

Norwich Area Museums Committee 12 December 2017

**Norwich Museums briefing: September to November 2017**

**1. Exhibitions at Norwich Castle**

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

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

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

Major loans shown in the exhibition included the Nile Coat from the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich and the bullet which killed Nelson from the Royal Collection. Other objects in this exhibition were drawn from NMS's own collections, including stored collections from Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Strangers' Hall, the Museum of Norwich and Norwich Castle Museum. Curators also worked in partnership with the Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk Heritage Centre to display fascinating documents and books including letters from Nelson and the Parish Register in which Nelson's baptism is recorded. Further loans came from the Nelson Museum in Great Yarmouth.

A complementary programme of talks and activities ran alongside this major exhibition, which saw exceptionally high levels of visits, including the highest recorded number of paying visitors on Wednesday 9 August (2,222 visitors).



  
**NELSON  
& NORFOLK**

Conservation of the ensign in St Andrews Hall

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



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait* c 1634. Etching, Norwich Castle Museum

The current major exhibition at Norwich Castle showcases the extraordinary NMS collection of 93 prints and one drawing by Rembrandt, alongside national loans from the British Museum, National Galleries of Scotland, National Gallery and the Royal Collection. Rembrandt's preoccupation with light and shade is seen throughout his work and this exhibition reveals how Rembrandt created unsurpassed effects of light and darkness. An illustrated catalogue has been produced to accompany this important show.

Members will be given the opportunity of touring this exhibition prior to the meeting.

## 1.3 Colman Gallery temporary displays

The current exhibition in the Colman Project Space until 1 July 2018 is *Magritte: The Lost Painting*. This explores the story of the detective work recently undertaken on NMS' Magritte painting *La Condition Humaine*, where a quarter of a missing Magritte painting, *La Pose Enchantée* was discovered underneath the later work.



*La Condition Humaine* by Rene Magritte

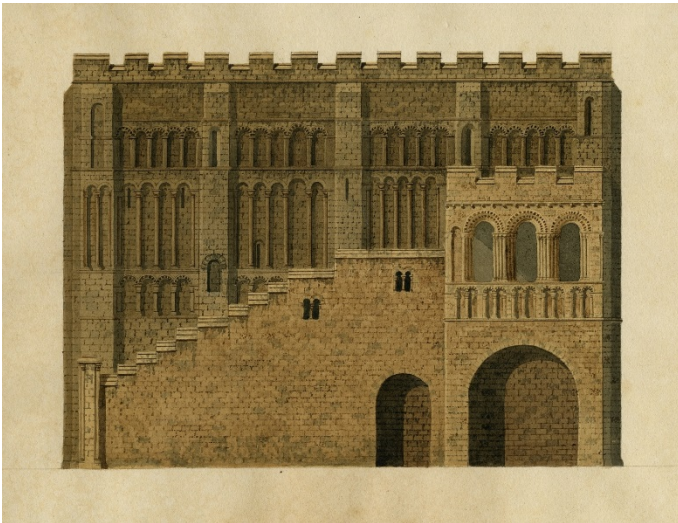
#### **1.4 We Came Here to Conquer: Eleven artists respond to the print collections at Norwich Castle (Timothy Gurney Gallery until 25 March 2018)**

This exhibition forms part of the 3 year *New Geographies* project funded by Arts Council England which sees NMS working in collaboration with nine arts organisations across the region. This exhibition showcases new work by eleven artists involved with print and printmaking, each of whom has explored and responded to the print collections at Norwich Castle. For more information about the project please see: [www.newgeographies.uk](http://www.newgeographies.uk)

## **2. Forthcoming exhibitions**

### **2.1 Norwich Castle: The Square Box on the Hill (10 February – 3 June 2018)**

This exhibition will explore Norwich Castle's history, illustrated through prints, photographs, paintings, plans and archives, many of which have never been exhibited previously. The exhibition will also enable visitors to find out more about the latest plans for the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England* project.



