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

19 December 2016

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 September
2016 – November 2016**

1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum is Little Lives, Snapshots of Childhood 1800 to the Present Day. The Mayor Cllr David Whitby opened the Little Lives exhibition on 23rd September. The display will run 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 accompany the family dolls house made by William Monement. The unconventional Ruskin School at Heacham of a century ago also features as well as more recent stories of childhood from the 1960s, with the four Breen brothers who went to King Edward Seventh Grammar School in Kings Lynn and the last two decades. A group of students from KES visited the exhibition to gain ideas for a planned display at the school about its history.
- 1.2 The previous exhibition Art of the Mart about the art and craft of the fairground featuring the work of Frederick Savage's King's Lynn fairground manufacturers ended its run on 11th September, Heritage Open Day.
- 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 King John Cup by Ruth Farnan, Displaying Seahenge by Hannah Jackson and Fantastic Flint by Oliver Bone. 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. The 'drop-in' format event in the October Half Term was Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales on October 25th with an attendance of 95.
- 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. Over the October Half Term period a Dragons Trail was available and on the Heritage Open Day on Sept 11th an Art Sticker Trail was provided.
- 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 #MuseumMashup, Toys and Games and Christmas Hand Bells.
- 1.7 The reception case at Lynn Museum is re-displayed regularly by Museum Trainee, Imogen Clarke. Recent exhibits have included a display linked to dancing with dance cards, dancing shoes and sheet music and a display entitled 'Child's Play', featuring toys from the collections. A request has been made to the British Museum to display two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in this case during 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 2680 tweets and 1772 followers while the Facebook account has 400 likes. The Museum participated in the Twitter #70things to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Arts Council and is using #LittleLives for the new Childhood themed exhibition which opened in September. The Lynn Museum participated in the international #MuseumMashup event with interest from America in traditional British sweets such as sherbet fountains.
- 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 has now been completed on the drawings by Thomas Baines which illustrate his experiences in 19th century Africa and a start has been made on topographical prints of the King's Lynn area. 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 has been working with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright on a weekly basis,

undertaking an audit of collections at the museum stores at Aickman's 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 framed in the Museums Service workshop in Norwich. An event is planned by the Friends to mark the restoration of the paintings in March 2017.
- 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 portrait of Nelson, a 1920s dress, a Christmas card and a photograph of schoolchildren.
- 2.6 The Lynn Museum is participating in a museums 'mystery shopping' programme 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 now all been completed by our new team members as part of their introductory training and we have received some useful feedback from all the other museums, mostly very positive. One particular item of feedback which is being actioned is to improve the appearance of the signage at the museum entrance.
- 2.7 An important set of recent acquisitions for the Museum collections has been a donation of material relating to Samuel Gurney Cresswell, the Arctic explorer. The Museum has received a ceremonial sword, cabinet, scroll and epaulettes presented to Cresswell by the people of Kings Lynn in 1853. It is hoped that these items can be incorporated into the Stories of Lynn displays at the Town Hall where the Cresswell story is highlighted.

3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 3.1 The Friends continue to offer a varied programme for members including afternoon talks, newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends have continued to support the exhibition programme of the Museum and have kindly paid for a protective Perspex lid to allow the display of the large Monement family dolls house in the new Little Lives exhibition.
- 3.2 The Friends of the Museum held their annual AGM on the 10th October and received reports about the work of the Museum, the organisation's finances and activities. Officers and committee were elected.

- 3.3 Christine Hodgson gave the Friends annual fundraising lecture on the Chelsea Physic Garden at Marriott's Warehouse on the 19th October.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme continues to be offered to encourage more young people to be involved.

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 helped with the production of a photography exhibition by young people organised by Ruth Farnan, Stories of Lynn Activities and Engagement Officer. This display opened on the 13th October and took the place of a display commemorating RAF Marham's centenary.
- 4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council has continued with the delivery of two major town events in the summer of 2016: the *Roaring Twenties* event on the 12th June to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday and a second event on the 17th July with *1940s Lynn: Life on the Home Front* Second World War theme. The Heritage Open Day on the 11th September was another major large town heritage event with 465 visitors to Lynn Museum.

- 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. The HLF have agreed to support the application and preliminary work on the project has started.
- 4.8 The Lynn Museum 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 was made available for visitors to Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum. The success of these extended hours is currently being reviewed.
- 4.9 The Museum is planning to work with the organisers of the King's Lynn Festival again in 2017 to provide the Museum as a venue for pop-up recitals and educational events.

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 seven hosted by the Museums Service as a whole. Amongst a range of other activities, Imogen 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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