

The Norwich Museums Members' Briefing Paper June 2014

Year End Update 2013/14 - See Appendix 1

Visitors

22,777 people visited the Norwich Museums and Study Centre in 2013/14, 6% more than in the previous year. This was primarily due to high numbers of visitors at Norwich Castle which reached a record 193,646 compared with 182,984 in 2012/13. Strangers' Hall also performed well, attracting 11,179 visitors which was more than was projected. This was as a direct result of the additional opening hours during June to September generously supported by the Friends.

Schools

School visits to the Norwich Museums held their own in 2013/14 at 20,634 compared with 19,968 in the previous year. Strangers' Hall performed particularly well.

Visitor Numbers 2014/15 - See Appendix 2

Visits to Norwich Castle are 20% higher for April and May 2014 compared with the same period last year. This can be attributed to an excellent Easter and May half-term family events programme, the continued popularity of the Roman Empire exhibition through to the end of April when numbers were significantly boosted over the last weekend of the exhibition as a result of good press coverage. Also Museums at Night. In May there was a 3 week temporary exhibition changeover but good visitor numbers were maintained, demonstrating the continued popularity of the core Norwich Castle visitor offer of Keep, permanent displays and daily events programme.

Visitors to both Strangers' Hall and the Museum of Norwich are both over 20% lower than for the same period last year. It's possible that the visitor offer at Norwich Castle which has received so much media coverage has had an impact on the number of visits to the small Norwich Museums. We are interrogating the ticket information to identify if there have been reductions in particular ticket categories or whether this decrease is across all audiences, and reviewing marketing activities.

Efforts to improve awareness of the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell in order to build visitor numbers continue. The Museum remains Trip Advisor's second best visitor attraction in Norwich. A comment in March 2014 ... *"oh my where do i begin? its amazing its wonderful, 2 1/2 hours and 267 pictures later and i still didn't feel id seen all of it. the pharmacy room. the collections. i have fallen for this place its amazing. taking the aussie fiance here asap love it. if you dont visit this place you are a heathen"*

School Visits 2014/15 See Appendix 2

School visits for April are attached, however, as schools schedule their visits differently year to year, therefore comparing the number of school visits with previous years is not hugely informative for the first couple of months of the year, particularly as Easter falls differently each year which has an impact on the number of term time weeks.

OTHER LEARNING SERVICES NEWS

Responding to the new curriculum

The Norwich Learning Team have been working with schools to adapt the schools learning offer and develop new sessions in order to support schools to deliver the new curriculum, to include archaeology for Key Stage 1 and maths sessions for Key Stage 2.

After-school club

A Roman market was recently held by pupils at St Michael's Junior School, Bowthorpe. It was the finale of a History after-school club that 12 pupils from the school took part in every Wednesday for 5 weeks. The club was funded by a local business through the East Anglia Art Fund and was delivered by members of Norwich Castle's Learning Team. As part of the club, the pupils visited Norwich Castle's Roman Empire exhibition and the Boudica Gallery.

Norwich Castle Temporary exhibitions

LOOKING BACK

- **ROMAN EMPIRE: Power and People: A SUCCESS STORY**

A British Museum Tour 1st February to 27 April 2014.

This exhibition proved to be hugely popular with all our audiences. A sponsorship arrangement with the EDP provided a strong media profile with regular editorial and advertisements in the EDP which was then picked up by radio and television. The resulting high profile coverage created a sense that the Castle was the place to be and *Roman Empire* was an exhibition not to be missed. This translated into 65,560 visits during the period of the exhibition February to April. This compared very favourably with the same period the previous year which featured the popular family friendly exhibition *Magic Worlds* which attracted 54,212 visits.

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

- **The Wonder of Birds**

Special Exhibition Galleries - 14 September 2014

The ***Wonder of Birds*** exhibition opened on Saturday 23rd May and explores the cultural impact of birds upon mankind. Eliciting a wide range of emotions from awe to fear, from pleasure to cruelty, birds have intrigued us since the earliest of times. The Show spans the centuries and includes a wide range of exhibits from the arts, natural history, archaeology, fashion and social history, with spectacular loans from local and national collections.



A beautiful weather vane in the shape of a heron, based on a painting by acclaimed contemporary artist Maggi Hambling which features in the show — see image left has been installed outside the main entrance to the Castle. Since early April visitors to the Castle's Rotunda have also been able to enjoy a live link up to the Hawk and Owl Trust's peregrine web cam from the top of Norwich Cathedral.

We have been working with a PR company and the EDP to generate a high profile for the exhibition. It has enjoyed coverage in national broadsheets including the Guardian, Times and Daily Mail, as well as monthly magazines such as Country Life and a wide range of other local and national publications. The EDP is also supporting the exhibition through regular editorials throughout the duration of the exhibitions.

- **Inspired by Birds**

Timothy Gurney Gallery

12 July – 31 August 2014.

The *Wonder of Birds* will be supported by an Open Art Show ***Inspired by Birds*** which offers artists living in East Anglia the opportunity to show and sell recent work. Organised in association with the East Anglia Art fund, the show will be a wonderful companion to the major loan exhibition *Wonder of Birds*.

