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

May 14th 2018

Item No.

KING'S LYNN MUSEUMS REPORT

Report by the Operations Manager - West

**This report provides information on King's Lynn
Museum activities in the period from March 2018 –
April 2018**

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 13th 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 exhibition runs until 17th June 2018 after which we plan to archive the information and images of the exhibits on our Google Cultural Institute platform.
- 1.2 The next major exhibition at Lynn Museum 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. The alphabet of objects to display has now been finalised and work is underway to carry out any remedial conservation work required and to research and write the text for the graphic panels and labels. Items exhibited within this multi-disciplinary display include natural history specimens, geology, toys, textile items and ephemera relating to household products. During this process, the object records are being improved with the addition of photographs and extra information. *Animal ABC* will open to the public on the 30th June 2018.

- 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 19th century including buildings that have since been demolished. These form an interesting record of King's Lynn and the local 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 In early 2017, 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. An application to request a loan of items from the famous Iron Age Snettisham hoard now has been submitted for consideration by the British Museum.
- 1.5 The reception area display case remains a useful space in which to create changing displays and to showcase items not usually on display. The current display explores the theme of gardening and the interest for people to grow their own food. This was developed by the former cohort of Teaching Museum trainees as part of a 'Display in a Day' training session.
- 1.6 In March 2018, Lynn Museum launched its new-look talks programme. Instead of monthly sessions, the museum now offers a short season of four talks on a particular theme on successive Wednesday afternoons in both March and October. The programme for March was Voices from the Workhouses by Megan Dennis, Doorways of Kings Lynn by Adrian Parker, The story of King's Lynn's South Gate by Oliver Bone, and My Stories of Lynn by Rachael Williams. The new format of talks seems to have been well received, with attendances for talks throughout this programme sitting at 25-30.
- 1.7 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continue to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. The Easter holidays included two special event days themed around Shoes (18 participants) and Medieval Life (71 participants). A programme of events throughout 2018 has been planned.
- 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. During the Easter holidays two trails were offered (If the Shoe Fits (62 participants) and Pilgrim Treasures (85 participants)).
- 1.9 To publicise the museum's events programme and enhance visitor numbers the Museum uses a variety of media including a 2018 version

of the *History in Your Hands* event flier distributed through local schools 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.

- 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 a Chocoholic session making Easter eggs (16 participants) and a Maritime themed event (15 participants) where participants design scrimshaw patterns into soap.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 Seahenge, the Holme Bronze Age timber circle conserved and displayed at Lynn Museum is to feature in a regional BBC TV programme as part of the Civilisations series. Presenter Ray Mears was filmed in conversation with archaeological timber expert Maisie Taylor at Lynn Museum in February. The programme, *Civilisation Stories Treasures of the Bronze Age with Ray Mears* was broadcast on Monday 30 April.
- 2.2 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. Staff plan to follow this up with a new online exhibition on pilgrimage and pilgrim badges, which was the subject of a study day at Lynn Museum in 2017, and an exhibition on Seahenge created by our new Coastal Treasures *Teaching Museum* trainees.
- 2.3 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum accounts continue to grow with the Twitter account having 2,268 followers while the Facebook account has 547 follows. During the period of this report, the Museum engaged extensively with the #MuseumWeek annual campaign, which inspires content with a different hashtag each day of the week.
- 2.4 A team of collections volunteers continues to meet on a weekly basis in the NMS offices at Queen Street. Volunteers are engaged with a programme of work involving the scanning and cataloguing of the drawing collections by local artists and topographical prints of the King’s Lynn area. The team’s work enhances and illustrates the museum catalogue available online through the NMS collections website. Volunteers have also been assisting with the accessioning of new gifts to the Museum, compiling a 20th century history of the museum and collating useful information about collections for our catalogue.

