a result of a very successful Heritage Open Day weekend.

The Friends of the Norwich Museums are still considering whether to provide financial support to enable Strangers' Hall to open for additional days – Thursdays and Fridays – from June to September 2015. The final decision will be taken at the Friends' Committee in January.

#### School Numbers 2014/15 - See Appendix 2

School visits to the Norwich Museums to the end of October were 14% higher than for the same period last year.

Bookings are generally going well for the new academic year, however, changes to the National Curriculum are beginning to have an impact, particularly at Strangers' Hall where the core school offer is Tudors. This subject is no longer taught at Key Stage 2 Primary age, and despite adapting the session to focus on other areas of the curriculum, e.g. local history and important people, bookings have dropped considerably. Colleagues from other museums across the Country have reported a similar situation.

However, more positively, the new curriculum does play to Norwich Castle's strengths where school visits are up by 20%.

#### OTHER LEARNING SERVICES NEWS

A 12 week **Youth Offending Team** programme ran from October to November at Norwich Castle, finishing with a presentation on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November.

Strangers' Hall and The Museum of Norwich are hosting this autumn's Saturday morning **Museum Club**.

The **Youth Forum** meet monthly and ran the first ever gaming session for over 14s **Gaming in the Castle** on 15<sup>th</sup> November. The event was a sell out and one is planned for spring. They are also working with **Equal Lives**, a disabled youth forum on a photography project inspired by the Wonnacott and Lessore exhibition.

The **Young Events Volunteers Group** meet monthly and develop and deliver activities for the public programme.

A **Routes into Museum Work Day** is taking place on 13<sup>th</sup> December. This will provide secondary age young people the opportunity to find out about career opportunities in museums. This event has been developed as an alternative to providing work experience placements, as we are unable to meet the demand for work experience placements but wanted to find a way to provide support and information.

### CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

#### **Norwich Castle's Norwich Union and Bernard Matthew Galleries** **JOHN WONNACOTT AND JOHN LESSORE** **The Life Room and the City** to 4 January 2015

Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery has joined with Norwich University of the Arts to celebrate the iconic art school's 170th year. This is an exhibition of the work of two important British painters, John Wonnacott and John Lessore, and the paintings they made in and around the art school while they were teaching there in the early 1980s. Wonnacott and Lessore were invited to Norwich Art School to develop a Life Room – a space where students could be trained in drawing from observation.



They created two Life Rooms where they also made their own work. As well as figure painting, the artists were inspired by the city around them. Many of their paintings feature much-loved Norwich scenes and are on loan from major museums and collections. This exhibition will explore ideas about how we teach art whilst placing the work of Wonnacott and Lessore within the context of British painting of the 20th century.

The exhibition is curated by Lynda Morris and an accompanying show '**John Wonnacott and John Lessore, About Life**' will be held at the Norwich University of the Arts Gallery (NUA) on St. Georges Street from 4 November 2014 – 10 January 2015

#### **Norwich Castle's Rotunda Display Case** **LETTERS HOME** To July 2015

**Letters Home** - a new temporary case display in Norwich Castle's Rotunda, reveals what life was like for Norfolk soldiers and their families during the First World War through a collection of poignant and moving personal letters.

Around 12 million letters were sent to the front lines each week and it took, on average, two days for a letter to reach the Western Front from England.

The experience of Norfolk soldiers takes centre stage in **Letters Home** until July next year.

**Letters Home** draws on the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum's archive and this is the first time that much of this material has been on public display. It explores significant moments in the lives of soldiers and their families throughout the war, and offers visitors a sense of what life was like for families waiting for news and the different ways in which they found out about a soldier's life and death in the First World War.

Written communication was vitally important during the First World War and the value of letters is revealed in a collection of correspondence kept by Captain John Hammond, a company commander in the 7th (Service) Battalion, the Norfolk Regiment. Like many officers serving at the front, it was his duty to write to next of kin, offering information and comfort in their loss. Unusually, he kept the letters that families sent in return and these poignant letters show the distress that wives and parents went through and the great uncertainty that they faced.

