

Norwich Area Museums Committee 6 March 2018

Norwich Museums briefing: December 2017 to February 2018

1. Exhibitions at Norwich Castle

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



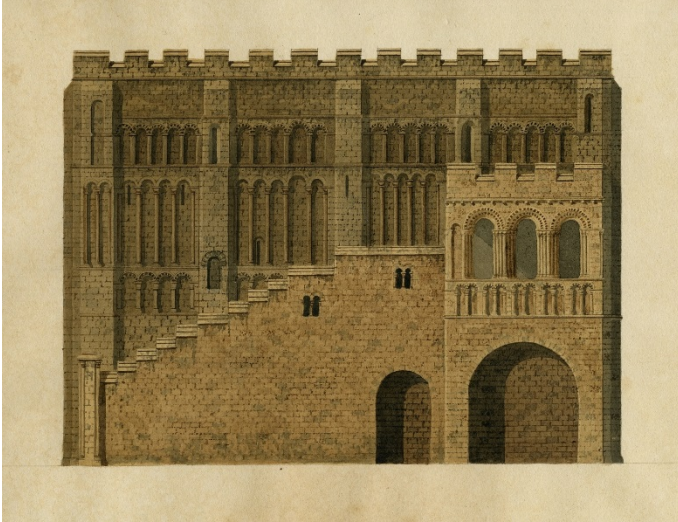
Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait* c 1634. Etching, ©Norwich Castle Museum

This major exhibition at Norwich Castle showcased 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 revealed how Rembrandt created unsurpassed effects of light and darkness. The exhibition saw strong attendances throughout its run. An illustrated catalogue was produced to accompany this important show, with good sales of some 900 copies.

1.2 The Square Box on the Hill (10 February – 3 June 2018)

Norwich Castle has dominated the City's skyline since the 12th century, but what is the story of this iconic and much-loved building? Built as a royal palace, Norwich Castle was a Norman showpiece with lavishly decorated interiors fit for a king. By the 14th century, it had become the County gaol confining Norfolk's prisoners within its walls. With the opening of the new prison at the end of the 19th century, the Castle's fate was uncertain, until its conversion into a public museum, which it remains to this day. This current exhibition explores Norwich Castle's history, illustrated through a stunning mixture of prints, photographs,

paintings, architectural plans, memorabilia and archives, many of which have never been exhibited previously. The exhibition also enables visitors to find out more about the latest plans for the HLF-supported *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England* project.



William Wilkins (attrib.) Norwich Castle 1795 ©Norfolk Museums Service

1.3 Colman Gallery temporary displays

The current extended exhibition in the Colman Project Space 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

2. Forthcoming exhibitions

2.1 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 complements the *Square Box on the Hill* exhibition in the adjacent gallery. Over 800 submissions were received for this show which will feature a captivating range of work including painting, sculpture, sound, textiles, film, printmaking and photography.

2.2. The Paston Treasure: Riches and Rarities of the Known World (23 June – 23 September 2018)

This major exhibition in collaboration with the Yale Center for British Art will gather together some of the extraordinary treasures depicted in the mysterious *Paston Treasure* painting for the first time in three centuries, featuring a number of very significant national and international loans. The first leg of this exhibition has recently opened at the Yale Center for British Art, Connecticut – for more information please see <https://britishart.yale.edu/exhibitions/paston-treasure-microcosm-known-world>



Anonymous, Dutch School, *The Paston Treasure* c.1665 ©Norfolk Museums Service

2.3. Armistice: Legacy of the Great War (20 October 2018-January 2019)

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding partners including the Town Close Estate Charity and the Norfolk Regimental Museum Trustees, this major centenary exhibition will explore the First World War in Norwich and Norfolk, showing the physical impact on the county, coastal defences and changes in agriculture and industry, alongside stories of the communities and individuals whose lives were transformed by the War.

3. Norwich Castle Events

3.1 Winter Wildlife Weekend (20-21 January 2018)

On Saturday 20 January and Sunday 21 January Norwich Castle hosted a Winter Wildlife Weekend coordinated by NMS Natural Sciences Senior Curator Dr David Waterhouse and Adult Learning Officer Patricia Day. The event gave visitors the opportunity to discover more about the wildlife in their own gardens, explore the NMS natural sciences collections and learn more about local wildlife groups and organisations. Over 3,600 visitors attended this event, one of the strongest event attendances ever recorded at the Castle. Visitor evaluation indicated that social media – especially Facebook – was the key means by which people had heard about the event.

