

**Norwich Museums Update: February to May 2021**

**1. COVID-19 Service update**

- 1.1 All Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) museums closed to visitors on 19 March 2020 as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. The majority of NMS non frontline staff have been working remotely from home since this time. Following a phased COVID-secure reopening of four NMS museum sites including Norwich Castle during July and August, all NMS closed again from 5 November 2020 as part of the second national lockdown. Following the announcement that Norfolk would be in Tier 2, three NMS sites reopened to the public on Thursday 3 December 2020. These sites were Norwich Castle, Time & Tide Museum and Lynn Museum, with the seasonal site at Gressenhall remaining closed until the start of the 2021 season. Following the announcement that Norfolk would be in Tier 4 from Boxing Day, all NMS sites closed again with effect from 24 December 2020. Following the government announcement that indoor museums could reopen from 17 May 2021 as part of Roadmap Step 3, seven NMS sites reopened to visitors in the week beginning 17 May. These sites were Norwich Castle, the Museum of Norwich, Lynn Museum, Time & Tide Museum, the Elizabethan House Museum, Cromer Museum and Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse (outdoor areas at Gressenhall had reopened on 12 April under Step 2). For those sites that have reopened, it is anticipated that current levels of restrictions will remain in place until 21 June (proposed Step 4) at the earliest. It is considered to be likely that some level of COVID restriction will remain in place for a number of months thereafter.
- 1.2 Many museum activities and services, including general visits and school visits, have been severely impacted due to COVID-19. NMS staff have been involved in supporting key work relating to the Norfolk County Council's (NCC) COVID-19 response, including helping to coordinate volunteer activities, managing the distribution of food and medicine to residents who needed this support, and making telephone calls to identified vulnerable residents. NMS staff have also been helping with other COVID response work including supporting the work of the NHS and the NCC Trading Standards and Registrars' teams.
- 1.3 Throughout the period of the pandemic, NMS staff have developed a broad range of digital resources to support audiences, including resources for children and families. Digital engagement included a significant expansion of social media activity. Resources continue to be made available for those in digital poverty or without ready access to digital content.
- 1.4 The enormous range of NMS activity during the period of COVID-19 disruption continues to be captured in the weekly *Museums Mardle* staff e-newsletter. A reminder that members of the committee can be added to this distribution list on request.

- 1.5 The reopening of museum sites during 2020 and 2021 followed the implementation of strict COVID-19 safety procedures that were reviewed and signed-off by the NCC Health & Safety and Wellbeing team. Reopening also took place in accordance with sector-specific guidance issued by the National Museums Directors Council and in liaison with the English Civic Museums Network. All visits are pre-booked using timed tickets available from the Art Tickets website. To accommodate social distancing, site visitor capacity has been significantly reduced and one-way recommended routes have been introduced. Under current restrictions, all visitors are legally required to wear face coverings, unless they have an exemption. There is also a legal requirement for Test & Trace data to be collected from all visitors aged 16+, with separate Test & Trace data being collected for café users.
- 1.6 Staff training has taken place at all NMS sites in advance of reopening. Staff are provided with any identified PPE and protective screens have been installed at key points. Enhanced staffing levels ensure that visitors can be provided with the necessary level of support and advice. Refresher training for staff took place in advance of the reopening of museum sites.
- 1.7 Planning work is underway to safely reopen remaining NMS sites when this is permissible. It is intended that all NMS sites will reopen, either for general visitors or for pre-booked use by schools. This planning work includes the development of individual reopening plans for Strangers' Hall, the Ancient House Museum (Thetford) and the Tolhouse Museum (Yarmouth).
- 1.8 During periods of site closure, all NMS sites have been the subject of regular premises, security and collections condition checks. Statutory maintenance has continued, as have essential construction and maintenance works, with strict COVID management procedures in place.

## **2. Reopening at Norwich Museums**

### **2.1 Norwich Castle reopening arrangements**

Visitors continue to use the external entrance door E8 as the temporary COVID-19 entrance (please see the Castle plan below). Visitors requiring level access including those with wheelchairs or pushchairs can enter via door E9. The temporary visitor exit is via door E6. Visitors tour the building by following a recommended one-way route. Visitors are also able to access toilets. Visitors and staff are required to wear a face covering in areas accessible to the public and to adhere to a 2 metre safe social distance. To aid this, clear and distinctive COVID-19 signage and floor markings have been installed to guide visitors through the one-way systems, as well as to the toilets and the exit.



Samples of the COVID signage and floor markings in use at all NMS sites

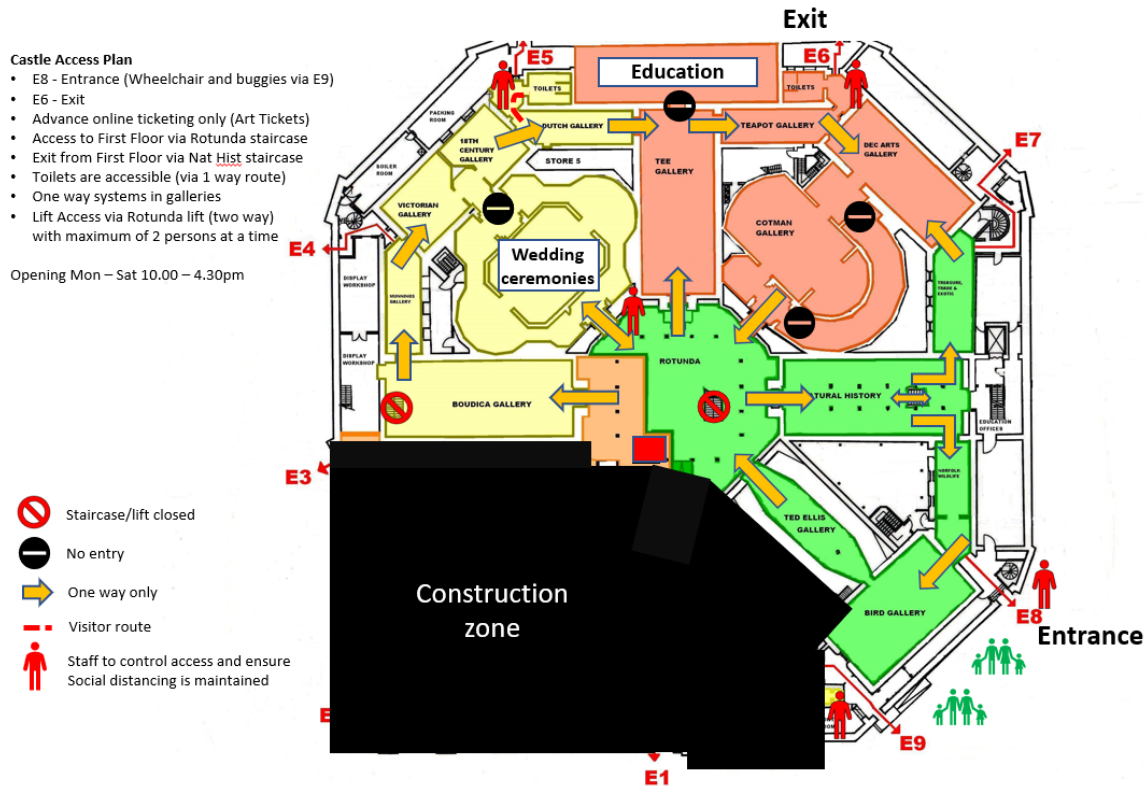
Interactives have been either covered or barriered off to reduce the possibility of cross-contamination. The numbers of tables and chairs have also been significantly reduced to further limit touch points and to help reduce the volume of cleaning required. There are also stickers placed on case fronts requesting that visitors do not touch the glass.

