

Norwich Area Museums Committee 11 July 2017

Norwich Museums briefing: February to June 2017

1. Exhibitions at Norwich Castle

1.1 *Small Stories: At Home in a Doll's House* (4 Mar – 25 June 2017)

Selected as one of only two UK regional venues, Norwich Castle Museum hosted this major international touring exhibition from the V&A Museum of Childhood. Showcasing a stunning collection of twelve of their best dolls' houses spanning 300 years, the exhibition proved popular for both families and doll's house enthusiasts from across Norfolk and beyond. The main exhibition was enhanced by the *Dream House 2017*, an installation of miniature dream rooms created by Norfolk artists, architects, makers, community groups and school children.

1.2 Colman Gallery temporary displays

A display of drawings and prints by the artist Claughton Pellew (1890-1966) was on show in the Colman Project Space until 11 June. This exhibition explored the harmony of country life on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the artist's death.

The new 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. This discovery occurred whilst conservation of the painting was taking place in preparation for a recent loan to the Pompidou Centre.



La Condition Humaine by Rene Magritte

1.3 *Sixty years On – Highlights from Norwich Castle's Collection* (Timothy Gurney Gallery from 24 September 2017)

This exhibition showcases the modern and contemporary art acquired over the last 60 years with the support of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society. The show includes a range of works by artists including Prunella Clough, Graham Sutherland, Keith Vaughan and Frances Kearney.

2. Forthcoming exhibitions

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

A major exhibition drawing 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 will be the 16x8.3m Tricolour Ensign of the French warship *Le Généreux*, which will take up one half of the whole exhibition, filling the first temporary gallery space. Major loans will include 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 will be drawn from NMS's own collections, including stored collections from Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Strangers' Hall, the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Norwich Castle Museum. Curators are also working in partnership with the Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk Heritage Centre to display some fascinating documents and books including letters from Nelson and the Parish Register in which Nelson's baptism is recorded.

A complementary programme of talks and activities will run alongside this major exhibition.



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

An important new exhibition featuring the nationally significant collection of Rembrandt etchings held by NMS, alongside selected loans from the National Gallery, the Royal Collections, the British Museum and the National Galleries of Scotland.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-portrait with Saskia*, c 1636. Etching, Norwich Castle Museum

3. Norwich Castle Events

3.1 Museums at Night, Saturday 20 May

Museums at Night at Norwich Castle explored the unusual viewpoints of Small Stories and welcomed almost 1800 visitors to view the building from a different perspective. Admission was free for this event, which ran from 5pm to 10pm.

Costumed characters and musicians presented an upside down wonderland world as a magician revealed his sleight of hand illusions while stonemasons from the Guild of St Stephen and St George revealed tricks of the eye as they played with the architectural perspective of the Keep. The central rotunda transformed into an intriguing space as visitors were able to manipulate a soundscape according to where they placed themselves on the video screen; thankfully their specially concocted 'drink me –shrink me' potions didn't affect their positioning! The teapot collection was brought into focus as visitors searched for the biggest teapot, which in turn inspired the creation of the smallest teapot ever!

The evening concluded with a dramatic fire breathing finale.



One of the smallest teapots created at M@N

3.2 February half term events - Rowdy Romans (11–18 February)

This year's half term theme was Rowdy Romans, taking a light hearted look at life in Roman times linked to our Boudicca Gallery. Actor Neil Paris performed *A History of the Roman Empire* in 20 minutes which was specially written for us and included lots of interactivity. Brutus the Roman soldier took visitor through weapons and tactics that were used in the Roman army and Belona's Battlestar Training Academy showed how the Romans kept fit. Visitor learned about how gladiators fought with fight expert Keith Wallis and how to make themselves beautiful the Roman way. Visitor feedback was excellent, many saying that it was our best programme yet. There were lots of activities and something for everyone. Visitor comments included: *Fantastic, the children loved it!; Really enjoyed the talk (Recline with Me about Roman manners) and I've expanded my knowledge of the Romans.*



3.3 May Half Term events – Homes within Houses (29 May – 3 June)

The May half term programme focussed not on houses for dolls, but on wildlife habitats made in and around human homes. The RSPB brought examples of bird nests and, along with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, demonstrated how we could all make small adaptations to our homes and outbuildings to support local flora and fauna. However, Sarah Norcross-Robinson and David Harvey, from the NMS Conservation Team, revealed just how much damage could be wrought if creatures chose to take up residence inappropriately; the post on Facebook generated much interest. Natural History Curator Dr David Waterhouse brought out some of the more unusual habitat specimens from the Natural History Collection including a great favourite, a duck's nest - built in a tree.

