

Report to the Norwich Area Museums Committee, 7th January 2020 (Friends of the Norwich Museums)

Since I last reported to the Norwich Area Museums Committee there have been several events that will be of interest to the Committee.

On 16th August 2019, The British Association of Friends of Museums SE (BAFM Eastern Counties) was hosted by FNM for a Regional Day, and members were welcomed by our Chairman, Chris Sanham. The topic of the day was "The Future of Friends' Groups" and the morning session in the TCA began with an address by Chris Sanham, followed by a talk by Dr. Robin Hanley, Assistant Head of Norfolk Museums Service, in which he emphasised the importance and the continued relevance of Friends' groups. He outlined the ways in which Friends' organisations can best help their Museums. Dr. Tim Pestell then spoke to the members about the Keep Project and its refurbishment, which is now underway. This was of great interest to the members.

The Staff of NMS, with their publicity officers, together with the FNM, held a publicity event in the Benefactors' Room at the Castle on the 21st November to promote the Tapestry which is being made by Fran Sales and about 100 stitchers, who have volunteered to create a Tapestry in the same design and embroidery techniques of the 12th Century, similar to the Bayeux Tapestry and charts the story of East Anglia from the Norman Conquest. The Tapestry will eventually be 18 metres in length and will be displayed in the Royal Bedchamber in the newly refurbished Keep in 2021. The first completed section was shown to the Press and there was also a film made as well as photographs of the work and interviews given by the key people involved with the Project. The Friends of the Norwich Museums are funding the Tapestry with a gift of £30,000 and have been keenly interested and involved with this very exciting project from the outset. We were all very pleased with the comprehensive coverage we received with Rowan Mantell's report in the EDP and there is also in this month's Norfolk Journal a four page report with photographs of the project.

On 11th July we held an event at the Museum of Norwich (Bridewell) entitled 'Meet the Museum' which was one of the events arranged by the FNM for its members as well as the wider public. Bethan Holdridge took the group on a guided tour around the museum which contains fascinating items from Medieval to modern day. The story of Norwich's social history including its many industries are displayed in the Museum. It is a great pleasure to see Samson in a prominent position in the museum, beautifully conserved and displayed. The FNM gave a substantial sum last year that made this possible, together with a successful crowd-funding initiative. The tour was concluded with tea served in the courtyard.

Another highlight was a Talk given by Joy Evitt and Helen Hoyte MBE 'Norwich is the City that Wool Built' on 14th November in the TCA. Joy and Helen took us on a journey from Roman, through the Medieval period and later development of the textile industry through the 18th and 19th centuries. They laid out for viewing some of the glorious Norwich Shawls, which delighted the audience.

Felicity Devonshire, (Representative, FNM)

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