COMING SOON

- **Autumn 2014: John Wonnocott and John Lessore**

- **Spring 2015:** Exhibition developed around a loan of a **Manet** painting owned by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford

- **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**

Exhibition proposals under discussion

- Rembrandt in Autumn 2016

- A V&A Museum of Childhood exhibition focusing on Dolls Houses and the history of the home in 2017

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

Events

REPORTING BACK

Roman Empire

The Roman Empire Exhibition was supported by a fantastic and diverse events programme. An example is ***Virtually Roman***, our first virtual technology programme which involved the creation of a virtual Roman Coliseum and filming participants, using green-screen technology, who dressed and acted like Romans, with the role of Gladiator proving especially popular. The resulting films can be seen on our YouTube channel: <http://tinyurl.com/kr7tl5l> and click on the Virtually Roman files. This was a fantastic engagement tool and provided all with a link to send and share with all of their family and friends so good for museum profile-raising.



Loom Demonstrations to the Public

The Jacquard loom was restored to full working condition during the Museum of Norwich redevelopment project. Thanks to financial support from the Costume and Textile Association and the Worshipful Company of Weavers, we have been able to train freelancers and staff to use the loom, and produce cloth to an original Norwich design. So far we have run sessions for schools and booked groups, but in April, we held the first drop in session for members of the public. A further session will take place in June.

Exhibition Brings in New Audiences to the Museum of Norwich

This spring saw our first collaboration with a community group in the Museum of Norwich's temporary exhibition space. The Norwich 20 Group of artists was formed in 1944, and approached the Museum last year with a view to exhibiting at the museum as part of their 70th birthday celebrations. The modest exhibition tells the story of the Norwich 20 Group and was supported by a series of talks and has attracted visitor who had not visited the museum before.

Museums at Night

This year's theme was *Egyptians*. The evening's entertainment included two bands, DJ's, a belly dancer, costumed characters, craft activities, object handling, storytelling and fire eating. This free evening event attracted over 1600 visitors, many of whom were first time visitors or hadn't visited Norwich Castle for many years.



LOOKING FORWARD

In Norwich Castle there will be a series **talks, workshops and special events** for adults and families running throughout the summer, many of which have been inspired by the *Wonder of Birds* exhibition. These include 3 events involving partner organisations: Hawk and Owl Trust, RSPB and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Strangers' Hall and the Museum of Norwich are taking part in the Norwich Lanes' Fayre on Sunday 6th July. Strangers' Hall's garden is feature in the National Gardens Scheme Norfolk Gardens 2014 programme.

First World War Commemoration

A Heritage Lottery Fund bid has been submitted to support the delivery of the Norwich Museums commemorations for the First World War . We expect to hear back from HLF in July.

Workshops and a resource pack to support members of the public to undertake their own research has already been developed and trialled. The resource pack includes reference to material held by the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum, Libraries and the Norfolk Record Office.

We are also working closely with Norwich City Council to raise funds to restore the Roll of Honour and relocate it from the Norwich Castle Keep to the City Hall where it will be more publically accessible.

Other News

Norwich Castle has been awarded Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence for 2014.

Norwich Community History Club at the Museum of Norwich

The Norwich Community History Club, working with BBC Voices has recorded a series of short films about their favourite parts of the Museum of Norwich. These will be presented on our social media pages as a taster to entice first time visitors to give the museum a try.

New Acquisition

With generous support from the Norfolk Contemporary Arts Society, the Friends of the Norwich Museums and the V&A Purchase Fund we have been able to purchase the mobile currently hanging in the Rotunda. Our thanks go to all of the above. This art work was created specifically for the space by Dutch artist Marjolijn Dijkman as part of the ***History Rising*** project in 2013.

Commercial developments

We are in the process of applying for licenses to host wedding and civil ceremonies at Norwich Castle and Strangers' Hall.

An outdoor café seating area has been introduced on Norwich Castle Mound. Visitors will be able to experience one of the best views in the city whilst enjoying café picnic menu. This facility extends the visitor offer by providing an outdoor option on fine days. The café is in the process of being re-branded with the theme of tea. Visual improvements will include displays of teapots and new graphics. New teapots and tea ware have been commissioned for the cafe, inspired by teapots in the Lowestoft Porcelain collection. These will also be for sale in the Shop. Visitor will be able to choose from a range of specialist teas, including one blended especially for Norwich Castle.

The Rotunda space has been reconfigured. The information desk has been relocated to the side making the space much more flexible and suitable for a wide variety of uses including venue hire events.

The Norwich Castle guidebook has been revised. There are new sections on the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum and the Prison Stories displays and out of date photographs have been replaced.

Strategic developments across NMS

The Norfolk Museums Development Foundation (a complementary fundraising vehicle for the Service) now has registered company status and has applied for charitable status.

We expect to find out whether the funding bid to ACE's second round of Major Museum Partnership funding has been successful in July. This is worth c.£1.2million per year and is awarded for 2015-18.

We have held an initial meeting with Norwich City Council about the plan to redevelop the Keep. A creative session will be held for all Norwich AMC members later in the year.

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

Rachel Kirk rachel.kirk@norfolk.gov.uk

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