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

**October 9<sup>th</sup> 2017                      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 July 2017 –  
September 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 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. Work is underway on selecting objects, assessing items for conservation requirements and work with designers. Items under consideration include a cape made from ostrich feathers, a 17<sup>th</sup> century stumpwork textile featuring animals, a stuffed pair of frogs playing cards, and a walrus skull. The object records are being improved with the addition of photographs and extra information.

- 1.3 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 drawing upon paintings in the Museum collections. Henry Baines painted a number of local scenes in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century including buildings that have since been demolished. These form an interesting record of King's Lynn and area as well as having considerable aesthetic value. The following web link takes you to a list of works by Henry Baines in public ownership, mainly at King's Lynn:  
<https://artuk.org/discover/artists/baines-henry-18231894>
- 1.4 Earlier in the year, 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. This proved very popular. Museum staff are in touch with the British Museum to follow this up, exploring the possibility of a display of items from the famous Iron Age Snettisham hoard.
- 1.5 Museum Trainee, Sam Bellotti has developed a mini exhibition programme for the reception area display case. Currently we have a display of a pair of shoes in the form of ceramic teapots based on Ming Dynasty teapots. These eye-catching items, linked to the Shoes exhibition, are on loan from Milly J Shoes of Norwich. Future plans include a display of recent acquisitions and the Baines painting of the cemetery chapels (see below).
- 1.6 A programme of monthly illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics have included a 'Another Brick in the Wall' an illustrated tour around King's Lynn buildings and architecture by museum volunteer Kim Leonard, and 'Fashion and Finery' 1920s fashion with items from the Lynn costume collections by Dayna Woolbright. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff.
- 1.7 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continue to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. Recent event figures for the summer holidays are as follows:

01/08/2017	Romans	67
08/08/2017	Medieval Treasure	34
15/08/2017	Best Foot Forward	42
22/08/2017	Ancient Egyptians	94
29/08/2017	Carousels and Candy Floss	30
25/07/2017	Awe-ful Archaeology	40

- 1.8 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. A small party for children participating in the trails was held in September.

- 1.9 To publicise the museum's events programme a new *History in Your Hands* event flier has been produced. The fliers were distributed through local schools prior to Easter and Summer holidays and through a number of local attractions and businesses. Facebook and Twitter are also used to publicise events as well as press releases to local media. Over the summer a publicity campaign including petrol forecourt signage and poster sites on buses was delivered to help boost attendances. July 2017's visitor numbers were comparable with the same month in 2016, reversing the previous downward trend, while visitor numbers for August 2017 were 52% up on the previous year, and in line with the bumper number seen in 2015-16 when the museum recorded over 18,000 visitors over the year. Further additional marketing is scheduled for October half term.
  
- 1.10 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. Recent themes include period toys and games, Origami, and Shoes.

## **2. Other Museum Developments**

- 2.1 The Lynn Museum, partnership with the Google Cultural Institute, currently shows '*Blubber, Bone and Baleen*' exploring the history of the whaling industry using collections from Lynn Museum. We plan to follow this up with an additional new online exhibition on pilgrimage and pilgrim badges. The Museum has a good collection of medieval pilgrim souvenirs and this was the subject of a recent study day at Lynn Museum.
  
- 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 2074 followers while the Facebook account has 492 follows. The Museum plans to participate once more in the #MuseumWeek and the new #ScienceWeek events next year.

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.

- 2.3 There have been some recent staffing changes at Lynn Museum with the appointment of a new full-time Front of House Supervisor, Sophie Broomfield, and a new Museum Learning Assistant, Sade Ojelade has just started work at Lynn Museum.
- 2.4 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 carved figure, a mug commemorating the ship Agamemnon, mariner's compass, a Roman gold phallus pendant and the Henry Baines painting of Nailing the Colours to the Mast. The last item has been lent to Norwich Castle (along with a commemorative glass and model of a funeral barge) for inclusion in the recent and highly successful *Nelson and Norfolk* exhibition.
- 2.5 With support from the Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant 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.
- 2.6 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 photography of collections and events.
- 2.7 The Museum has successfully raised the £1,100 needed to purchase a group of 8 silver coins known as sceattas. These coins represent the earliest form of penny and they circulated in England from circa 675 to the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The group of coins includes a rare runic *Aethiliraed* type. Grant aid comes from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of Kings Lynn Museum.