Hand sanitiser dispensers have been placed at strategic points throughout the museum. All visitors are requested to sanitise their hands upon entry, after visiting the toilet and prior to exiting the museum. Additional hand sanitiser units have also been installed at points in the museum where there are increased risks of visitors touching door handles or push plates. Visitor contact information is being recorded for the NHS Test & Trace scheme, including via the NHS COVID-19 app. Visitors are legally required to wear face coverings at all times whilst inside the museum, unless they are exempt.

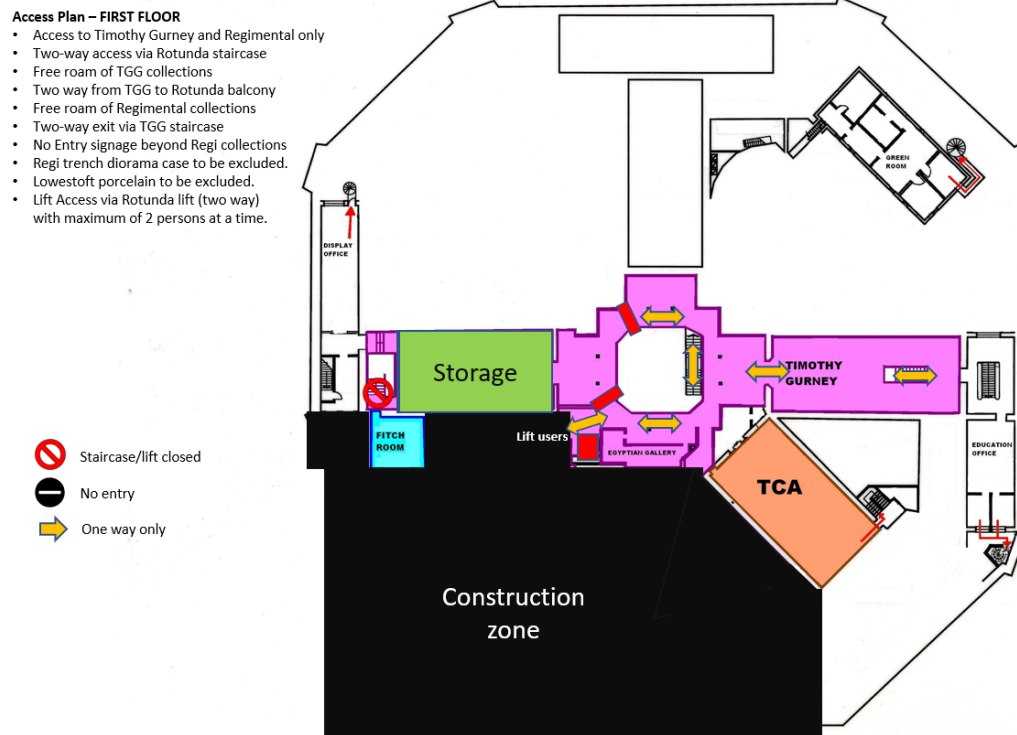
Since the 17 May, visitors now have access to the Timothy Gurney Gallery, the Rotunda balcony including the Norfolk Regimental collections and the Rotunda lift.



Norfolk Regimental collections and Open Art Show 'Somewhere Unexpected'.



Ground Floor Plan of COVID-19 visitor routes at Norwich Castle



First Floor Plan of COVID-19 visitor routes at Norwich Castle

## 2.2. Other Norwich site reopening plans

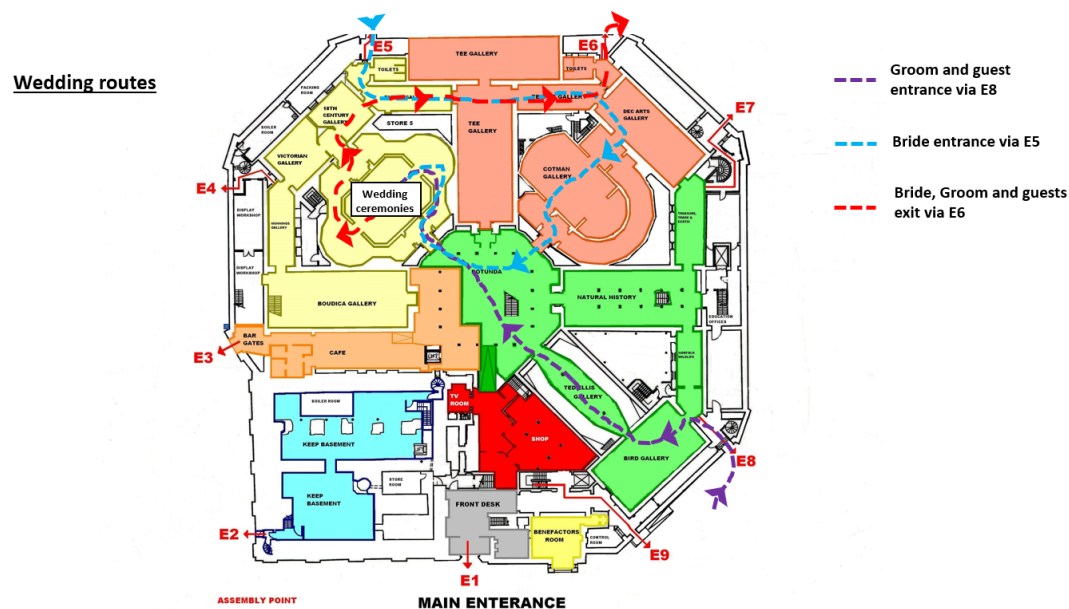
Staff have also worked on plans to reopen both of the branch museums in Norwich. The Museum of Norwich opened to the public on Saturday 22 May. As with Norwich Castle, the museum has a recommended one-way system in place, with all gallery spaces accessible.