William Wilkins (attrib.) Norwich Castle 1795

### **2.2 Norwich Castle Open Art Show: Inheritance (3 March – 20 May 2018)**

Delivered in partnership with the East Anglia Art Fund, the Norwich Castle Open Art Show 2018 provides artists resident in East Anglia with the opportunity to both show and sell recent work, with artists responding to the theme of *Inheritance*. This theme was inspired by the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England* project and will complement the *Box on the Hill* exhibition.



Over 800 submissions were received for this show, with shortlisting currently underway.

### 3. Norwich Castle Events

#### 3.1 Saturday Knight Fever (Saturday 7 October)

This was a major new event at Norwich Castle, developed and delivered as part of the pilot Activity Plan event programme for the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England* project. The event utilised a number of outside spaces including a partnership with Castle Mall to use the grassed area adjacent to the shopping centre. This event focussed on visitors learning all about knights – who they were and what they did.

Battle Heritage, the premier full contact medieval combat club in Great Britain who compete around the world at international tournaments gave spectacular demonstrations of medieval fighting, alongside family workshops using child-friendly equipment). Dominic Sewell demonstrated the art of arming a horse for medieval battle – using a real horse. Dominic is a leading figure in the field of historical equitation, trained in jousting, mounted falconry and skills-at-arms disciplines.

Inside the Castle, activities included the 'Act Like a Knight' family drama workshops which showed knightly life. 'Knight's Quest' saw families venturing on a quest to find ten objects linked to the key themes of Knighthood, while craft sessions gave younger visitors the chance to create their own swords and helmets. For adults and older children, there were three talks: Dominic Sewell on the world of 'The Medieval Warhorse'; Dickon Whitewood, Research Assistant for Norwich Castle's Gateway to Medieval England project on 'How to be A Knight' and Dr Michael Schmoelz from the University of East Anglia on 'Fight, Pray, Work: The role of the Knight, Monk and Peasant in Medieval Society'. Leading actor and dancer, Neil Paris, recreated the famous 'Golden Years' dance sequence from 'A Knight's Tale' originally featuring Heath Ledger.



### **3.2 Museums at Night – Digital Takeover! (Saturday 28 October)**

This pilot event provided an opportunity to test and evaluate some of the digital technology that will be used as part of the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England* project. Visitors were able to discover the Castle through immersive experiences including interactives and games, meeting a range of characters from the Castle's colourful past.



### **3.3 A Horrid Halloween Half Term events (23-27 October)**

Halloween provided the theme for the October half term events programme at Norwich Castle including performances of the story of Black Shuck with actor Neil Paris and an exploration of the world of Creepy Crawlies with the NMS Natural History Curator.

### **3.4 Autism Aware activities (14-15 October)**

Delivered in partnership with Autism Anglia, these events provided a range of engagement opportunities in a relaxed and informal environment suitable for visitors with autism, their friends and families.

## **4. Stranger's Hall**

### **4.1 Spooky Happenings at the Hall (25 October)**

This event took place as part of the October half term programme and gave those of all ages the chance to discover what was lurking in the hidden corners of the building. Visitors were also able to create and take home their own mini Strangers' Hall room.

### **4.2 Toyroom redisplay project**

Staff are working on a project to redisplay the Toyroom collections at Strangers' Hall and increase access to the important toy collections. A programme of visitor consultation has been undertaken and plans are currently being developed. It is

anticipated that a funding application will be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Our Heritage grant programme in 2018.

#### 4.3. Christmas at Strangers' Hall

A range of tailored Christmas-themed events are currently being marketed for Stranger's Hall, including *After Hours Christmas Specials* on 13 and 20 December and *A Strangers' Traditional Christmas* on 16 and 20 December.

### 5. Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell

#### 5.1 Cecil Aldin – The Art of Black Beauty (–25 November)

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



#### 5.2 October half term printing event

The Museum of Norwich welcomed Print to the People to the museum during October half term. The printers drew on the *Black Beauty* exhibition to demonstrate letter press techniques, giving visitors the opportunity to create and print their own unique posters to take home.





## 6. Learning Team activities and projects

### 6.1 Sandford Award

The Norwich Castle learning team has recently been awarded a national Sandford Award for Heritage Education. The judge commented,

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

The award was presented at an event at the Fashion Museum in Bath on Tuesday 21 November. The Norwich Castle award was accepted by Councillor John Ward in his capacity as Chairman of the Norfolk Joint Museums Committee and Colly Mudie, Learning Manager for Norwich Museums.



### 6.2 ST\*ART Junior Masterclass: Drawing on the Lines of Rembrandt

These masterclasses have been designed to provide progression opportunities to the ST\*ART club 'graduates' and also to be accessible to any other children aged 7-12 to develop their artistic, creative and technical skills, providing much needed provision as art in the national curriculum declines. Working with artist and Arts Educator Karl Foster, this one day workshop explored traditional and modern approaches to drawing inspired by the works of Rembrandt. The children worked in the 'Apprentice's Studio' section of the exhibition itself, but also in the gallery as they drew inspiration and 'gathered information' from the works themselves.. As part of our ambition and strategic planning for ST\*ART, staff have met with NUA to see if a clear pathways of opportunity and progression from ST\*ART to Higher Education can be created. The next ST\*ART Junior Masterclass is on 2 December with Ali Atkins: *The Magic of Rembrandt*.



### 6.3 Creative Writing Summer School

The first *Writing the Castle* event took place in August with Amanda Addison, local author and creative writing tutor working with Patricia Day in the learning team. The two day summer school for adults was well attended by aspiring writers both from Norfolk and further afield. The course began by looking at portraits in the Colman Gallery, comparing and contrasting the different sitters, which were then developed into cameo pieces to explore characterisation. Participants then did a close read of Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* to see what is possible in prose fiction when working from a portrait. The students also explored the exterior of the castle, focusing on the entrance and then compared it to the interior of the keep. On the second day they looked at memoir writing and used the objects in the design gallery as writing prompts. The course was fully subscribed. Amanda has also been leading a new monthly writers group *Castle Writers* which has been set up this autumn, which has been very well attended and received.

### 6.4 Architecture Day at Norwich Castle (21 October)

As part of the 2017 Festival of Architecture in Norwich and Norfolk (FANN17) and The Big Draw Festival 2017, NMS teamed up with Derek Jackson Graphics and Visualisation Manager from LSI Architects and students at Norwich University of the Arts. Derek and his team designed and built a suspended exhibition in the Castle Keep and invited visitors to sketch a slice of the 360 degree view from the top of Castle Mound to create a collated sketch of the Norwich skyline. Ana Rute Costa, Lecturer in Architecture at Norwich University of the Arts, and her students supported Derek and his team of volunteers on the city skyline project. Feilden and Mawson, the Keep project architects gave a talk in the afternoon. The event was very popular and we plan to make Architecture Day an annual feature in our visitor programme. Ana and her team of Architecture students also developed a novel activity to celebrate FANN 17, Hat-itecture which they ran through October half term. Children were invited to create a tall hat that explored the notion of structure, using corrugated paper, which they customised to look like buildings and other structures. Finished hats included skyscrapers and also



rockets and giraffes. Children loved the activity and took great pride in wearing their hats around the museum. This was a very successful partnership project that resulted in new exciting activities, a chance to refresh and extend our practice, and the opportunity to work with professionals outside the museum world.



### **6.5 HLF Kick the Dust programme**

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded Norfolk Museums Service a Round 1 pass for a grant of £776,500 for the project Norfolk Journeys, under the HLF's new Kick the Dust programme. This is a consortium project delivered in partnership with YMCA Norfolk and Creative Collisions (a youth arts network based in Great Yarmouth). The project aims to engage with 11-25 year olds – including those most hard to reach - during a four year period from 2018-22. Through the project the young people will be able to participate in a range of structured heritage activities that will develop their skills, experience and confidence. Work is currently underway preparing the Round 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the key element of which is a detailed Activity Plan. The Round 2 paperwork will be submitted in February 2018. Project activity should start in early summer 2018.

A summary of what the project aims to achieve:

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

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

A project update will be given during the meeting.

## **7. Other Developments**

### **7.1 Registrars wedding offer at Norwich Castle**

The Registrars weddings at Norwich Castle continue to perform strongly with bookings up 14% to date in this financial year when compared with 2016/17. The actual number of ceremonies over the past 3 months are as follows:

August	101
September	96
October	55

### **7.2 Venue Hire – August to November**

August is generally a quiet month for venue hire as staff focus on the delivery of the busy summer holiday activity programme. One marquee event was the *Genome 10k* event hosted at the end of August. This event was very popular and well-attended with 200 guests enjoying a wide variety of what Norwich Castle has to offer, including the hugely popular *Nelson and Norfolk* exhibition.

The success of the Nelson exhibition was highlighted even further through September as the Castle hosted six evening events during the month to support the exhibition alone, a higher number than any previous exhibition. With a variety of evening events delivered at Strangers’ Hall in addition to those at Norwich Castle, September was one of our busiest months to date for out of hour’s events.

October saw the launch of the exhibition *Rembrandt: Lightening the Darkness*, a busy half-term and Museums at Night, the latter attracting some 900 museum visitors alone. November has had a run of successful breakfast events linked with the Rembrandt exhibition as well as hosting the city’s Big Boom fireworks and a popular evening lecture in collaboration with the Art Fund.

### **7.3. OWL – Opportunities in Work & Learning**

We are very pleased to report that NMS have recently joined a project being pioneered by the Adult Social Services Department at Norfolk County Council called OWL –Opportunities in Work and Learning. It aims to provide supported work experience opportunities to young people (aged 18-25) with additional needs. The placements are open to all young people and adults of 18 years and above with additional needs. The young person needs to have adult social care involvement and be in receipt of a personalised budget. The young person is supported by a job coach or support staff who accompany them to the

placement. The first NMS placement will be commencing work at Norwich Castle on 10 January 2018.

### **7.3 Catering Review**

A review of the catering operations across NMS is currently underway, focussing on the Norwich Castle Café and Mardlers Rest Café at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse. This review has 5 aims:

1. To ensure maximum revenue potential is achieved across both sites.
2. Ensure the Castle Café operation is able to meet visitor demand post Keep Project development.
3. Ensure the management and oversight structure meets the requirements of the operation.
4. To improve the procurement processes.
5. To review and improve all financial reporting and procedures, to include: Cost of Sale analysis, stock control, wastage and sales analysis.

Since March the Operations Manager, Catering Manager and Business Development Trainee have been reviewing all aspects of the catering operation. This process highlighted areas that required improvement and more importantly identified solutions. Supported by this increased focus the Café at Norwich Castle is having an excellent year with revenues up by 24% to date in the current financial year.

### **7.4 Norwich Castle critical infrastructure project**

This project is being delivered with funding from the Norfolk County Council capital funding programme. The project encompasses the replacement and refurbishment of the Castle's external lift and improvements to the environmental controls systems within the major temporary exhibition galleries. NMS secured £900,000 capital funding for this work. £150,000 is allocated to the external lift and £750,000 on the environmental systems upgrade.

The first stage of this project will be works to the external lift. This work will be commencing early in 2018, with a view to it being completed by early summer 2018. The lift works will include a new lift carriage, new electric motor operating control systems to replace the current hydraulic systems, a refurbishment of both entrances of the lift (top and bottom) and also include works to eradicate water ingress issues.

The second stage of the project will focus on the environmental controls to the temporary exhibition galleries. Staff are currently at the feasibility stage of this element of the project and physical works to the galleries will commence during autumn 2019.

## **8. Visitor Numbers**

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

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