### **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 AGM takes place on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> October to include election of officers etc.

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. Recruitment for a new Learning and Engagement Officer has recently taken place following Ruth Farnan's move to a museum post in London.

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. Recent displays at Stories include one about Olive Edis, photographer and two First World War themed exhibitions.

4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council continues and the Norfolk Museums Service has again organised the Second World War themed event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front*. This event will take place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The event proved a great success in the town and at the Lynn Museum was very well attended with 747 visitors that day. Lynn Museum once more participated in the *Heritage Open Day* on 10<sup>th</sup> September, and 593 people came to visit. Both these days were offered with free admission and took place on Sundays.

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 comprising borough council and museums staff has been meeting monthly to plan and to review progress. A building conservation plan brings together information about the architectural, historical and archaeological significance of the site. Display plans are shaping up and initial design visuals were used for consultation with visitors to South Gate on the *Heritage Open Day* in September when about 600 people came to the site. Costumed interpreters were on hand to engage visitors about the Siege of Lynn during the English Civil War and this proved popular. Further consultation was carried out with the volunteer team. 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 has been open once more on Sundays from 12pm until 4pm for the 2017 season running from April until September, made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. A Sunday joint ticket was available for visitors to Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum, with positive uptake. On the Sunday of the August Bank Holiday exactly one third of the 39 visitors to the Lynn Museum had purchased a joint ticket and were signposted to the museum from the Town Hall.
- 4.9 The Museum worked 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 was a violin and cello recital on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> July at the Museum. The Museum also hosted the *Have a Go: Play our Piano!* activity. The piano was part of the Sunday 16 July event on the Tuesday Market Place when a local artist will decorate the piano. The piano was then available for anyone to play, and went to the Corn Exchange foyer, to Bank House Hotel and then to the Lynn Museum.
- 4.10 The Museum team is currently working with the 'Digital Pilgrim' project, supported by the Paul Mellon Foundation and in conjunction with the University of Cambridge and the British Museum. A Pilgrim Badge study day was held on 15<sup>th</sup> September with curators coming to King's Lynn from other museums with significant collections including Bristol, Bury St Edmunds, Norwich, the British Museum and the Museum of London. One academic who has published in this area came over from the United States. An interesting part of the day was a demonstration by Colin Torrode of making pilgrim badges using molten metal poured into a mould. The Museum was successful in raising a grant of £1,000 from MUPI (Museums and Universities Partnership Initiative) to cover the costs. The Museum team plans 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 once more 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, Museum Learning Assistants 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 Stone Age and Bronze Age. Here is some feedback from a teacher who visited recently: *"Many thanks to you & your superb team who created & delivered such an amazing learning opportunity for our children yesterday! We all thoroughly enjoyed the day, the activities that were provided & we learnt so much that can be further developed & built on back in the classroom! The day ran extremely smoothly with maximum learning chances squeezed into every minute. Thank you!"*
- 5.4 School bookings for this term at Lynn Museum are positive, with confirmed bookings of 420 pupils to date.
- 5.5 Lynn Museum is starting to support local uniformed groups, such as Scouts and Brownies, to visit the museum outside normal opening hours as part of their badges. We are exploring creating a badge specific to Lynn Museum to encourage more of these visits.
- 5.6 Recent partnership work with the Stories of Lynn project at the Town Hall has included a joint session for schools exploring the town's Victorian fairground heritage. At the end of the summer term this event was run at maximum capacity with 153 pupils visiting in one day.
- 5.7 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**

(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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