At this stage it is intended that Strangers' Hall will reopen for school and pre-booked group bookings only. This is due to the fact that as a complicated Tudor building with many items including furniture on open display, Strangers' Hall represents a significant challenge in terms of ensuring a COVID-secure visit. The site will therefore initially reopen to schools and other groups operating in bubbles to attend scheduled learning activities. It is anticipated that school group bookings will recommence in July 2021.

## 2.3. Norwich Castle wedding ceremonies arrangements

Wedding ceremonies recommenced at Norwich Castle on 17 May 2021. There have been a strong number of bookings for ceremonies, as the Registrars' work through a considerable backlog of weddings that had to be cancelled during lockdown.

In order to ensure the safety of staff, visitors and wedding parties, the groom and wedding guests enter the Castle via external door E8 along with general visitors, where they then make their way to the Ceremony Room (Colman Gallery). The bride arrives by vehicle and enters the Castle via external door E5. The bride is then interviewed prior to being taken (via the one-way system) through the Cotman Gallery into the Rotunda and then the Ceremony Room. Once the ceremony is complete, the entire wedding party vacate the Castle via the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Gallery, Dutch Gallery and via door E6. Only one wedding party is permitted on site at any one time. This enables staff to control the numbers of visitors and wedding guests and help reduce the possibility of queueing or congestion.





### **3. Norwich Learning Team activity – highlights report**

The Norwich Museums Learning Team have been busy developing and delivering programmes for priority and target audiences, including Norfolk schools and young people, through a wide variety of engagement methods. All staff have continued to learn new digital skills techniques to ensure that NMS continues to deliver rich and rewarding learning experience for audiences, including those unable to access the museum.

To explore the programmes in more detail and get involved, please visit the *What's On* and *Learning at Home* pages of the Norwich Castle website:

<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/norwich-castle>

#### **3.1 Staff updates**

In May the Learning team welcomed Rosalind Hewett in the role of Adult Learning and Participation Officer. For a brief period several years ago Rosalind worked for NMS as a Relief Learning Assistant, but more recently has held learning and engagement positions at Tramshed and Sadlers Wells in London. Her creative arts background brings a fresh perspective to our desire to provide audiences with pleasurable and valuable experiences with our strong collections and sites at their heart. Rosalind also brings to the team great experience and skills in collaborative partnership working and has already made contact with organisations around the county to develop our work supporting older adults, those experiencing social isolation and those with dementia.

#### **3.2 On-site Schools Recovery**

Learning staff have continued to work closely with Norwich Museums Operations Manager, Stuart Garner, and NCC's Health, Safety and Wellbeing team to ensure that 'face-to-face' schools events could be adapted and made COVID-secure ready to re-start at the three Norwich Museums following the re-opening of sites in May. With restrictions in place around touch points and social distancing the Learning team have had to make many changes to the way schools events run but are confident that the revised offer will continue to deliver engaging, informative and memorable experiences for everyone involved. Costumed characters, object-focused sessions and gallery visits all still feature in the sessions and are drawn together with a narrative for the day which addresses a key question or point of debate for the children to explore and continue discussing back in the classroom.

The first on-site school visit at Norwich Museums since March 2020 takes place on Tuesday 8 June at Norwich Castle, and the first schools' event at Museum of Norwich on Wednesday 9 June. The Learning team are pleased to be returning to working at the museum, and particularly to be running sessions directly with children and enjoying their energy, curiosity and imagination. The Summer 2021 Schools Programme is available on the Norwich Castle website: [Learning - Norfolk Museums](#)

#### **3.3 Schools Digital and Virtual programmes**

Virtual outreach, resources and events delivered direct to classrooms through digital platforms, is an integral part of Norwich Museums' formal learning offer. To whet the appetite of teachers, children and parents alike, staff created a short trailer showing some highlights from the programmes: <https://youtu.be/6qa3XvXmiVY>

The Virtual programme provides the high-quality curriculum links, learning outcomes, and engagement opportunities that underpin the historic success of the Norwich Museums schools programme. Teachers are provided with pre-recorded films, an associated pack of resources and lesson plans, and the opportunity for a live-streamed *Ask an Expert* session with learning staff (or alternatively questions answered by email for schools not wishing to participate in a live-streamed event).

Between February and May 2021 the Learning team directly engaged with over 1,300 school children through the digital schools learning programme. Feedback has been extremely encouraging, demonstrating that this offer is continuing to positively contribute to children's learning. Some recent comments include:

*"Children were really knowledgeable after the two lessons with videos ready for the live event"*

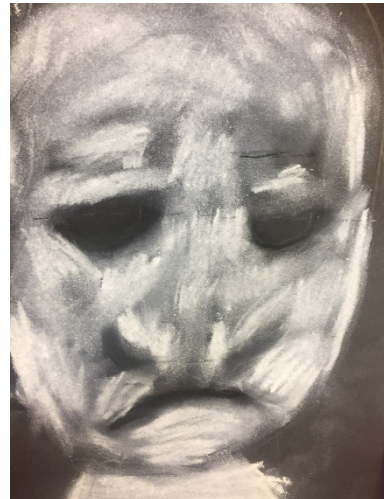
*"Everything was perfect"*

*"Thank you for the castle resources. The children have really enjoyed watching the videos and taking part in the activities. We will be having our own tournament at the end of the week."*

### **Digital Provision for Secondary Schools**

Thanks to funding through the 'Moving IT On' scheme administered through the Festival Bridge, Learning team staff are actively producing a series of secondary digital programmes in collaboration with teachers. Piloting and feedback from schools which have previously been to the museum for in-person events has been very positive and we are hugely grateful to these schools for supporting our digital development at such a busy time in the school calendar.

Sometimes our resources are used as inspiration by teachers working with year groups different from those they were designed for. For example, the KS4 *Crime and Punishment* online resources has recently been used with a year 5 class in a rich, cross-curricular way by one school. Pupils started the topic considering 'death heads' – the masks of executed people – creatively, formally and emotionally as a launch-pad for then exploring notions of Crime and Punishment past and present.