When lines of communication were hindered, for example for Prisoners of War, many soldiers kept diaries to record their thoughts and experiences. Private Robert Sheldrake kept his prison camp diaries hidden in the false bottom of a cardboard box filled with books and keepsakes to avoid detection by the guards at Zwickau PoW camp in Germany.

### **Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell**

#### **FABULOUS 1950S FASHION**

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2015**

A modest exhibition in the Museum's 20<sup>th</sup> Century gallery showing how fashion designers and film stars influenced everyday style in the 1950s.

### **LOOKING FORWARD at Norwich Castle**



#### **HOMAGE TO MANET**

31 January – 19 April 2015

An exhibition developed around a loan of an Edouard Manet (1832 – 1883) painting owned by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus* 1868.

The exhibition will include a number of loans from Tate, the British Museum, The Manchester City Art Gallery, the Royal Academy and private collections including works by Claude Monet (1840 – 1926) John Singer Sargent (1856 – 1925), Walter Sickert (1860 – 1942) and Philip Wilson Steer (1860 – 1942)

- **Summer 2015: Jeff Koons.** A touring exhibition from the Artist Rooms Programme.
- **Autumn 2015 Digital/New Media exhibition**
- **Spring 2016: How to Train Your Dragon - A Vikings Guide to Deadly Dragons.** An exhibition from the National Centre for Children's Books on the book by Cressida Cowell.
- **Summer 2016:** Leading venue with Norwich University of the Arts for **The British Art Show**
- **Spring 2017: Small Stories Dolls' House and the History of the Home.** A V&A Museum of Childhood touring exhibition.

#### **Exhibition proposals under discussion**

- Rembrandt in Autumn 2016
- Building a touring exhibition around the Paston Treasure painting in 2018 in collaboration with Yale University, USA.

### **Coming next to the Museum of Norwich**

Next year, the celebration of 200 Years of Colman's continues, and [Norwich HEART](#) have just agreed that we can display their exhibition of the history of the company and workers stories from January through to March 2015, following its outing at the Forum and Fusion screen this November. The exhibition will complement the existing displays perfectly, and provide an opportunity to run talks alongside the displays.

### **Events**

#### **REPORTING BACK**

There have been a wide range of events to suit all audiences during the autumn. At Norwich Castle adult audiences have been able to choose from Tuesday lunchtime talks, an exhibition conference, Creative Writing, Art, Archaeology and Costume and Textile workshops, talks and handling sessions. Family audiences were treated to *Spooky City*, a programme of events over the October half-term culminating in a Parade from the Castle to The Forum.



We've also participated in national schemes including *The Big Draw*, when families helped to create a giant community artwork of the city, and *Museum Takeover Day*, where the Brownies were invited to take over our jobs, from giving talks in the galleries to tannoy announcements. *Takeover Day* is run by the **Kids in Museums** campaign to celebrate children and young people's contribution to museums, galleries and historic homes. Takeover Day at Norwich Castle is being used by *Kids in Museums* as a case study for best practice.

Christmas kicked off on 29<sup>th</sup> November with a First World War day inspired by the Christmas truce of 1914 called *Christmas in the Trenches*. This included a talk a book signing session with Michael Foreman, author of the children's First World War classic *War Game*.

The Museum of Norwich and Strangers' Hall have also been busy on the events front, with activities to support The Big Draw, together with talks, drawing, puppet show and puppet making and shoe design workshops

### Norwich Castle on national television and radio



An Episode of the new series of ***Digging For Britain***, to be broadcast in November on BBC 4 was filmed in Norwich Castle Keep one evening in September. The programme is a magazine of recent finds and work in British archaeology, presented by Professor Alice Roberts and ex-Time Team digger Matt Williams. In addition to the various stories covered, the programme will be looking at associated stories from the Castle, including relating some Roundhead graffiti in the Keep's fighting gallery, to a number of items from our

In particular, some of the more recent high-profile acquisitions will be featured, including a spectacular Middle Bronze Age dirk and a hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold bracteates. This was a fantastic opportunity to advertise the richness of both our archaeology collections and the museum more generally, as well as providing us with income from a facility fee. While the filming was highly concentrated, with a string of archaeologists coming in to discuss their work with the presenters, it was also a long night.

