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**KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

September 2016 Item No.

KING'S LYNN MUSEUMS REPORT

Report by the Head of Operations and Learning

**This report provides information on King's Lynn
Museum activities in the period from June 2016 –
Aug 2016**

1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum considers aspects of the art and design of the fairground and is entitled *Art of the Mart: Savage's - the famous fairground makers of Lynn*. It tells the story of King's Lynn's iconic creator of merry-go-rounds – including a close look at the art, craft and design of the fairground. The exhibition includes a number of products from the St Nicholas Ironworks that have not been on public display before including watercolour designs, accessories from the costume collections, taxidermy, a finely carved canopy, wooden patterns and a large chalk drawing of a racing cockerel, conserved and framed with support from the Friends of King's Lynn Museums. The exhibition includes the modern 'Mart' horse, and the bell used in the Opening Ceremony in February, on loan from the Town Hall collections. A painted decorative frieze in the display was a gift from Harry Overton, local sign-writer and member of the Showmen's Guild. The popular exhibition has been extended over the summer holidays and runs until 11 September 2016.
- 1.2 The forthcoming exhibition *Little Lives, Snapshots of Childhood 1800 to the Present Day* opens on 23rd September and runs until 17 June 2017. This exhibition touches on stories of childhood over the last two centuries. Childhood objects from the museum collections together with photographs and paintings offer snapshots of the changing experience of childhood. Photographs of the Monement family of King's Lynn by pioneering Victorian photographer William Bolding will accompany the family dolls house made by William Monement. The unconventional Ruskin School at Heacham of a century ago will also feature as well as

more recent stories of childhood from the 1960s and the last two decades.

- 1.3 A programme of illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics have included a talk on the *Art of Alfred Munnings* and a *History of the Paranormal in Norfolk*. Forthcoming talks topics include *Roestraten's Still Life with King John Cup*, *Displaying Seahenge*, and the *Fantastic story of Flint*. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff.
- 1.4 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. 'Drop-in' format events this year have included: Bronze Age (45), Victorians (47), Dinosaurs (72), Fun of the Fair (38), Toys (17) and Pirates (29). During August additional afternoon storytelling events were held for children and families.
- 1.5 During the school holidays the Lynn Museum continues to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail available for each week of the school holidays. Recent trails have included Dinosaurs (82), Art of the Mart (69), Egyptians (80), Whale trail (80), Victorians (39) and Twitching (24).
- 1.6 The Lynn Museum continues to host monthly *Coffee, Cake and Collections* "coffee morning" style events for adults, with each session exploring a different aspect of the collections. Topics have included a sessions on postcards and room designs.
- 1.7 The reception case at Lynn Museum is re-displayed regularly by Museum Trainee, Imogen Clarke. Recent exhibits have included conserved Roman glass from Hockwold, a display about pilots on the river and a display linked to dancing with dance cards, dancing shoes and sheet music. A request has been made to the British Museum to display in this case two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in January and February 2017.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum Twitter account has 2573 tweets and 1691 followers while the Facebook account has 357 likes. The Museum participated in the Twitter #70things to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Arts Council and will be using #LittleLives for the new Childhood themed exhibition opening in September.

- 2.2 A team of collections volunteers continues 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. Work is underway on the drawings by Thomas Baines which illustrate his experiences in 19th century Africa. The team's work enhances and illustrates the museum catalogue available online through the museum service's collections website. .
- 2.3 In addition to the scanning project, a small team of volunteers is working with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright on a weekly basis, undertaking an audit of collections at the museum stores at Aickmans Yard. They have been joined by a local artist who has been creating drawings of different objects which are regularly shown to audiences on social media and formed a display in the reception case last winter.
- 2.4 The Museum has 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 are 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 are also contributing to the costs. Both portraits have now been conserved and are being framed in the Museums Service workshop in Norwich ready for display later in the autumn...
- 2.5 The Museum's fortnightly *History of Kings Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News has generated significant interest. Recent artefacts featured include a painting of the Ruskin School, a carved coconut and a King's Lynn postcard.
- 2.6 Recruitment of staff for the Museum's Front of House team has been completed and the new team members are settling in well.
- 2.7 The Lynn Museum is participating in a museums 'mystery shopping' exercise in which members of staff visit other museums and offer feedback on their findings in exchange for feedback on the museum in King's Lynn. The visits have been undertaken by our new team members as part of their introductory training and we have received some useful feedback from the other museums, mostly very positive.
- 2.8 Recent Acquisitions for the Museum collections have included a police special constable's badge, an example of First World trench art by a King's Lynn soldier and a watch by a Lynn maker.