### **3.4. Visitor Programme Activities**

#### **Babies in Museums: Snaplings & Snapdragons On-line sessions**

Please see - [Snapdragons and snaplings - Norfolk Museums](#)



111 children aged under 5 years (some as young as 4 months) and their adult caregivers have participated in our online *Babies in Museums* events. Delivered as part of the Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn Activity Plan, each session is inspired by the medieval world and objects from our collections.

Feedback has been very positive, with many comments from adults for whom this was the on-line event they had participated in with their child. For example:

*"He loved the different sections, all interactive and short enough to keep him interested"*

*"Really good pace and variety of activities. Cleverly suitable for all children within the range."*

Early Years Learning Officer Emma Clarke's skills in accessible learning and sign-along delivery techniques are widening participation for audiences with additional needs. The positive impact of this is reflected in feedback comments too:

*"He was really engaged with Emma, we are currently doing a baby signing course so he loves that aspect!"*

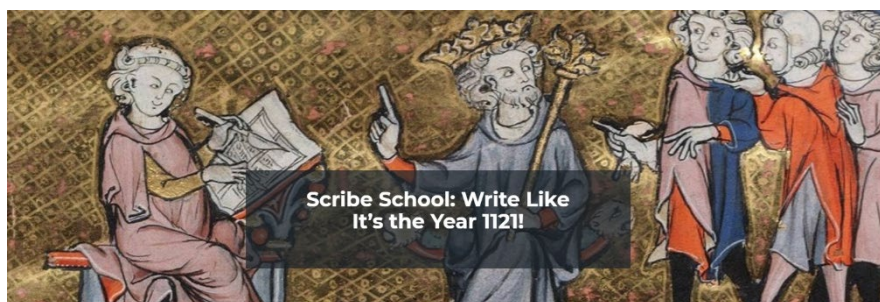
*"We were also very impressed Emma signs as she speaks, as we are learning BSL."*

*"Emma, thank you so much for today's Snaplings session. It was lots of fun and I wasn't expecting you to be signing - X's sister is profoundly deaf so I'm trying to teach her basic BSL along with words. It was so helpful for her to see you signing too! We haven't done anything like this before but she had a great time. We'll try to book on the next one too."*

## February Half Term: Scribe School

Also delivered as part of the Keep Project Activity Plan has been the digital event *Scribe School*.

It first ran in conjunction with February half term and World Book



Day, engaging 150 children and their families to tell stories and have fun with words and writing. Costumed characters and some newly created digital graphics brought a Zoom event to life. Staff were impressed by the creative – and sometime gruesome – stories that the children invented, including a tale of an exploding king. The event is being run again in May half term, focusing on manuscript production and encouraging children not just to write a story but to make their own unique 'zine – a modern-day re-working of a handwritten medieval tale.



## Women's History Month live-streamed webinar

The event *Norwich Castle in Conversation: Women Artists of the Norwich School* was held during Women's History Month in March, as a way to expand our established *Female Voices* museum tour, which due to COVID-19 and museum closure has not been delivered since March 2020. Staff wanted to make some of the tour content – and the narratives of women it contains – digitally accessible.

The event was a pre-booked free Zoom webinar featuring Laura Moseley of Common Threads Press, in discussion with staff from Norwich Castle, Dr Rosy Gray and Susie Childerhouse, with support from our Kick the Dust Project Worker Rachel Daniel. Through conversation amongst panelists, the event encouraged the audience to consider their own personal responses to questions such as, how is the work and experience of women of the Norwich School of Artists relevant to Norfolk women working in the arts today? The audience also participated in a staff-facilitated Q&A, which included pre-supplied questions from the Kick the Dust Young Curators group.

65 devices were registered for the event, with more than one person attending on many devices. Through a post-event survey we discovered that 50% of participants had not engaged with Norwich Castle previously, demonstrating the event's success in growing a new audience. 85% of survey respondents rated the event as 'very good' or 'excellent'. Comments from participants included:

*"Really enjoyed the format of this! A short introductory presentation followed by discussion. I liked the mix of panel - art historical perspective paired with a contemporary lens of zines. Please do more webinars!"*

*"Thanks for a great session. Very informative and knowledgeable presenters. A good mix of information, discussion and questions."*

*"Great to see Norwich Castle develop relevant and contemporary partnerships with makers and groups like Common Threads Press. I hope to see more events like it in future! Thanks so much."*

## Castle in the Spotlight: a masterpiece by Bellotto

From 17 May a very special painting goes on display in the Colman Project Space at



Norwich Castle. *Castle in the spotlight: a masterpiece by Bellotto from the National Gallery, London* provides visitors with a wonderful opportunity to explore one of the most original and impressive examples of 18th-century landscape painting: Bernardo Bellotto's *The Fortress of Königstein from the North*. Painted in c. 1756-8, this monumental painting (measuring over 2m in length) was saved for the nation

in 2017 with support from Art Fund and other donors. To celebrate its acquisition, the National Gallery has loaned the painting to a number of institutions, including Norwich Castle, so that audiences around the country can appreciate this important masterpiece.

In anticipation of its arrival in Norwich, and with generous support from the National Gallery's Touring Exhibitions Manager Gracie Divall, Norwich Castle's Learning team created an online programme of activities for children and families of all ages, available from Monday 29 March:

*In the Picture...Out of the House* features a fascinating community video which compares and contrasts how a variety of different people think and feel about Bellotto's painting, and the Learning team were excited to introduce for the first time both a Signalong and a non-verbal response from an artist. These sit alongside the thoughts of a three-year-old and a National Gallery Curator, amongst others, reflecting that art is for everyone. You can watch along and find the accompanying resources on the Castle webpages here: [In the Picture...Out of the House! - Norfolk Museums](#)

The accompanying activity sheet, *Castles, Bellotto and Baked Beans* investigates the painting further, exploring concepts of big and small and introducing the fascinating array of castles in our very own county of Norfolk.

Inspired by Bernardo Bellotto's *The Fortress of Königstein from the North* c. 1756-58, we've been thinking about how our point of view can make things big or small.



Why does Bellotto make things big or small?

For Early Years children and their adults, staff hosted *A Fortress for a Tortoise!* A free pre-booked online workshop for 2-4 year olds to explore the painting. The online event included a playful journey through Bernardo Bellotto's work to explore and imagine different places to be and different characters to meet. It provided a fun, relaxed drama session for little ones and their adults, and many ideas for things to make and do afterwards.

Also to support Early Years visitors when the museum reopened from 17 May, the Learning team created *Bellotto Boxes* – activities and ideas to explore in the gallery and afterwards, all contained within a cardboard box which can become a 'fortress'. 200 boxes were made and all have been given out free of charge to families visiting the museum in the first three weeks of reopening.