Norwich Castle also captured the interest of the BBC's ***Celebrity Antiques Road Trip***. The presenters drove up to the Castle in their vintage car on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October to make a film clip about our Egyptian collections for the show. They were particularly interested in connections with Rhyder Haggard and spoke to Research Associate and Egyptology expert Faye Kallionitis.

Anglo Saxons farming implements and Norwich Castle Battlements featured at the beginning of **Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time** last week, providing an introduction to the programme which was recorded at the Assembly House.

### LOOKING FORWARD

Father Christmas will be in his workshop at Strangers' Hall on 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December, and all three Norwich Museums will be running Christmas themed craft activities on the run up to and during the Christmas holiday period.

The Spring 2015 **What's On** will be available before Christmas. In addition to a programme of activities including Tuesday lunchtime talks, to support the exhibition *A Homage to Manet*, there is a large and varied programme of events and activities across the three Norwich Museums to meet the interests of all visitors. In partnership with RSPB we are running another Big Garden Birdwatch weekend on 24<sup>th</sup> January, where children will go free and all other visitors will be able to take advantage of the Pop in for £2.00 at any time over the weekend.

Please pick up a What's On or see the website [www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk) for details.



## Access to Collections

### New Collections Website

NMS' new collections website is now live. The new site, accessible via the 'Search our Collections' button on each page of the NMS website, offers online visitors a rich new way to engage with the collections. ([www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk)) The new site features stunning photography of star objects and the opportunity to learn more about some of the intriguing stories behind them. Supported by funding from Arts Council England and the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, the website will initially feature 87,000 records from a total of three million objects in NMS's nationally and internationally important collections. More records will be uploaded over the coming weeks and months. In addition, 150 key objects from the collections have been chosen for special treatment, to give visitors a flavour of the riches the collections hold. Visitors will be able to find out more about these key objects by clicking on themes such as 'Tied to the Sea', 'Prestige and Power', 'Faith and Ritual' and 'Conflict and War'. Several categories explore significant aspects of Norfolk including 'Industrious Norfolk', 'Norfolk Collectors' and 'Inspired by Norfolk'. The new site was launched at an event at Norwich Castle on 31 July, with Nick Poole, CEO of the Collections Trust giving the keynote speech.

## Other News

### Finalist is 2014 EDP VisitNorfolk Tourism Awards

Norwich Castle was a finalist in the [Business Impact](#) category of the 2014 EDP VisitNorfolk Tourism Awards for the "hugely successful" Roman Empire: Power and People exhibition. The Awards, celebrating their 10th year this year, recognise excellence in an industry which is vital to the county's economy, contributing £2.8 billion a year and employing around 50,000 people.

### Great British High Street Award

The Lanes was selected as the winner for the City Category of the Great British High Street Award and will receive a share of £50,000 and dedicated support and mentoring from industry experts. This national and highly prestigious award received over 135 entries across the UK and the Lanes faced huge competition to win. Receiving this award is a fantastic achievement for the Norwich Lanes and Norwich BID who have received recognition on a local and national level. The judges were impressed by the "partnership with traders and Norwich BID to develop a strong brand, organising a series of innovative events and marketing campaigns." One of those key partners is the Museum of Norwich, it hosted a visit from the judges from the Cabinet Office in October and they were obviously impressed by what they saw as David Cameron even favoured one of Curator Jenny Caynes' tweets supporting the Lanes bid to win.

### Commercial developments

Norwich Castle and Strangers' Hall are now licensed to hold wedding ceremonies, and are embarking on an exciting new chapter, working with professional wedding planner, Event-House, to develop wedding packages for these unique venues.

A venue hire offer has been developed for Norwich Castle. Full details are available in a new brochure which is also available to download from the web-site.

### Norfolk Museums Christmas Cards



Strangers' Hall has a large collection of greetings cards, including the comic Valentines on show at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell, and Christmas cards from the Victorian period up to the 1990s. A range of twenty lovely examples are now available for sale in the run-up to Christmas in NMS museum shops.

