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**KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK  
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE  
July 24<sup>th</sup> 2017**

**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 March 2017 –  
June 2017**

**1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum**

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum is *Shoes!* exploring the changes in footwear from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The exhibition draws upon the museum's collection of historic footwear with additional items from the Norfolk Museums Service costume and textile collection. The examples on show include both everyday shoes from the past and more elaborate shoes made for special occasions. There are medieval shoes from archaeological excavations in King's Lynn, shoes discovered by builders deliberately concealed in old houses and heirloom shoes passed down through the generations. Also on show are a selection of shoes from recent decades. The Shoes exhibition was opened to the public on 23<sup>rd</sup> June by the Mayor of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, Cllr Carol Bower, with words of welcome and thanks by Chair of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee, Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds. The exhibition runs until 9<sup>th</sup> June 2018.
- 1.2 Until 11<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the Lynn Museum's major exhibition was *Little Lives, Snapshots of Childhood 1800 to the Present Day*. This exhibition touched on stories of childhood over the last two centuries. Childhood objects from the museum collections were displayed 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 accompanied a family dolls house. The unconventional Ruskin School at Heacham of a century ago also featured, 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 objects from the last two decades.

- 1.3 The next major exhibition at Lynn Museum to open next summer will be *Animal ABC* aimed at families and drawing upon collections from, or inspired by, the natural world. *Animal ABC* will be curated in partnership with Dr David Waterhouse, Curator of Natural History, Norfolk Museums Service.
- 1.4 In the summer of 2020 the Lynn Museum is planning to mark the bicentenary of Thomas Baines birth with an exhibition about the King's Lynn born artist brothers, Thomas and Henry Baines.
- 1.5 The Lynn Museum held a special exhibition of two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in the display case in the reception area of the Museum. On loan from the Trustees of the British Museum, the display was installed in January and due to its popularity, the loan was extended until 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017. These silver brooches, found by a gravedigger in Pentney churchyard, date from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century and early 9<sup>th</sup> century AD and are amongst the most significant and finest of their kind. In their first month on display about 430 people visited specifically to see them. Museum staff are now in touch with the British Museum about possible future loans to follow up this popular display.
- 1.6 The reception case at Lynn Museum will be re-displayed by Museum Trainee, Sam Bellotti who is developing an exhibition programme for this case. Currently we have a display of a recent gift to the Museum of a money box in the form of a model of a King's Lynn house.
- 1.7 A programme of monthly illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics have included a talk on finds from Sutton Hoo by Sue Brunning from the British Museum, a talk about the Monement family as photographed by William Bolding, and a history of the Kings Lynn Festival. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff.
- 1.8 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continue to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. Recent event figures are as follows: Childs play – 10 Adults, 16 Children, Easter crafts – 10 Adults, 16 Children, Sailing the high seas – 7 Adults, 11 Children. Future events will take place on Tuesdays throughout the school summer holidays as well as the town-wide events, *Forties Lynn* and *Heritage Open Day*.
- 1.9 To publicise the museum's events programme a new History in Your Hands event flier has been produced. The fliers have been taken to local schools so that they can be included in the children's bags to take home to show their families. Facebook and Twitter are also used to publicise events as well as Press Releases to local media. Over the summer a publicity campaign is planned in the town to help boost attendances.

- 1.10 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. The trails use different themes each time and children completing the trails receive a small prize.
- 1.11 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 *Shoe Conversations*, and making Brass Rubbings for a *Death Café* themed morning using experience from the *Death Café* events in Norwich.
- 1.12 The Norfolk Museums Service has appointed a new full-time Front of House Supervisor, following the departure of Carl Hutchings to pursue a career in teaching. Sophie Broomfield has just started at Lynn Museum in this role. The Museum is currently recruiting for a Museum Learning Assistant following the appointment of Lindsey Wortley to a position at Time and Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth.

## **2. Other Museum Developments**

- 2.1 The Lynn Museum, in partnership with the Google Cultural Institute, launched a ‘cultural platform’ as part of Google Arts and Culture in February. This development allows Lynn Museum to display extremely high resolution images of paintings in the collection by local artists Henry Baines, Thomas Baines, Walter Dexter and others. It also allows the museum to create online exhibitions. The first of these is ‘*Blubber, Bone and Baleen*’ exploring the history of the whaling industry using collections from Lynn Museum. Another useful feature of the cultural platform is the facility to use Google Street View to explore the galleries and displays inside the museum. This can also be accessed from Google maps and we expect this will be helpful for some visitors, including schools, planning a museum visit. Analysis of the statistics show that people from around the world have been looking at the Lynn Museum details, especially in the United States.
- 2.2 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 1973 followers while the Facebook account has 456 likes. The Museum participated in the #MuseumWeek Twitter event in June, which generated new followers and interest from around the world. As a campaign, #MuseumWeek 2017 has reported engagement from 4287 participants from 90 counties who produced over 81,000 posts. These were shared over 1.6m times, with over 43,000 comments.
- 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 by local artists. Work continues on topographical prints of the King's Lynn area. The team's work enhances and illustrates the museum catalogue available online through the Norfolk Museums Service's collections website. Another volunteer has been using information from Museum committee reports to compile a 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the museum and useful information about collections for our catalogue.

