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

14 March 2016

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 November
2015 – February 2016**

1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum explores the life and work of Frederick Savage and is entitled *Art of the Mart: Savage's - the famous fairground makers of Lynn*. It tells 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 includes a number of products from the St Nicholas Ironworks that have 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 includes the modern 'Mart' horse, and the bell used in the Opening Ceremony in February, on loan from the Town Hall collections. A painted decorative frieze in the display was a gift from Harry Overton, local sign-writer and member of the Showmen's Guild. The exhibition runs until 2 July 2016.
- 1.2 A programme of illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics have included *Digging up a Tyrannosaurus* by Dr David Waterhouse, Curator of Natural History *Norwich Castle Keep* by Dr John Davies, Chief Curator, and the *Story of Seahenge* by Dr Robin Hanley. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff.
- 1.3 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. 'Drop-

in' format events this year have included: a popular *Pirates* event during the February Half term which received 504 visitors.

- 1.4 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. A recent trail used a Lost Cat poster from the Museum collections as inspiration to encourage exploration of the museum displays in search of the cat and his cat toys.
- 1.5 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 a session led by Rachel Duffield from the Voices from the Workhouse project at Gressenhall with wooden spoons and a morning with Jim Kavanagh who led a storytelling session with drawings.
- 1.6 The reception case at Lynn Museum is re-displayed regularly by Museum Trainee, Morgan Bell. Recent exhibits have included Egyptian pottery, and crafts made by Napoleonic Prisoners of War. A request has been made to the British Museum to display in this case two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in January and February 2017.
- 1.7 The Museum featured on the TV programme *Antiques Road Trip* broadcast on 1 February when presenter James Braxton spoke with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright about King's Lynn's experience of the First World War.
- 1.8 The Museum's Sedgeford Hoard of Iron Age gold coins once hidden in a cow bone features in a new British Museum publication, 'Hoard, Hidden History' by Eleanor Ghey.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 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 2159 tweets and 1429 followers while the Facebook account has 318 likes. A recent Valentines card from the museum collection of 1809 was tweeted and received 90 likes and 66 retweets.
- 2.2 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 Henry Baines and Walter Dexter.

The team have now scanned around 2,000 items from the Museum's prints and drawings collection helping to make them much more accessible.

- 2.3 In addition to the scanning project, a small team of volunteers is working with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright on a weekly basis, undertaking an audit of collections at the museum stores at Aickmans Yard. They have been joined by a local artist who has been creating drawings of different objects which have formed part of an exhibition in the reception display case.
- 2.4 The Lynn Museum team has been working with Google on a project to photograph works of art at extremely high resolution and specialised equipment has been deployed over 7 days both at the museum and the stores. The finished images allow very close inspection of the techniques of the artists and details of the scenes depicted. This 'gigapixel' project will be available online later this year through the Google Art project a 'not-for-profit' part of the company in partnership with Norfolk Museums Service.
- 2.5 The Museum has 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 are of John Langley and his wife Elizabeth. John Langley travelled around the world with Captain Vancouver and later in life managed a public house in King's Lynn. The Friends of Kings Lynn Museums and two private donors are also contributing to the costs. The paintings are currently being conserved by Julie Crick, Fine Art conservator. Once complete an unveiling of the finished works is planned with the museum Friends group.
- 2.6 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 whale skull, an eighteenth century glass, a painting by James Sillett of the Norwich Stagecoach and a child-sized Bronze Age gold ring.

3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 3.1 The Friends are continuing to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends have continued to support the afternoon talks programme being offered at the Lynn Museum during 2015 and 2016.
- 3.2 The Friends are continuing 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.
- 3.3 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme has been launched and members of the Friends Committee attended last summer's family events

to invite children and young people to join. 37 Junior Friends have joined up.

3.4 The Friends of Kings Lynn Museum hosted a regional meeting of BAFM, the British Association for Friends of Museum at Lynn Museum on the 29th February 2016. About 30 people attended from museums in the region including Norwich, Peterborough, Cromer, Thetford, Wisbech and Diss. Delegates heard presentations from Amy Cotterill representing the Museums Association about Museum ethics, and from Miranda Rowlands about the Shared Enterprise scheme which encourages museums to be innovative with fundraising from areas such as legacies, membership, retail and business links.

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 and Project Board, NMS continues to lead on the development and delivery of the project Activity Plan and the development of exhibition designs and site interpretation.

4.3 NMS is hosting the two *Stories of Lynn* project funded posts, the Project Curator and the Learning & Engagement Officer. Both continue 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. Dayna Woolbright, Assisted Curator for Lynn Museum is currently seconded to the *Stories of Lynn* project from January to March 2016 to complete the curatorial aspects of the work including installation of objects in displays, completing graphic panels and labels and arranging for the packing and safe return of collections. The new displays at the Town Hall open on 25 March.

4.4 Partnership working with the Borough Council in the summer of 2015 included the delivery of two major town events, *Magna Carta 800* and *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front*. The Museum Service is again much involved in two town-wide events in the summer of 2016, one on the 12 June 2016 with a 1920s theme to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday, and a second on the 17 July with a repeat of the *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* Second World War theme.

4.5 The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the 2015-16 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.

- 4.6 The Lynn Museum will be opening on Sundays from 12 until 4 for the 2016 season running from April until September. This has been made possible as the result of financial support from the Borough Council.
- 4.7 The Museum worked over the summer of 2015 in partnership with the Kings Lynn Festival with displays and as a venue for a violin recital. There are plans to participate once more in 2016.

5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2015 - 2016 the Lynn Museum has 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. Morgan Bell is currently working as Curatorial Trainee for King's Lynn and Thetford. Amongst a range of other activities, she helps coordinate the trails programme, supervises collections volunteers and schedules displays in the museum reception area. Morgan's traineeship ends in April when we welcome new trainee, Imogen Clarke, one of 6 hosted by the museums service as a whole.
- 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 Romans box and an 'Archaebin' with layers of archaeological finds for children to investigate local history and archaeology.

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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