

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes from the Meeting of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee held on Monday, 9th November, 2015 at 2.15 pm in the Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs E A Nockolds (Chairman)
Councillors H Humphrey, T Smith, A Tyler and T Wing-Pentelow

Dr R Hanley	-	Norfolk Museums Service
Ms H Jackson	-	Norfolk Museums Service
Susan Thompson	-	Friends of King's Lynn Museums
Rebecca Rees	-	Trues Yard

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Avril Wright, County Councillor Chenery of Horsbrugh, Mr Steve Miller and Mr John Ward.

2 MINUTES

The notes of the meeting held on 14th September 2015 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Page 16, paragraph 10, be amended to read:

Councillor Tyler made reference to the issue of leaflets at the train station and following a meeting with the Regional Manager, enquiries would be made to try and get the leaflets back into the foyer.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF OPERATIONS AND LEARNING

King's Lynn Museums Report – September 2015 to October 2015

The Head of Operations and Learning and Western Area Operations Manager jointly presented the report which provided Members with information on King's Lynn Museums for the period September 2015 to October 2015 as set out below:

(i) Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum explored the life and work of Frederick Savage and was entitled *Art of the Mart: Savage's - the famous fairground makers of Lynn*. It told 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 included a number of products from the St Nicholas Ironworks that had 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 included the modern 'Mart' horse, and the bell used in the Opening Ceremony in February, on loan from the Town Hall collections. The painted decorative frieze in the display was a gift from Harry Overton, local sign-writer and member of the Showmen's Guild. The exhibition will run until 2 July 2016.

A programme of illustrated talks continued to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics included *the Archaeology of Tattooing* by Ken Hamilton and a talk by Dayna Woolbright on the *Art of the Mart exhibition*. Attendances averaged 15-25 and most talks were delivered by NMS staff.

An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continued to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. 'Drop-in' format events this year included: *Big Draw* and *Halloween* themed events during the October Half Term. Both events had very positive feedback with 89 people attending the Big Draw and 58 attending the Halloween events.

During the school holidays the Lynn Museum continued to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail available for each week of the school holidays. Participants who completed a number of trails over the summer holidays were invited to a celebratory tea party at the Museum on Saturday 19 September. Overall about 4 – 5 families attended the tea party.

The Lynn Museum continued to host monthly *Coffee, Cake and Collections* "coffee morning" style events for adults, with each session exploring a different aspect of the collections. One of the topics included a Mystery Object quiz. The September morning was held as part of the national charity Macmillan Coffee fundraising events. The event was well attended and featured in the Lynn News. In total they raised £40.00.

The reception case at Lynn Museum had seen a display featuring historic roller skates and currently displayed drawings by the Artist in Residence Rosie Redzia alongside objects from the museum collections she had illustrated.

Museum staff delivered a workshop about the story of whaling in King's Lynn on the 8 October, commissioned as part of the activity plan of the Narborough Bone Mill conservation project, a Heritage Lottery Fund-funded project. Participants were able to learn about the King's Lynn whaling ships, see whaling related specimens and artefacts and visit the Greenland Fishery building, once a meeting place for the whalers. Collection items featured included an 18th century dress and stays stiffened with whalebone, scrimshaw carvings on sperm whale teeth, a pilot whale skull and a bottle nose whale skull, a model of the Fountain, one of the town's whaling ships and a mug featuring the Baleana of Lynn.

The Lynn Museum played its part in the town's successful Heritage Open Day on 13 September, with 441 participants attending.

The Museum had loaned three oil paintings for an exhibition at the King's Lynn Arts Centre *the Bigger Picture 3* which ran until 31 October. The paintings lent were *The Purfleet* by Unknown Artist c.1800, *Too Late for the Ferry* by Robert Walker Macbeth (1848 – 1910), and *Red Mount, King's Lynn* by Thomas Baines (1820 – 18875). Local artists had been given a small square of the image to paint, then for a big reveal all the squares were put together to create a large reproduction of the original painting displayed alongside.

Councillor Tyler was interested how popular the whaling workshop was and asked whether there was any mileage in future activities regarding whaling. In response to Councillor Tyler's question, the Head of Operations and Learning explained that it did not naturally fit with the curriculum for education; however they would always look to incorporate it into events going forward.

Sue Thompson from the friends of Kings Lynn museum suggested inviting Dave Andrews, the author of a whaling book to give an afternoon talk at one of the museums. The Western Area Operations Manager thought it was a good suggestion and agreed to look into it.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith, the Head of Operations and Learning explained that during the Christmas period there would be at least a gallery trail. In recent years the attendance had been quite patchy for the workshops during Christmas, but the trails had proved to be quite popular. He informed those present that in previous years they had run wreath making workshops and Decoupage

events during Christmas; however the trails had always been most popular.

Councillor Humphrey asked whether the local artists who painted the small square images were asked to copy the paintings or interpret their own. The Western Area Operations Manager explained that the paintings took place at the Arts Centre not the museum, so they had not had chance to see them but agreed to find out and provide Councillor Humphrey with further information and images.

(ii) Other Museum Developments

The Lynn Museum continued to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum Twitter account had 1969 tweets and 1283 followers while the Facebook account had 213 likes.

A team of collections volunteers continued to meet on a weekly basis in the NMS offices at Queen Street. Volunteers had continued with a programme of work involving the scanning and cataloguing of the drawing collections. The team had now scanned around 2,000 items from the Museum's prints and drawings collection helping to make them much more accessible.

In addition to the scanning project, a small team of volunteers had worked with Curatorial Assistant Dayna Woolbright on a weekly basis, undertaking an audit of collections at the museum stores at Aickmans Yard. They had been joined by a local artist who had been creating drawings of different objects which currently formed part of an exhibition in the reception display case.

The museum had 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 were of John Langley and his wife Elizabeth. The Friends of Kings Lynn Museums and two private donors also contributed to the costs. The paintings were currently being conserved by Julie Crick, Fine Art Conservator.

The Museum's fortnightly History of King's Lynn in 100 objects series with the Lynn News generated significant interest. Members of the public had visited the museum with additional information for the museums records. They were currently up to item number 26 with the most recent artefact featuring a slightly macabre object for Halloween, relating to the infamous murderer James Rush. Other recent artefacts featured included a product of LinCan canneries, the historic roller skates recently displayed in the reception case, and a papier-mache model of an Indian temple.

In response to a question from Councillor Tyler the Western Area Operations Manager explained that the museum monitored their tweets

carefully to make sure they updated the public on a regular basis. She also explained that they looked closely at the other 10 museums in the service to see what types of things proved popular to help inform future planning. They were currently aiming to increase by 100 followers each year.

The Chairman was queried whether staff encouraged visitors to tweet about their experiences within the museums. The Western Area Operations Manager informed those present that they currently had #martart on twitter which people were using to share their pictures of the Art of the Mart Exhibition. The Head of Operations and Learning commented that as part of their funding they had a digital officer to review and promote social media and the NMS website. He also explained that the officer would benchmark their performance and activity and compare it with others in local areas.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Operations and Learning explained to those present that NMS had relatively recently launched an online collections database with a search facility. The Chairman asked whether the entire catalogue would eventually be digitalised. The Head of Operations and Learning explained that so far 50,000 had been digitalised and scanned. It was suggested that Jamie Everitt came to speak at the next meeting to give a tutorial on the digitalised catalogue.

(iii) Friends of King's Lynn Museums

The new Chairman of the Friends of Kings Lynn Museums, Susan Thompson was invited to give an update.

The Friends continued to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, trips and an annual lecture. The annual lecture this year was well attended by Friends and other interested individuals. Roughly around 45 people attended. It was held on the 24th September at Marriott's Warehouse on the Goldsmiths of the Early Anglian Kings and given by Angela Care Evans former Keeper of Anglo Saxon collection at the British Museum. The Annual Lecture will run again next year but there isn't a topic as of yet. The Friends had continued to support the afternoon talk's programme being offered at the Lynn Museum during 2015.

The Friends had continued 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. Eventually when the full restoration of the portraits was complete, the Friends will organise a talk to explain who they are and why they helped to restore them.

A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme had been launched and members of the Friends Committee had been attending the summer family events to invite children and young people to join. 37

Junior Friends had joined up. As well as the Junior Friends scheme they had also launched a life membership scheme. So far they had 4 people sign up and hoped for more interest in the future.

The new Chairman of the Friends informed those present of the possible plans they had for the future. These included:

- Starting a project to find pictures of old buildings and working environments and comparing them with the new modern versions. When this was complete it would be uploaded onto the modes system and following up from that a talk may be organised about the pictures.
- Undertake a list of artefacts the Friends had helped to purchase and publish it onto the website.
- Arrange to meet with the Regional Co-ordinator of BAFM and other local area museums to discuss the good working practice, self-promotions and memberships.
- Continue to create a newsletter to promote the Friends of King's Lynn Museums and the on-going events.

Councillor Humphrey asked in what ways the juniors could be more active to promote the museums. The Chairman of the Friends explained that it was currently quite early days but in the future they hoped that this could be a group who would become more involved in helping shape the activity programme at the museum. The activities and exhibitions would be looked at closely by the Learning Officer to make sure that they would fit in with the school curriculum.

(iv) Partnerships

The Lynn Museum free admission period ran from October to the end of March. This free admission period was provided under the terms of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Borough Council and NMS.

NMS continued to support the Borough Council with the delivery of HLF-funded Stories of Lynn project focussed on Kings Lynn Town Hall. As well as being part of the project steering group and Project Board, NMS continued to lead on the development and delivery of the project Activity Plan and the development of exhibition designs and site interpretation.

NMS continued to host the two stories of Lynn project funded posts, the Project Curator, Andy Mills and the Learning & Engagement Officer, Ruth Farnan. Both post holders continued 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. NMS staff had recently supported the Borough Council's procurement process for the main exhibition fit-out contractors and the provisions of an App-based tour of the Town Hall and wider town.

Following the success of the 2015 town centre events delivered in partnership with the Borough Council including Magna Carta 800 and Forties Lynn: Life on the home front, NMS staff liaised with Borough colleagues to explore opportunities for future events in 2016. Gressenhall had spoken to the Borough Council and it was hoped that a repeat of the wartime event can happen again next year.

The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continued to operate under the terms of the 2015-16 Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council. Under an extension to this agreement, NMS continued 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.

Councillor Nockolds informed those present about the positive feedback received by the Joint meeting of the Regeneration & Development and Environment & Community Panel and also commented how well she thought the 1940's event turned out.

In response to a question from Councillor Tyler, the Head of Operations and Learning explained that both the library and the museums were part of the same County Council department and they both shared a good working relationship.

(v) Learning & Outreach

During 2015 the Lynn Museum had 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. Trainee Morgan Bell was working as Curatorial Trainee for King's Lynn and Thetford. Amongst a range of other activities, she helped coordinate the summer trails programme, supervised collections volunteers and scheduled displays in the museum reception area. Across the previous years this particular Traineeship was the only one which had rolled on each year and they already had made plans to carry it on next year as well.

Lynn Museum had continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. Learning programmes had been adapted following recent changes to the history National Curriculum. The Seahenge and early history displays and themes proved popular with schools. They were currently focussing on Key Stage 1 & 2 and looked to incorporate a Town Hall school programme at some point in the future.

(vi) Visitor numbers

The visitor figures were circulated at the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Tyler the Head of Operations and Learning informed those present that the most important factor regarding attendance at the museums was the quality of the exhibitions. He added that visitor expectations had continued to rise. He commented that social media and websites were also very helpful as they advertised the museums and encouraged people to attend. He explained that they currently had a database which sent out emails specifically to people in certain criteria. For example if there was a family event coming up it would specifically send out an email to families. As well as quality, the Head of Operations and Learning also explained that facilities such as ease of parking and availability of toilets were important to visitors.

Councillor Humphrey asked whether the museum had considered providing adult courses in which adults could progress into volunteers if they wished. The Head of Operations and Learning explained that previously they had run 8 – 10 week courses in which they had about 20 – 30 people attend and that provision for similar styles of sessions were part of the activity planning for the Stories of Lynn project.

6 **TRUE'S YARD MUSEUM ACTIVITY REPORT**

The Assistant Manager from True's Yard Museum presented the report which provided Members with information on True's Yard Museum as set out below:

(i) Temporary exhibitions and events at True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum

The next major exhibition at True's Yard would be Lynn Regis: King's Lynn and the Royals. This exhibition would be primarily a photographic one using items from their own collection as well as those loaned from other institutions. There would also be objects and a small number of informative panels.

The True's Talks still provided very popular on Thursday Afternoons with attendances of up to 34 people. Recent topics had included Ralph Vaughan Williams, Bamberg Cathedral and one particularly evocative title Kings Lynn Glorious Past, Blighted Future. The last talk took place on Thursday; however there were plans to continue the talks again next year.

True's Yard once again took part in the Heritage open Day and welcomed a total of 961 visitors during the day.

(ii) Other Museum Developments

True's Yard Silver Jubilee Appeal

Launched on 15th September the purpose of the Silver Jubilee Appeal was to consolidate what had been achieved over the last 25 years, develop key educational projects for schools and maintain True's Yard for future generations. Following a recent survey, essential roofing repairs and replacement of windows had been highlighted. The 1904 fishing smack activity dry docked in their yard also required major conservation work. Their IT equipment was very old and needed to be replaced as well. So far they had raised £11,965 for these projects.

(iii) Partnerships

Hanse 2015

True's Yard played a role in an informal partnership called History & Archaeology Sympoium (HAS) alongside Marriott's Warehouse Trust, The Town Guides and the King's Lynn Hanseatic Club. They organised the History and Archaeology Symposium at Marriott's Warehouse and the Community Breakfast, which took place over the Hanse weekend in May. Other activities included the Children's book King's Lynn and the Hanseatic League, written by two members of staff at True's Yard which would be distributed to all year 5 children in the local schools on Friday 13th November 2015. There were also plans to liaise with the Lynn Museums to create a School book for children.

In response to a question from Councillor Tyler, the Assistant Manager of Trues Yard agreed to find out how far back the Kings Lynn and the Royals exhibition would go. Councillor Humphrey asked whether or not they had been in contact with Sandringham regarding this exhibition. The Assistant Manager agreed to find this out.

Councillor Tyler asked which outlets would be selling the books in King's Lynn. The Assistant Manager advised that they would be selling for £9.99 in the True's Yard Museum and possibly the Tourist Information Centre. Copies would also be given to the Kings Lynn, Gaywood and Mobile Libraries.

7 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2016

The following schedule of meetings were agreed and noted.

- Monday 14th March 2016, 2.15pm, Committee Suite, King's Court
- Monday 13th June 2016, 2.15pm, Committee Suite, King's Court
- Monday 26th September 2016, 2.15pm, Committee Suite, King's Court

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was Monday 14th March 2016, 2.15pm,
Committee Suite, King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm