



If you need this report in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Robin Hanley on 01603 493663 and we will do our best to help

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

14 September 2015

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 February to
August 2015**

1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum explores the life and work of Frederick Savage and is entitled *Art of the Mart: Savage's - the famous fairground makers of Lynn*. The exhibition was opened on 25 July 2015 by the Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Cllr Colin Manning. 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 exhibition runs until 2 July 2016.
- 1.2 The previous major temporary exhibition at Lynn Museum *1914-2014: King's Lynn and the First World War* ran until 6 June 2015. Marking the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War, the exhibition explored the town's experience of the war, including damage caused by Zeppelin raids, the Home Front and the role that local businesses played in the war effort. The exhibition featured a broad range of collections including costume, ephemera and Zeppelin fragments.

- 1.3 A small travelling version of this World War One exhibition was created and has been loaned to a number of community venues including schools in Upwell and Emneth.
- 1.4 From the 12 June until 12 July 2015, the Lynn Museum showed *Trading Stories: A century of shops, crafts and trade*. This exhibition was an enhanced version of the *Shops and Shopping* travelling exhibition produced by the Fens Museums Partnership as part of the HLF-funded *Fenland Lives & Land* project. Graphic panels featuring photographs of historic Lynn shop fronts used in the display have now been passed to colleagues at the Borough Council to support the promotion of the Townscape Heritage Initiative in the town.
- 1.5 A programme of illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics have included *Hidden Histories, The First Official First World War Artist and the History of Lynn Museum*. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff.
- 1.6 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum. ‘Drop-in’ format events this year have included:
- *Carousels and Candy Floss* – 17 February (66 participants)
 - *Dinosaurs* 31 March (210 participants)
 - *Romans and Iceni* 7 April (70 participants)
 - *Waterloo* 26 May (45 participants)
 - *Seahenge* 28 July (48 participants)
 - *Egyptians* 4 August (44 participants)
 - *Treasure* 11 August (72 participants)
 - *Vikings* 18 August (108 participants)
 - *Dinosaurs* 25 August (126 participants)

An additional Fairground event for families was held on 25 July, 10am – 4pm to mark the opening of the *Art of the Mart* exhibition (50 participants).

- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 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 the *Illustrated London News* digital archive, recent acquisitions and Historic Lynn Shop-fronts.
- 1.9 The reception case at Lynn Museum has seen displays of acquisitions made with support from the Friends, two displays featuring the Kings Lynn Festival, a display of Victorian Roller skates, and a display of a

the Rudham dirk, a large ceremonial Bronze Age dagger on loan from Norwich Castle Museum..

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 NMS staff have been supporting Borough Council colleagues with recent improvements to the King's Lynn bus station, including new interpretation. New exterior signage has been installed on the front of the Lynn Museum following the completion of bus station improvements and following consultation with the Borough Council's Conservation Officer. The reception for the opening event for the Bus Station on 30 July was held at Lynn Museum, with some forty guests in attendance. The completed bus station works offer benefits to the Museum and its users, with an improved external environment including additional paved areas, seating and trees.
- 2.2 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. At the end of August 2015 there were 1228 Twitter followers (729 August 14) and 199 Facebook followers (131 August 2014).
- 2.3 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. Volunteers from the team were nominated for the SHARE Museums East Volunteer Awards in the 'going the extra mile award' and the 'behind the scenes award.' The team have now scanned around 2,000 items from the Museum's prints and drawings collection helping to make them much more accessible.
- 2.4 In addition to the scanning project, a small team of volunteers is working with Curatorial Assistant 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. These drawing have been displayed on social media and will form part of an exhibition in the reception display case scheduled for the autumn.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 Lynn Museum will feature in an edition of the TV programme *Antiques Road Trip* to be screened in the early New Year. Presenter James

Braxton was filmed with Curatorial Assistant Dayna Woolbright discussing aspects of Kings Lynn during the First World War.

- 2.7 The Museum's fortnightly *History of Kings Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News has generated significant interest. Members of the public have visited the museum with additional information for the museum records.

3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 3.1 The Friends are continuing to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends have continued to support the afternoon talks programme being offered at the Lynn Museum during 2015.
- 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 display to promote the work of the Museum Friends was exhibited in the display case in the Lynn Museum reception area. This included a number of recent acquisitions, together with fine art conserved with support from the Friends. This display - together with members of the Friends Committee - was featured in the local press.
- 3.4 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme has been launched and members of the Friends Committee have been attending the summer 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 and Project Board, NMS continues to lead on the development and delivery of the project Activity Plan and the development of exhibition designs and site interpretation.
- 4.3 NMS is hosting the two *Stories of Lynn* project funded posts, the Project Curator (12 months) and the Learning & Engagement Officer (48 months). Both continue 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.

- 4.4 Partnership working with the Borough Council this summer included the delivery of two major town events, *Magna Carta 800* which ran on the weekend of 13-14 June (810 participants at Lynn Museum) and *Lynn at War: Life on the Home Front* which took place on the 19 July (884 participants at Lynn Museum). To support the range of activities taking place across the town centre, the Museum offered costumed re-enactments and a variety of other activities including the striking of a replica King John penny, object handling, crafts and trails.
- 4.5 The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the 2015-16 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.
- 4.6 NMS continued to lead the Fens Museums Partnership including the delivery of the Heritage Lottery Fund funded partnership project *Fenland Lives and Land*. Five exhibitions were co-produced by "clusters" of museums and community groups. These toured a range of community venues across the Fens, including the Lynn Museum. The project was completed in April 2015, with the last exhibition closing in July. The final claim to HLF will be submitted shortly and homes have been found for all the displays within partnership museums. Successor programmes are currently being considered and opportunities explored.
- 4.7 The Museum has been working in partnership with the Kings Lynn Festival. Teaching Museum trainee Morgan Bell liaised with Daniel Brown, an intern from the King's Lynn Festival Office, to produce two displays for the museum reception case. The displays covered the origins of the Festival and the Festival in the 1960s and 1970s. Included were loaned items, such as a painting by local artist, Walter Dexter, and a bronze bust of Lady Ruth Fermoy, founder of the Festival. The Lynn Museum was also a venue for a solo violin recital during the Festival fortnight in July.

5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2015 the Lynn Museum has 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 appointed to this position and started in April. She is working as Curatorial Trainee for King's Lynn and Thetford. Amongst a range of other activities, she helps coordinate the summer trails programme, supervises collections volunteers and schedules displays in the museum reception area. Her Teaching Museum predecessor, Emily Shepperson, has gained employment at the British Schools Museum in Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

5.2 As part of the HLF Skills for the Future programme based at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse, King's Lynn Museums and the Fenland Partnership hosted a traineeship focussed on informal learning. Tabitha Runacres supported the delivery of activities linked to the HLF-funded *Fenland Lives & Land* project, involving work with museums across the Fens. Tabitha completed her traineeship in March and has since gained employment as a Learning Officer at Leiston Long Shop Museum, Suffolk.

5.3 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. A recent partnership with local schools saw a project to decorate small wooden horses in connection with the *Art of the Mart* exhibition at Lynn Museum. The horses have been mounted on a turntable to form a colourful merry-go-round exhibit.

5.4 Over the summer, the Museum participated in a high profile youth engagement project in partnership with the national organisation 'Kids in Museums' utilising funding derived from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Young Roots programme. This '*Teen Take*' project entailed young people from Kings Lynn Museum's Youth Forum and members of the Teenage History Club at Thetford's Ancient House Museum making a film with the support of professional film-makers. Following museum study visits in August, the young people give their considered opinions on each other's museums with the aim of encouraging greater levels of access and engagement by teenage audiences. The project was overseen by Learning Officer Melissa Hawker and Stories of Lynn Learning and Engagement Officer, Ruth Farnan. A premier of the film took place in Thetford on 2 September and the film will now be circulated to museums across the region.

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

Originator of report:

Dr Robin Hanley

Head of Operations & Learning

Norfolk Museums Service

Shirehall, Norwich

Tel: 01603 493663

e-mail: robin.hanley@norfolk.gov.uk