***A View from Norwich Castle Battlement*** leaflet has been developed to support Battlement tours and is also available for purchase separately.

### **Strangers' Hall opening hours**

In order to diversify its income streams and increase revenue, Strangers' Hall is now available for wedding and civil ceremonies and receptions. The most popular day for weddings continues to be Saturday, and to be able to provide visitors with a clear and consistent message regarding Strangers' Hall's core opening hours, public opening will move from a Saturday to a Sunday from 1-4.30pm. Visitors won't be losing out though, as there are plans to enhance the visitor offer on the fourth Sunday of every month by bringing the building to life with music and other activities.

### **Roll of Honour**

We are working closely with Norwich City Council to raise funds to restore the Roll of Honour and to relocate it from the Norwich Castle Keep to the City Hall where it will be more publically accessible. Visitors to City Hall and Norwich Castle will also be able to uncover the stories of the soldiers listed on the Norwich Roll of Honour in a digital format.

### **Strangers' Hall Discovery**



Initial dismay about the temporary closure of one of our main display rooms for ceiling repairs following leaks was mitigated by the promise from NORSE of carrying out some long-needed additional work on a gable in the Coach-house courtyard. But what should have been a simple repair however, turned into a major headache when it was discovered that the timbers in that part of the building had been severely affected by wood-boring beetle.

However, there was a silver lining. A specialist Norse team whilst working to resolve the problem discovered, during the course of removing the old render two new early windows at first and second floor level, one complete with original mouldings. These are thought to be of 16th/ 17th century date and help us establish a better idea of the original form of the building at the west end of the Great Hall. Following treatment and timber replacement, several hundred hand cut laths have been fixed to be followed by re-rendering with lime plaster which will allow this part of the building to breathe again and help prevent future problems.

### **The Rudham Dirk**

A rare Middle Bronze Age weapon, one of only six known from Europe, has been saved with the support of a grant of £38,970 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. The award, made to Norfolk Museums Service, has allowed the Rudham Dirk, a ceremonial artefact, to come into public ownership and be placed on display in Norwich Castle.

The Dirk was actually found about twelve years ago, when ploughed up in a field in East Rudham, north Norfolk. Taken home as a curio, the farmer, who wishes to remain anonymous, used it as a doorstep to his office. He was on the verge of throwing it away when a friend suggested he should take it to be identified. At Norfolk's Identification and Recording Service, which runs the county's Portable Antiquities Scheme from its base in Norfolk Museums Service's Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, it was seen by Dr Rogerson, senior historic environment officer and Finds Liaison Officer Erica Darch. They were able to recognise the dirk's date and importance immediately. Negotiations were subsequently opened between the landowner and Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery and a final sale price of £40,970 agreed. Grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society have enable the dirk to be secured for the nation

### **Norfolk Museums Development Foundation**

The Norfolk Museums Development Foundation is a new independent organisation that has been established to help Norfolk Museums Service to secure a diverse and sustainable funding base for the future. The foundation is a company limited by guarantee and a Registered Charity. A highly skilled and experienced Board of Trustees have been appointed and they met for their first board meeting this in October.

## **Arts Council Funding ACE**

Norfolk Museums Service has been successful in its bid to continue leading on developing the museum sector in the East of England. NMS is one of nine partners nationally to receive funding from Arts Council England to provide professional support, advice and guidance to museums to raise standards across the sector. NMS has been awarded £1,188,000 over the next three years for this important work.

The latest award recognises NMS' leadership role in the wider museum sector, and the service's track record of working with museums of all shapes and sizes in the past few years to improve standards. In the last year alone NMS has worked with 93% [153] of the region's Accredited museums through its innovative skills sharing scheme SHARE Museums East, delivering training and support to over 1,000 museum staff and volunteers last year.

For more information visit: <http://sharemuseumseast.org.uk/>

If you want to discuss any matters in this briefing please contact

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For further information about the Norwich Museums, their services and programmes check out the website on [www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk) where you can also sign up to receive regular e-bulletins.