- 2.4 An event was held to mark the cleaning, conservation and reframing of two portraits of John Langley and his wife Elizabeth at the Museum on 13<sup>th</sup> March. John Langley travelled around the world with Captain Vancouver and later in life managed a public house in King's Lynn. The Friends of King's Lynn Museums and two private donors are also contributing to the costs. Both portraits have now been conserved and framed in the Norfolk Museums Service workshop in Norwich. The Museum plans to hang the paintings in the main gallery close to the Maritime history display case.
- 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 medieval cheese press, a King's Lynn spit jack, a presentation sword given to Captain Manby, a gold ring and sailmaker's leather palm.
- 2.6 With support from the Art Fund, the V and A purchase fund and the Friends of the Museum, the Museum has purchased a painting by Henry Baines of the Cemetery Chapels at the Hardwick Road cemetery. This interesting view shows the cemetery buildings which no longer exist and is a significant addition to the collection of Baines works. Museum staff are making arrangements for the painting to be brought back to King's Lynn from America.
- 2.7 A useful partnership is developing with the photography course at the College of West Anglia where the Museum is able to offer work experience to photography students and the museum benefits from new photos of collections and events. One photograph by the students of a gold serjeant's ring, inscribed, 1552 will be used in a forthcoming British Museum publication *Bejewelled: Men and Jewellery in Tudor and Jacobean England*, by Natasha Awais-Dean, due to be published in October 2017

### **3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums**

- 3.1 The Friends are continuing to offer a varied programme for members including a newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. Other Friends benefits include free admission to the Museum and to the afternoon talks programme.

- 3.2 The Friends of the Museum hold regular committee meetings at the Museum and receive reports on the museum activities, upcoming events and requests for supporting museum purchases or conservation.
- 3.3 The Friends are currently looking for some new committee members (Treasurer and Secretary) and a press release about the Friends and their support of the museum has been sent to local media.
- 3.4 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. Ruth Farnan, the current Learning and Engagement Officer is moving to a new museum post in London and recruitment to this vacancy has started.
- 4.4 Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator for Lynn Museum continues to support curatorial aspects of Stories of Lynn, such as display snagging, the production of the town App to guide people around the history of King's Lynn, assistance with exhibitions and work on the Town Hall's collections storage facility.
- 4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council continues and the Norfolk Museums Service has again been asked to organise the return of the Second World War themed event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front*. This event will take place on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Lynn Museum will also be participating in the *Heritage Open Day* in September, another opportunity to celebrate the town's heritage.
- 4.6 The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the 2017-18 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 successful 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. A project team has been established which meets monthly to plan and to review progress. A building conservation plan has been written which brings together information about the architectural, historical and archaeological significance of the site. A display brief has also been written and initial design visuals are being prepared in time for the *Heritage Open Day* in September when costumed interpreters will be on hand to engage visitors about the Siege of Lynn during the English Civil War. Lighting and display improvements are planned for the winter and spring with an activities programme to stimulate interest in the 2018 season. The scheme includes a budget for volunteer development and there are plans to support the volunteer team who open up the site and receive visitors on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays through the summer season.
- 4.8 The Lynn Museum is open once more on Sundays from 12noon until 4pm for the 2017 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 is working 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. There will be a violin and cello recital on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> July 1.30 at the Museum. The Museum will also be hosting the *Have a Go: Play our Piano!* activity. The piano will be part of the Sunday 16 July event on the Tuesday Market Place when a local artist will decorate the piano. The piano is then available for anyone to play, and will be at the Corn Exchange foyer, at Bank House Hotel and then at the Lynn Museum. Members of the public are invited to "Discover a hidden talent or impress passers-by with your virtuoso skills, and upload your video to our YouTube channel or email them to [kate@kingslynnfestival.org.uk](mailto:kate@kingslynnfestival.org.uk)"
- 4.10 Through social media the Museum team has made contact with the 'Digital Pilgrim' project, supported by the Paul Mellon Foundation and in conjunction the University of Cambridge and the British Museum. A Pilgrim Badge day is being arranged with Amy Jeffs from University of Cambridge in September for curators around the country with important collections to come to Kings Lynn, find out more and share ideas and experiences. The Museum was successful in raising a grant of £1000 from MUPI (Museums and Universities Partnership Initiative) to cover the costs. The Museum team plan to improve interpretation of the Lynn Museum's important collection of lead pilgrim badges for the public benefit and develop an informal network in this specialist area.

## 5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2017-2018, 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. Sam Bellotti is our trainee this year, one of seven hosted by the Norfolk Museums Service as a whole. Amongst a range of other activities, he 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, Melissa Hawker, and freelance educators to help children investigate local history and archaeology.
- 5.3 The schools bookings for Lynn Museum show the continued popularity of the toys programme, an upsurge in interest from schools in sessions on local individuals such as Captain Vancouver and Frederick Savage, and an interest in flooding as a topic in environmental education.
- 5.4 Recent partnership work with Stories of Lynn at the Town Hall has included a joint session for schools looking at the town's Victorian fairground heritage.
- 5.5 The Learning Officer has been training and mentoring the Museum Learning Assistant team at Lynn Museum in delivering sessions for schools and the Museum Learning Assistants are now undertaking at least one session per school visit.

## 6 Visitor numbers

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

## 7. Resource implications

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|-----|-------------------------------|------|
| (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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