

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes from the Meeting of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee held on Monday, 14th March, 2016 at 2.15 pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn

PRESENT:

Councillors M Chenery of Horsburgh, H Humphrey, Mrs E Nockolds, A Tyler, T Wing-Pentelow and Mrs A Wright

S Thompson, Chairman – Friends of Lynn Museum

Officers:

O Bone, P Eke, R Hanley, H Jackson, S Johns

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor J Ward, Borough Councillor T Smith, Steve Miller and Tim Humphreys.

2 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **REPORT BY THE HEAD OF OPERATIONS AND LEARNING**

The Head of Operations and Learning and Western Area Operations Manager presented the report which provided Members with information on King's Lynn Museums for the period November 2015 to February 2016 as set out below:

(i) **Temporary Exhibitions and Events at Lynn Museum**

The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum explored the life and work of Frederick Savage and was entitled *Art of the Mart: Savage's - the famous fairground makers of Lynn*. The exhibition runs until 2 July 2016 and was proving popular with

visitors. The exhibition had also been visited by many local schools.

A programme of illustrated talks continued to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics had included *Digging up a Tyrannosaurus* by Dr David Waterhouse, Curator of Natural History *Norwich Castle Keep* by Dr John Davies, Chief Curator, and the *Story of Seahenge* by Dr Robin Hanley. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks were delivered by NMS staff.

An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continued to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. 'Drop-in' format events this year had included: a popular *Pirates* event during the February Half term which received 504 visitors.

The Lynn Museum continued to host monthly *Coffee, Cake and Collections* "coffee morning" style events for adults, with each session exploring a different aspect of the collections.

The reception case at Lynn Museum was re-displayed regularly by Museum Trainee, Morgan Bell. Recent exhibits had included Egyptian pottery, and crafts made by Napoleonic Prisoners of War. A request had been made to the British Museum to display in this case two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in January and February 2017.

The Museum featured on the TV programme *Antiques Road Trip* broadcast on 1 February when presenter James Braxton spoke with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright about King's Lynn's experience of the First World War.

The Museum's Sedgeford Hoard of Iron Age gold coins once hidden in a cow bone features in a new British Museum publication, 'Hoards, Hidden History' by Eleanor Ghey.

(ii) **Other Museum Developments**

The Lynn Museum continued to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum Twitter account has 2159 tweets and 1429 followers while the Facebook account has 318 likes. A recent Valentines card from the museum collection of 1809 was tweeted and received 90 likes and 66 retweets.

A team of collections volunteers continued to meet on a weekly basis in the NMS offices at Queen Street. Volunteers have continued with a programme of work involving the scanning and cataloguing of the drawing collections by local artists Henry Baines and Walter Dexter. The team had now scanned around

2,000 items from the Museum's prints and drawings collection helping to make them much more accessible.

In addition to the scanning project, a small team of volunteers were working with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright on a weekly basis, undertaking an audit of collections at the museum stores at Aickmans Yard.

The Lynn Museum team had been working with Google on a project to photograph works of art at extremely high resolution and specialised equipment had been deployed over 7 days both at the museum and the stores. The finished images allow very close inspection of the techniques of the artists and details of the scenes depicted. This 'gigapixel' project will be available online later this year through the Google Art project a 'not-for-profit' part of the company in partnership with Norfolk Museums Service.

The Museum had been successful in obtaining grant funding of £1,160 from the Woodmansterne Conservation Awards, supporting the conservation of two newly acquired portraits in poor condition. The portraits were of John Langley and his wife Elizabeth. John Langley travelled around the world with Captain Vancouver and later in life managed a public house in King's Lynn. The Friends of Kings Lynn Museums and two private donors were also contributing to the costs. The paintings were currently being conserved by Julie Crick, Fine Art conservator. Once complete an unveiling of the finished works was planned with the museum Friends group.

The Museum's fortnightly *History of Kings Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News had generated significant interest. Recent artefacts featured included a whale skull, an eighteenth century glass, a painting by James Sillett of the Norwich Stagecoach and a child-sized Bronze Age gold ring.

(iii) Friends of King's Lynn Museums

The Friends were continuing to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends have continued to support the afternoon talks programme being offered at the Lynn Museum during 2015 and 2016.

The Friends were continuing to fund a programme of fine art conservation, most recently the cockerel drawing for the Art of the Mart exhibition and support for the conservation of the portraits of John and Elizabeth Langley.

A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme had been launched and members of the Friends Committee attended last

summer's family events to invite children and young people to join. 37 Junior Friends had joined up.

The Friends of Kings Lynn Museum hosted a regional meeting of BAFM, the British Association for Friends of Museum at Lynn Museum on the 29th February 2016. About 30 people attended from museums in the region including Norwich, Peterborough, Cromer, Thetford, Wisbech and Diss.