3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 3.1 The Friends are continuing to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends have continued to support the exhibition programme of the Museum and are kindly paying for a protective Perspex lid to allow the display of the large dolls house in the new Little Lives exhibition.
- 3.2 The Friends are 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.
- 3.3 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme has been launched and members of the Friends Committee attended last summer's family events to invite children and young people to join.

4 Partnerships

- 4.1 The Lynn Museum free admission period runs from October to the end of March. This free admission period is provided under the terms of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Borough Council and NMS.
- 4.2 NMS continues 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, NMS continues to lead on the delivery of the project Activity Plan.
- 4.3 NMS is continuing to host the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer, who works closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office.. Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator for Lynn Museum was 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 opened on 25th March. The Assistant Curator has continued to support the Stories of Lynn project with display snagging, and the production of the town App to guide people around the history of King's Lynn, and work on the Town Hall's collections storage facility.
- 4.4 Assistant Curator, Dayna Woolbright has led on an exhibition in the Stories of Lynn changing displays area to commemorate the 100th anniversary of RAF Marham. The exhibition has run through the summer. Linked to the exhibition is a plane spotting trail for families in the Stories of Lynn exhibition area and the town's Tornado trail. A new photography exhibition by young people organised by Ruth Farnan, Stories of Lynn Activities and Engagement Officer, will open on the 13th October
- 4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council has continued with the delivery of two major town events in 2016: the *Roaring Twenties* event on

the 12th June to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday when over 400 visited Lynn Museum, and a second event on the 17th July with *1940s Lynn: Life on the Home Front* Second World War theme (647 visitors). The Lynn Museum played an active part in both events and received large numbers of visitors on these two busy days. The Heritage Open Day on the 11th September is the next large town heritage event in which the Lynn Museum will participate.

4.6 The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the 2016-17 Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council. Under an extension to this agreement, NMS continues to provide curatorial advice, support and an enquiry service for those Borough collections currently held in the Town Hall including fine art and Civic Regalia.

4.7 On behalf of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, museum staff have worked on a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for improving the interpretation and display of the town's South Gate, a grade one listed building and scheduled ancient monument. The Borough Council submitted the application to HLF in September, and a decision should be made within three months.

4.8 The Lynn Museum has opened on Sundays from 12 until 4 for the 2016 season running from April until September, made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. A Sunday joint ticket is available for visitors to Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum.

4.9 The Museum worked with the Kings Lynn Festival again in 2016 by providing the Lynn Museum as a venue. Flautist Anna Rosa Mari gave a 30 minute recital on Thursday 28 July and an event aimed at pre-school children and their families was given by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment on Saturday 16th July. The Museum plans to work with the organisers again for the Festival in 2017.

5 Learning & Outreach

5.1 During 2016 -2017, the Lynn Museum is 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. Imogen Clarke is our trainee this year, one of six hosted by the Museums Service as a whole. Amongst a range of other activities, she helps coordinate the trails programme, assists with the coffee cake and collections mornings, supervise collections volunteers, contributes to social media work and schedules displays in the museum reception area.

5.2 Lynn Museum has continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. Learning programmes have been adapted following recent changes to the history National Curriculum. The

Seahenge and early history displays and themes are proving popular with schools and school numbers are up on last year's total. New boxes of handling artefacts are being created for use with schools including a new prehistoric box used by our Learning Officer and freelance educators to help children investigate local history and archaeology.

5.3 The schools bookings for Lynn Museum show the continued popularity of toys programme and an upsurge in interest from schools in sessions on local individuals such as Captain Vancouver.

6 Visitor numbers

6.1 Visitor figures for the period will be circulated at the meeting.

7. Resource implications

(a)	<u>Finance</u>	None
(b)	<u>Property</u>	None
(c)	<u>Staff</u>	None
(d)	<u>Information Technology</u>	None

8. Recommendations:

1. That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

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