If you have glue or tape, you could stick decorations onto your fortress too!

Top tip: look in your recycling bin for materials!

You could also ask an adult to help you to carefully cut out a door or windows.



You could even put on a puppet show with your creation!

Adults can also explore the painting, the artistic techniques used and its historical context in more depth in *Introducing a Masterpiece by Bernardo Bellotto* a film presented by our Senior Curator, Dr Francesca Vanke, and available to watch on the Castle YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W90NSFhCkDc>

### Kick the Dust project – Norwich update

Rachel Daniel, the Norwich Kick the Dust Project Worker continues to develop and run a rich programme of activities for young people aged 11-25 as part of this 4 year NMS-

wide project funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The Norwich Kick the Dust programme is built on the interests and views of the young people Rachel engages.

*The Gaol Tales* project is a recent success, welcoming eight young people aged 11-18 to work alongside writer Daisy Henwood to be inspired about experiences and circumstances of imprisonment and containment in medieval Norwich. Daisy has supported their creative writing practice, hosting workshops to develop their skills and confidence. At the time of this report filming of the pieces the young people have created during the programme are being filmed and will be shared first with the young people, their adults and supporters and then publicly.

Supported by the Kick the Dust project's Youth Accelerator Fund programme, Rachel established a new online *Art Lab* group for young people aged approx. 12-16. Information is available here: [Saturday Art Lab - Norfolk Museums](#) The sessions run online at weekends and have been fully booked with participants for each series of sessions. The participants have completed the 'Discover' level Arts Award and are now working towards 'Explore'. *Art Lab* has successfully provided a continuation opportunity for younger children who might previously have participated in the museum's ST\*ART Club and had welcomed many young people who had not been involved with the museum before. Working digitally has removed some barriers to involvement for young people who might struggle to come to the Castle for an in-person event. As COVID-19 restrictions begin to relax, staff are aware of the need to continue a level of online provision alongside in-person activities, to ensure as many young people as possible can participate.

The *Castle Curators* group of young people is now well established, and Rachel is supported by curatorial colleagues including Andrew Ferrara, Curator on the Keep Redevelopment Project. Together the group has most recently contributed to the *Castle on Tour* 'pop-up' exhibition at St Peter Mancroft church: [Norwich Castle On Tour Exhibit | The Church of St Peter Mancroft](#) This 'real world' exhibition and related activities have provided the group with practical experience of curation and other aspects of museum work. All of the young people are keen to continue their involvement with the group and plans are developing for digital and in-person projects linked to the cultural histories of medieval Norwich.

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

The *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* project, funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and delivered in partnership with a range of organisations including YMCA Norfolk, has continued to engage with young people aged 11-25 throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period.

The project team have adapted their activities to support existing groups across Norfolk, in particular YMCA groups, using digital means.

From the start of the first national lockdown to 18 May 2021 there were a total of 3,070 interventions, involving 1,273 individual young people taking part in 1,330 hours of quality digital activity.

Total engagement numbers for the project from October 2018 to 18 May 2021 are 9,143 interventions, involving 2,988 individual young people taking part in 4,465 hours of quality activity. Of these interventions, 233 volunteering opportunities have been provided to 105 individual young people.

Of this activity 6% has been at *Pre-Player* (introductory) level specifically designed for YMCA clients; 27% has been at *Player* (initial activity) level; 43% at *Shaper* (project development & delivery) level; and 24% at *Leader* (leadership) level. Of these activities, 66% involve young people in leading and designing projects as well as acting as mentors to staff and other young people through our *Digital Buddies* and Peer Mentoring programmes.

Since October 2018, the breakdown of project activity taking place in each NMS area: 46% in the West (covering Kings Lynn, Thetford and Gressenhall), 32% in the East (covering Great Yarmouth, Cromer and Sheringham) and 22% in Norwich. Since March 2020 the breakdown changed as more activity has taken place online and additional groups have been established: West 28%; East 32% and Norwich 40%.

Throughout lockdown, project staff have continued to develop and deliver an online training offer for all staff and volunteers who support youth engagement in NMS. In total 206 staff have taken part in training since October 2018, with 112 of these opportunities having taken part during lockdown. Training allows young volunteers and staff to work together and share best practice, something that will continue post lockdown. Key areas which staff and volunteers have identified for future training have been incorporated into this years' training plan and include: May/June 'Voice of the Past: An Introduction to Oral History'; May 'Mental Health First Aid' accredited training with the YMCA; June/July 'Freelancer' training with Museums Freelance and May 'Young Peer Evaluator' training with the Audience Agency, our external project evaluators; June 'SEND' training with GEM. Planning is in place with the YMCA to develop and deliver a series of 'Interview Preparation' sessions for young people who may wish to progress onto the next cohort of the Bursary traineeship programme or into other employment.

The *Digital Buddy* programme continues to expand with 6 young people supporting 5 Norwich based curators and the Events and Visitor Programme Manager for Norwich Castle with social media.

NMS and NCC continue to work together through the 'Making Creative Futures' group; its sub-group the 'Norfolk Creative Collective' and the recently formed 'All 4 One': Adults and Creativity' group, the latter focusing on equipping parents and carers with the skills and confidence to use creativity as a way to engage with their children. Members continue to support the distribution of digital content and physical packs such as the 'Explore and Draw' pack developed by one of the Teaching Museum trainees which



went out to 1,000 young people and their families during Creativity and Wellbeing week (17-23 May). The group plays a key part in the delivery of activity as part of the DfE funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) project.

Kick the Dust was set up as a three-stage journey (*Player-Shaper-Leader*), with young people developing transferable work-related skills and gaining experiences that they would struggle to find elsewhere, to support them in securing employment. Staff have seen young people move through the programme, gaining the confidence to take on volunteering roles within NMS, others securing their first job through the Government's Kick Start 6 month placement programme; three young people progressing onto the Kick the Dust Bursary traineeship programme who are set to complete their Level 3 Diploma in Cultural Heritage and two others who have taken up positions within NMS Front of House teams. Three young people currently sit on the Project Steering Group.

Take up continues to expand through the establishment of new partnerships with schools, colleges, NCC Children's Services and other cultural organisations. The launch of the new Kick the Dust web pages on the NMS site will support this growth and solidify the way NMS approaches youth engagement going forward – see:

<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/join-and-support/kick-the-dust>

#### **4.1 Breakdown of Kick the Dust project participants**

This has changed considerably since lockdown due to the high number of YMCA clients project staff have been engaging with through the enhanced digital offer.