3.2. Rembrandt events

To complement the *Rembrandt: Lightening the Darkness* exhibition a range of printmaking demonstrations and workshops were organised for adults. These included demonstrations of *Alternative Printing Techniques* with artists Adam Bridgland and Flora Parrott on 2 December and introductory workshops in *Drypoint Printing* on 9 December with artist Laura White and *Lino & Collagraph Printing* with artist Aaron Scott Griffin and NUA's Carl Rowe on 16 December.

4. Strangers' Hall

4.1 Annual Deep Clean

From Christmas until February half term Strangers' Hall was closed for its annual Deep Clean, with 21 volunteers contributing time to carry out a major conservation clean across the whole museum. This equated to 61.5 working days of five hours, or 229.5 hours in total. Out of those 21 volunteers, six were also employees of NMS, coming in on days off to help, ten already volunteer at Norwich museums, and two were Aviva workers. All textiles were frozen and vacuumed under conservators' supervision, and ceilings, walls, floors, furniture and delicate objects carefully cleaned using conservation vacuums. Store 5 was fitted with additional racking, allowing some of the fragile ornament collection to be stored more safely.



4.2 Toyroom redisplay project

Staff are continuing to work 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 were delivered at Stranger's Hall in the run up to Christmas including *After Hours Christmas Specials* on 13 and 20 December and *A Strangers' Traditional Christmas* on 16 and 20 December. Staff and volunteers transformed the museum with traditional greenery, fruit and nuts, lights and Christmas trees for the Christmas season. The museum hosted three Christmas parties, schools events, two traditional family Christmas days and two evenings of seasonally-themed tours. For the well-attended family days, Father Christmas was in residence to greet younger visitors in 'Santa's workshop' with his sleigh and presents in the Coach House. Dragon Hall Mummers and Auriga Capella choir also entertained. The annual Facebook virtual advent calendar, showcased the beauty and wide variety of the wonderful collection of scent bottles attracting a lot of interest. Feedback was extremely positive, and the evening tours were particularly well-attended.

4.4 Feast of St Valentine event

The museum reopened on 14 February with a family event celebrating 'The Feast of St Valentine'. 'Young visitors tried their hands as servants and helped 'Cook' prepare a Salgamundi dish, before they folded elaborate napkins to take home with Bethan, the Parlourmaid. Visitors also enjoyed the new 'Object of the Month' display, displaying some of the perfume bottle collection that they may have read about in the Advent Calendar.



5. Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell

5.1 Samson fundraising campaign

In February staff at the Museum of Norwich launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds towards the creation of a new display for the recently renovated figure of Samson. The Friends of Norwich Museums have already generously agreed to support this campaign with a grant of £2,500.



Samson and Hercules were removed from their home in Tombland in 1993 and taken into the care of NMS, as there was growing concern for their safety. It was discovered that the Samson figure dated from the 17th Century, whilst his partner Hercules was a much later copy, having been replicated in the 1890's by George Cubbitt, an antiques dealer who owned the property at the time.

The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund supported Shine a Light project included the conservation of this important piece of Norwich history. In 2014, the statue was transported to the London conservation studios of Plowden and Smith. Over the last three years, Samson has emerged from behind the sixty layers of white paint which has protected him for centuries to reveal a well preserved wood carved figure. NMS conservators and curators believe Samson is a unique survivor from this period. Samson remains fragile and requires a bespoke, state of the art display case to enable his return to the Museum of Norwich.

Public fundraising towards the new display began with an Art Fund online crowd funding campaign which commenced on 13 February, with the aim of raising £15,000 in six weeks. In the first week, over £1,000 was raised thanks to over 50 generous donors. The campaign launch saw extensive media coverage including ITV Anglia, BBC Radio Norfolk and the EDP. The BBC will shortly launch their 'Civilisations' series, presented by David Olusoga, Mary Beard and Simon Schama. Samson has been scanned by the BBC and will feature on an app which will accompany the series to highlight a range of significant objects in museums and galleries across the UK. BBC Look East will also feature his story.

The campaign to Save Samson was launched on Valentine's Eve. The museum captured the mood of loving and giving, and ran a successful special evening of 'Love and Chocolate' where the city's chocolate heritage, and the story of Jack Valentine were marked.



6. Learning Team activities and projects

6.1 Childminders Day at Norwich Castle

Over the past year the NMS learning team has been linking with Norfolk County Council Children's Services Early Help and Early Years teams to explore how we can work more strategically together. A key priority for Children's Services in 2017 was to support and raise the standard of childminding. *The Uniqueness of Childminding*, a small pilot event, was held in May 2017 and was well received.

Building on the lessons learned from this pilot event, a new larger-scale event for childminders and the children they care for was held at Norwich Castle on Monday 5 February. The day included singing, dancing, craft and story-telling around the theme of animals – plus time to get to know the museum. The day was promoted by Children's Services and was fully booked in 24 hours – one of the fastest-selling events ever, with 60 children and 25 childminders booked in.

Sian Welby and Jane Taylor-Currie from Children's Services supported the day, providing information for childminders and giving feedback to NMS. The day was a great success and comments included:

I liked the variety of activities and being able to pick and choose what we did

I liked being a black panther (child aged 3)

The learning team now plan to run a day for childminders on a regular basis, once a term. NMS is also working on a pilot 'Babies in Museums' event after Easter, another area identified as priority by Children's Services Community workers.

This event was coordinated by Colly Mudie, Learning Manager and Steve Arber, Learning Officer, at Norwich Castle.



6.2 Norfolk Youth Offending Team partnership

Norwich Castle has worked with young offenders and children/young people at risk of offending in partnership with Norfolk Youth Offending Team (YOT) since 2004. The annual 10-12 week programme is jointly delivered by the NMS learning team and Norfolk County Council YOT team. This unique programme helps the young people to develop team working and inter-personal skills, to participate in meaningful activities in a safe inspiring setting and to re-assess some of their behaviours. Many have low self-esteem and the programme aims to improve this.

The 2017-18 YOT project was a series of five, two-hour workshops for five cohorts of young people with the outcome of making an object out of clay inspired by the museum's collections. The YOT worker, Niccy Mills invited YOT young people with time spent on the project going towards their allocation of hours spent working with the team. Niccy focused on approaching high ability but disenfranchised young people who were negative towards education or authority. The hope was that a more positive learning experience in an unusual setting like the Castle might help to widen their view of education in general. The Castle sessions were developed and run by Susie Childerhouse from the NMS learning team at Norwich Castle and artist Rachel Daniel.

The young people worked with clay to make an object inspired by the museum collections, it was the first time most of them had worked with clay. The sessions also provided a good opportunity for the YOT workers to talk to the young people in a neutral environment.

Highlights:

- ★ Ollie waiting and watching until there was only 15 minutes left, then creating an amazing bowl inscribed with a quotation from Tupac Shakur "For every dark night there is a brighter day". He was thinking about what he could do for a long time, and only committed to creating something when he knew what he wanted to do.
- ★ Buster's beautiful mosaics that he was secretly proud of even though he denied it. He was smiling broadly as he collected his certificate from the head of YOT.
- ★ Charlotte's amazing dog figurine. As she was shaping it, she was telling us how she wouldn't be able to do it, how she was "rubbish at art", how it was "no good", despite her hands shaping and moulding the clay.



6.3 School Library Van

In 2017 NMS worked in partnership with Libraries & Information to design and decorate a mobile library van for Norwich Castle. Libraries ran a competition in November-December to name the van and chosen the winning name as *Sir Learnalot*. The library van was parked outside Norwich Castle on Thursday 21 December to award the prize-winner. There was good press coverage of the event and the chosen name has been painted on the front of the van.



6.4 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. The Round 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was submitted to the HLF in early February 2018, accompanied by a detailed Activity Plan. The HLF final decision should be known at the end of June 2018, with project activity commencing in September 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.”

7. Other Developments

7.1 Registrars wedding offer at Norwich Castle

The Registrars weddings at Norwich Castle continue to perform strongly with bookings up on the previous year. The actual number of ceremonies over the past 3 months are as follows:

December	29
January	16
February	22 (TBC)

7.2. OWL – Opportunities in Work & Learning

NMS continues to support this project in partnership with NCC Adult Social Services. OWL –Opportunities in Work and Learning aims to provide supported work experience opportunities to young people (aged 18-25) with additional needs. Placements are open to all young people and adults of 18 years and above 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 commenced work at Norwich Castle in January 2018.

7.3 Norwich Castle external lift improvements

Detailed planning is underway for the major improvement works scheduled for the Norwich Castle external lift during 2018. This project is being delivered with £150,000 funding from the Norfolk County Council capital programme. The works will commence in early summer and 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 improved signage and interpretation.

7.4 Teaching Museum Recruitment

Recruitment is currently underway for the latest cohort of Teaching Museum trainees who will take up their 12 month paid posts from April 2018. All interested candidates were invited to attend a briefing event prior to application. Shortlisted candidates were then invited to an Assessment Centre run by NMS staff across

two days in February. This programme is funded by Arts Council England as a key part of the NMS National Portfolio Organisation Business Plan 2018-22.

8. Visitor Numbers

Detailed visitor figures up to the end of February 2018 will be circulated at the meeting.

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