- 2.5 The Museum's fortnightly *History of King's Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News has generated significant interest. Recent artefacts featured include an article on former Lynn Museum Curator and artist C.T. Page, resident of Clifton House, a ceremonial trowel from King's Lynn Railway Station, an item exploring the display of the Plowrights shop at Lynn Museum and a painting of an enormous sheep by an unknown artist.
- 2.6 With support from the Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Museum and the Friends of Hardwick Road Cemetery, the Museum purchased a painting by Henry Baines of the Cemetery Chapels at the Hardwick Road cemetery of about 1870. This interesting view shows the cemetery buildings which no longer exist and is a significant addition to our collection of Baines works. The painting is now on display within the main chapel gallery and the Friends of King's Lynn Museum recently organised a guided tour of the Cemetery by Dr Paul Richards.
- 2.7 The partnership with the photography course at the College of West Anglia continues to develop with students assisting with new photography of collections and events.
- 2.8 Recent acquisitions at the Museum have included an early 20th century book entitled *Ruth's Roses*, which was presented to a girl called Laura Reading by the King's Lynn Corporation of The Salvation Army for good conduct and attendance, and some additional Early Medieval small silver coins from the same find-spot near Downham Market.

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 A tour of the Hardwick Cemetery with Dr Paul Richards was organised by the Friends on Monday 23 April. 20 Friends explored the gravestones and stories of some of King's Lynn's former inhabitants, finding out more about the history of the town and its cemeteries in the process. The group visited the location of the chapels painted by Baines in the recently acquired painting and the tour ended at the site where Henry Baines is recorded as having been buried.
- 3.3 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.

- 3.4 An unveiling event for the newly acquired painting by Henry Baines on December 18 2017 was hosted by the Friends and we are looking at making a Christmas social event an annual occasion for members.
- 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. Rachael Williams, Learning and Engagement Officer works with Melissa Hawker, Learning Officer and Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator on such aspects as school visits and temporary exhibitions.
- 4.4 Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator for Lynn Museum continues to support curatorial aspects of Stories of Lynn, such as display snagging, assistance with exhibitions and work on the Town Hall's collections storage facility. The current exhibition at Stories is 'My Lynn Cup', following a project by Learning and Engagement Officer Rachael Williams to work with individuals and groups to create their own design in response to the King John Cup. The next exhibition, exploring the Hanseatic history of the town, will open on 16 May.
- 4.5 A programme of Spring Talks held at King's Lynn Town Hall was organised by Learning and Engagement Officer Rachael Williams on Tuesday evenings in April. Subjects included Norfolk's Forgotten Wives and Mothers by Alison Gifford, Norfolk's Suffragettes by Kathy Hipperson and The First and Latest Female Mayor by Rachael Williams and Councillor Carol Bower. For the final talk, Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright displayed the portrait of Florence Ada Coxon by Fred Roe to the audience. There are plans to display this portrait within the Stone Hall in the near future.
- 4.6 Partnership working with the Borough Council on events continues and the Norfolk Museums Service will once more be involved in the planning and delivery of the popular Second World War themed event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* on Sunday 22nd July. The

Museums Service will also be participating in the Heritage Open Day in September.

- 4.7 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 and conservation advice, support and an enquiry service for those Borough collections currently held in the Town Hall including fine art and Civic Regalia.
- 4.8 On behalf of the Borough Council, NMS staff have been working on the project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Borough Council and the Friends of the Walks 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 museum staff continue to meet monthly to plan and to review progress. A building conservation plan brings together information about the architectural, historical and archaeological significance of the site. Work is currently underway on the design of graphic panels, liaison with specialist contractors including those making the interactive model, period furniture and replica food. Lighting and display improvements are planned for the next few months, subject to consent of the Scheduled Ancient Monument application. 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.
- 4.9 The Lynn Museum is open once more on Sundays from 12pm until 4pm running from April until September. This additional opening is made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. A Sunday joint ticket, available to visitors of Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum is also available. Previously, this has seen positive uptake.
- 4.10 The Museum will be working with the King's Lynn Festival again in 2018 to follow up three years of successful partnership working. The Lynn Museum works as a 'pop-up venue' for recitals during the July Festival period. On Friday 27 July, the museum will host the Consone Quartet with tickets available at just £1.00 on the door. In addition, the museum is supporting the *Lynn from all Angles* exhibition of Walter Dexter and works by contemporary artist Jon Harris. The exhibition, held at the Fermoy Gallery, will feature loans of oil paintings, sketches and posters from the Lynn Museum collection.
- 4.11 The Museum has been working in partnership with Norfolk County Council's Children and Adults Social Services by providing free admission cards to the Lynn Museum for care leavers. One hundred cards were delivered to our colleagues at Priory House, King's Lynn for distribution to the young people.

- 4.12 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. In the summer 2018 we are hoping to work with a visiting Canadian academic and her students to improve documentation of the town's significant collection.

5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2018-2019, the Lynn Museum is hosting three 12 month Teaching Museum traineeships provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme. Samantha Parker is the new Curatorial Trainee, based at the Lynn Museum and the Ancient House Museum in Thetford. Her traineeship is funded through the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 2018-2022 Business Plan. Amongst a range of other activities, Sam will help on the South Gates project, Animal ABC exhibition and work with colleagues to support visitors with autism to explore the museum.
- 5.2 Fellow Teaching Museum trainees Andrew Tullett and Monika Saganowska are funded through the Norfolk *Coastal Treasures* project. In July 2017, Norfolk County Council was awarded funding from the Government's Coastal Communities Fund for this project to promote sustainable tourism and new ways of accessing the wealth of heritage interest in the coastal area between King's Lynn and Holme. The project will develop walking and cycling trails, aligned to the delivery of Stretch 4 of the long distance England Coast Path, and use new technologies to bring the heritage assets of this area to life. Andrew and Monika are based in the museum offices at the Town Hall. During the year they will focus on key heritage assets of this area including the Holme timber circle known as Seahenge and the internationally important iron Age finds from Snettisham.
- 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 the changes to the history National Curriculum. The Seahenge and early history displays and themes remain popular, with schools and school numbers up on last year's total.
- 5.4 Recent partnership work with the Stories of Lynn project at the Town Hall has included a number of joint session for schools exploring the town's heritage.
- 5.5 As mentioned in the last report, our learning programme is delivered by a combination of museum staff and specialised freelancers. Key to the sustainability of the schools programme is the involvement of the Front of House Supervisor and Museum Learning Assistants in assisting with development and delivery. In order to do this, they need to be able to deliver quality learning and respond flexibly to teachers' needs. We are pleased to report that, following training from Learning Officer Melissa

Hawker; Sophie, Bethany and Folasade have been doing a fantastic job supporting learning at Lynn Museum.

6 Visitor numbers

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

7. Resource implications

(a) Finance

Lynn Museum receives funding to support core operations and activities from Norfolk County Council and through a Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. A number of activities are financed as part of funding to Norfolk Museums Service from Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation under the terms of the current 2018-22 Business Plan. Project activities are funded from a range of external sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund. The source of these funds are detailed within the report. The above report includes no additional or unfunded financial implications.

(b) Property

Unless specified, the above activities relate to the Lynn Museum, the Town Hall NMS offices and Aickman's Yard museum stores. The above report includes no additional implications relating to property.

(c) Staff

The team at Lynn Museum are supported by a wider team of colleagues within Norfolk Museums Service, in addition to partnership working with the Borough Council to deliver additional projects and activities. Some current posts are funded by external project funding. The above report includes no additional implications relating to staffing and personnel resources.

(d) Information Technology

Digital operations at Lynn Museum are supported by Norfolk County Council's IMT department. Social media is delivered by the Lynn Museum team. The above report includes no additional implications relating to Information Technology.

8. Recommendations:

1. That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

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