The Norfolk Bee Keeping Association displayed an observation hive, buzzing with honey bees. Young visitors enjoyed spotting the Queen and were fascinated by the honeycomb structure of the colony. The Hawk and Owl Trust were on hand to share information relating to the Castle's live link up with the Norwich Cathedral and fortunately did not encroach too much on the territory of the Norwich Bat Group who had the challenging aim of trying to raise the positive profile of resident bat communities.

3.4 Architecture Weekend

A celebration of architecture took place over Spring Bank Holiday at Norwich Castle as the historic keep was filled with modern building designs created by students from Norwich University of the Arts. There was some striking creations and innovative solutions to the project brief of 'Outside In'. In contrast, the Guild of St Stephen and St George shared their knowledge of more traditional building techniques and gave a great insight into the castle's medieval craftsman. Visitors were invited to contribute to the theme by making a castle conurbation of their own; the inclusion of a fast food outlet was one of the less subtle additions.



3.5 Small Stories Writing Workshops

Visitors were given the choice to participate in two completely different creative writing workshops to complement the *Small Stories* exhibition. Both were led by published authors currently teaching at the UEA, but each focussed on different aspects. 'Dreamstorming in Kaleidoscope House' looked at how to use the voice in prose writing, while 'In the Parlour with the Candlestick' explored character development and scene setting in fiction. Feedback from both of the workshops was very positive and has encouraged the learning team to introduce a monthly Castle Writers group to begin in the autumn.

4. Curatorial work

4.1 Nelson exhibition conservation work

Work for the forthcoming *Nelson & Norfolk* exhibition is currently a key focus for the NMS Conservation Department. In particular, the Ensign of the French ship *Le Généreux* captured in 1800 by Captain Berry, Nelson's flag captain— is the subject of hundreds of hours of dedicated work. Evidence suggests that it is, quite possibly, one of the earliest, if not the earliest, Tricolour in existence. It will go on display in the summer for the first time in over 100 years. The logistics of conserving this enormous textile, which is 16 metres by 8.3 metres, has been a major challenge, but the team had access to a large, temporary space where they were able to lay out and work on the flag partially rolled. Phase one of this complex conservation project saw the assessment, investigation, and initial cleaning of the Tricolour, and also the removal of a much deteriorated section of previous lining which was detrimental to the long-term preservation of the flag itself. Phase two involved the re-lining and repair of the blue section of the flag. There were numerous holes and weak areas, broken seams and all the problems associated with a textile that is over 200 years old.



A small team of volunteers from the Costume and Textile department, led by Ken Smith, have completed work on a replica of the Ensign of Le *Généreux*.

The Costume and Textile Association is provided a grant of £5,000 towards this conservation work and hosting a Just Giving campaign to enable people to donate and match the C&TA grant. The Nelson Society have also given a grant of £1,500 which has paid for the new lining fabric so that the Nelson Society will always be closely woven into the life story of this object.

5. Stranger's Hall

5.1 Exhibition developments

Strangers' Hall Curator Cathy Terry provided the curatorial lead role for the V&A touring exhibition *Small Stories: at Home in a Dolls' House*. Staff at Strangers' Hall also worked with the NMS display and conservation teams to create new displays at Strangers' to complement the main exhibition on show at Norwich Castle Museum.

Small Stories at Strangers has provided an opportunity to refresh the toy collections on show and augment the existing room displays with installations from Strangers' own collections. In the Toy Room, a modest improvement to case lights and installation of new graphics have allowed the newly conserved Norwich Baby House to take pride of place complete with AV interpretation to illuminate the house, and tell the stories of the dolls that now reside within it. Adjacent cases feature new selections of children's games, models including pedlar dolls and toy shops and the wonderful fortress and farm set from the Todhunter collection. During the months ahead, staff will be carrying out consultation to establish public reaction to the Toy Room with the aim of applying for funding to support the replacement of the outdated cases and lighting and for the display of a wider selection from the very extensive reserve collections, such as children's books and dolls. The joint ticketing offer for the two *Small Stories* exhibitions, together with the new trails and dolly craft activities are helping boost visitor numbers.



5.2 Events at Stranger's Hall

A new programme of craft workshops commenced with a straw-work furniture making session based on a fabulous Victorian 'fancywork' style model parlour from the collections, and will be followed by two more— creating feather-work furniture and miniature books. Behind the scenes curator tours were also on offer. The busy months of March and April included a Paranormal night and a very successful wedding and reception. Staff have organised training for the Strangers' volunteer team and planned the delivery of a Refugee Week event. Alongside the Museum of Norwich, Strangers' Hall will be supporting the Freeman's 700 Summer activities.

6.0 Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell

6.1 Exhibitions at the Museum of Norwich

The exhibition *300 Years of Freemasonry* is on show at the museum from 9 May to 22 July. Marking the tercentenary of Freemasonry, the exhibition explores the mysteries and symbolism of Freemasonry and has been created by Norfolk Freemasons.

The next exhibition will mark the 140 years since Jarrold & Sons first published Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. The museum will be 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.



6.2 Free Days from the Freeman 25 July – 6 August

Free admission will be available at the Museum of Norwich and Strangers' Hall from 25 July to 6 August thanks to the generous support of the Norwich Freeman. 2017 marks 700 years of the Freeman of Norwich and the open days

at the Museum of Norwich and Strangers' will sit alongside a wide programme of activities throughout the city over the summer months.

Free-entry
to Strangers' Hall and
The Museum of Norwich

from Tuesday 25 July to
Sunday 6 August 2017

Strangers' Hall, Charing Cross:
open on Wednesday, Thursday and
Friday 10am to 4pm and Sunday 1pm to 4.30pm

Museum of Norwich, Bridewell Alley:
open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 4.30pm



6.3 Stores Audit Volunteer Team

The museum has welcomed a new batch of recruits to the stores audit volunteer team. The new team have received training in MODES, object handling and marking, as well as a hands-on session with conservator David Harvey. In addition, the museum has hosted a UEA MA Heritage Studies student, who is based in Norwich and at The Collections Centre at Gressenhall. This work is providing essential practical collections experience, which is an excellent counter-balance to their academic course.

7. Learning Team activities and projects

7.1 Increasing visits from secondary schools at Norwich Castle

Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery has seen an increase in Secondary school and student visitors over the past four years – bucking national trends. In 2013 NCM offered two KS4 events to support the History GCSE– Medicine Through Time and Crime and Punishment. In 2012/13, 9 secondary schools with 506 students visited the Castle. The museum also offered four KS3 events – Storming the Castle (a Maths and Medieval History event), a Norman Conquest day, a Geography event and a History of Slavery day. These events brought in a total of 15 schools and 1120 students. At that time staff found that an increasing number of secondary schools were no longer re-booking or cancelling events.

To address this decline, learning staff developed a range of events closely knitted to the national curriculum and exam board specifications, with activities that could not be delivered in the classroom and that would impact positively on

students' attainment. The KS4 programme increased to four events, two updated (Medicine and Crime and Punishment) and two new (Anglo-Saxon and Norman and Historic Environment) as well as refreshing the four KS3 events. This has led to a significant increase in the number of secondary schools and students in academic year 2016-17, with 39 Secondaries bringing 2636 students – 15 more schools and 1010 more students than in 2013. Of this total, 20 schools brought 1608 KS3 students in total – an increase of 5 schools and 488 students. For KS4 visits, NCM hosted 19 schools and 1028 GCSE students – an increase of 10 schools and 522 students.



7.2 Learning events in the Shirehall Courtroom

On Saturday 18 March Springboard East Theatre Company actors and volunteers delivered the first performances of *Victorians on Trial*. Springboard East were successful in obtaining a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to work with NMS to research the courtroom itself and notable trials that took place there in the past, and to develop both a tour and an enactment for groups and visitors.

Trials took place in the courtroom from 1822 to 1988 and there are many exciting cases from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. So far audiences have been able to relive the trial of John Stratford who was hanged for murder in 1829. The trial of the Downham Market Rioters has been prepared and will be the next enactment this summer. With a combination of character re-enactments and audience participation, the trials are explored and examined with audiences being given the opportunity to express their opinions on the defendant and the outcome.

The feedback has been extremely positive. The enactments are not simply dramatic interpretations of past trials however, but also an exploration of the history and development of the English criminal legal system. Group bookings

include A level Law students, Fakenham Society, UEA School of History as well as visitors to Norwich Castle on 18 March and 17 June.



7.3 New Anglo saxon and Normal schools event

Around 50 GCSE History students participated in the new Anglo-Saxon and Norman event at Norwich Castle on 24 April. The Year 10 students, from Attleborough Academy, met four costumed characters—two Anglo-Saxon and two Norman.

Students re-enacted the Battle of Hastings, met an Anglo-Saxon rebel, toured the Keep, explored the Anglo-Saxon and Viking Gallery and handled Anglo-Saxon objects as part of the event. The topic Anglo-Saxons and Normans was included as one of the new History GCSE topics this year.



7.4 Childminders Day

The NMS Learning team has been working with Sian Welby from the Norfolk County Council Home Learning Environment (HLE) team looking at how our two departments can work more closely together. Conversations started with a focus on Early Years provision but developed into a more strategic look at how NMS

can work with Norfolk Children's Services. Childminding is a priority in Norfolk, with more families eligible for 30 hours free childcare from September. In partnership with the HLE and Family Information Service (FIS) teams, Norwich Castle hosted a special day for childminders and the children in their charge on Monday 15 May. Children took part in a special music session and sang songs about leopards' spots and tigers' stripes; castle-themed stories involving a knight falling off his horse and made their own cardboard castle. The activities were delivered by NMS staff and supported by members of the HLE team.

Feedback was excellent— childminders valued the fact that the day was especially for them and that there were lots of opportunities for children to choose. The HLE and FIS teams have both had team meetings at the museum and were excited at the prospect of working in a new setting. This was a pilot event and it is intended to make them a regular feature of the programme at Norwich Castle. A partnership event is planned with NMS and Children's Services on 20 September to look at how the two services can work more strategically and effectively together.



8. Other Developments

8.1 *New Geographies of the East* project

Norfolk Museums Service is one of nine organisations that are part of the East Contemporary Visual Arts Network (ECVAN) that have been successful in an application to Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence strategic fund. Receiving a grant of £600,000 over three years will enable ECVAN to deliver a new project: *New Geographies of the East*. This is an ambitious programme that

will deliver 10 major site-specific visual arts commissions, developed with and for communities in the East of England and with international partners from the Netherlands. The first stage of the project is for a widespread open call to be announced inviting communities and members of the public to nominate places in East Anglia that are overlooked or undiscovered. These will then become the long list for the locations for the 10 new commissions.

8.2 NPO Funding

Norfolk Museums Service has secured major investment from Arts Council England for the next four years totalling £6,557,808 following two successful bids announced on 27 June 2017.

As one of the Arts Council's 831 National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), NMS will receive £4,812,680 for 2018-22. This will enable the Service to move forward with its ambitious plans for the transformation of Norwich Castle Keep as well as continue to enhance the programme of temporary exhibitions and permanent galleries, extend the events' programme across all museums, create opportunities for skills development, lifelong learning activities and increase its work with schools and young people.

NMS was also successful in its bid to be one of the Arts Council's Sector Support Organisations (SSOs) with a separate grant of £1,745,128 to continue the regional museum development programme SHARE Museums East that provides leadership and support for museums across the six counties that make up the East of England.

8.3 Teaching Museum programme

The new cohort of NMS trainees funded through the ACE MPM Business Plan 2015-18 started their jobs in April 2017. The recruitment process began in December 2016 with briefing sessions at Norwich Castle culminating in the recent assessment centres on 22 and 23 February carried out by a team from NMS and County Hall. Forty shortlisted candidates participated in activities and exercises which were assessed against a range of criteria. The trainees and posts for 2017 are:

Costume & Textiles: Andy Bowen

Keep Project: James Lumbard

Business Development: Nicoletta Foden-Hall

Community History (Museum of Norwich): David Holgate-Carruthers

Exhibitions & Event (Time and Tide): Alanna Baker

Learning (Time and Tide): Phoebe Wingate

Curatorial (Western area): Sam Bellotti



9. Visitor Numbers

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

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