- 7% aged 11-13 years
- 12% aged 14-16 years
- 32% aged 17-19 years
- 24% aged 20-22 years
- 25% aged 23-25 years

Data is collected around ethnicity through the Young People's Feedback form (should they choose to answer this question) and is based on the descriptions used by NLHF:

Breakdown of ethnicity:

- Asian – 2.5%
- Black- 0.4%
- Mixed ethnic – 4%
- White – 86.5%
- Unknown – 6.6%

Those identifying as having a disability which can be a barrier to engagement:

- Disabled – 17%
- Non-disabled – 19%
- Unknown – 64%

#### **4.2 Target audiences** (some young people fall into more than one category)

- YMCA clients – 36%

- Secondary schools – 28%
- FE/HE – 32%
- Young people with mental health issues – 16%
- Outside of mainstream education – 6%
- Young Offenders at those at risk of offending – 5%
- Looked after children and adopted living at home - 6%
- SEND – 10%
- NEET – 3%
- Care Leavers – 2%
- New arrivals and refugees – 1%
- Pregnant young mums and teenage parents – 1%
- Young Carers – 4%

### 4.3 Evaluation

As part of the feedback, young people are asked how aware they are of the range of job roles available within NMS and the heritage sector and how they perceived museums in terms of being spaces for young people. 82% of young people stated they had little or no knowledge of job roles in NMS or the heritage sector before taking part and 86% felt that museums were a space they could use and would use in the future.

Evaluation responses from this Kick the Dust project can be compared with those from the other eleven Kick the Dust projects currently running across the UK. This programme- wide evaluation has been commissioned by the National Lottery Heritage Fund from the evaluation specialists Renaisi.

Following their engagement with the NMS Kick the Dust project:

- 92% of young people said they had learnt new and interesting things about heritage (Renaisi survey 90%);
- 91% of young people felt that heritage reflected them (Renaisi 70%)
- 92% felt heritage would engage other young people (Renaisi 89%).
- 84% of young people said they were more likely to become a volunteer as a result of their involvement in KTD and this option was the most popular with work experience for all those who took part. (Renaisi 61%)
- 100% of young people stated they felt welcomed and respected by staff and 100% felt a sense of achievement.
- 76% of young people stated they now had a better understanding of heritage having taken part in the programme with 24% stating they weren't sure and needed more engagement. (Renaisi 78%)
- 90% of young people felt they had the opportunity to influence decisions. (Renaisi 66%)
- 84% of young people felt that there were jobs for young people like themselves to work in heritage. (Renaisi 72%).
- 57% of young people felt that heritage had helped them understand more about their own lives – it had given them context
- 79% said they had found heritage more relevant than they had before embarking on their Kick the Dust journey (Renaisi 77%).

- 95% of young people felt that the programme was easy and affordable to get involved in but had concerns that they may not be able to do this in the future if there was a significant cost to them. (Renaissi 92%).

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

### **5.1 Impact of COVID-19**

Whilst the award of the main construction contract was delayed due to COVID-19, project progress was maintained during lockdown, with both the internal and external project teams working remotely. The principal contractor has robust COVID-secure health & safety procedures in place for all staff and sub-contractors.

### **5.2 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 will remain open to visitors throughout the project.



The tower crane and entrance hoardings

Recent construction works have included the completion of major new drainage connections in the Rotunda area and the reinstatement of the wooden floor. Main groundworks including drainage and piling works have taken place in the Keep, Percival building and former shop and café areas. Additional specialist survey and investigative work has been undertaken, alongside archaeological excavations and watching briefs. Construction works are scheduled to be completed in late 2022.



Rotunda area showing main drainage connection works during construction and post completion

## 6. Other activity

### 6.1 Museum of Norwich: Preparing to reopen

The museum opened its doors to the public once again on Saturday 22 May, with the museum currently open to visitors on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. This allows Wednesdays to be used as a 'school visit day', whereby school children can visit the museum without coming into contact with general visitors.

#### ***Crome's Norwich: 1821-2021 – Art exhibition***

The exhibition *Crome's Norwich: 1821-2021* takes a closer look at the artist's relationship with his native city, then and now, through the lens of contemporary photographer, Nick Stone, who has walked in the footsteps of John Crome, along riverbanks and city paths to revisit the locations which inspired him. The result is a collection of images, which blend Crome's works with contemporary photography, bringing the story of Crome's Norwich up to date.

To accompany the exhibition, photographer Nick Stone has created a self-guided walking tour which takes in some of the locations featured in his work. Users follow in both Crome's and Nick Stone's footsteps to see the places which inspired them both.





New Mills – Nick Stone © 2020 (After Crome - Back of New Mills) - Credit: Nick Stone/John Crome

## 6.2 Strangers' Hall

### Preparations for Reopening

The COVID-secure re-opening of Strangers' Hall to general visitors is complicated, with the majority of display rooms being too small for effective social distancing and challenges around effective one-way routing. Additional requirements around maximising ventilation pose additional challenges, as the museum's precious 17<sup>th</sup> century leaded glass windows are for the most part too fragile to safely open. Staff are currently working to reopen the museum to the public when national restrictions are eased. Staff have been working with the NMS Learning team to devise COVID-secure routes around the building in preparations for reopening initially to schools, with the first school visits provisionally booked for late June.

### Housekeeping and Maintenance

The annual Strangers' Hall deep clean took place over several weeks in February and March. Without the usual complement of volunteers due to COVID-19 restrictions, the clean was smaller in scale and took longer than in previous years. An outbreak of carpet beetle in the Little Bedchamber was identified and dealt with by freezing and cleaning. Additionally, all textiles were frozen and cleaned, and furniture exhibiting signs of wood-boring beetle sent to be frozen at Gressenhall. Maintenance work on guttering, hoppers and downpipes to address some damp issues is ongoing. The garden has benefitted from grass cutting and shrub border maintenance by the Norse team and training is currently taking place to permit the Strangers' Hall garden team volunteers to safely return in order to carry out much-needed weeding, courtyard maintenance and summer planting. They will work in discreet pairs and follow agreed Safe Systems of Work to ensure COVID-19 safety.

### Curatorial and public profile

Curator Cathy Terry has been interviewed on the Radio Norfolk's *History at Home* series, talking about the Norfolk Turkey work Cushions at Strangers' Hall. Her article on Norwich in John Crome's era has been recently been published in Dr Giorgia Bottinelli's *A Passion for Landscape* monograph. Cathy Terry and Assistant Curator Bethan Holdridge have both written blogs for the Norwich Castle WordPress blog, on Margaret Tryon and Agnes Sotherton respectively. Staff are also involved in planning event and activities with the forthcoming *Edible East* project and working with Norwich Paintout to run *Drawing Master* masterclasses to complement the Norwich Castle Crome exhibition. Strangers' Hall has been active on social media, with support from Natascha Allen-Smith, the Teaching Museum Digital Trainee. Online family programmes contributed to include *Eccentric Eggs* (Easter Holidays), *Share Your Smile* (May Half Term). Bethan Holdridge and NMS Conservator David Harvey devised and presented a special Webinar *Brush with History*, inviting people to take a look at historic methods of housekeeping and join in with questions on the care and maintenance of their own special objects. Work continues on documentation of the *Picturing the Pandemic* project and on other documentation priorities.



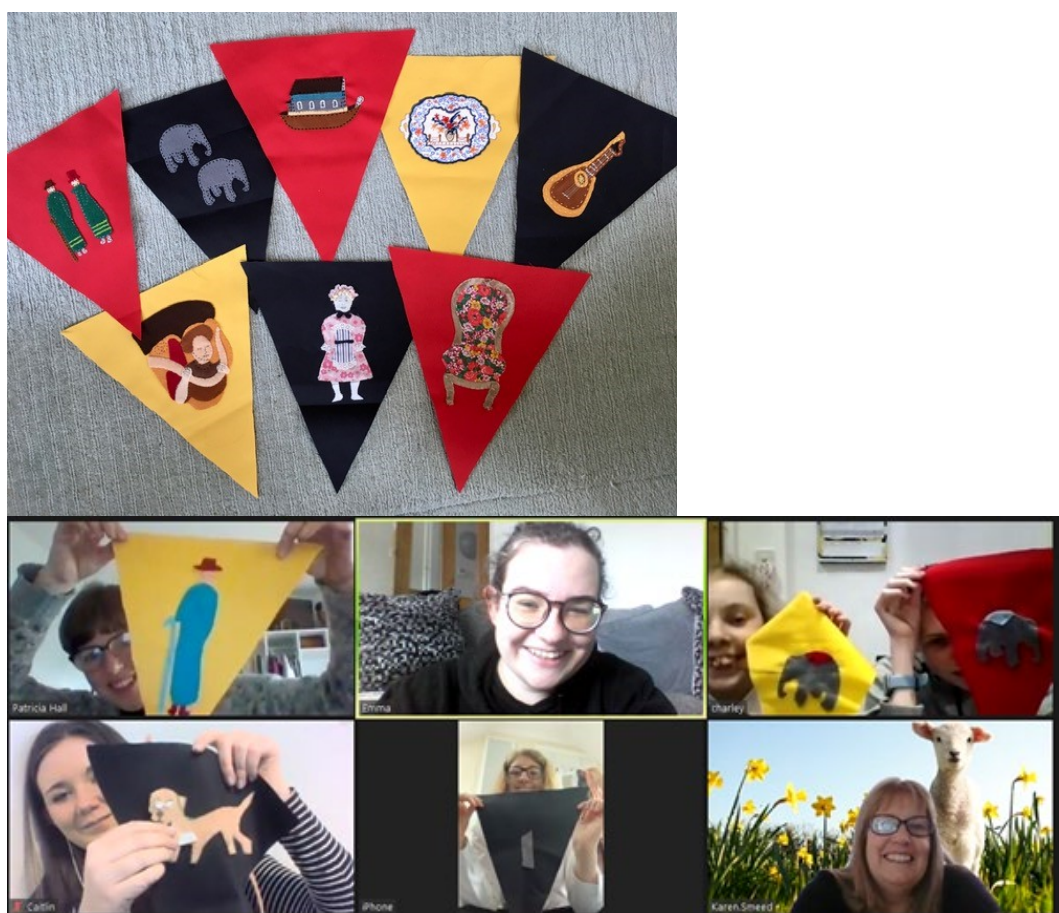
The *Share Your Smile* event

### **Flag it Up bunting project at Strangers' Hall**

Loneliness has become ever more of an issue as the pandemic has continued, impacting particularly heavily on those living alone, shielding, and on young people. The necessary restrictions on volunteering in museums have meant that the regular weekly contact with like-minded people and opportunity to get out of the house has ceased. To ring the changes from Zoom chats, quizzes and newsletters, Strangers' Hall staff have developed an initiative to involve their volunteers in an activity that they can carry out during the lockdown that will contribute something really creative and worthwhile for the museum: the stitching of themed bunting pieces based on objects or designs from the

museum. These will be stitched together at Strangers' Hall and used in the Great Hall in celebration of the museum reopening, as well as for future events.

*Kick the Dust* trainees Kelly West and Amber Doxey have worked with Strangers' Hall staff to research materials, design templates from museum objects and help produce the kits of materials that have then been sent out to volunteers from the Strangers' Hall and Natural History department teams. A week after people had received their packs, staff held the first *Stitchalong* to answer any questions, have a stitch and a chat. Volunteers have now created over 50 pennants. Meanwhile in Great Yarmouth, *Kick the Dust* groups including *Yarmouth Makes* and the YMCA have got involved and staff hope that this creative activity will lead to a group visit to the museum over the summer. The next step is to stitch the bunting together ready for reopening.



Volunteers creating bunting

The loneliness project, now named *Talking Time*, will continue, with a pilot online *Cookalong* starting in June, involving people in cooking simple recipes from the past.

## 7. Norwich Curatorial update

The Norwich specialist curators are continuing their work on exhibitions and collections whilst facing the challenges of working remotely.



Dr Tim Pestell, Senior Curator of Archaeology, is primarily focusing on the Keep redevelopment project. He is spending most of his time on practical aspects of the project at present but, along with other members of the curatorial team, has also been making regular videos for the NMS Youtube channel which offer viewers close-ups of some of the choice medieval objects planned for the new displays. Creating videos of this kind has of course been an important new development, for many different purposes, during the pandemic for several members of the curatorial team.

Links to two of the most recent *Talking Objects* videos presented by Dr Pestell:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oULIho29IVI>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKrHpPd\\_aH4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKrHpPd_aH4)

Dr Giorgia Bottinelli, Curator of Historic Art, opened the exhibition *A Passion for Landscape: Reimagining John Crome* to coincide with the re-opening of Norwich Castle Museum on 17 May. The exhibition is an important landmark: a bicentenary celebration and a reassessment of one of Norwich's most lastingly significant artists, but also the first exhibition based entirely around his work in more than fifty years.

To demonstrate the centrality of John Crome to Norwich's history, and its museum collections, this exhibition is generously being supported by the Friends of Norwich Museums, as part of their 2021 centenary celebrations.



John Crome *The Yare at Thorpe, Norwich*, 1806, NMS

To accompany the exhibition Dr Bottinelli has also produced a publication including much new research about this most enigmatic of artists. This publication, for which she won Paul Mellon funding, is a lasting legacy of the exhibition, and will, unusually, include extensive conservation studies undertaken in collaboration with Tate Britain. It is already proving popular.



To coincide with the exhibition at the Castle, to compare how Norwich looked in 1821 in Crome's time, with how it appears today, an exhibition of photographs by photographer Nick Stone, *Crome's Norwich*, has opened at the Museum of Norwich, as noted above. His work superimposes images of Norwich past and present. By juxtaposing Crome's views of Norwich with contemporary photographs he creates evocative 'ghost images' with the past and present merged as one. This show is accompanied by maps showing the many sites in Norwich where Crome painted.

Dr Rosy Gray, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, has been working on the East Anglia Art Fund's Open Art Show, *Somewhere Unexpected*, now open in the Timothy Gurney Gallery at the Castle. To complement the themes of the John Crome exhibition, the subject this year is landscape. The topical aim is also to acknowledge the significance of our immediate environments in the shifting context of a global pandemic.



Dr Gray continues her work on other exhibition projects, including *Slaves of Fashion*, an exhibition with the acclaimed contemporary artists the Singh Twins planned for autumn 2022. This will include combining works from NMS art and social history collections with the Twins' large-scale paintings, and if fundraising is successful, will also include a major commission for our permanent collection. Other projects include working on two further exhibitions for 2022. Firstly, *City*, which is based around a touring exhibition of modern and contemporary artworks from the Arts Council's collection. Dr Gray is also working with artist Yelena Popova on a new exhibition for the Timothy Gurney Gallery. This exhibition focuses on Popova's exploration of the landscape, geology and nuclear histories. Popova has visited Sizewell on the Suffolk coast, as well as other nuclear sites across the UK, gathering stones and soil samples from each locality.

Dr David Waterhouse, Senior Curator of Natural History and Geology, has been working on aspects of the Deep History Coast project, including a funding bid in partnership with the NMS Learning team based at Cromer Museum and a CPD session about the Deep History Coast via Zoom for teachers in both Cromer and Great Yarmouth.

At Norwich Castle he has started developing a new display in the British Wildlife gallery based around fossils. Dr Waterhouse has also been working with other museums around the county. He assisted with the recently *More in Commons* exhibition at Gressenhall with Curator Dr Megan Dennis. He also worked with Ancient House Museum Thetford on an event for *Citizen Science* month.

In terms of media activity, David appeared on Radio Norfolk for their *Object of the Week* spot - in which other Norwich and NMS staff have also been featured. He appeared recently on the TV programme *Escape to the Country* to discuss responsible fossil collecting on the Norfolk coast and has written and presented a Youtube video on geology and fossils for NMS Museums Pass holders. Dr Waterhouse also wrote and presented a 20 min video tour of the Natural History galleries for the recent Natural Sciences Collections Association online conference – discussing galleries during lockdown, how the natural history collections are presented at the Castle.

Dr Francesca Vanke, Senior Curator and Keeper of Fine and Decorative Art, has been working towards the loan of *The Fortress of Königstein from the North* by Bernardo Bellotto from the National Gallery, London. This painting is now installed and on display at Norwich Castle as a single spotlight loan in the Colman Project Space until 4 July 2021.



Bernardo Bellotto (1722 - 1780)  
*The Fortress of Königstein from the North*, 1756-8  
National Gallery, London

This display is accompanied by an online version of Dr Vanke's original *Castles* exhibition, which was cancelled due to COVID-19. It is available to view on Art UK here: [https://artuk.org/discover/curations/castles-in-reality-history-and-myth/search/curation\\_type:exhibition/page/1/view\\_as/grid](https://artuk.org/discover/curations/castles-in-reality-history-and-myth/search/curation_type:exhibition/page/1/view_as/grid)

To take the place of in-person exhibition talks, Dr Vanke in conjunction with Eye Film has made two short films. The first is available here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W90NSFhCkDc>

The second, longer film will shortly be published on Youtube.

JMW Turner's *Walton Bridges*, which was acquired by NMS in 2019, has recently returned from loan to Colchester Castle Museum. Dr Vanke is writing a blog post to celebrate its return and the painting will go back on display at Norwich Castle until June 2022. The painting will then be displayed at Lynn Museum from 25 June to 16 October 2022. For this show Dr Vanke is at present curating an exhibition around the theme of water, which will include other works from our collections alongside the Turner.



JMW Turner, *Walton Bridges*, 1806, NMS

Around Norwich Castle, Dr Vanke has put together a small display of decorative arts on the theme of birds for a new case in the Birds gallery. She is also at present working on adapting other aspects of the decorative arts displays. In addition, Dr Vanke has put together a mini online exhibition for the blog website to celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month in February. This can be found here –

<https://norwichcastle.wordpress.com/2021/02/09/art-identity-lgbtq/>

and has also wrote a blog post on Margaret Paston for Womens' History Month in March, which can be found here –

[Margaret Paston – Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery \(wordpress.com\)](#)

Ruth Battersby Tooke, Senior Curator of Costume and Textiles is reconfiguring the *Textile Treasures* exhibition which had originally been intended for display in the Norwich Union gallery at Norwich Castle. However, due to lockdown, the exhibition needed to be postponed. It will be mounted instead in the Timothy Gurney Gallery. A selection of linked events is also being devised which can be undertaken online. She is also beginning work on new research and exhibition projects, which include a large-

scale partnership project on the subject of fancy dress, which will culminate in an exhibition at Norwich Castle titled *Masquerade*, at present planned for 2024.



Silk hexagon patchwork dressing gown, c.1860, NMS

Kate Thaxton, Curator of the Regimental Collections, continues to work towards a major stores move and re-organisation. She is also still working on a complete update and overhaul of the Regimental Museum's website and responding to an increased number of enquiries. The recent digitisation of the World War One records has helped greatly with this process.

### **8. Participation numbers**

Visitor numbers for Norwich Castle from 17 – 31 May were as follows:

Visitors – 2,202

Wedding Guests – 440

Total – **2,642** (avg of 176 per day).

Visitor numbers for Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell from 22 May to 31 May were as follows:

Visitors – **120** (avg of 30 per day).

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