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

17 June 2019                      Item No.

### KING'S LYNN MUSEUMS REPORT

#### Report by the Assistant Head of Museums

**This report provides information on King's Lynn Museum activities in the period from February 2019 to May 2019**

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

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum is *Animal ABC: from Ammonite to Zebra*. The exhibition is primarily aimed at a family audience and draws upon collections from, or inspired by, the natural world. *Animal ABC* was co-curated with the Curator of Natural History for Norfolk Museums Service (NMS). Preparation of objects for display and installation of artefacts was undertaken by NMS conservators and 3D design of the show was by the NMS Design team, working closely with Lynn Museum staff. Items exhibited within this multi-disciplinary exhibition include natural history specimens, geology, toys, textile items and ephemera relating to household products. *Animal ABC* opened to the public on 30 June 2018 and visitors have been enjoying the displays and showing their appreciation. In association with the exhibition, the museum team worked with the NMS Retail Manager to ensure a suitable range of animal related stock is available for sale in the museum shop.
- 1.2 The summer 2019 exhibition at Lynn Museum will be *Journeys, People, Place and Pilgrimage*. The exhibition opens on Friday 21 June at 2pm. It will connect with - and be funded by - projects and partnerships led by the Norfolk County Council's Environment team exploring the themes of Green Pilgrimage and Coastal Treasures. Funding for the Green Pilgrimage project is derived from the ERDF Interreg programme and for the Coastal Treasures project from the Coastal Communities Fund. The exhibition will draw upon the museum's rich collections relating to West Norfolk including the nationally significant historic collection of pilgrim badges found in King's Lynn's River Purfleet. These badges include a number of medieval lead souvenirs

from the important shrine at Walsingham. Additional pilgrim badges will be loaned from the Peter Sibley Collection at Walsingham and also Oscott College, Birmingham, with grateful thanks to the trustees of these organisations. Other planned exhibits include a feature on the railway journey to Hunstanton for holidaymakers and the display of a knitted bathing costume from the Museum's costume and textile collections, alongside journeys to and from Norway and the Arctic. One of the Interreg project European partners from the Green Pilgrimage project is offering loans of medieval Grimston Ware from North West Norfolk that had been traded to Norway and Sweden and found in archaeological excavations there. There will be a Green Pilgrimage Interreg project partner visit to Norfolk in September and the group plans to visit King's Lynn on the 11-12 September 2019.

- 1.3 In the summer of 2020 Lynn Museum will mark the bicentenary of the birth of Thomas Baines with an exhibition exploring the King's Lynn born artist brothers Thomas and Henry Baines, drawing upon the significant body of their work in the Museum collections. Henry Baines painted a number of local scenes in the second half of the 19th century, including a number of buildings that have since been demolished. These paintings form an interesting social history record of King's Lynn and the local area as well as having considerable aesthetic value. A list of works by Henry Baines in public ownership, mainly at King's Lynn can be found at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/baines-henry-18231894>
- 1.4 The Lynn Museum is currently showing a selection of items kindly loaned by the Trustees of the British Museum from the famous Iron Age Snettisham hoard, the largest collection of such Iron Age gold, silver and bronze objects in Europe. The display has generated a additional visitors and has received interest from the local papers and radio. The Curator gave a Radio Norfolk interview about the display. Also interviewed was a relative of the finder of the Great Torc. The display opened in March 2019 and runs through until the end of August 2019.
- 1.5 The Lynn Museum reception area display case remains a useful space in which to create changing displays and to showcase items from store that are not usually on display, all encouraging repeat visits. Following the Snettisham Treasure display, there are plans to continue exploring the themes of Journeys and Coastal Treasures.
- 1.6 The Lynn Museum continues to offer a programme of Wednesday afternoon talks using a format of short seasons of themed talks, with four in March and four in October. The March talks programme included *Egyptology, A Cabinet of Curiosities* by Faye Kalloniatis on 6 March, *Cooking Equipment in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in King's Lynn* by Tony Weston on 13 March, *History Underfoot: Medieval Floor Tiles* by Monika Saganowska on 20 March and *A Natural History of Lynn*

*Museum* by Andrew Tullett on 27 March. The October programme includes talks connected to the Journeys theme. Forthcoming talks include: 2 October – Susan Maddock ‘*On both sides of the sea, on water and on land: the life and travels of Margery Kempe of Lynn*; 9 October – Ken Hill *Journeys to the Antarctic 1956-1957*; 16t October – Alison Gifford *Meet the Vancouvers*; 23 October – Oliver Bone *Medieval Pilgrim Souvenirs*; 30th October – Paul Richards *The Port of Lynn: From Medieval to Modern*. Attendances for talks are normally in the range 25-30.

- 1.7 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum during the school holiday periods. A full programme of events throughout 2019 has now been planned. The February Half Term saw a 1940s themed event on 21 February with object handling, crafts and food (185 attendees) and an Egyptians themed event took place on 11 April and Crack the Crime (151 attendees) as a joint event with Stories of Lynn. The 30 May saw a Fairground themed event with Isabelle King, in addition signing copies of her children’s book which is inspired by Savages and the Lynn Museum collections (47 attendees).
- 1.8 During the school holidays the Lynn Museum continues to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail developed by the museum team available for each week of the school holidays. The trails use different themes each time and children completing this activity receive a small prize. May half term’s theme was *Shy Coconuts*, An Egyptians trail took place at Easter and February Half Term saw a World War Two themed activity.
- 1.9 The Lynn Museum continues to host monthly *Coffee, Cake and Collections* “coffee morning” style events for adults, including those who are isolated or those who would not normally be confident enough to visit the museum. Each session explores a different aspect of the collections. Recent themes have included DIY Bird Feeders, Georgians, and Springtime.
- 1.10 The Lynn Museum’s new monthly *Mini Museum* club aimed at under 5s is proving popular. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month and the club will run throughout 2019. This activity forms part of an increasing Early Years offer across NMS.
- 1.11 To publicise the museum’s events programme and enhance visitor numbers, the Museum uses a variety of media. The 2019 version of the *History in Your Hands* event flier was distributed to local schools on 16 May. It is also available 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.

## **2. Other Museum Developments**

- 2.1 The Museum has received a recent donation of a Roman armilla. Mr Turner, the finder writes "*Though perhaps not much to look at, it is quite a rare object as it is, importantly, complete. It was an award to a Roman soldier, who had to be a Roman citizen and below the rank of Centurion, who performed an act of outstanding bravery in battle. I have spoken to our Finds Liaison Officer, Julie Shoemark, and the farmer/landowner about donating it to a museum and we are of a mind to offer it to Kings Lynn Museum first as it is the closest museum to the findspot in Pentney.*" This is a gift from Mike Turner (finder) and John Meyer (farmer).
- 2.2 The Lynn Museum's partnership with the Google Cultural Institute currently included the online exhibition *Blubber, Bone and Baleen*, exploring the history of the whaling industry using collections from Lynn Museum. Staff are working on a new online exhibition on the theme of Shoes drawing upon content from a previous temporary exhibition.
- 2.3 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being actively used and maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum accounts continue to grow with the Twitter account having 2,570 followers while the Facebook account has 649 follows. The Museum has been sharing images of watercolours of the town by former curator Christopher Thomas Page under the hashtag *#WatercolourWednesday* and has been running through the alphabet of the current *Animal ABC* exhibition. On Facebook there have been a number of posts using the *History of Kings Lynn in 100 Objects* theme.
- 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 and collating useful information about these collections for the catalogue.
- 2.5 The Museum's fortnightly *History of King's Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News has generated significant interest. After the series came to its 100<sup>th</sup> article, museum staff have now started a follow up series entitled *Picture This*, focussing on local drawings, engravings and paintings. Examples of published works have included a photograph of the (since demolished) Savage's factory in South Lynn, an illustration of the Cretaceous Sea, and a painting of the former Kettle Mill by Henry Baines.

- 2.6 Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn have started to play a significant part in the NMS-wide *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* project. This is an exciting 4 year project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with match-funding support from the borough council. The project is aimed at young people aged 11-25 years of age with specific focus on young people who face significant barriers to participation in heritage and arts activities. This includes harder to reach groups of young people: care leavers, children who are looked after, refugees and YMCA clients. The *Kick the Dust* project aims to work with 8,000 young people between July 2018 and June 2022 working in consortium with Creative Collisions and YMCA (Norfolk). Designed by young people for young people the project offers the chance to take part in a range of exciting activities and events inspired by the vast collections and objects held by NMS as well as structured work placements and work awareness opportunities which will support the development of work related skills as well as open young peoples' eyes to the range of job roles within the heritage sector. Each young person will be supported in developing their own unique pathway which meets their needs and interests and which in turn will help shape the future of the Museums Service in attracting more young people in the future. As well as taking part in a range of activities the young people will have the opportunity to gain a 'behind the scenes' understanding of museums and how they operate. They could find themselves working in a team to host an event or put on an exhibition; learn how to display and mount work; produce a tour; developing the social media around such an event; be involved in 'Take Over days'. In addition all young people will have the opportunity to gain accredited skills and training through the Arts Award programme. Young people will have the opportunity for progression through the project, engaging with different levels of activity characterised as "Player-Shaper-Leader".
- 2.7 Up to the end of April 2019, NMS has delivered over 1170 hours of Kick the Dust activity to 2,171 young people : 1,169 young people took part in a 'Player' activity which have ranged from art and heritage based activity to tours; 857 in a 'Shaper' activity where they have been able to influence the type of longer term activity based on their interests; a further 145 have taken on a Leader role through a project group or as volunteers and mentors supporting other programmes
- 2.8 Current *Kick the Dust* projects in King's Lynn include establishing a regular forum for young people running out of Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn museums, with 19 young people now attending weekly. Working with the College of West Anglia the group are making a heritage film for the South Gate. For a Queer History project, young people from Thetford's Ancient House's Teenage History Club came to Lynn Museum to mark LGBT History Month, researching the collections and leading tours. The Teenage History Club members went 'on the road' to queer the collections at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse on 20 February and Lynn Museum on 22 February. The tours build on the Teenage History Club's *Rainbow Pride* project and *Pride of the People*:

*Helping History Out of the Closet* exhibition which ran at the Ancient House Museum. The Pride project came out of a discussion at one of the Club's sessions, where the young people were shocked to discover homosexuality was illegal until 1967. The group requested a project to explore what life was like for non-heterosexual people in the past in the local area. The project has particular appeal as some of the group identify as LGBTQ+ or queer.

- 2.9 There have been some recent staffing changes at Lynn Museum. Front of House Supervisor Sophie Broomfield has moved on to a position as a Learning Officer at Holkham Hall and Sade Ojelade has taken up a position at the Museum of Classical Archaeology in Cambridge. Following a recruitment process, Beth Kierman is the new Front of House Supervisor and Holly King and Monika Saganowska are the new part-time Museum Learning Assistants. Monika was a former NMS Teaching Museum trainee based in King's Lynn.

### **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 Annual fundraising lecture on 18 September 2019 will be by Dr Megan Dennis, NMS Curator at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. Megan will be speaking about Norfolk Workhouses.
- 3.3 The Friends of King's Lynn 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 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 delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) 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.
- 4.2 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 SLA between the Borough Council and NMS.

- 4.3 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. NMS manages the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer post. The postholder Rachael Williams works closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office. Funding from the Borough Council has enabled this post to continue for a further 12 months from the ending of HLF funding in November 2018.
- 4.4 Partnership working with the Borough Council on events continues and the NMS is once more involved in the planning and delivery of the Second World War themed town-wide event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* on 21 July 2019. NMS will also participate in the town-wide Heritage Open Day in September 2019.
- 4.5 On behalf of the Borough Council, NMS staff have been working on the project to improve the interpretation and display of the town's South Gate, a grade one listed building and scheduled ancient monument. A stakeholders event to mark the refurbishment is planned for the 3 July 2019. The Borough Council worked in partnership with NMS to secure £89,500 of funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project also received a generous donation of £3,500 from The Friends of The Walks. The new displays have been installed and the site opened to the public on 4 August 2018. The new interpretation improves the way information about the building is presented, making it more attractive and engaging to visitors. The work completed includes installing new interior lighting and replacing the information panels inside and outside the building, which date from the 1980s. Additional work under the scheme to be completed in 2019 includes the delivery of a holiday event programme, work with schools and production of a film working with young people.
- 4.6 The Lynn Museum is once more on Sunday afternoons from 12pm until 4pm to the end of September 2019. 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.
- 4.7 NMS is continuing to work in partnership with the King's Lynn Festival in 2019 to follow up four years of successful partnership working. The Lynn Museum serves as a 'pop-up venue' for recitals during the July Festival period. Further collaborations are being delivered through a programme of exhibitions in the Fermoy Gallery as part of the Festival extension weekends in April and October 2019, with NMS working in partnership with the King's Lynn Festival, Norfolk & Norwich Festival and the NCC Arts Service to curate a three show programme funded by the New Anglia LEP *Look Sideways East* project. These Fermoy exhibitions are curated by the NMS Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art and draw on NMS collections. The current exhibition is *Landscape in Abstraction*, running at the Fermoy Gallery from 13 April to 4 May 2019. This exhibition features a number of loans from the NMS modern

and contemporary art collections and makes connections with the historic map collections held in the Borough Archives. These exhibitions have all been supported by programmes of events for schools, children and adults developed and delivered by the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer.

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 The Museum has teamed up with the University of Cambridge and their outreach *Insight Discover* project. This project provides a range of events in West Norfolk to raise awareness of Higher Education at an earlier age and develop skills. Year 7 students at six schools across West Norfolk have participated in the project. They have been working with a mentor to create an autobiographical mini sculpture in the form of a shoebox. A selection of these are being displayed at the Museum and on 23 May a celebration evening was held at Lynn Museum for the students. 101 adults and 90 children participated in this project.

## **5 Learning & Outreach**

- 5.1 During 2019-2020, the Lynn Museum is continuing to host a 12 month NMS Teaching Museum traineeship provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme and funded through the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 2018-2022 NMS Business Plan.. Current Trainee, Paula Murphy is based at both Lynn Museum and the Ancient House Museum in Thetford. Paula has been busy working on the Journeys exhibition, writing pieces for the Lynn News, social media, and she will be working on displays in the reception case. Her predecessor, Sam Parker finished her traineeship in April.
- 5.2 Teaching Museum trainees Andrew Tullett and Monika Saganowska, were funded during 2018-19 by 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 has developed walking and cycling trails, aligned to the delivery of Stretch 4 of the long-distance England Coast Path, and has used new technologies to bring the heritage assets of this area to life. During the year Andrew and Monika focussed on key heritage assets of this area including the Holme timber circle known as Seahenge and the internationally important Iron Age finds from Snettisham. The *Coastal Treasures* book and accompanying website – to which Andrew and Monika both made significant contributions - was launched in April 2019. For more information please see: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/out-and-about-in-norfolk/norfolk-trails/coastal-treasures>

- 5.3 Lynn Museum has continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. The Seahenge and early history displays and themes remain popular with schools and school numbers for 2018-19 show an increase over the previous year. The NMS Learning Officer offers flexible bespoke workshops to suit teachers' needs. Recent examples have included sessions on Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Flooding, Romans and Egyptians. Schools that have visited during this reporting period include St Martha's, Eastgate Academy, St Edmunds, Cpt Vancouver School Ashwicken, Cherry Tree Academy, The Mart School, Reffley Academy, West Winch and St Michaels.
- 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, with a particular focus on Flooding, Vancouver and Frederick Savage, with these sessions often using the archive as a 'jumping off' point for exploration. Successful co-working between NMS, Borough Archive staff, Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn staff has been supported by Work Experience students from the College of West Anglia.

## **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 National Lottery Heritage 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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