The Chairman of the Friends informed those present that 2017 was the 60th anniversary of the Friends of Lynn Museums and a special event would be planned to celebrate the anniversary.

(iv) Partnerships

NMS continued to support the Borough Council with the delivery of the HLF-funded *Stories of Lynn* project focussed on King's Lynn Town Hall. As well as being part of the project steering group and Project Board, NMS continued to lead on the development and delivery of the project Activity Plan and the development of exhibition designs and site interpretation.

NMS was hosting the two *Stories of Lynn* project funded posts, the Project Curator and the Learning & Engagement Officer. Both continued to work closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office, alongside the external designers responsible for developing the new exhibitions at the Town Hall. Dayna Woolbright, Assisted Curator for Lynn Museum is currently seconded to the *Stories of Lynn* project from January to March 2016 to complete the curatorial aspects of the work including installation of objects in displays, completing graphic panels and labels and arranging for the packing and safe return of collections. The new displays at the Town Hall open on 25 March.

Partnership working with the Borough Council in the summer of 2015 included the delivery of two major town events, *Magna Carta 800* and *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front*. The Museum Service was again much involved in two town-wide events in the summer of 2016, one on the 12 June 2016 with a 1920s theme to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday, and a second on the 17 July with a repeat of the *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* Second World War theme.

The Lynn Museum will be opening on Sundays from 12 until 4 for the 2016 season running from April until September. This had been made possible as the result of financial support from the Borough Council. On behalf of the NMS, the Head of Operations and Learning thanked the Borough Council for their support for the Lynn Museum to be opened on Sundays.

The Museum worked over the summer of 2015 in partnership with the Kings Lynn Festival with displays and as a venue for a violin recital. There were plans to participate once more in 2016.

(v) Learning & Outreach

During 2015 - 2016 the Lynn Museum had been hosting a 12 month Teaching Museum traineeship provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme, funded by ACE as part of the 2015-18 Major Partner Museum ACE business plan. Morgan Bell was currently working as Curatorial Trainee for King's Lynn and Thetford. Amongst a range of other activities, she helps coordinate the trails programme, supervises collections volunteers and schedules displays in the museum reception area. Morgan's traineeship ends in April when we welcome new trainee, Imogen Clarke, one of 6 hosted by the museums service as a whole.

Lynn Museum had continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. Learning programmes had been adapted following recent changes to the history National Curriculum. The Seahenge and early history displays and themes were proving popular with schools and school numbers were up on last year's total. New boxes of handling artefacts were being created for use with schools including a new Romans box and an 'Archaebin' with layers of archaeological finds for children to investigate local history and archaeology.

(vi) Visitor numbers

Visitor figures for the period were circulated.

The Head of Operations and Learning explained that the visitor figures had included the whole year to date which included the Lynn Museum. For the year to date there had been an increase in visitors to the Lynn Museum. The pirate event held during the February 2016 half term had been successful. The importance of holding family events during the school holidays was highlighted.

The Chairman, Councillor Nockolds commended the good work carried out by NMS and the partnership with the Borough Council on the Stories of Lynn. The Chairman also commented that the Lynn Museum being featured on Antiques Road Trip had provided good promotion of the museum.

Councillor Tyler congratulated NMS officers on an excellent report. He also reported that he had attending a coffee morning at the museum.

In response to questions from Councillor Tyler regarding budget cuts and the staffing levels required, the Head of Operations and Learning explained that NMS was aware of the resource implications for events, but provided assurance that there was a countywide service in place to draw upon required resource.

Following questions from Councillor Chenery on the crafts from Napoleonic prisoners of war, the Head of Operations and Learning explained that the crafts had included items made of ivory, straw and dominoes. A few of the items had been placed in a permanent display case in the Lynn Museum. The Committee was advised that the Peterborough Museum had a whole gallery devoted to the Napoleonic war stories and was well worth a visit.

Councillor Mrs Wright commented that she had attend a recent family event with her grandchildren and thanked the Museums Service for an hands on experience which was well attended.

In response to questions from Councillor Humphrey regarding engaging children in educational events and evaluation, the Head of Operations and Learning explained that evaluation played a key role in all programmes. He explained that teachers of primary schools were asked to fill out evaluation forms and there was a section for children to complete. The Learning Officer worked with teachers to develop sessions. The schools programme enabled children to explore a variety of learning styles and the programme was under constant review.

In responses to questions from Councillor Tyler on old buildings being represented what the structure would have looked like in former years, the Head of Operations and Learning gave an example of Norwich Castle being the subject of a current Heritage Lottery Fund Bid to interpret how the now grey building would have looked like in the past. An experiment with projections on the inside of the building was being trialled. The Committee was informed that the use of hand held technology was being explored at the Town Hall for visitors. An app was currently being devised for the Town Hall and Town tours.

Following questions from the Chairman regarding the work being carried out with Google, the Collections Documentation Officer explained that this was free of charge, but NMS would receive a number of high resolution images which would form part of the work to make all the collections available at the highest quality.

The Chairman, Councillor Nockolds thanked the Friends for their valuable input into the Lynn Museum. The Chairman of the Friends reported that the Friends had discussed the idea of supporting the volunteers at the museum by offering them a free Friends membership on completion of a certain number of volunteer hours. These volunteers already obtain time credits, a scheme available through the Borough Council. The Head of Operations and Learning explained that

a similar scheme was proving beneficial at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, offering the active 120 volunteers free membership to museum as members of the Friends of Gressenhall. Those present were informed that as part of the development phase of the Town Hall project, a consultant had been commissioned to review the heritage volunteers and explore opportunities for a joint recruitment, training and development programme which had been successful elsewhere in the County.

RESOLVED: The Area Museums Committee noted the report.

NMS Collections Website

The Committee received a presentation from Sam Johns, Collections Documentation Officer.

Following the presentation, the Committee was invited to ask questions/comment, a summary of which is set out below.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Nockolds regarding the images which had been scanned, the Collections Documentation Officer explained that the images had been stores in a central database and then pushed out where required, but that this was still work in progress. To date, 2000 drawings had been scanned and would therefore enhance the data stored. Officers were currently developing an enhanced search facilities.

The Collections Documentation Officer invited the Committee to look at the website

<http://norfolkmuseumscollections.org/#!/home>

The Chairman, Councillor Nockolds thanked the Collections Documentation Officer for attending and giving a presentation to the Committee.

6

REPORT OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Committee received and noted the Borough Council's report which provided an update for the Committee on tourism marketing and development activities since September 2015. The Committee's attention was drawn to the following sections of the report:

- 2016 West Norfolk Holiday guide – a total of 75,000 copies had been printed.
- 2016 Where to Go and What to Do – a total of 200,000 copies had been printed.
- Discover King's Lynn – print run had been increased from 130,000 to 150,000.

It was noted that all publications had been delivered ready for the Easter holiday.

RESOLVED: The Committee noted the report.

7 **TOURISM RESPONSIVE WEBSITE**

The Tourism Support Officer gave a presentation on the new website and explained that work on the new responsive website www.visitwestnorfolk.com which had been taking place over recent months was virtually complete. Content display was responsive to whether people were viewing it on a desktop, tablet or phone. Up to 65% of people per month accessed the website via tablet or phone.

It was highlighted that the website provided links to view or download PDF versions of West Norfolk's publications. As 2016 publications had been produced these PDF versions had been adapted to ensure users did not have to rotate or turn sections to view them.

Following a comment, from Councillor Humphrey regarding the downloading of documents, the Tourism Support Officer undertook to ensure a pdf version could be downloaded from the front page of the website, via a link to the Publications page.

Councillor Tyler commented that he had visited the new responsive website and highlighted the importance of ensuring that the information was kept simple and easy to access. The Tourism Support Officer advised that the information had been streamlined as much as possible to ensure documents were easily accessible.

The Chairman, Councillor Nockolds asked if there was a link on the Borough Council's website to the Norfolk Museums Service. The Tourism Officer advised that this link was required and *was subsequently added following the meeting*. He explained that the Lynn Museum itself was already linked to throughout the site, and also had its own entry.

In response to comments from Councillor Chenery on the Pilgrimage season and pointing out significant buildings in some villages to visit, the Chairman, Councillor Nockolds explained that there was a link in the churches section of the website.

Councillor Tyler made reference to the excellent guides now provided on display racks at the railway station and asked what arrangements were in place to replenish stocks. The Tourism Support Officer explained that boxes were delivered to the railway station and the display racks were stocked by a volunteer. Discover King's Lynn leaflets were also on display at the Dukes Head Hotel, Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn.

Councillor Chenery asked if the Borough Council made use of the railways, for example, Peterborough to display leaflets and posters. In

response, the Tourism Support Officer explained that as far as possible leaflets, etc were available at railway stations outside of the Borough. He added that promotional posts were also placed on trains themselves.

Councillor Humphrey commented that some villages in West Norfolk had their own circular trails and asked if a link could be added on the Borough Council's website. The Tourism Support Officer explained that there was an area on the website dedicated to walks and therefore appropriate links could be added.

RESOLVED: The Committee was invited to forward any additional information for inclusion on the new website to the Tourism Support Officer.

8 **INVITATION FOR THE AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE TO VISIT STORIES OF LYNN**

Members of the Area Museums Committee are invited to a preview session on Wednesday 23 March 2016 at the Town Hall from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm. Members are welcome to attend at any time during this period, and officers will be on hand to answer any queries.

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 13 June 2016 at 2.15 pm in Meeting Rooms 1, 2 and 3, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm